INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Changing the international system to better enable local leadership

Learning Note
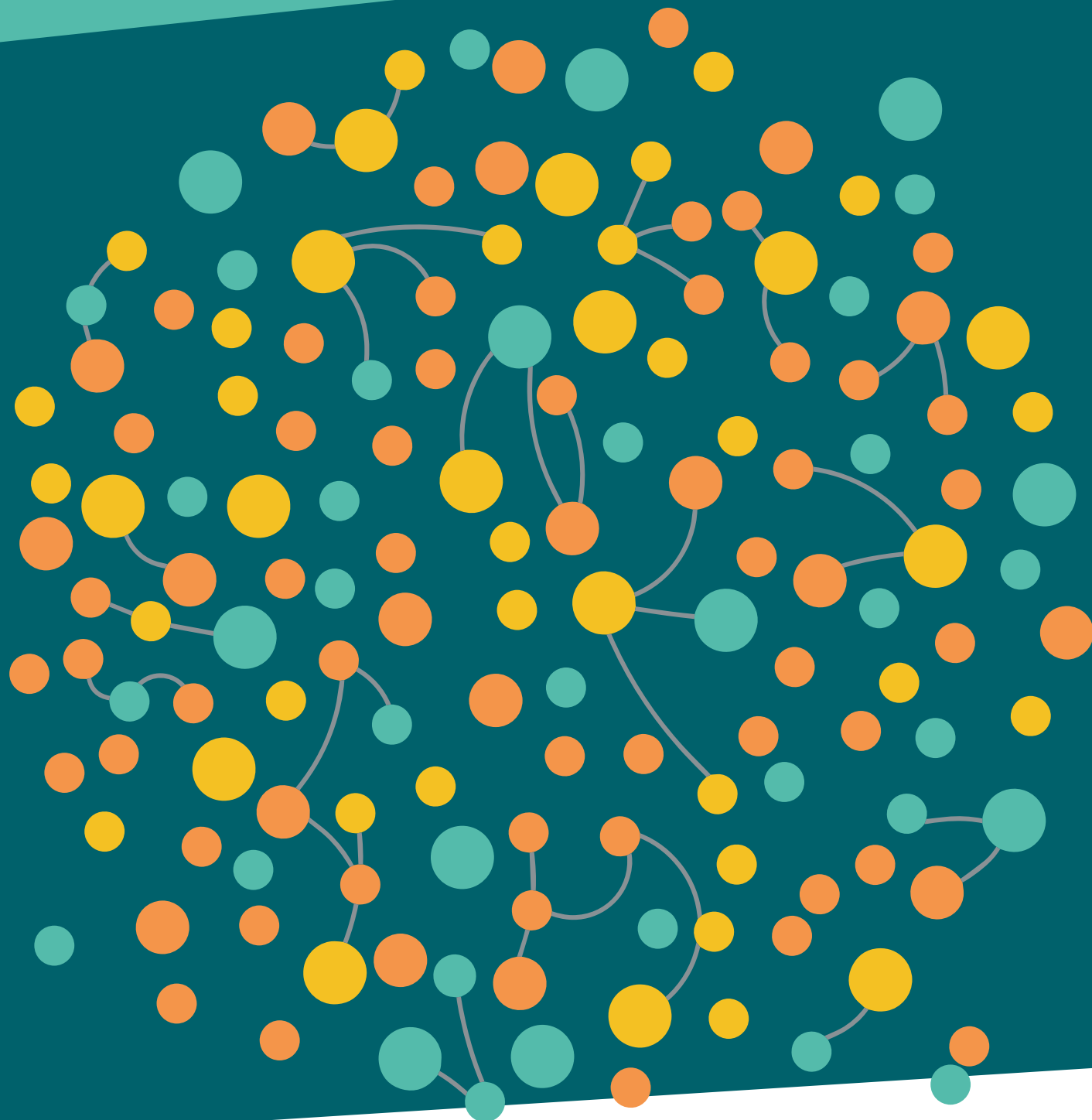
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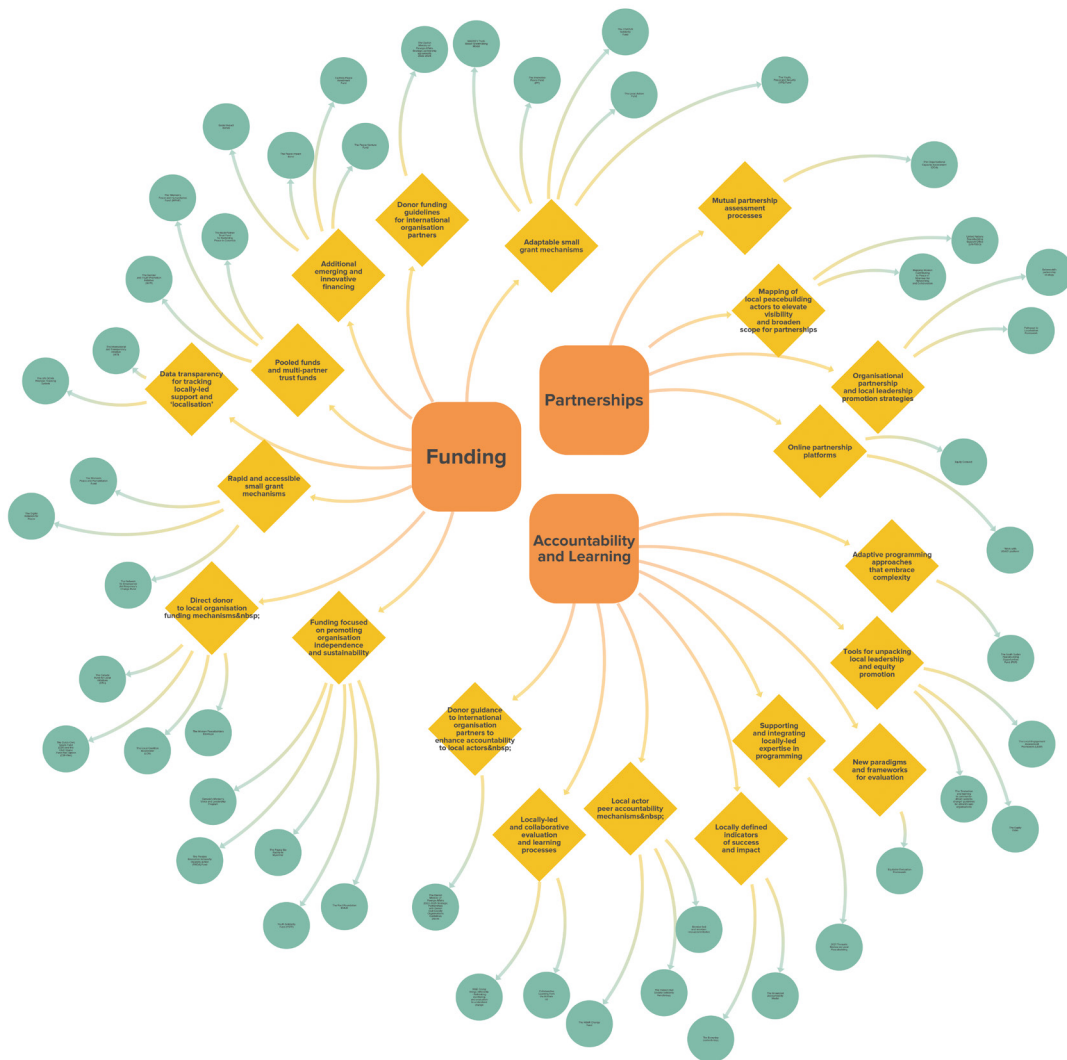
Explore the mapping of innovative practices through this **KUMU map**.

This publication is based on the experiences and knowledge development of Conducive Space for Peace, related to locally led peacebuilding and systems change. This work is supported by Humanity United and the Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH, among others.

March 2023

Publisher

Conducive Space for Peace

www.conducivespace.org

Who is this learning note for and how to use it

This note is one component in a series of broader learning initiatives by CSP intended to consolidate insights on systems change, spark conversations and inspire opportunities to take forward learning processes on innovative practices in international development and peacebuilding organisations. Scroll through the practice snapshot areas and sub-areas to zoom in on a number of specific examples.

In parallel to this learning note, CSP is creating spaces to share learning on various types on practice. An interactive map of the practices included in this note is available **here**.

About this learning note

This learning note and mapping of innovative practice draws on an extensive desk review and a series of conversations with organisations and individuals who have developed and tested promising practice. It is supplemented by the collective institutional experiences of Conducive Space for Peace, which has been explicitly working on systems change for local leadership since 2016.

Introduction

It is widely recognised that international peacebuilding and development support needs to do more to enable local leadership in practice. The proliferation of policies, commitments and principles by international organisations underscores the strong rhetorical momentum to rethink fundamental assumptions regarding the role of international actors and the impetus to centre those in and closest to a given context.[1] While such policies and practices have and continue to unpack nuance around the importance of local leadership and equitable partnership, their translation to practice is needed more than ever.

Despite well-documented challenges in translating policy and rhetoric to practice, international organisations (including donors and international NGOs) are increasing their aspirations and actions for innovation to enable local leadership. In recent years, there has been an increase of practice innovation with the explicit purpose of enabling greater local leadership and unlocking the benefits of more equitable partnerships. Recent innovation has also been propelled forward by trends that are less explicitly focused on local leadership but nonetheless impact it; namely, trends related to value for money, efficiency and effectiveness. With varying levels of ambition and transformative impact, these pockets of innovation and practices are emerging across a wide spectrum of areas.

This learning note seeks to inspire all actors and institutions in the international aid system in taking forward efforts to innovate and learn from one another on concrete practice change for greater local leadership. In supporting systems change for local leadership, there is great potential in unlocking learning on practice innovations as one critical element in pursuing institutional and broader systems change, including structural and attitudinal change. In the analysis and consultations that inform this note, it becomes clear that work to innovate practice at the level of international organisations is a necessary but insufficient condition for systems change. Sustained movement towards a more locally led and equitable international peacebuilding and development system requires not only practice and policy change but a strong emphasis on organisational change, alongside shifts in culture and mindsets.[2] This deep work entails applying a Chain of Influence Framework lens to the positionality of an individual and/or organisation in the aid system,[3] and innovating their modalities of peacebuilding and development support accordingly, to best meet the expressed needs of local civil society and communities.

