



A Network of People
Building Peace

Issue Brief
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BUILDING PEACE LOCALLY AMIDST A GLOBAL PANDEMIC:

Infrastructures for Peace in the Era of COVID-19

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FOREWORD

The unprecedented and unpredictable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the critical importance of consistent investment in and focus on conflict prevention and sustaining peace, through prioritising development and peacebuilding action. COVID-19 highlights and intensifies deeply rooted challenges to peace: polarisation, securitisation, inequalities, environmental insecurity and shrinking civic space. As a result, the pandemic reveals that existing mechanisms, capacities and processes for conflict prevention and sustaining peace – known as Infrastructures for Peace (I4Ps) – could be better equipped to deal with emerging crises.

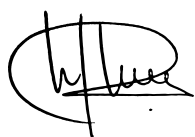
With over 15 years of local peacebuilding experience, we at the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), believe that I4Ps serve multiple essential roles. They help to address the root causes of conflict and violence, contribute to the formation of constructive social relationships, and build resilience of societies against crises, risks and emerging threats. Let me share with you three examples from our network where I4Ps take the form of community circles and youth community groups in Uganda, multi-stakeholder participatory platforms in Fiji, and women mediators' networks in the South Caucasus. Over the years, we have witnessed I4Ps making a great difference in communities where these infrastructures are locally-led and globally-supported.

Peace globally will only be sustainable if local communities are empowered to take the lead in the decisions that affect them and their experiences are meaningfully integrated in peacebuilding and development action. I4Ps can be a vehicle to advance locally-led action on sustaining peace.

GPPAC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) share commitments to ensuring that local ownership and locally-led action are at the core of the integrated policy and action on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This shared commitment gave rise to our partnership in understanding how local peacebuilders adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic across five (5) regions – Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This issue brief follows-up on the consultative regional discussions held and presents the key priorities articulated by local peacebuilders for accelerating the progress towards sustaining peace for all by 2030.

The opportunity to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic must be firmly seized to inspire a transformative change in peacebuilding and development envisioned in the 2030 Agenda and the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development.

Sincerely,



Victòria Carreras Lloveras

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BACKGROUND

The success of peacebuilding and sustaining peace is directly connected to the existence of inclusive national capacities to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Following the profound reflection on the current state of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in 2020¹, the UN General Assembly and the Security Council via dual resolutions (A/RES/-201/75S/RES/2558) reiterated that development and peacebuilding are interlinked (PP3) and that sustaining peace encompasses a wide range of development and peacebuilding activities that contribute towards recovery, reconstruction and development (PP4).

Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) represent a dynamic network of skills, capacities, resources, tools and institutions that support the integrated approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace rooted in the development priorities². I4Ps help address root causes of conflict and violence, form constructive social relationships, and build resilience of societies against crises, risks and emerging threats. Taken together, I4Ps serve an important peacebuilding function and are a meaningful mechanism for delivering on the SDGs.

Infrastructures for Peace are understood as a dynamic network of skills, capacities, resources, tools and institutions that help build constructive relationships and enhance sustainable resilience of societies against the risks of relapse into violence. They prevent conflicts, build peace and contribute towards sustainable development and peace.

Some of the most impactful examples of I4Ps are visible at the local level and rooted in local experiences. This is because within communities, crises and conflicts are easily identifiable and manageable. For instance, Early Warning and Early Response Systems (EWERs) in West Africa, based on the data collected by community monitors, have prevented election-based violence³. In Northeast Asia, the Ulaanbaatar Process was established as a civil society-led platform to address disputes and potential military aggression on the Korean Peninsula in the absence of another regional platform for dialogue.⁴ Over time, this impactful local action has resulted in the global recognition of the crucial role of local peacebuilders in the global sustaining peace action⁵.

1- More information about the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review is available at: <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/-2020review-un-peacebuilding-architecture>

2- Giessmanm, Hans J. 2016. Embedded PeaceInfrastructures for Peace: Approaches and Lessons Learned

3- More information about the strategic partnership between the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the implementation of a regional early warning and response system referred to as ECOWARN (as well as other successful examples of regional partnerships) is available at: <https://gppac.net/resources/spirit-partnership-operationalisation-sustaining-peace-regional-level>

4- See GPPAC, The Ulaanbaatar Peace Process, 2021 <https://gppac.net/ulaanbaatar-process>

5- For the first time, dual resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/201/75) and the Security Council (S/RES/2558) mention local peacebuilders as a critical stakeholder in sustaining peace. The United Nations has also launched the UN System-Wide Community Engagement Guidelines to further encourage the UN field presences to build partnerships with civil society. Finally, the 2030 Decade of Action calls for the acceleration of people's action, including by youth, civil society, the media, the private sector, unions, academia and other stakeholders, to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformations.

THE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Building on five regional consultations held between 2020 and 2021, six priority areas have been jointly identified by local peacebuilders and development experts to reimagine I4Ps based on the lived experiences of local peacebuilders across the globe.



Sustaining peace requires a well-resourced and structural transformation of infrastructures for peace towards a more integrated and locally-led network of skills, capacities, resources, tools and institutions.

The success of peacebuilding and sustaining peace requires that peacebuilding and development experts at the national, regional and global levels prioritise the following action:



Priority 1: Expand multi-stakeholder and inclusive Infrastructures For Peace

This means conducting regular mapping of diverse stakeholders; facilitating dialogues that connect local peacebuilders, national governments and multilateral partners, among others; and institutionalising partnerships and engagement models to sustain multi-stakeholder relationships in the long term.



Priority 2: Ensure coordination and complementarity among Infrastructures For Peace

This means improving coordination between I4Ps operating at different levels and in different contexts; promoting cross-regional and cross-sectional dialogues; and integrating remote engagement channels for dialogue while consistently working to address the existing digital divide.



