



# Local peacebuilding

What works and why

6 June 2019

# Abbreviations

<b>AMA</b>	Assistance Mission for Africa
<b>APD</b>	Association for Peace and Development
<b>CAFOB</b>	Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines au Burundi
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>DM&amp;E</b>	Design, Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>FNJ</b>	Federation of Nepali Journalists
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>PDRC</b>	Peace and Development Research Center
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>YMCA</b>	Young Men's Christian Association

# Acknowledgements

This is a pdf version of an online report which is available online at:  
<https://www.peaceinsight.org/reports/whatworks>

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# Preface

Although the Global Peace Index recorded the first increase in global peacefulness in five years in 2019, the facts on the ground in many countries speak to a different reality; one where communities are being torn apart by violence that was both avoidable and, in many cases, predictable. In the past month, continued violence in central Mali threatens to spiral out of control, with the latest attack resulting in the deaths of scores of people. In May, the UN estimates that 300,000 people fled the violence in Ituri province in DRC, hampering the ongoing Ebola response efforts. And in Sri Lanka, the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks have led to a series of retaliations against Muslim communities across the country, with over 1,000 Muslim refugees originally from Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan fleeing just one town. All the while the global number of refugees continues growing to unprecedented levels as people flee violent conflict.

What links the examples above, and many other countries experiencing violence right now, is the proliferation of opportunities to build peace that are routinely being overlooked by the international community. While high level negotiations do often stall, there are countless opportunities to support bottom up peacebuilding in some of the most violent contexts right now. Local peacebuilding actors are protecting vulnerable people, resolving local disputes, preventing displacements and saving lives.

At Peace Direct we have been dedicated to supporting and strengthening local capacities for peace since our founding over fifteen years ago. The premise underpinning our work is that local people working to stop violence and build peace in their communities remain the greatest sources of untapped peacebuilding potential globally. While the rhetoric around supporting local peacebuilding efforts is slowly changing, international and national policies and

practice are not keeping up. A combination of bureaucratic inefficiency, systemic inertia, risk aversion, concerns about scale, capacity, effectiveness and impact, and a lack of contextual understanding still hampers efforts to provide timely, flexible support to local peacebuilding efforts. In addition, existing policy commitments at the UN level have not yet been operationalized.

This report, a joint collaboration between Peace Direct and the Alliance for Peacebuilding, aims to address one of the questions we often hear from policymakers and donors around the effectiveness of local peacebuilding efforts. If concerns about the effectiveness of local efforts is one of the reasons for the lack of investment by governments and multilateral institutions, we hope that our analysis of over 70 evaluations collected from a diverse range of organizations and contexts across the world will help strengthen the case for support. The examples in this report and the accompanying website not only speak of remarkable heroism; they demonstrate tangible impacts on the ground in places where violence is often dismissed as endemic. From reducing violent conflict in Sudan and eastern DR Congo to protecting villages from attack in Colombia, these stories highlight what is possible, even in places where national level peace processes have stalled.

This year at the UN High Level Political Forum in New York, member states will review progress made towards SDG16. We believe that SDG16 cannot be achieved without greater levels of participation by and support for local peacebuilding efforts. Localization is now a prominent theme within the humanitarian sector. Let's start talking about localizing peace and investing in it now.

**Dylan Mathews**  
CEO Peace Direct

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# 1 Introduction

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**Peacebuilding, and especially local peacebuilding, is needed more than ever if the world is to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Having reviewed evaluations of over 70 local initiatives, this report finds that they make a significant and essential impact on peace, and deserve more support.**

In many respects, the world has become more peaceful.<sup>1</sup> The number and magnitude of armed conflicts declined steeply between 1990 and 2003, amid improvements in local and international peace making.<sup>2</sup>

More recently, however, this trend has gone into reverse. In 2016, more countries experienced violent conflict than at any time in the previous 30 years, with nearly 26,000 people dying from extremist attacks, and 560,000 people losing their lives due to violence.<sup>3</sup> The Global Peace Index for 2018 showed peace had deteriorated for the fourth year in succession.<sup>4</sup> While this is felt most acutely in parts of Asia, the Middle East and Africa, the reality is that armed violence affects people on all continents, with around fifty intra-state and interstate conflicts active in 2016.<sup>5</sup> Such conflicts inflict widespread death, wounding and trauma, as well as undermining the resilience, well-being and development prospects of families, communities and entire societies.

## **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16**

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

## **SDG 16 peace target**

Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere:  
Less homicides, conflict-related deaths, people subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence, and more people that feel safe walking alone where they live.

## **2018 UN report on progress**

'Many regions of the world continue to suffer untold horrors as a result of armed conflict or other forms of violence that occur within societies and at the domestic level.'

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and Its Causes*, New York: Viking, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Monty G. Marshall and Gabrielle C. Elzinga-Marshall, 'Global Report 2017: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility', Centre for Systemic Peace, 2017; K. Dupuy, S. Gates, H. M. Nygård, I. Rudolfensen, H. Strand and H. Urdal, 'Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946–2014', Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> OECD, *States of Fragility 2018*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, 'Global Peace Index 2018: Measuring Peace in a Complex World', June 2018. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/reports>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018.

It is therefore welcome that peacebuilding has a growing role in international aid. Peace is prominently included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),<sup>6</sup> and is the focus of major new international policies. The recent flagship document *Pathways to Peace*, produced jointly by the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank, calls for 'a shift away from managing and responding to crises and toward preventing conflict.'<sup>7</sup> This reflects commitments made by many other international organizations, including major aid donors, and the recognition that achieving the SDGs depends on achieving peace.<sup>8</sup>

Peace is the fruit of sustained and long-term peacebuilding efforts by communities, governments, civil society, businesses, international organizations and intergovernmental bodies. While peacebuilding involves using non-violent actions to stop, reduce or prevent immediate violence, this is never enough in itself, as violence can all-too-readily recur. Peacebuilding therefore encompasses longer-term initiatives that contribute to resilience, making conflicts less likely in the future, and strengthening people's and societies' ability to handle those that do without resorting to violence.

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<sup>6</sup> UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

<sup>7</sup> United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Pathfinders for Peaceful and Just and Inclusive Societies, 'The Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: A Call to Action to Change Our World', Center on International Cooperation, 2017. Available from: <https://cic.nyu.edu/programs/sdg16plus>

# Support for local peacebuilding – the gap between rhetoric and reality

International peace initiatives have become increasingly prominent since the UN Secretary-General announced peacebuilding as a priority in 1992.<sup>9</sup> These are critical for negotiating peace agreements, keeping the peace between warring parties, and in furnishing political, financial and technical support. International interventions alone, though, are insufficient. As is increasingly understood and widely agreed, peace is only sustainable when it is driven and led locally, that is, by the people and institutions of the country or countries concerned.<sup>10</sup> This is because peace is only likely to be sustained when local people take the lead.<sup>11</sup> They know the context well enough to judge what measures might work, and have the knowledge, relationships and motivation needed to ensure they do work, especially over the longer term.

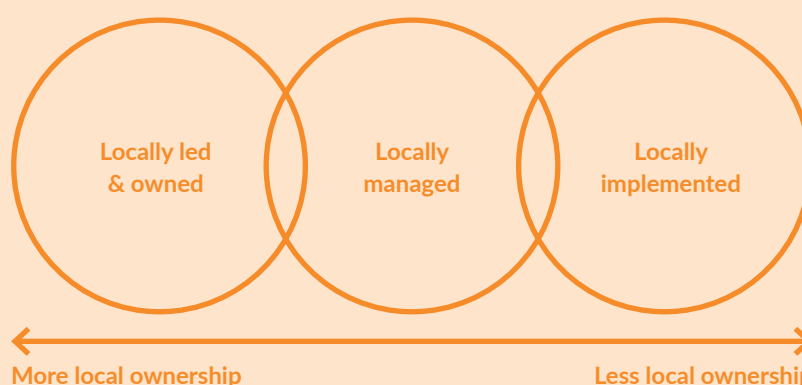
Stability created by outsiders, however welcome in the short term, lacks both the mettle and resilience of a peace forged in the crucible of local dynamics and compromises.

This truism is widely embedded in policy rhetoric, which often emphasizes inclusive peace processes and local engagement. However, such rhetoric is not sufficiently reflected in more detailed plans, much less in the actions of the international organizations that play such a dominant role in peace processes.

For example, even though Pathways to Peace highlights the need for ‘inclusive engagement at all levels’, the importance of local peacebuilders is not reflected in the same document’s detailed prescription for how to promote peace.<sup>12</sup>

## Local peacebuilding

Local peacebuilding in this report refers to peacebuilding initiatives owned and led by people in their own context. It includes small-scale grassroots initiatives, as well as activities undertaken on a wider scale. Peace Direct distinguishes between initiatives that are (1) locally led and owned, where local people and groups design the approach and set priorities, while outsiders assist with resources; (2) locally managed, where the approach comes from the outside, but is “transplanted” to local management; or (3) locally implemented, primarily an outside approach, including external priorities that local people or organizations are supposed to implement.



<sup>9</sup> United Nations (UN), 'An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping: Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to the Statement Adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, A/47/277', 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Rosie Pinnington, 'Local First in Practice: Unlocking the Power to Get things Done', Peace Direct, 2014; Séverine Autesserre, 'International Peacebuilding and Local Success: Assumptions and Effectiveness', *International Studies Review* (2017) 19(1):114–32; UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016), Sustaining Peace.

<sup>11</sup> Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010; 'Local Peacebuilding: A Primer', Peace Direct.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018.

This gap between rhetoric and reality matters enormously, because international organizations have a preponderant influence on policy and programming in conflict and post-conflict environments. This is due to the nature of their mandates, the large budgets at their disposal, and the relative fragility of local institutions. Meanwhile, for political reasons, national leaders often ignore or marginalize local voices and initiatives, meaning they become overly dependent on external support. Therefore, when international organizations fail to live up to their policy rhetoric, local initiatives can be starved of support, and opportunities to promote and consolidate a sustainable peace lost.

International organizations neglect local initiatives for three principle reasons. First, many international organizations implicitly biased towards formal, short-term, output-oriented programming, and supporting organizations they already know. This prejudice is exacerbated by an institutional aversion to risk – international organizations often lack confidence that local organizations will implement programmes and steward resources effectively – and by the limitations imposed due to their partnerships with host governments.

*'International peacebuilding failed in the Democratic Republic of Congo because the reigning peacebuilding culture precluded attention to local conflicts. The dominant paradigm emphasized "top down" interventions at national and regional levels and viewed local conflicts simply as a consequence of weak state authority.'*

– Peacebuilding expert **Séverine Autessere**

Second, many international organizations find it operationally difficult to collaborate with local initiatives. Limited knowledge and understanding of local context means many local actors and initiatives are invisible to them. Additionally, operational constraints such as funding, contracting criteria, results frameworks and the need to minimize transaction costs make it difficult to support what are often quite small-scale activities, many taking place far from the capital city.

Third, there is a limited body of published and publicly recognized evidence demonstrating the success of local initiatives, which makes it difficult to allocate resources to them. This is exacerbated by a prevalent understanding that 'successful' peacebuilding means having an impact on highly visible, high-level national peace or political processes.

*'[Peacebuilding is] an enduring work that needs patience, time and lifelong relationships. The international community can support this work by coming alongside us, instead of not listening and doing their own work without us. It is our communities and our people who know what we need the most.'*

– **South Sudanese peacebuilder**

While this report will argue that the first and second of these constraints need to be addressed, it is principally concerned with the third. It presents clear evidence of the impacts of externally evaluated local peacebuilding initiatives from diverse contexts, with the aim of convincing decision-makers in the international aid system to pay more attention to, and provide more support to, local initiatives. Such initiatives are essential components of violence prevention and reduction, as well as longer-term peacebuilding.



# Peacebuilding impact

Peace is the cumulative impact of many different peacebuilding contributions, initiated at all levels, whether that be in communities, nationally or internationally.<sup>13</sup> Its durability is influenced by global, regional, national, sub-national and community-level factors, all of which can either undermine or sustain it. Every context is different, and every peace process must reflect that.

Because of this complexity, it is seldom clear how different initiatives and contributions add up to sustainable peace on a wider scale, or what has been called ‘peace writ large’. Nevertheless, enough is known about how peace takes root to identify with confidence individual contributions in the shorter term. To provide a measure of coherence in the evaluation of diverse actions, they are often evaluated in terms of three domains, and at three levels, as shown in Figure 1. The three levels are somewhat progressive, in that changes in knowledge and attitudes can be the precursor to changed behavior, which is in turn the precursor to structural changes. The three domains are a necessary simplification of the highly complex factors that enable sustainable peace.

## Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding describes the myriad methods employed by people all over the world to improve prospects for peace. Peacebuilding includes a wide range of initiatives, from mediation, protection, reintegration, trauma healing and reconciliation, through to longer-term investments in fairer access to governance, education, health, justice, security and livelihoods. In 2018, Peace Direct and the Inclusive Peace Transition Initiative asked peacebuilders from across the world to describe peacebuilding. Here are some of the things they said:

- Addressing the root causes of violent conflict;
- Addressing socio-economic inequality;
- Creating spaces for change;
- Empowering people with the means and space to develop their own solutions to conflict;
- Building trust, dialogue and reconciliation;
- Creating a culture of peace;
- Anchoring global policies in local realities;
- Meeting human security needs – from water to physical security.

<sup>13</sup> Phil Vernon, ‘Redressing the Balance: Why We Need More Peacebuilding in an Increasingly Uncertain World’, International Alert, 2017; Peace Direct and Inclusive Peace Transition Initiative, ‘Civil Society & Inclusive Peace: Key Insights and Lessons from a Global Consultation Convened on Peace Insight’, February 2019.

Figure 1. Three domains and three levels of peacebuilding impact, with generic illustrations

Levels →	Changes in knowledge and attitudes	Changes in behavior	Structural changes (norms, systems, institutions)
Domains ↓			
<b>Violence prevented, reduced or stopped</b>	Improved understanding of the underlying causes of violence among those affected	People stop using violence, and adopt other methods to resolve conflicts	Violence early warning and early response systems adopted
<b>Horizontal relationships between and among people and peoples improved</b>	Greater empathy towards, and understanding of, people from 'other' groups	People exhibiting and calling for acceptance of others; active collaboration underway	Collaborative approaches in place to manage conflict over shared resources
<b>Vertical relationships between people and those with authority and power improved</b>	Better understanding among people and authorities of each other's roles and challenges	Governments consulting people, and civil society engaging with governments, leading to less confrontation	Formal systems for public consultation, democratic governance and non-violent management of conflict adopted

# This report

This report argues that more support for local peacebuilding is needed, and highlights examples of effective local initiatives in support of this claim. To counter the scepticism some decision-makers express about the impact of local peacebuilding, the report is confined to examples that have been objectively assessed by external evaluators or researchers. As a key concern is to improve the allocation of overseas aid, the examples are limited to the Global South, where aid money is spent.<sup>14</sup>

After a short account of our research approach, the report explores peacebuilding impacts in respect of three broad headings, with a chapter on each:

- Community-based peace initiatives;
- Initiatives led by, or engaging specific groups, such as women, youth and traumatized people;
- Initiatives that advocate improved national policies and discourse, or early-warning networks.

