

# Local peacebuilding

What works and why

Summary Report  
June 2019







# Abbreviations

|      |                                   |
|------|-----------------------------------|
| DRC  | Democratic Republic of Congo      |
| DM&E | Design, Monitoring and Evaluation |
| NGO  | Non-governmental organization     |
| SDG  | Sustainable Development Goals     |
| UN   | United Nations                    |

# Acknowledgements

**This is a summary version of a longer 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.

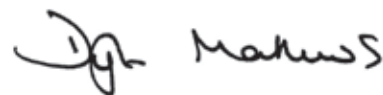
What links the examples above, and many other countries experiencing violence right now, is the proliferation of opportunities to build peace that are routinely being overlooked by the international community. While high level negotiations do often stall, there are countless opportunities to support 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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The full version of this report can be found at: [www.peaceinsight.org/reports/whatworks](http://www.peaceinsight.org/reports/whatworks)



# 1. Introduction

**Despite an increased commitment to peacebuilding on the part of donors and other international organizations, the world has become more violent in the past decade.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, while meeting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 is recognized as crucial to achieving all SDGs,<sup>2</sup> progress has been disappointing, and is currently under review.<sup>3</sup>**



As the UN Security Council has made clear, while peacebuilding can and must be supported by international efforts, peace is only durable when it is locally built, owned and sustained.<sup>4</sup>

**Local peacebuilding** – actions initiated, led and implemented by people in and from their own context, both at the grassroots and nationally – is therefore essential. Yet local peacebuilders are too often starved of support. Their political leaders can be unsupportive, meaning international help is crucial. International donors and organizations, however, are often unwilling or unable to step in. This can be due to risk aversion, prejudice and operational constraints, as does an unwarranted scepticism that local actions have the requisite depth, scope and scale of impact to reduce violence and shift societies from fragility to resilience.

Even so, local peacebuilders have demonstrated a significant impact on peace. This report therefore argues that the international community must give them more support.

Based on an examination of over 70 external evaluations of local initiatives, the report highlights and analyses their considerable success in **three domains of impact**:<sup>5</sup>

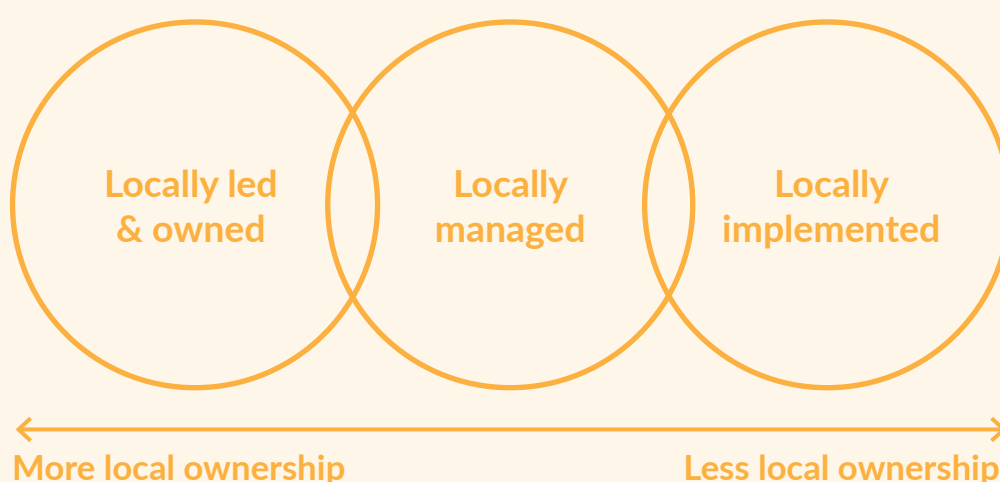
- Preventing, reducing or stopping violence;
- Improving relationships between and among people and peoples (i.e. 'horizontal relationships');
- Improving relationships between people and those who govern them ('vertical relationships').

The report further divides these impacts into **three ever-deepening levels of change**: Knowledge and attitudes, behavior, and structures (i.e. norms, systems, institutions) (illustrated in Figure 2 on page 8).

### 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.



1 Institute for Economics & Peace, 'Global Peace Index 2018: Measuring Peace in a Complex World', June 2018. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/reports>  
2 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>  
3 UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>  
4 UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016), Sustaining Peace.  
5 The full report, of which this is a summary, can be downloaded at <https://www.peaceinsight.org/reports/whatworks>

### **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'

**Three clusters of peacebuilding approaches** emerged from the evaluations studied:

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

The sustainable impacts on peace of these approaches are explored and analysed, forming the basis for practical recommendations aimed at donors, multilateral organizations and international NGOs.



La Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare









## 2. Local peacebuilding impact

**The peacebuilding initiatives reviewed for this report demonstrate the ways in which local initiatives have improved the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, as well as the norms and structures, on which peace is built (see Figure 2). The full version of this report contains an analysis of the three distinct clusters of peacebuilding approaches that emerged from the available evaluations.**



**Community-based initiatives** are particularly effective in situations of persistent, chronic conflicts taking place in the wider context. Such initiatives prevent local disputes from escalating, improve local governance, improve representative decision-making, give excluded people a voice, and improve relationships and communication within and between communities.

**Initiatives led by or engaging with specific groups** also have considerable impact. Locally appropriate trauma-healing techniques improve individuals' and communities' well-being, and improve peaceful co-existence and social cohesion. Other initiatives help women and young people gain greater voice and agency, and help prevent young people from being drawn into extremist or political violence.

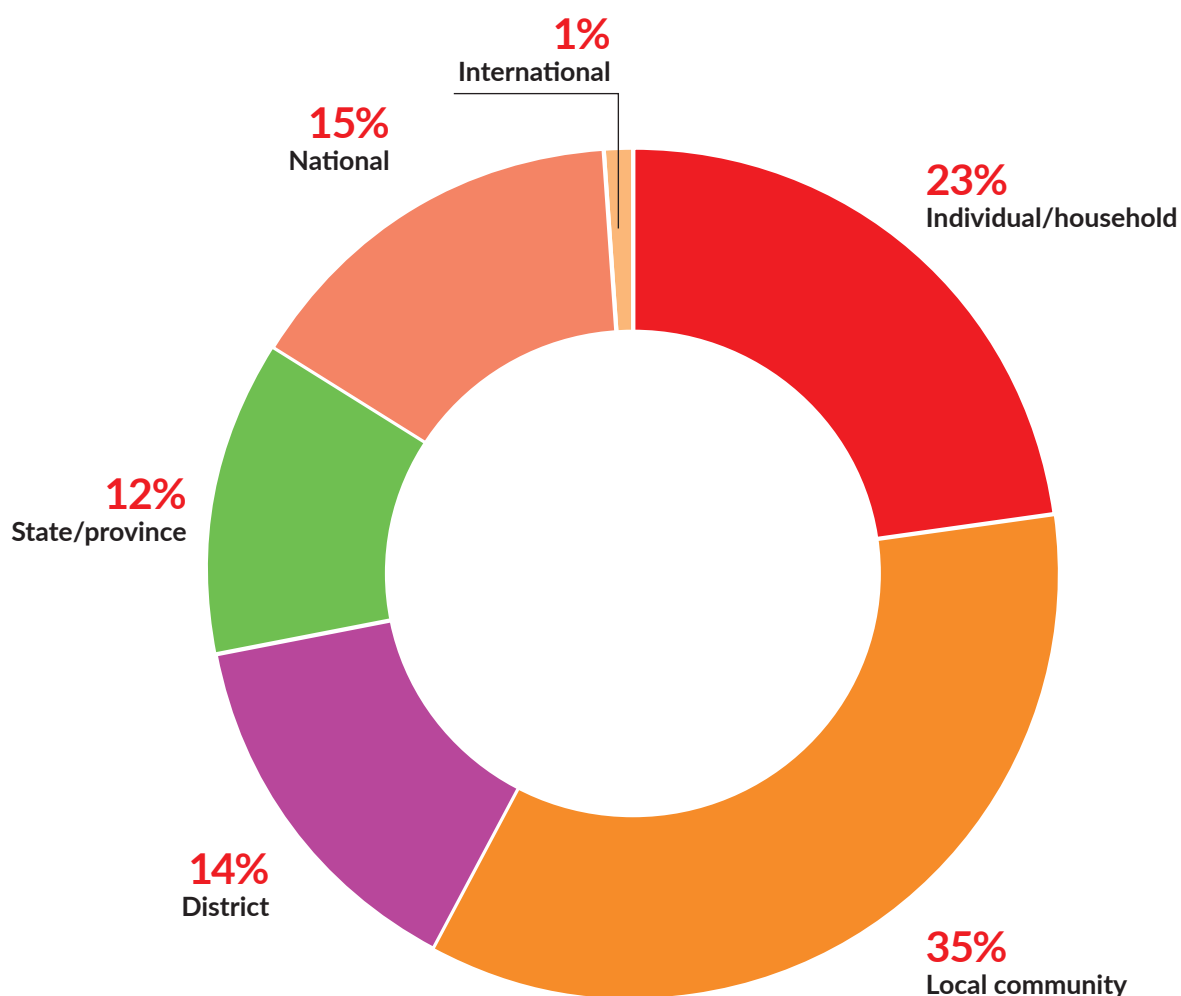
**National advocacy campaigns** shape societal discourse towards being more conducive for peace, as well as persuading governments to adopt policies

