



WAA CAMEROON



A Network of People
Building Peace



Building Infrastructures for Peace in Africa

Summary Note

On the 6th of July 2020, a roundtable discussion on 'Building Peace Infrastructures in Africa' took place online and saw the participation of a diverse range of representatives of the United Nations, Member States and civil society, who reflected on their perspectives and experiences in building infrastructures for peace.

Infrastructures for peace comprise all institutions, mechanisms, resources, and skills that create resilience, address root causes of conflict and support peaceful resolution of conflicts. A key characteristic of infrastructures for peace is the focus on building capacities and mechanisms *within* communities, countries and regions.

Strong infrastructures for peace are particularly critical at the local level, where the sources of resilience and capacities for early warning are present and most developed. Without enabling infrastructures that build peace at the local level, there could be no possibility of achieving peaceful, just and inclusive societies and meeting any Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Such infrastructures can take a variety of forms that are reflective of contexts and opportunities in particular communities. The experiences across the African continent offer a number of good practices in building strong and inclusive capacities for peace, such as the establishment of the National Peace Council (NPC) in Ghana,¹ the consistent approaches to transforming traditional spaces to support women's rights in Cameroon,² the advocacy for the adoption of the peacebuilding strategy and economic empowerment projects in Uganda³, and efforts to promote justice and enhance civic space in Libya.

The discussion highlighted the following key points:

- **Building peaceful, just and inclusive societies requires prioritisation of peacebuilding capacities.** Achieving peaceful, just and inclusive societies is impossible without

¹ Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies: SDG 16+ in Ghana (2020) By GPPAC and WANEP-GHANA Cameroon – Yelyang, A, Richard, P. et al <https://gppac.net/resources/sdg-16-ghana-progress-towards-peaceful-just-and-inclusive-societies>

² Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies: SDG 16+ in Cameroon (2019) By WAA Cameroon and GPPC https://gppac.net/files/2019-07/GPPAC%20SDG%20Report%20Cameroon_def_online.pdf

³ Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies: SDG 16+ in Uganda (2020) By CECORE-Uganda and GPPC https://gppac.net/files/2020-07/GPPAC%20SDG%20Report%20Uganda_Final_digital_spread.pdf

enhancing peacebuilding capacities. Strong institutions and justice for all can only be achieved if peacebuilding capacities are enhanced and conflict prevention is prioritised.

- **Local peacebuilding capacities and initiatives need to be adequately supported and proactively engaged with.** Local peacebuilders and organisations must be empowered to drive peace within their communities and participate in broader national, regional and global processes through institutionalised processes.
- **Infrastructures for peace need to be adequately financed.** Regardless of how critical and effective particular initiatives could be, they cannot achieve their intended result without adequate and sustainable funding.
- **Various peace initiatives, mechanisms and capacities require coherence and coordination.** Peaceful, just and inclusive societies need a coordinated, complementary approach among all initiatives, mechanisms, capacities and skills in order to reduce competition and increase cohesion.

Building peaceful, just and inclusive societies requires prioritisation of peacebuilding capacities.

The recognition that there is no development without peace and no peace without development appears to be a critical element of the discourse within peacebuilding and development communities. However, governments frequently do not classify the peace element of SDGs as a priority.

In Uganda, many peace-related projects are placed under ‘unfunded priorities’ or merged into other development or humanitarian priorities. The ‘Uganda 2030’⁴ agenda has helped re-prioritise work towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies, however, there is still an issue as the government remains focused on returns on investment, and peacebuilding work is difficult to quantify.

In Libya, where the armed conflict continues for decades, the concern has been around the proliferation of arms that is not reflected among the indicators for SGD16 and therefore are not seen as part of comprehensive action.

In order to re-prioritise peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the following actions are critical:

- Shifting donor priorities towards peacebuilding and conflict prevention, including by collecting the evidence of their cost-effectiveness;
- Building the peacebuilding capacities within local, multilateral, regional and national institutions;
- Develop concrete mechanisms for supporting local peacebuilding action by institutionalising the engagement between the government and local communities on peacebuilding;
- Prioritising human security, with the focus on people-centred approach, over national securitized responses to violence;
- Localising the global policy frameworks (i.e, Sustainable Development Goals) in a way that builds on and strengthens existing capacities for peace.