*'A peace that is imposed on people from above is a short-lived peace, but a peace that comes from the people is a lasting peace.'*

– **Unnamed evaluation interviewee, Somalia**

While these categories are far from exhaustive, they reflect the main themes that emerge from the data available, and together paint a picture of the creative and courageous approaches people are using to make a difference in their local context. Following these three chapters, there is a discussion of the main findings, which is in turn followed by recommendations addressed to international aid organizations, as they consider how step up their efforts to meet SDG 16 by 2030.

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<sup>14</sup> This is not, however, to ignore the importance and impact of peacebuilding in northern countries – for example in Northern Ireland, the Basque country, and the USA, where peacebuilding methods have been used successfully to reduce political, inter-ethnic and gang-related violence.

## 2 Approach

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**Desk research was undertaken between February and April 2019. This comprised analysis of independent assessments of local peacebuilding initiatives, obtained as follows:**

- A call was sent out by Peace Direct and the Alliance for Peacebuilding, followed up by direct requests, to over 1,600 local and international peacebuilders, requesting copies of evaluations;
- Other databases were searched, including evaluations held by the Alliance for Peacebuilding, and the DM&E for Peace and International Initiative for Impact Evaluation websites;
- Additional materials were sourced through searches on the internet.

These documents – 251 in all – were sifted to determine their relevance for the study. Documents were considered relevant if they clearly concerned ‘local’ initiatives as defined for this study, with an explicit focus on making a contribution to peace; were written by independent third parties; were credible in that the reported results appeared proportionate to the strategies used, based on the researchers’ experience; and reflected a rigorous evaluation approach.

Based on these criteria, 57 reports, or 23% of the sample, were eligible. These were reviewed in more detail, providing the substance around which the report was prepared. Initiatives in 23 countries are referred to directly in the report. Organizations cited in this paper were contacted for their approval, unless the information was already freely available in published form. In some cases, information has been anonymized to protect those involved.

Local peace initiatives include the actions of national and sub-national governments, traditional leaders, business people, religious institutions, civil society and individuals. However, nine in ten of the evaluations concerned civil society initiatives, and the report is focused on those.

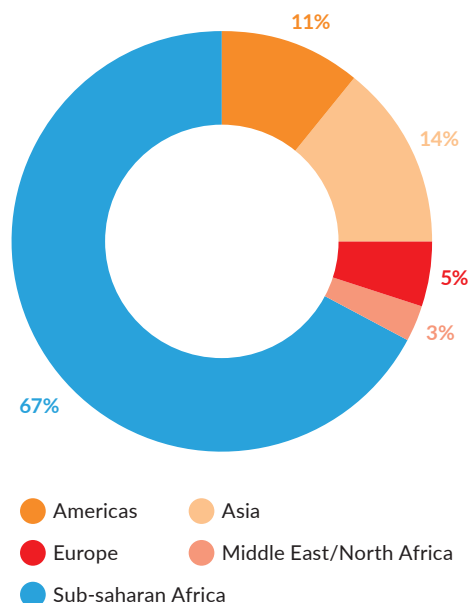
## Caveats

Time and resource constraints limited the size of the research sample, and made it impossible to ground-truth the evaluation findings, nor establish if impacts had been sustained in later years. The sample was skewed towards Africa, which represented over two-thirds of the eligible reports (see Figure 2). It probably also contains a positive bias, given that the call for evaluations was explained in the context of a search for evidence of peacebuilding impact, which would have been interpreted to mean 'positive impact'. Additionally, given many local initiatives, especially smaller ones, are not routinely evaluated, the dataset was biased towards initiatives supported by international programmes.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the research was limited to formal initiatives conducted with the main intention of building peace. This ignores the mass of informal initiatives, as well as those conducted with a different primary intention, both of which make important contributions to peace.

Despite these limitations, the sample was sufficiently robust to develop some clear conclusions and recommendations. Nevertheless, the recommendations set out in Chapter 6 include a call for further evaluations to both broaden and deepen the knowledge base about local peacebuilding.

Figure 2. Geographical distribution of initiatives analysed in this research



<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, for most of these it was impossible to tell if the local partners were genuinely implementing their own initiatives, or if they were merely 'implementing partners', executing others' plans. These cases were therefore excluded, even though some may well have included initiatives which were genuinely locally led.

# 3 Community-based peace initiatives

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Grassroots peace initiatives based on local community structures are extremely common, and well-represented in the evaluations used for this report. The structures, which take different forms, are sometimes called peace committees, but have a variety of other names. They are ‘local’ in the purest sense of the word, typically covering a neighbourhood or district, and bring together a representative selection of voices to resolve specific problems that have the potential to cause conflict and violence. They reflect the underlying dynamics of their communities, and often collaborate with and build on existing local power structures and processes. They define and follow a set of rules and procedures to maximize objectivity and fairness. They are often inclusive, involving women and men of different ages, and members of different ethnic communities and economic interest groups, along with local leaders. Over the medium and long term, they can enhance trust and collaboration within and across communities.

This chapter draws on evaluations of local peace committees in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Nigeria, Sudan and South Sudan. These operate against a background of chronic and unresolved conflict, and inadequate higher-level governance. They are particularly good at resolving disputes over natural resources, which are common in economies based on farming and livestock.

It also draws on a slightly different case, which involves Colombian farmers in the Carare valley setting up an association (La Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare) designed to protect local communities from all three armed groups – rebel guerrillas, paramilitaries and the army – in a sustained, triangular conflict.

The chapter also refers to local peace structures established to promote recovery and healing in post-conflict environments, such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, where years of conflict have engendered deep mistrust; and in parts of Kenya, where the threat of violent extremism is an important conflict issue.

Below, some of the impacts of local peace structures are described under three headings: Local dispute and conflict resolution; longer-term impacts on stability and peaceful co-existence; and sustainable peace and resilience mechanisms.

# Local dispute and conflict resolution

The mandate of most community-based peace structures is to resolve local conflicts non-violently. Among the issues they deal with are disputes over access to natural resources, political violence linked to elections, and violence perpetrated by armed groups.

Evaluations show that peace committees in South Kordofan in Sudan have successfully resolved many conflicts between farmers and herders, where the latter's animals were damaging vital crops (see Case Study 2). In other cases, they resolved disputes between pastoralist groups, preventing outbreaks of violence linked to disputes over women and, in at least one case, murder. In one situation, they mediated between two pastoralist groups that had threatened to attack one another, preventing the conflict from escalating. To put this in perspective, an earlier, similar case had resulted in 150 deaths.<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere, in Burundi, local peace groups prevented and reduced electoral violence. 'Peace clubs' in a number of communities mobilized citizens to report the risk or incidence of electoral violence as soon as it occurred, calling in local security services and civic leaders to intervene. Local authority representatives observed a significant reduction in violence between the 2010 and 2015 elections in communities where peace clubs had been established.<sup>17</sup>

*'The conference outcomes had a direct impact on my personal and family security. My farm is a bit far from the village. Last year, and this year before the conference, I and other members of my family, while on the farm faced several incidents of threats from masked and armed men allowing their cattle to enter into the farm and damaging crops. The implementation of the conference resolution has put an end to this through public awareness raising among pastoralists, especially youth.'*

**– Adam Aliheimir Jibteel, farmer from El Tokmah, Sudan**

Local peace structures take on particular significance in chronically unstable contexts, where they can find themselves conducting sensitive and dangerous negotiations with armed groups. This requires reserves of courage and skill, but can pay dividends for local security. In eastern DRC, an evaluation team found that peace committees had engaged in dialogue and advocacy with armed militias operating nearby, reducing tensions and the risk of violence at rebel roadblocks.<sup>18</sup> This was particularly important due to the threat of sexual and other violence by militia members, and because fear was preventing people from accessing their fields and markets, undermining local livelihoods. In another example (see also Case Study 1), a peasants' association in the Calare Valley in Colombia protected its members over many years by negotiating an agreement with armed group leaders.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Guma Kunda Komey, 'Evaluation of the Process, Outcomes and Impact of the CfPS-RRF and PCs in Local Peace-building and Conflict Resolutions in South and West Kordofan, Sudan', 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Michelle Spearing, 'Addressing State Fragility from the Bottom Up Through Inclusive Community Governance: Exploring Theories of Change', CARE Nederland, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Alexis M. Gardella and Eric Kalaba, 'Citizenship And Peacebuilding In The Democratic Republic Of Congo: Final Evaluation', March 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Oliver Kaplan, 'Protecting Civilians in Civil War: The Institution of the ATCC in Colombia', *Journal of Peace Research* (2003) 50(3):351–67.

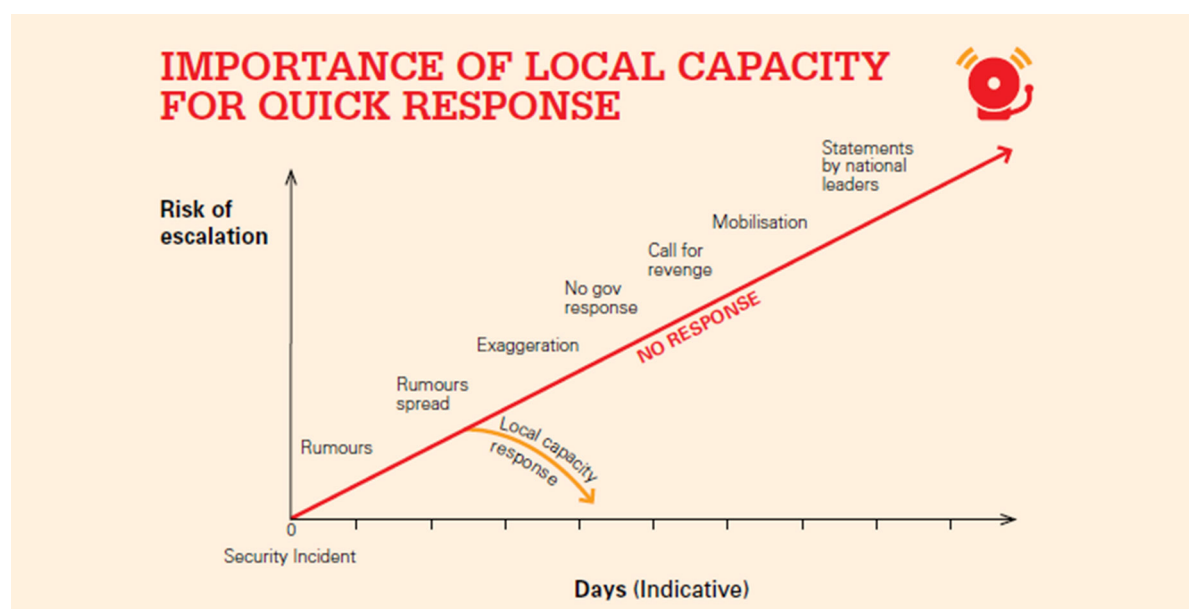
# Longer-term impacts on stability and peaceful co-existence

As important as resolving specific disputes is, the impact of community peace structures goes beyond this to create a more stable environment of trust, stability and collaboration. By demonstrating that problems can be satisfactorily and fairly resolved, their actions reduce the incentive for disputing parties – and their respective networks and constituencies – to act pre-emptively and aggressively. In so doing, community structures prevent small disputes from escalating, and can be instrumental in atrocity prevention (see Figure 3).

An evaluation of peace committees in Sudan found they had ‘contributed significantly to effective and sustainable prevalence of local peace and social co-existence, and to positive changes in attitudes and behaviors among community members’.<sup>20</sup> Studies have noted similar phenomena elsewhere, for example improved intra-community relations in eastern DRC,<sup>21</sup> between Muslim and Christian communities in Nigeria, and between clans in Kenya.<sup>22</sup>

Data from three contexts (see Figure 4) illustrate this further, highlighting changes in attitudes and behaviors, as well as the high percentage of problems resolved and of residents who felt they were safer and had better local relationships. These are significant results in contexts of chronic, unresolved conflict, or in the uneasy peace following the end of civil war.

Figure 3. Illustrating the potential consequences if a local incident is not addressed in a timely fashion<sup>23</sup>



<sup>20</sup> Guma Kunda Komey, 'Evaluation of the Process, Outcomes and Impact of the CfPS-RRF and PCs in Local Peace-building and Conflict Resolutions in South and West Kordofan, Sudan', Peace Direct, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Rosemary Cairns, 'An Evaluation of "Strengthening Locally Led Peacebuilding"', Peace Direct, May 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

<sup>23</sup> Christian Aid, 'In It For the Long Haul?: Lessons on Peacebuilding in South Sudan', 2018.



**Figure 4. Selected statistics demonstrating the breadth and depth of local peace improvements**

**Kordofan, Sudan**

- In over half of peace committee interventions in South Kordofan, communities that had previously fought alongside one of the parties to a conflict, subsequently chose not to;
- In 80% of interventions where violence had occurred and been brought to an end, no further violence was reported;
- In 94% of interventions, the specific conflict was deemed to have been partially or fully resolved;
- In only 6% of cases had the interventions appeared to have failed entirely.<sup>24</sup>

**Sierra Leone – Fambul Tok programme<sup>25</sup>**

- 84% of people felt their local peace groups had helped prevent conflicts, and 96% said that levels of violence had been contained;
- 60% agreed that the programme had made them want to bring people closer together;
- Over 85% thought it had changed their perception of others whom they had not previously liked, and that they had learned to forgive others.<sup>26</sup>

**South Kivu, DRC**

- A cluster of peace structures known as baraza (Swahili for council) resolved at least 1,500 local disputes in three years, benefitting at least 3,000 people directly, and 15,000 indirectly;
- 90% of cases brought to the baraza's attention had been satisfactorily resolved;
- 86% of respondents said the baraza's initiatives had made their community more secure.<sup>27</sup>

Improving attitudes towards others often means confronting the ideas that underpin negative behavior. Evaluators saw this as one of the achievements of Fambul Tok community peace structures in Sierra Leone, where local residents gained a better understanding of the history and causes of the civil war, and thus overcame their prejudices towards others, allowing a measure of reconciliation. They also became more likely to forgive those who had perpetrated violence, more trusting of ex-combatants, and more community-oriented, with stronger social networks.<sup>28</sup>

Like many conflicts, the civil war in South Sudan has a strong inter-ethnic element, based on prejudice, antagonism and violence against 'other' groups. A programme implemented by local organization Assistance Mission for Africa was found to have helped local Dinka and Nuer peacebuilders improve relations between communities through awareness-raising activities and inter-ethnic dialogue. This led not only to improved attitudes and mutual trust, but also practical outcomes such as a reduction in cattle raids and revenge killings, the return of stolen cattle, safer movement, and a stronger commitment to using peaceful mechanisms to resolve disputes.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Integrity, 'Final Report: Evaluation of the CFPS Rapid Response Fund and Peace Committee Model in Sudan', 2012, cited in Paul van Tongeren, 'Potential Cornerstone of Infrastructures for Peace? How Local Peace Committees Can Make a Difference', *Peacebuilding* (2013) 1(1):1–31.

