



United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture *in Practice*:

Perspectives from Local Peacebuilders in the Horn of Africa and
Great Lakes region



Outcome Report as Submission to the 2020
United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture
Review

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Cover Photo: Dalwalba waxaa dhisa dadkiisa [*“Every nation is built by its people”*] Graffiti Art in Somalia. Photo by Deqa Abshir.

Executive Summary

This report is the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) and its partners' written submission to the 2020 United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Architecture Review process. As the outcome of a series of consultations, it gathers perspectives from a diverse range of peacebuilding practitioners in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region. Particular emphasis was placed on engaging peacebuilders who are not often heard in global policy discussions.

LPI has been working in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region for the past 35 years, promoting non-violent approaches to support conflict transformation. Building from this experience, this consultation sought to find out what sustaining peace specifically looks like in these areas, and what the UN more broadly means to the work of local peacebuilding— the best practices, the challenges and the barriers for local peace actors to meaningfully engage the UN.

The report is organised in two parts. **Part One** presents the perspectives of the peacebuilding practitioners we engaged in six context-specific consultations. The report highlights their examples and experiences. These examples are largely unseen and under-recognised in global peacebuilding policy and action, and demonstrate the richness of practices, efforts, knowledge and experiences – remaining to a large extent as untapped resources for building sustainable peace.

Two key themes on **civil society engagement and perception** of the UN emerged:

Competing and complementary identities of the UN - A wide variety of roles played by the UN in conflict and peacebuilding situations were identified by consultation participants, from the highly specific and technical to the broad and overarching. For participants, position defines perspective – individuals in conflict-affected contexts apply their needs, and their areas of work, onto the UN's identity and function: what they see of the UN, and what they demand of it, constitutes its identity. This reflects both the challenges faced by the UN in articulating its mandate, managing expectations and also the potentiality held by the institution, and the legitimacy it has to engage in many processes and spaces. Three key roles were noted by participants-peacebuilding, mediation and peacekeeping. The role of a peacebuilding actor was not well known by consultation participants, particularly in relational or social elements of peacebuilding at the local level, and there was very little awareness of the broader UN peacebuilding architecture. The UN's role in peace processes was much more known, seeing the UN having a specific focus on track 1, formal processes and peacekeeping. According to participants, the UN's perceived neutrality gives it a unique ability to bridge conflicting parties. The UN is visible through its peacekeeping missions, and thus perceived as an external military force, and as a security actor. Participants highlighted challenges around mission mandate and the actual capacity of such missions to protect civilians. Humanitarian or development functions also influence how the UN is perceived as a peacebuilder, and opportunities in promoting peace may be created (or sacrificed) via work in other areas, indicating the need for coordination and common understanding across these functions.

Partnerships with the UN – either directly or via an international intermediary such as an NGO – were rare, or entirely absent from the experiences of participants. A participant in Sudan emphasised that: “*It is unclear how one even does this [partners with the UN]*”, and that there is little public information on how to work in partnership with the UN. The majority of participants saw the UN as inaccessible, operating within its compound with little interaction with communities. Interventions were seen as based on either a lack of localised conflict analysis or outdated information, and thus not often managing to meet the needs of communities or arriving too late to provide effective responses.

Building off these perspectives, **Part Two** introduces four recommendations, based on reflections shared by participants, directed at the UN Peacebuilding Architecture which, if implemented, will support a transformation towards a more inclusive space for decision-makers and practitioners, working in pursuit of aligned goals to sustain peace.

Understanding context and peacebuilding opportunities better through joint analysis: the starting point for coalescing understanding of what is needed to advance and sustain peace in a given context is joint context and conflict analysis which draws on insights and collective wisdom of all actors engaged in peacebuilding. Civil society is a particularly untapped resource in context analysis processes. **Processes of integrated context- and issue-based analysis, with civil society at the table, will ensure the UN would have more relevant and accurate information which could then more effectively guide strategy development, funding decisions and implementation.**

Thinking and acting long-term across levels through multi-year peacebuilding strategies: through solid and sustained partnership with civil society, the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and the peacebuilding sector needs to develop more functional links between people, organised civil society, governments and international efforts. **Creating inclusive and comprehensive, mutually agreed frameworks, guided by joint-context analysis, to direct the work at country level can create a space for the development of cross-sectoral and multi-level relationships.**

Making peacebuilding financing more accessible and transparent: **funding mechanisms need to be adapted to allow civil society to be actively involved as equal partners in analysis, design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives.** Innovative efforts by the UN Peacebuilding Architecture to both provide more funding directly to civil society, as well as creating a more accessible small grant fund, are necessary steps towards more meaningful engagement between the UN and civil society.

