UNITED NATIONS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES ON PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

United Nations
Peacebuilding

FOREWORD

Local civil society 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. They are critical in promoting confidence and trust, encouraging cooperation, creating incentives for collective action and ensuring that efforts are adapted to local and national contexts. Their contributions range from providing basic services to enhancing cohesion and stability; from enabling communities to influence social norms to mediating relationships between the government and people through dialogue or mechanisms for state accountability. As such, community engagement with local civil society actors is a central component of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This is why, in my 2018 report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707 and S/2018/43), I called for wide-ranging efforts to strengthen this work.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the value of community engagement clearer than ever. COVID-19 has caused an unprecedented worldwide crisis that is having devastating consequences on healthcare systems, livelihoods and the social contract, and threatens to aggravate long-standing inequalities and security challenges.

Local civil society actors are rising to the challenge. In countries around the world, young women and men are delivering supplies to frontline health workers and people in need. They are developing innovative communication methods to maintain social cohesion despite physical distancing. We know from previous public health crises such as HIV/AIDS and Ebola that faith leaders have enormous influence, and we have seen that impact today in promoting unity and solidarity. I am also grateful to the many local civil society actors worldwide who have echoed my appeal for a global ceasefire in order to focus our fight on our shared enemy – the disease.

The United Nations, in its efforts to promote sustained peace and security, is strongly committed to directly and meaningfully engaging local populations and communities. It is in this precious civic space that we can interact with the people whose lives we hope to improve and who are affected by what we do. I urge UN colleagues to draw on these guidelines to advance our efforts to build and sustain peace.

António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 twin resolutions on the review of the UN peacebuilding architecture adopted in the General Assembly and Security Council (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016), respectively) recognized the changing scale and nature of peacebuilding challenges. This led to shifting the long-term focus of the UN from crisis response to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with a view to "prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development" through comprehensive and coherent approaches and strategic and operational partnerships including with civil society actors, especially women and youth-led organizations.

Following the Secretary-General's call for the UN's improved engagement with civil society at the local level in his 2018 report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace[1], a joint UN-civil society working group[2] developed the UN system-wide Community engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace to:

- Support UN field presences in developing country-specific community engagement strategies on peacebuilding and sustaining peace; and

- Provide operational guidance to UN field presences on how to more effectively engage with civil society actors at the local level in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

These Guidelines should also be understood in conjunction with the process, led by OHCHR and UN Women, to develop UN system-wide documents aimed at bringing more coherence to the UN's approach towards civic space.

COMMUNITY

Often a geographical subset of society at the local level, a "community" can be defined by **commonalities such as, but not limited to, norms, religion, shared interests, customs, values and needs of civilians.** A community is not static or closed, but constantly evolving subject to internal and external construction and reconstruction.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A strategic process to directly involve local populations in all aspects of decision-making and implementation to strengthen local capacities, community structures and local ownership as well as to improve transparency, accountability and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings. In the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, community engagement is generally done through partnerships with a broad range of local civil society actors as intermediaries who work in the sphere of peacebuilding.

CIVIL SOCIETY

For the UN, "civil society" is a broad concept including any **collective civic arena of individuals, organizations, social movements, networks or coalitions that act or organize formally or informally to advance joint interests, values, objectives or goals of or across communities.**

In the context of the UN's engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the scope of civil society may be identified as, but not limited to: human rights defenders; independent media (online, off line); faith-based organizations and leaders; non-governmental organizations; community-based groups; professional groups or associations, including trade unions; women's groups; youth groups; religious, cultural, tribal or other informal organizations and civic movements that self-recognize as civil society; groups representing marginalized or underrepresented communities; social media communities; and academic institutions (schools, universities, research bodies). Additionally, civil society can include informal gatherings or multistakeholder networks and coalitions. It is important to note the identity of local actors within civil society may be fluid and dependent on the context in conflict-affected situations.

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1. In his report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, reflecting on the UN's engagement with civil society, the Secretary-General points to the range of forms this may take, including "building capacity, sharing good practices, producing practical tools, fostering a conducive environment for robust civil society, and active engagement in analysis, planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation." He asked for the development, in consultation with civil society, of "guidelines on system-wide engagement with civil society for sustaining peace" (para. 61). He also asked for the "United Nations peace operations and United Nations country teams develop community engagement strategies in consultation with national and local stakeholders, particularly youth and women's groups, and that these be shared, monitored and reviewed with local actors".
2. The Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) has led a joint UN-CSO Working Group (including Policy Planning Unit (PPU)/DPPA, Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training (DPET)/Department of Peace Operations (DPO), OHCHR, UNDP, UN Women, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), International Peace Institute (IPI), Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and UN entities). to develop the UN system-wide Community engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (UNCEG) through an innovative, uniquely inclusive and consultative process.

SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL CONTEXT THROUGH RESPECTFUL, COHERENT AND FLEXIBLE ENGAGEMENT

- **Community ownership through home-grown peacebuilding solutions** that are prioritized and fostered through mutually beneficial, respectful and transparent partnerships.
- Full understanding of each community's distinct context, including, but not confined to, **language, demographic, ethnic groups, religion, culture and tradition etc.**[3]
- Gendered, conflict-sensitive and risk-informed **joint community contextual analysis and mapping of communities and local civil society actors** as part of the Common Country Analysis (CCA).
- **Operational flexibility including risk mitigation strategies** that are adjustable to community-specific contexts.

2. OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC COHERENCE AND EFFECTIVE COORDINATION IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE UN IN THE FIELD

- **Streamlined community engagement** at the country level through senior leadership.
- **Designated civil society engagement capacity** within the country presence to create and maintain a comprehensive and centralized database on communities and local civil society actors in peacebuilding and promote sustainable participation (in integrated UN mission settings, jointly managed central database).
- Centralized coordination role by the senior leadership complemented **by strengthened individual community engagement capacities of various UN entities and agencies.**

3. SAFETY AND PROTECTION IN RESTRICTED ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH CONFLICT-SENSITIVE AND RISK-INFORMED APPROACHES

- **"Do-no-harm" approach** during, before and after community engagement.
- **Promote, protect and expand civic space** for robust community engagement.
- With the consent of those involved, **document any act of attack, threat, intimidation and reprisals** against local civil society actors for engaging with the UN and devise appropriate protection measures to address the situation, including in cases of credible threats of physical violence.
- **Context-specific protection needs and key safety and protection issues that can generate genuine progress** included in community contextual analysis.
- Integration of **advocacy goals for safety and protection of local civil society actors** in the UN's broader partnerships with national and regional stakeholders.
- **Regular full risk assessment and risk mitigation measures** for safety, security and protection.

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[3]. At the same time, it is important to be mindful that in some contexts culture and tradition could be the underlying cause of discrimination, oppression and marginalization of certain groups in communities which should not be reinforced by UN support.

4. INCLUSIVE AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

- **People-centered, locally-led approach** through institutionalized community engagement modalities through diverse range of local actors.
- **Meaningful participation of local civil society actors** in peace processes and the analysis, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting of peacebuilding programmes, engaging communities at an early stage with a guaranteed feedback loop.
- **Conflict-sensitive and effective communication and outreach**, including through Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), for two-way communication.
- **Flexible reporting and monitoring and evaluation** modalities at the local level.