This note offers a snapshot of innovative practices used by international organisations—bilateral donors, multilateral organisations and international NGOs—to support and promote local leadership.[4] Given the fast moving and diverse universe of innovations, this mapping is not exhaustive. It is further important to note that CSP has not assessed the effectiveness of these practices. Their inclusion here also does not indicate CSP endorsement of any sort. Although CSP consulted with some of those who use the practices presented in this mapping exercise, there is much more to learn about their development, implementation and impact. As with many of these initiatives, their approach is at times innovative, however shifts may be relatively incremental and not yet be classifiable as entirely transformation in their approach to enabling local leadership. Key questions therefore remain around the ultimate level of local leadership that is enabled and the degree of equity in partnerships that is fostered, as well as the truly transformative potential of an 'innovating practices approach' to systems change, underscoring the long journey ahead.

EXPLORING KEY AREAS OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICE FOR LOCAL LEADERSHIP

In this analysis, the term 'innovative practice' is used broadly to indicate a wide range of action—an intervention, a way of working, a particular mechanism, programme and/or service, a strategy or policy, or some other specific institutional undertaking that shows potential for change towards a more conducive space for local leadership. In particular, an innovative practice for local leadership is understood as one that is intended to actively change the way an organisation works so as to enable the greater agency and power of local actors in conflict-affected contexts. Such practices may be institution-wide, which means they are used across the entire organisation, or they may be discrete, which means they are limited to a specific organisational portfolio or area of work.

This note recognises the complexity and multifaceted nature of systems change for greater local leadership and more equitable partnerships. It examines three broad areas of programmatic practice due to the proliferation of the innovative practices therein: 1) funding; 2) partnerships; and 3) learning and accountability. This snapshot of innovative practice aims to capture the breadth of practice change that is taking place in these core areas to enable systems change.[5] The selected practices identified across these three programmatic areas are elaborated in greater detail in the attached Annex of Innovative Practices.
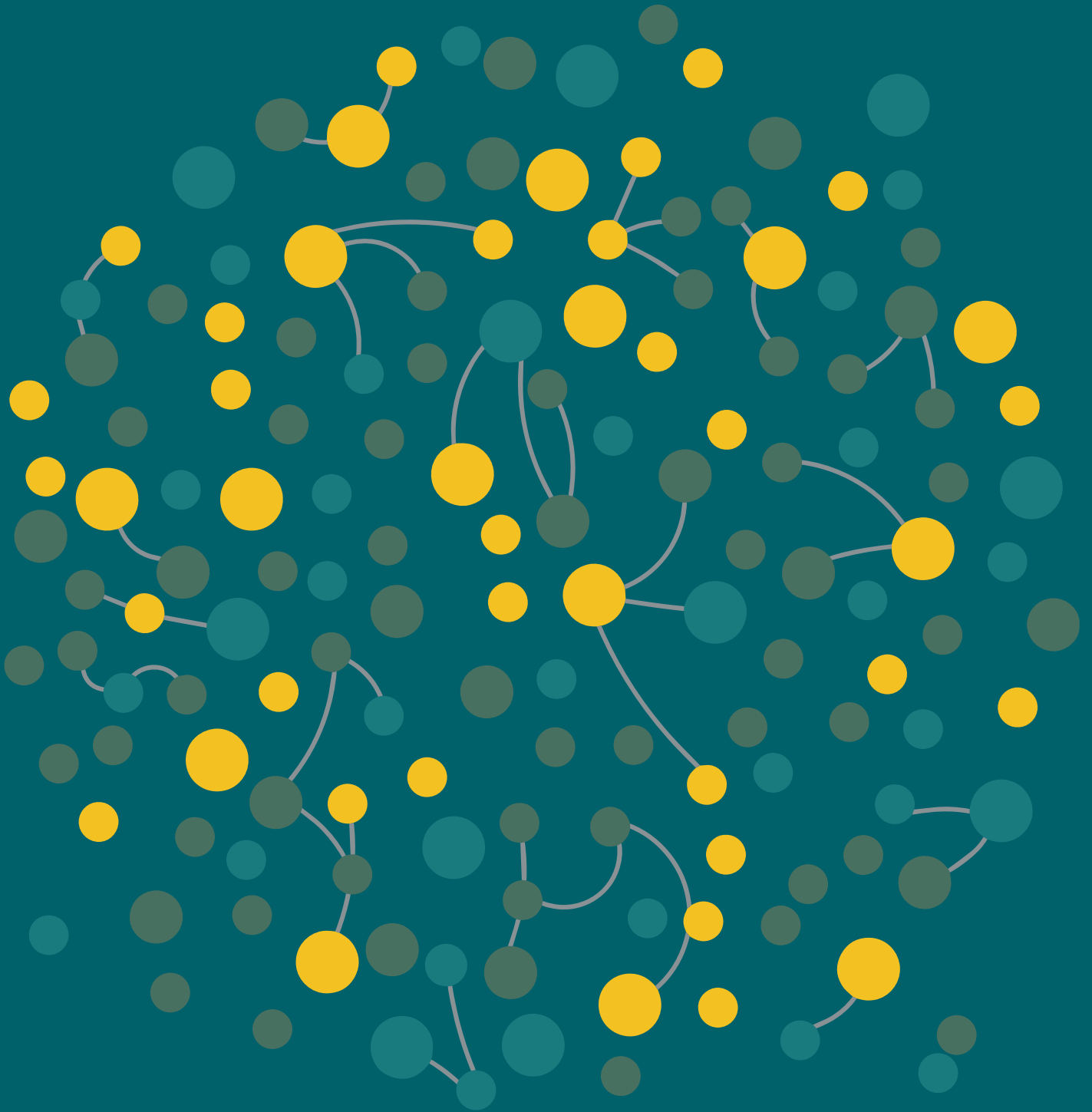
Funding practices

Funding practices may entail concrete funding modalities and the ways of working that surround the implementation of these funding modalities. Specific funding instruments and mechanisms can be grouped into the following categories including: rapid, accessible and participatory funding mechanisms; long-term flexible core or organisational development funds for local organisations; pooled funding to reduce burden; direct bilateral donor support to local actors; innovative finance instruments; funding guidelines to promote more direct local support; and funding data transparency. A selection of some emerging practice areas and specific practices follow.

Rapid and accessible small grant mechanisms aim to provide relevant, tailored and readily accessible support for local actors. These mechanisms are designed to counter what are often challenging and restrictive dimensions of flexibility and access. These funds can provide relatively flexible funding that can be applied to a wide range of interventions at the discretion of local actors to meet immediate needs quickly. Rapid small grant mechanisms can also be well placed to meet key access considerations. This includes: rapid approval and pre-approval mechanisms for grantees; manageable levels of funding for small organisations; eligibility requirements that are suitable for small, informal groups and individuals from contexts with restricted spaces.

- **Change Fund** by the Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR)
- **Digital Inclusion for Peace initiative**, a collaboration between Conducive Space for Peace, Humanity United and Peace Direct
- **Rapid Response Window (RRW)** by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)
- **Start Fund** by the Start Network
- **Peacebuilding Response Fund** by Conciliation Resources

Adaptable small grant mechanisms that are locally accessible are an area of innovative practice similar to their rapid grant counterparts. These mechanisms focus on accessibility to small local organisations. They can have explicit local leadership requirements (for example, in decision-making roles), along with light to no formal reporting. These mechanisms can also emphasise adaptability, including through lack of pre-defined indicators and multiyear timelines. Grant size ranges vary significantly, with some offering very small amounts from USD 100 to USD 1,000 and others from USD 3,000 to USD 10,000, while yet other mechanisms can grant as much as USD 100,000 per organisation.

- **CIVICUS Solidarity Fund** by CIVICUS
- **Local Action Fund** by Peace Direct
- **Yemen Civil Society Solidarity Fund (YCSSF)** managed by Saferworld
- **Innovative Peace Fund (IPF)** by International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
- **Trust-Based Grantmaking model** by MADRE
- **The Youth, Peace and Security Fund (YPS Fund)** incubated at Search for Common Ground (SFCG), in partnership with United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders)

Funding to promote organisation independence and sustainability is focused on building institutional strengthening and capacity development, especially for smaller national and sub-national organisations. This includes specific funding designed to strengthen the institutional capacities of local NGOs, based on their own identified needs. This may include development of strategic plans and/or putting in place auditing and other administrative infrastructures to help secure funding without intermediaries. This type of support can meet the needs of local actors to address key concerns related to the sustainability in their work. In particular, it can contribute to local NGOs having the space to better position themselves to then further take forward leadership of work in their respective contexts.

- **Paung Sie Facility (Peace Support Fund)** in Myanmar, a multi-donor trust fund including the UK FCDO, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Government of Sweden.
- **Women's Voice and Leadership Program** by Global Affairs Canada.
- **Bespoke organisational development support** by PeaceNexus.
- **The BUILD initiative** by the Ford Foundation
- **Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF)** from the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)
- **The Young Feminist Fund** by the Flexible Resources Inclusivity Diversity Action (FRIDA)
- **Circle Portfolio** by EMpower

Pooled funds and multi-partner trust funds cooperate across a range of thematic areas and global, regional and country contexts. These funds can include non-traditional pooled funds, demonstrating possible avenues to provide longer-term flexible support that is directly accessible to local actors. Often long challenged by only meeting the lowest common denominator of accountability and flexibility requirements, more recent innovations are seeking to demonstrate ways to promote civil society and local actors in leadership positions of fund management and through more direct support. However, many pooled or multi-partner trust funds do not excel at reaching local actors or providing enabling support. At times, they may simply serve to add more layers of accountability and complexity in the given chain of influence that local actors navigate.

- Institutional funding windows by the **Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)**
- **Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI)** by the United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)
- **The Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Sustaining Peace in Colombia**, by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Colombia
- **Local Coalition Accelerator (LCA)**, an initiative of the Share Trust and Warande Advisory Centre

Direct bilateral donor-to-local organisation funding mechanisms offer important pathways to increasing both the quantity and quality of support given to local civil society organisations. In these instances, such direct donor support to local civil society organisations by-passes traditional multilateral or INGO intermediaries. This can provide a number of advantages to local actors, including: greater space for and more direct dialogue with donors, which may result in greater funding flexibility; more funding for overhead costs and/or institutional strengthening; and more decision-making power in programming direction and design.

- **Dutch Civic Space Fund (CSF) and the Civic Space Fund Flex Option (CSF-Flex)**, an instrument for embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- **Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)**, a small projects fund managed directly by Canadian diplomatic missions
- **Women Peacebuilders Envelope**, an initiative by Global Affairs Canada

Additional emerging and innovative financing includes outcome-based financing approaches, participatory funding and community-based philanthropy, cash transfer use in new sectors (such as the peacebuilding sector), among others. While many of these practices have a long history of implementation in the development and humanitarian fields, emerging initiatives are broaching their application in the peacebuilding field. Social Impact Bonds such as Development Impact Bonds (DIB), issued by governments.

