



Financing Inclusive Peacebuilding: Strengthening Locally-Informed Innovative Solutions for Sustaining Peace

3 December 2020, 8.30 – 10.00 AM EST

Summary Note

During discussions on the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, there was consensus that international policy and practice must focus on the implementation of the UN Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions and the achievement of concrete results at regional and country levels. To support this effort, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) have initiated a series of roundtable discussions on Operationalizing Sustaining Peace to examine the strategies and pathways towards the implementation and full realization of the Sustaining Peace resolutions.

The fourteenth roundtable discussion in the series was held on 3 December 2020 and convened experts from Permanent Missions to the UN in New York; representatives from UN departments and entities at Headquarters and country level; and civil society actors working with international and local organizations. The online roundtable was held in the weeks leading up to the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the landmark UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) (2015). It provided a space for participants to reflect on challenges and progress made in inclusive, accessible, sustainable, and adequate financing for peacebuilding initiatives; the unique roles of young people of all backgrounds and gender identities in driving peacebuilding programming and the unique challenges they face to access funding; and the opportunities that could be used to meaningfully support the ownership of young people and local peacebuilders more broadly in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Inclusivity is a key principle in the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282), which have recognized the importance of women's and youth leadership and meaningful participation in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding, and highlighted the urgent need to invest in mechanisms and efforts that safeguard their representation in decision-making at all levels. Over the past few years, the normative discourse on peacebuilding financing has underscored the importance of ensuring that resources are more accessible to diverse local actors – especially youth-led and women-led organizations, initiatives and actions. However, the rhetoric has not

translated into real change in terms of funding accessibility. While good practices do exist, they are very rare and cannot be characterized as a comprehensive effort to advance inclusivity and leadership of young men and women in peacebuilding.

The following is a summary that captures key themes and examples shared during the discussion, as well as recommendations and next steps for actions that were put forward to address persisting challenges.

Local civil society actors engaged in peacebuilding continue to face structural barriers to accessing financing

Despite being at the frontlines of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, local civil society actors struggle to finance their efforts, with women and youth peacebuilders facing unique barriers in accessing funding for their own work and peacebuilding ideas.

Roundtable participants emphasized that in many cases, stringent fiduciary requirements imposed by donors prevent local grassroots organizations, especially those led by women and youth, from accessing funds. These include the requirement of formal organizational registration documents, audited financial statements, and institutional capacity to not only apply, but report on these grants. Participants noted that grant reporting is extremely time-consuming. Given the small size and number of staff in youth-led organizations, the time needed for reporting is taken away from implementation on the ground.

Providing more context to the challenges faced by local civil society, the participants discussed the progress made and challenges faced by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in Somalia. The Fund has been successful in increasing the funding available for peacebuilding in countries and communities impacted by conflict through its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative. While the PBF has significantly stepped up its investments at the country-level, it continues to face challenges in terms of making the funds available to local women and young peacebuilders. In Somalia, where the PBF has increased its investments to over 2 million USD in 2020 and supported civil society-led peacebuilding programming, accessibility of funding to Somali-based organizations remains limited. Since there are little to no funds that are accessible to local peacebuilding organizations, local peacebuilders turn to PBF to support their work – but are deterred by eligibility criteria, requirements and conceptual debates on the definition of “a peacebuilder.”

These eligibility criteria impede women and youth-led peacebuilding organizations, who already operate on extremely limited budgets and personnel capacity. At the same time, it was recognized that the fiduciary requirements are necessary for donors’ own accountability. The discussions focused on identifying models that could be used to reconcile the demands of transparency and accountability with realities on the ground, and the need for making funds more accessible.

Dedicated funds and intermediaries can help channel funding to women and youth peacebuilders

One of the solutions to the above challenge identified during the discussion was the creation of funds dedicated to supporting local peacebuilding. Such funds are designed to provide smaller-sized grants, which are easier for grassroots organizations with limited capacity – including youth-led and women-led organizations – to manage. They often also have less burdensome reporting requirements.

Examples of such dedicated funds included: GPPAC's *YPS Small Grants Scheme*¹; *Mama Cash* – a feminist fund dedicated to supporting projects led by women, girls, trans and/or intersex people; and International Civil Society Network (ICAN)'s *Innovative Peace Fund*.

Participants also noted that important lessons can be learned from pooled funding mechanisms that have been created to support women-led peacebuilding. One such example is the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), which grants 100% of its funds directly to local women's organizations in conflict-affected communities, and includes women peacebuilders in decision-making about funding disbursement.