5. COMMUNITY-BASED CAPACITY-BUILDING, INCLUDING FINANCING FOR PEACEBUILDING

- **Regular conflict-sensitive guidance, tools and capacity-building opportunities** for local civil society actors.
- Smaller-scale, predictable, flexible and risk-tolerant local funding modalities.
- **Simple and user-friendly** grant application templates and selection/reporting criteria.
- The intermediary role of international and national civil society organizations with greater capacity, which can help trickle down resources to smaller organizations.
- **Broader partnerships** with regional and subregional organizations, private sector and international financial institutions (IFIs), including the World Bank.

6. MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL WOMEN AND WOMEN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

- **Create spaces for and encourage the meaningful participation of diverse women and women civil society actors** in all aspects of peacebuilding, including the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements, transitional justice processes, demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes, etc.
- **Incorporate gender-sensitive measures in all aspects of peacebuilding, including by ensuring** that a **gender analysis** is included in conflict analysis, and in programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Wider access to **gender-sensitive, longer-term, flexible and multi-year funding models** at the local level.

7. MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Recognition of youth from diverse backgrounds and sectors, including those in informal groups, and increased investment in leadership of young people at the local level.
- Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) programming including partnership with **at least one youth-led civil society actor.**
- Local youth civil society actor **meaningfully engaged in all phases of peacebuilding interventions and treated as equal partners.**
- **Increased operational and financial sustainability** of youth civil society actors without over-bureaucratization by identifying innovative and flexible mechanisms.

1. INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES

Community engagement is at the heart of successful peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. In order to promote meaningful inclusion through broader partnerships, the Secretary-General's report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43) called for strengthened and systematized engagement with civil society, including women and youth groups and local communities at large. Reflecting on the UN's engagement with civil society, the Secretary-General points to the range of forms this may take, including "building capacity, sharing good practices, producing practical tools, fostering a conducive environment for robust civil society, and active engagement in analysis, planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation." He asked for the development, in consultation with civil society, of "guidelines on system-wide engagement with civil society for sustaining peace" (para. 61). He also asked for the "United Nations peace operations and United Nations country teams to develop community engagement strategies in consultation with national and local stakeholders, particularly youth and women's groups, and that these be shared, monitored and reviewed with local actors" (para. 59).

In response to the Secretary-General's recommendations, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), now part of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), has led a joint United Nations-Civil Society working group to develop the UN system-wide Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace through an innovative, inclusive and consultative process since 2018. This working group included the Policy Planning Unit (PPU) of DPPA, the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division (DPET) of the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), OHCHR, UNDP, UN Women, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the International Peace Institute (IPI) and the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO). This process included an online survey completed by more than 300 UN and civil society actors working in peacebuilding contexts; 42 video consultations with focus countries (Burundi, Cambodia, Guatemala, Liberia, Mali and Somalia); and a three-day global online consultation with more than 400 participants, mostly local peacebuilders.

These guidelines are intended to support UN field presences at the country-level in developing country-specific community engagement strategies, guided by a human rights-based approach and the key principles of conflict-sensitivity; inclusive and diverse representation; respectful and meaningful participation; flexibility and accessibility; transparency and accountability; and safety and protection. These guidelines are also to be understood in conjunction with broader UN system-wide initiatives to bring more coherence to the UN's approach towards civic space.

The specific objectives of the system-wide community engagement guidelines are:

- Support UN field presences in developing country-specific community engagement strategies on peacebuilding and sustaining peace; and

- Provide operational guidance to UN field presences on how to more effectively engage with civil society actors at the local level in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

The 2016 twin resolutions on the review of the UN peacebuilding architecture adopted in the General Assembly and Security Council (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016), respectively) recognized the changing scale and nature of peacebuilding challenges. This led to shifting the long-term focus of the UN from crisis response to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with a view to "prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict

to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development" through comprehensive and coherent approaches. They also called for strategic and operational partnerships with civil society organizations, women's groups and youth-led organizations. This was reinforced by the joint UN-World Bank study *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, which underscored the changing nature of violent conflict—with more complex drivers and root causes and more non-state actors involved—and stressed the importance of inclusive participation of domestic actors, particularly civil society, in the prevention of violent conflict.

This new whole-of-UN approach to conflict prevention, response and sustaining peace requires enhanced operational and policy coherence. It also requires a comprehensive and strategic approach across all UN efforts in peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian action to support nationally-owned initiatives before, during and after conflict.

While sustaining peace inherently recognizes the importance of national ownership and leadership, this goes beyond government ownership to encompass the need to build an **ecosystem of strategic and inclusive partnerships across society**, focusing especially on women and youth and local communities at large "to ensure that the **needs of all segments of society are taken into account**." Strengthening partnerships both within and beyond the UN, particularly with regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions (IFIs), including the World Bank, and other multilateral donors, civil society and the private sector is a key aspect of sustaining peace in this regard, which needs to be upheld and implemented on the ground. The UN system-wide Community engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace serve as a step to improving the UN's partnership and engagement with communities and local civil society actors in the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in order to be more effective.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

While **"Community"** is usually defined as a geographical subset of society at the local level, it can also be defined by commonalities such as, but not limited to, norms, religion, shared interests, customs, values and needs of citizens.

"Community engagement" is a strategic process to directly involve local populations in all aspects of decision-making, policy development and implementation to strengthen local ownership, capacities and community structures as well as to improve transparency, accountability and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings.[4] Different UN entities engage with communities in diverse ways and at different levels. In peacekeeping settings, local communities are engaged (through intermediaries) as key stakeholders alongside other actors in order to integrate different interests into successful strategies. In the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the community engagement is generally done through partnerships with local civil society actors working in the sphere of peacebuilding.[5]

Building on a participatory approach, community engagement through local civil society actors is imperative in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. **Local civil society actors,** when legitimately representing their communities' interests, can support the UN to build and strengthen an environment for effective peacebuilding in the field with their knowledge and expertise. They can also create incentives for joint action in conflict-affected communities, including during transitions. For example, local civil society actors provide basic services; contribute to enhanced social cohesion and stability in communities; and enable communities to influence social norms and mediate relationships between the government and communities by creating and maintaining civic space for dialogues, accountability

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4. UNICEF Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators on Community engagement, 2019.
5. DPKO - Department of Field Support, Peacekeeping Practice Note: Community engagement, 2018

and grievance mechanisms. Local civil society actors also have an important role to play in promoting awareness, understanding and trust in the formal system of justice in local communities by providing external checks and balances. Efforts to empower civil society are crucial to provide external oversight and increased public demand for integrity and accountability.[6]

"Civil society" is a broad concept including any collective civic arena of individuals, organizations, social movements, networks or coalitions that act or organize formally or informally on behalf of, or to advance, shared interests, values, objectives or goals within or across communities.

In general, civil society is set apart from government or private actors. Civil society actors are unarmed and do not seek profit or governing power. In the context of the UN's engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the scope of civil society may be identified as, but not limited to: human rights defenders; independent media (online, off line); faith-based organizations and leaders; non-governmental organizations; community-based groups; professional groups or associations, including trade unions; women's groups; youth groups; religious, cultural, tribal or other informal organizations and civic movements that self-recognize as civil society; groups representing marginalized or underrepresented communities; social media communities; and academic institutions (schools, universities, research bodies). It is important to note the identity of local civil society actors may be fluid and dependent on the context in conflict-affected situations.