- **Peace Impact Bond** by Interpeace
- **CADMOS Peace European Engagement Fund** by de Pury Pictet Turrettini & Cie is a peace themed listed equity fund that engages companies on their most material sustainability issues, with an emphasis on operations in fragile and conflict-affected countries

Donor funding guidelines for international organisation partners, whereby a number of bilateral donors have begun placing requirements on INGO partners to ensure that specific amounts of their funding reaches local partners. Funding guidelines also provide space for emerging innovative practices among donors that support internal discussion and reflection within INGOs on their role in supporting local partners.

- **2022-2025 Strategic Partnership Agreement** with Danish INGOs by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Data transparency for tracking locally led support and localisation and reporting on funding by INGOs, donors, multilateral organisations and other funds disbursed directly to locally led peacebuilding interventions, including real-time reporting, it expands avenues to track innovation for local leadership. Reporting on the amount and purpose of funding that reaches local actors can be critical to advancing understanding about how local actors receive support and where additional attention may most be needed. Data transparency and reporting is only sporadically applied in the peacebuilding sector; however, practices in the humanitarian sector show some promising examples.

- **International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)**
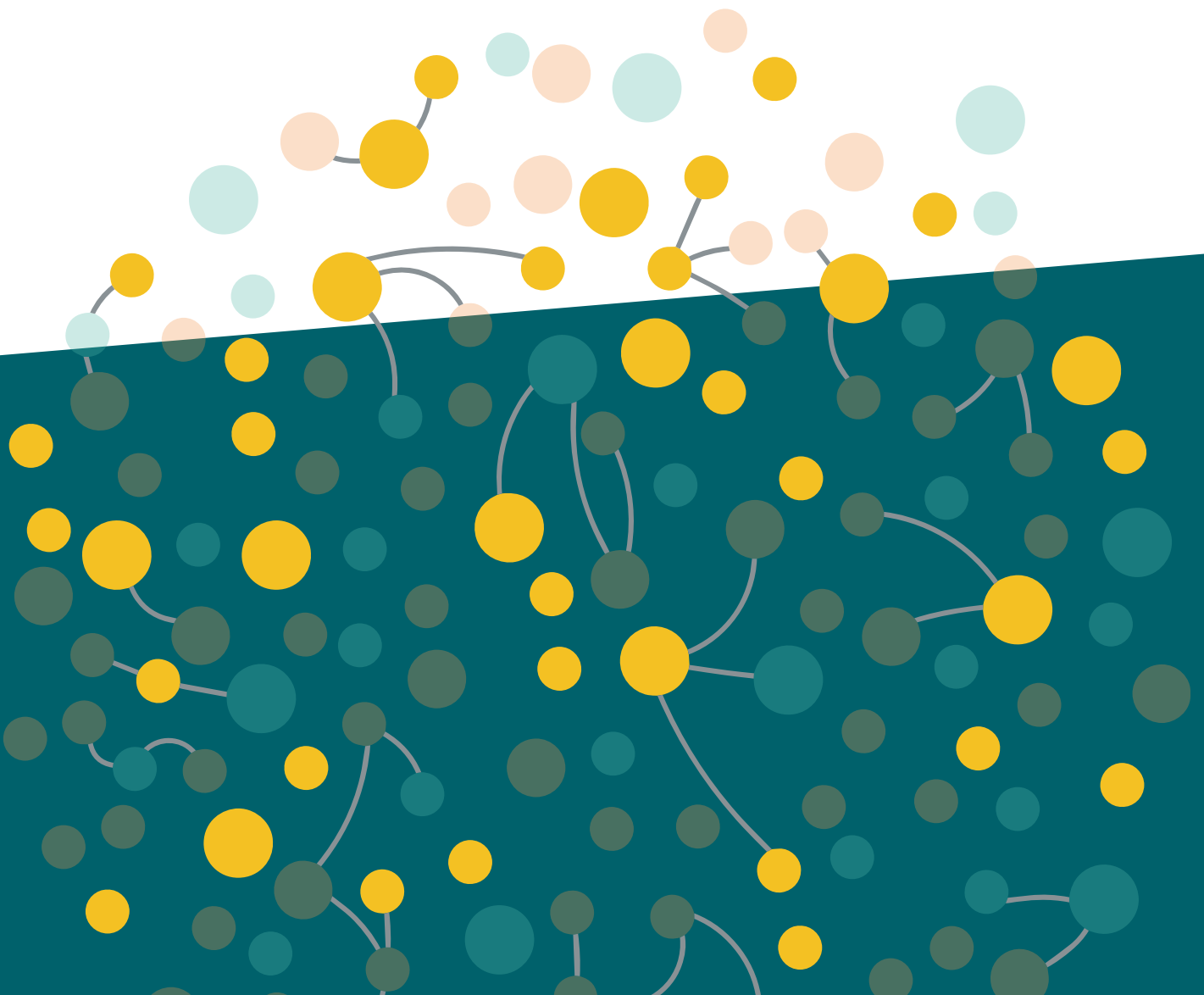
Partnership practices

Partnership practices look to reshape power dynamics in partnerships between actors across the system in a way that ultimately contributes to more equitable and dignified leadership space for local actors more broadly. This can be partnerships between bilateral donors and international organisations, INGOs, and local or national civil society organisations or other relevant types of partnerships among international actors themselves and local partners that impact local leadership across a given chain or chains of influence in the aid system. Innovation may deal with new constellations of partners and types of partnerships between key stakeholders and new modalities of partnerships; that is, ways of creating, structuring and co-managing partnerships. A selection of emerging practice areas and specific practices follow.

Organisational partnership and local leadership promotion strategies by international organisations can reduce potential harm and negative impact on partners, and support reflection on opportunities to rethink collaboration. Such strategies can also provide concrete opportunities for clear principled commitments to be made on operationalising how the organisation creates space for local leadership, equity and dignity through their partnership modalities. These internal strategies can then inform relations to corresponding partners, including INGOs, bilateral donors, national NGOs and other key stakeholders.

- **Local Partnership Guide** by Mercy Corps
- **Partnership Strategy** by Saferworld
- **10 Year Strategy: Shifting the power; making meaningful participation a reality** by Porticus
- **Pathways to Localisation Framework**, development of which was supported by Christian Aid, CARE, Tearfund, ActionAid, CAFOD and Oxfam
- **Reinforcing intra-organisational empathy for local partnerships**, by the Robert Bosch Stiftung Foundation

Partnership assessment tools, including those that focus on power, dignity and equity, can support organisations to assess their own policies and ways of working. In particular, these tools can be useful for identifying specific areas of support and complementarity, with partnership as the entry point.

- **The Power Awareness Tool** by Partos, including the experience of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) in utilising this tool in their own organisation
- **Participatory CLD Assessment Tool** launched by the Movement for a Community-led Development (MCLD)
- **Community Leadership Development Tool** by CF Insight, a service of Candid

Mutual partnership assessment processes whereby local and international partners break out of traditional top–down assessment practices and strive for more equitable due diligence and assessment regimens, including self-assessment. These processes often have greater focus on recognition of local capacities, mutual learning and self-expressed needs for support.

- **Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA)**, a mutual process developed by Saferworld

Online partnership platforms provide space where donors, INGOs, local NGOs and civil society organisations can connect, learn about partnership possibilities, and increase transparency and accessibility of funding and partnership processes and resources.

- **Work with USAID**, an online platform by USAID
- **KujaLink**, an online platform initiative of Adeso

Mapping tools can elevate the visibility of local actors and broaden the scope of types of partnerships with them. Undertaking local, national or regional mappings of local organisations working in development and peacebuilding is recognised as a fundamental step in identifying new partners, elevating the presence of local actors in national and international peace and development processes and making it clear to donors and other international actors of the range and diversity of local actors that are there and that they should be supported.

- **Mapping Women Contributing to Peace in Myanmar for Networking and Collaboration** by Nonviolent Peaceforce and USAID Kann Let
- **Mapping of local peacebuilding organisations** conducted by UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) in collaboration with Peace Direct

Accountability & Learning practices

Accountability & Learning practices include sub-elements such as monitoring and evaluation. This area includes contractual, financial, institutional strategy-related practices, local accountability mechanisms, community-based and/or peer-review approaches, and reverse due diligence, among others. Practices of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) specifically focus on requirements in programming, financial control, reporting and adaptive learning. This includes programmes that divert from pre-set outputs management or guiding frameworks and instead show significant flexibility in their translation into results and high levels of adaptability based on local learnings. This also entails institutionalised policies and practices used by international organisations to recognise and put local and indigenous expertise at the centre of an intervention. A representative selection of emerging practice areas and specific practices follow.

Local actor peer accountability mechanisms are those in which local peer organisations report to one another thus holding one another accountable, with no reporting requirements to the INGO partner. These mechanisms have been increasingly utilised in a number of spaces, including in pool fund management.

- **CIVICUS Solidarity Fund** by the Member Advisory Group (MAG), inclusive fund governance mechanism
- **Yemen Civil Society Solidarity Fund (YCSSF)** by Saferworld local actor peer review and local accountability measures
- **Change Fund** by NEAR utilises inclusive peer governance components

External technical tools to support accountability to local actors offer concrete avenues to close the feedback and accountability gaps that exist between communities, local partners and international organisations. These tools use basic technology to document and capture input that can contribute to shaping the type and quality of international development, peacebuilding and humanitarian support.

- **Loop**, a locally owned mobile phone-based feedback and accountability technology service

Donor guidance to international organisation partners to enhance accountability to local actors may be specific mechanism that operates alone or in parallel with other accountability mechanisms. Some donors have begun to issue guidance requesting or instituting structures that increase accountability to local partners and communities. This may entail specific reporting requirements for INGOs on project status and work done to strengthen local leadership. It may also mandate a local partner assessment of the respective INGO partner during the partnership period and/or a self-assessment on promoting local leadership. Donor guidelines can require budget reports to include information on the level of funds transferred to local partners.

- **2022-2025 Strategic Partnership Agreement** with Danish INGOs by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs includes guidelines and reporting requirements that specifically focus on strengthening local leadership.
- **2021-2025 Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society Power of Voices Partnerships** by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Tools for unpacking local leadership and equity promotion used at international organisations such as NGOs and donor organisations can support cross-organisational understanding of what local leadership in partnership entails because they offer a basis for a standardised language of ownership that can be adapted across contexts. Assessment frameworks can include questions about which local actors are engaged (for example, host country government, civil society, private sector) in donor-supported projects, how the engagement empowered local stakeholders and the timing of the engagement. These tools can also apply self-reflective frameworks to assess their own performance in fostering local accountability and ownership at each stage of the development process. Other guidelines are designed to support funders in using robust learning and evaluation processes based on genuine listening and learning, community-driven decisions about indicators and measurements, and learning for adaptation not judgement or punishment. Many of these new guidelines have been developed following a multi-year process of inquiry, co-creation and learning with community-based civil society organisations to develop a clearer understanding about how funders can better support community-level change.