<sup>25</sup> Fambul Tok means 'family talk' in Krio, and is the generic name given to a network of community peace structures established to foster reconciliation by a Sierra Leonean NGO after the end of the civil war.

<sup>26</sup> Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Susan Shepler, 'Fambul Tok Program Evaluation', April 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Allana Poole, 'Baraza Justice: A Case Study of Community-Led Conflict Resolution in the D.R. Congo', Peace Direct, 2014

<sup>28</sup> Jacobus Cilliers, Oeindrilla Duba and Bilal Siddiqui, 'Can the Ruins of War be Healed? Experimental Evidence from Sierra Leone', Impact Evaluation Report 75, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, May 2018.

<sup>29</sup> 'Portals 2 Peace and National Action Plan Evaluation report, 2019', Assistance Mission for Africa and PAX, 2019.

*'[Local peace groups] are very perseverant. They do not give up easily. They find creative solutions.'*

– Security officer, Nigeria

Community peace initiatives have also reduced the incidence of conflict and the risk of violence associated with refugee movements. In 2016, when South Sudanese refugees arrived in South Kordofan's Kalogie locality, some residents saw them as culturally alien and resented their need for scarce local resources. As a result, conflicts arose over access to water and land. At this point, the local peace committee stepped in, convening the refugees and the local community in dialogue, identifying specific grievances and concerns on both sides, and identifying solutions. To improve the underlying relationship, they established a joint peace committee made up of refugees and villagers. External evaluators found that this had fostered collaboration and co-ownership, allowing further issues to be quickly resolved, and improving relations at a deeper level.<sup>30</sup>

*'[The District Dialogue Platform] made some of us change the way we were working. We were hard on our approach to witnesses. We have calmed down and know our place in working with the community people and this is also for some of our co-workers.'*

– Security sector operative, Liberia

The West African Ebola epidemic provides another example of how local peace structures can calm fraught local relationships. The epidemic ended in 2016, after a long period of crisis. One of the obstacles to restoring normality was a residual fear of disease survivors, amid accusations of witchcraft. This was a context where trust had already been weakened by years of civil war. Several District Dialogue Platforms – community-based initiatives set up by Liberian communities to rebuild trust after the war – recognized this situation was putting their fragile stability at risk. They conducted public awareness campaigns, and helped affected individuals and families to reintegrate economically and socially. Evaluators found this had helped communities recover, as well as recommit to the post-war rebuilding that the epidemic had interrupted.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Guma Kunda Komey, 'Evaluation of the Process, Outcomes and Impact of the CfPS-RRF and PCs in Local Peace-building and Conflict Resolutions in South and West Kordofan, Sudan', Peace Direct, 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

Community peace initiatives can also improve relationships with government and other external players – players whose behaviors can have a major impact on local peace and stability. One report that reviewed local peace groups in a range of countries found they had helped improve community relations with (previously heavy-handed) government security services. This contributed to a reduction in human rights abuses and community disruption, while allowing the security services to keep the peace more effectively.

Community members in Kenya – where clumsy actions by the security services towards young Muslim men had previously soured relations – attributed this to changed attitudes and behaviors on the part of security actors, who were now more willing to consult community members before taking action. In another example from the same report, relations between a community in Liberia and a mining company operating locally had deteriorated, creating instability. Here, the dialogue platform had initiated dialogue between the company, the local community and government officials, ultimately allowing the company to continue its work and provide local jobs.<sup>32</sup>

*'There are several aspects of the functioning of the noyaux de paix that are of particular note. It is clear that [they] have become permanent mechanisms for conflict resolution within their communities. This becomes especially clear in certain communities where the noyau de paix has come to be called a baraza in Sud Kivu, or a barza in Nord Kivu – both Swahili terms for the customary council of sages, headed by a chief, which in the past, and in the absence of state judicial institutions, arbitrated conflicts within the community. The traditional baraza, of course, comprised only men of notable standing from one ethnicity.'*

– Evaluation of local peace structures, DRC

### Case Study 1. Negotiating security with armed groups in Colombia

La Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare (a local peasants' association in the Carare River valley), representing rural households long preyed upon by guerrillas, paramilitaries and the army (all three sides in a triangular conflict), established a system protecting local communities from the various armed groups. Armed groups from all sides were in the habit of putting pressure on local people either to join them or provide intelligence, threatening them with death if they refused. This put people in an invidious position. They knew that if they acceded to the demands, they would likely be targeted by the other side, while if they refused they would be harmed or killed.

The association worked out a complicated system, with the agreement of the armed group leaders, under which they guaranteed the neutrality of their members, thus giving them the space to say no to all parties. In cases where one of the armed groups accused an association member of supporting another armed group, the association itself would undertake a full and objective investigation. If this investigation exonerated the individual, the armed group concerned would be informed. If, on the other hand, the investigation found that the accusations of partisanship were true, the association would offer the individual two options: Either leave the area immediately for their own safety, or renounce their affiliation and hope for the best. By sticking rigidly to its procedures, the association became trusted on all sides, and is credited by external researchers with minimizing the rates of targeted violence during many years of civil war.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

<sup>33</sup> Oliver Kaplan, 'Protecting Civilians in Civil War: The Institution of the ATCC in Colombia', *Journal of Peace Research* (2003) 50(3):351–67.

# Sustainable mechanisms that contribute to long-term resilience

When community-based peace initiatives are adopted as part of local governance mechanisms, their ongoing contribution is sustained, representing a structural change. For this to happen, there must be prolonged demand for their interventions, and widespread support across the community.

Many community-based peace structures become the preferred mechanism, or 'first stop', for people seeking resolution of disputes. Evaluators found plentiful examples of community-based initiatives collaborating with and complementing local authorities, and saw this as an indicator of sustainability and structural change. Typically, traditional community leaders are members of their local peace group. In one case, where both rebels and the national army were active in part of the DRC, an army commander stationed nearby also sat on the community peace committee.<sup>34</sup>

Collaboration between community-based peace groups and the authorities is pragmatic. Local authorities refer petitioners to the local peace structure when relevant, and community peace groups often refer cases that are beyond their remit or capacity to the local authorities. This mutual support allows both parties to be effective, and for more cases to be satisfactorily addressed. The study examining Fambul Tok community peace structures in Sierra Leone found that 83% of respondents considered their local chiefs supportive of their community peace group. In the DRC, many local chiefs used public resources to support community peace groups in practical ways, for example by providing a meeting hut, or a plot of land for the group to cultivate in order to defray their expenses.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Alexis M. Gardella and Eric Kalaba, 'Citizenship And Peacebuilding In The Democratic Republic Of Congo: Final Evaluation', March 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Alexis M. Gardella and Eric Kalaba, 'Citizenship And Peacebuilding In The Democratic Republic Of Congo: Final Evaluation', March 2009.

In another sign of sustainability and structural transformation noted by external evaluators, some community peace groups expand their mandate and geographic coverage, often in response to increased demand. A district peace initiative in Liberia expanded to cover the whole county.<sup>36</sup> Peace groups in the DRC received and acted on requests from people in neighbouring areas.<sup>37</sup> Some councils in Burundi reached 'upwards and outwards' to expand their election early-warning systems from their own colline (ward) to the commune (district) level, and some created functional networks, linking up with nearby community-based initiatives.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, many evaluators give examples of grassroots peace initiatives being encouraged by their communities to play a leadership role in local development more broadly. Peace groups helped improve local youth employment opportunities in Sudan,<sup>39</sup> road infrastructure in the DRC,<sup>40</sup> and community radio stations in Liberia.<sup>41</sup> They also helped increase voting rates in Liberia, particularly among first-time women voters.<sup>42</sup>

A common result of their work in many contexts was an improvement in local governance through more representative participation in decision-making, richer public debate, and improved accountability. In Sierra Leone, 79% of respondents said their community peace groups enabled greater community participation in decision-making,<sup>43</sup> while research in Burundi found that elected officials were paying more attention to community views, in an atmosphere of improved trust.<sup>44</sup> Community members in the DRC felt corruption had lessened due to the community-based peace group's work.<sup>45</sup>

*'The conflicts which were resolved by the chiefs of the village were unfinished and still drove people back into the same situation afterwards, because if one of the parties involved in the conflict did not have the means to give money to the chief, the chief would not judge or resolve the problem. And if he resolved it, he always gave it in the best interest of whoever had given him most. The Baraza does it free and the solutions always result in peaceful living together afterwards.'*

– Muvunju (name changed), resident of Kigongo in the DRC

<sup>36</sup> Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

<sup>37</sup> Alexis M. Gardella and Eric Kalaba, 'Citizenship And Peacebuilding In The Democratic Republic Of Congo: Final Evaluation', March 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Michelle Spearing, 'Addressing State Fragility from the Bottom Up Through Inclusive Community Governance: Exploring Theories of Change', CARE Nederland, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Guma Kunda Komey, 'Evaluation of the Process, Outcomes and Impact of the CfPS-RRF and PCs in Local Peace-building and Conflict Resolutions in South and West Kordofan, Sudan', Peace Direct, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Banga Assumani Monday, 'Emergency Project To Support Sustainable Socio-Economic Reintegration Of Ex-Child Soldiers In Beni, The Democratic Republic Of The Congo: Impact Assessment Report', 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

<sup>42</sup> Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

<sup>43</sup> Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Susan Shepler, 'Fambul Tok Program Evaluation', April 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Michelle Spearing, 'Addressing State Fragility from the Bottom Up Through Inclusive Community Governance: Exploring Theories of Change', CARE Nederland, 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Allana Poole, 'Baraza Justice: A Case Study of Community-Led Conflict Resolution in the D.R. Congo', Peace Direct, 2014.

## Case Study 2. Building local peace against a backdrop of chronic conflict in Sudan

The peace committee in Delenj – the capital of South Kordofan – has been active for several years. In 2017, at the request of local elders from El Tokmah, around 10 km away, it intervened in response to growing tensions between semi-nomadic livestock herders and settled farmers.<sup>46</sup>

Situated in a fertile zone on major traditional livestock routes, El Tokmah is a collection of hamlets and encampments housing around 9,000 people from up to 20 ethnic groups. The people living in and transiting the area have for a long time followed an agreed code of practice to help avoid the kinds of conflicts that can occur when farmers and herders share land and water, but these norms have come under increasing pressure in recent years. The secession of South Sudan and the persistence of chronic armed conflict in the region have closed off much of the alternative grazing, forcing nomads to spend more time in the neighbourhood. Weak state institutions and the proliferation of small arms have only exacerbated tensions.

The situation became increasingly tense during the harvest season in 2017. The incursion of livestock onto farmers' fields resulted in violence between Dar Nay'la nomads and Nuba Ajank farmers, causing serious injuries. Reports of livestock damaging crops proliferated amid a sense of growing mistrust. A farmer was shot dead at night while guarding his fields. Farming communities threatened to take the law into their own hands as pressure over access to grazing and water sources mounted. In October, the elders of the El Tokmah communities – anxious about the growing tension, and aware that at least ten people had been killed in similar circumstances the previous year – requested help from the Delenj peace committee. The committee agreed, and obtained support from Khartoum-based NGO Collaborative for Peace in Sudan to organize a major meeting in November, designed to develop and agree a solution.

They produced an agreement that, among others things, committed community leaders to restore and enforce traditional codes of practice that had maintained peace in the past; to keep livestock in agreed pasture lands further away from the farms; to establish a joint committee to monitor and respond peacefully to further infractions; and to levy fines on anyone breaking the rules or carrying small arms.

The committee knew the underlying issues had to be addressed as well, and so persuaded the government to create an additional water point to reduce the pressure on existing resources. Meanwhile, the committee persuaded international development organizations to bring new development interventions to El Tokmah in order to create jobs for young people and improve health services.

Six months later, researchers found that the initiative had been successful. There had been a decrease in reports of livestock infringements, as well as of the use of small arms and other violence, while there had been an increase in reports of people using peaceful dispute-resolution mechanisms. As reported by Ibrahim Mohamed Hamad, a Sheikh of the pastoral Baggara group: 'As a community leader of the nomadic group, I am one of the direct beneficiaries of the conference. It made our work easier than before, because the conference had tremendous positive impact on local peace and social co-existence. There were significant reductions of farmer-pastoral conflicts during harvest season this year compared to last year. Precisely, this year, as community Sheikh, I received four cases only while it amounted to several tens of farmer-pastoral conflict cases last year over the same period.'

<sup>46</sup> Guma Kunda Komey, 'Evaluation of the Process, Outcomes and Impact of the CfPS-RRF and PCs in Local Peace-building and Conflict Resolutions in South and West Kordofan, Sudan', Peace Direct, 2017.

## Lessons learned

Figure 5 summarizes the impacts of local peace structures reviewed in this chapter, following the three domains and three levels used in our impact model. From this short review, it is clear they have contributed to improved local stability and peace. Looking first at the three levels of impact, community-based peace initiatives have shown they can improve people's attitudes and knowledge, as was the case in Sierra Leone, where local residents said they had become closer to and less prejudiced towards others. Community-based peace initiatives have also helped change behaviors, as illustrated in the Sudan case study, where farmers and herders were using peaceful dispute-resolution mechanisms.

Additionally, the many cases where peace groups have become 'part of the furniture', operating as an integral part of local governance and conflict-resolution mechanisms, represent new structural norms.

The cases also provide examples of horizontal and vertical relationships – the basis of positive peace – being strengthened. These include horizontal relationships between refugees and locals, and farmers and herders, and vertical relationships between community members and security services, as well as local officials. Finally, community-based peace initiatives can avert, reduce or stop violence, including preventing unresolved small-scale violence escalating into atrocities on a larger scale.