Priority 3: Promote, engage and support local peacebuilding actors in all efforts to sustain peace

This means providing an accessible space, opportunities and protections for a diverse range of local peacebuilders and their networks to meaningfully organise, engage and participate in decisions that affect them.



Priority 4: Integrate the principles of human security and conflict sensitivity into the work of Infrastructures for Peace

This includes better understanding diverse experiences and tailoring conflict resolution strategies to these experiences and ensuring that local peacebuilders have an opportunity to meaningfully contribute to defining security threats and response strategies. Subsequently, a commitment to trauma healing is critical so that peacebuilders can operate at their full potential.



Priority 5: Ensure adequate, predictable and quality financing for Infrastructures for Peace

This means adjusting existing funding strategies and developing innovative mechanisms to support local I4Ps and local peacebuilders in an unrestricted and flexible way that provides for core funding and institutional support towards I4Ps. National governments can further enhance I4Ps by providing funding through budgetary allocations and political support in fundraising.



Priority 6: Measure impact of Infrastructures for Peace through locally-articulated methodologies

This means supporting reflective learning and community-led determination of impact; encouraging story-telling and other not-indicator-based methods of conveying data; and allowing adequate capacity to local networks to carry out data collection with streamlined channels of rapid analysis. These processes should directly feed into decision-making to ensure that information meaningfully informs further action.

1. The Role of Infrastructures for Peace in Sustaining Peace during COVID-19

Infrastructures for Peace (I4Ps) represent a dynamic network of skills, capacities, resources, tools and institutions that help societies address root causes, form constructive social relationships, and build resilience against crises, risks and emerging threats.⁶ These infrastructures exist at all levels (local, national, regional, and global) and, building on the comparative advantage of each other, support inclusive national capacities to advance sustaining peace and development in the long-term.⁷

In order to ensure that I4Ps are effective in advancing sustaining peace, they need to be institutionalised, context-specific and anchored within local communities.

The engagement of local peacebuilders is widely regarded as a prerequisite for legitimate and effective I4Ps.⁸ Concretely this means that I4Ps need to be locally-led because local ownership builds trust and resilience within communities. This makes it also easier to prevent and manage crises at the local level.⁹ There are three key characteristics to local peacebuilders. First, local peacebuilders – including women, youth, traditional leaders and so on – retain the best knowledge of local communities, are capable of identifying early signs of violence and are aware of the best approaches required to create meaningful change and build sustainable peace. Second, due to their flexibility and close relations with diverse grassroots constituencies, local peacebuilders are often able to reach out to places and actors where government officials or international actors do not have access. Finally, through networks and coalitions, local peacebuilders can engage broader groups into peacebuilding and raise awareness about the SDGs and their importance for ensuring peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, local peacebuilders act as first respondents to the crisis.¹⁰ See Table 1. Examples of local action to sustain peace during COVID-19 include advancing peace education, strengthening local mediation capacities, building platforms for dialogue, promoting inclusive and representative participation of women and youth in COVID-19 responses, among others. As a result of their local action local peacebuilders helped build social cohesion, deepen the normative frameworks for conflict prevention, support and advance development gains, and address long-term drivers of conflict.

By assessing and learning from the impact of COVID-19 as experienced by local peacebuilders, the international community has a unique opportunity to reflect on the capacity of and strengthen existing I4Ps to deliver on the goals of sustaining peace at the local, national, regional, and global level.

6- Giessmann, Hans J. 2016. *Embedded Peace Infrastructures for Peace: Approaches and Lessons Learned*

7- Ginty, R.M. 2103. *Routledge Handbook on Peacebuilding*. Routledge, London

8- United Nations General Assembly, 2020 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/ -976 /74S/773/2020)

9- Van Tongeren, P. 2013. Potential cornerstone of infrastructures for peace? How local peace committees can make a difference. *Peacebuilding*, 1, pp. 60-39

10- Ibid.

LOCAL I4P IN ACTION DURING COVID-19

SKILLS:

Advancing Peace Education in the Western Balkans¹¹ During the pandemic, the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue in the Western Balkans developed online peace education programmes for children in secondary schools, as well as for groups of community leaders. These initiatives helped build resilience, facilitate dialogue, encourage critical thinking, and develop additional tools for conflict analysis.

CAPACITIES:

Supporting Capacities for Behavioral Change in Armenia¹² Women for Development in Armenia initiated its annual peace painting and essay contest on “Peace Lessons from COVID-19” for youth from across the world. This contest encouraged behavioral change in attitudes among young people towards peace and security and strengthened critical capacities for conflict analysis and resilience - building.

RESOURCES:

Ensuring Community Awareness of Resources in Zimbabwe¹³ The Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum (ECLF) in Zimbabwe opened counseling hotlines for people suffering from domestic -and gender-based violence, and interpersonal conflict which rose disproportionately during the lockdown.. This work helped effectively respond to and prevent violence within communities and families.

TOOLS:

Utilising Monitoring Tools for Situational Mapping in Africa¹⁴ The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), through its Conflict and Resilience Monitor, identified and analysed incidents of COVID-19 -related social unrest and conflict along seven categories such as stigmatisation and discrimination; livelihoods and food security; and domestic and gender-based violence. This realtime data-collection informs rapid interventions aimed at mitigating and preventing COVID-19 -related violence.

INSTITUTIONS:

Creating Institutional Response in Bougainville¹⁵ In Bougainville, the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation proactively engaged with the Bougainville Regional Disaster Committee to establish a team for women controllers to ensure the specific needs of women are included in the national COVID-19 management and recovery. The Centre has also reached close to 600 people through COVID-19 awareness sessions. This ensured that women’s voices and needs are taken into consideration in the national response.

NETWORK OF I4Ps:

Infrastructures for Peace in Africa The African continent has a strong reputation for I4Ps. At the national, local and community level, examples of I4Ps include the National Peace Council in Ghana, Local Peace Committees in South Africa, and the Women’s Situation Room in Cameroon. At the regional level, Continental Early Warning Systems (CEWS) engage with the data collected by local community monitors. During COVID-19, the important work of existing I4Ps has been complemented by the work of local peacebuilders, who carried out community sensitisation on COVID-19, responded to cases of domestic violence, provided counselling and hands on skills training, and established peace education programmes in schools, among other actions.

