In the Spirit Partnership:

Operationalisation of Sustaining Peace at the Regional Level

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GPPAC

A Network of People
Building Peace

About this paper

This working paper sheds light on the benefits of operationalising strategic partnerships at the regional level from the perspective of the GPPAC network. It analyses and assesses the roles that the United Nations can play in the process; shares good practices introduced at the regional level by various actors; and outlines lessons learned that explain additional opportunities for action. The paper closes with specific recommendations for the 2020 Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace and the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture on how the United Nations can enhance existing work to bolster regional peacebuilding, with a specific focus on strengthening strategic and operational partnerships at the regional level.

About GPPAC

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a member-led global network that links civil society with relevant local, national, regional and international actors and institutions to collectively contribute to a fundamental change in dealing with violence and armed conflict: to advance a shift from reaction to prevention.

Founded in 2003, the GPPAC network consists of fifteen regional networks of local peacebuilding organisations worldwide; each region with its own priorities, character and agenda. At the regional level, we advocate and work for strengthening *regional coordination on peacebuilding in an inclusive and multi-stakeholder manner,* and *for the advancement of regional norms and frameworks for conflict prevention, sustaining peace and sustainable development.* We do this through locally-led inclusive initiatives, based on needs and priorities identified by our regional networks.

> **"Peace can no longer be confused with the diversification of violence."**
>
> *– GPPAC members in North America.*

1. How can Regional Peacebuilding be Operationalised?

Sustaining peace, as defined in the dual United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions (A/70/262 and S/2016/2282),[1] is "a goal and process [...] aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict". It shifts the starting point of analysis from looking only at the drivers of risk to also understanding the sources of resilience in a society, putting the focus on preventive rather than reactive operations.

Sustaining peace is primarily the responsibility of Member States as the principle of national ownership was underscored in the dual 2016 resolutions. However, today's realities dictate that sustaining peace cannot be accomplished by individual Member States alone and solely at the national level. Current conflict dynamics too often have regional and cross-regional trajectories and linkages.[2]

> **In this context, sustaining peace requires strengthened action to build strategic and operational regional partnerships with local peacebuilders, including women peacebuilders and youth groups, national actors and regional and sub-regional organisations.**

Operationalising strategic partnerships at the regional level includes:

- Coordinating **joint analysis and peacebuilding** strategies among all relevant stakeholders engaged in peacebuilding in each specific context;
- Building capacities and trustful relationships to exchange information and monitor cross-cutting **developments relevant to sustaining peace** at the regional level;
- Supporting existing or, when needed, creating **inclusive regional platforms as spaces for regular exchange and strategic collaboration**;
- Enabling **regional and cross-regional dialogue and cooperation**;
- Mapping and **mobilising actors best positioned to respond** to identified peace and security challenges.

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[1] UN. (2016). Security Council Resolution 2282. Retrieved from https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/sres2282.php.

[2] Conolly, L., Michielli L. (2019). Sustaining Peace in Liberia: New Reforms, New Opportunities? Retrieved from https://gppac.net/publications/sustaining-peace-liberia-new-reforms-new-opportunities

Conolly, L., Michielli L. (2019). Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea: A look at Conflict Prevention in Practice. Retrieved from https://gppac.net/publications/sustaining-peace-papua-new-guinea-look-conflict-prevention-practice

Okok Obuoga, B (2016) The Role of Inclusive Multi-stakeholder Partnerships in Enhancing Conflict Transformation in the Great Lakes. Retrieved from: https://gppac.net/files/2019-08/ACCORD-PPB-43.pdf

2. The Role of the United Nations at Regional Level: Quest for Clarity

The dual resolutions (A/70/262 and S/2016/2282)[3] set out that the role of the United Nations in delivering on the aspirations of sustaining peace is primarily to build its own capacities and support those of national actors (para. 32). United Nations peacebuilding activities are aimed at assisting countries emerging from conflict, reducing the risk of relapsing into conflict and laying the foundation for sustainable peace and development.

The United Nations peacebuilding actors, including the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and its Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), have a specific responsibility to support the operationalisation of sustaining peace.[4] However, these are not the only actors that should be involved in action.