Accordingly, "civic space" is the environment that enables civil society to play a role in the political, economic and social life of societies. Freedoms of expression, assembly, association and participation are the main vehicles of civic space.

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6. *DPO-OROLSI, Justice and Corrections Service (JCS) lessons learned study on extending effective and legitimate state authority through the delivery of rule of law services in conflict environment, 2020.*

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following seven recommendations have been agreed system-wide for the UN to more effectively engage with local civil society actors and their communities in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

1. DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL CONTEXT THROUGH RESPECTFUL, COHERENT AND FLEXIBLE ENGAGEMENT

2. OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC COHERENCE AND EFFECTIVE COORDINATION IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE UN IN THE FIELD

3. SAFETY AND PROTECTION IN RESTRICTED ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH CONFLICT-SENSITIVE AND RISK-INFORMED APPROACHES

4. INCLUSIVE AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

5. COMMUNITY-BASED CAPACITY-BUILDING, INCLUDING FINANCING FOR PEACEBUILDING

6. MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL WOMEN AND WOMEN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

7. MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL CONTEXT THROUGH RESPECTFUL, COHERENT AND FLEXIBLE ENGAGEMENT

As a prerequisite, the UN should recognize and respect the fundamental and inalienable human rights of civil society actors, both individually and collectively. Local ownership through home-grown peacebuilding solutions should be prioritized and fostered through mutually beneficial, respectful and transparent partnerships with the UN and other relevant stakeholders. Such partnerships are contingent on the UN's comprehensive understanding of its local civil society partners and their communities.

Because social contexts and interactions constantly evolve, the UN should use in-depth community-specific conflict analysis and assessment of peacebuilding needs to ensure a deeper understanding of communities and their characteristics and interests, including, but not confined to, language, ethnic groups, belief system and religious practices as well as cultural and traditional norms.[7] Such context-specific reflection and understanding of communities and local civil society actors will help the UN determine the best way to engage.

In this regard, to the extent possible, it is important for the UN to regularly conduct a gendered conflict-sensitive and risk-informed joint community contextual analysis and mapping of local civil society actors to assess the latest peacebuilding needs and priorities. The **contextual analysis** would scope the general peacebuilding context of the relevant community while the mapping would, with guided criteria, identify specific local civil society actors working in peacebuilding within the community context (see Table 1 below).

The mapping of local civil society actors should involve all relevant UN entities and international, regional, national and local partners, including think tanks and academic institutions. In some contexts, including in cross-border areas or where safety may be of concern, UN regional configurations or regional and national organizations as well as existing local civil society networks are well-positioned to perform consultation and information gathering activities. The mapping should include a diverse range of civil society actors, including women and youth-led organizations. It is important the UN allocates resources and time to build partnerships as mapping would require trust building in advance.

NIGER

Since 2015, the UN has been implementing a project across the Diffa and Tillabéri regions of Niger challenged by violence stemming from Boko-Haram/ISIS-WA operations. The project works with communities to prepare them for government-led efforts aimed at the reintegration of defector groups associated with Boko Haram. Under this project, the UN did not engage directly with former combatants but instead worked closely with communities and local civil society actors, including local leaders and authorities, to prepare them to receive low risk individuals. Local communities participated in the identification of activities, such as cultural festivals and events, that assisted the communities in rebuilding the torn social fabric and reinforcing social cohesion. Because these activities were identified by the local communities and local civil society actors and deemed pertinent, they resonated with the local population and played a key role in transforming perceptions of violence and relationships with defector groups. Today, nearly 500 peace committees have been set up at the village level and at the border areas, trained in promoting peace, reconciliation and tolerance. These groups, comprised of women, youth, village chiefs and local imams, continue to provide early warning support to local authorities.

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7. *At the same time, it is important to be mindful that in some contexts culture and tradition could be the underlying cause of discrimination, oppression and marginalization of certain groups in communities.*

It is also important that the contextual analysis and mapping are trauma-sensitive. This includes the need to liaise with relevant and gendered experts to identify and consult individuals and groups who experienced conflict-related trauma, requiring psychosocial support.

In efforts to complement the analysis and mapping, UN peacekeeping and special political missions and country teams should also conduct an internal assessment of the UN's collective capacity in civil society engagement in ongoing peacebuilding interventions at the local level.

TABLE 1. COMMUNITY CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND MAPPING OF LOCAL PEACEBUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT COMMUNITY	**COMMUNITY-WIDE PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING** • Collective perception of the UN • Understanding of peacebuilding and sustaining peace • Community-level conflict analysis (including both conflict drivers and peace mechanisms/factors), including those in need of psychosocial support **COMMUNITY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT** • Community-wide perception and understanding • Demography (including information on marginalized populations) • Age and sex-disaggregated data • Language, culture and tradition (including communal calendar) • Previous and/or existing peacebuilding interventions (good practices and lessons learned) **OPERATIONAL SETTING** • Accessibility (including ICT capacity) and safety/protection needs and existing/available local resources • Popular mode of communication
MAPPING OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS WORKING IN PEACEBUILDING	• Type of peacebuilding work • Gender and age of leadership and membership (among other possible factors which could be considered developing on what is relevant in the context to ensure diversity). • Previous and ongoing peacebuilding interventions with the UN and/or international, regional or national stakeholders (including funding sources and modalities) • Urgent peacebuilding needs and potential initiatives • Existing capacity and capacity needs • Possible risks for project implementation • Relationship with the UN/Government (including partnering Ministries)
INTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF THE UN'S FIELD CAPACITY FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	• Internal assessment of UN field missions and country teams' collective capacity for civil society engagement, including with women and youth-led organizations, against ongoing peacebuilding interventions.

SRI LANKA

Every April, Sinhala and Tamil new year celebrations occupy the calendar of communities nationwide. Familial commitments are prioritized, especially by women, involving several weeks of intense preparation for the new year celebrations. Many local actors are inevitably less available during this period, but this is often overlooked in designing and planning peacebuilding interventions. Flexible operational rules and procedures could accommodate such cultural and changing contexts and help prevent implementation delays. This is also contingent on the flexibility of donors.

When conducting the contextual analysis and mapping exercise, the UN should be mindful of a wide spectrum of civil society actors, as well as their interests and capacity, to engage conflict-affected communities in relation to various factors, including political preferences, relationships with the government and different perspectives among national and local stakeholders. To the extent possible, the UN should seek to engage with a broad range of civil society actors at the local level with impartiality and transparency in order to ensure an inclusive and more sustainable peacebuilding process.

To accommodate community-specific contexts that could affect the implementation of peacebuilding interventions it is also important for UN entities to maintain operational flexibility and put in place risk mitigation strategies, including through identifying appropriate alternative spaces and mechanisms for community engagement and adjusting programming parameters, to best support the efforts of local civil society actors. Such strategies should be developed based on the national and local contexts and periodically revisited to ensure continued relevance.

OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC COHERENCE AND EFFECTIVE COORDINATION IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE UN AT THE COUNTRY-LEVEL

The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General or the Resident Coordinator (RC) and her or his Office (RCO) should play a proactive role to **streamline and coordinate sustainable community engagement across UN entities at the country level.** It is important to ensure a coherent and strategic approach, avoiding duplication and building on existing engagements by each UN entity and agency. For example, it might be possible to combine surveys or focus-group discussions of several UN country team members.