11- More information can be found at: <https://gppac.net/news/webinar-resilience-and-dialogue-times-crisis>

12- More information can be found at: <https://wfd.am/archives/6065>

13- More information can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/ECLF-Zimbabwe605654286198573-/>

14- More information can be found at: <https://www.accord.org.za/COVID19-/#monitor>

15- More information can be found at: <https://www.gppac.net/files/07-2020/GPPAC20%Speech20%at20%PBC20%on20%Pacific.pdf>

2. Understanding Infrastructures for Peace: Lessons Learned from COVID-19

COVID-19 has placed considerable stress on all societies, with strong implications for peace and development at all levels.¹⁶ The following examples present only a few of the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, peace processes were halted (i.e., in the Mindanao region of the Philippines), and many peacebuilding activities were called off (i.e., trainings in conflict transformation and peacebuilding in South-East Asia). Further, the pandemic has deepened inequalities and exclusion; eroded trust in national, regional and global institutions; exacerbated insecurity, social unrest and democratic deficits. It has also highlighted the lack of sustainability, flexibility and inclusion in current I4Ps and their networks; demonstrated the lack of adequate and flexible funding for peacebuilding; and questioned the capacities of I4Ps to deliver impact at the local level.¹⁷ This list is not exhaustive and depends on specific contexts.

Experiences of local peacebuilders utilising and building I4Ps during COVID-19 in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)¹⁸ provide a unique opportunity to not only see the devastating impact of the pandemic but also reflect on the learning space it presents:

16- United Nations, Secretary-General Calls for Global Ceasefire, Citing War-Ravaged Health Systems, Populations Most Vulnerable to Novel Coronavirus, 2020 <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20018.doc.htm>

17- Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Peace Index 2020 https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/10/2020/GPI_2020_web.pdf

18- See GPPAC, What Infrastructures for Peace Support Peacebuilding in the Context of Fragility and Crisis? <https://www.gppac.net/what-infrastructures-peace-support-peacebuilding-context-fragility-and-crisis> for a detailed description of the challenges identified by local peacebuilders in each region.

Lesson Learned 1:

Inclusive and multi-stakeholder Infrastructures for Peace can advance targeted and coherent action on sustaining peace.

“*Creative efforts by national leaders in building governance systems that are inclusive, participatory and restore trust across communities, are necessary for laying the foundations for regeneration and recovery.*” - **Busi Ncube, peacebuilding expert from Zimbabwe**”

COVID-19 shows the prevalence of unilateral action by national authorities and poses a substantial threat to the future of multilateralism. Deteriorating multilateralism builds on the lack of consolidated peacebuilding strategies and an ongoing challenge faced by local peacebuilders to connect to formal processes as well as influence higher-level decision-making. For example, in Uganda, local peacebuilders report that the slow pace of the development of a peace strategy leads to peacebuilding efforts and responses being largely reactive, ad-hoc, and not well coordinated.¹⁹ In the South Caucasus, local peacebuilders have long advocated for the establishment of an independent civil society process to support addressing the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. However, with little political support, any activities to this end have lost their influence.²⁰

The existence of national peacebuilding frameworks, with a clear pledge to multi-stakeholder inclusion and participation, will build the foundation for social cohesion and community resilience.

The unique experiences of specific groups, including indigenous people, refugees and displaced communities, and ethnic and gender minorities among others, are often missing in national action when pandemic responses have to be developed. This is due to the fact that, traditionally, these groups are not seen as agents in peacebuilding and development action. For instance, the indigenous groups in the Mindanao region of the Philippines have reported facing serious challenges in having their specific needs met such as accessing services during the pandemic. Beyond the pandemic, their experiences are similarly unrepresented in various national decision-making processes. Conversely, a good practice of meaningful inclusion in developing national action responding to the pandemic comes from the Pacific. There, women-first responders reported levels of gender and family violence

19- See GPPAC, SDG+16 in Uganda, 2020 <https://www.gppac.net/news/new-report-sdg-16-uganda>

20- See GPPAC and ICCN, In Search of Sustaining Peace: A Case-Study of Peacebuilding in South Caucasus, 2020, <https://gppac.net/resources/search-sustaining-peace-case-study-peacebuilding-south-caucasus>

as well as economic and social impacts of the pandemic thus helping to shape national response strategies to be reflective of women's needs.²¹ This showcases that the diversity of local peacebuilders at the local level needs to be acknowledged and their experiences need to be integrated in policy and action.

It is critical to ensure that Infrastructures for Peace are genuinely participatory and inclusive of diverse stakeholders and provide for joint solutions and strategies.

Successful experiences of building joint and inclusive solutions should be capitalised on. For example, a series of collaborative consultative processes between the UN, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) member states and local peacebuilders resulted in the adoption of the regional Human Security Framework, Conflict Prevention Framework, Regional Framework for Security Sector Governance, the Regional Action Plan (RAP) on Women, Peace and Security, and the Boe Declaration on Regional Security.²² This partnership further underpinned the practice of the Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster that, during the pandemic, worked to ensure that response in the Pacific countries is informed with gender, age, disability and location disaggregated data.²³ The National Peace Council in Ghana is also a good practice of an institution mandated to convene an inclusive set of actors and facilitate the achievement of sustainable peace in Ghana.²⁴

Multi-stakeholder consultative processes can prevent unilateral decision-making, mend the gap between early warning and early action, and ensure representative decision-making that is focused on the community needs and has legitimacy among the people.