**Figure 5. Three domains and three levels of impact, with illustrations from community-based peace initiatives**

Levels →	Changes in knowledge and attitudes	Changes in behavior	Structural changes (norms, systems, institutions)
Domains ↓			
<b>Violence prevented, reduced or stopped</b>	Greater understanding of and confidence in non-violent dispute methods	High percentage of local disputes resolved  Reduced violence, including electoral and intercommunity violence  Reduced harassment by militias	Community members feel safer  New norms, by which people and armed groups agree on rules to keep civilians safe
<b>Horizontal relationships between and among people and peoples improved</b>	Community members gain a more thorough understanding of the history and causes of conflict, thus becoming more tolerant and forgiving of perpetrators  Improved attitudes and mutual trust between rival communities	Increased movement of community members across inter-ethnic divides  Improved intra-community relations  Improved relations between ethnic and religious communities and clans  Returning refugees helped to reintegrate peacefully	Strengthened social networks  Increased commitment to using non-violent approaches to resolving inter-community conflict  Governance structures established to manage relations between communities  Community-based peace initiatives expand their mandate and territory
<b>Vertical relationships between people and those with authority and power improved</b>	Improved mutual understanding between authorities and people	Communities negotiate to reduce tensions between community and armed militia  Security services use more collaborative approaches  External businesses and communities collaborate better	Community peace initiatives integrated into local decision-making systems; local leaders integrated into community peace structures  Diverse participation in community peace initiatives breaks down prejudice towards women, minority groups and youth  Community-based peace initiatives refer cases to the authorities and vice versa  Improved popular participation in decision-making; improved accountability of local leaders; reduced corruption



Several important conclusions emerge from this section of the report, each of which is briefly addressed below (and will be revisited in the overall conclusions in Chapter 6):

### **Relevance in situations of long-term conflict and inadequate governance**

Community peace structures are especially relevant in situations of chronic conflict. Given higher-level governance structures are often unable or unwilling to help resolve local disputes fairly, the ability to resolve issues before they become violent – and thereby maintain local stability and prevent atrocities – is at a premium. The examples from Colombia, DRC and Sudan demonstrate this. In particular, in South Sudan, community peace structures improved relations between Dinka and Nuer communities, even while civil war was pitting the wider Dinka and Nuer communities against each other.

### **Practical approaches, on a breadth of issues**

Theorists have long argued that peace can be strengthened or weakened across a wide gamut of issues, including access to economic opportunity, security, justice, opportunities to improve well-being, and participation in governance. Judging from how they operate and the issues they address, community peace activists know this. They deal with disputes over natural resources, foster diverse participation in transparent governance, and in many cases are drawn into the provision of justice and development activities. Community members feel safer because of what local peace structures have done. Community peace activists address this wide set of issues in a practical way, tackling issues on which they have legitimacy and traction, building peace from the bottom up.

### **Responsiveness and adaptability**

Many evaluations cite the responsiveness of community peace structures as being a direct result of their closeness to the ground and local knowledge, and of being untied to bureaucratic procedures. This is demonstrated by the Delenj and Kalogie peace committees stepping in to play a leadership role when their respective local security situations abruptly deteriorated. Given the risk of small incidents escalating in situations of chronic conflict, this ability to respond quickly and adapt is potentially critical in atrocity prevention.

### **Inclusion and governance**

Successful community-based peace structures tend to reflect the diversity of their communities, and allow people of different genders, ages and ethnicity to have their issues heard. Peace initiatives can be more progressive than their wider communities, for example in their approach to involving women, and providing migrants and refugees with a voice. However, such openness is not fully accepted everywhere, and evaluations note that some local voices were raised against it. Even when women have a seat at the table, patriarchal attitudes often persist.

According to evaluators and the community members they consulted, the inclusiveness of peace initiatives can have a positive impact on local governance more broadly. Since improved governance is one of the keys to positive, sustained peace, local peace structures are thus making a significant indirect contribution to peace in the long term.

Of course, not everyone appreciates the role played by peacebuilding structures, and in some cases community leaders have seen them as usurpers of their own traditional – and often remunerative – role in dispute resolution. Other actors with an interest in perpetuating political conflict have also tried to undermine them. Therefore, in some circumstances, community-based peace structures can face challenges in establishing legitimacy and a ‘licence to operate’.<sup>47</sup>

## Partnerships with NGOs

Many of the examples in this chapter have been of communities supported by NGOs, and community peace structures seem well-suited to collaboration with local and international NGOs. Several of the evaluations explore this, finding that local knowledge and capacity combined with external knowledge and access to resources is often very effective. For example, peace committees told evaluators that the training they had received in peacebuilding techniques from Collaborative for Peace in Sudan had made them more effective.<sup>48</sup>

However, others have noted the risk that outsiders – especially international organizations, or the national government – can undermine community initiatives by co-opting them, drawing them into inappropriate activities, or providing them with forms of support on which they become over-reliant, harming their sustainability and effectiveness. Outsiders must therefore be sensitive when providing support.<sup>49</sup>

## Scale

Finally, there is the issue of scale. Almost by definition, community-based peace structures operate on a small scale. While this allows them to be relevant, knowledgeable and adaptable, it can also limit their ability to tackle wider peace and conflict dynamics.

However, the impact of community-based peace initiatives should not only be measured case by case. The cumulative impact of repeatedly resolving different conflict problems in a given area can be greater than the sum of the parts. The peasants’ association in Colombia achieved this kind of effect, allowing families to continue to obtain a livelihood over a wide area for more than twenty years.

Some local groups have addressed this question of scale by expanding their reach, such as the peace club in one Burundian colline that also prevented election violence at commune level, or the Liberian district dialogue platform that expanded to cover the whole county. Others have networked with similar entities in neighbouring communities, as seen in the linkages being developed between local peace clubs in Burundi. There is also a natural ‘scaling up’ that emerges when networks of similar bodies operate across a given area. In 2017, one researcher in Burundi counted 500 to 600 local peace structures at commune, colline and cellule levels (in 40 of 129 communes, and 14 of 17 provinces).<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Michelle Spearing, ‘Addressing State Fragility from the Bottom Up Through Inclusive Community Governance: Exploring Theories of Change’, CARE Nederland, 2016; and Alexis M. Gardella and Eric Kalaba, ‘Citizenship And Peacebuilding In The Democratic Republic Of Congo: Final Evaluation’, March 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Guma Kunda Komey, ‘Evaluation of the Process, Outcomes and Impact of the CfPS-RRF and PCs in Local Peace-building and Conflict Resolutions in South and West Kordofan, Sudan’, Peace Direct, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Lisa Müller-Dormann, ‘Kenya’s Local Peace Committees: How Does The Local Remain Locally Owned?’, Polis Brief No. 8, Polis180, 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Rene Claude Niyonkuru, ‘Building the Peace Architecture from the Bottom-up: The Experience of Local Peace Committees in Burundi’, Occasional Paper, Peacebuilding Series No. 5, Future Generations Graduate School, 2017.

A cluster of baraza peace councils in eastern DRC by their own individual actions achieved increased access to justice across a wide area of South Kivu, allowing disputes to be resolved before a wider sense of grievance could develop or be exploited for negative political purposes.<sup>51</sup> The Fambul Tok groups in Sierra Leone have combined grassroots legitimacy with scale: The programme has been implemented with and by communities in all parts of the country, and has now been ongoing for several years.<sup>52</sup>

These are good examples of scaling up, achieved in locally relevant ways. Nevertheless, many evaluations of local peace structures also identify unexploited opportunities to achieve more impact through scaling up. It is therefore something that local peace structures, and their partners, should consider further.

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<sup>51</sup> Allana Poole, 'Baraza Justice: A Case Study of Community-Led Conflict Resolution in the D.R. Congo', Peace Direct, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Susan Shepler, 'Fambul Tok Program Evaluation', April 2015.

# 4 Initiatives led by, or engaging, specific groups

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Peacebuilding initiatives are often focused on addressing the needs and concerns of a particular group of people whose engagement is essential for peace but who may otherwise be excluded. These may be people with the capacity to undermine peace, or whose inclusion can help make the peace more durable. Examples include political, ethnic or geographically specific groups, women and youth, particular castes, sexual minorities, people suffering from violence-induced trauma, displaced people and refugees, and ex-combatants.

Local initiatives are well-placed to take on this challenge, as they understand the constraints and opportunities faced by members of the group in question, not least because they are usually led and conducted by group members.

This chapter draws on examples of initiatives that have addressed the needs of three such groups – people traumatized in conflict, young people, and women – chosen because they were represented in the evaluations available to this study. Initiatives included psychosocial programmes promoting trauma healing of individuals and their communities in post-genocide Rwanda, and in Zimbabwe where political violence and torture has divided communities.

The chapter also includes examples from Burundi, Guatemala, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, South Sudan and Syria, of NGOs helping steer young people away from political or criminal violence and towards making a more positive contribution to society. Additionally, it highlights initiatives reducing urban gang violence in Honduras, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, and South Africa.

Finally, it describes impact of women's organizations on increased female participation in politics and decision-making in Burundi, Somalia and South Sudan, and reducing gender-based violence in the DRC and South Sudan.

*'Before joining this group, I used to be a counsellor who helped people during commemoration periods when [they were] traumatized. When a Tutsi child [was] traumatized, I could speedily support him, gave him a bottle of water and rapidly took him in a good place for counselling, but when a Hutu child [had a] crisis, I used to run away and didn't care about him. Nothing I could do for him because I thought "they are not wounded". But since joining this group I have learnt the sense of empathy, tolerance and [different] types of wounds.'*

– Youth peace dialogue participant, Rwanda

# Helping people who have been traumatized by conflict

Psychological trauma caused by exposure to conflict – as perpetrator, victim, person at risk, survivor or witness – inflicts an immense burden on individuals, families, communities and societies, often persisting long after the violence ends. Most people lack access to professional assistance to help them recover, while families and communities are often ill-equipped to provide support. Left unresolved, this problem can potentially not only undermine a person's life, it can also undermine the rebuilding of peaceful social relations. This is particularly the case after civil conflict, when communities have been divided, trust severely eroded, and society has become dysfunctional for peace. Addressing psychological trauma, usually with limited professional and clinical resources, is therefore a critical part of building peace.<sup>53</sup>

The NGO Tree of Life Trust Zimbabwe trains and accompanies members of the communities it helps – including religious and business leaders – in conducting managed local dialogues and encounters, in parts of Zimbabwe where years of political and inter-ethnic violence have left people and communities traumatized. Several external reviews have found it has made a considerable difference to people's lives. Participants reported reduced levels of trauma, renewed community ties and trust, and that divisions in their community due to the political violence were beginning to heal.<sup>54</sup> In Mashonaland, a rural community in Mutoko District, Tree of Life's intervention led to people deciding to revive a communal farm they had previously cultivated for the advantage of vulnerable families, a project that had lapsed amid the dysfunctionality of community trauma.<sup>55</sup>

A follow-up study found that the symptoms of a third of participants had been reduced to below clinical thresholds.<sup>56</sup> In another, 36% of torture victims who had attended the workshops showed significant clinical improvement. While 44% were still experiencing difficulties, 56% reported coping better. Many felt the process had helped them find a new positivity, and had improved how they felt about the past.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Abiosseh Davis, Celestin Nsengiyumva and Daniel Hyslop, 'Healing Trauma and Building Trust and Tolerance in Rwanda: Lessons learned from Peacebuilding Approaches to Psychosocial Support Group Healing in Rwanda', Interpeace and Never Again Rwanda, April 2019.

<sup>54</sup> Tree of Life and Mutoko Team, and Craig Higson-Smith, 'Healthy People and Healthy Communities in Zimbabwe', Tree of Life Trust Zimbabwe; Andrew Iliff, 'Tree of Life: Sowing the Seeds of Grassroots Transitional Justice', African Arguments blog post, 11 March 2010. Available from: <https://africanarguments.org/2010/03/11/root-and-branch-tree-of-life-sowing-the-seeds-of-grassroots-transitional-justice/>; Tony Reeler, Kudakwashe Chitsike, Fungisai Maizva and Beverley Reeler, 'The Tree of Life: A Community Approach to Empowering and Healing Survivors of Torture in Zimbabwe', *Torture* (2009) 19(3):180–93.

<sup>55</sup> Tree of Life and Mutoko Team, and Craig Higson-Smith, 'Healthy People and Healthy Communities in Zimbabwe', Tree of Life Trust Zimbabwe.

<sup>56</sup> Andrew Iliff, 'Tree of Life: Sowing the Seeds of Grassroots Transitional Justice', African Arguments blog post, 11 March 2010. Available from: <https://africanarguments.org/2010/03/11/root-and-branch-tree-of-life-sowing-the-seeds-of-grassroots-transitional-justice/>

<sup>57</sup> Tony Reeler, Kudakwashe Chitsike, Fungisai Maizva and Beverley Reeler, 'The Tree of Life: A Community Approach to Empowering and Healing Survivors of Torture in Zimbabwe', *Torture* (2009) 19(3):180–93.

### Case Study 3. Healing traumatized individuals and communities in Rwanda

Many Rwandese still suffer from trauma due to the 1994 genocide, with even people born after that date affected. Communities remain divided along ethnic lines, or between perpetrators and survivors, and this is an obstacle to long-term peace. Recent evaluations examined four years of work by Never Again Rwanda, an NGO that promotes healing through a combination of dialogue, trauma healing, and practical, collaborative projects in divided communities across the country.<sup>58</sup> The research describes how people had been traumatized by their experience of the genocide and its aftermath, as refugees, by the loss of loved ones and incomplete mourning, rape, labelling and stigmatization, the loss of identity, transferred guilt, and witnessing violence first-hand.

Never Again Rwanda's initiatives helped people reduce their levels of trauma and psychological distress, and to build resilience, forgiveness and tolerance for social cohesion and peace. Almost all participants experienced profound personal change, and were able to move on with their lives and relationships. People became less isolated, and were more willing to interact with others across society. The effects of trauma improved by an average of 25% on a trauma index, with the improvement being slightly greater for men than women. People exhibited increased self-esteem and less guilt. The number of people feeling depressed went down by almost half, to 23%. There was also a significant decline in the number of people who thought about suicide very often, from 15% of participants to 5%.

The impact was not only felt by individuals, but led to improved community health and functionality. Levels of trust between participants and the rest of society significantly improved. Evaluators used a trust index that measured people's readiness for social interactions, personal sharing and partnerships in daily life. This improved by an impressive 57% between the baseline and later evaluations – a transformative level of change.

Social tolerance also improved in terms of attitudinal and behavioral factors, such as the frequency of contact with other ethnic and social groups, being comfortable with marriage to other groups, as well as voting for and receiving assistance from other groups. All areas of the social tolerance index improved, especially among genocide perpetrators.

There was more limited progress in terms of people engaging in peace activism and independent peacebuilding activities. Nevertheless, the percentage of participants involved in conflict resolution in their communities increased from 66% to 82%. Participation in formal, state-organized governance processes, and collaborative community work programmes known as Umuganda, as well as civic reconciliation and commemoration activities, also improved. Independently, some students – people who hadn't yet been born in 1994, but even so were affected by the genocide – formed groups to promote peace in their communities. There was also evidence of increased critical thinking, and the debating of community priorities with local authorities, thus improving governance and providing a greater sense of 'membership' of the community.

<sup>58</sup> The data on Never Again Rwanda is drawn from two documents: Abiosseh Davis, Celestin Nsengiyumva and Daniel Hyslop, 'Healing Trauma and Building Trust and Tolerance in Rwanda: Lessons learned from Peacebuilding Approaches to Psychosocial Support Group Healing in Rwanda', Interpeace and Never Again Rwanda, April 2019; and Stacy Hilliard, Eugene Ntaganda and Katie Bartholomew, 'Societal Healing & Participatory Governance: Mid-Term Evaluation', Taysha Consulting, March 2017.