Enhanced engagement and partnership in practice: it is vital that focus is turned to partnership with civil society. This is one weak link, among others, in creating real multi-level engagement which responds to multi-level dynamics in conflict contexts. **Such partnership needs to depart from existing practice of extracting information and relegating civil society as ‘mere implementers’ to equal partnerships between the UN and civil society actors in matters of peacebuilding work.** This means focusing on the process of high-quality engagement as much as the outcomes of peacebuilding interventions and ensuring diverse civil society actors are included from the analysis stages right through to the evaluation.

Many of the recommendations coming forward are not new, but have been raised by civil society in the past. **This further reiterates the need to focus on implementation.** Thus, moving forward, LPI will continue to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders – civil society, national actors, regional and sub-regional organisations, the African Union and the UN – to explore implementation of the recommendations from the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review process. Specifically, when the review is concluded, the Institute will seek to host a multi-stakeholder dialogue to think about better implementation of the recommendations, in concrete terms, following up on any decisions on policy level emerging in the review process to ensure the review does not end with a report and attendant resolution but results in meaningful change for those experiencing and living in conflict.

Introduction

This report is the outcome of a series of consultations organised by the Life & Peace Institute (LPI), upon invitation by the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) to engage in the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review (see box 1).¹ The process included two face-to-face consultations in Mogadishu (Somalia) and Bukavu (Democratic Republic of Congo), four virtual or phone consultations with peacebuilding practitioners from Ethiopia, borderlands (Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Sudan) and one virtual consultation with representatives of regional and international organisations. This was an adapted process from the originally planned multi-stakeholder in-person consultation due to the Covid-19 pandemic.²

The peacebuilding practitioners consulted include a diverse range of stakeholders from the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region, particularly community-based practitioners who are not often heard in global policy discussions. A point of feedback heard from local actors engaged in this process is that peacebuilding is happening with or without the UN. Therefore, this report is an overview of what the participants shared with us about their perspectives of what peacebuilding and sustaining peace look like and means to them and their work in the different contexts explored, as well as what international institutions, like the UN, mean to this work. The report captures how the UN is seen, by civil society, as working in these contexts – the best practices, the challenges and the barriers in engaging the UN. The report ends with a series of recommendations, building on these perspectives, looking at how the UN should be operating in these contexts to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the community, country and globally.

Box 1: The UN 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review

In 2020, the United Nations (UN) embarked on its third comprehensive review the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture. The UN's Peacebuilding Architecture is currently composed of three elements- the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). This review calls for a broader consultation that looks beyond the three traditional mechanisms of the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture and more broadly at how the UN, its partners and other stakeholders are undertaking peacebuilding worldwide and working to achieve the UN's new peacebuilding approach – sustaining peace.

Sustaining peace, as defined in resolutions A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282, *“is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the Government and all other national stakeholders”* based on nationally identified *“priorities, strategies and activities for sustaining peace”*, centred on inclusivity where civil society is seen to *“play an important role in advancing efforts to sustain peace.”* Intrinsic to this is the recognition that external actors, the UN included, have limitations in the role they can play in communities, and the acknowledgement that actors in context – especially local actors closest to communities – have the requisite expertise and knowledge about their own situation.

Structure of the Report

This report is organised in two parts:

Part One presents perspectives of the peacebuilding practitioners we engaged in context-specific sessions, and is organised around common themes, concerns, and claims. It focuses on introducing the diverse group of peacebuilding practitioners who contributed to this consultation process and summarises the various

¹ This report is an independent report, authored by the Life & Peace Institute, and does not represent the views of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office.

² See annex 1 for more details on the process.

peacebuilding contexts. Following this, the section explores three themes emerging from the six consultations with peacebuilders:

- How the UN is perceived broadly by peacebuilding practitioners in their context
- What peacebuilding roles and functions the UN plays, or does not play, in a way that is visible to peacebuilders
- What partnership currently looks like.