and governance approaches that enhance stability. Early-warning networks, meanwhile, reduce levels of violence and prevented people from harm.




Figure 1 illustrates that the initiatives studied had an impact at all levels, from the individual up to national and even international level.

The dataset used for the report was not comprehensive, nor do any of the initiatives reviewed claim to have fulfilled on their own the task of building peace. Nevertheless, Figure 2 illustrates that local initiatives have made effective contributions to reducing violence, as well as strengthening the sustainable capacity of their societies to minimize and manage conflicts. It is striking that they have achieved success not only in changing people's knowledge, attitudes and actions in the short term, but also in the far harder task of changing the norms and structures that shape people's behaviors over the long term.

Figure 1. Proportions of initiatives reviewed for this report, per the scale of impact achieved



**Figure 2. Local peacebuilding impacts identified in this research, in three levels of change and three domains of impact**

-  **Violence prevented, reduced or stopped**
-  **Horizontal relationships between and among people and peoples improved**
-  **Vertical relationships between people and those with authority and power improved**

| Changes in knowledge and attitudes  | Changes in behavior  | Structural changes (norms, systems, institutions)  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Improved optimism regarding and knowledge of peaceful approaches to addressing conflict</p> <p>Opinion-formers better understand how their words can shape peace or conflict</p> <p>Increased readiness to accept ex-fighters, refugees and others back into community</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 and response mechanisms prevent violence</p> <p>Youth less vulnerable to recruitment for violence</p> | <p>Communities safer</p> <p>Armed groups 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>  |
| <p>Improved empathy for 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 society</p>                    | <p>Proactive peace actions by ethnic, religious and community leaders to improve ties and cohesion</p> <p>People actively build practical links and improved relations with 'other' groups</p> <p>Mutual support actions</p> <p>Reintegration of returning refugees</p>              | <p>Increased commitment to using non-violent conflict-resolution mechanisms</p> <p>Practical solutions to conflicts achieved through dialogue</p> <p>Intra- and inter-community bodies petitioned to help solve disputes and build peace; some expand their geographic and sectoral mandate</p>  |
| <p>Better understanding between authorities and citizens of how to collaborate practically</p> <p>Improved mutual understanding between authorities and citizens on conflictual issues</p>  | <p>Dialogue and other participation mechanisms allow authorities to listen and consult readily</p> <p>Problems and relations with security services and armed groups resolved</p> <p>People engage more in 'civic' activities</p> <p>Increased voting rates</p>                      | <p>New governance approaches for conflict-resolution and policy adopted by communities, and local and national government</p> <p>Community-based peace initiatives and mechanisms integrate women, young people and minorities into decision-making</p> <p>More women achieve office</p> <p>Improved popular participation in decision-making and accountability</p> <p>Governments adopt pro-peace policies</p> |









# 3. What helps local peacebuilding succeed?

**The 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

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From the evidence reviewed, it is clear that small-scale peacebuilding interventions can have a cumulative impact, especially when they persist over a long time, expand the scope of their actions, where there is a clustering effect, or when initiatives link up together. For example, a peasants' association in Colombia improved the security of local communities over a period of two decades when they negotiated a set of rules that their members and all armed groups locally agreed to follow.<sup>6</sup>

Other initiatives had knock-on effects beyond their initial aims, improving, for example, inclusion and governance. Some community-based initiatives grew in scope or scale, while several expanded their mandate to include, for example, a wider 'developmental' role.