The importance of engagement with regional and sub-regional organisations as well as strengthening the United Nations' capacities at the regional level are also strongly highlighted across various United Nations documents on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. **The main drivers for the process of increased cooperation at the regional level are the UN Secretary-General, the Peacebuilding Commission and the UN Security Council.**

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has supported the delegation of various responsibilities on peace and security to regional organisations, within the limits of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The recent UNSC resolution 2493,[5] for example, promotes the continued use of the UN's annual consultations with regional organisations to encourage the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda as it relates to their specific contexts, further advancing cooperation and sharing of best practices (OP 9b). In its recent Presidential Statement,[6] the Security Council welcomed the Peacebuilding Commission's collaboration with regional and

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[3] UN. (2016). Security Council Resolution 2282. Retrieved from https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/sres2282.php.

[4] Security Council Resolution 1645 (2005) emphasises that the Peacebuilding Commission shall, where appropriate, work in close consultation with regional and subregional organisations to ensure their involvement in the peacebuilding process in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter (OP. 11).
One of the niches outlined in the Peacebuilding Fund's 2017-2019 is investing in cross-border and regional settings, in addition to an expressed commitment to strengthen partnerships, particularly with (sub-)regional organizations.
The 2019 UN Reform of peace and security pillar requires support of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) in the operationalisation of the single regional structure designed to support a more holistic approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

[5] UN. (2019). Security Council Resolution 2493. Retrieved from https://undocs.org/S/RES/2493(2019)

[6] UN. (2019). Security Council Presidential Statement Encourages Peacebuilding Commission to Present Recommendations on Sustaining Peace Ahead of Mandate Reviews | UNITED NATIONS PEACEBUILDING. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/news/security-council-presidential-statement-encourages-peacebuilding-commission-present.

subregional organisations and emphasised the importance of further engagement with relevant regional actors on regional and country-specific issues with consent of the countries concerned.

Similarly, the recent **United Nations Reform on Peace and Security**[7] encourages the support for regional and sub-regional organisations and the development of regional peacebuilding initiatives. This includes increased engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission at the regional level. The Commission continues to strengthen its reputation as a unique platform to convene key partners, such as Member States, relevant UN actors, international financial institutions, regional and sub-regional organisations and civil society in support of nationally-identified peacebuilding priorities, with a view to enhance coordination of peacebuilding activities.

The United Nations Reform includes an ambitious goal to further strengthen regional infrastructures, capacities and coordination on peacebuilding. One element of this effort is the operationalisation of the single regional structure designed to support a more holistic approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This structure is aimed at linking prevention, mediation, conflict-resolution, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding, while connecting them to long-term development. The Reform also includes strengthening regional responsibilities of three Assistant Secretaries-General and the integration of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the former Department of Political Affairs (DPA) into the new Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). As explained by GPPAC members in the Middle East and North Africa, this regional bridge may also facilitate smoother transitions from a mission into alternative models of the UN country presence, as both political and peacekeeping missions are now expected to work with the same regional teams within this structure.

Specific attention is given to the partnership with the African Union and other regional organisations in the Sahel, Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, building on the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. This has been done, for example, through a workshop held in October 2018 on operationalising the African Union Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development in the Sahel.[8] In addition to the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the UN worked to develop a 2018-2030 Support Plan for the Sahel, integrating development, humanitarian action, human rights and peace while encouraging partnership between relevant UN and other regional actors. Another important effort is the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative to promote the prevention, management

[7]UN. (2019). Peace and Security Reform. Retrieved from https://reform.un.org/content/peace-and-security-reform.
[8] Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding. (2018). Chairman's Summary "Operationalising the African Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy in the Sahel Region: Charting the Way Forward". Retrived from https://www.cairopeacekeeping.org/admin/images/user_uploads/20181025%20Expert%20Workshop%20Operationalizing%20AUPCRD%20in%20Sahel%20-%20Chairman%20Summary(2).pdf

and resolution of conflicts in Africa.[9] This work serves to align expectations of different actors and supports regional coordination.