# Young people

Young people form the majority in many conflict-affected countries. They represent the future of society, and so their knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, and their participation in peaceful structures, is essential for durable peace. They often feel – and often are – excluded from political, social and economic structures, meaning they can be particularly vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups. It is important to address the needs and aspirations of alienated young people who feel they lack prospects and are poorly served by society. Therefore, many peacebuilding programmes work with young people, to protect them both from committing and suffering harm, and to secure their engagement in a peaceful vision of their future.

The impacts on young people described in the evaluations used for this report fall into two broad, overlapping categories. The first of these is a reduction in young people's vulnerability to being drawn into violence, while the second is increased engagement as active citizens in building a peaceful society.

## Reducing young people's vulnerability to being drawn into violence

While young people have great potential to contribute to peaceful societies, they are also especially vulnerable to being recruited for violence, whether as thugs to intimidate or harm political opponents during elections, as members of criminal gangs, or as participants of armed groups in civil wars or extremist insurgencies. Community groups in Nigeria were found to have reduced young people's susceptibility to being recruited or manipulated for violence.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, a group of Burundian NGOs that used training, dialogue forums, media campaigns and collaborative projects, were found to have helped youth leaders prevent young people from being manipulated by politicians into political violence.<sup>60</sup>

The Kumekucha initiative of the Green String Network in Kenya aims to lessen the risk of young people being recruited by violent extremist groups, by increasing community resilience. An evaluation found they were on track to succeed. Individual well-being had increased, social and community support mechanisms were significantly more active, trust levels were higher, and readiness to accept ex-members of armed extremist groups back into the community had also gone up.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

<sup>60</sup> Alejandra Bernardo Andrés, 'Youth Inspired: Today and Tomorrow and Intamenwa (Indivisibles): Mobilizing Youth for Peaceful Elections', Progress Evaluation, Search for Common Ground, December 2014.

<sup>61</sup> 'Summary of Evaluation Report of the Kumekucha Program in Majengo, Nairobi', February 2019.



Peacebuilding techniques are being used to prevent violence in urban settings where criminal gangs hold sway. Working with schools and families, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Guatemala reduced levels of violence affecting young people. Evaluators note that training 114 young leaders – half of them male and half of them female – and supporting them in their outreach, had enabled them to reach over 16,000 people, in the process breaking down stigma and ethnic barriers, and improving young people's perceptions of their communities and sense of safety. As a result, the young people experienced 60% fewer incidences of violence, and their own acceptance of violence was reduced by 85%.<sup>62</sup> Cure Violence, an international NGO, has pioneered an approach that mobilizes trained community members in US cities to intervene and de-escalate violence when tensions rise due to specific incidents.<sup>63</sup> This approach has been adapted by organizations elsewhere, often yielding impressive results. Figure 6 summarizes the results given by external assessments of these programmes in four different countries.

Burundian NGOs Réseau des Jeunes en Action, Collectif pour la Promotion des Associations des Jeunes, Centre d'encadrement et de Développement des Anciens Combattants, and Appui au Développement Intégral et à la Solidarité sur les Collines, increased the proportion of young people who felt they could resist manipulation to engage in violence to 95% ahead of the 2015 elections. 87% of youth leaders claimed they were committed to non-violence in the coming elections, and indeed the evaluators found evidence of actual decreases in violence ahead of the elections, in places where these initiatives had been conducted.

**Figure 6. Evidence of urban violence reduction reported from sites where Cure Violence methods were used<sup>64</sup>**

<b>Cape Town (South Africa)</b>	14% fewer killings 29% fewer attempted killings 10% fewer serious assaults
<b>Juarez (Mexico)</b>	50% fewer killings Fewer disputes and conflicts
<b>Port au Prince (Trinidad and Tobago)</b>	67% fewer cases of wounding 33% fewer police callouts for incidents where persons were armed with firearms

<sup>62</sup> Y Care International, 'Change the Game: Engaging Marginalised Young People Through Sport and Play', 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Information on the Cure Violence Model available: <http://cureviolence.org/the-model/essential-elements/>

<sup>64</sup> Summary of findings on the Cure Violence Model. Full source references available: [www.cureviolence.com](http://www.cureviolence.com)



## Young people engaging as active citizens

The other impact area for young people is increased civic participation, which often goes hand in hand with violence reduction initiatives. The group of Burundian NGOs referred to above have also helped young people become more positively engaged in society,<sup>65</sup> while the YMCAs in Sierra Leone and Liberia have helped reduce violence levels and improve relationships between young people and their communities.<sup>66</sup>

Local organizations providing young Syrians with education regarding the concepts and practice of peaceful co-existence saw improvements as little as six months after enrolment in the programme. Evaluators identified an increase in knowledge about peace concepts, as well as finding evidence of increased optimism and critical thinking, more positive attitudes towards peaceful approaches to dealing with conflict, and of young people challenging notions of grievance and revenge. This was in a context where years of war had traumatized young people, and normalized violence. In one striking example, a child who attended peace education sessions subsequently volunteered to hand in a knife he had hitherto always carried. Evaluators used an index to measure young people's resilience to being drawn into conflict, which had increased among refugees in Lebanon, though unfortunately not among participants in Syria itself.<sup>67</sup>

## Outcomes of peacebuilding with young people in Burundi

94% of youth had softened their attitudes towards others with different political beliefs, and felt they had greater opportunities to engage with young people from other affiliations;

93% of young people had begun to engage more positively in the community;

Over 90% of youth leaders felt more able to mobilize their peers for peace, democracy and development;

Young female leaders organized local peace festivals;

More young people had been persuaded to vote.

*'The project came at a time of high political tension. Currently, the youths are not under the threat of being manipulated, they can see clearly. The project has opened their eyes; there are now only those who have not taken the trainings who are susceptible to manipulation, the others not.'*

*'We are now able to identify politicians' manipulations; their promises and the unfair advantages.'*

– Participants in focus groups, Bujumbura, Burundi

<sup>65</sup> Rapport d'évaluation du projet 'Mobilisation des jeunes pour une culture de la paix au Burundi', February 2011, cited in Lesley Connolly and Laura Powers, eds, 'Local Networks for Peace: Lessons from Community-Led Peacebuilding', International Peace Institute, September 2018.

<sup>66</sup> Y Care International, 'Supporting Youth Livelihoods And Governance In Liberia And Sierra Leone', 2013.

<sup>67</sup> This paragraph draws on evaluations seen by the author, but which the organizations concerned preferred to keep confidential.

After the end of Sri Lanka's long-running civil war, the Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka brought young people from different religious identities together to take part in joint cultural activities, in order to foster collaboration and a sense of common citizenship. Its Young Visionaries programme, implemented in five regional centres, was found to have created a cadre of young people trained in concepts of peaceful co-existence, and who had got to know people from 'other' identity groups – from which many would otherwise have grown up isolated. This stimulated a widespread willingness to form relationships with young people from other ethno-religious groups, whereas only one in ten of them had previously had friends from outside their own community. Participants devised collaborative civic initiatives, such as public health campaigns and environmental clean-ups. In a knock-on effect, some of their parents adopted the tolerance and collaboration they witnessed in their children.<sup>68</sup>

The Citizen's Theatre movement in South Sudan also uses cultural activities as the basis for engaging young people for peace. Since 2012, it has trained around 800 young facilitators to lead community forums in six states, and organized inter-school theatre festivals in Juba, Bor and Aweil. Theatre groups remain active in secondary schools across the country, regularly using performance and dialogue to raise important issues related to peace and development in their communities.

A central element of the approach is that young participants take the lead in selecting the issues around which to build dialogue. The process has created a rare safe space for communities – led by their youth – to consider how the problems they face stem from and feed into wider conflict. The style, subject and emphasis differs from location to location, but typical issues have included cattle raiding, tribalism, hate speech, moral values and corruption, all of which have a link to conflict, and thus to peace.

Evaluators found that the Citizen's Theatre movement has increased young people's social networks across ethnic and cultural divides. It has helped improve mental health and well-being, reduce fear, and increase mutual understanding of the 'other'. Participants are more likely to engage in leadership and problem solving within the community. A young woman in Bor attributed her success in securing the release of her unjustly imprisoned brother to the skills and confidence she had developed in the programme. The number of drama clubs in secondary schools is increasing year on year, and the movement has persuaded the Ministry of Education to incorporate drama in schools.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Rosemary Cairns, 'An Evaluation of "Strengthening Locally Led Peacebuilding"', Peace Direct, May 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Forthcoming evaluation report on the Citizens' Theatre initiatives, cited in Christian Aid, 'In It For the Long Haul?: Lessons on Peacebuilding in South Sudan', 2018.

# Women

Women and girls are frequently victims of conflict, while peace processes involving women are more likely to be sustained.<sup>70</sup> Numerous local peacebuilding initiatives, often led by women's organizations, therefore seek to increase their political, social and economic participation, as well as addressing their needs and advocating for their interests.

Many initiatives focus on democratic participation and leadership training for women, such as in Liberia, where local initiatives have helped increase female voting rates.<sup>71</sup> Elsewhere, the Burundi Leadership Training Program was found to have increased the number of women candidates and councillors in the 2015 local elections.<sup>72</sup>

The Burundi Leadership Training Program – initially established by an international organization, but now fully Burundian-led – trained over 900 women in leadership skills and encouraged women to stand in the 2015 local elections. This contributed to a 19% increase in female office holders in colline (ward) councils in Muramvia and Gitega provinces from the 2010 to the 2015 elections, and a 33% increase, from 18 to 24, among *chefs de colline* (ward chiefs).

The NGO Assistance Mission for Africa (AMA) helps women in South Sudan play a greater role in community governance, as members of traditional courts, inter-ethnic councils and local peace committees.<sup>73</sup>

Across AMA's various programme locations, women's participation was found to have reached at least 30% (and often higher) in local forums, from a low base. Women spoke up more in public meetings, and were readier to challenge local administrators, chiefs and elders in community forums. They persuaded young men to stop cattle looting and committing revenge killings, speaking both as mothers and with a community voice. Women also conducted outreach with neighbouring communities, helping to build peaceful relations and prevent violence.

A recent report exploring the peacebuilding role of women in Somalia identifies some of the ways women have prevented violence and built peace. They have persuaded men and boys to refrain from violence, created lines of communication with women in opposing clans, raised awareness, demonstrated in public, and advocated with clan leaders and mediators.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

<sup>72</sup> Mathias Kinezera, 'Rapport d'évaluation externe du projet 110171 « Renforcement du Leadership Féminin »', 2015.

<sup>73</sup> Portals 2 Peace and National Action Plan Evaluation report, 2019', Assistance Mission for Africa and PAX, 2019.

<sup>74</sup> Life & Peace Institute, Peace Direct and Somali Women Solidarity Organization, 'Women, Conflict and Peace: Learning From Kismayo: A Study Report', April 2018.

Gender-based violence, particularly against women and girls, is prevalent in conflict contexts, both as a practice in communities and as an outcome and tool of conflict itself. This means prevention, justice, and the care and recovery of victims is a common priority of local peacebuilding programmes. Somewhat unexpectedly, there were limited evaluations of this work in the dataset studied. That said, a number of female-led NGOs were found to have been successful in improving the reintegration of women raped by armed groups in the eastern DRC back into their communities.<sup>75</sup>

*'The peace committee from the other side was not able to get involved. We had to change tactics and involved the youth and women. We sat and talked. That was the time the tension reduced.'*

– Local peace committee member,

These women might otherwise have been stigmatized and rejected. In South Sudan, AMA promoted public discussion and awareness-raising regarding the practice of men beating their wives. This helped reduce the prevalence of this practice, and increase the proportion of men accused of violence against women being taken to court. Police became more sensitive to the needs of women victims, while traditional courts became less likely to ignore accusations of gender-based violence, partly because more women were sitting as judges. This improved the dynamics of the justice process, with more attention and respect being paid to female witnesses and women's rights. Male judges asserted that having women judges had improved the courts' effectiveness.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Alexis M. Gardella and Eric Kalaba, 'Citizenship And Peacebuilding In The Democratic Republic Of Congo: Final Evaluation', March 2009.

<sup>76</sup> 'Portals 2 Peace and National Action Plan Evaluation report, 2019', Assistance Mission for Africa and PAX, 2019.

## Lessons learned

Local peacebuilders who engage specific segments of the community have clearly shown they can make a difference. By tailoring their initiatives to those whose experience of conflict has left them traumatized, to young people who so often become the tools of conflict entrepreneurs or gangs, and to women whose potential to contribute to peace has been overlooked, they have helped these groups begin to shape more peaceful societies. These initiatives are seen as relevant by the people they seek to assist, as evidenced by the levels of participation, and as acknowledged by the evaluations reviewed.

Figure 7 shows how these tailored initiatives have had an impact in all the dimensions of our impact framework. Men have improved their attitude to the inclusion of women in governance mechanisms, and young people's knowledge of and attitudes towards other ethnic groups has become more conducive to peace. Communities behave differently towards one another, and their structural approaches to decision-making and local governance have become more inclusive.

Both horizontal and vertical relationships have improved as a result of these local initiatives. This can be seen in the incidence of inter-ethnic friendships among young people in Sri Lanka, dispute-resolution mechanisms crossing ethnic lines in South Sudan, and the increased governance participation of traumatized community members in Rwanda.

Finally, local initiatives have contributed to reduced electoral violence in Burundi, as well as reduced gang-related violence in a number of urban contexts making use of the Cure Violence methodology.

**Figure 7. Three domains and three levels of peacebuilding impact, with illustrations from initiatives engaging specific groups**

Domains ↓	Levels →	Changes in knowledge and attitudes	Changes in behavior	Structural changes (norms, systems, institutions)
<b>Violence prevented, reduced or stopped</b>		<p>Increased readiness to accept ex-fighters back into the community</p> <p>Improved knowledge of peaceful approaches, and optimism, among young people living in contexts where violence is normalized</p>	<p>Reduced vulnerability of young people to recruitment by extremists, or for election violence</p> <p>Reduced election violence</p> <p>Reduction in gang violence</p> <p>Rape victims accepted and reintegrated into their community</p>	<p>Young people taking the lead to organize peacebuilding activities</p> <p>Women advocating peaceful behavior among young men</p> <p>Courts taking gender-based violence more seriously</p>
<b>Horizontal relationships between and among people and peoples improved</b>		<p>Acknowledgement that fellow citizens have been traumatized by their experiences and need help</p> <p>Improved attitudes to community following trauma healing</p> <p>Increased tolerance towards 'other' groups</p>	<p>Improved community ties, collaboration and mutual support following trauma healing</p> <p>Newly built relationships across religious or ethnic divides</p>	<p>Inter-community councils</p>
<b>Vertical relationships between people and those with authority and power improved</b>		<p>Men accepting that gender-based violence is unacceptable</p>	<p>More engagement in civic activities</p> <p>Increase in young people and women voting</p>	<p>More women standing for elected public office and in courts</p>

Three important lessons emerge from analysis of the examples used in this chapter (and will be revisited in Chapter 6):

### Community-based trauma healing initiatives are effective, and need to be sustained

Low-cost initiatives that address individuals' trauma as well as that of their communities can be highly effective, as shown by the examples from Zimbabwe and Rwanda. However, the data also implies a need for greater sustained action. Despite considerable improvements, 23% of Rwandese participants still suffered from depression, and in Zimbabwe 64% of torture victims had not yet shown significant clinical improvement. This corroborates findings from the Fambul Tok programme in Sierra Leone, where community reconciliation appeared to be associated with individuals experiencing increased anxiety and depression, perhaps suggesting an imbalance between the focus on community and on individuals' needs.<sup>77</sup> All this indicates that while effective, relatively low-cost trauma healing models do exist, they need to be supported by appropriately trained people, achieve a well-judged balance between a focus on the individual and the community, and be sustained over several years.

