

Lessons Learned and Strategic Operationalisation of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in Eastern and Central Africa

Summary note of the informal regional consultation

Kampala, Uganda, 11 November 2024

This regional consultation for the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (2025 PBAR) provided an opportunity for local peacebuilders, UN and government representatives as well as the donor community to discuss the key steps that the UN peacebuilding architecture can take to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the region. These include: 1) intentional localisation of peacebuilding efforts, 2) integration of peacebuilding and sustaining peace across the work of the entire UN System, 3) multi-stakeholder coordination on peacebuilding in the region, and 4) promotion of political and institutional commitment to peacebuilding and sustaining peace among all peacebuilding stakeholders. This summary note aims to inform the formal phase of the 2025 PBAR, as well as relevant actions of all peacebuilding stakeholders in Eastern and Central Africa (hereafter, the ECA region).

The following key takeaways emerged from the regional consultation:

1. To be impactful and relevant, peacebuilding policies require localisation.

The [2 July 2020 Peacebuilding Commission \(PBC\) Chair's letter](#) encouraged measuring the success of peacebuilding and sustaining peace 'in terms of impact rather than outputs'. Building on this, the 2020 UN resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace requested a 'comprehensive review of UN peacebuilding in 2025, [...] with emphasis on the systematic impact made at the field level' ([A/RES/75/201-S/RES/2558](#), OP 5). It is increasingly recognised that the impact of peacebuilding and sustaining peace is directly connected to the capacity of all peacebuilding actors to carefully consider and incorporate local realities, needs, situations and knowledge in their actions ([A/79/552-S/2024/767](#), paras. 13, 15).

Localisation means prioritising local needs over political interests and building on the work already being carried out by local actors. This approach requires trust in the knowledge and expertise of local actors, including their indigenous knowledge. It should be noted that localisation does not diminish the contributions or reduce the importance of other peacebuilding actors. It rather contributes to these efforts, making them more impactful to the communities peacebuilding and sustaining peace aims to benefit.

Localisation of peacebuilding policies and programming requires:

- Committing to intentional co-creation at every stage of policy and program development, implementation, and monitoring, involving diverse stakeholders, particularly local actors. This means engaging diverse stakeholders, particularly local actors, from the outset by assigning them a formal and equal role alongside other peacebuilding stakeholders. Networks and coalitions could provide an effective avenue for inclusion as they are accountable to broader diverse constituencies.

- Translating global peacebuilding policies into local languages, with subsequent awareness-raising efforts within communities. This could be undertaken by local peacebuilding organisations and civil society.
- Developing local indicators to monitor the implementation of global policies¹.
- Click [here](#) for more guidance on how to localise global peacebuilding policies.

2. The entire UN System should integrate peacebuilding and sustaining peace into all aspects of its work.

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace is the responsibility of the UN System ([A/RES/70/262-S/RES/ 2282](#), PP5); therefore, it should also be integrated into the work of UN field presences (e.g., UNDP, OHCHR, and UNICEF) under an umbrella of a single peacebuilding strategy. Further, local peacebuilders underscore the link between sustainable development, human rights and peace ([A/RES/70/262-S/RES/ 2282](#), PP4). For local peacebuilders, the main risks to peacebuilding and sustaining peace include harmful gender norms, exclusion, bad governance, access to justice, climate change, among other issues. As such local peacebuilders use global policy spaces connected to human rights, peace and security and development to inform global policies relevant to them in their mission to sustain peace in their communities. Overall, every global policy agenda should be conflict-sensitive and every institution within the global multilateral system should have a dedicated mandate, capacities and resources to contribute to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

The UN System should integrate peacebuilding and sustaining peace in all aspects of its work by:

- Developing a clear peacebuilding strategy for the UNCTs, supported by coordinated UN peacebuilding leadership and adequate peacebuilding capacities (i.e., peace and development or peacebuilding advisors).
- Ensuring that all UN agencies, funds and programmes within the UNCTs and regional offices have conflict-sensitive programming. Requesting conflict analysis from local peacebuilding networks could be an avenue to shape their programming in a conflict-sensitive manner.
- Bolstering the focus on peace in all global policy discussions across the Peace-Development and Humanitarian Nexus. A dedicated ‘peace day’ during the annual UN Climate Change Conferences (COPs) can be considered a good practice.
- Ensuring that every UN agency, fund and programme at the field level has a clear mandate, the capacities and resources to contribute to sustaining peace.