The Peacebuilding Commission also enhanced the number of meetings on regional issues with regional organisations both in New York and in the respective regions. Subsequently, the **United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office** (PBSO) has signed memoranda of understanding with the African Union (AU) and the **Economic Community of West African States** (ECOWAS), and it supported regional and national efforts to coordinate and reinforce peacebuilding in Burkina Faso, Burundi and the Central African Republic.

Regional approaches have also manifested in stronger partnerships between the Peacebuilding Fund and regional organisations, such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).[10] The United Nations has increased the number of liaison offices to regional and sub-regional partners, including the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

> The United Nations continues to encourage Member States to bring disputes to and broker peace at the regional level, in addition to the international level. The Group of Five in Bissau (African Union, Community of Portuguese Language Countries, ECOWAS, European Union, United Nations) have demonstrated how the operational partnership between regional and international actors can support the consolidation of peace, stability and development in Guinea-Bissau.[11]

This further merges with the development reform, where **the Development Coordination Offices (DCOs)** work to enhance collaboration among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities in specific countries, as well as to enhance capacity of regional offices to provide analytical and programmatic support.

The **UN Development Programme (UNDP)** contributes to these efforts through its long history as a knowledge broker, through its partnership and capacity development facilitator in the context of South-South Cooperation (SSC), and through regional partnerships, including by supporting systems to connect partners; encouraging dissemination of best practices and proven solutions; maintaining programmes for gender-sensitive job, skills and leadership development. In Asia, UNDP supports the N-Peace Network, a multi-country network of peace advocates in Asia that

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[9] ACCORD. (2018). Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and ACCORD organise CSO Roundtable. Retrieved from https://www.accord.org.za/news/global-partnership-for-the-prevention-of-armed-conflict-gppac-the-west-african-network-for-peacebuilding-wanep-and-accord-organise-cso-roundtable/

[10] UN. (2019). Speakers Highlight Efforts in Sahel, Partnerships with Regional Organisations, as General Assembly Considers Annual Reports of Peacebuilding Commission, Fund. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12145.doc.htm

[11] UN. (2019). Security Council Press Statement on Situation in Guinea-Bissau. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13989.doc.htm

seeks to advance Women, Peace and Security by building the capacity of selected women and men to create institutional and social shifts in order to prioritise the inclusion and empowerment of women and girls and change the discourse on the role of women in peacebuilding.[12]

One of the best practices in supporting national and regional capacities to sustain peace stems from the UNDP-DPPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention[13] - a signature cross-pillar initiative that provides catalytic support to UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams to build bridges between the political and development pillars of the United Nations work towards stronger action on sustaining peace and the prevention of violent conflict. In South Caucasus, the regional Peace and Development Advisor has been working specifically on identifying entry points for sub-regional peacebuilding initiatives, engaging local peacebuilders and civil society networks in a South Caucasus-wide dialogue on sub-regional challenges and priorities, and building support among key international partners and donors for new peace and development initiatives.

Local ownership also receives more recognition within this system. In his 2018 report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, reflecting on the UN's engagement with civil society, the UN Secretary-General asked for the development, in consultation with civil society, of "guidelines on system-wide engagement with civil society for sustaining peace" (para. 61). He also asked that the "United Nations peace operations and United Nations Country Teams develop community-engagement strategies in consultation with national and local stakeholders, particularly youth and women's groups, and that these be shared, monitored and reviewed with local actors" (para. 59). The Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) has led a unique format of a joint UN-CSO Working Group (together with the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), International Peace Institute (IPI) and Quakers UN Office (QUNO)) to develop the UN system-wide community-engagement guidelines on peacebuilding and sustaining peace through an inclusive and consultative process.