- **Local Engagement Assessment Framework (LEAF)** assessing how diverse actors engage with USAID-supported projects
- **The Locally Led Development Checklist** by the USAID Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships (LFT) Hub

- **Evaluation and learning for community-driven systems change guidelines** developed by the Firelight Foundation for philanthropic organisations

Locally defined indicators of success and impact can include research and programming approaches that connect local knowledge with broader development and peacebuilding initiatives by asking community members to identify their own measures of development and peace. Locally defined indicators aim to shift programming and funding in the development and peacebuilding sectors to better meet the needs of local communities. Typically, these approaches refine and adapt given technical indicators and impact measurements but they can also devise entirely new ones. More broadly, locally defined indicators also allow for more participatory assessments, starting from the smallest scale and moving in a bottom–up direction.

- **Grounded Accountability Model (GAM)**, currently being piloted in a number of countries, co-led by actors and local organisations around the globe working with Everyday Peace Indicators, Search for Common Ground and Humanity United in a community of practice
- **Everyday Peace Indicators (EPI)** conducts participatory research and evaluation in partnership with communities affected by conflict and builds bridges between diverse actors working on peace and conflict

Accompanying, connecting and elevating local knowledge, organisations and expertise in decision-making, including supporting local and under-represented groups in research and democratising knowledge creation, works to shift paradigms on the origins of expertise. In particular, these types of activities aim to move target groups from passive to active forms of participation in knowledge creation and production. These activities also encompass online platforms and spaces that enable local actors to lead decision-making, locally led research networks, academic journals or fellowship programmes at INGOs or other international organisations that support the greater inclusion of local expertise in the respective knowledge ecosystem.[6] A general goal of these initiatives is to elevate and share local insight and expertise so that it can shape narratives, inform agendas and recognise diverse lived experiences as a form of knowledge.

- **Platform4Dialogue**, an online locally accessible global consultation platform hosted by Peace Direct
- **Youth, Peace and Security Research Network (YPS Research Network)**, including the Journal of Youth, Peace and Security, hosted by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders)

Participatory Action Research (PAR) and adaptive programming is driven by a number of local and international organisations. It takes a long-term, often multi-partner approach to championing local expertise and creating spaces that convene for knowledge creation across vertical power relations. The goal is to support community-based and locally led understanding and approaches and support for peacebuilding and development.

- **Research-to-Change (R2C) Toolkit**, a resource for youth practitioners by Youth Excel developed through a human-centred design process with several local youth-led and global development organisations
- **Vestibule de la Paix initiative** by the Institut Malien de Recherche-Action pour la Paix (IMRAP), Interpeace, Humanity United and the Institute of Development Studies
- **Adaptive Capacity Diagnostic Tool** by Adapt Peacebuilding

Supporting and integrating locally led expertise in programming can include placing local actors in leadership positions in international knowledge generation initiatives, supporting publications and research initiatives by local actors (intentionally not using INGO branding) and supporting editing, layout and dissemination only as determined by local actors.

- **Thematic Review on Local Peacebuilding** supported by United Nations Volunteers (UNV), United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (UN PBSO) and the PeaceNexus Foundation included youth researchers and evaluators in the review process

Locally led and collaborative evaluation and learning processes of work with international organisations can be powerful channels of learning for future programming. Such processes are also an important local leadership leverage point, with approaches involving review of the long-term impact of development and peacebuilding work over multiple years using highly participatory processes, peer-review committees and other methodologies that are informed by local actors.

- **Collaborative Learning from the Bottom-up** by Life & Peace Institute

New paradigms and frameworks for evaluation re-imagine evaluation by placing equity at the centre, lowering typical barriers (such as the hierarchical control that often guides evaluation processes) and unlocking greater focus on mutual learning and evaluation as pathways to better and more equitable programming.[7]

- **Equitable Evaluation Framework™**, a component of the Equitable Evaluation Initiative

Support for trans-local spaces to share analysis and insight on peacebuilding and development among local peacebuilders and other actors in conflict-affected contexts can serve to provide greater visibility to local actor analysis vis-à-vis news channels, sharing locally led research on platforms among local peacebuilders and making local analysis, expertise and organisational profiles more readily available.

- **Peace Insight**, a platform supported by Peace Direct

Adaptive programming approaches that embrace complexity in MEL processes break from traditional results management framework approaches and are instead driven by iterative learning and dynamics on the ground as they unfold. This includes centring local knowledge and expertise.

- **South Sudan Peacebuilding Opportunities Fund (POF)** implemented with CAFOD–Trócaire in Partnership (CTP) and Forcier Consulting
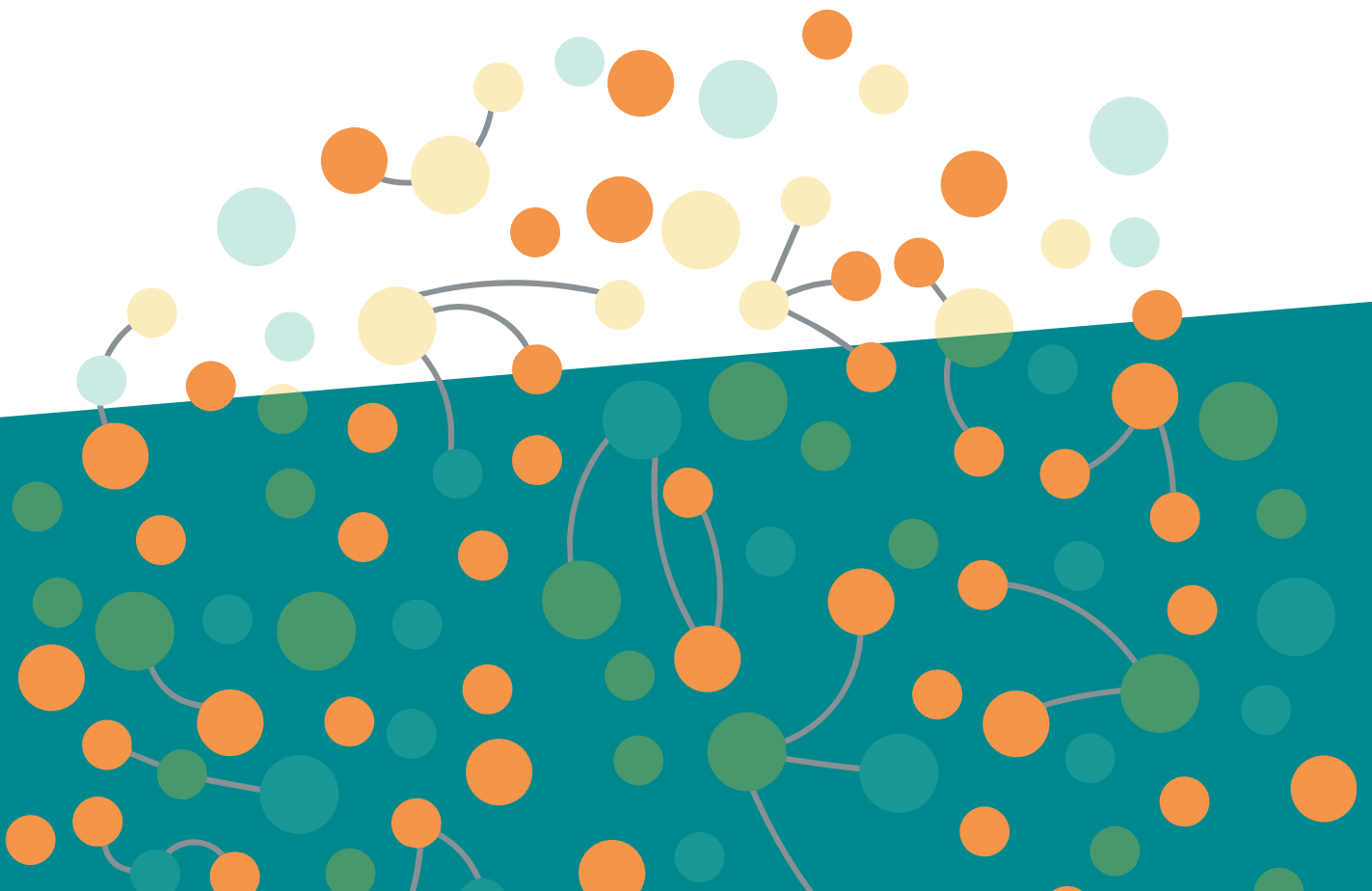
Patterns and trends in innovative practices

Based on this snapshot of over 60 innovative practices, a set of patterns and trends emerges that provides insight into the overall direction of the global peacebuilding and development system in relation to prioritising locally led action. While these trends and patterns are provisional and do not exhaust emerging possibilities, they nonetheless reflect growing ambitions for more transformative innovation in practice change. At the same time, they also capture some of the persistent challenges (and even pitfalls) that beset these practices.

Funding

Conceptualising locally led financing: Given the wide variety of individual practices identified under this programmatic area, this may suggest the primacy of new funding approaches in terms of promoting local leadership. Taken together, these various innovations seem to create funding models that work towards centring diverse forms of local agency. In general, these practices are mostly used in the funding mechanisms administered by INGOs. To some degree, they are also used in mechanisms managed by bilateral and multilateral donors, and philanthropic foundations.

Key elements include being:
- **Quick** – Many of the financing mechanisms identified in this snapshot have a rapid turnaround, with a number making funds immediately available. This supports local actors to take action before a crisis moment has either passed or changed the situation so much that the original intervention plans are no longer relevant.
- **Accessible** – Key features of innovation include application processes with no deadlines or those that operate on a rolling basis, and lower levels of institutional formality to be able to apply (for instance, unregistered organisations). Prioritising local access to funds often involves raising awareness through channels that local actors already access, such as local radio.
- **Unobtrusive** – This may mean light or non-existent reporting requirements.
- **Transparent** – Providing clarity on how applications are assessed, and according to what criteria, as well as offering an opportunity for local actors to ask questions about application requirements and processes are important elements of innovation.
- **An ally** – Some initiatives create space for local actors to be at the centre of and lead decision-making on funding mechanism design, direction and governance, while drawing on expertise and support of international organisations, as requested.
- **Participatory** – Some initiatives also actively involve those doing the work and/or those who directly experience the issues on which a given proposal focuses in evaluating applications.
- **Inclusive** – A number of funds are specifically directed at groups that have been historically excluded or otherwise unable to participate in (decision-making around) peacebuilding and development.
- **Relevant** – Many practices recognise the benefits of adapting the practicalities of a funding model and the types of work that receive support to more closely reflect the immediate situation faced by local actors.
- **Flexible** – Some practices have limited or no pre-approvals when it becomes necessary to adapt agreed activities (in scale, form or function) or make budgetary changes.
- **Support beyond money** – Based on the expressed needs of local actors, some innovations include mentoring, accompaniment and facilitation of peer learning, protection, psychosocial support and/or organisational capacity enhancement (either directly from the donor to the local organisation or by supporting an INGO with funds to provide this kind of institutional development. It can also mean providing additional support for local actors to meet typical accountability and contractual compliance requirements.