3. The regional and national peacebuilding architectures in the ECA region should be strengthened.

A strong peacebuilding architecture relies on several principles. These include, but are not limited to:

¹ Examples of local indicators could be found in Bwire & Kumskova (2024). Participatory Governance and SDG16+ Localisation: The Case of CECORE: https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/CSO_Case_Studies_EN.pdf. Also, see Akiteng (2023). Local indicators for climate security risk assessment: Learning from Uganda how to strengthen climate action and peacebuilding: <https://gppac.net/news/local-indicators-climate-security-risk-assessment-learning-uganda-how-strengthen-climate>.

First, political will and institutional commitment to peace form the foundation of a strong peacebuilding architecture. While the UN resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace suggest that the responsibility for peacebuilding and sustaining peace lies with governments and other national stakeholders ([A/RES/70/262-S/RES/2282](#), PP8; [A/RES/75/201-S/RES/2558](#), OP3), every peacebuilding actor needs to commit to peacebuilding and conflict prevention action for sustaining peace to be realised. Local peacebuilders emphasise the lack of prioritisation of peace and conflict prevention by numerous actors across the region. During the consultation, local peacebuilders evaluated the political will and institutional commitment of national governments².

The governments in the ECA region do not demonstrate a clear commitment to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Two countries have distinct peace policies (i.e., [Kenya's National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management](#) and [Uganda's Draft National Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation Policy](#)). These policies could serve as examples for other countries across the region that wish to develop peace policies. However, it needs to be recognised that these two existing policies are yet to be properly operationalised and require significant resources, as well as political will at the national level. Additionally, [Ethiopia has a dedicated Ministry of Peace](#), which is a notable example of a government structure that centralises peacebuilding obligations, preventing peace efforts from being scattered across various ministries without coordination or proper accountability.

To advance national ownership in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, governments should consider:

- Identifying a government entity responsible for peacebuilding and sustaining peace.
- Establishing clear modalities of civil society engagement in decision-making on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.
- Developing a national prevention or peacebuilding strategy.
- Ensuring domestic mobilisation of resources for peacebuilding.

Second, the regional peacebuilding architecture in the ECA region requires effective multi-stakeholder coordination. The UN resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace identify a variety of stakeholders relevant to peacebuilding and sustaining peace ([A/RES/70/262-S/RES/2282](#), OP18; [A/RES/75/201-S/RES/2558](#), OP1). The ECA peacebuilding architecture encompasses a variety of diverse actors, each with a complementary role in building and sustaining peace. Local peacebuilders have noted a significant overlap among various partners. For example, programming by the UN and local civil society often overlaps, while regional and UN assistance to peace processes often compete. Promoting multi-stakeholder coordination among peacebuilding actors based on their comparative advantages and on equal footing can help actors align on key concepts and coordinate policies and programming in a complementary manner.

Effective multi-stakeholder coordination involves:

² Further inquiry is required to assess political will and institutional commitment by other stakeholders. However, the recommendations presented in this section could be relevant for a broader range of peacebuilding stakeholders.

- Establishing multi-stakeholder platforms for dialogue at the country level. The UN should elevate its role as a convenor rather than an implementer, focusing on facilitating annual meetings for partners to coordinate joint analysis and peacebuilding strategies, build capacities, and ensure strategic collaboration.

Third, peacebuilding networks are a crucial component of a strong peacebuilding architecture. These networks offer numerous benefits to peacebuilding. First, they help local peace actors combine their efforts in their collective endeavours to promote peace and prevent conflict, relying on principles such as local ownership, complementarity, mutual support and joint action. Additionally, peacebuilding networks are valuable partners to other peacebuilding stakeholders as they represent diverse local constituencies and engage organisations based in the peripheries, including new and unregistered, as well as grassroots organisations, while also involving local actors with diverse thematic expertise. As these networks continuously grow and expand, they engage more local actors in their endeavour to promote peace and conflict prevention. However, peacebuilding networks require nurturing and adequate support to reach their potential. While they at times struggle to deliver the clear outputs often required for programmatic funding, their critical impact is undeniable. Peacebuilding networks play a key role in promoting local leadership, enhancing capacities, and providing access to global platforms. These efforts contribute to creating more inclusive peacebuilding efforts ([A/RES/70/262-S/RES/ 2282](#), PP9).

