Local Peacebuilders' Perspectives on Climate, Peace and Security

Summary of the GPPAC's Learning Session

At GPPAC, we see an increased interest of local peacebuilders to engage on climate, peace and security. In 2023, six (6) GPPAC regional peacebuilding networks are focusing on related issues. This includes 1) Middle East and North Africa (MENA), 2) Eastern and Central Africa (ECA), 3) Southern Africa, 4) Central Asia, 5) South Asia, and 6) the Pacific. This confirms a growing concern at the local level about the interlinkages between climate change and fragility and the need to support locally-led climate, peace and security action as they are capable to respond to crises efficiently and with impact.

Local peacebuilders at the regional level work to advance the following climate, peace and security action:

1. Localisation approach to climate, peace and security action: Interactions between climate change and fragility vary across countries and between localities within countries. Recognising this, GPPAC's local peacebuilders have developed the Localisation Guidance Note to support local peace actors in documenting, assessing, and addressing climate security challenges at the local level. Localised climate security risk assessments provide a critical tool to help identify, collect evidence of, and prioritise responses to climate-related security risks at the local level. Localisation efforts, if further supported, have the capacity to integrate local experiences in global and regional climate, peace and security policy and programming. Once localised, reliable and verifiable local evidence can help drive prioritised, targeted action, and investment by stakeholders at all levels. At the same time, the following gaps remain:

- Donors and development partners need to invest in scaling up the localisation of climate, peace and security: GPPAC members from Uganda have been bringing up concerns about the interlinkages between climate, peace and security for a long time, without an opportunity to receive funding that allowed for the conceptualisation of their knowledge and expertise. During the implementation of the risk assessment in Uganda, local peacebuilders came to a recognition that other localities are facing similar issues. Since Localisation Guidance Note is now available, along with the pool of local peacebuilders who have used it to conduct a climate-sensitive risk assessment in Mozambique, Uganda and Zimbabwe, more diversified funding available locally is required to scale up climate, peace and security action at the local level.

- Donors and development partners need to support the community of practice on climate, peace and security that includes local peace actors: In the spirit of South-South Cooperation, it is important to enable continuous learning among local peacebuilders, regional experts, development partners and national government representatives on climate, peace and security. However, as a result of COVID-19 and limited resources for cross-regional convenings, such spaces continue to be limited. Where these spaces exists, they are rarely accessible by local peace actors. Local peacebuilders must be included in existing global efforts on climate, peace and security and get access to the community of practice available at the UN's Climate, Peace and Security Mechanism.

2. The intersectional approach across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (Triple) Nexus: Local peacebuilders recognise that climate change results in intersectional crises that give rise to diverse humanitarian, development, and security risks. Therefore, climate change requires coherent action by various stakeholders who have to work together in order to effectively, efficiently and complementarily respond to crises. Examples from the Pacific, with the development of the 2025 Blue Pacific Strategy and the establishment of the Climate and Security Network, provide a good foundation to think about avenues in which the international

community can work to respond to the multidimensional nature of climate change. At the same time, the following gaps remain:

- <u>Development partners should work with local peacebuilders to conceptualise a Nexus approach to climate, peace and security:</u> The international and regional financial and technical support continues to be broken down along the policy lines, including peace and security, humanitarian, development, biodiversity, and disaster risk reduction siloes. At the same time, local community actors continue to "live through the Nexus" and develop approaches that include diverse stakeholders from the national governments, development agencies, intergovernmental organisations, and local communities. They are able to clearly articulate how various actors can be working together based on their respective mandates. Often lacking the technical capacity to engage with diverse partners due to their inability to adjust terminology understood by experts in a particular field, they have the reuired knowledge to be integrated into comprehensive and intersectional approaches to climate, peace and security. In the Pacific, local women peacebuilders are launching the Pacific Women's Mediators Network to support the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and national government in overcoming siloes in their intersectional and comprehensive responses to climate-induced risks.