Despite the recent Interim Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/73/890-S/2019/448) noting that "strategic partnerships with regional and sub-regional partners on peacebuilding and sustaining peace remain a priority for the United Nations," the implementation of the United Nations Reform and the recommendations of the 2018 Secretary-General's Report at the regional level call for greater clarity, as the information on how regional peacebuilding architecture is being built up is largely missing from the discussions,

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[12] UNDP. (2018). Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Work in Asia-Pacific II. Retrieved from: https://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/democratic_governance/conflict-prevention-and-peacebuilding-work-in-asia-pacific-II.html

[13] UN. (2019). Peace and Development Advisors - Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention. Retrieved from: https://dppa.un.org/en/peace-and-development-advisors-joint-undp-dppa-programme-building-national-capacities-conflict

and due to the complexity of the UN frameworks, relevant terminology and processes make it complicated for a variety of actors to engage proactively.

Another challenge is individual commitment. Since the UN Secretaries-General, Peacebuilding Commission and the UN Security Council are the key drivers of regional engagement, decline in interest from these institutions can dampen the momentum towards building effective regional peacebuilding architecture. This is specifically visible in the context of frozen conflicts, such as those in South Caucasus. The local peacebuilders in this region believe that the region has been relegated to the "backyards" of the international peace agenda. With little discussions and efforts on behalf of the regional and international community to support the spirit of sustaining peace in the region, it lacks visibility and progress.

As it stands, the practical articulation of the United Nations regional peacebuilding work provides insufficient clarity, creating gaps in coordinating and implementing capacity and reiterates expectation mismatches among the United Nations bodies, funds and programmes and regional actors. The United Nations system-wide coordinated leadership and operational support at the regional level is critical to enhance the coordination of peacebuilding efforts, advance global commitment to conflict prevention and create platforms for dialogue that support local priorities and national capacities in a complementary and sustained manner.

3. Who is who at the Regional Level?:
A Review of the Key Stakeholders

Regional actors and mechanisms[14] form a crucial link between norms, mechanisms and capacities at local, national, and global levels in efforts to sustain peace. Their importance is borne out by the fact that sustaining peace is most effective in regions where regional architectures have demonstrated mandates and capacities to address conflict and have invested in strengthening inclusive and accountable processes.

Peacebuilding actors that operate at the regional level are best positioned to understand and identify the main gaps and root causes of crises with regional dimensions, while providing platforms to address these crises before they can develop into intractable conflicts. In peacebuilding, their local capacities and context-specific expertise remain key in sustaining peace.

Local peacebuilding networks play a unique role by contributing to the articulation of a people-centred perspective that is often missing in state-centric security analysis. This perspective includes important expertise, grassroots knowledge and localised contexts and representations that play a key role in the analysis of conflict dynamics, power relations, actors and enable early warning and response. Due to the flexibility of their structures and their close relations with diverse grassroots constituencies, local peacebuilders are often able to reach out to places and actors that official government officials or international actors cannot. Moreover, the staff turnover, changes in priorities and fluctuating resource transitions of the United Nations' on the ground provides incentives for investing into the work of local peacebuilders who have vested interest in the success of peacebuilding initiatives.

Regional and sub-regional organisations can provide localised support to stem the crisis from escalating. Being proximal to the crisis neighbourhood and having more acceptance among local populations, they are often in a better position to understand and influence it. Their proximity also demands that they have a long-term interest in sustaining peace. At the same time, geopolitical realities have made it difficult for these organisations to engage constructively in peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the regional level. The situation in Colombia demonstrates limited engagement of the Organisation of American States (OAS), while the OAS can be seen as a natural partner.

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[14] The key regional organisations highlighted by the members of GPPAC network include: the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Melanesia Spearhead Group (MSG), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Organsation of American States (OAS), League of Arab States (LAS), the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), African Union (AU), International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Inter Governmental Agency on Development (IGAD), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), European Union (EU), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Mano River Union (MRU), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The major bodies, funds and programmes of the United Nations include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), UN Women.

Member States form another important actor at the regional level, both as separate actors as well as members of regional and international organisations. Regional partnerships require Member States buy-in to maintain their importance, develop strategic vision, and ensure appropriate implementation. For example, this has led to the fact that some Member States are not giving the necessary support to multilateral organisations like the United Nations, the African Union, and Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) to effectively prevent and manage conflict.[15]

Limited or overlapping mandates of the United Nations and the above-mentioned stakeholders create confusion and competition at the regional level. For example, the lack of a conflict prevention mandate in the OAS has limited its ability to actively respond to situations in its Member States. Engaging in efforts to strengthen the rule of law and peaceful, just and inclusive societies contribute to effective peacebuilding and sustaining peace, but cannot serve a substitute to peacebuilding programming. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has an effective specific mandate and practice, however, the alignment between its work and that of regional and international actors such as the African Union and the United Nations is at times not optimal.