21- Bhagwan Rolls, S, Peacebuilding Commission: Ambassadorial-level meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Pacific Islands, 2020 <https://gppac.net/files/07-2020/GPPAC20%Speech20%at20%PBC20%on20%Pacific.pdf>

22- GPPAC, Operationalising the Peace-Development-Humanitarian Nexus through the Boe Declaration in the Pacific, 2020 <https://gppac.net/resources/operationalising-peace-development-humanitarian-nexus-through-boe-declaration-pacific>

23- Bhagwan Rolls, S, Peacebuilding Commission: Ambassadorial-level meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Pacific Islands, 2020 <https://gppac.net/files/07-2020/GPPAC20%Speech20%at20%PBC20%on20%Pacific.pdf>

24- More information about the National Peace Council in Ghana is available at: https://gppac.net/files/07-2019/GPPAC20%SDG20%Report20%Ghana_def_online.pdf

Lesson Learned 2:

Better coordination and complementarity among various Infrastructures for Peace can ensure efficient and non-duplicative action on sustaining peace.

“ *“The world needs effective and comprehensive infrastructures for sustainability and peace more than ever as we deal with the COVID-19 and climate crises. The GPPAC network is such an already existing crucial infrastructure, amplifying voices of local communities from all over the world.” - Yoshioka Tatsuya, peacebuilding expert and activist from Japan* ”

Coordination between various I4Ps could allow diverse stakeholders to complement each other for efficient and joint action on sustaining peace.²⁵ The African continent, for instance, has a strong reputation for effective I4Ps including early warning and early response systems, Women’s Situation Rooms, national and regional peacebuilding frameworks. However, their mandates are often overlapping and therefore, further mapping is required to enhance complementarity of action. Similarly, there is strong networking between local peacebuilders in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), but not necessarily between local peacebuilders, the governments and regional organisations. In addition, the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) provide considerable institutional capacity at the regional level. Yet, their efforts are eroding as a result of increased focus on bilateral relations and the absence of regional coordination in response to COVID-19 pandemic.²⁶

Effective regional coordination avoids programmatic overlaps and repetitions. Such coordination can be achieved by mapping existing actors and facilitating a platform for joint planning and action.

25- United Nations General Assembly, *2020 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/-976/74S/773/2020)* <https://www.undocs.org/en/S/773/2020>

26- GPPAC, *Latin America & Caribbean Cooperation in the Era of COVID-19: Glimmers of Hope for Kickstarting Regional Organisations, 2020* <https://gppac.net/news/latin-american-caribbean-cooperation-era-COVID-19-glimmers-hope-kickstarting-regional>

The COVID-19 pandemic provided opportunities to strengthen coordination by creating relevant consultative virtual platforms at all levels to exchange experience and develop effective and coordinated responses to crises. During the pandemic, local peacebuilders in the MENA region have launched a Youth, Peace and Security Coalition, as well as the Gender and Small Arms Coalition, capitalising on opportunities to coordinate joint action in the virtual space. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) interventions to promote democratisation and the rule of law²⁷ underscores the fact that strong regional and sub-regional arrangements are critical in the internalisation of continental and regional norms.

Regional arrangements could be better utilised to develop a common understanding of risks and root causes of violence and develop effective and coordinated responses to crises both at the regional and national levels.

The increase in virtual engagement during the pandemic presents an opportunity for improved coordination. Local peacebuilders, including those from the most remote areas and those negatively affected by a digital gap,²⁸ have gained more opportunities to share their perspectives with national, regional and global policy-makers and the donor community as consultations and exchanges to a large extent moved into the virtual space. This has also been the case for the UNDP-GPPAC joint project.

Intergenerational, cross-regional and multi-stakeholder virtual dialogues have shown to be valuable in coordinating and strengthening action during COVID-19 pandemic. For example, local peacebuilders in Southeast Asia have utilised the shift into the virtual space to organise intergenerational dialogues. Further, they have developed resources to strengthen local capacities to engage in peacebuilding using dialogue and exchange.

Growing digital inclusion will support not only more informed action but also provide opportunities for developing and deepening partnerships with actors who cannot normally get a visa or afford traveling to global policy hubs such as New York or Geneva on a regular basis.

27- See more at: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Regional Cooperation on Democratization and Conflict management in Africa, 2018 <https://carnegieendowment.org/19/03/2018/regional-cooperation-on-democratization-and-conflict-management-in-africa-pub75769->

28- Women are %20 less likely than men to have access to digital platforms and the internet. See more information on the “digital gap” within the COVID-19 pandemic context at: <https://gnwp.org/resources/COVID-19-wps-database/worsened-gender-digital-divide2-/>

Lesson Learned 3:

Support for local peacebuilding actors in their own activities ensures local ownership and community resilience.

“*For us, peacebuilding is a critical part of development work, humanitarian action, transition contexts, and everyday life.*” – **Tajykan Shabdanova, civil society leader from Kyrgyzstan**”

Sustaining peace is not solely contingent upon national capacities. Indeed, it also requires the meaningful inclusion and participation of resilient local communities that can manage and resolve violence and conflict peacefully and efficiently before it escalates to the regional or global level. Therefore, local peacebuilding work should not be separated from national action. For example, despite recurrent claims to the contrary, young Africans are regularly excluded from I4Ps work, unless I4Ps are specifically dedicated to the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda. This is due to the fact that local peacebuilding networks often lack visibility. In LAC, the peacebuilding work is framed through a development lens which provides an avenue to gain visibility and obtain political support. In the South Caucasus, after the 2020 escalation of the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh, the absence of local peacebuilders became very visible as the traditional response methods – such as state-mandated public health guidelines, restrictions on economic activities, and allocations of sanitation materials – contributed to ongoing divides between communities whose needs remain unaddressed.

Local peacebuilders and their networks have legitimacy and needed capacities to be included in all formal processes related to peacebuilding and development.

