

## Towards a People-Centered Approach to Sustaining Peace through Operational and Policy Coherence

*Recommendations on operational and policy coherence  
for the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review*

May 2020

This submission draws from the joint work of the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS), Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflicts (GPPAC), and the Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network as part of the SDG16+ Localisation Consortium on **advancing operational and policy coherence for prevention, sustainable development and peace** through advancing a people-centered approach rooted in local ownership across all pillars of the UN work. This document serves to inform the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review by presenting key messages and recommendations critical for the continued advancement and implementation of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

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### **Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace encourages a critical shift from reaction to prevention.**

Formulating sustaining peace in resolutions as “a goal and process...aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict,” Member States now universally recognise that efforts must be taken to design and implement policy, and commit to planning that contributes to building peace before, during and after conflict.

**Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace<sup>1</sup> places the needs and experiences of people and communities at the center** of strategy and action “across all three pillars of the United Nations’ engagement [...] and in all its dimensions” (PP 8). Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace therefore recognises the interlinkage between social, economic, and political situations, as well as perceptions and grievances which together often form or exacerbate root causes of conflict and societal violence.

**Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace requires local peacebuilding action to be supported in the times of peace and from the outset of a crisis**, and not after social, economic, humanitarian and political situations give rise to violence (S/RES/2282; PP 7). Locally-led and locally-owned peacebuilding action has proven to be critical for preventing crises and building peaceful, just and inclusive societies. It encompasses action on institution-building, social cohesion, behavioral

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<sup>1</sup> The dual resolutions of the UN General Assembly (A/70/71) and Security Council (S/RES/2282) on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_res\\_2282.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2282.pdf)

change, and beyond. Today's realities, including the COVID-19 pandemic, underscore the importance of continued and enhanced support for local peacebuilding action.

**Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace requires the United Nations to take the following actions in order to provide coherent and strategic action in support of sustaining peace:**

## **1. The United Nations should support the development of integrated and inclusive national prevention, development and peace agendas**

As recognised by the dual resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, sustainable development is critical to sustaining peace, and vice versa. The recent United Nations Reforms already provide a platform for integrating peacebuilding into national development plans, ensuring that resources are allocated to efforts dedicated to addressing risks and building sustainable peace. It provides operational guidance on how to ensure that sustainable development and sustaining peace reinforce each other.

**Local ownership should guide the way the UN and national actors approach their strategies for the integration of peacebuilding and development priorities.** By its nature, the work of civil society does not always fall specifically under specific UN agendas, and therefore can provide necessary expertise to break down silos between governmental institutions and link all relevant agendas for more peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

**Only fully integrated and coordinated policy approaches and strategies for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and development can release the full 'transformative power' of these agendas.**

**UN in Liberia:** The resident coordinator's office has been able to lead an integrated approach, aligning the UN development assistance framework with the government of Liberia's national development plan. The empowered resident coordinator is well positioned to bridge operational activities and agencies in support of the country's efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. And the resident coordinator's office has shown a willingness not only to align its work with the government's priorities but also to partner with regional organisations and local civil society organisations<sup>2</sup>.

**SDGs in the Pacific:** The impact of climate change has established a need for methodologies that link peacebuilding, climate change, human security, development, human rights, and women, peace, and security.<sup>3</sup> The inclusive peace-development-humanitarian nexus is a unique approach that requires synthesising various working methods, agendas and approaches together to redefine security, transform institutions, and ensure equality and inclusion. Developed and implemented by

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<sup>2</sup> Sustaining Peace in Liberia: New Reforms, New Opportunities? (2019) By GPPAC and the International Peace Institute - Conolly, L., Minchelli L. [https://gppac.net/files/2019-05/1905\\_Sustaining-Peace-in-Liberia.pdf](https://gppac.net/files/2019-05/1905_Sustaining-Peace-in-Liberia.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> And She Persisted for Peace: Redesign the Table. By GPPAC-Pacific. <https://gppac.net/resources/and-she-persisted-peace-redesign-table>

local peacebuilders in Bougainville, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu, this approach effectively spotlights the key gaps in policy action, and mobilises relevant stakeholders to address the challenges through policies that are in line with national and local priorities and concerns.

**SDG16 in Review:** CSPPS in partnership with the TAP network have through concerted efforts strengthened the engagement and capacity of civil society organisations in fragile and conflict-affected countries in VNR and post-VNR processes. The Ready for Review project sought to foster meaningful inclusion and contribution of national, regional and local civil society organizations in government-led consultation, review and validation processes of the SDG16<sup>4</sup>. The VNR consultation processes as embarked upon clearly have provided a strategic entry point for continuous dialogue and coordination around next steps in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at country level. Broad civil society participation is instrumental to ensure localization and inclusive implementation of the SDGs. Fostering the meaningful inclusion, participation and contribution of national and local civil society organizations in government-led SDG16 consultation, review and validation processes will ensure reporting for future advancement of the 2030 Agenda.