Local networks, regional and sub-regional organisations, and Member States all play vital and varied roles at the regional level. The United Nations needs to upscale its capacities in ensuring coherence and complementarity at the regional level. This can be achieved by mapping existing actors and their mandates and providing the support needed to ensure that strong and operational regional partnerships can be enabled to address the broader scope of issues relevant to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This requires capacity for assessment and flexibility in providing necessary support.

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[15] Forti, D., & Singh, P. (2019, October). Toward a More Effective UN-AU Partnership on Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management. Retrieved from https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1910_UN-AU_Partnership-1.pdf.

4. Sustaining Peace at the Regional Level: Experiences of Local Peacebuilders

As a network of organisations that operate through the regional secretariats, GPPAC's structure provides a good practice example on how to support the work done by local peacebuilders to sustain peace at the regional level in a complementary, comprehensive and coherent manner and build partnerships at the regional level. A recent survey of the GPPAC membership revealed that GPPAC regional networks serve as the key entry points on policy engagement and capacity building for local peacebuilders at the regional level.

Since 2011, GPPAC has regularly facilitated the sharing of experiences amongst the United Nations, regional organisations and local peacebuilders from different parts of the world, to examine current policies, infuse local realities within global and regional frameworks, share lessons and best practices, create greater synergies and encourage joint solutions.

The most recent exchange was the conference "Achieving Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: The Role of Global and Regional Intergovernmental Organisations and Civil Society Actors" in September 2019 in Washington, D.C. The Conference specifically highlighted the important peacebuilding work undertaken at the regional level by the United Nations, regional organisations and local peacebuilders in a variety of contexts. It spearheaded the creation of a Working Group, which aims to bring together regional organisations, local civil society and the United Nations to strengthen capacities, cooperation and complementarity between various stakeholders at the regional level.

Through the diverse experiences of GPPAC members, we identified five key benefits of regional peacebuilding:

- First, effective **regional peacebuilding coordination enables policy coherence and fosters complementarity.** When the United Nations, regional organisations, civil society, and other external actors are working together, implementation of sustaining peace tends to be more effective as it avoids programmatic overlaps and repetitions.
- Second, for local peacebuilders, including women and youth, who are experiencing challenges breaking the stereotypes and engaging with national governments, meaningful participation at the regional level provides another **opportunity to mobilise support for their cause.**
- Third, growing isolation between people living on different sides of conflict leads to further separation and growing mistrust, leading to instability and potential relapse of conflict. Regional level engagement has the capacity to **open a space for dialogue on a neutral territory and on a mutually acceptable basis**, where trust and effective partnerships can be built.
- Fourth, regional partnerships further encourage norm setting on peacebuilding and **transformation of global norms and standards to the local contexts**, creating a platform for the adoption and improvement of laws, policies and programmes that are context-specific and appropriate, ensuring wider inclusivity in the ownership of processes.
- Fifth, **peacebuilding and sustaining peace require a long-term commitment** that the United Nations, with its charged agenda and stretched resources, is often not best placed to furnish.

The creation of regional spaces and platforms that allow for dialogue, joint analysis and the advancement of regional norms, frameworks and actions with international, regional and local peacebuilding actors serves as a useful model that can be supported by the United Nations in various contexts. Depending on the context and capacity, the United Nations can either play the role of a facilitator through the convening role of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the capacity for providing a platform for preventive diplomacy as well as other activities managed by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs' regional offices, or provide relevant operational support for best-suited actors to lead operationalisation of sustaining peace at the regional level.

5. Best Practices in Operationalising Sustaining Peace at the Regional Level

Successful examples have shown that peacebuilding and sustaining peace are most effective when international efforts build on regional ones and support national and local peacebuilding actors (and vice versa).