Others expanded geographically, sometimes at the request of neighbouring communities. While few of the evaluations explicitly or thoroughly examine the effect of clustering, some did find evidence of this. For example, the combined impact of local peace structures in areas of South Kivu in the DRC was found to be greater than the sum of their parts.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the examples of the Dushirehamwe women's peacebuilding network and the Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines au Burundi in Burundi, and of the Boendoe early-warning network elsewhere, illustrate the benefits of formal collaboration among local peacebuilders, based on a shared goal. In the former case, activists successfully advocated for changes to government policies, and in the latter, their ability to prevent local violence was enhanced through mutual solidarity.<sup>8</sup>

## Cost-effectiveness

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Local initiatives use low-cost, technically appropriate approaches. Local entities are, by their nature, less costly than international bodies. Not only this, they tap into local volunteerism and employ techniques – such as the non-clinical psychosocial methods used by the NGO Tree of Life Zimbabwe,<sup>9</sup> or the community-based structure established in many countries – that are realistically replicable in a constrained budget environment, and are thus scalable.

## Practical orientation

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Local initiatives tend to apply practical approaches to addressing issues, rather than framing action in terms of higher level concepts such as 'stability' and 'inclusion', as is often the case with international theories of change. While this was 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 support and participate in local initiatives. For example, an initiative by a group of NGOs in Burundi established highly practical approaches to engage young people in civic action, rather than electoral violence.<sup>10</sup>

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

7 Allana Poole, 'Baraza Justice: A Case Study of Community-Led Conflict Resolution in the D.R. Congo', *Peace Direct*, 2014.

8 Kiely Barnard-Webster, '"Strength Is From A Union; Working Together You Go Far": Understanding Collective Impact Using an Analytic Framework', CDA, 2018; Francois Lenfant, 'Making Women's Voices Heard in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in Burundi', *International Alert*, 2013.

9 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.

10 Alejandra Bernardo Andrés, 'Youth Inspired: Today and Tomorrow and Intamenwa (Indivisibles): Mobilizing Youth for Peaceful Elections', *Progress Evaluation*, Search for Common Ground, December 2014.

## Relevance

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Local initiatives are seen as relevant by local stakeholders, allowing them to achieve high levels of participation and support. Most evaluations found the activities under examination were both relevant on their own terms, and were deemed relevant by local actors. This was particularly true of grassroots initiatives, and of initiatives conducted by and with particular target groups. Such initiatives were able to tap into community support, especially from the people whose interests they represented. The relevance of advocacy was demonstrated by the relatively rapid uptake of many advocacy proposals. Similarly, the relevance of dialogue was demonstrated by the ready adoption of dialogue outcomes.

The research also found that local peacebuilding is relevant throughout the conflict cycle. For example, local peacebuilders prevented outbreaks of violence in Burundi; reduced levels of violence in situations of chronic conflict such as Colombia and Sudan; and enabled communities to recover from conflict, as well as build future resilience, in Sierra Leone and Rwanda.

## Local knowledge

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Local peacebuilders' contextual knowledge and networks allow them to mobilize the courage, leadership and capabilities that exist in potential within society. For example, when South Sudanese women were empowered by new peacebuilding knowledge and skills, and by their participation in local peace committees, they took the initiative in convincing young men in cattle camps to refrain from violence towards other ethnic groups.<sup>11</sup> Many of the initiatives reviewed for this report also showed evidence of rapid adaptability, especially grassroots, community-based actions. This stemmed from their responsiveness to local stakeholders, as well as perhaps a lack of bureaucratic restrictions when compared with international projects.

## Working with the grain, to change the grain

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Local initiatives mobilize latent popular energy in support of behavioral and structural change. Many evaluations noted the high level of support for change among citizens and leadership figures. The potential of people to contribute to peacebuilding is often untapped, and local initiatives can provide them with such opportunities, particularly with regard to women and young people. According to several evaluations, local leaders were also mobilized to participate in new approaches to peacebuilding, suggesting that local initiatives can inspire and create opportunities even for those in positions of power within the status quo.

In other words, while local initiatives engage with and build on existing norms and mechanisms, they can also change these, for example when partnering with the Somaliland government to help 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 collaborators, and the norms and systems they represent, will obstruct change. However, local peacebuilders appear well-placed 'to work with grain, to change the grain' – that is, to bring these actors 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 new, alternative governance mechanisms.

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11 'Portals 2 Peace and National Action Plan Evaluation report, 2019', Assistance Mission for Africa and PAX, 2019.



## 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 broad range of issues, and local peace initiatives confirm this. From the examples reviewed, 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

Relations and trust within and between communities can be readily improved by local initiatives. This is illustrated by the impact of community-based initiatives in post-war Sierra Leone, as well as in South Sudan, between Dinka and Nuer groups.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that trust is a latent public good, and that local actors are well-placed to bring it back to the surface when circumstances allow.