Another model discussed at the roundtable session focused on channeling funds to youth-led organizations through third party intermediaries – larger organizations with established capacity for grant management and reporting. It was noted that the PBF GYPI has introduced a requirement of a minimum of 40% of funds received by direct recipients – who are often UN agencies and international NGOs – to be channeled to local peacebuilding organizations.

These models, when designed in partnership with women-led and youth-led organizations and in a way that enables local ownership, can be an effective way of making more funding available to young peacebuilders.

Capacity building of civil society, especially young peacebuilders, on how to apply for and manage grants is critical in making funding more inclusive

Roundtable participants emphasized that while channeling funds to youth-led organizations through intermediaries can be an effective arrangement, it should also aim for young peacebuilders be able to apply directly for larger funds in the long term. Long-term funding allows local peacebuilders to advance their own ideas and become flexible in responding to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this regard, the *Youth 360 Initiative* by Search for Common Ground, in partnership with the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY), was cited as a good example. Through the initiative, small funding opportunities are provided to young peacebuilders and are complemented by training and mentoring that focus in particular on developing skills necessary to develop funding proposals and manage grants.

¹ GPPAC. Johanna Hilbert. Oct 22, 2020. Best Practices in Financing for Peacebuilding: A Funding Stream for Youth by Youth. Accessible here: <https://www.gppac.net/news/best-practices-financing-peacebuilding-funding-stream-youth-youth>

Similarly, it was noted that organizations that act as intermediaries and channel funding to young peacebuilders should include systematic capacity building models in their engagements with local peacebuilders. This requires flexibility from donors to allow for the use of project funds for capacity building, mentorship and accompaniment, as well as rapid adjustment to the needs at the local level.

Participants also highlighted that building capacity requires not only enhancing young peacebuilders' skills, but also providing core funding to enable local peacebuilding organizations to grow and strengthen their organizational capacities.

There is a need to rethink and review grant requirements and arrangements

Roundtable participants noted that even when an intermediary model is used, heavy donor reporting requirements placed on pooled funding mechanisms or intermediary organizations sometimes “trickle down” to the local organizations. For example, if receipts for small, discretionary expenses are required by the donor, the burden of obtaining them, or producing official statements of receipts (for example, for taxi or public transport) are not available, is still on the local organizations, who are the primary implementers on the ground.

While it was noted that a certain level of donor requirements is inevitable due to fiduciary obligations and the need for transparency and accountability, it was also agreed that some requirements and burdensome practices could be revised and more accessible solutions considered. Several participants also noted that in order to identify such solutions, it is critical to include grassroots peacebuilders – including youth from different backgrounds and of different genders – in discussions and decision-making about funding. For example, young peacebuilders should be consulted and meaningfully included in reviews of funding mechanisms, as well as in donor conferences, and on boards of pooled funding mechanisms. In parallel, donors should also commit to participate in policy conversations to better understand the context and the circumstances faced by young men and women peacebuilders.

Overall, the discussion reiterated the urgency of investing in and amplifying solutions for more coordinated peacebuilding action that deliver results at the local level. Making peacebuilding funding more accessible and flexible is not an easy feat, and there is no one-size-fits all solution. A combination of approaches is needed for a sustainable change in the financing landscape. Crucially, effective and sustainable shifts towards more inclusive financing will only be possible through joint engagement between young peacebuilders and donors both in financing and policy debates.

Recommendations: Financing for Inclusive Peacebuilding

During the roundtable discussion, the following recommendations were identified to address the challenges above:

- *Donors (Member States, the UN, and the private sector) should review their funding requirements and make an effort to lessen fiduciary and administrative burdens, to make funding more accessible and flexible to local civil society peacebuilders. This could include allowing national and regional donor presence, where available, to have broader discretion on the allocation of grants and accepting proposals submitted in national, sub-national, or local languages.*
- *International NGOs and larger peacebuilding organizations should prioritize partnerships with local peacebuilding organizations – in particular those led by youth from different backgrounds and of all genders – to channel peacebuilding funding to local organizations, applying flexible modalities that enable decision-making to be driven by local peacebuilders.*
- *Donors, international NGOs and larger peacebuilding organizations that act as intermediaries should invest in and provide institutional and technical capacity building on donor reporting, grant management and monitoring and evaluation, enabling grassroots organizations to access donor funds directly in the long term.*
- *Donors should provide core and un-earmarked funding for peacebuilding organizations to cover their operational costs.*
- *Donors should direct more investment to scaling up and developing new innovative funding instruments designed to provide grants directly to young peacebuilders.*
- *Donors, international NGOs and other actors should create spaces for youth of all genders and from diverse backgrounds to engage and meaningfully participate in the design of donor priorities – for example, by consulting them in reviewing existing funding instruments and designing new ones, or enabling participation in or input to donor conferences.*