Coordinating joint analysis and peacebuilding strategies among major stakeholders: Example from West Africa [16]

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been particularly successful in developing and operationalising mechanisms for conflict prevention and sustaining peace using reliable information from the ground. GPPAC's founding member the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) has a strategic partnership with ECOWAS in the implementation of a regional early warning and response system referred to as ECOWARN. This partnership allows ECOWAS to access verified indicators and information collected and analysed in a purposeful manner by WANEP. Such an engagement offers at the same time the opportunity for local peacebuilders to contribute to Track I response to conflicts and, through the analytical, information collation and networking role of WANEP to also inform policy debates and development. This information analysis and reaction system has contributed to preventing electoral violence in Gambia and constructively resolved electoral disputes in Côte d'Ivoire, among many others.

The project enables ECOWAS and WANEP to gain access to real-time community-based conflict information, which were hitherto uncollected and unreported but highly needed for the purposes of operationalisation of sustaining peace in the region.

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[16] WANEP. (2019). Election Monitoring Analysis and Mitigation in West Africa. Retrieved from https://www.wanep.org/wanep/files/2019/Apr/EMAM_Publication.pdf.

Monitoring cross-cutting developments relevant to sustaining peace at the regional level: Lessons Learned from Asia-Pacific

Engagements between a network of local women peacebuilders in the Pacific and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) led to the adoption by Pacific Forum Leaders of the Regional Action Plan (RAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). This was the first regional action plan on WPS and was designed to support and guide Member States to localise the WPS agenda into national policies and actions. The formulation of the RAP drew on the ongoing recognition of expertise and knowledge of local women peacebuilders and informed and strengthened peacebuilding work at the regional level, as well as the collaboration with the UN system and the PIF via a series of consultative processes that resulted in the adoption of the regional Human Security Framework, a Conflict Prevention Framework and Security Sector Governance Framework. Through regional security consultative processes, local peacebuilders lobbied strongly for the broadening of the definition of security to include human security, humanitarian assistance, environmental security, and regional cooperation. This expanded notion of peace and security was a welcome development and an opportunity to enhance a peace-development-humanitarian nexus implementation in the region in line with the 2018 Boe Declaration.[17]

Supporting existing or, when needed, creating inclusive regional platforms as spaces for regular exchange and strategic collaboration: Example from the Pathways for Peace

Systematic and meaningful engagement of civil society can be ensured by creating engagements with direct follow-up opportunities. In 2018, GPPAC convened a series of engagements between local peacebuilders, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank and regional organisations to review and contextualise the Pathways for Peace report to inform its further contextualisation at national and regional levels. This included a regional consultation with the United Nations Development Programme, World Bank and the African Union that mobilised local peacebuilders to be involved in follow-up initiatives that seek to organise joint regional and national approaches to sustaining peace, such as the supporting national dialogues in Cameroon. This extends beyond the symbolic nature of civil society participation in a variety of existing platforms.

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[17] PIF Secretariat. (2018). Boe Declaration on Regional Security. Retrieved from: https://www.forumsec.org/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/

Enabling Regional and Cross-Regional Dialogue and Cooperation: Example from the Ulaanbaatar Peace Process [18]

The Ulaanbaatar Process, a civil society-led dialogue for peace and stability in Northeast Asia, was launched in 2015 in the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar. The process is coordinated by the GPPAC Global and Northeast Asia Regional Secretariats, and Mongolian non-governmental organisation Blue Banner. It promotes effective regional Track II dialogue, seeking to strengthen the role of local peacebuilders as a complement to Track I processes, towards the development of an institutionalised regional peace and security mechanism for Northeast Asia - a region lacking such a framework. This process is unique in that it creates a space for the perspectives of local peacebuilders from across the region, including both Koreas, to be heard in the same forum.

