



THE FIRST CSO-UN DIALOGUE ON PEACEBUILDING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



UN HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK

November 30th - December 1st, 2023



We would like to thank the generous support of:



We would also extend our gratitude to the continuous support of our CSO-UN Dialogue Initiative on Peacebuilding Core Group:



The First CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding – Executive Summary

The inaugural two-day Civil Society Organisation (CSO)-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding took place at the UN Headquarters in New York from November 30 to December 1, 2023. It aimed to provide a platform for UN entities and civil society actors dedicated to peacebuilding to engage in substantive discussions on global peacebuilding efforts. The event strived to systematise an ongoing dialogue within the larger context of the New Agenda for Peace between the UN and civil society and set the stage for continued, expanded, and diversified engagement.

The dialogue underscored several **critical themes essential for impactful and sustained peacebuilding efforts**. Strengthening the CSO-UN partnership emerged as the central priority, emphasising the need for strategic partnerships and equal two-way engagement between the UN and civil society. Inclusivity – particularly the meaningful involvement of women and youth – was highlighted as essential for unlocking collective action and devising effective peacebuilding approaches. The dialogue also emphasised the importance of transparent, participatory, and flexible funding mechanisms to advance peacebuilding, with calls for innovative financing methods and increased involvement of the private sector. Emphasis was placed on addressing root causes of conflicts and fragility, such as weak governance and economic disparities, as well as on the changing nature of conflicts and geopolitical contexts and what this means for peacebuilding including the impact of integrating peacebuilding practices within communities and across structures. Participants stressed the importance of tailoring peacebuilding efforts to specific contexts, defining and aligning global agendas in response to local realities, and empowering grassroots and other relevant stakeholders in shaping sustainable peacebuilding strategies. Overall, the dialogue emphasised the need for collaborative, inclusive, and locally driven approaches to peacebuilding, to address the complexities of global conflicts and pave the way for enduring peace.

The following **actionable recommendations** emerged from the CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding:

Strengthening the CSO-UN Partnership

Civil society and UN entities should work together to:

- Institutionalise the Dialogue Initiative to create a sustainable platform that can serve as the catalyst to implement all other recommendations arising from the Dialogue.
- Formalise and institutionalise structured exchanges for consistent, regular, and reciprocal collaboration between UN entities and civil society at all levels to ensure equal partnership.
- Ensure continuous collaboration through diverse means, including having mandatory focal points for CSOs in UN country offices; establishing and standardising reciprocal reporting structures; having regular national and regional UN-CSO dialogues that capture conflict dynamics and innovate solutions at various levels; and establishing communication channels for continuous feedback loops and exchange.
- Establish regular meetings for joint decision-making, reciprocal learning and evaluation exercises, and co-creation of peacebuilding initiatives, acknowledging complementarity of UN entities and CSOs as equal partners in policy and implementation.

- Develop protection mechanisms addressing intimidation and reprisals faced by CSOs and their personnel working with the UN.
- Strengthen communication channels between UN headquarters and field operations to foster consistency between UN HQ, field missions', and country offices' approaches to CSO consultation. Digital tools to support this process should be explored.

Localised Peacebuilding

Civil society and UN entities should work together to:

- Prioritise locally, nationally, and regionally driven programmes, to address issues most relevant to conflict-affected communities. It is essential to strengthen the engagement with local stakeholders to accurately address these specific challenges and needs.
- Translate key policy documents and reports into local languages, as well as making them more understood by local communities for broader accessibility.
- Amplify local voices and facilitate their audibility and access to international policymakers.

Inclusive Peacebuilding

Civil society and UN entities should work together to:

- Facilitate gender and youth inclusive and co-created dialogues with built-in follow-up mechanisms.
- Provide safe spaces and training programmes to foster the leadership of marginalised groups.
- Incorporate gender- and youth markers into their programming.
- Invest in educational initiatives and mentorship programmes for local actors, especially youth, to ensure the provision of necessary resources and platforms for skills enhancement and leadership development.

Enhance Sustainability and Impact of Peacebuilding

Civil society and UN entities should work together to:

- Enhance collaboration, dialogue, and reciprocal learning between the UN and CSOs to enhance the sustainability, efficacy, and impact of peacebuilding efforts. Ensure that dialogues and consultations with civil society are not merely seen as a rubber stamp to legitimise peacebuilding endeavours, but rather as a means to review and adapt peacebuilding strategies, initiatives, and methodologies.
- Partner with policymakers, practitioners, and scholars to conduct longitudinal studies and comprehensive assessments that capture and document the impact of peacebuilding initiatives and what contributes to the impact in a particular context.

- Develop methodologies that synchronise peacebuilding strategies with long-term necessities and transcend short-term objectives.
- It is essential to restructure top-down and UN-centric approaches, aligning timelines and goals, in order to be realistic and responsive to local priorities and constraints. Craft frameworks to prioritise the enduring needs of conflict-affected regions over short-term donor-driven objectives, and which redirect attention to long-term goals.

Integration of CSOs' Input into the development of National Processes and UN Policies

UN entities and Member States should work together to:

- Cultivate dedicated modalities for meaningful CSO participation in policymaking, UN policies and national reform processes and establish formal advisory roles for CSOs.
- Partner with CSOs that operate across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. They bring added value, impetus, and innovative practices to develop a comprehensive peacebuilding framework that better integrates the three UN pillars through coordinated efforts, shared resources, and collaborative strategies.

Rethinking Peacebuilding Financing

UN entities and donors should work together to:

- Create clear funding guidelines and grant application processes and offer transparent feedback loops on funding allocation decisions.
- Prioritise direct financing and access to financing of local civil society organisations. Funding models must support community-led approaches where communities play a leading role in determining peacebuilding priorities and strategies.
- Explore innovative financing models beyond traditional means of aid that can better respond to address long-term peacebuilding needs.
- Offer technical assistance and capacity-building support throughout the grant-writing and implementation processes to ensure that a variety of organisations, including grassroots organisations, fulfil the criteria while effectively utilising allocated funds.
- Develop funding mechanisms mindful of the power imbalances and inequities in funding processes that may be reinforced rather than countered. Funding and project accountability mechanisms should be more flexible and adaptable for those that sometimes lack the financial and administrative infrastructure to satisfy stringent donor requirements but may be best placed to address the needs in a particular context. This includes sensitivities to both the dilemmas and potential associated with funding these organisations and can be done through indirect funding channelled through networks and international organisations that may more easily comply with donor requirements.