### Young people can be agents of change

Just as local violence entrepreneurs can readily recruit young people for violence, local initiatives can readily divert their energies from violence and disruption into playing a positive role. Young people, given the chance, demonstrate that they can play leadership roles in defining the future of the societies they will inherit. The demographic profile in many conflict-prone societies is tilted towards youth, and their alienation and susceptibility to being drawn into conflict should therefore, as the UN has stated, be a major priority.<sup>78</sup> More support should therefore be given to local initiatives that help young people channel their energies into peaceful development.

### There is a lack of data on the effectiveness of local initiatives to prevent violent extremism, and of local women's initiatives

The peacebuilding literature rightly emphasises the need for more women's engagement in peacebuilding, and increased attention to issues experienced by women and girls as victims of violent conflict. Similarly, in recent years there has been a widespread call for programmes that work with young people who are vulnerable to being recruited for violent extremism and that address the underlying reasons for this vulnerability. Despite this, very few evaluations examined for this study addressed these questions. While this may simply be due to the timing of the research and nature of the call for evidence, it would be worrying if it indicated a lack of visible support for, and evaluation of, local initiatives working on these issues.

<sup>77</sup> Jacobus Cilliers, Oeindrilla Duba and Bilal Siddiqui, 'Can the Ruins of War be Healed? Experimental Evidence from Sierra Leone', Impact Evaluation Report 75, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, May 2018.

<sup>78</sup> Youth, Peace & Security, 'The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth Peace and Security', UNFPA and UNPBSO, 2018.

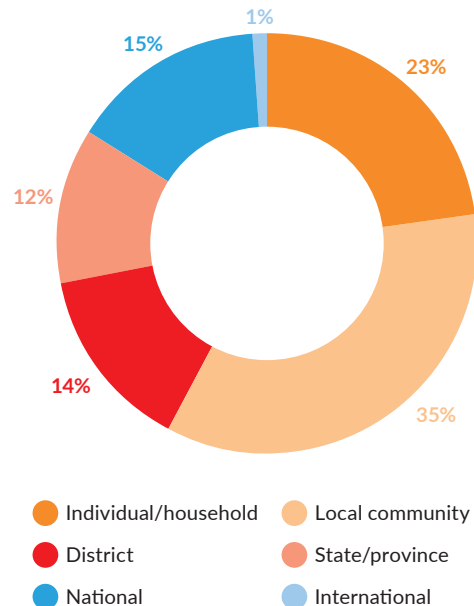
# 5 Shaping public discourse and policy, and early-warning networks

This report demonstrates that even relatively small-scale initiatives and impacts matter for peace. Beyond this, though, many local peacebuilding initiatives also have an impact on a wider scale. Indeed, many of the oft-rehearsed narratives of successful peacebuilding fit into this category. Examples include the Borama political dialogue process in Somaliland;<sup>79</sup> mediation by the Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone in peace talks between the Revolutionary United Front rebels and the state;<sup>80</sup> women activists who shaped the speed and content of the Liberian peace process;<sup>81</sup> and the Otpor! student movement,<sup>82</sup> which mobilized thousands of young people and influenced Serbia's political direction towards peace.<sup>83</sup>

However, these were not 'projects', and like many locally-driven initiatives it is hard to find formal evaluations of their impact. This means they are outside the scope of this report, despite their impact being in little doubt. As shown by Figure 8, the dataset for this report did however contain examples of initiatives with impacts at a high level and on a wide scale.

The examples fall under three headings: Efforts to reshape public discourse; advocacy that led to changed government policies; and networks of early-warning interventions that prevented violence.

**Figure 8. Proportions of initiatives reviewed for this report, per the scale of impact they achieved**



<sup>79</sup> Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015.

<sup>80</sup> Maria Jessop, Diana Aljets and Betsie Chacko, 'The Ripe Moment for Civil Society', *International Negotiation* (2008) 13:93–109.

<sup>81</sup> Global Nonviolent Action Database, 'Liberian Women Act to End Civil War, 2003'. Available from: <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/liberian-women-act-end-civil-war-2003>

<sup>82</sup> Otpor, or 'resistance' in Serbian.

<sup>83</sup> Dylan Mathews, *War Prevention Works: 50 Stories of Conflict Resolution*, London: Oxford Research Group, 2001.



# Shaping public discourse

Language has enormous power. The way leaders and elites frame issues influences how other citizens interpret and engage with them. Public discourse – how people view and speak of others, and of conflict issues – affects how conflicts are handled in society. This section describes attempts to influence public discourse in support of peace. It cites examples of dialogue initiatives in Ukraine, Guinea Bissau and Somalia; of changes in how journalists approach peace and conflict issues in Nepal and Somalia; and of approaches to reconciliation and tolerance between ethnic and religious communities in Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

Dialogue is frequently used by peacebuilders to improve collaboration and reduce tensions. Yet some decision-makers doubt its utility. With this in mind, the Mediation and Dialogue Research Center in Kyiv studied 157 dialogue processes conducted by over 60 organizations in Ukraine during 2014–18. They found that dialogue practitioners faced many practical obstacles, linked to security, facilitation and the difficulty of getting people with extreme views to take part. They also found that few dialogues directly addressed the deeper questions of identity underlying many conflicts in Ukraine.

Nevertheless, dialogues that addressed very practical issues enabled participants to achieve consensus on tangible outcomes, such as agreeing a way forward to resolve the issue under discussion, or getting local authorities to pay more attention to people's needs. Both men and women were found to participate fully, with 76% of respondents assessing their participation positively, and 89% saying that dialogue had improved their understanding of the views of and/or relations with other participants. Given dialogue is used frequently across Ukraine, these findings imply that it has helped soften intra- and inter-community relations cumulatively and widely.<sup>84</sup>

In more than 150 dialogue processes in Ukraine, 76% of participants said the experience was positive, while 86% said dialogue had improved their understanding of and/or relations towards others.

*'I began to better understand those who have different opinions and to make efforts to see the situation through the eyes of different participants. And I practise it now. This dialogue clearly influenced my understanding and attitude towards everything that was going on, not only with respect to the dialogue topic but also in general, with respect to relations between the people in the country. This helps me now in my work as a tourist guide, when I have to talk about complex historical issues with people from different parts of the country and from abroad.'*

– Dialogue participant, Ukraine

<sup>84</sup> Tatiana Kyselova, 'Understanding Dialogue in Ukraine: A Survey-Based Study, Analytical Report 2018', Mediation and Dialogue Research Center, Kyiv, 2018.

Guinea Bissau has been affected by conflict, underpinned by inadequate governance, since before gaining independence in 1973. Local organization Voz di Paz began peacebuilding initiatives a decade after the 1998/99 civil war, aiming to foster a culture of dialogue where none existed, and to overcome what it saw as the elite's habitual disregard of citizens' needs. It ran a series of regional and national dialogues to explore visions of peace and development, with a 2011 evaluation concluding that good progress had been made. People had taken advantage of the dialogues to resolve local conflicts and improve local governance – going beyond what Voz di Paz had intended. The dialogue approach used by Voz di Paz was also formally adopted for a National Conference designed to formalize new governance arrangements. Thus, the use of dialogue was becoming normalized.<sup>85</sup>

Journalists also play a role in shaping public discourse, influencing how citizens perceive and comprehend conflict issues. They can sometimes contribute to conflict, either intentionally through skewed analysis and exaggerated use of language, or unintentionally through lazy, ill-informed or conflict-insensitive reporting. Separate initiatives in Nepal and Somalia aimed to improve the conflict-sensitivity of media reporting. To do this, and professionalize the sector, the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) trained its members in ethical and conflict-sensitive reporting.

A 2014 evaluation found that most journalists who had taken part demonstrated increased understanding of the link between reporting and security. Almost all reported changing their behavior as a result – improving their reporting, being more security conscious, and paying more attention to the underlying causes of conflict and the impact of what they broadcast or wrote. The FNJ established a permanent training wing, and persuaded the government to subsidise this.<sup>86</sup>

Evaluations found two organizations in Puntland and Somaliland had achieved similar improvements. The Association for Peace and Development (APD) and the Peace and Development Research Center (PDRC) provided training to journalists, helping them make demonstrable improvements in their ethical standards and conflict-sensitivity, as well as broadening their awareness of women's issues and the issues confronting remote, peripheral communities, where many conflicts arise.<sup>87</sup>

Reconciliation is another issue strongly linked to public discourse. The Centre for Peace Building and Reconciliation (CPBR) promoted reconciliation in Sri Lanka after the brutal military defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in 2009 brought the 26-year civil war to an end. Though the war was over, underlying conflicts remained unresolved, including conflicts between different ethno-religious communities, and between the Tamil community and the state.

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<sup>85</sup> Annette Englert, 'Consultancy on the Evaluation of the INTERPEACE Voz di Paz Programme in Guinea-Bissau (2009–2010)', June 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Ruth Simpson, 'Evaluation Report for SAFE Media Nepal: A Safe, Able, Free and Empowered Media for the Promotion of Human Rights, Democracy and Peace in Nepal', International Alert, August 2014.

<sup>87</sup> Philip Thomas, 'Pillars of Peace & Democratization: Final External Assessment', Final Report, D3 Associates, 2016.

The CPBR, based in Colombo, initiated a programme promoting reconciliation and healing, with a focus on improving relations between ethno-religious identity groups. It brought religious leaders together for a series of workshops. These improved communication and trust between Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Buddhist leaders, allowing them to explore the underlying reasons for the civil war, and to take actions in their own communities to address them.<sup>88</sup>

Intolerant religious discourse also sustains conflict in Indonesia, where networks of local organizations have collaborated to increase freedom of religious belief. Religious intolerance is both culturally and politically ingrained in many parts of the country, and sometimes supported by the state. This means the potential for conflict is structurally maintained. To counter this, civil society organizations have been conducting awareness-raising and advocacy for religious freedom in three provinces – West Timor, Aceh and Java – amid a climate of growing religious intolerance.

*'Now, as a result [of the Centre for Peace Building and Reconciliation's work], you can see that children from all communities are staying together and playing. Since the nature of the activities was made known to families, so they desire the same kind of relationship with other communities. Even some of the other religious communities are coming to Hindu kovils, and we go to their worship places for some functions. We have really changed – you can see.'*

**– Siva Sri Sivabalan Anjaz, retired civil servant from Batticaloa, Sri Lanka**

A 2016 evaluation of their work found they were beginning to make progress in changing attitudes between people from different religious communities. Their advocacy helped allow three churches in Yogyakarta to obtain licences to re-open, after the authorities had closed them down. Additionally, government agencies in Aceh had begun to reach out to civil society as a potential partner in changing the discourse, after seeing how interfaith groups had worked together to resist intolerance. However, evaluators also noted that progress had been slow and incremental, and would likely remain so given the structural nature of public attitudes.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Rosemary Cairns, 'An Evaluation of "Strengthening Locally Led Peacebuilding"', Peace Direct, May 2011.

<sup>89</sup> Asfinawati dan Tati Krisnawaty, 'Facilitating Freedom of Religion and Belief: Evaluation Report of The AFSC Program Period of 2013–2015', American Friends' Service Committee, 2016.

# Changing public policy and decision-making mechanisms

Government policy defines institutional behaviors that either support or undermine progress towards peace, meaning peacebuilding initiatives frequently include advocacy designed to influence changes – or prevent negative changes – in public policies and decision-making mechanisms. This section draws on examples of advocacy that improved policies towards women in Burundi, and persuaded state governments to adopt new governance approaches in Somalia.

In Burundi, the women's peacebuilding network Dushirehamwe and the umbrella body for women's organizations Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines au Burundi (CAFOB) worked together to embed women's concerns in the national policy agenda. They specifically targeted the 2012 Poverty Reduction Strategy, a set of policies developed to guide public and donor resource allocation. Dushirehamwe is a nationwide network, with members implementing peace initiatives in communities across the country. Exploiting this reach, it organized a broad and participatory consultation process in order to agree a set of policy priorities to help women in support of peace. These included improved measures against sexual and gender-based violence, equal rights and greater representation for women, and economic policies designed to support rural women. As a result of their advocacy, 13 peace and development priorities were included in government policy, out of 18 demands raised.<sup>90</sup>

In the Burundi example, women activists argued their case as political outsiders. Another route to advocacy is through providing practical assistance to the government, using this as an opportunity for insider influence. The APD and the PDRC, working in Somaliland and Puntland respectively, both secured changes in government policies and processes that were designed to improve stability and peace. The organizations provided practical support over a number of years, facilitating consultation and dialogue processes that helped their respective governments clarify critical needs and policies on peace-related issues, such as land and electoral reform. By engaging in support of the state, they were in a position to help shape the resulting policies in line with the needs of peace. Furthermore, by demonstrating the effectiveness of dialogue-based consultation mechanisms, they persuaded the Somaliland and Puntland governments to adopt and institutionalize participatory consultation and analysis approaches.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Francois Lenfant, 'Making Women's Voices Heard in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in Burundi', International Alert, 2013.

<sup>91</sup> Philip Thomas, 'Pillars of Peace & Democratization: Final External Assessment', Final Report, D3 Associates, 2016.

The APD facilitated a consultative process that revised the legal mandate of the police in Somaliland, while the PDRC helped create a neighbourhood watch programme in Puntland – both steps towards greater trust between police and communities, providing a stronger foundation for the rule of law. The APD facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogues in Somaliland that resulted in Diya Enforcement Committees, designed to prevent clan disputes escalating into violence. It also organized and supported local dialogues and a national Land Management Conference, leading to the institutionalization of a decision-making process aimed at reducing the frequency and escalation of land disputes – a common source of violent conflict. A similar initiative by Somali Peace Line in Somalia’s Lower Shabelle region also introduced new dialogue and negotiation approaches in order to resolve local disputes over land and other natural resources.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Abdifatah Mohamed Hikam and Mark M. Rogers, ‘Community-Based Bottom-Up Peacebuilding Project: Implementation Evaluation Report’, The Life & Peace Institute and Somali Peace Line, 2017.