UNAMID

12 'Portals 2 Peace and National Action Plan Evaluation report, 2019', Assistance Mission for Africa and PAX, 2019.





## 4. Challenges

**Based on the evaluations reviewed for this report, there is plenty of evidence that local peacebuilding can achieve impact in terms of the goals established by the initiatives themselves, and of its relevance to accepted peacebuilding frameworks.**



Any form of peacebuilding has its limits, however, and local initiatives do not always fully succeed. Some are poorly conceived or executed, while others are undermined by external circumstances. Several evaluations sounded notes of caution, with one simply stating that the initiative in question had failed because the organization had overreached itself.

Even approaches that do work may not succeed in every case. For example, not everyone suffering from post-traumatic stress in Rwanda can expect to be healed.<sup>13</sup> In another example from Sierra Leone, while reconciliation was successful at a community level, it appeared to be associated with increased anxiety and depression for some individuals, suggesting that the process had stirred up feelings that had not been addressed.<sup>14</sup> This is a reminder of the need for regular evaluations in order to identify challenges as early as possible, and technical support to meet challenges when they are identified.

Some community-based peace initiatives are undermined by local leaders who fear their status and income at risk, or by spoilers whose interests are ill-served by stability. Meanwhile, some initiatives risk being instrumentalized and co-opted for political gain.<sup>15</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 provided an example of inadvertent exclusion, with dialogue organisers unable to involve people with extreme views.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere, attempts at inclusion were resisted due to patriarchal attitudes or prejudice against minorities.

When initiatives give rise to new bodies – new community-based peace structures, for example – these risk supplanting existing governance mechanisms, weakening the latter's ability to pursue peace.<sup>17</sup> The willingness of citizens to get involved should not be an excuse for the authorities to disengage.

Finally, in common with other social change activists, local peacebuilders are 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 had learned about how to coexist peacefully, they had yet to consciously draw on it in informing their own relationships.<sup>18</sup> Other initiatives found intolerance harder to shift than had been hoped,<sup>19</sup> or that the cynicism of elite leaders was highly resilient to advocacy.<sup>20</sup> Structural obstacles to peace often need to be addressed over many years before they begin to shift – a reminder of the need to invest in peacebuilding over a sustained period in order for change to be fully embedded.

These challenges 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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13 Stacy Hilliard, Eugene Ntaganda and Katie Bartholomew, 'Societal Healing & Participatory Governance: Mid-Term Evaluation', Taysha Consulting, March 2017.

14 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.

15 Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

16 Tatiana Kyselova, 'Understanding Dialogue in Ukraine: A Survey-Based Study, Analytical Report 2018', Mediation and Dialogue Research Center, Kyiv, 2018.

17 Mark M. Rogers and Dr Hippolyt Pul, 'Learning From and About Local Peace Groups: Thematic Evaluation Report', Conciliation Resources.

18 Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Susan Shepler, 'Fambul Tok Program Evaluation', Fambul Tok International, April 2015.

19 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.

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



## 5. Areas and mechanisms for support

**Four 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

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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 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 where higher level or wider conflicts persist. They 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 stop or prevent violence, therefore, and improve 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

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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. In Burundi, some community peace structures networked with others in nearby communities, while others expanded their geographic reach.<sup>21</sup> In Sudan, local peace committees took on a wider, developmental mandate, designed to address certain underlying causes of conflict.<sup>22</sup>

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.

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

22 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.

## Sustainability

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The 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

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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:

- Contribute 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

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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>23</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 recommend 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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23 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.









# 6 Recommendations

**SDG 16 requires the world to have made significant progress towards sustainable peace by 2030.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, the data shows that the world is going in the opposite direction.<sup>25</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>26</sup> It also reaffirms that women’s leadership and participation is essential, while the recent ‘Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security’ called for young people to be at the centre of peacebuilding approaches.<sup>27</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>28</sup>

Implementation of these policies and principles at scale has been conspicuously lacking so far. As this report 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:

## **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.

## **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.

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

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

26 UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016), Sustaining Peace.

27 Youth, Peace & Security, ‘The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth Peace and Security’, UNFPA and UNPBSO, 2018.

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



### 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.

### 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 full version of this report can be found at: [www.peaceinsight.org/reports/whatworks](http://www.peaceinsight.org/reports/whatworks)

## 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.

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## About the Alliance for Peacebuilding

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.

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