Moreover, a designated civil society engagement capacity within the country presence should **create a comprehensive and centralized database on civil society** based on the contextual analysis (see Recommendation 1), local civil society mapping and internal assessment, in line with and complementary to the Common Country Analysis (CCA), and regularly update and share with relevant UN entities. This role could be assigned to existing mission or RCO staff.

In this context, a **joint UN-civil society standing body at the country-level** for internal UN system coherence and coordination can also be an effective vehicle for improving targeted communication, training and knowledge management and information exchange at both national and local levels, including on community engagement.[8]

For example, the joint standing body can organize training for incoming UN and civil society staff on conflict-sensitive and effective engagement with local civil society actors.

Such a centralized coordination role by the senior leadership in mission and development settings should be complemented by **strengthened individual community engagement capacities across various UN entities and agencies** to ensure a wide spectrum of community concerns and local voices in peacebuilding and sustaining peace are understood and taken into account in the UN's strategic decision-making, political processes and programme design at the country level.

The UN's community engagement capacity could also be further strengthened by the **intermediary role of UN national staff and international, regional and national civil society partners** through their contributions to the abovementioned contextual analysis and mapping exercise, creating and maintaining the centralized database on local civil society actors and ensuring effective outreach and communication as relevant.

In integrated UN mission settings, **the centralized database on local civil society actors and their communities** (see Recommendation 1) **should be jointly managed** to ensure sustainability and operational coherence, minimize a potential gap in terms of financial support and continue strengthening partnerships at the local level in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, especially during transitions.

★ SOMALIA

The UN in Somalia has promoted community-based planning (CBP) to strengthen engagement with local actors in development and peacebuilding processes in response to the country's mass displacement crisis. CBP is defined as a process which empowers communities, including vulnerable socio-economic groups and their leaders, to demand and actively participate in development interventions that are relevant to them. The desired outcome of this process is to agree on shared priorities within and among communities, assist communities to access resources and promote social cohesion and integration between displaced and host communities. The priorities provided the basis for community action plans that became the local reference point to which development actors can align their support.

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8. *In countries with humanitarian emergencies, the Humanitarian Country Team essentially fills this function. A similar model could be explored in the peacebuilding field.*

SAFETY AND PROTECTION IN RESTRICTED ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH CONFLICT-SENSITIVE AND RISK-INFORMED APPROACHES

A politically, legally, socially and/or culturally restricted environment may impede the ability of local civil society actors to promote peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Certain groups, such as women and youth, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and those who experience caste-based discrimination or discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity among other marginalized communities, are particularly vulnerable in such environments.

Restricted civic space is often an early warning sign for fragility, conflict and violence. Noting the inherent preventive value of civic space, including the important avenue civic space provides to address and resolve grievances through peaceful means, the UN should **promote, protect and expand civic space in order to enable robust community engagement.**

To ensure a **conflict-sensitive "do-no-harm" approach before, during and after community engagement**, the UN should discuss with local civil society actors in advance the detailed elements of the UN's community engagement so as not to expose these actors to risks and danger, and take preventive action in consultation with local civil society actors and their communities where necessary. Special effort should be made to consult with women, youth and other marginalized groups to ensure that specific risks are taken into account.

The safety and protection of local civil society actors begin with the conduct of a comprehensive community contextual analysis and local civil society mapping (see Recommendation 1) that reflect specific challenges and risks faced by local civil society actors, including their multiple and intersecting identities, in a restricted environment. When conducting the contextual analysis and mapping, it is important to note **context-specific protection needs as well as key safety and protection issues that can make genuine progress through constructive initiatives** with national and local authorities and/or armed groups.

In this regard, the UN should **integrate advocacy goals for safety and protection of local civil society actors in the UN's broader partnerships with national and regional stakeholders** and support local civil society protection networks through strategically identifying, advocating and advancing possible local safety and protection issues to advance in complementarity to the national context.

In deteriorating environments, the UN should be flexible and able to **adapt to changing conditions and consider sequencing activities based on risk mitigation measures and necessary conditions** for safety, security and protection. This would include establishing regular risk assessments and early-warning mechanisms in consultation with local civil society actors and their communities as well as relevant regional and subregional organizations.

🇲🇱 MALI

A local civil society organization worked with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to establish a Community Watch group which engaged the entire community, including ex-combatants from armed groups that were integrated following the Algiers Agreement. This project focused on building trust among women in communities, security forces and armed groups to collectively advance the situation of local women. This initiative was deemed effective as the mission, through multiple consultations and mappings, was well-informed of the complex realities on the ground, including the dynamics among the relevant actors, prior to designing and planning the project. Today, the Ministry of Civil Defense has replicated this project in communities with similar contexts.

To the extent possible, the UN should identify, address and work to reduce general community security issues in restricted environments in partnership with local civil society actors, including through developing, strengthening and disseminating gender-sensitive and youth-inclusive safety and security policies and protocols (both online and offline) including the safe-handling of information related to the local civil society actors; mainstreaming conflict-sensitive approaches for all meeting and communication formats and tools; familiarizing with and proactively facilitating access to existing protection and emergency support mechanisms established by regional, national and local stakeholders; and conducting mandatory conflict-sensitive peacebuilding training for all UN staff and other international, regional and subregional partner organizations supporting or jointly engaging with local civil society actors and their communities.

The UN also needs to adopt a conflict-sensitive mindset, which includes an awareness of the fact that engagement with the UN in restricted environments can put local civil society actors at risk and can make them vulnerable to being accused of working against the interest of their country or as agents of other States, or supporting violent and criminal elements etc.

In such cases, and with the consent of those involved, the UN should **document and condemn any act of intimidation and reprisals** against an individual or community, which may arise in the context of their engagement with the UN and devise appropriate protection measures to address the situation, including in cases of credible threats of physical violence.

INCLUSIVE AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Recognizing the fundamental and inalienable human rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly, as well as to, individually or collectively, participate in public affairs at every level, the UN should prioritize a **people-centered and bottom-up approach** in community engagement efforts with diverse representation from women and youth-led organizations, ethnic groups, marginalized groups, indigenous communities, traditional leaders and peace makers, faith-based organizations and leaders, people with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons, sexual and gender-based minorities and other stakeholders. The UN should also make clear that peaceful assemblies and protest, which are protected under International Human Rights Law, are a channel of participation that help take the pulse of communities and identify grievances.

To integrate such an inclusive and bottom-up approach in the UN's culture and way of working, performance management systems should be realigned with the view of incentivizing staff to more proactively engage with diverse local civil society actors, especially marginalized groups, and support local peacebuilding initiatives.

Recognizing that local civil society actors are the main agents of change, the UN should also advocate for the effective participation of local civil society actors, especially marginalized groups, in national peace processes and peacebuilding interventions in order to ensure **broadly inclusive national ownership and to "leave no one behind."** The same principle applies to programme management to ensure the meaningful participation of local civil society actors in decision-making, analysis, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting of peacebuilding programmes, engaging at an early stage and throughout the process with a guaranteed feedback loop and exit strategy with local resources for sustainable impact at the end of the project.