Map and mobilise actors best positioned to respond to identified peace and security challenges: Formalising Commitments to Sustaining Peace [19]

In efforts to advance multi-stakeholder processes for conflict prevention and sustaining peace, GPPAC worked to find creative ways to engage in peacebuilding within the scope of their mandates, including by building the capacity of relevant actors to address the root causes and facilitate civil society engagement. In September 2019, GPPAC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Organisation of American States (OAS) to stimulate the role of civil society and regional organisations in the promotion of peace and the prevention of violent conflict, despite the absence of a peacebuilding mandate at the OAS. As the first step in furthering such a commitment, GPPAC co-hosted a discussion with peacebuilding experts in New York aimed to further explore the opportunities to translate a peacebuilding mandate in the region and explore avenues for mobilising and enhancing the capacities of regional organisations to support peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Effective regional peacebuilding requires harnessing the capacities and mandates of all existing peacebuilding actors at the regional level. This requires creating an enabling environment which works with regional organisations and local peacebuilders. Together global, regional and local peacebuilding actors can carry out conflict analysis and strengthen structural, strategic and operational response capacities. To this end, the necessary political space and regional connections must be fostered, resources facilitated and joint information sharing, analysis, planning and implementation achieved.

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[18] GPPAC. (2019). Dialogue in Northeast Asia. Retrieved from https://gppac.net/dialogue-northeast-asia.
[19] Organisation of American States (OAS). (2019). OAS and GPPAC Sign Agreement to Promote Peaceful Coexistence. Retrieved from https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/photonews.asp?sCodigo=FNE-97542.

Conclusion: Where do we go from here?

The ultimate purpose of sustaining peace as "a goal and a process" cannot come to fruition without strong operational partnerships at the regional level with local peacebuilders, including women peacebuilders and youth groups, national actors, regional and sub-regional organisations and financial institutions.

Given the variety of contexts and political dynamics within different regions, it is not yet feasible to come up with a unified framework for regional peacebuilding coordination,[20] neither is it necessary because regional capacities, activities and commitments differ from context to context.

Increased United Nations leadership and operational support can develop needed capacities and bolster commitment of different regional actors; create spaces and opportunities for dialogue, joint analysis and policy development; and elevate expertise that is currently missing or being side-lined.

Critical actions needed from the United Nations peacebuilding actors to operationalise the sustaining peace at the regional level include:

- Building **the capacity of the regional organisations, national actors and local peacebuilders** to undertake a greater role in peacebuilding and sustaining peace by:

  - Equipping the United Nations regional presence to provide effective offices and technical and logistical support to regional stakeholders;

  - Supporting institutionalised capacity of regional actors via the Peacebuilding Fund and ongoing operational support from the UN Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA) for building national and regional commitment, developing specific programming and engaging in partnerships;

  - Increasing regular engagement of the Peacebuilding Commissions and DPPA's regional offices with regional organisations and local peacebuilders, including on cross-border issues;

  - Ensuring operational flexibility of best-placed actors to assess and build capacity and opportunities to sustain peacebuilding work long-term;

  - Continue raising awareness about normative frameworks on peacebuilding and the role of the United Nations, its funds and programmes at the regional level, developing

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[20] For example, while some regional organisations are explicitly geared towards peace and security issues, others are oriented more towards economic integration. This can make it difficult to reach shared understandings of concepts, to agree on common strategies and to cooperate on issues such as conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Moreover, regional organisations possess different capacities. As far as financial and human resources are concerned, a vast discrepancy between regional and regional organisations exists, which can be attributed to global imbalances in wealth and power. UNU, GPPAC. (2015). Strengthening the Global Peacebuilding Architecture Through Chapter VIII. Retrieved from: https://unu.edu/projects/strengthening-the-global-peacebuilding-architecture-through-chapter-viii.html

targeted guidelines for various stakeholders on how to engage with the United Nations both at the normative, technical and operational levels;

○ Ensuring that peace and development advisors, both national and regional, as well as relevant staff at the UN Country Teams and missions, have relevant regional expertise in order to best reflect relevant contexts of the region across all areas of work;

○ Developing bilateral memoranda of understanding between the United Nations individual bodies, funds and programmes and regional partners to act as flexible frameworks of cooperation based on mutual confidence and reliance.