Given that local peacebuilders are the first responders and bear the immediate social, economic, political, and security impacts of crises such as COVID-19, it is imperative to recognise and protect safe space for their work. Local peacebuilders developed regional training programmes on peacebuilding and conflict transformation and coordinate informal dialogues, such as Lumad Husay Mindanaw (LHM) – an independent dialogue platform involved in the peace process which provides platforms for indigenous actors and other groups to engage in the peace process in the Philippines²⁹. Where peace dialogue and space for regional coordination is absent, local peacebuilders create space for dialogue, such as the Ulaanbaatar Process in North East Asia – an ongoing civil society-led open space for political dialogue and promoting effective work with governments and partners.³⁰ The response to COVID-19 provides an opportunity for foreign aid agencies, who are now obliged to work remotely, to support local capacities and enable them to drive local programmes that they have already pledged to take.

Existing local peacebuilders' efforts need to be supported and taken into consideration when designing other peacebuilding and development programming.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates and provides justification for repressions against civil society activists and often, local peacebuilders. Some countries have adopted controversial laws that allow governments to impose legal and regulatory barriers to the registration of civil society organisations that receive international funds.³¹ While COVID-19 makes the shrinking civic space more visible, the international community has yet to find ways to respond to the unique challenges faced by local peacebuilders.³² Local peacebuilders' engagement with national and regional stakeholders, often as first respondents to a crisis like COVID-19, coupled with the lack of adequate protection mechanisms that respond to their unique needs, can put their critical work at risk and roll back on their current peacebuilding successes.

As COVID-19 exacerbates global challenges and shrinks civic space, the critical work of local peacebuilders must be protected through means that respond to their specific needs and situation.

29- GLZ, Indigenous peoples submit proposed inclusions in the southern Philippines peace agreements to national government <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/70653.html>

30- GPPAC, Dialogue for Peace in Northeast Asia, 2018 <https://gppac.net/news/dialogue-peace-northeast-asia>

31- See Secretary-General Highlights COVID-19 as Pretext for Violations, in Message for Opening of Human Rights Council's Forty-Sixth Session, 2021 <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20589.doc.htm>

32- GPPAC, International Protections for Local Peacebuilders, 2020 <https://gppac.net/news/international-protection-local-peacebuilders>

Lesson Learned 4:

Infrastructures for peace that integrate principles of human security and conflict sensitivity produce long-term impact.

“ *"The current peace and conflict studies curriculum contains more contents on conflict and security than peace. This can be addressed in such a way that peace education can be incorporated not only in the university-level specialised courses but in the school-level curriculum at the basic education level."* - **Mallika Joseph, PhD, woman peacebuilder expert from India** ”

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of systems and structures that are securitised, do not take into account the welfare of individuals and ignore long-standing economic and social inequalities. During the pandemic, lockdowns have led to increased levels of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, destruction of infrastructure, increase in the number of child soldiers, and the re-emergence of long-term sectarian and inter-communal clashes.³³ The persistence of poverty, lack of development and environmental pressures experienced by people during the pandemic all exacerbated the pandemic's impact and had implications for long-term social and political stability.

Peacebuilding and development systems and structures need to prioritise action to support the welfare of individuals and address long-standing economic and social inequalities.

All stakeholders should place human security and conflict sensitivity at the core of their efforts to rebuild societies post-COVID-19 in a manner that addresses long-standing challenges to individuals' survival, livelihoods and dignity.³⁴ The pandemic created a space to reflect on what security means and to move beyond national security approaches in order to place greater emphasis upon social protection measures which work toward the realisation of the security and dignity of citizens' daily lives. The pandemic has exacerbated existing grievances and inequalities, for instance in health care. It has further revealed that trust between the state and the population and community engagement are critical for an effective response.

33- CRIES, *The Militarization and Beyond*, 2020 <https://gppac.net/resources/militarization-and-beyond>

34- UNDP, *Human Security: A Thematic Guidance Note*, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/human_security_guidance_note_rnhdrs.pdf

Human security includes personal, community and political security of all people in their diversity. Conflict sensitivity refers to an approach that minimises the risk that any action by infrastructures for peace could worsen conflict dynamics.

Education for peace, peace journalism and other means to advance 'peace messaging' can help bridge conflict divides, prevent segregation, and increase social cohesion. The COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity to spread positive messages online, consolidate resources on a culture of peace and community resilience, and facilitate virtual workshops to make these resources available in communities. In Europe and Central Asia, ministries of education and local peacebuilders have introduced online media communications to address negative stereotypes through virtual advocacy consisting of games and participatory videos. Such approaches encourage people to be more cautious around how their own actions feed into conflict dynamics and be more mindful of early action.

The wide circulation of 'peace messaging' encourages people to move beyond ignorance, disengagement, and disillusionment, counters hate speech and false information, and helps to overcome hostility and distrust.

There is further a great need for trauma healing through the provision of mental health and psychological support to all community members who have been both directly and indirectly affected by COVID-19, especially the groups impacted by conflict. The situation of protracted and unresolved conflicts, for example, in Eastern Europe and in the South Caucasus, has resulted in instability to be part of everyday life for peacebuilders, creating a variety of traumatic experiences.

Efforts to integrate the principles of human security and conflict sensitivity in peacebuilding action can appease tensions, increase trust between the state and their people, as well as between people, and lower the risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of conflict.

Lesson Learned 5:

Adequately financed Infrastructures for Peace that allow for flexibility and participatory grantmaking enable more effective and timely action.

“*Funding for peacebuilding must be flexible to reflect the changing nature of threats. Donors’ priorities should be shifted to go beyond “traditional” peacebuilding and learn from the methodology of local responses that touch upon the integrated development and peacebuilding nexus.*” - **Sharon Bhganwan Rolls, local peacebuilder and global feminist activist from Fiji**

The challenge in the availability of resources for infrastructures for peace that support local action is well-recognised. The adequate functioning of Ghana’s National Peace Council, for example, is undermined by the lack of sustained funding.³⁵ While good practices do exist, such as the Peacebuilding Fund’s Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative, they are rarely available to local peacebuilders directly and provide only catalytic support without sustainable resourcing.³⁶ In the LAC region, only one percent of funding for peacebuilding is allocated to women organisations.³⁷ Moreover, I4Ps are overly reliant on a small number of peacebuilding and development donors who prioritise short-term and restricted grants that are rooted in global policy rather than local realities of peacebuilding. The engagement with the private sector, while a welcoming development, also requires further research and understanding of appropriate forms of engagement.