🇲🇦 MOROCCO

The 2016 Marrakesh Declaration on the persecution of religious minorities reinforced how religious tradition and international human rights laws can be mutually reinforcing. This powerful initiative highlighted the important contributions made by traditional civil society actors, such as religious and traditional peacemakers (of whom many are women and youth) thanks to their unique connections to local communities and the trust they enjoy from relevant stakeholders. Religious leaders, however, continue to lack recognition and support from the international community. Religious leaders should not only be more actively involved in consultations to plan, design and implement peacebuilding initiatives, but should also be better utilized as "community champions" and leaders through more meaningful participation, such as mobilizing community actors and facilitating consultations and conflict resolution dialogues, etc.

In this context, as part of the country-level community engagement strategy and overall civic space work, [(senior leadership) the Special Representative of the Secretary-General or Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (in mission settings) or the Resident Coordinator] should develop and institutionalize **community engagement modalities**[9] **for consistent and coherent rules of engagement** with a broad range of local civil society actors and further liaise with existing mechanisms at the community level, including community grievance mechanisms.

These mechanisms should aim at enabling local civil society actors to not only share their experiences, grievances and needs, but to also more actively engage in peace negotiations; implementation of peace agreements and political transitions; design and planning of peacebuilding interventions from an early stage with a focus on developing an exit strategy with local resources for

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9.   *For further reference for missions, see Annex I: Spectrum of Interaction Modes with Civil Society (from DPKO/DFS, Understanding and Improving Engagement with Civil Society in Multi-Dimensional UN Peacekeeping: from Policy to Practice, 2016); "Interaction modes" include 'inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower.'*

sustainable impact. Where available, the UN should consider building on existing community engagement mechanisms to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity.

It is also important to ensure **conflict-sensitive and effective outreach and communication** to articulate not only the UN's role and work in peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the local level, including its limitations and own challenges in general as well as in certain contexts, but also the concrete objectives of community engagement and the selection criteria or process of engaging with local civil society partners on behalf of communities, where applicable or relevant. A lack of clear communication and understanding can result in mismanaged and/or unfulfilled expectations.

INDIA

While organizing a social advocacy campaign at the local level, UN agencies and community-based actors jointly identified and utilized various and creative communications channels that could best reach communities: from children-led radio shows and reality TV series to sports coaches, tuk tuk drivers and town criers.

This joint exercise highlighted the importance of investing in identifying the appropriate and best-received messenger and platform for communication in communities in the early stages of planning initiatives. Once the communication platforms are identified and connected, the messages penetrated in communities more effectively in efforts to raise awareness and foster communal dialogue.

In this regard, the UN should identify the most **context-appropriate communication channels**, with consideration of reach and credibility, particularly among women, youth and other marginalized population, including by way of the central local civil society database where helpful. Based on this information, the UN should develop **user-friendly communication materials and platforms grounded in the capacities and context of communities.** These could include leaflets, social media, television and radio programmes that are simplified with diagrams and translated into local languages, or community-level town halls aimed at local civil society actors and communities.

To further ensure effective communication at the local level, more resources should be allocated to ensuring safety and security, sensitization and capacity building of local journalists and media outlets on **conflict-sensitive and risk-informed reporting and hate speech monitoring,** especially during periods of political transition.

Where available, the UN should also refer to **centralized messages** related to the mission or country team's mandate and objectives as well as expected outcomes of community engagement through local civil society actors, developed by the Public Information Office or the RCO's communications team in missions and country teams respectively.[10]

MALI

In order to effectively inform MINUSMA of local priorities and community-specific security needs, local civil society partners collaborated to organize dialogues and consultation sessions in communities, including in hard-to-reach rural areas. Based on the local communities' collective understanding of "local security" and their specific security needs – which was slightly different from the UN's "human security" perspective – local society actors collaboratively contributed to developing a security training module for MINUSMA personnel and national security forces.

Regular consultations should be systematized between the UN and local civil society actors and communities, especially with women and youth. For example, the UN could establish a permanent dialogue and/or grievance mechanism (see Recommendation 4) through which local civil society actors and communities could engage with the UN as a one-stop shop, helpline, ombudsman and physical space, etc., which can be further directed to specific issue-based UN entities if necessary. Such consultations could provide a space where specific needs and concerns of local civil society actors and communities could be communicated through a bottom-up approach. These platforms could also serve as opportunities for informal peer review and guidance on peacebuilding initiatives and networking with the UN and other stakeholders working in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

10. For further guidance, DPKO/DFS Engagement with Civil Society, June 2017.

CAMBODIA

In the 1990s, the UN's main purpose in Cambodia was humanitarian assistance including providing food supply. This changed in 2004, when the UN's objective shifted towards a more policy-oriented role. The UN's updated capacity, however, had not been communicated to previous local partners and communities and many had expectations of continued food supply. This led to disappointment and misguided perception of the UN and its work in Cambodia. This was especially true for communities and local actors with little knowledge of the UN and who rely on local hearsay.

In July 2019, Cambodia's first "Civil Society and UN dialogue on Sustaining Peace" served as a platform to better communicate with local actors on the UN's specific role in peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Cambodia, including the work of each agency as well as good practices and lessons learned in sustaining peace. This helped communities acquire an improved understanding of the UN's work in peacebuilding, network with other national and local stakeholders, and share collaboration ideas and opportunities.

To the extent possible, the UN should actively seek to prioritize home-grown peacebuilding solutions and participate in community events hosted by local civil society actors to build trust with the relevant communities. Such local gatherings can also serve as outreach opportunities to narrow expectation gaps and serve as platforms to further discuss peacebuilding objectives, needs and challenges.

Recognizing the evolving relationship between the UN and civil society actors, the UN is encouraged to explore and experiment innovative forms of meaningful engagement, collaboration and partnership with broader and diverse group of local civil society actors and communities.

For example, **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**, such as webcast, videoconference, social media, online consultations and mobile texts, should become a regular part of the UN's communication strategy, as relevant to the local context and carried out in a conflict sensitive and risk informed manner, to ensure real-time **two-way communication** with a broader range of local actors. The UN should work with local civil society networks to better understand, support and utilize existing local communication platforms to facilitate peacebuilding interventions, foster participation, promote interactive reporting and share information on peacebuilding developments in communities.

Where needed, the UN should **invest more in building ICT capacity in hard-to-reach areas with limited accessibility** to foster more effective two-way communication. For example, the UN, in collaboration with other stakeholders, could establish community ICT centers and involve youth groups and actors to manage and coordinate. These centers would allow various local actors from rural areas to virtually participate in consultations and dialogues as well as raise possible concerns at all levels through video technology. Where ICT capacity has already been identified through the mapping exercise, the UN should avoid reinventing the wheel and instead further strengthen existing capacities.

KYRGYZSTAN

An innovative project implemented in four regions of Kyrgyzstan utilized the innovative use of participatory video (PV) methodology in a series of training sessions for 128 children and 32 teachers in 16 schools. Children worked in diverse multiethnic groups to produce videos where they were able to showcase various peacebuilding issues in their communities. This contributed to creating spaces for dialogue and reconciliation, realizing stereotypical thinking and behavior and increasing tolerance and understanding of "the other."