Towards supporting local organisation sustainability:
The collection of innovative funding practices indicates a move away from local partners as primarily activity implementers. A push for local actors to be provided with core cost coverage demonstrates this tendency. In some practices, the underlying message is to shift local

actors toward organisational sustainability, independent from partnerships with INGOs. Some grant mechanisms even focus specifically on this transition to autonomy. In addition, the sums of money provided by many of the initiatives are relatively small, with funds mostly provided in response to an immediate need that is identified by local actors; for example, in relation to rapid interventions to build peace during a crisis moment or to respond to emergencies with humanitarian relief. The prevailing assumption that local equals low cost is consistent with the ongoing stigma faced by local actors, whereby they are perceived as incapable of managing larger amounts of funding. This is linked to the trend of (partly) assessing local actors on the basis of the risk they represent to (international) donors. When small grants are provided, they tend to be relatively short term. Another element of locally relevant financing is multiyear timelines but these are not often provided in the context of lower levels of funding.

Money as the metric for success: Despite wide ranging innovation, the metric by which a given funding mechanism is assessed often remains the amount of money that a fund has disbursed. This is even the case when a funding mechanism or instrument seeks to stand out, operate creatively and meet local needs. A quantitative approach to demonstrating success is perhaps reflective of the fact that these funds frequently have to convince their benefactors (bilateral donors, multilateral agencies) of their value in terms that are understandable and usable by those benefactors.[8]

Partnerships

Looking inward and looking outward: Rethinking partnerships between INGOs and local actors includes reflecting internally and assessing organisational identity and ways of working. It also entails reaching out externally to partners (including donors) to learn from them—to understand what they need or require, and hope to find in a partnership. Mutual assessment, either assessing one another or exchanging self-assessments, is also increasingly used as a means to promote equity in partnership. Moreover, quality partnerships mean more than collaborative design, planning, implementation and reflection. These types of partnerships involve creating

a space in which partners learn together, co-accompany and develop collectively. They also take a more holistic view of the different types of power all partners exercise, whether financial, local expertise or otherwise. These spaces themselves often include honest and open discussions on power dynamics between partners. In addition, INGOs often play two key partnership roles: 1) being better listeners to their local partners; and 2) communicating local partner needs to their donors. Some partnership approaches focus primarily on navigating the transfer and management of finances, while others do not involve financial transactions; for instance, a partnership defined in terms of a collaborative advocacy effort.

Building partnerships and visibility for others: Some practices, particularly those that involve mapping, have the potential to enhance INGO roles in supporting partnership creation between others (rather than between their organisation and one or more local organisations). This involves using their positionality, networks and access to build relationships and weave new engagements between local organisations, between local actors and INGOs, and/or directly connecting local actors with donors. Related to this, some donors (for instance, USAID) are making concerted efforts to be more accessible, easier to understand and more transparent in their operational processes.

Accountability & Learning

Multidimensional and multidirectional accountability: Across innovative practice, there is a focus on both reversing the direction of accountability (promoting bottom–up accountability, in which communities hold INGOs and donors to account) and creating interactions of a horizontal nature. This means democratised assessment and learning structures, as well as peer evaluations. Processes to assess the effectiveness of peacebuilding and development programming, in which local organisations and communities are involved, also appear to have an increasing focus on optional but accessible participation by local actors. Individuals and organisations are able to opt in, rather than have an imposed assessment, with mandatory participation. In addition, good accountability is not only bottom–up and horizontal. It is also broad, casting the net as wide as possible, with the implication

that the greater the number of community members providing feedback on a given intervention, the higher quality the accountability. As such, breadth and depth are both key elements of locally driven accountability.

Knowledge management and expertise: A variety of innovative learning and accountability practice focus on equitable knowledge ecosystems, knowledge creation and the problematisation of expertise origin. This often means institutionalising policies and practices in international organisations that recognise local and indigenous expertise and place it at the centre of an intervention. Further, practices that prioritise local knowledge include mechanisms, spaces and institutional capacity support to elevate and connect indigenous expertise to MEL, research and analysis efforts in ways that address power inequalities through these processes.

Indicators as a site of transformation: Some efforts look to give greater space to local actors in defining the indicators used for an intervention. Others seek to hyper-localise the indicators themselves, moving their focus to micro-level ebbs and flows within communities. The primary assumption underlying these innovative approaches to determining indicators appears to be that the closer an indicator is to the day-to-day experiences of individual people, the more useful it is to them. Other efforts take a structural approach, with local actors not only choosing indicators and/or providing their knowledge but also creating the structures for MEL, designing evaluations and developing frameworks for research and analysis. In these

cases, local actors set the terms of engagement for MEL and its management. In most cases, however, reporting to donors often remains an international organisation role. Instead, the focus is on how INGOs interact with their partners during reporting. This includes shifting decision-making to local actors, who determine what gets reported to donors.

Institutionalising new accountability and learning practices: Many of the innovative accountability and learning practices are power-shifting efforts designed and committed to by INGOs, with international actors embedding them into their organisational protocols. Working toward their institutionalisation at a systemic level likely means donors also committing to them; for instance, by requiring their grantees to undergo evaluations by their local partners. This re-emphasises that direct power in the system is often financial. Thus, movement by donors, as those who resource the work, may have a larger effect than an individual INGO changing their practice, using a new tool and so on. At the same time, a large number of INGOs (and others across the chains of influence in global peacebuilding and development) using a new practice, such that it becomes normalised without donors requiring it, might also be a route to institutionalising change across the system.

Where do we go from here?

As the universe of innovations to better support local leadership and equitable partnership continues to evolve and grow, we see exciting new opportunities to leverage learning for systemic impact. While we continue to see across practice areas—funding, partnerships, and accountability and learning— nascent deep learning and exchange between the organisations implementing these practices we are encouraged by the growing momentum and interest to learn and innovate. Join us as we strive to open further spaces to share lessons and learn how various initiatives can complement one another and contribute to broader systems transformation.

ANNEX OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICES
Funding practices

Rapid and accessible small grant mechanisms

- **Change Fund**, initiated by the Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) in 2022. This is an easily accessible and transparent disaster response fund dedicated to local and national organisations in 28 of the most vulnerable countries across the globe. NEAR members and peers lead the oversight body that evaluates humanitarian reports, declares countries in crisis, reviews applications and grants funds. The funding process (from application to disbursement) takes less than a week, which allows local NGOs to immediately focus on emergency response. Since March 2022, the Change Fund has disbursed USD 1.49 million to 10 local organisations in 8 countries across 4 regions, stretching from Asia to Latin America and the Caribbean.

- **Digital Inclusion for Peace initiative**, a collaboration between Conducive Space for Peace, Humanity United and Peace Direct. Active throughout 2020, this fund focuses on the digital inclusion of local actors in conflict-affected contexts. It has a quick approval turnaround time. Applications can be made in more than four languages. Funding is available in accessible amounts that range between USD 50–USD 750 and can be used to purchase equipment, software and tech support. In addition to funds, the initiative is linked to an online network platform and free online digital peacebuilding courses. The focus and design of this fund responds to the specific needs expressed by local peacebuilders in a global consultation process.

- **Rapid Response Window (RRW)**, by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) This funding mechanism gives rapid grants solely to national or local civil society organisations that support women's participation in track one or track two peace processes. It offers a support stream of direct cost coverage up to USD 25,000 and a short-term grant stream of up to six months in length, with a funding ceiling of USD 100,000. This fund requires that the lead applicant be legally registered. Women-led organisations are specifically encouraged to apply.

- **Start Fund**, the flagship initiative of Start Network. This is one of the fastest humanitarian financing mechanisms in the world. It is owned and managed by Start Network member organisations and supported by donors, including the governments of the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany and Jersey, along with the IKEA Foundation and the Conrad N Hilton Foundation. Once an alert is raised, proposed projects are reviewed and selected within 72 hours by local committees, then immediately funded. Since its beginning in April 2014, the Start Fund has disbursed more than GBP 100 million, assisting 23 million people in more than 70 countries. The Start Network is committed to increasing direct funding for local and national NGOs in the coming years.

- **Peacebuilding Response Fund**, is a flexible funding pool that the staff and programmes of Conciliation Resources (CR) and their partner organisations can draw on to rapidly respond as new crises emerge and situations evolve. The fund can be used as needed and can include covering the cost of salaries, logistical support such as evacuations and on peacebuilding activities. The Fund has been successfully used in Afghanistan following the takeover of the Taliban to help partners in coordination and evacuation efforts and in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict to enable partners to coordinate activities, plan projects and mitigate risks they face and providing support to continue their work during the conflict.

Adaptable small grant mechanisms

- **CIVICUS Solidarity Fund**, a member-led and member-resourced fund created in 2019. It provides flexible funds and support to CIVICUS members. The fund has a grant range of USD 1,000–USD 10,000, with an annual open call and a one-year timeline for support. This fund does not require narrative reports but instead uses bi-weekly check-ins and a simplified financial report at the end of the grant. The fund is led by the Member Advisory Group (MAG), composed of CIVICUS members and resourced through membership fees.[9]

- **Local Action Fund**, initiated by Peace Direct in 2019. To date, the fund has supported more than 350 locally led peacebuilding initiatives across a number of conflict-affected contexts, with a total of more than USD 1 million in rapid micro-grants (less than USD 500) and small grants (less than USD 15,000). The Local Action Fund uses an innovative local hub organisation modality to distribute small grants to local groups. The funding mechanism is co-designed to respond to a given context, which in turn promotes joint ownership over priorities and modalities. Alongside rapid access to flexible funding, this model also provides additional support to local groups, including mentoring, training, advocacy and other forms of accompaniment and peer learning.[10]

- **Yemen Civil Society Solidarity Fund (YCSSF)**, managed by Saferworld and the European Commission. This fund exclusively supports local civil society organisations across Yemen. Typically lasting for approximately one year, funding ranges from USD 40,000 to USD 60,000 per organisation and has a high degree of flexibility. Funds may be used for projects based on local partner interests and needs, organisational development or other organisational sustainability investments (e.g. renovating a training hall). The project selection process consists of peer evaluations, whereby the grant applicants themselves evaluate the applications of their peers. They do so using a standardised set of criteria developed by Saferworld (in future iterations of the fund, it is possible that criteria may be co-developed with potential applicants.) Other related accountability measures: partners may use their own reporting formats and/or request funding to conduct a self-evaluation at the end of the project.