Innovative funding mechanisms that ensure most resources reach local level are an essential component of filling the gaps in financing for peacebuilding.

35- WANEP & GPPAC. SDG +16 in Ghana. Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies. 2019

<https://gppac.net/resources/sdg-16-ghana-progress-towards-peaceful-just-and-inclusive-societies>

36- United Nations, Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative, <https://www.pbfgyipi.org/>

37- GPPAC, Supporting Local Infrastructures for Peace Post COVID-19: The Role of an Integrated Peacebuilding-Development Approach in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2020 https://gppac.net/files/02-2021/GPPAC-UNDP20%consultation-LAC-Dec20%204%2020_Dialogue20%20Summary.pdf

The current models of financing for peacebuilding do not always allow for impactful action at the local level. This is because the funding available through traditional channels is generally project-based and short-term. During COVID-19, such an approach has proven to be ineffective, as many organisations had to pause their programming due to a lack of flexibility of financial requirements. Civil society-led funds such as the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)'s Innovative Peace Fund and GPPAC's YPS Small Grants Scheme³⁸ were recognised as positive examples of supporting peacebuilding with the impact at the field level in a flexible and participatory manner. Such funding mechanisms foster constructive relationships based on a strategic partnership rather than a traditional donor-recipient relation and allow for greater flexibility to respond and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances at the field level.

Donors must prioritise mechanisms that foster constructive relationships of trust based on a strategic partnership and allow for greater flexibility to respond and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances at the field level.

38- See GPPAC, Best Practices in Financing for Peacebuilding: A Funding Stream for Youth by Youth, 2020 <https://www.gppac.net/news/best-practices-financing-peacebuilding-funding-stream-youth-youth>

See more about ICAN's Innovative Peace Fund at: <https://icanpeacework.org/our-work/innovative-peace-fund/>

Lesson Learned 6:

The impact of Infrastructures for Peace at the local level needs to be understood from the perspective of local peacebuilders to provide space for future learning and transformation.

“*The need to purposefully build capacity for climate security analyses and incorporate climate security into the debate on peacebuilding and development issues is critical. This is because there are a lot of ongoing climate disasters that can strengthen the dynamics of crime; however, there is a paucity of research on how climate change impedes peacebuilding*”. – **Adriana Abdenur, woman climate expert from Brazil**”

Measuring the impact of peacebuilding activities is fundamental to shape future programming, policies and strategies. Yet there is a stark lack of knowledge of the impact of I4Ps at the local level and the ways to measure this impact. Understanding of impact needs to be context-specific to unpack how peacebuilding interacts with a variety of non-traditional peace and security challenges, such as climate change and health emergencies; economic, political and social risk and resilience factors; existing power structures, positionalities of peacebuilding groups vis-a-vis other actors; and the fragility of contexts and conflict/war economy among others. Measurement should be based on the needs and priorities of recipients of services rather than just the understanding of what external actors and experts believe are important indicators of peace.

The impact measurement needs to be locally-led and locally-driven. This requires the use of everyday indicators developed based on community knowledge – the body of knowledge accumulated by local people and that people use in their daily lives to determine whether they are at peace.³⁹ During COVID-19, early warning and early response systems and conflict and resilience monitors in Africa have adjusted their methodologies to include COVID-19 –specific indicators. In Papua New Guinea, the Community Engagement Working Group set up a Community Response Map to track communities’ needs and their perceptions of the humanitarian response. Once indicators are defined, data collection mechanisms should also be locally driven. A good practice is the development of representative community monitoring mechanisms, such as the early warning and early response systems in West Africa and Southern Africa.⁴⁰ Locally-led tools to gather and report on data can make a significant difference for areas that are off the radar and for marginalised groups who otherwise remain invisible.

39- IPI, Measuring Peace Through Locally Driven Everyday Peace Indicators, <https://www.ipinst.org/12/2018/locally-driven-indicators-developing-participatory-approach-for-measuring-peace4#>

40- More information about the strategic partnership between the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the implementation of a regional early warning and response system referred to as ECOWARN (as well as other successful examples of regional partnerships) is available at: <https://gppac.net/resources/spirit-partnership-operationalisation-sustaining-peace-regional-level>

3. Local Perspectives on Infrastructures for Peace: Key Priorities

Learning from the COVID-19 pandemic, the international community should focus on “building back better” in a transformative manner. COVID-19 demonstrates that changes in the existing processes are not enough to achieve sustainable development and peace by 2030, providing an important opportunity to reimagine I4Ps based on the experiences of local peacebuilders.

The COVID-19 pandemic offers a unique opportunity to seek out and invest in skills, capacities, resources, tools and institutions for transformative resilience that are embedded in communities and societies. Institutionalising resilience to crises and shocks ahead of 2030 requires policy action for strengthening I4Ps and advancing structural transformation towards sustainable peace.

This requires prioritisation of the following action:



Priority 1: Expand multi-stakeholder and inclusive Infrastructures For Peace

Multi-stakeholder partnerships are at the core of peacebuilding and development policy. In 2020, the UN Security Council stated that “sustaining peace is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the government and all other national stakeholders” (S/RES/2558, PP2). Similarly, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and SDG 17 call for strengthened multi-stakeholder collaboration across all societal sectors.⁴¹

- **The operationalisation of national peacebuilding frameworks presents an opportunity to adequately map the work done by diverse stakeholders at the national level and build inclusive partnerships to support national priorities.** Conducting stakeholder mapping increases the understanding of the linkages between policy priorities, actors and issues, and may bring to light previously unknown alliances, conflicts or innovative peacebuilding approaches. The development community could facilitate a dialogue between national governments and diverse local peacebuilding experts to develop inclusive national peacebuilding frameworks and jointly develop response strategies to the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises. When implemented successfully, national peacebuilding frameworks can ensure that local peacebuilders are connected to formal processes and are able to support higher-level decision-making with direct impact within communities. Understanding of the connections and disconnections between the key stakeholders supports more targeted programming, deeper analysis of and action on factors that contribute to and limit opportunities for sustaining peace.