# Early warning, early intervention

This section presents two examples of initiatives that successfully promoted non-violence by identifying situations at risk and then mobilizing people to prevent it. The first of these is anonymized because of political sensitivities, but draws on a number of independent evaluations (see Case Study 4).

## Case Study 4. Boendoe Early-Warning Network<sup>93</sup>

In this case, a network was formed by several civil society organizations, and almost 200 individuals, covering all districts of a chronically unstable country that had undergone several cycles of organized violence, and was particularly at risk from election violence. Collaborating under the shared goal of building a more peaceful society, the network operated nationally, while supporting members who were active in their local areas.

The network provided training and support to members, helping them mobilize local actions to prevent or de-escalate violence, and, where appropriate, to initiate longer-term peacebuilding actions. It also helped them to link up with and mobilize local government and others in civil society. Additionally, it conducted lobbying, as well as organizing reconciliation processes between political parties. In a situation where cooperation among civil society activists was often made difficult by the tensions in the wider society they represented, the network modelled effective collaboration through its decentralized governance of local chapters.

In a two-year period, almost 5,600 incidents were reported by network members. Its actions are acknowledged as having reduced violence locally, as well as having influenced international actions and approaches to the country in question.

As one of the instigators and leaders of the network said:

'I identified 40 organizations that were doing really important, good work in the country but were isolated; there was no space really for them to come together to collaborate, and they wanted to! Some were working with youth in one province, others working with women in their little corner, others also working with ex-combatants but only in one province — you see? There was a lot of willingness to collaborate and to coordinate efforts. The network offered that space.'

<sup>93</sup> Kiely Barnard-Webster, "Strength Is From A Union; Working Together You Go Far": Understanding Collective Impact Using an Analytic Framework, CDA, 2018.

A second case concerns unarmed civilian protection volunteers operating in several different parts of Myanmar. Although trained and supported by the international organization Nonviolent Peaceforce, these were local volunteers operating on their own initiative. Operating in a context of unstable, long-term ceasefire arrangements between government forces and rebels, they intervened when potential or actual outbreaks of violence risked people's lives, as well as the fragile peace itself. As with the Boendoe network, their ability to intervene locally was strengthened by being part of a wider network.

*'There was a heavy attack near Moenyin city. We successfully negotiated with the army chief. So the civilians can go free from war zone.'*

– Civilian protection volunteers from Kachin, Myanmar.

A 2018 evaluation reported numerous incidents in which volunteers had helped sustain the peace across different parts of the country. Actions included rescuing civilians from crossfire; organizing dialogue to prevent imminent outbreaks of violence; obtaining the release of forcibly recruited youth and illegally detained civilians; helping displaced people flee outbreaks of fighting and connect to humanitarian aid; stopping an illegal mining operation; addressing land issues; and raising awareness of the peace process among thousands of people.

Many of the volunteers were already leaders in their community, and others, especially women, became leaders through their participation.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ellen Furnari, 'Strengthening Civilian Capacities for Peace', Nonviolent Peaceforce, July 2018.

# Lessons learned

‘Local’ peacebuilding has impacts on a wider scope and scale than the name initially implies, across the three levels and domains of the proposed impact framework (see Figure 9). Its relevance is confirmed by the relatively rapid uptake of advocacy suggestions by governments, and by people’s willingness to participate in dialogue and other processes. In Ukraine, local dialogue approaches have successfully changed people’s knowledge of, and attitudes towards, others, while initiatives in Indonesia and Sri Lanka have changed attitudes towards people of other religions.

Members of the Federation of Nepali Journalists have adopted new behaviors, changing how they reported conflict-related stories. In Somaliland and Puntland, new approaches to decision-making and conflict resolution have been formally adopted as structural changes. The anonymized civil society network, along with peace activists in Myanmar, have reduced the risk of violence in their respective contexts. Meanwhile, vertical relations have improved in Guinea Bissau and Somalia, and horizontal relations improved in Ukraine and Sri Lanka.

**Figure 9. Three domains and three levels of peacebuilding impact, with illustrations from national and early-warning initiatives**

Domains ↓	Levels → Changes in knowledge and attitudes	Changes in behavior	Structural changes (norms, systems, institutions)
<b>Violence prevented, reduced or stopped</b>	Journalists have improved understanding of how their words can drive conflict or peace	Volunteers mediate between warring parties to prevent outbreaks of fighting  Journalists take more care to avoid exacerbating violence  Early-warning mechanisms prevent violence	Local authorities and security services respond to early-warning information
<b>Horizontal relationships between and among people and peoples improved</b>	Improved understanding of the views of others  Increased tolerance towards other identity groups	Better relationships with others  Religious leaders build improved relations between their communities  Interfaith activism reduces intolerance	Agreed solutions to conflict issues achieved in dialogue
<b>Vertical relationships between people and those with authority and power improved</b>	Authorities willing to try new, more open, governance approaches	Authorities listening to citizens’ views more, due to dialogue/consultation approaches, and responding to reports of violence	New formal approaches for policy consultation and conflict resolution adopted by the state  Governments adopt pro-peace policies



Four lessons in particular emerge from this chapter (which will also be picked up again in Chapter 6):

### Scaling up

If one of the constraints for local peacebuilding is the difficulty of achieving scale, then this chapter offers ideas on this can be achieved. The examples studied illustrate three models of scaling up:

- Advocating for policy changes, and thus having a potential impact across the entire polity;
- Using federations or networks of individual members, as is the case with the journalists in Nepal or the civilian volunteers in Myanmar;
- Collaborating in networks of complementary organizations in order to achieve a greater impact locally, while combining grassroots with national action. This is the model used by the Boendoe network, by CSOs in Indonesia, and by the women's advocacy organizations in Burundi.

### The attractions and limits of dialogue

This chapter offers intriguing insights about the attractions and limits of dialogue approaches. On the one hand, governments and citizens in Ukraine, Guinea Bissau, Somaliland and Puntland saw the relevance of dialogue approaches to their needs, which suggests that dialogue methods can be readily adopted and achieve policy gains for peace, even in the short term. The is especially the case for tangible issues requiring a consensus on a concrete plan of action. On the other hand, researchers in Ukraine found that dialogue processes tended to exclude those with more extreme views, and that dialogue was less apt for dealing with deeper, underlying aspects of conflict – such as questions of identity – which can obstruct pathways to peace.

This implies a choice for local peacebuilders. They can either continue using dialogue techniques to help people resolve tangible questions requiring tangible plans, or they can develop the skills and methods to address the deeper questions on which more extreme views tend to be held.

### The slow, incremental nature of influencing public discourse

Several of the evaluations studied for this chapter either state explicitly or imply that achieving major policy change, or influencing public discourse sustainably, is a long-term enterprise requiring a sustained approach. Gains in religious tolerance in Indonesia were seen as small steps on a much longer path; it is not clear whether the policy changes in Burundi, Guinea Bissau, Somaliland and Puntland were translated fully from paper to action; and the very fact that Boendoe network members prefer to remain anonymous speaks eloquently about the incomplete nature of their achievements so far. All this indicated the need for continued and careful support of local peacebuilding actions, over many years.

### The lack of evaluations of national-level peacebuilding

This chapter opened with a reference to several successful, national-level peacebuilding initiatives. Despite being well-known, they have not necessarily been evaluated and documented objectively. It would help make the argument in support of high-level local peacebuilding activities if a larger corpus of objective evaluations was available.

# 6 Findings and recommendations

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As the report demonstrates, local peacebuilding initiatives are often highly effective. Therefore, at a time when donors and international organizations are discussing how to redouble their efforts to achieve SDG 16 by 2030, it is critical that local voices be included and their achievements celebrated. Moreover, local peacebuilding initiatives need to be better acknowledged and better supported.

The impacts discussed in Chapters 3–5 are summarized in Figure 10 below. They demonstrate that local initiatives improve the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, as well as the norms and structures, on which peace is built. It is notable that, while changing attitudes and knowledge is often seen as easier than changing behavior, all three columns in Figure 10 contain strong examples of impact. Clearly, local initiatives make a substantial difference.

Figure 10. Summary of some of the impacts in this report, in three domains and at three levels

Levels →	Changes in knowledge and attitudes	Changes in behavior	Structural changes (norms, systems, institutions)
Domains ↓			
<b>Violence prevented, reduced or stopped</b>	<p>Improved optimism and knowledge of peaceful approaches to addressing problems</p> <p>Opinion formers better understand how their words can shape peace or conflict</p> <p>Increased readiness in communities to accept back ex-fighters, refugees and others</p>	<p>Local disputes resolved</p> <p>Mediation between conflict parties prevents fighting</p> <p>Opinion formers take more care with their words and actions</p> <p>Early-warning mechanisms prevent violence</p> <p>Reduced vulnerability of youth to recruitment to violence</p>	<p>Communities are safer</p> <p>Armed groups accept and follow violence reduction mechanisms</p> <p>Women, young people and others proactively advocate non-violence</p> <p>Gender-based violence taken more seriously in courts</p>
<b>Horizontal relationships between and among people and peoples improved</b>	<p>Improved understanding of the views and problems faced by 'others'</p> <p>Increased trust, tolerance and forgiveness</p> <p>Improved understanding of underlying reasons for conflict</p> <p>Improved attitudes towards/reduced alienation from the community</p>	<p>Proactive peace actions by ethnic, religious and community leaders to improve horizontal ties and cohesion</p> <p>Mutual support actions</p> <p>People actively build practical links and improved relations with 'other' groups</p> <p>Reintegration of returning refugees</p>	<p>Practical solutions to conflicts achieved through dialogue</p> <p>Increased commitment to use non-violent mechanisms to resolve conflicts</p> <p>Intra- and inter-community bodies are petitioned to help solve disputes and build peace; some expand their geographic and sectoral mandate</p>
<b>Vertical relationships between people and those with authority and power improved</b>	<p>Improved mutual understanding between authorities and citizens on conflictual issues</p>	<p>Dialogue and other mechanisms allow authorities to listen and consult more readily</p> <p>Problems and relations with security services and armed groups resolved</p> <p>Increased engagement in 'civic' activities</p> <p>Increased voting rates</p>	<p>New governance approaches for conflict resolution and policy adopted by communities, local and national government, and others with power</p> <p>Community-based peace initiatives and other mechanisms integrate women, young people and minorities into decision-making</p> <p>More women standing for and achieving office</p> <p>Improved popular participation in decision-making and accountability</p> <p>Governments adopt pro-peace policies</p>

# What helps local peacebuilding succeed?

This report reviewed a variety of initiatives, from diverse contexts. Based on these, the following conclusions about the qualities of successful local peacebuilding initiatives can be drawn:

## Cumulative impact

Small-scale peacebuilding interventions can and do have a cumulative impact. This is especially the case when they persist over a long period of time, expand the scope of their actions, where there is a clustering effect, or when initiatives link up. The actions of the Colombian peasants' association created a measure of sustained stability over two decades, with all parties accepting a set of rules that allowed local communities relative security in difficult circumstances. Many local initiatives have a knock-on effect, improving inclusion and governance. Some community-based initiatives grow in scope or scale, including potentially expanding their mandate – for example to include a wider 'developmental' role than the narrower violence prevention mandate they started with. Others expand geographically, at the request of neighbouring communities. While few of the evaluations explicitly or thoroughly examine the effect of clustering, some do find evidence of this. For example, the combined impact of various local peace structures present across part of South Kivu in the DRC was greater than the sum of the parts. Finally, the examples of Dushirehamwe and CAFOB in Burundi, and of the Boendoe network elsewhere, show the benefits that can be achieved by formal collaboration based on a shared goal.

## Cost-effectiveness

Local initiatives use low-cost, technically appropriate approaches. Local entities are by nature less costly than international organizations, can tap into local volunteerism, and employ techniques – such as the non-clinical psychosocial methods used by Tree of Life in Zimbabwe, and grassroots mobilization of advocacy ideas through the Dushirehamwe network in Burundi – that are realistically replicable in a constrained budget environment, and thus scalable.

## Practical orientation

Local initiatives tend to be practically oriented. They apply practical approaches to address tangible issues requiring concrete outcomes, rather than being framed in terms of abstract theoretical concepts such as 'peace', 'stability' and 'inclusion'. While not explicitly tested in the evaluations considered for this report, it is reasonable to speculate that this focus on practical action is one of the reasons people find local initiatives to be relevant, and why they support and participate in them. The example from Colombia, in which representatives of peasant families devised a complex security scheme requiring agreement from, and disciplined application by, communities and armed groups, stands out as a powerful illustration.

## Relevance

Local initiatives are seen as relevant by local stakeholders, and this allows them to achieve high levels of participation and support. Most evaluations found the activities they examined to be both relevant on their own terms, and deemed relevant by local actors. This is particularly true of grassroots initiatives, and of initiatives conducted by and with particular target groups. These are able to tap into community support, especially from those whose interests they represent. The relevance of advocacy is demonstrated by the relatively rapid uptake of many advocacy proposals, while the relevance of dialogue is demonstrated by the ready adoption of dialogue outcomes.

Local peacebuilding is also relevant throughout the conflict cycle. For example, local peacebuilders prevented outbreaks of violence in Burundi, reduced levels of violence in situations of chronic conflict in Colombia and Sudan, and enabled communities to recover from, and build their resilience to, conflict in Sierra Leone and Rwanda.

## Local knowledge

Local peacebuilders' contextual knowledge and networks allow them to mobilize courage and leadership, as well as the considerable capacity and potential that exists within society. To give just one example, when South Sudanese women were empowered by new peacebuilding knowledge and skills, and by their participation in local peace committees, they proceeded under their own direction to convince young men in cattle camps to refrain from violence towards other ethnic groups.<sup>95</sup> Many of the initiatives reviewed for this report also showed evidence of rapid adaptability, especially grassroots, community-based actions. This stems from their closeness to the ground, their responsiveness to local stakeholders, and perhaps also a lack of bureaucratic restrictions when compared with international projects.

### Working with the grain, to change the grain

Local initiatives mobilize latent popular energy for behavioral and structural change. Many evaluations reviewed for this report noted the high level of support for change among citizens and leadership figures. People's potential to contribute to peacebuilding is often untapped, but local initiatives can provide them with opportunities to make a contribution. In particular, by creating opportunities for women and young people, peacebuilders were able to mobilize their untapped energy and support. Local leaders were also mobilized to participate in new approaches to peacebuilding, which suggests that local peacebuilding initiatives can inspire and create opportunities even for those in positions of apparent power within the status quo.

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<sup>95</sup> 'Portals 2 Peace and National Action Plan Evaluation report, 2019', Assistance Mission for Africa and PAX, 2019.

In other words, while local initiatives engage with and build on existing norms and mechanisms, they can also change them. Examples include partnering with the Somaliland government to help it develop new pro-peace policies, or collaborating with community chiefs on grassroots initiatives in the DRC. There is always a risk in such circumstances that their more powerful collaborators, and the norms and systems they represent, will obstruct change. However, local peacebuilders are well-placed ‘to work with grain, to change the grain’, that is, to carry these actors along with them as champions of change. This is evidenced by the widespread acceptance of women and minorities in community-based peace initiatives, often in apparently conservative rural areas, and by the willingness of those in power to explore alternative governance mechanisms.

