



Berlin Declaration on Decolonizing Funding for Peacebuilding

The Global Peacebuilders Network (GPN) held a Summit in Berlin from 29 May to 2 June 2023, bringing together 30 eminent peacebuilders and human right defenders from crisis regions all over the world to discuss conditions impacting their work. The funding of civil society organisations working on peacebuilding in the Global South was raised as a key issue requiring the attention of the international community. Drawing on their funding experiences, the Global Network of Peacebuilders has adopted this declaration on decolonizing funding to ensure the ownership, sustainability and impact of their endeavors to create sustainable peace.

This declaration outlines key recommendations that are needed to transform the current approaches and practices in order to cocreate improved, meaningful and respectful partnerships between local peacebuilders and the international community.

Context

Despite past commitments to address the inequities and persistent injustices in the international aid system (Paris Declaration, Accra Agenda for Action and UNSCR 1325), which emphasized ownership, alignment, harmonization, results, mutual accountability and crucial participation of women and girls in peacebuilding processes, little progress has been made with regard to funding for local peace actors. Power, resources and decision-making affecting, directly or indirectly, hundreds of millions mostly in the Global South remain dominated by a small group of organisations and donors based in the Global North.

Peacebuilders in Africa, Asia, Middle East, Latin America and Eastern Europe are regularly confronted with unfair practices, discriminatory structures, condescending attitudes and norms that are rooted in neo-colonial unbalanced relationships. Some of the practices, attitudes and norms include the:

- Devaluation and distrust of local expertise and knowledge in the design of programs, practices and analyses of conflict contexts;
- Lack of intersectional and inclusive approaches to peacebuilding programming;
- Unbalanced power and limited representation of views and opinions of those directly impacted by conflicts leading to the persistence of a peacebuilding decision-making system concentrated in the Global North;
- Increasing difficulty of sustainable funding for civil society organisations as they compete with governments, intergovernmental organisations and international NGO's for the same pool of funding for peacebuilding projects;
- Lack of core and/or multi-year funding for organisational sustainability, in favour of short term project funding;

- Continued usage of differing and complicated templates and guidelines for applying, monitoring and reporting on projects, making it extremely difficult for local actors to meet donor requirements;
- Aid flows and the production of knowledge between former colonial powers and former colonised regions often mirror past colonial relationships, with decision-making power and agenda setting concentrated in the North;
- Programmes and research design are rooted in Western values and knowledge systems
 - inadvertently creating a standard that the Global South are then required to meet. Local knowledge is, by default, devalued;
- The practices and norms of the donor community, intergovernmental organisation (e.g. UN) and INGO's reinforce colonial dynamics and beliefs of the 'White saviour' (even if some hues have changed).

There is an urgent need to dismantle the racist, discriminatory and destructive funding systems that perpetuate colonial mentalities. Hence, the Global Peacebuilders Network calls for the decolonisation of funding, especially for work on peacebuilding by civil society organisations in the Global South.

As a network of Global Peacebuilders we therefore strongly recommend that:

- Peacebuilding is not a project and therefore requires both long-term funding for sustainability and funding for rapid response interventions to address emergency issues;
- Local peacebuilders are the reservoirs of knowledge. They hold knowledge, experience and expertise on how conflicts should be resolved and their voices need to be listened to, respected and prioritised;
- Templates, structures, mechanisms and process of funding and reporting on peacebuilding work have to be flexible, adaptable and accessible
- Use flexible funding models, including core and multi-year funding to allow for greater impact of work undertaken;
- INGOs and UN agencies should end the competition with local organisations for access to national funds;
- Roles and responsibilities of the diverse actors (NGOs/peacebuilders, UN agencies, INGOs, Governments, etc) in international cooperation need to be clearly defined and agreed upon in a co-creative process. Their relation to local peacebuilding organisations should be analyzed in a differential and power sensitive way.
- Core funding should help organisations to achieve sustainability while multi-annual funding is project-related and aimed at achieving sustainability and impact of projects with a minimal period of 4 years.
- Fund cross-country co-operation and networks so that experience can be shared and impact enhanced;
- Invest in trust building with local NGOs to reduce the burden currently imposed because of trust deficits;

- Co-create, not dictate, effective peacebuilding responses to the current conflict situations.