41- United Nations, *The SDG Partnership Guidebook*, 2020: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2698SDG_Partnership_Guidebook_1.01_web.pdf

- **The development and peacebuilding experts within the UN, national governments and regional organisations should institutionalise and systematise multi-stakeholder partnerships.** This requires time and resources to engage with diverse peacebuilding actors in a systematic and intentional manner from an early stage of policy or programme development with a guaranteed feedback loop. The development and peacebuilding community should not only provide opportunities for local peacebuilders to identify their needs, but also give them space to support the operationalisation of their recommendations for I4Ps. Engaging local peacebuilding networks is an efficient method to do so because these networks often have agreed and inclusive priorities for joint action. In order to develop impactful strategies for engagement with local peacebuilders, the development community could capitalise on the UN System-Wide Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace⁴² and the experience of joint civil society-UN working groups and advisory groups (i.e., Civil Society Advisory Committee for UNDP in Burundi).
- **The development and peacebuilding community should acknowledge the diversity of local peacebuilders and be representative of their diverse needs and experiences.** Engagement with a diverse range of local peacebuilders, including indigenous groups, women and young peacebuilders, provides opportunities for more coherent action. Further, it is important to improve the visibility of local peacebuilders who face difficulties accessing peace and security debate, including already existing youth, women and feminist networks at the regional and national levels (i.e., the MENA Coalition of YPS and Korea Peace Now) and capacitating more women and youth to take up positions in various I4Ps as well as within the government structures.



Priority 2: Ensure coordination and complementarity among Infrastructures For Peace

The coordination among various actors remains critical to ensure that no one is left behind and no single challenge to peace is unaddressed. The UN has undertaken a series of reforms to overcome fragmentation within the UN system.⁴³ The UN-World Bank 'Pathways for Peace' report similarly states that the mapping and coordination between various actors is required to capitalise on their respective comparative advantages and develop more impactful and integrated solutions.⁴⁴

- **The development and peacebuilding community should come together to create platforms for coordination between peacebuilding and development stakeholders at all levels.** Global, regional and national platforms for coordination among various existing I4Ps, including local I4Ps, need to be created to ensure an efficient, non-duplicative and prompt action. When responding to crisis and conflict or supporting resilience building, relevant stakeholders need to ensure that any efforts are leveraged to support ongoing local peacebuilding work.

42- United Nations, *The UN System-Wide Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace*, 2020: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/un_community-engagement_guidelines_august_2020.pdf

43- United Nations, *United to Reform*: <https://reform.un.org/>

44- UN-World Bank, *Pathways for Peace*, 2018: <https://www.pathwaysforpeace.org/>

- **The peacebuilding and development community should engage regional and sub-regional arrangements.** Since many conflicts spill over national borders, regional peacebuilding coordination needs to be strengthened. It further needs to involve regional actors, including (sub-)regional organisations and development banks. A regional approach encourages adapting global norms and standards on peacebuilding to the regional contexts and instills the culture of compliance. Regional coordination among different actors via regional platforms and partnerships could allow for appropriate information sharing, strengthened joint action and the creation of opportunities to fall back on in times of crisis and thus enhance resilience.
- **Opportunities for innovative uses of technology should be better understood and, where relevant, utilised in an inclusive and sustainable manner.** Both the digital gap and the lack of translation in local languages need to be recognised and addressed by the development and peacebuilding communities in all their activities. The development of guidance and training on how to navigate and participate in virtual discussions is critical. The UN should create a task force to critically review virtual engagement models and identify stakeholders that are not currently included in the discussion for the coordination purposes. The adoption of a common conceptual framework for digital inclusion is also required to strengthen meaningful virtual engagement of women in all their diversity, young people, indigenous groups, people from rural and remote areas, to name a few.



Priority 3: Promote, engage and support local peacebuilding actors in all efforts to sustain peace

Local actors, including women and youth, are often primary agents of peacebuilding, playing key roles in conflict-affected societies and in situations of extreme fragility or transition.⁴⁵ As such, the UN Secretary-General has recognised that supporting local action is a central component of peacebuilding and sustaining peace and published the UN System-Wide Community Engagement Guidelines (CEG) to support UN actors at the field level in systematising their engagement with local peacebuilders.

- **The development and peacebuilding community should support capacity building for diverse local peacebuilders to develop and sustain their own I4Ps.** Women in all their diversity, young people, indigenous groups, people from rural and remote areas to name a few, should have an opportunity to craft their own strategies to contribute to peacebuilding and development efforts. This includes supporting the establishment and development of national and regional networks of local peacebuilders and independent women mediators' networks to serve as platforms for facilitated peer learning and support, as well as the sharing of experiences and best practices. These networks can be used to strengthen the capacity of individual local peacebuilding groups without directly interfering in their operations.

45- United Nations, *The UN System-Wide Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace*, 2020: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/un_community-engagement_guidelines_august_2020.pdf

- **International legal experts should advance action to address the accountability deficit around the protection of local peacebuilders.** The principles of international law must be updated to reflect the unique situation of local peacebuilders (i.e., a global legal framework for the protection of online and offline spaces and ensuring the autonomy and security of local peacebuilding work). International legal experts should support national governments in creating an enabling environment for local peacebuilders by putting in place appropriate legal and policy frameworks that clearly define the role, mandate and protections for local peacebuilders, including in the digital fora. One way to deliver on this would be for the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop international guidelines on the protection of peacebuilders that recognise specific needs and situations in which peacebuilders operate.