- <u>Climate, peace and security experts should implement an intersectional approach rooted in gender analysis:</u> The gender transformative approach – the one that takes into account not only the participation of women in climate, peace and security action but the way gendered considerations are integrated into decision-making – remains underdeveloped in responses to climate-induced crises. As a result, local women are exposed to additional insecurities. For example, in Zimbabwe, where women are forced to engage in artisanal mining to support their livelihoods are increasingly exposed to violence, without proper protections offered to them. Women in the Pacific, similarly, have to advocate on the sidelines for their unique knowledge to be integrated into formal decision-making. Multi-stakeholder processes and gender transformative approaches should be integrated into climate, peace and security efforts.

3. Promoting inclusive decision-making through a peacebuilding approach: A peacebuilding approach relies on a dialogue between diverse stakeholders identified nationally at the outset of engagement planning. Through GPPAC's localised climate-sensitive risk assessments, local peacebuilders have proven to be capable to convene required stakeholders for impactful dialogues that lead to sustainable action. When all relevant stakeholders, including local and traditional leaders, are involved from the outset of the project, the results are more likely to be sustainable, as such an approach cultivates joint ownership over the outcomes of future engagement. In the recent climate-sensitive risk assessment conducted by CECORE in Uganda, the local government actors' participation enhanced the legitimacy of the project, while the existing structures provided important platforms for the project to build on and sustain the climate security action. The project also led to the spontaneous implementation of community initiatives applying sustainable climate-sensitive practices, integration of localised climate indicators in the national early warning system, and increased joint planning and action between climate and security actors. At the same time, the following gaps remain:

- <u>Climate experts must ensure that conflict-sensitivity is integrated into all interventions: and security actors should consider climate-related risks indicators</u> Traditionally, security actors do not see how climate-related risks fit within their mandate. The same is the case for climate experts, who rarely engage with security actors. As a result of the risk assessment conducted in Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, the collaboration between security and climate actors within the local government departments has improved as a result of the joint discussions, resulting in efforts to jointly build a comprehensive understanding of the climate-related security risks and applying conflict- and climate-sensitivity in respective bilateral actions. Local peacebuilders outlined that it remains a big challenge to strategically engage with security actors on climate, peace and security. One potential strategy to respond to such a challenge would be to identify

and outline examples where climate-related risks have actually led to insecurities in order to engage security actors around their better understanding of potential fragility exacerbated by climate change.

- <u>Donors and development partners must avoid projectisation of climate, peace and security action</u>: The future of the Climate and Security Network in the Pacific is unclear as the position of the coordinator is no longer funded. This demonstrates how the lack of integration of interventions into existing community structures (i.e., early warning data collection monitoring) could lead to unsustainable investments and one-off unimpactful research interventions. The work led by local actors can ensure that the right stakeholders can not only participate in the project but learn from this experience in their own work.

- <u>Local peacebuilders must be supported as lead implementers of climate, peace and security activities at the local level</u>: While the UN and global policy experts have the necessary expertise to support global policy development on climate, peace and security, the interventions led by local actors are more likely to lead to sustainable change. When the stakeholders involved are determined at the local level and involved through established channels of collaboration, it provides incentives for them to sustain the efforts beyond the scope of the project. At the same time, the UN actors could scale up their support in linking local, national and regional efforts in a coordinated and coherent manner. This includes offering support to local peacebuilders to connect to the UN in-country resident coordinators and regional climate and security experts.

4. Integration of climate-related security risks and local indicators in early warning and early response: Early warning mechanisms have traditionally used incident (of violence) reporting. This approach does not provide space for qualitative local and indigenous indicators or climate-related data to be reflected in the analysis, along with other relevant risk factors. As a result of the risk assessment conducted in Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, early warning mechanisms have started developing avenues to address these gaps within the AU's Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and IGAD's CEWARU. At the same time, the following gaps remain:

- <u>Diverse early warning mechanisms should be coordinated among each other:</u> In addition to the CEWS' community-level data collection mechanism in Zimbabwe, the SADC Secretariat has country-specific national early warning officers that work exclusively with government departments and not with local communities or data collectors and perceive climate as a non-security issue. This leads to a lack of unified understanding of the root causes of conflict, including climate-related security risks, in response plans. Ensuring stronger collaboration between the formal and informal early warning structures would ensure more comprehensive data gathering, joint analysis, and context-specific responses with greater impact at the local level.