To fulfil the full potential of local peacebuilding networks, peacebuilding stakeholders should consider:

- Providing long-term sustainable financial support for regional and national peacebuilding networks;
- Institutionalising policy engagement with networks at the field level by including the representatives of peacebuilding networks at all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of peacebuilding policies and programming;
- Creating regular spaces and platforms for learning and exchange. There should be space for multi-stakeholder exchanges, as well as youth-only or women-to-women strategic gatherings to ensure that different local actors can find their safe space and sense of belonging to unlock their full potential.

Fourth, infrastructures for peace (I4Ps) could provide ‘a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace’ called for by [A/RES/70/262-S/RES/ 2282](#) (PP12). While popular in global policy discussions, the term ‘national prevention strategies’ is not yet well understood at the local level. At the same time, local peacebuilders continue to stress the importance and relevance of early warning systems and other I4Ps at the local level. ‘Infrastructures for peace’ is a term more familiar to local peacebuilders as a vehicle to advance [locally-led action on sustaining peace](#). Local I4Ps have demonstrated their ability to prevent extreme hardships that conflict inflicts on communities, offering a more cost-effective alternative to reactive interventions. They play a key role in connecting local actors and national governments to facilitate inclusive responses. Across the ECA region, diverse and often fragmented efforts in early warning and conflict monitoring have shown effectiveness. For example, the SAFE programme for reporting conflicts via a toll-free line is a good practice. Peace committees are another effective formal structure for community engagement. At the same time, limited

participation of youth and women is recorded in such committees. Further, early warning system coordinated by IGAD works effectively, with the participation of local communities. However, the early warning is not followed by an early response at national and/or sub-regional level. The sustainability of I4Ps also depends heavily on the availability of continuous financial support.

To strengthen infrastructures for peace (I4Ps), peacebuilding stakeholders should consider the following actions:

- Investing in new and building on existing I4Ps in a coordinated manner. The African Union should strengthen its efforts to establish a sub-regional early warning system in the ECA region, by bringing together and building on existing early warning efforts.
- Ensuring I4Ps are connected to proper government and intergovernmental processes at the national and regional levels.
- Adjusting existing funding strategies and developing innovative mechanisms to support I4Ps in an unrestricted and flexible way that provides for core funding and institutional support.

Fifth, quality and quantity of financing for peacebuilding are critical for a strong peacebuilding architecture. Inadequate financing for local peacebuilding efforts remains a critical challenge to effective peacebuilding and impactful local action ([A/RES/76/305](#), PP5). Local peacebuilders highlight persistent issues with both the quality and quantity of financing. In addition to limited resources generally available to local actors, the existing financing for peacebuilding fails to comply with [the principles of quality financing](#). Ineffective investments further compound the problem of limited financing for peacebuilding by failing to maximise local impact. Participants highlighted several challenges, including short funding periods, donor-driven restrictive agendas, and insufficient support for operational and institutional costs. Funding models often fail to align with local needs, lacking the flexibility required to adapt to evolving contexts. Moreover, the lack of donor transparency and a hierarchical donor-recipient relationship undermines trust and reduces the effectiveness of interventions. Smaller and newly-formed grassroots organisations, as well as youth-led organisations, in particular, struggle to build a track record required to secure funding.

Local peacebuilders in the region are working to diversify resources, by engaging with non-traditional donors, diaspora communities, and the private sector. However, building relationships with new donors takes considerable time. Some traditional donors are showing interest in exploring new modalities of supporting peacebuilding. A good example includes the ‘Contributing to Peaceful and Safe Societies 2024-2031’ Grant Programme by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which supports peacebuilding networks and provides flexible funding that allows space for learning.

To strengthen the quantity and quality of financing, the donor community could consider:

- Increasing quality financial support for local actors by allocating funding directly to local and grassroots organisations and prioritising long-term and flexible funding models that can adapt to the realities on the ground. The UN funding (e.g., the PBF’s Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative) specifically could be more

accessible and long-term, following the practices of proposal co-creation present in some regional- and country-specific pooled funds.

- Co-creating participatory approaches to funding peacebuilding efforts together with local peacebuilders, replacing top-down, hierarchical funding models. Development corporation strategies, as well as calls for proposals, should be based on continuous, localised analysis to ensure that they are tailored to contextual needs.
- Developing strategies for the engagement of the private sector as a partner in financing sustainable peace initiatives.