- **Innovative Peace Fund (IPF)**, managed by International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN). The fund is the only independent multi-donor global grant making mechanism entirely dedicated to providing financial support, strategic accompaniment and technical assistance to women-led peacebuilders. It has a strong focus on equity in partnership, institutional strength and sustainability, and regular communication. This fund also allows for flexibility in the adaptation of activities. It has a multiyear grant range of USD 3,000 to USD 213,000, with nearly USD 7 million in grants committed globally as of 2022.

- **Trust-Based Grantmaking model** by MADRE provides grants to local civil society organisations and activists to advance community-led peacebuilding in conflict and post-conflict contexts. The MADRE funding model is based on trust and consultations with local women and girl leaders. The average grant is approximately USD 39,000. Over a 35-year period, MADRE has invested more than USD 52 million in grassroots organisations across the globe.

- **The Youth, Peace and Security Fund (YPS Fund)**, an initiative aiming to become a global fund, financed by small-scale investments. With young people as co-owners and investors themselves, the fund exclusively supports youth-led peacebuilding. It was launched in 2021 and is currently incubated at Search for Common Ground (SFCG) in partnership with United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders). The quarterly fundraising target is USD 22,500.

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Funding focused on promoting organisation independence and sustainability

- **Paung Sie Facility (Peace Support Fund)**, a multi-donor trust fund for Myanmar, including donors such as the UK FCDO, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Government of Sweden. In response to needs expressed by local actors, the facility has a programme specifically focused on supporting local civil society organisations with organisational development. Financing from this multi-donor fund is often paired with other projects that receive bilateral donor support to complement these efforts.

- **Women's Voice and Leadership Program**, a component of the Canadian Feminist International Assistance Policy at Global Affairs Canada. This fund provides longer-term institutional support for local women's rights civil society organisations seeking to enhance their sustainability.

- **PeaceNexus** offers organisation development support to selected local civil society organisations and INGOs. This support focuses on organisational development for greater impact, with PeaceNexus partnering with more than 40 local organisations since its inception. Its primary approach is to provide local partners with specifically tailored support based on their self-identified needs, working across the whole of an organisation to improve strategy and niche, and develop learnings to enhance the impact and sustainability of the partner. PeaceNexus is also increasingly shifting to having local staff involved in accompaniment processes.

- **BUILD initiative** at the Ford Foundation, supports social justice organisations to become stronger and more resilient over time. The initiative provides grantees with five years of operational support, coupled with targeted organisational strengthening, to increase their desired impact. Support specifically focuses on providing flexible funding, assessment tools, tailored institutional strengthening, peer learning, and evaluation and learning.

- **Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF)**, managed by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). Established in 2008, this fund supports youth-led organisations that foster peaceful and inclusive societies. It provides seed funding and follow-on organisational development support and capacity building to youth-led and youth-focused projects. Since its inception, YSF has funded 73 youth-led projects in more than 40 countries, for a total of USD 2.49 million in investments.

- **The Young Feminist Fund** by Flexible Resources Inclusivity Diversity Action (FRIDA). The fund offers two main types of grants: flexible core grant funding; and the funding+ model, with a limit of USD 5,000. In 2020 alone, FRIDA awarded more than USD 2.6 million in direct grant making to new and existing partners. The funding+ model offers transition grants that specifically aim to accompany the transition of a partner organisational independence. Funding+ also pairs up partners to collaborate over a two-year work plan to strengthen mutually identified capacities.

- **Circle Portfolio** by EMpower, with 50 percent flexible funding. This fund provides funding to smaller organisations that are locally led and have lived experience in the communities where they work. An eligible organisation or group typically has an annual budget ranging from USD 35,000 to USD 79,000. EMpower grants can total up to half of the annual budget (or between USD 10,000 to USD 39,000 per year), with grants usually lasting for one or two years. Funding focuses on programme support, including institutional needs, MEL, organisational strengthening or financial sustainability; e.g. fundraising, income generation, reserves, etc.

Pooled funds and multi-partner trust funds

- **Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)**, a global partnership of UN member governments, private foundations, corporations and individuals. This multi-partner fund supports national and local civil society through a variety of different funding streams. These include smaller-scale institutional funding opportunities for local civil society organisations, which range between USD 2,500–USD 30,000. The fund also has a larger funding stream focused on programmatic needs, which range between USD 30,000–USD 350,000. The latter is used to support programmatic activities focused on the socio-economic recovery, participation and leadership of women and young women in peacebuilding contexts, among others.

- **Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI)**, specifically focused on increasing impact and advancing the implementation of the Women Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth Peace and Security (YPS) agenda. Projects must allocate at least 40 per cent of the requested grant to national/local civil society partners, in particular women and youth-led organisations with project duration being a maximum of 24 months and grants ranging in size from USD 300,000 to USD 1.5 million per project.[11]

- **The Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Sustaining Peace in Colombia**, has sought to increasingly support local civil society due its relevance in peacebuilding. Since its inception in 2016, the Fund has allocated over 40 percent of funding to local peacebuilders and seeks to increase accessibility for local civil society organisations with flexible calls with a minimum of requirements to guarantee its participation. The fund provides close support to the organisations from the formulation of the projects to the performance of capacity assessment, where, for smaller partners, additional resources may be given to support them in meeting the accountability and reporting requirements. The fund was created in 2016 directly financing 144 civil society organisations, most partners are local civil society organisations. It encourages small organisations to apply having developed a virtual first stage application, has committed resources to widely disseminating calls via social networks, public media and has made experience requirements for local organisations more flexible.[12]

- **Local Coalition Accelerator (LCA)**, is an initiative of the Share Trust and Warande Advisory Centre that supports coalitions of local and national civil society organisations to lead in the design and implementation of large-scale multi-sectoral programming, and directly access the significant bilateral financing that is currently channelled almost exclusively to and through UN or INGO vehicles. By building the infrastructure to shift funding and power to local actors, while also changing donor processes and systems to be more equipped to accompany and complement community driven initiatives, the LCA aims to fundamentally change how international assistance is designed and delivered. It is currently being implemented in Uganda, Bangladesh and Nigeria.

Direct bilateral donor-to-local organisation funding mechanisms

- **Dutch Civic Space Fund (CSF) and the Civic Space Fund Flex Option (CSF-Flex)**, is an instrument that can be used by embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to offer direct support to local civil society organisations.[13] The fund specifically aims to strengthen the advocacy and lobbying capacity of local civil society, and has a specific focus on supporting local CSOs (with INGOs and their local offices being ineligible for funding). The instrument is under the 'Strengthening Civil Society–Power of Voices' policy framework and has an annual CSF budget of EUR 10 million, with a one-off additional budget available of total EUR 7.5 million for CSF-Flex to be spent in 2022 and/or 2023.

- **Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)**, a small projects fund managed directly by Canadian diplomatic missions. The application and reporting requirements focus on enabling more recently formed and smaller local organisations to more readily access funding for project-based activities. With a total budget of CAD 26.8 million, the average grant amount is CAD 31,000. During the 2019–2020 fiscal year, 38 local women's rights organisations in fragile and conflict-affected states received grants.[14]

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- **Women Peacebuilders Envelope**, an initiative by the Canadian ministry of foreign affairs. This fund has created a CAD 5 million envelope specifically dedicated to supporting women's peacebuilding organisations, with the goal of reducing barriers to funding and increasing flexibility where possible. The envelope has a minimum of a CAD 100,000 to a maximum of CAD 1 million per project. Eligible funding areas include institutional capacity building, as well as protection mechanisms and psychosocial and emotional support, among other areas.[15]

Additional emerging and innovative financing

- **Peace Impact Bond**, an initiative by Interpeace. This is a new type of bond instrument whereby proceeds are exclusively applied to finance new or existing projects aimed at realising verifiable peace impacts.[16] This initiative is comprised of a robust set of principles and standards to certify that the bond deploys capital in a way that is peace responsive. The peace impact of the bond is specifically achieved through the embedded Peace Enhancing Mechanisms (PEMs), financed by Peace Bond proceeds. Peace Bonds address both peace risks and project risks. A recent feasibility study indicates that this contributes to lowering the discount rates, the risk premium on the debt financing, on the Peace Bond by up to 200 basis points (from 18 percent to 16 percent).[17]

- **CADMOS Peace European Engagement Fund** by de Pury Pictet Turrettini & Cie is a peace themed listed equity fund that engages companies on their most material sustainability issues, with an emphasis on their operations in fragile and conflict-affected countries to encourage conflict-sensitive and peace-promoting business practices. Its predecessor fund, the CADMOS Peace Investment Fund, was launched in collaboration with and seed funding from the PeaceNexus Foundation. By co-launching the fund, PeaceNexus aims to further raise awareness among large corporates on the impacts of their business practices on conflict dynamics in fragile states. Since the Fund's launch, PeaceNexus has held over 100 engagement meetings with companies, many of which have taken action recommendations made and a select number have partnered with the Foundation to strengthen their positive impact in fragile states.

Donor funding guidelines for international organisation partners

- **2022–2025 Strategic Partnership Agreement** with Danish INGOs by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Danish INGOs specifically mandates a ceiling of 20 percent for expenditure at headquarters, with the explicit purpose of strengthening local leadership and increasing the flow of funds to the Global South and implementation of activities by local partners.

Data transparency for tracking locally led support and localisation

- **International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)**, a new opt-in initiative that donors can use to upload in real-time the percentage of direct funding to local and national partners. Other global tracking systems such as the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Creditor Reporting System (CRS) does not necessarily require donors to report local actor contributions.[18]

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Partnerships practices

Organisational partnership and local leadership promotion strategies

- **Local Partnership Guide** by Mercy Corps was launched in 2003 and encompass the Mercy Corps Principles of Partnership. They serve to ensure clear and transparent working relationships with partners. Principles of partnership are structures around 10 key principles: 1) Equity, 2) Transparency, 3) Mutual benefit, 4) Communities as the primary stakeholders, 5) Non-discrimination, 6) Fiscal responsibility, 7) Consistent communication, 8) Coordination, 9) Learning, and 10) Monitoring and evaluation. The Partnership Guide recognises the diversity of different partner groups and highlights special considerations specific to those groups, such as CSO's, local government groups, private sector and cross sectoral partnerships, partnering in emergencies, networks and coalitions and global partnerships. The Local Partnership Framework is designed to recognise the differences that exist in partnerships, while ensuring balanced partnerships and helping partners to achieve their goals.