⁴ SDG16+ In Uganda. GPPAC Country Report, June 2020. https://www.gppac.net/files/2020-07/GPPAC%20SDG%20Report%20Uganda_Final_digital_spread_0.pdf

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During the discussion, the representatives of the United Nations, Member States and international non-governmental organisations emphasised the critical importance of local peacebuilders for peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Local peacebuilders and traditional leaders retain the best knowledge of local communities, capable of identifying early signs of violence and are aware of the best approaches required to create meaningful change and build sustainable peace. Due to their flexibility and close relations with diverse grassroots constituencies, local peacebuilders are often able to reach out to places and actors that government officials or international actors cannot. Through networks and coalitions, local peacebuilders can engage broader groups into peacebuilding and raise awareness about the SDGs and their importance for ensuring peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

In Cameroon, for example, local peacebuilders engage with traditional leaders to advance their understanding and support for addressing gender-sensitive issues and encourage human security in communities. In Libya, local communities advocate for rights of women and children involved in foreign marriages. They work in coalitions which significantly strengthens local capacities for peacebuilding. The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) collects early-warning data by community monitors within the communities to support the mitigation of electoral violence and address critical priorities in the context of COVID-19⁵. In Uganda, tribal or religious leaders, village elders and community leaders recognised by state authorities act as 'competent authorities' that crime victims can report to in order to seek justice. In areas where a lack of trust in the police prevails, this has led to an increase in crime reporting.⁶

This spotlights the importance of the model for localisation for achieving peaceful, just and inclusive societies. **Such a model for localising the SDGs** includes ensuring that the following elements are met: 1) local ownership; 2) inclusive engagement, including traditional leaders, women, youth; and 3) meaningful participation with an opportunity to shape the policy and action.

Some of the critical steps to support local peacebuilding capacities include:

- Encouraging and meaningfully supporting coalition building and peacebuilders' networks;
- Supporting local early-warning approaches and proactively engaging with them to develop broader prevention and response strategies;
- Providing technical and administrative support for local peacebuilders to better equip them to carry out their strategies while being reflective of bureaucratic processes;
- Localising global agendas by systematically working with community actors to identify and address priorities relevant in a specific context.

Infrastructures for peace require accessible and sustainable funding.

⁵ Peace Education in Formal Schools of West Africa

http://www.wanep.org/wanep/files/pub/peace_education/P_E_Implementation_Guide_en.pdf

⁶ Data Gap Analysis for SDG 16 in Uganda, UNDP and UBOS, June 2020. https://gppac.net/files/2020-07/GPPAC%20SDG%20Report%20Uganda_Final_digital_spread.pdf

The lack of adequate, sustainable and flexible funding continues to act as a major obstacle for peacebuilding at the local level. At the same time, funding remains a critical prerequisite for enabling the implementation of SDG16 and other relevant peace agendas. While funding for local peacebuilding work has traditionally been hard to obtain, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated financing challenges.

Peace initiatives continue to struggle with obtaining funding. In Ghana, the National Peace Council (NPC), an initiative that serves as a comprehensive framework for the promotion and implementation of the SDG16, still faces a lack of adequate funding. This especially affects smaller organisations that are dependent on funding support from the NPC as they face extinction.⁷

Some of the critical steps to strengthen funding for peace infrastructures include:

- Ensuring that peace institutions, mechanisms, resources, and skills are adequately financed under independent oversight;
- Developing a fund that directly supports local peacebuilding action;
- Reallocating national resources away from military spending towards education and health, promoting social peace and peace education;
- Moving from overarching focus on humanitarian aid to sustaining services;
- Providing more core funding rather than project-based funding, which is generally short-term in nature.

Various peace initiatives, mechanisms and capacities require coherence and coordination.

The achievement of the SDGs relies heavily on the coordination of responses and actions from actors at all levels. The participants agreed that there is an increasing need for complementarity and non-repetition, as well as joint analysis and planning.

At the international and national level alike, the roles of UN bodies, Member States, and non-governmental organisations are in disarray. For example, in Uganda, many existing policies take peace into account but no specific peacebuilding framework to guide the coordination of peace processes exists. In Karamoja, in northeastern Uganda, lack of coordination and attention to the local experience between various actors has led to ineffective response to containing violence.

Some approaches to increase the complementarity of responses include:

- Mapping of relevant action in a given context and developing a coordination mechanism to mobilise joint analysis and planning and oversee complementarity and non-repetition;
- Ensuring that a strong “local component” is included in peacebuilding coordination;
- Developing a more coherent strategy that supports local peacebuilders in a harmonised way to remove competition at all levels.

⁷ Support to the National and Regional Peace Councils, NPC, September 2018.

[https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/GHA/Final%20Report-%20SUPPORT%20TO%20THE%20NATIONAL%20AND%20REGIONAL%20PEACE%20COUNCILS%20\(DANIDA\)-%20%20September%202018%20-1.pdf](https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/GHA/Final%20Report-%20SUPPORT%20TO%20THE%20NATIONAL%20AND%20REGIONAL%20PEACE%20COUNCILS%20(DANIDA)-%20%20September%202018%20-1.pdf)