● Monitoring **peace and conflict developments** in the region while coordinating information-sharing between relevant actors by:

○ Developing and strengthening monitoring capacities of local peacebuilding organisations as well as the infrastructure needed to mobilise a timely response from relevant partners to early-warning signs of potential violence;

○ Supporting the development of monitoring and response mechanisms managed by the UN Regional Offices that are informed by real-time community-based conflict information;

○ Establishing and improving, when needed, formal communication structures between various peacebuilding actors at national, regional and global levels.

● Encouraging **joint analysis and peacebuilding strategies** among stakeholders engaged in peacebuilding in each specific context by:

○ Prioritising capacity building for regional organisations and local peacebuilders on coordinating joint analysis and conducting ongoing conflict-sensitive assessment;

○ Establishing regional working groups, composed of heads of UN agencies, regional organisations, local peacebuilding organisations, Member States, financial institutions and donors, that meet regularly to share analysis and coordinate common messaging and strategies;

○ Ensuring that the UNDP-DPPA Joint Programme capacitates Peace and Development Advisors in the region to effectively communicate peace and conflict developments to all regional peacebuilding actors;

○ Encouraging closer cooperation between all UN bodies, including the Peacebuilding Commission, the Security Council, Human Rights Council, as well as the funds and programmes, on relevant regional developments, including exchange of information and providing recommendations by the Commission to the Council;

○ Ensuring that the information about UN-led meetings and country visits is available widely well in advance and local peacebuilder's expertise is sought out to help shape the agenda and priorities.

- Supporting existing or, when needed, creating **inclusive regional platforms as spaces for regular exchange and strategic collaboration** by:

  ○ Establishing and strengthening existing regional platforms and partnerships to analyse and understand risk and share lessons learned and ensuring regular and meaningful engagement of local peacebuilders;

  ○ Ensuring that the Peacebuilding Commission effectively promotes and sustains attention on countries on its agenda and creates space for a wide range of actors to participate in meetings on specific country situations;

  ○ Considering within the UN Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs to support annual regional convenings for the United Nations, regional organisations and local peacebuilders to assess and take stock of regional peacebuilding progress and processes, while enabling better adjustment of the processes in line with existing gaps and sharing good practices from relevant contexts.

- Mapping and **mobilising actors best positioned to respond** to identified peace and security challenges by:

  ○ Encouraging and supporting regional organisations in operationalising the peacebuilding and sustaining peace resolutions by integrating it into their policies and priorities;

  ○ Ensuring that the UN Regional Offices conduct regular mapping of peacebuilding activities and actors that have a potential to strengthen peace, prevent conflicts, continue to provide needed support to sustain such efforts, ensure complementarity, coherence and non-repetition;

  ○ Enabling local peacebuilders to freely and securely conduct peacebuilding work, collect data and meaningfully inform peacebuilding work across different levels;

  ○ Encouraging the Peacebuilding Commission to provide a forum for the identification of the best possible regional actors for the deployment of required interventions and the development of a coordinating structure in a way that encourages inclusivity, sustainability and continuity;

  ○ Encouraging the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and UN Regional Offices to recruit a dedicated Civil Society Liaison Officer or create another formal mechanism for engaging with local peacebuilders, following the examples of the Civil Society Advisory Groups available in UN Women, UNDP, and other UN agencies;

  ○ Encouraging all UN Peacebuilding Actors and the UN Country Teams to draw on the Community Engagement Guidelines to improve engagement between the UN and local peacebuilders.

- Ensuring **appropriate and sustainable long-term funding** for regional peacebuilding work:

  ○ Broadening partnerships to include a wider array of financial stakeholders, including regional development banks and international financial institutions, while encouraging inter-sectoral funding;

  ○ Ensuring that the appropriate and sustainable financial and human resources are deployed in support of the process ought to be increased;

- Encouraging donors and the United Nations to provide financial and technical support for the creation of multi-stakeholder regional platforms;
- Concentrating support from the Peacebuilding Fund towards filling the gaps that appear as a result of comprehensive analysis of the available funding streams;
- Encouraging the participation of donors in meetings on the development of regional prevention and response strategies.