- **Partnership Strategy** by Saferworld consolidates a multiyear internal and external series of consultations. It consists of a partnership in practice guide, articulating a set of organisational commitments, as well as specific practical approaches to achieving them, grounded in the values of equitable partnership and local leadership. The partnership strategy development process included a variety of conversations with Saferworld CSO (civil society organisation) partners, discussing questions such as: What does it mean to work in solidarity in conflict-affected contexts? What additional modalities of partnership and support exist beyond financing? What added value does an INGO bring to partnership in the context of prioritising local leadership? Commitments linked to the strategy focus on capacity exchange and resource sharing among partners, spanning organisational practices across programming, finance, operations, human resources, fundraising and advocacy. Accountability to these commitments is promoted through mechanisms, including regular reciprocal performance assessments. The commitments are embedded into Saferworld institutional results framework. In addition to implementing the strategy, Saferworld is also planning to share insights from their ongoing organisational journey on partnership through a series of upcoming blogs, videos and interviews, including feedback from CSO partners.

- **10 Year Strategy: Shifting the power; making meaningful participation a reality** by Porticus included a commitmentt to ingrain meaningful and equitable participation of the people who are affected by poverty and exclusion in all grants and programmes. A working group created a multiyear plan with activities covering not just the design and implementation of grants; proposals were made around governance, communication, human resources, strategy development, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning. They are working on a detailed roadmap, with goals, indicators, and targets, along with six broad pillars of participatory philanthropy. The language used at Porticus has changed. Colleagues have started or deepened participatory practices in their grant-making and programme development and implementation, and Porticus has become more conscious of the importance of lived experience and the need to diversify their staff.

- **Pathways to Localisation Framework**, development of which was supported by Christian Aid, CARE, Tearfund, ActionAid, CAFOD and Oxfam, sets forward a framework to support development of and innovating existing INGO localisation strategies to unpack a focus on reassessing partnerships, discussions on recognising and supporting local capacity, the role of financing and coordination. This framework has informed the development of a number of INGO global and national-level localisation frameworks.

- **Reinforcing intra-organisational empathy for local partnerships** by Team Peace at the Robert Bosch Stiftung Foundation is taking forward an internal initiative to reinforce intra-organisational empathy to better support the Foundation's provision of locally-led medium- to long-term support to local partners. This internal

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initiative focuses on ways to increase empathy and understanding cross-organisationally between project management and project controlling staff teams. Through regular monthly convenings between controlling and project management teams the Foundation is working to overcome what can be at times competing internal priorities between controlling requirements and the desire for flexibility accountability to partners needs. These engagements offer space for building greater empathy, increasing internal communication efficiency and creating greater space to seek out creative approaches to best fund local actors and partner more equitably.

Partnership assessment tools

- **The Power Awareness Tool** developed by Partos can help identify important decision-making topics related to equity in partnership; Scoring the level of participation of each partner in decision-making; and reflecting on implications and next steps. These types of tools can support donors and international and national organisations assess and mitigate negative dynamics in relation to power and seek greater opportunities to align with core values. One example is the **Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy** (NIMD), which used the Partos tool to analyse and reflect on questions of equity within their Power of Dialogue Consortium, as part of the Dutch ministry of foreign affairs Power of Voices (PoV) funding instrument.

- **Participatory CLD Assessment Tool** launched by the Movement for a Community-led Development (MCLD) is intended for use by funders, NGOs or governments. It is versatile: it can be a self, peer or participatory review tool used at a number of programme decision points to support determination of how programming aligns with community-led development characteristics. The tool also supports analysis and guidance to undertake course corrections as identified.

- **Community Leadership Development Tool** by CF Insight, a service of Candid. This tool focuses specifically on foundations. It provides a framework to conduct a self-assessment of the performance of the foundation on support for community leadership. The assessment takes approximately 25–30 minutes and is intended to be taken by all staff involved in the respective community leadership work every two to three years, results of which are also designed to support strategic planning processes.

Mutual partnership assessment processes

- **Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA)**, a mutual process developed by Safeworld.[19] The OCA is based on principles of solidarity, mutual support and accompaniment. It seeks to create spaces and processes to establish and maintain partnerships with greater equity and attention to power relations. It provides an opportunity to hold an honest and reciprocal discussion about what areas each organisation wants to strengthen and what support they can provide to one another. This process entails a mutual self-assessment between the international and national NGO partners on areas such as management and decision-making, human resources and operations, finance and administration, and issues of experience and knowledge. Upon completion of the self-assessment, conversations are taken forward to define strengths and opportunities for mutual capacity exchange and establish self-defined partnership goals. The OCA also serves as a baseline to build on throughout the partnership, allowing for a better understanding of the work each partner undertakes, and to hold one another accountable to agreed partnership objectives. The OCA process can be used in due diligence processes, as well.

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Online partnership platforms

- **Work with USAID**, an online platform by USAID. This platform offers technical solutions to help lower barriers to partnership and connect and create connections and learning spaces among local and international partners. It offers self-assessment tools and other resources, including a **series of trainings** for organisations on how national and local partners can partner with the agency.

- **KujaLink**, an online platform initiative by Adeso that specifically seeks to facilitate direct donor access to local and national civil society organizations based in the Global South. The platform aims to enhance the visibility of and support establishment of connections between funders and local civil society, leading to an increase in direct giving. The platform including affinity groups, discussion forums, matchmaking and search features as well as donor and civil society organisational profiles. The platform is being developed with the support of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Humanity United and the Segal Family Foundation.

Mapping of local peacebuilding actors to elevate visibility and broaden scope for partnerships

- **Mapping Women Contributing to Peace in Myanmar for Networking and Collaboration** by Nonviolent Peaceforce and USAID Kann Let. This report maps women peacebuilding organisations nation-wide. It creates an electronic visualisation aiming to increase the visibility of local women peacebuilders, promote partnerships and stimulate their greater inclusion in peace process activities. The initiative mapped a total of 670 women in 383 organisations across the country.

- **Mapping of local peacebuilding organisations** across the Central Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger), a collaboration between United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (UN PBSO) and Peace Direct, including a regional conflict analysis. The mapping exercise explores ways for the UN to best support local actors and cross-border networks; e.g. through the launch of a small grants programme for local peacebuilding that seeks to more directly channel funds to local organisations.

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Accountability & learning

Local actor peer accountability mechanisms

- **CIVICUS Solidarity Fund**, a member-led and member-resourced fund created in 2019. It provides flexible funds and support to CIVICUS members. The fund has a grant range of USD 1,000–USD 10,000, with an annual open call and a one-year timeline for support. This fund does not require narrative reports but instead uses bi-weekly check-ins and a simplified financial report at the end of the grant. The fund is led by the **Member Advisory Group** (MAG), composed of CIVICUS members, who review applications, select grantees and make important decisions about funding and applicant support in addition to providing mentoring support to grantees.

- **Yemen Civil Society Solidarity Fund (YCSSF)** managed by Saferworld and supported by the European Commission relies on several peer elements, including: a project selection process wherein applications are peer evaluated, with grant applicants evaluating the applications of their peers; partners are permitted to use their own reporting formats; and the YCSSF provides funding to conduct a self-evaluation at the end of a project.

- **Change Fund** by NEAR Network utilises a series of peer governance components; for example, the fund itself was developed through a participatory process; it is governed by an oversight body of self-selected NEAR network members; and based on feedback by a locally rooted early warning mechanism, the oversight body assesses crisis conditions and directs fund resources.

External technical tools to support accountability to local actors

- **Loop** is a locally owned service using mobile phone technology to enable an accessible space for communities, NGOs and others involved in the given context to give feedback on humanitarian and development services, and to report fraud or abuse safely. Loop uses basic mobile phone and computer technology that is widely available in each context. It is a common, permanent and accessible service available in more than 15 languages and used by a variety of development and humanitarian organisations.

Donor guidance to international organisation partners to enhance accountability to local actors

- **2022–2025 Strategic Partnership Agreement** with Danish INGOs by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Danish INGO guidelines. This guidance focuses on strengthening local leadership. It mandates increasing the transfer of funds and decision-making power to local partners, with specific provisions on reporting requirements for strengthening local leadership. This includes the requirement that Danish partners be assessed by their local partners during the partnership period. In the budget, partners are required to report on the level of funds transferred to local partners. In addition, Danish INGOs are asked to self-assess how they promote local leadership in line with the five core elements of local leadership as defined by the Danish ministry of foreign affairs.

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- **2021–2025 Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society Power of Voices Partnerships** by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Elements of this framework place explicit focus on quality of local actor collaboration and participation in program design and joint learning assessment. Specifically partner organisations are required to reflect on and devise a plan to mitigate power dynamics that inhibit local partner having an equal say in decision making. Areas of decision-making processes local partners are expected to partake in as equal partners include; roles and responsibilities of mutual rights and obligations o selection of partners o budget allocation o programme design (including the Theory of Change and monitoring and evaluation) of programme implementation.

Tools for unpacking local leadership and equity promotion

- **Local Engagement Assessment Framework (LEAF)** seeks to foster local engagement by assessing which actors among the host country government, civil society and the private sector engage with USAID-supported projects. It also examines if and how that engagement empowers local stakeholders, and during what part of the project cycle the engagement took place. This then provides a standardised language of ownership that can be adapted across contexts.

- **The Locally Led Development Checklist** and **the Locally Led Factsheet** are reflection tools designed to help USAID missions adopt locally led approaches at each stage of the development process. The goals of the checklist and fact sheet are to both ground discussions and create space for meaningful pause and reflection on where one has been and where one is going. The checklist specifically may be applied to USAID missions as they work with partners to: Identify a challenge, define success, co-create with USAID, mobilise local resources, manage financial risk, MEL, develop local capacity, among other areas.

- **Evaluation and learning for community-driven systems change guidelines**, developed by the Firelight Foundation for philanthropic organisations. These guidelines outline important considerations and steps for funders that seek to support learning agendas and evaluation frameworks when taking a community-driven systems change approach. They support robust learning and evaluation processes but encourage donors to do so through a framework of genuine listening and learning, with communities driving the decisions about indicators and measurements, and learning for adaptation not judgement or punishment. As with many other guidelines, the Firelight Foundation guidelines were developed following a three-year (2017–2020) process of inquiry, co-creation and learning with community-based civil society organisations to develop a clearer understanding about how philanthropic funders can better support community-level change.[20]

Locally defined indicators of success and impact

- **Grounded Accountability Model (GAM)**, currently being piloted in a number of countries, co-led by actors and local organisations around the globe working with Everyday Peace Indicators, Search for Common Ground and Humanity United in a community of practice.[21] GAM aims to shift programming and funding in the peacebuilding sector to better meet the needs of local communities. It refines and scales a technical indicator and impact measurement approach that can be used by people working at any scale to work with people projects aim to serve to define impact. GAM work feeds into the first pillar of the Peace Impact Framework, accessible on **ConnexUs**, which intends to broaden learning and better quantify the impact of peacebuilding, including local peacebuilding.