KENYA

The national conflict prevention strategy 'UWIANO platform for peace' provides space for collaboration among peace actors and coordination of national and local stakeholders to promote initiatives that mitigate electoral violence. This platform is also an early warning/early response mechanism which enhances community security, cohesion and resilience between actors and at different societal level through innovative technology.

Various social media platforms could also be used for local civil society actors to informally report on project implementation and/or communicate situations at the local level, including opportunities and challenges, good practices and lessons learned in order to allow more effective community engagement.

The UN should also systematize **flexible modalities of reporting and monitoring and evaluation at the local level,** including through perception surveys and community-based monitoring throughout the project cycle, which would help foster local-level

dialogue and strengthen the capacity of local civil society actors, community-based institutions as well as accountability and grievance mechanisms.

In efforts to promote local ownership, evaluations should also include the impact of local civil society partners and the effectiveness of their leadership in communities throughout project implementation.

To ensure an active and sustainable exit strategy and feedback loop at the local level, relevant UN and local civil society partners should report and present the outcomes and exit strategy to the target communities following the closure of projects.

COMMUNITY-BASED MONITORING (CBM)	Community-based monitoring allows for communities of participants to monitor the local effects and impact of an intervention. Ideally, this system empowers the community to indicate whether their expectations are being met and to provide suggestions to decision-makers for possible re-focusing. This may employ a range of data collection methods, including short standard surveys, rapid SMS surveys, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, etc.
PERCEPTION SURVEY	Perception surveys collect formal and informal views on specific issues (including specific qualitative project indicators) from a randomly selected sample of community respondents through their response to standardized questions in order to depict a snapshot of the situation and to help monitor progress and direct programming.

SIERRA LEONE

In order to ensure live community feedback throughout project implementation for quality control, the UN installed a "hot line" for local civil society partners and communities to call UN partners for questions on a wide spectrum of issues and concerns on project implementation.

COMMUNITY-BASED CAPACITY-BUILDING, INCLUDING FLEXIBLE FINANCING FOR PEACEBUILDING

The UN should provide **regular conflict-sensitive, gender-sensitive and women and youth-inclusive guidance, tools and capacity-building opportunities to local civil society actors,** including on the concept of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.[11] This could include related frameworks and policies and their application in local contexts and conflict-sensitive peacebuilding project design, implementation, reporting and monitoring and evaluation.

The UN should also **direct specific allocations to community engagement,** including the cost for travel of local civil society actors for consultations, training and learning exchange opportunities, institutional support and basic management training, including fundraising, financial management, grant writing and reporting, catered towards the context-specific needs of local civil society actors and essential to sustaining local capacity.

The mapping of local civil society actors should involve all relevant UN entities and international, regional, national and local partners, including think tanks and academic institutions. In some contexts, including in cross-border areas or where safety may be of concern, UN regional configurations or regional and subregional organizations as well as existing local civil society networks are well-positioned to perform consultation and information gathering activities. The mapping should include a diverse range of civil society actors, including women and youth-led organizations. It is important the UN allocates resources and time to build partnership as mapping would require trust building in advance.

Financing for peacebuilding at the local level is critical yet underexplored. While existing funding mechanisms have supported local civil society actors to engage in peacebuilding processes, more could be done to adequately accommodate specific funding needs at the local level. To build more understanding around the funding needs at the local level, the UN could conduct perception surveys to gather information about experiences and specific needs of local civil society actors that apply for UN funds.

Local civil society actors promoting peace-building and sustaining peace require **smaller-scale funding** to explore, test and implement home-grown and sustainable peace-building solutions. To accommodate, the UN should introduce **innovative, predictable, flexible and risk-tolerant funding modalities**[12] that allow local initiatives to build measurable impact towards longer-term and structural change.

PEACEBUILDING FUND (PBF)

The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund's Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) strongly encourages 40% of project funding to be allocated to local civil society organizations.

LANGUAGE

Language is a main barrier for local civil society actors to engage in the application process for peacebuilding funds. It is important application forms are accessible in all UN languages and further adapted to relevant local languages in every occasion. In particular, for local civil society actors working in conflict-affected countries in the Middle East, UN application forms should be available in Arabic.

UN grant application procedures and attached administrative requirements are also often complicated and prohibitive for local civil society actors, including new and/or smaller organizations, particularly in conflict-affected settings.

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11. At times training and capacity building can generate alternative livelihoods. For example, UNMAS (United Nations Mine Action Service) provides regular trainings to local civil society actors on ordnance disposal, which leads to employment opportunities at both national and international levels.
12. Examples of existing modalities (Peacebuilding Fund, UN Democracy Fund)

To the extent possible, the UN should lead efforts, including encouraging the donor community, to **simplify and/or develop innovative grant application templates and selection/reporting criteria** for local civil society actors, especially women and youth. For instance, local civil society actors with limited capacity that do not receive more than US$50,000 could apply with more lenient standards, such as a short description of their vision and expected outcomes, which could then be further polished with the support of the UN and intermediary civil society actors. For reporting mechanisms, photos or video footages of activity outcomes could also be accepted as an alternative.

Where there is not yet sufficient capacity or funding modalities to directly support local civil society actors, the UN should further explore the **intermediary role of international and national civil society organizations** to support local civil society actors. For example, the UN could fund intermediary civil society actors with greater capacity which can then trickle down the support to smaller organizations. See Figure 1.

While this funding modality is proposed as a way forward, it is critical the UN continues to explore sustainable funding avenues that can more effectively support local civil society actors. Until then, such modalities in partnership with intermediary civil society organizations should be regularly monitored and evaluated to contextualize to the specific visions and needs of local civil society actors.

GUATEMALA

Local women groups and actors who have mobilized in communities to combat femicide require urgent, flexible and long-term support to help build or sustain grievance mechanisms and provide legal and psychosocial support to families and relatives of femicide victims. Local women actors, however, noted the difficulty in completing application forms that are too long and complicated, which often made it difficult to accurately deliver their peacebuilding vision, objectives and needs. This difficulty was further compounded for local women peacebuilders with no previous connection to the UN. Required documents, such as audited financial records for more than two years, discouraged newly established local groups from applying. In this regard, the UN could create a flexible funding mechanism where funding is made available specifically to smaller and newly established organizations to help them grow in their communities.

FIGURE 1. FINANCING FOR PEACEBUILDING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL
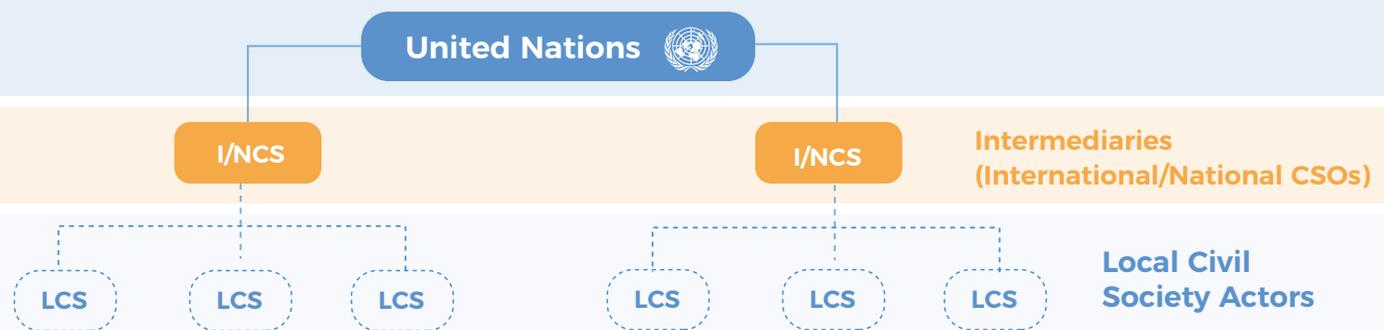
In recognition that the UN alone cannot change existing funding modalities to meet the needs of local civil society actors, senior leadership in missions and country teams should encourage relevant partners, including **regional and subregional organizations, private sector, international financial institutions (IFIs), including the World Bank, and regional development banks**, to collaboratively explore exploring innovative funding modalities in efforts to narrow the funding gap of local civil society actors as well as to scale up their initiatives and impact.