Priority 4: Integrate the principles of human security and conflict sensitivity into the work of Infrastructures for Peace

The advancement of human security results in greater resilience, peace and sustainable development.⁴⁶ Incorporating conflict sensitivity can help strengthen peace processes and social cohesion more broadly by understanding existing tensions and the potential impacts of the programming.⁴⁷

- **The development and peacebuilding community should support regional, national and local stakeholders in developing their own conflict sensitivity strategies.** These strategies are crucial to overcome hostility and distrust between various actors and build initiatives that promote peaceful co-existence and develop capacities for understanding conflict dynamics, prevention and mitigation strategies through a people-centred approach. Clear guidance on conflict sensitivity and inclusive conflict analysis should underpin the efforts. Further, investment is required in academic research for studying conflicts from a local perspective and building institutional knowledge that provides an alternative understanding of conflict and a basis for solutions rooted in local perspectives. The development community could also support the establishment of a conflict transformation hub that would bring various stakeholders together to develop new innovative ideas to address peace and security issues in a conflict-sensitive manner.
- **National governments should encourage the involvement of diverse local peacebuilders in security processes.** Local peacebuilders are rarely in the discussions on the questions of security and disarmament; however, this is an oversight that creates silos between traditional security and sustaining peace. Support is required to raise the capacity of local peacebuilders to track arms proliferation within communities and engage in disarmament and security matters. There is a vital need to ensure that national authorities create spaces for individuals of all identities and backgrounds to be meaningfully included in the defining of security threats to ensure that crisis

46- United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, *Human Security Handbook*, 2016: <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/10/2017/h2.pdf>

47- World Bank, United Nations, European Union, *Guidance for PDNA in Conflict Situations*, 201: <https://www.undp.org/publications/pdna-guidance-integrating-conflict-sensitivity>

responses are designed with the focus on individual's wellbeing and responsive to the conflict dynamics within communities.

- **The peacebuilding community should support trauma healing.** Provision of the necessary mental health and psychosocial support for all people directly or indirectly affected by COVID-19 should be made available. There is an urgent need for trauma healing for everyone who has experienced conflict, including those who live in protracted conflict and no longer differentiate their lives from the surrounding conflict settings. To this end, the international community must institutionalise trauma healing in peacebuilding policies, frameworks and programming.



Priority 5: Ensure adequate, predictable and quality financing for Infrastructures for Peace

The UN Secretary-General in his recent report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/-976/74 S/773/2020)⁴⁸ reiterated that adequate, predictable and sustained financing is an imperative prerequisite to sustaining peace and preventing conflict at the field level.⁴⁹ However, there is a dire gap both in the quality and quantity of financing for peacebuilding.

- **National governments should support financing for local Infrastructures for Peace.** While many I4Ps rely on international funding, national governments can support fundraising efforts for I4Ps and provide political support for peacebuilding work. Governments can also support peacebuilding through dedicated budgetary allocations for the implementation of national and sub-regional peacebuilding frameworks and policies. Further, strategic resource mobilisation (including attracting private investment) for national and local peacebuilding programmes continues to be an area that national governments can explore further.
- **The donor community needs to prioritise funding for local Infrastructures for Peace.** This includes developing innovative solutions to provide direct funding to local peacebuilders in a way that better balances donors' own fiduciary requirements with the realities and capacities of local peacebuilders. This also includes shifting the current funding models in a way that encourages local decision-making on the priorities and enables a simplified and less burdensome fundraising process.
- **The donor community should ensure flexible funding for Infrastructures for Peace. The donor community should establish more** unrestricted and flexible funding models that allow peacebuilders to dynamically adapt to shifting priorities and exercise agency over funding while minimising dependency on donors. Further, the donors should support core funding and operational support that encourage organisational resilience in the context of crisis.

48- The 2020 Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/sg_report_on_peacebuilding_and_sustaining_peace.a.-74.976s.2020.773.200904.e_4.pdf

49- The 2020 Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/sg_report_on_peacebuilding_and_sustaining_peace.a.-74.976s.2020.773.200904.e_4.pdf



Priority 6: Measure impact of Infrastructures for Peace through locally-articulated methodologies

The 2 July 2020 Peacebuilding Commission Chair's letter (A/935/74), recognises the need to measure the success of peacebuilding "in terms of impact rather than outputs" by filling the gap in the availability of context-specific, inclusive and locally-led impact – not policy implementation – assessments of peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the field level.⁵⁰

- **The peacebuilding community must articulate what the impact of peacebuilding action means within local communities.** The efforts to determine and define what impact means at the local level need to be rooted in community-led determination of impact. For this, inclusive indicators need to be developed on the basis of context-specific drivers of instability and sources of resilience, in consultation with local communities. Non-indicator-based monitoring and evaluation methodologies could also be further tested and explored. The donor community and policymakers should publicly support story-telling and other methods of conveying data to be an adequate measurement of the impact of infrastructures for peace. Systematic documentation and analyses of lessons learned within the last 10-5 years can be used to project the efficacy of future peacebuilding activities.
- **Peacebuilding action across all sectors and institutions should be informed with locally-led and inclusive data collection methods.** Given local actors' comparative advantage in accessing information within communities, support is needed for local peacebuilding actors, including women's networks, to develop and lead comprehensive and inclusive data collection, including by establishing networks of community monitors. This requires significant network- and capacity-building to ensure that data collection is adequate. These data collection methods need to be complemented by streamlined channels of rapid analysis. Finally, peacebuilding and development experts at the national and regional levels should engage with these practices to ensure that information adequately feeds into decision-making processes.

50- United Nations, *Peacebuilding and sustaining peace*, 2020: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/a_2009035-935_74e_1.pdf



BUILDING PEACE LOCALLY AMIDST A GLOBAL PANDEMIC:

Infrastructures for Peace in the Era of COVID-19

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