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- **Everyday Peace Indicators** conducts participatory research and evaluation in partnership with communities affected by conflict and builds bridges between diverse actors working on peace and conflict issues to inform peacebuilding practice, policy, and scholarship. EPI works with communities to generate their own indicators of complex ideas and concepts related to peace. Communities work to identify indicators that are important to them, building meaning from the bottom up, working as locally as possible, partnering with villages and neighbourhoods experiencing or emerging from conflict around the world. EPI can be used as a research and monitoring evaluation tool for planning and measurement purposes. They have projects in Colombia, Sri Lanka, Bosnia and the United States.

Accompanying, connecting and elevating local knowledge, organisations and expertise

- **Platform4Dialogue** is an online platform hosted by Peace Direct. This platform encourages, enables and supports inclusive online dialogue for practitioners, professionals and peacebuilders on a range of issues. It is specifically designed as a space to elevate and share local insight and expertise on peacebuilding.

- **Youth, Peace and Security Research Network**, hosted by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders). This network aims to move from passive to active forms of youth participation in knowledge creation processes in the field of youth and peacebuilding. The YPS Research Network also publishes the Journal of Youth, Peace and Security, a collection of articles on policy, practice and scholarship related to youth and peacebuilding. The articles are written and edited by young local peacebuilders. The journal ensures young people have a platform to claim ownership of the YPS agenda by shaping its narrative and recognising the diverse lived experiences of young people as a form of knowledge.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) and adaptive programming

- **Research-to-Change (R2C) Toolkit**, by Youth Excel. This is a youth-inclusive implementation research toolkit that aims to guide youth-led and youth-serving organisations to strengthen their positive youth development programmes using research and data. This tool kit was developed through a human-centred design process with several local youth-led and global development organisations.

- **Vestibule de la Paix initiative**, is a multi stakeholder initiative by the Institut Malien de Recherche-Action pour la Paix (IMRAP), Interpeace, Humanity United and the Institute of Development Studies. This is an initiative for peacebuilding work across Mali with communities in the North, Center and South of Mali to supporting them in managing the conflicts without violence and help them build social cohesion. The initiative channels these local level experiences into conversations with the Malian government and key international players to see how they could shift their practices to harness the power and agency of local actors and build lasting peace and with the aspiration to shift approaches to peacebuilding in Mali to be more locally led.

- **Adaptive Capacity Diagnostic Tool**, by Adapt Peacebuilding provides an organisation with the means of self-assessing their organisation's potential to improve performance through the adoption of learning-centred, adaptive programming approaches. This tool is developed to assess the potential for development or peacebuilding programs in volatile and conflict affected settings to benefit from adaptive management approaches, including utilising the benefits of timely learning to adjust programs so that they are more effective and produce better results. The questions require one to reflect upon your own organisation, as well

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as its relationships with others with questions determining a score for each of several factors, which have been shown through literature and practice to constrain and enable the benefits of adaptive management.

Supporting and integrating locally led expertise in programming

- **Thematic Review on Local Peacebuilding** by United Nations Volunteers (UNV), United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (UN PBSO) and the PeaceNexus Foundation. This review process supported an initiative in which youth researchers and evaluators were hired across a series of country contexts to contribute to the 2021 Thematic Review on Local Peacebuilding.

Locally led and collaborative evaluation and learning processes

- **Collaborative Learning from the Bottom–up** by the Life & Peace Institute (LPI). This is an innovative locally led evaluation and learning process that looked at more than a decade of engagement and work on peacebuilding in North and South Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The aim is to shift power to respondents, with the respondents themselves leading and designing the evaluation methodology. LPI supported local researchers and respondents to analyse data, including a local peer-review committee and original questions designed in a participatory process.

New paradigms and frameworks for evaluation

- **Equitable Evaluation Framework**[TM], a component of the Equitable Evaluation Initiative. This framework challenges philanthropic donors to redefine and reimagine key elements of evaluation, including areas such as equity, evidence, objectivity, bias, rigour and validity. Launched in 2019, the framework is set up to support work in the evaluation community (including among donors) to rethink and define anew accountability, success and ways of knowing.[22]

International actors support trans-local spaces for sharing analysis and insight on peacebuilding among local

- **Peace Insight**, a platform supported by Peace Direct. This platform is a space for highlighting the work of local peacebuilders across the globe by profiling and mapping local peacebuilding organisations and sharing local peacebuilder generated analysis, expertise and insights. Peace Insight publishes first-hand reporting on grassroots peacebuilding initiatives, gathers local peacebuilding resources and hosts information on approximately 2,300 peacebuilding organisations in 44 conflict-affected regions around the world.

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Adaptive programming approaches that embrace complexity

- **South Sudan Peacebuilding Opportunities Fund (POF)**, currently managed by Oxford Policy Management, is funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). This fund is a scalable, adaptable and context-driven mechanism to pursue peacebuilding objectives in South Sudan. Learning is at the centre of POF adaptive programming, with activities evolving in directions that are successful and scaling down when there is little or no evidence of intended impact. It has now supported the set-up, and provides core-funding to Peace Canal, a national implementing partner.

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Endnotes

[1] For example, see: **Grand Bargain 2.0** (2021), **OECD DAC Recommendation** on enabling civil society support and **USAID 2021 commitment** to advancing local leadership. These more recent documents join many prior commitments and policies, including the Sustaining Peace resolutions, Doing Development Differently and **the New Deal** (2011).

[2] For additional discussion on more fundamental and systemic change to international development cooperation, see research on issues such as **decolonising aid**, **localisation** and **systems change**.

[3] For specific discussion on the Chain of Influence Framework, see: '**Chain of Influence Framework: Shifting Power to Local Actors**' (March 2022).

[4] By limiting the scope of analysis to innovative practices at international organisations, this mapping by no means intends to discount the critical (if not most important) role that practice innovations undertaken by local and national organisations play and will continue to play in systems change for local leadership.

[5] Also see: 'System-Wide Initiatives Snapshot' (CSP learning note, forthcoming), which explores a range of initiatives that explicitly focus on catalysing broader systems change. These initiatives often compliment or may directly overlap with innovative programmatic practice work (see Figure 1). They can include processes of convening and dialogue, scenario planning, reimagining, multi-stakeholder mechanism design, training and capacity development on systems change, knowledge development, and principles and commitments.

[6] Also see: the Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security (WCAPS) **Pipeline Fellowship Program** and the **Platform4Dialogue** space hosted by Peace Direct.

[7] Garred, Michelle, '**Reimagining Evaluation: Putting Equity At The Center as Global Peacebuilding Comes To The United States**', CDA Blog (March 2022).

[8] Recognising that these benefactors also face accountability to and face scrutiny from others — to their governments, to their citizens and to the taxpayers.

[9] For further details, also see: **CIVICUS Solidarity Fund Learning Journey**.

[10] '**Financing Local Peacebuilding: Why and How?**', Peace Direct, 2022.

[11] For more information, see: **Gender and Youth Promotion Initiatives**.

[12] For more information, see: '**The Fund Innovates To Ensure That It Is The Communities That Build Peace In Their Territories**' (August 2022).

[13] '**Additional funding | Dutch Civic Space Fund (CSF) and the Civic Space Fund Flex Option (CSF-Flex)**', News Update, Partos Network.

[14] Bradshaw, Jennifer, '**Investing in Equity: Creating Equitable Funding for Women Peacebuilders**', Joan B Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, 18 (2022).

[15] Bradshaw, Jennifer, '**Investing in Equity: Creating Equitable Funding for Women Peacebuilders**', Joan B Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, 24 (2022).

[16] PeaceCon10 Presentation, '**Revisiting Innovative Financing for the Peacebuilding Sector**' (27 January 2022).

[17] PeaceCon10 Presentation, '**Revisiting Innovative Financing for the Peacebuilding Sector**' (27 January 2022).

[18] For more information, see: Development Initiatives data analysis of local actor support in the annual World Humanitarian Reports.

[19] Conversations with Saferworld staff (Spring 2022).

[20] For the results of the Firelight inquiry, see: '**Community-Driven Systems Change: the power of grassroots-led change for long-term impact and how funders can nurture it**'. For a collection of the growing suite of guidelines, see **community driven systems change**.

[21] For more information, also see: **Global Impact Framework**.

[22] Along similar lines, see: **Compendium of Good Practices on Conducting MEAL in Partnerships with International Actors And Local Faith Actors**.
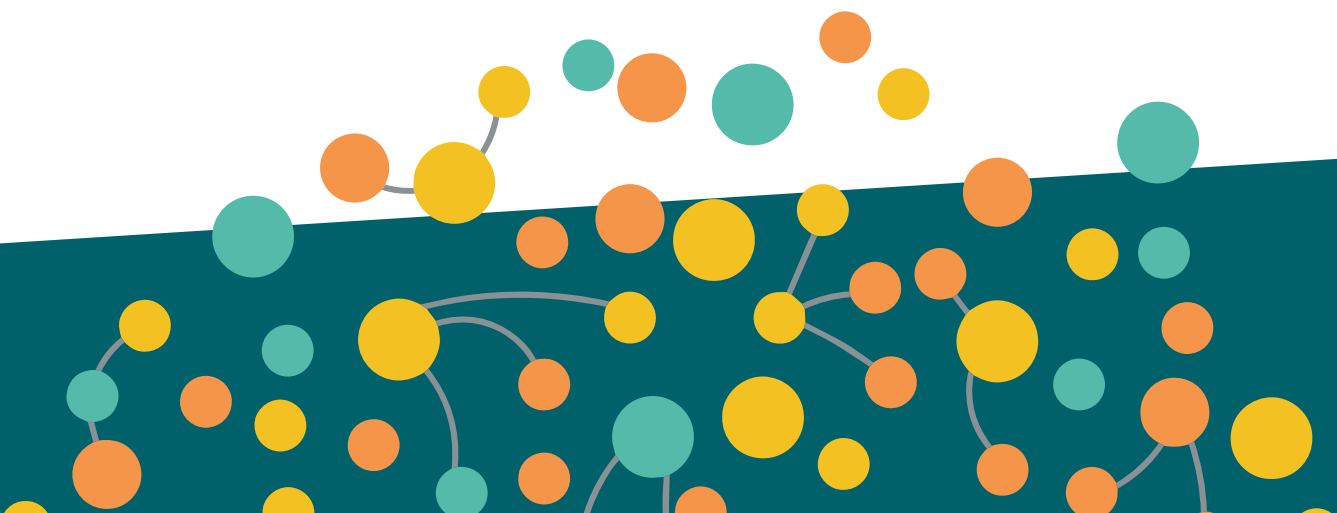
About Conducive Space for Peace

Conducive Space for Peace is an international NGO and its mission is to transform the global peacebuilding and development system to better enable local leadership and equitable partnerships. CSP works as a connector and accompanier, taking forward initiatives for change through analysis, network building, training and reimagining processes that catalyse systems change for local leadership.

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