

## Redefining Peacebuilding Impact Through Local Perspectives: Strengthening Peacebuilding Impact on the Ground

### *Considerations for Global Policy*

*On 13 December 2024, Luis Gomez Chow, Senior Director of Global Initiatives & Senior Technical Director at PartnersGlobal and GPPAC Regional Representative for North America shared insights on how local actors in peacebuilding and nonviolent social movements experience and understand peacebuilding impact.*



---

Good morning everyone and a big thank you to our hosts and organisers for inviting me to participate in this space. My name is Luis Gómez Chow and I am here on behalf of PartnersGlobal and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, GPPAC – two networks of networks of local peacebuilders and peacebuilding organisations working all over the world.

Both of our networks have a strong focus on participatory processes, multi-stakeholder dialogue, and the development of a culture and capacities for dialogue, collaboration, conflict prevention, and peaceful conflict management and transformation. Additionally, we have made a strong investment and a strategic bet on protecting and promoting the resilience of civil society as a key actor for democracy and peace. *We are currently working together with 27 other global, regional, and local organisations and networks on the Powered by People (PxP) project that focuses on strengthening the diverse infrastructures that support nonviolent social movements and activism, as well as peaceful collective action around the world.*

**As global networks of networks with very diverse members, approaches, and initiatives, we have struggled over the years with the issue of measuring or, maybe not measuring but *demonstrating* impact.** As the contexts around the world become more dire, and substantive and sustained peace at local, national, regional, and global levels becomes more and more elusive, it is very easy to fall into the trap of thinking that investments in local

peacebuilding initiatives, past and present, are not yielding the expected results and impact. There is a perception of *limited evidence of the impact of local action, limited understanding of what impact means in the context of local action, and limited support available for local actors to develop the most impactful approaches* to advance social change.

With the 8-year grant from the Dutch government provided to GPPAC and the joint work GPPAC and PartnersGlobal are doing, we have a chance to better understand and test innovative approaches to measuring the impact of local action that is supported in a long-term, flexible and adaptive manner.

This is why we decided to bring together peacebuilding and nonviolent social movements in pilot communities of practice to explore this question. Here is what we have learned:

### **First, there are issues around measurement.**

1. **Traditionally, the assessment of local action around peace has been confined to output-based metrics** (for example, whether training participants learned new information measured through pre- and post-training tests) or at the activity level (such as the number of people trained, and how many agreements were reached by consensus). This data does not capture social transformation, such as the increased commitment of communities to peace and democratic values and improved social cohesion. Most of the current type of measurement with its narrow focus on quantifiable outputs overlooks the nuanced outcomes of peacebuilding and activism, particularly at the local and micro local. Levels, where it matters the most, leaving significant contributions by local actors unrecognised and undervalued.

More and more organisations and donors have indeed recognised the importance of mixed methods, and we have seen more acceptance of long-term qualitative methods, such as the most significant change.

However, it seems that donor preferences still are more aligned with more traditional and restrictive methods and there is still a need to advocate for adaptations in how we measure impact.

This includes showcasing alternatives that support community-led processes of measuring change at the local level, including encouraging the bottom-up development of indicators, conducting community-led perception surveys, as well as amplifying the voices of beneficiary communities by meaningfully engaging them in peacebuilding community-based monitoring and evaluation processes.

### **A second issue has to do with understanding impact.**

2. At PartnersGlobal, and GPPAC, **we operate under the framework of positive peace**, of peace writ large. We are focused not only on the absence of violence, facilitating dialogues and conflict transformation processes. We are also working on strengthening the local infrastructures that support peace, on bolstering and protecting civil society

actors working to affect positive social change and disrupt the systems, the structures, and the institutions that are perpetrating violence.

One of the findings from our nascent community of practice is that many donors are still looking at peace interventions, at whatever level, under a narrow lens of international conflict or domestic, civil wars. We need to rethink what peace and peacebuilding mean in diverse contexts not only of open conflict and direct violence. What does it mean to build peace in peaceful places where the state has been captured? Or in territories controlled by criminal groups? Or in places where “legal actors” like extractive industries are perpetrating violence against communities. The following are therefore outcomes we observe at the local level:

- Survival of communities, networks, and activists advocating for peace and social justice;
- New connections and new partnerships between diverse, disparate groups;
- Revived/reinvigorated organising for nonviolent action and resistance in the face of state capture;
- The smallest scale changes happening at the individual and micro-local levels are the ones that are actually transformative.

**Finally, a third issue has to do with the availability and accessibility of platforms for sharing and learning.**

3. It became evident that the impact of local action is often marginalised due to a lack of adequate platforms for local actors to share, learn, and grow collectively. Existing collaborative spaces, such as Communities of Practice (CoPs), often serve intermediaries or higher-level decision-makers, but **there is a significant need to amplify grassroots voices through learning platforms that prioritise local actors.**

Consultations with key stakeholders revealed strong support for a collaborative space where local actors can explore **what “impact” means** from their own perspectives. The consultations led to a validation of a need for a space where local actors can engage in defining and measuring impact based on their lived experiences. By shifting the narrative on impact measurement, a collaborative learning space could foster innovation in how local actions are evaluated and supported.

A highly relevant example here is the [Impact Hub](#) launched by the UN’s Peacebuilding Support Office in December 2023. Our nascent CoP seeks to complement and expand empirical evidence by documenting the knowledge about what local strategies and practices produce the most impact toward social transformation. It could also serve as a database for the Impact Hub, supporting its limited resources to document local impact.

We hope today’s conversation will become a foundation for further joint dialogue with the UN and the donor community.

I thank you.