## Connections

Local initiatives reflect the breadth and interconnectedness of peace and conflict factors. Peacebuilding theory tells us that peace can be built and sustained through improvements across a very broad range of issues, and local peace initiatives confirm this. From the examples reviewed for this report, it is clear that local peacebuilders attribute peace to a wide variety of factors, including personal and community security, access to economic opportunity, improved governance and justice, and social well-being.

## Restoring trust

Local initiatives can often lead to improvements in relations and trust within and between communities. The impact of community-based initiatives in post-war Sierra Leone, where communities regained a sense of mutual trust, and of Dinka and Nuer groups building mutual trust in South Sudan, illustrate this well. This readiness suggests that trust is a latent public good, and that local actors are well-placed to bring it to the surface when circumstances allow.

# Challenges

While there is plenty of evidence of successful local peacebuilding, any approach to building peace has limits, and local initiatives do not always fully succeed. Some are poorly conceived or executed, while others are undermined by external circumstances. Some of the evaluations studied sound notes of caution, with one simply stating that the initiative in question had failed because the organization had overreached itself.

Even approaches that work do not succeed in every case. For example, not everyone suffering from post-traumatic stress can expect to be healed. As one Rwandese participant said, 'The programme can't address all consequences of genocide. I lost my family members and they will never come back. I sometimes don't go home because I have no one to find there.'<sup>96</sup>

In Sierra Leone, meanwhile, while reconciliation was successful at a community level, some individuals reported increased anxiety and depression for, suggesting the process had stirred up feelings and memories it had not addressed.<sup>97</sup> This is a reminder of the need to evaluate regularly, identify challenges as early as possible, and provide technical support to meet such challenges when they are identified.

Some community-based peace initiatives are undermined by local leaders who fear their role is being usurped, and their status and income put at risk, or by spoilers whose interests are ill-served by stability. On the other side of the coin, some initiatives risk being instrumentalized and co-opted for political gain.<sup>98</sup>

The reliance on volunteerism is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it ensures ownership and local knowledge, while on the other it potentially excludes those who lack the time or resources to get involved. Dialogue processes in Ukraine provide an example of inadvertent exclusion, with dialogue organizers unable to involve people with extreme views.<sup>99</sup> Elsewhere, attempts at inclusion are resisted due to patriarchal attitudes, or prejudice against minorities.

When initiatives gave rise to new bodies – new community-based peace structures, for example – these risk supplanting existing governance mechanisms, thereby weakening the latter's ability to undertake its governance and security functions in pursuit of peace.<sup>100</sup> Citizens' willingness to get involved should not be the excuse for the authorities to disengage.

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<sup>96</sup> Stacy Hilliard, Eugene Ntaganda and Katie Bartholomew, 'Societal Healing & Participatory Governance: Mid-Term Evaluation', Taysha Consulting, March 2017.

<sup>97</sup> Jacobus Cilliers, Oeindrilla Duba and Bilal Siddiqui, 'Can the Ruins of War be Healed? Experimental Evidence from Sierra Leone', Impact Evaluation Report 75, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, May 2018.

<sup>98</sup> Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

<sup>99</sup> Tatiana Kyselova, 'Understanding Dialogue in Ukraine: A Survey-Based Study, Analytical Report 2018', Mediation and Dialogue Research Center, Kyiv, 2018.

<sup>100</sup> Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

Finally, in common with other social change activists, local peacebuilders were not always able to convert attitudinal and knowledge change into new behaviors and practices. For example, 54% of participants in a survey in Sierra Leone felt that, while they could acknowledge what they had learned about how to co-exist peacefully, they had yet to draw on it consciously to inform their own relationships.<sup>101</sup> Other initiatives found people's intolerance harder to shift than had been hoped,<sup>102</sup> or that the cynicism of elite leaders was highly resilient to advocacy.<sup>103</sup> The structural obstacles to peace often need to be addressed over many years before they begin to shift.

These findings do not undermine the importance of local peacebuilding, but merely underline the need for local peacebuilders to ensure they match their ambitions with appropriate resources and capacity, and employ effective monitoring and evaluation. Given that monitoring and evaluation approaches are still being explored in the peacebuilding sector as a whole, this is a potential area for external support and collaboration.

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<sup>101</sup> Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Susan Shepler, 'Fambul Tok Program Evaluation', April 2015.

<sup>102</sup> Asfinawati dan Tati Krisnawaty, 'Facilitating Freedom of Religion and Belief: Evaluation Report of The AFSC Program Period of 2013–2015', American Friends' Service Committee, 2016.

<sup>103</sup> Annette Englert, 'Consultancy on the Evaluation of the INTERPEACE Voz di Paz Programme in Guinea-Bissau (2009–2010)', June 2011.



# Areas and mechanisms for support

Four areas potential areas of external support can be identified based on the evaluations surveyed for this report: Increased support in situations of chronic violence, scaling up, sustainability and evaluation. This has implications for which models of support are appropriate.

## Increased support to local initiatives in situations of chronic violence

How should we consider local initiatives that, although successful on their own terms, are vulnerable to deterioration in the wider context? Does the fact that the DRC, for example, remains deeply affected by chronic and violent political conflicts undermine the importance of local initiatives there? Such initiatives cannot, after all, be expected to bring such conflicts to an end in the short term.

The research reviewed suggests that local initiatives remain important, and may be even more important, in cases where higher-level or wider conflicts persist. Local peacebuilders have demonstrably improved people's access to peace in countries such as Burundi, DRC, Myanmar, South Sudan and Sudan, even while wider conflicts remain unresolved. Such conflicts may take many years to resolve, and may recur even after formal peace agreements and settlements have been achieved. The ability to prevent violence, therefore, as well as improving relations between and among people, and between people and those in power, remains critical. This implies increased support for local initiatives is needed in such contexts.

## Scaling up

Nevertheless, the impacts of local peacebuilding initiatives can sometimes seem isolated, and they risk being overwhelmed by external dynamics. While this is not a reason to dismiss them, it does suggest the need for scaling up where possible. The evaluations surveyed identify several ways local initiatives have done this, for example by formal and informal networking, or expanding their mandate or scale.

Many evaluations, though, identify unexploited scale-up opportunities, particularly opportunities for synergy between different initiatives. Even so, it would be a mistake to assume that all local initiatives have the capacity to expand or reach out to others. Any attempt at scaling up should be based on a clear-eyed assessment of capacity and opportunity, and driven by the organizations or communities themselves, rather than by external demands. Nevertheless, opportunities for linking and scaling up peacebuilding actions and impacts merit further exploration. This is potentially an area where careful external support could help local initiatives increase the scope and depth of their impact.

## Sustainability

This research conducted for this report was unable to assess the ongoing sustainability of local initiatives beyond the timeframe in which they were evaluated. While many are reported as already becoming embedded in local behaviors and structures, a number of evaluation reports recommend further efforts to improve sustainability. Converting knowledge and attitudinal change into behavioral change is not a given, and converting behavioral change into new norms and structures can be even more of a challenge. There is therefore a need to sustain local initiatives long enough for their impacts to become firmly embedded – for several years, at least.

## The evaluation deficit

This report identified successful examples of local peacebuilding based on a dataset of evaluations submitted in response to a call that was sent out in English, primarily to formal peacebuilding organizations. This was supplemented by internet searches and through existing DM&E databases. While this established a dataset sufficient for the research, it also exposed gaps in readily available evaluation data. There appears to be a deficit of independent, objective evaluations of local peacebuilding impact, and especially of efforts that:

- Contributed to stabilization and sustainable peace at a provincial or national level;
- Are unconnected to national or international programmes;
- Are informal in nature, i.e. not implemented by organizations as such;
- Are defined in terms other than peacebuilding, yet have had a significant impact on peace;
- Are continued over a long period of time and thus provide an opportunity to evaluate their sustainability.

Furthermore, the evaluations reviewed tend to stop at the limits of the actions under review, and seldom ask wider questions about the influence of the initiative on peace writ large, i.e. peace on a wider, societal scale. Asking this question in evaluations would not only allow reviewers to explore the wider impacts of a specific local initiative, it would also help highlight opportunities for synergy and scaling up.

## Partnership and support models

While this report is not specifically focused on models of support for local initiatives, several of the evaluations reviewed discuss this. Indeed, many of the evaluations were commissioned by international agencies as a result of their support to local organizations.<sup>104</sup> In a few cases, the local organizations had themselves been established by, or emerged from, programmes run by international NGOs. These were considered eligible for the report, provided they had subsisted independently for a number of years, and were locally led.

Broadly, the evaluations contain two main findings about support models. The first is that the combination of local and international has much to recommend it. Partners are able to blend local knowledge, capacity and interests with skills and knowledge gained from other conflict zones, and internationals are also able to secure financial resources. The second is that, in some cases, local voices are being drowned out in planning and reporting, unable to take the initiative as they should. The evaluations recommended more equal partnerships to prevent this form of disempowerment.

It is also worth repeating that evaluations commissioned by international programmes often fail to differentiate the impacts or roles of local partners from those of their international collaborators. Even when they do, many fail to clarify the extent to which the former are in genuine leadership positions, devising their own initiatives rather than merely implementing others' priorities. International organizations have an incentive to present outcomes and impacts as theirs, even when they should rightly be attributed to local partners. Evaluation reports should therefore differentiate roles and impacts more clearly, and report explicitly on the independence of local partners.

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<sup>104</sup> Among these: American Friends Service Committee, CARE, Christian Aid, Conciliation Resources, Cordaid, Cure Violence, International Alert, Interpeace, Life & Peace Institute, Nonviolent Peaceforce, PAX, Peace Direct, Peaceful Change Initiative, Search for Common Ground, and Y Care International.

# Recommendations

SDG 16 requires the world to have made significant progress towards sustainable peace by 2030.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, the data shows that the world is going in the opposite direction.<sup>106</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2282 on Sustaining Peace mandates the UN and its member states to implement and support peacebuilding initiatives at all stages of the conflict cycle, and 'reaffirms the importance of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding, whereby the responsibility for sustaining peace is broadly shared by the Government and all other national stakeholders and underlines the importance [...] of inclusivity'.<sup>107</sup> It also reaffirms that women's leadership and participation is essential, while the recent UN report, 'Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security', called for young people to be at the centre of peacebuilding approaches.<sup>108</sup> These statements are matched by other international policies, and by peacebuilding theory, which consistently state that local initiatives are essential for peace.

While there is no shared policy benchmark for the minimum proportion of peacebuilding aid that should be given to local initiatives, nor accurate data about the proportion that is currently flowing to local initiatives, the Charter for Change – which calls for the 'localization' of humanitarian aid – has set the initial benchmark at 20% of total humanitarian funding.<sup>109</sup>

Implementation of these policies and principles at scale has been conspicuously lacking so far. As this report clearly demonstrates, local peacebuilders are making a substantial impact, but need more support to expand and deepen their efforts. The UN is in the middle of a major reform of its approaches to peacebuilding, and of its implementation approaches more generally. Progress towards SDG 16 is under review in 2019. The following recommendations are therefore timely, and are aimed primarily at donors, multilaterals and international NGOs in the aid system:

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<sup>105</sup> UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

<sup>106</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, 'Global Peace Index 2018: Measuring Peace in a Complex World', June 2018. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/reports>

<sup>107</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016), Sustaining Peace.

<sup>108</sup> Youth, Peace & Security, 'The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth Peace and Security', UNFPA and UNPBSO, 2018.

<sup>109</sup> Charter for Change: Localisation of Humanitarian Aid. See: <https://charter4change.org/>

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**1. Increase levels of sustained funding to local peacebuilding initiatives at all stages of the conflict cycle, in ways that respect their leadership and autonomy**

- Support local peacebuilders in devising, leading and implementing their own initiatives, using funding instruments that allow them to remain responsive to local stakeholders, and adapt their approaches rapidly and independently when necessary;
- Use flexible funding models including core funding, and sustain these through repeated five-year funding cycles, to allow local initiatives time to have a measurable impact and convert changed knowledge and attitudes into new behaviors and structural change;
- Audit the volume of funding currently applied to local peacebuilding initiatives, and make timebound public commitments to increase this to at least 20% of all peacebuilding funds.

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**2. Collaborate with and support local peacebuilders to help maximize their direct and indirect impact**

- Support local peacebuilders who wish to test and evaluate models for scaling up their initiatives and impacts, for example by expanding their scope and scale, and linking up with others;
- Provide technical support to local peacebuilders, based on a collaborative analysis of their opportunities and needs, and on the complementarity of local and international knowledge and capacity;
- Support local civil society involvement in and influence over national peace processes;
- Use political influence to protect and enlarge the space for civil society.

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**3. Support local peacebuilders to generate and take advantage of learning about what works locally**

- Collaborate with local peacebuilders to fund and disseminate more external evaluations of their initiatives, considering in particular initiatives that are less formal or visible, those conducted at national level, those that prevent violent extremism, and those undertaken by women;
- Commission and disseminate research into progress towards 'peace writ large' in specific contexts, disaggregating the various contributions of local and external initiatives, and identifying the impact of synergies between them;
- Require evaluators to specify the distinct role and impacts of local peacebuilders in assessments of larger programmes in which they play a part, and to assess the degree to which they have space to exercise leadership and autonomy.

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**4. Adapt the way donors, multi-lateral organizations and international NGOs work, to make it easier to collaborate with and support local peacebuilders, and for local peacebuilders to access support**

- Simplify grant allocation and management, with a stronger focus on mutual trust and collaboration; use adaptive programming; lighten the compliance burden on both parties by adopting a greater tolerance of risk; and tailor programme design and grant application processes so that local initiatives are welcomed and included;
- Re-align performance management systems so staff are incentivized to spend more time with local civil society actors, and provide more support to local initiatives;
- Align recruitment and provide training so staff have the knowledge, skills and experience to work effectively and conflict-sensitively with local peacebuilders;
- Design country strategies and programmes to be more inclusive of local voices and actions, and reflective of their roles and priorities;
- Make grants to international organizations contingent on their support for and collaboration with local initiatives.

The online interactive version of this report can be found at:  
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The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) is the leading global peacebuilding network, with more than 100 member organizations working in 153 countries to end violent conflict and sustain peace. We bring together coalitions in key areas of strategy, policy, and evaluation to elevate the entire peacebuilding field, tackling issues too large for any one organization to address alone.

[www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org](http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org)

#### About Peace Direct

Peace Direct works with local people to stop violence and build sustainable peace. We believe that local people should lead all peacebuilding efforts, and this report explores the effectiveness of local peacebuilding, sharing real and impactful initiatives from around the world.

[www.peacedirect.org](http://www.peacedirect.org)

[www.peaceinsight.org](http://www.peaceinsight.org)

