



EVENT BRIEFING NOTE: HLPF 2020 SIDE-EVENT ON IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LOCAL PEACEBUILDING
Event held 16 July 2020

OVERVIEW

Peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG16+) are central to achieving progress on all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The COVID-19 pandemic presenting serious implications for conflict prevention and peacebuilding work globally, the 2020 High-Level Political Forum presented an important opportunity to reflect on challenges and opportunities in the field. The [Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding \(CSPPS\)](#) and [Conductive Space for Peace \(CSP\)](#) came together to host a discussion with local peacebuilders to share recent findings and recommendations from two recently released reports on COVID-19 implications for peacebuilding, engaging with key challenges faced by local peacebuilders and exploring opportunities to enhance support in this critical moment. Peter van Sluijs (CSPPS) and Christian Cito Cirhigiri (CSP) introduced the reports, [“Fighting COVID-19, Building Peace – What Local Peacebuilders say about COVID-19, Civic Space, Fragility and Drivers of Conflict”](#) and [“Act Now on ‘Localisation’: COVID-19 Implications for Funding to Local Peacebuilding”](#) as an introduction to the panel conversation.

Local peacebuilders that participated in the panel discussion included Comfort Attah of ASSHHF (Nigeria), Rashida Namulonda of the Sophia Muwanika Institute (Uganda), Fidele Djebba of Association Rayons Soleil (Cameroon), and Jimmy Shilue of Platform for Dialogue (Liberia).



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Interventions from the event panellists and findings of recently published reports by the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) and Conductive Space for Peace (CSP) highlighted a series of worrying global trends regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on local peacebuilders and their work.

The Pandemic carries a devastating ‘secondary impact’, exacerbating underlying root causes of conflict, particularly inequality, with government responses not being adequately conflict sensitive often placing constraints at national and sub-national levels for more dynamic civil engagement restricting ability of peacebuilding actors to operate. Peacebuilders reported a significant uptick in violence, and exploitation by governments of authoritarian measures often leading to an exacerbation of existing inequalities, increasing instability and fragility. Peacebuilding organisations, even at the local level struggle to access the most vulnerable and affected groups, the digital divide is particularly felt in remote regions where digital access is highly limited. Panellists and recent findings of CSPPS and CSP reports also indicate spikes in gender-based violence, including domestic sexual violence, with women and youth particularly effected as the pandemic unfolds.

Small local peacebuilding and civil society organisations are at the frontline of peacebuilding, also during the COVID-19 crisis, but they have been hardest hit financially by the crisis with 4 out of 5 peacebuilders experiencing a reduction in funding since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic putting the sustainability of their work at risk. Such reduction in funding and opportunities for resources for local peacebuilding has dire implications for the sustainability of their work.

COVID-19 also presents important opportunities to evolve the field of peacebuilding and re-think our ways of working to better place local agency and power at the centre of decision making, enhancing peacebuilding effectiveness and sustainability. The pandemic has presented the opportunity for peacebuilding practitioners and policy makers to unpack the level of sustainability of their work and support the agency of local communities in responding to the crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To the fullest extent possible the manner of response to the COVID-19 crisis by actors should hold at its core a prevention approach aimed at promoting an integrated approach to integrates conflict prevention and peacebuilding as the pandemic is not only a health emergency but a multi-dimensional crisis that poses challenges to peacebuilding and drives conflict so responses must reflect this complexity.
- Re-examine partnerships with an understanding that it is important for local NGOs to be treated as equal partners, particularly recognising that during the COVID-19 pandemic it is local NGOs who are on the frontlines.
- INGOs play a critical role as interlocutors in securing funding and appropriate support for local peacebuilders and must negotiate with bilateral donors and private foundations to promote and secure more easily accessible and flexible funding to local peacebuilders.
- International donors should also continue to advocate with national governments for the importance of local peacebuilders and also act on the power they have to ensure that intermediary organisations channel as much funding as possible to local organisations.
- Funding application standards need to be more flexible to access funding and project timelines should be extended. It is often too high to apply for international funding which restricts access. Donors should offer longer timelines for projects to enable greater impact and sustainability of interventions.



- There are a range of innovative ways forward to better support local peacebuilding. Initiatives include: Mapping of local peacebuilders to know who is where and who is doing what; creating a directorate of funding opportunities so local peacebuilders know where funding lies; Create a repository of best practices and lessons learned.
- Inclusion in the design and implementation processes, as well as transparency regarding financial policy can aid in increasing levels of trust and national cohesion, especially in a time of crisis.
- There is a need for greater collaboration amongst national actors, international donors, bilateral actors, foundations, and CSOs to come together to support local peacebuilders during and beyond the pandemic.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Digital Inclusion for Peace Initiative](#) - launched by the Shift Power for Peace collaboration.
- [Fighting COVID-19, Building Peace – What Local Peacebuilders say about COVID-19, Civic Space, Fragility and Drivers of Conflict](#) - Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS)
- [Act Now on ‘Localisation’: COVID-19 Implications for Funding to Local Peacebuilding](#) - Conductive Space for Peace (CSP)
- [COVID-19 and the impact on local peacebuilding](#) - Conductive Space for Peace, Humanity United and Peace Direct.
- [Countering Mistrust in Times of Corona](#) - CSPPS Coordinated Response to Support Local Action during COVID-19: an interview with Liberia’s CSPPS Member Platform for Dialogue and Peace.
- [Fight like a Girl? The Toughest Battles in Cameroon are Fought by Women and Girls](#) - CSPPS Coordinated Response to Support Local Action during COVID-19: an interview with Cameroon’s CSPPS Member Association Rayons de Soleil.
- [A Polarised Nation during a Global Pandemic: the Libyan Predicament](#) - CSPPS Coordinated Response to Support Local Action during COVID-19: an interview with Libya’s CSPPS Member Tamazight Women’s Movement.
- [Conflict, Climate Change and COVID-19: The Complexities of Somalia](#) - CSPPS Coordinated Response to Support Local Action during COVID-19: an interview with Somalia’s CSPPS Member IIDA Women’s Development Organisation.
- [Facing Two Fronts: COVID-19 amidst the Yemeni Civil War](#) - CSPPS Coordinated Response to Support Local Action during COVID-19: an interview with Yemen’s CSPPS Member Youth Without Borders Organization for Development (YWBOD).
- [A Society is Only as Strong as its Most Vulnerable Members](#) - CSPPS Coordinated Response to Support Local Action during COVID-19: an interview with Sierra Leone’s CSPPS Member WASH-Net.

About the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) is a global network of civil society organisations (CSOs) supporting peacebuilding efforts in fragile and conflict-affected settings, jointly striving for inclusive societies and sustainable peace. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any question you might have at info@cspps.org.

About Conductive Space for Peace

Conductive Space for Peace is an International Peacebuilding organisation based in Denmark. We work in collaborative partnerships as a connector in facilitating systemic transformation of the global peacebuilding system. Contact us at jasper@conducivespace.org.