**Sierra Leone:** Civil society organisations have spearheaded an initiative to bring various national stakeholders together to discuss the issue of national cohesion<sup>5</sup>. They defined national cohesion as a foundation for peace and development. Like the social contract which it nurtures, it requires vertical efforts between state and society, particularly around service provision, and horizontally, strengthening the relations and bonds among people. It requires addressing 'grievances and structural sources of conflict and inequality, as well as supporting the development, political and security priorities of all segments of society'. As such, efforts driven by civil society, in particular, hold promise for building more inclusive societies that sustain peace.

### THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE SHOULD:

- Provide platforms for sharing separate analysis and, where possible, developing and coordinating joint strategies that address peacebuilding and development priorities between diverse national, regional and international stakeholders;
- Engage civil society in the process of development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all programmatic work, including undertaking the commitment to operationalise the recently published UN System-Wide Community-Engagement Guidelines (CEG);
- Take deliberate steps to ensure that local civil society are adequately resourced, informed, and equipped to collaborate and engage meaningfully;
- Ensure that any efforts to address crisis and respond to violence are leveraged to support ongoing work in other fields (i.e., humanitarian, peacebuilding, development);

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<sup>4</sup> Reporting for the Future: Final Report Ready for Review 2019. By Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS). <https://www.cspps.org/publications/reporting-future-final-report-ready-review-2019>

<sup>5</sup> National Cohesion for Sustainable Peace and Development, Communique Mammy Yoko Workshop, Freetown/Sierra Leone. By Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS). <https://cspps.org/news/national-cohesion-sustainable-peace-and-development-perspective-sierra-leone>

- Encourage political support and support national capacities for building adequate infrastructures, including infrastructures for peace and access to justice, in a coherent, integrated, and inclusive manner;
- Ensure continual assessment of the implementation of joint strategies and programs across all priority areas, with a specific focus on their impact at the local level.

## 2. The United Nations should strengthen national infrastructures capable of supporting local initiatives

**Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace is the primary responsibility of national governments;** being inclusive of all national stakeholders, they are required to identify, drive and direct priorities, strategies and activities for sustaining peace (S/RES/2282; PP. 9). National capacities for peace are measured, in part, by the existence of infrastructures capable of ensuring local peacebuilding activities, including early warning, and enhancing robust response to the spread of crises. These infrastructures must enable inclusive, transparent, and accountable processes tailored to the context-specific needs of local communities. In addition to economic and health infrastructures, it requires community-led and community-owned initiatives to drive peace.

**Operational, fully-funded and locally-owned initiatives for peace are fundamental to sustaining peace.** Many plans on building locally-led infrastructures for peace already exist and are being implemented; however, their sustained implementation is negated by the lack of appropriate arrangements, political support and the absence of adequate funding.

**Ghana:** The National Peace Council (NPC)'s mandate is to lead and facilitate the achievement of sustainable peace in the country<sup>6</sup>. Many of its interventions have been aligned with the targets of the SDG 16, particularly to those targets that relate to peaceful coexistence. But, similar to many innovative transformative initiatives, it needs greater institutional capacity, bolder political support and much more meaningful financial support to undertake its work adequately as a key peace infrastructure that sustains peace and ensures adequate implementation of the SDGs.

**West Africa:** West Africa Network of Peacebuilding (WANEP), has been driving local community monitors who collect Early Warning and Early Response data to mobilise action by national governments, regional intergovernmental organisations, the private sector, civil society and donors, especially around elections<sup>7</sup>. Such processes, informed by grounded local experiences of identifying early signs of violence in communities, are needed to ensure that national policies and actions

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<sup>6</sup> Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies: SDG 16+ in Ghana (2020) By GPPAC and WANEP-GHANA Cameroon – Yelyang, A, Richard, P. et al <https://gppac.net/resources/sdg-16-ghana-progress-towards-peaceful-just-and-inclusive-societies>

<sup>7</sup> In the Spirit of Partnerships: Operationalisation of Sustaining Peace at the Regional Level. By the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. <https://gppac.net/resources/spirit-partnership-operationalisation-sustaining-peace-regional-level>

recognise relevant trends and put people and the planet at their center of attention. Through such processes, existing norms and practices can be challenged and transformational change encouraged.

### THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE SHOULD:

- Promote transparent, accountable, representative and participatory decision making, institutions, and implementation;
- Build the capacity of Member States to establish and maintain infrastructures needed to maintain and encourage local peacebuilding work;
- Encourage inclusive national capacities to implement existing policies;
- Mobilise the donor community to support national peace infrastructures and scale up support for civil society and grassroots approaches;
- Localise the global policy frameworks (i.e, Sustainable Development Goals) in a way that builds on and strengthens existing capacities for peace.

### 3. The United Nations should ensure local ownership in driving and localising international policies and agendas:

**Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace requires inclusivity in order to ensure that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account** (S/RES/2282; OP3). However, UN policy frameworks and interventions in the field are often viewed and implemented through an ‘elitist’ top-down approach, where local civil society have numerous reasons not to engage with these frameworks. These reasons include: the absence of local presence during the development of interventions; the lack of awareness of international frameworks; terminologies, jargon and linguistic inaccessibility; and the lack of capacity to translate international agendas to local realities. As a result, international policy frameworks see, where it is possible to track, little impact in the field.

**Localisation of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace must mean that the views, needs, and experiences of people most affected by issues at hand must co-determine the policies and actions affecting them.** This means recognising people not only as objects of programmatic work, but also implementers and experts in their own right. It demands developing more participatory ways of doing and evaluating UN led work before, during and after conflicts. It also requires making the UN more receptive to partnerships with local communities. Buy-ins from local communities would also further drive accountability and stronger implementation.

**Regional:** The Regional Forums on Sustainable Development as organised by UN Regional Commissions provide a useful opportunity for Member States and other key stakeholders to discuss implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The meetings are meant to provide a forum to discuss the HLPF thematic focus from a regional perspective. Stakeholders present

at the Regional Forums (governments, civil society, academia and the private sector) gather to share lessons learned and experiences on how to best accelerate action on the SDGs. The Regional Forums on Sustainable Development therefore serve as important mechanisms for monitoring and tracking progress in implementation at the regional level, as well as for mobilising and ensuring the participation of relevant stakeholders. Experience has shown that engagement is also key for cementing network relationships ahead of follow-up consultation at national level.

**Cameroon:** Civil society organisations have obtained a degree of success through engaging in consultations with government officials on the ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)<sup>8</sup>. However, such engagements are normally an exception rather than an institutionalised practice. When it comes to the area of peace, justice, inclusion and conflict resolution, local peacebuilders in Cameroon, including churches and their leaders, face challenges trying to be directly involved, and the calls for inclusive multi-stakeholder processes and dialogues on key issues have usually not been heeded to.

**Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG16+:** “Amplified Commitments and Partnerships for Accelerated Action: Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG16+” (Rome Declaration)<sup>9</sup> outlines key messages, principles, recommendations, and a broad call-to-action from civil society collectively around SDG16+. It features ambitious commitments put forward by civil society, and a bold call for all stakeholders to accelerate action towards SDG16+ and local peacebuilding efforts. However, despite this slow progress, there are encouraging examples of good progress being made that must be amplified going forward, as well as areas where ambition and action must be scaled up. The Rome Declaration lays out key recommendations and sets out a plan of action for the global SDG16+ and peacebuilding communities, to ensure that we collectively deliver on commitments made on SDG16+, and to leave no one behind.

## THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE SHOULD:

- Allocate the time and resources required to build trust for establishing relationships with local civil society (i.e., time to build trust, printing resources in local languages, organising capacity building workshops, etc.);
- Establish more consistent, sustained and transparent modalities to ensure partnership with diverse civil society in all processes;
- Encourage the development of national and regional indicators for the implementation of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in an inclusive process;
- Ensure greater meaningful inclusion of civil society, including women, youth and other groups, particularly those who are marginalised, in all processes in order to strengthen accountability and provide alternatives that are gender and youth responsive;
- Support building the capacity of national governments to engage with local civil society;

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<sup>8</sup> Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies: SDG 16+ in Cameroon (2020) By GPPAC and Women in Alternative Action. <https://gppac.net/publications/cameroon-sdg-16-cameroon-progress-towards-peaceful-just-and-inclusive-societies>

<sup>9</sup> Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG16+. <https://tapnetwork2030.org/romedeclaration/>



- Practice being an enabler of peacebuilding in the field and ensure implementation methodologies at the field level are flexible, and adaptable to different communities and contexts;
- Work with the UN human rights actors to establish a special rapporteur or special representative to examine the issues faced by local peacebuilders and formulate recommendations to the UN system on how to better support local peacebuilding efforts.