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL WOMEN AND WOMEN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

Local women and women civil society actors are essential actors for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, comprised of ten Security Council resolutions and reinforced by human rights obligations including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), reinforces the importance of women's meaningful participation in national and local contexts, and centers gender inequality as a root cause of conflict. Efforts to implement the WPS agenda include, but are not confined to, establishing women's mediators' networks, mainstreaming gender into national and local peacebuilding priorities, preventing and responding to women's rights violations and conflict-related sexual violence, engaging men in the promotion of gender equality and building gender-responsive early warning mechanisms. The wealth of experience, knowledge and expertise of local women and women civil society actors make them valuable partners in efforts to improve the UN's community engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Women's meaningful participation is both a human right and improves the effectiveness of our efforts to build and sustain peace. It is therefore important that the UN mainstreams gender-sensitive measures in both informal and formal peace processes, peacebuilding efforts, and grievance mechanisms, including the crafting and implementation of peace agreements and political transitions. The UN should also ensure that such an inclusive approach extends to women from different backgrounds and sectors. This includes actively identifying and addressing socio-cultural and institutional barriers to the participation of local women and women civil society actors. In particular, the UN should develop measures to actively protect women human rights defenders and peacebuilders under persistent threats and direct targeting for challenging such traditional gender and cultural norms.

The UN should also continue to support local women and women civil society actors' meaningful participation in the implementation of the peace agreement after it is signed. It is important to ensure that UN peacebuilding priorities at the national and local levels are gender-sensitive and reflect the core values of global frameworks and polices to promote gender equality and strengthen women's participation, protection and rights across the conflict cycle. These include the Beijing Platform for Action, ten UN Security Council resolutions on WPS[13] and the CEDAW.

LIBERIA

Following the recommendations on the need for communal and traditional mechanisms under the national reconciliation programme to redress and resolve community conflicts remaining from the civil war, the UN supported local women's indigenous peacebuilding structures called the "Peace Hut." The traditional conflict resolution setting, "palava huts", brought together village elders, all of whom who were men, to address issues of conflict between members of the community. By being led by women peacebuilders who had led the mass action for peace during the war, "Peace Huts" addressed deep-rooted gender inequalities of the traditional "palava hut" where women had little or no access to meetings.

In 2019, there were 38 "Peace Huts" throughout Liberia, providing spaces for women and young women to engage in mediating local disputes, serve as vigilant watchdogs on the police and justice services, prevent gender-based violence (GBV), refer GBV victims to support services, raise community awareness of peacebuilding priorities and mobilize on other critical issues such as elections and the importance of women's political participation and governance. Peace Hut women have also recently formed partnerships with male champions, justice and security actors and other communities.

13. UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security: 1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019).

Wider access to gender-sensitive, longer-term, flexible and multi-year funding models at the local level, including easier application process, smaller grant mechanisms with access to cash for travel, is critical to local woman and women civil society actors in order to secure and sustain their local level interventions in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

In this regards, the Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) mobilizes critical support for local and grassroots civil society organizations working on women, peace and security and humanitarian action. WPHF is a flexible and rapid financing mechanism supporting quality interventions designed to enhance the capacity of women to prevent conflict, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize key peacebuilding opportunities. Since its launch in 2016, WPHF has funded over 140 civil society organizations in 12 countries working to support women to be a force for crisis response and lasting peace. UN Women serves as the secretariat.

In this context, the UN should pay distinct attention to women in certain socio-cultural contexts or with caring responsibilities, who may have less mobility than men and cannot move to another job or location once project funding has ended. The precarious employment situation and protection needs of women human rights defenders who are under constant threat of violence should also be identified, addressed and monitored as they face considerable pressure from families to stop their activism.

MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The UN Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) as well as the new resolution 2535 (2020) on youth, peace and security (YPS) recognize that young people at the local level, either as civil society actors or community members, have already been contributing to peacebuilding and sustaining peace by strengthening resilience of their communities, including through driving inclusive social progress, inspiring political change and proposing innovative solutions. However, their contributions have often been met with resistance and have entailed risks world-wide.

It is therefore important for the UN, in the implementation of the YPS agenda, to acknowledge the unique risks and challenges faced by young people in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, including at the local level, and utilize the UN's global convening role and mandate to support the vision and protect their platform and space through which their needs can be addressed, voice can be amplified, and their engagement advanced.

Moreover, it is imperative that youth-led civil society partners are recognized by, and accountable to, the young people for whom and with whom they work. Working with informal youth groups and movements in communities from diverse backgrounds and sectors should also not be precluded, as not all young people work in registered organizations.

> ### ★ **S**OMALIA
>
> *In 2017, the government of Somalia and two UN agencies launched an annual innovation challenge camp called "Innovate for Somalia" which was a platform for young people to pitch their business ideas on improving the living conditions of internal displaced persons (IDPs) in order to raise start-up funding. Select ideas and solutions were supported through entrepreneurship training, incubation and access to direct funding support and alternative financing mechanisms.*
>
> *Also, a Youth Advisory Board for the UN in Somalia was created in 2019 following an open nomination process. The Board comprises of 18 young Somalis (nine male and nine female) from across the country. The Board was created as a way of strengthening the UN's engagement with youth in Somalia with regard to their meaningful involvement in political processes and peacebuilding initiatives. including the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda at the national and local levels.*

The UN should invest more in the leadership of young people at the local level working on peace and security, recognizing that young leaders are not only civil society actors but also embedded in communities in various capacities. In this context, any funding support for Youth, Peace and Security programming should include partnership with at least one youth-led civil society actor at the local level.

Young people at the local level should also be engaged in the early decision-making stages for peace processes and peacebuilding interventions, including in all phases of programme design and implementation and the selection of local youth civil society partners. When engaging with young people, it is critical that the UN ensures that they are meaningfully engaged throughout and treated as equal partners.

The UN should prioritize building organizational capacities in basic management for youth civil society actors to increase their operational and financial sustainability and the impact of their work, including through networking opportunities with other young people and youth civil society actors and collaboration with more experienced youth civil society actors, where relevant. At the same time, the UN should be mindful not to over-bureaucratize grassroot and volunteer-driven youth civil society actors with heavy administrative standards by identifying innovative reporting and small grant management mechanisms.

Where possible, the UN should also ensure that a significant percentage of peacebuilding funding is specifically allocated to interventions facilitating meaningful youth participation, as well as youth-led and youth-focused civil society actors at the local level from diverse backgrounds and sectors. This should also include a minimum percentage of funding going directly to local youth-led organizations working with young women and on gender equality issues, as well as directly to organizations led by young women.

SRI LANKA

In Sri Lanka, a UN project noted the disproportionate challenges of young women in peacebuilding and adopted an innovative engagement approach called the "360-degree methodology," where young women were asked to collaboratively identify local issues related to peace and security and design community-level responses and solutions. Young women leaders were then supported to implement their ideas peacebuilding initiatives through a tailored mentorship from senior local and national female leaders and a small grants programme. This initiative aims to identify and address added peacebuildign challenges for young women and to empower emerging young women leaders as drivers of peace.

NIGER

In 2019, the UN supported a project aimed at addressing the recruitment of Nigerien youth by violent extremist organizations on the cross-border regions with Mali and Burkina Faso. The goal of the project was to prevent recruitment and cross-border tension through increased social cohesion among different ethnic youth groups by collaborating on governance and peacebuilding initiatives. Under the guidance of two grass root organizations, youth actors from different areas and backgrounds came together and engaged with a wide range of local stakeholders to conduct community-wide conflict mappings.

3. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN FOSTERING STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

While these guidelines are centered on articulating UN efforts to better promote meaningful inclusion and partnerships with civil society at the community level, there is also a role civil society can play in fostering strong and operational partnerships for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The recommendations have been developed through a series of online and in-person consultations with civil society.

Existing civil society networks and coalitions, both formal and informal, can be effective in trust-building, coordination, and the implementation of initiatives to foster and sustain peaceful societies. As such, the UN, through engaging with such networks and coalitions, can enhance its partnership with civil society, and strengthen efforts to build peace. To contribute to this work, if relevant and impactful for the context, civil society could coordinate with like-minded organizations, build coalitions to strengthen peacebuilding efforts, and connect such work with in-country UN actors.

Civil society actors, networks and coalitions can play a key role to support and strengthen UN mapping exercises given their sustained and lasting organizational relationships, and practical, on the ground experience and analysis. It is important to build in time and capacity to support and sustain the relationship and knowledge development that is needed for successful mapping. Where the context allows, civil society contributions may include sharing information from their own mappings and networks. It is critical that any engagement and partnership between UN and civil society entities, especially those involving information or knowledge exchange, is grounded in principles and practices that prioritize safety and security for all involved.

Civil society actors can consider avenues to support perception surveys and community-based monitoring and assessment of UN peacebuilding interventions and their impact. Information can then be shared in a systematic way with UN partners to inform the design, monitoring, evaluation and implementation of peacebuilding initiatives. This work can also serve as an avenue for civil society to hold the UN accountable in its efforts to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Civil society actors recognize the need to better work across peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian action to encourage coherent and joint approaches, including within local networks. They also see the importance of cross-regional and cross-national experience sharing, learning and programming, particularly in partnership with local and grassroots civil society from conflict-affected countries. Civil society can then consider avenues to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned from their own peacebuilding initiatives, as well as seek to develop cross-sector programming to build peace. When relevant, this information exchange and joint programming can be carried out in partnership with the UN. As civil society enhances its coordination to be more impactful for building sustainable peace, the UN should play an active role in supporting cross-sector and cross-regional partnerships and contribute towards building an enabling environment for such partnership.

Efforts can be taken to determine what safe and secure online coordination, learning and exchange platforms exist for civil society. If a gap is identified, civil society can consider creating an online

"Community of Practice on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace" to serve as a platform to connect, exchange and network; enhance solidarity; and build capacity for sustaining peace by sharing civil society knowledge and experience from their communities throughout the peace continuum in various countries and contexts. The UN can contribute by uploading learning and training resources and sharing good practices and lessons learned from its own peacebuilding interventions. Learning from such exchanges can inform the development, monitoring and assessment of programmes and policies, and build capacity for joint strategies for peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

International and national civil society actors can play a key intermediary role in local peacebuilding initiatives. As intermediaries, these actors should continue to be mindful of ensuring that peacebuilding efforts reach communities with the best possible impact, particularly in risk-prone and underrepresented areas. Capacity building of local civil society actors should be given more consideration by intermediaries to foster meaningful participation and wider access to funding support towards home-grown resolutions on the ground. International and national civil society actors could leverage their capacities to coordinate efforts with other civil society actors and the UN to facilitate locally driven approaches and ensure that initiatives are not duplicative but complementary.

ANNEX

Annex. Key Documents and Training Resources on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

Title	Year
Concept of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	
1 A/73/890-S/2019/448, Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	2019
2 A/73/724-S/2019/88, Annual Report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its 12th Session	2018
3 A/73/829, Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	2018
4 A/72/707-S/2018/43, Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	2018
5 A/RES/72/276-S/RES/2413, Follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace	2018
6 A/RES/70/262-S/RES/2282, Resolutions on the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture	2016
Definition of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	
1 Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, https://www.daghammarskjold.se/peacebuilding-and-sustaining-peace/)	2018
2 Sustaining Peace and Prevention (International Peace Institute, https://www.ipinst.org/programs/sustaining-peace-and-prevention)	2016
3 What does Sustaining Peace mean? (UN Peacebuilding Support Office, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/policy-issues-and-partnerships)	2016
4 What is Peacebuilding (Alliance for Peacebuilding, https://allianceforpeacebuilding.org/what-is-peacebuilding/)	2018
5 What is Peacebuilding? Do no harm, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding (Interpeace, https://www.interpeace.org/resource/what-is-peacebuilding-do-no-harm-conflict-sensitivity-and-peacebuilding/)	2010
Conflict Analysis & Peacebuilding Programming	
1 Assessment Framework for UN Preventive Diplomacy: An Approach for UN Mediators and International Policymakers (UNU Centre for Policy Research, https://i.unu.edu/media/cpr.unu.edu/post/2729/UNPreventiveDiplomacyAssessmentFramework.pdf)	2018

2	Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis (UNSDG, https://unsdg.un.org/resources/conducting-conflict-and-development-analysis-tool)	2016
3	Conflict Analysis Framework: Field Guidelines and Procedures (GPPAC, https://www.gppac.net/publications/conflict-analysis-framework-field-guidelines-and-procedures)	2017
4	Conflict Scans: Guidance Note for the Conflict Scan Methodology (Search for Common Ground, https://www.dmeforpeace.org/peacexchange/conflict-scans-guidance-note/)	2015
5	Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding. Programming Guide (UNICEF, https://www.unicef.org/media/59156/file)	2016
6	Local Conflict Analysis and Planning (LCAP) tool (DPET/ZIF)	2018
7	Guide to Conflict Analysis (UNICEF, https://www.eccnetwork.net/resources/guide-conflict-analysis)	2016
8	Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace (QUNO, https://quno.org/resource/2018/4/integrating-human-rights-and-sustaining-peace)	2018
9	United Nations Conflict Analysis Practice Note (UNSDG, https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-conflict-analysis-practice-note)	2016
**Community and Civil Society Engagement**	
1	Peacekeeping Practice Note: Community engagement (DPKO-DFS)	2018
2	A Survey of Practice. Civil Affairs Interventions to Address Local Conflict Dynamics (PBPS/DPET, DPKO-DFS)	2018
3	Civil Affairs Handbook (PBPS/DPKO-DFS/ACCORD, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/civil_affairs_handbook.pdf)	2012
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