To round off this part, examples of peacebuilding practice brought forward by peacebuilding practitioners, largely unseen and unrecognised by global peacebuilding policy and action, will be showcased. These examples demonstrate the richness of practices, efforts, knowledge and experiences – remaining to a large extent as untapped resources for building sustainable peace.

In **Part Two** of the report, the focus shifts to match the perspectives of Part One with an analysis of the ambition of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, and where there is most space for transformation – towards an inclusive space for decision-makers and practitioners, working in pursuit of aligned goals to sustain peace.

Limitation of this Report

Despite efforts to adapt, we are aware of the limitations of the virtual process undertaken and what it means for the content of this outcome report. Firstly, the absence of an inclusive, multi-stakeholder meeting between peacebuilding practitioners, national government representatives, representatives of regional organisations and those who live and experience the inner workings of the UN peacebuilding architecture means that the disconnect between those actors across levels remains. To close this gap, this report serves as a bridge, created by LPI as the convener. Additionally, the report focuses on summarising input from local peacebuilding practitioners, mainly. This reflects that those actors have been comparatively less consulted. This choice was also pragmatic, as virtual reach to national-level government actors was considered not feasible within the given timeframe when adapting the process to Covid-19. In mitigating this, dependent on the development of the Covid-19 pandemic, we hope that our engagement in this process will extend beyond the input phase. When the review is concluded, we will seek to host a multi-stakeholder dialogue to think about better implementation of the recommendations, in concrete terms, following up on any decisions on policy level emerging in the review process to ensure the review does not simply end with a report and resolution but results in meaningful change for those experiencing and living with conflict.

The second limitation concerns differences created between participants because different formats were used – face-to-face, online consultation, phone conversation. Some participants could not participate because travelling would have been too risky, or because they did not have the possibility to use and access the online conferencing software. While we never intended to write an outcome report representing all of civil society, we are cognisant that this report represents the views of those who could engage in this virtual platform and it, perhaps, not as representative of unheard perspectives as initially intended.

Thirdly, on gender sensitivity and transformative approaches to gender, the report authors recognise that gender – as an analytical lens, and more directly in content of the consultations – is not included in detail throughout the report. It should be noted that some conversations related to gender did indeed take place during consultations, focused on the unique difficulties faced by women in conflict environments, promoting women's roles in mediation, or on mitigating the challenges experienced by female cross-border traders, for instance. There were, in addition, requests for UN support to begin to tackle some of these challenges.

These points related to gender, during the consultations, focused largely on vulnerability and distinct threats faced by women, with rights and economic empowerment being seen as the main avenues for redress.

Gender-focused content did not go further than gender sensitivity, toward transformative approaches to gender norms. In addition, the experiences of men and masculinity more broadly were not significantly discussed.

The questions used to guide deliberations with participants focused primarily on their experiences with the UN – in its various roles, and in the context of partnerships. Further attention could have been paid to gender dynamics, through the purposeful inclusion of gender-focused questions during consultations. However, the report reflects, as closely as possible and wherever appropriate in their own words, the perspectives and requests made by consultation participants. Effort has been made, in this regard, to reduce the analytical distance between what was said in consultations and what is seen here – on the page. This, it is hoped, goes some way to explain the lack of immediate gender focus in the report. However, as LPI intends to continue to engage with consultation participants in subsequent stages of the Review, this angle may be more substantively included in future.

Part One: “We hear, but never see them”: Peacebuilding practitioners’ views and experiences with the United Nations and the Peacebuilding Architecture

Part One presents perspectives of the peacebuilding practitioners we engaged in context-specific sessions, and is organised around their experiences and concerns. The inputs across the six contexts were analysed and common themes identified. The focus is on presenting the perspectives and examples of participants, including through their own words, so as to stay close to the actual consultations. It is therefore not an exhaustive account, and summarises individual experiences, knowledge and memories.

Meet the Peacebuilding Practitioners

Identifying Participants

When LPI’s working group started off the process of identifying peacebuilding practitioners from the country contexts in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions, criteria were developed (see box 2), which were then discussed with LPI’s country teams feeding into a long-list, from which we identified 25 participants, initially with the intention for them to participate in the larger multi-stakeholder dialogue in Nairobi at the end of March. There was some consideration whether LPI should be the one to identify participants, or whether core partners should select as a collective. Due to the tight schedule, and to be able to ensure diversity of participants in terms of their positions in the local peacebuilding space, we settled on identifying participants based on recommendations and LPI’s existing experience of working with them. It should be noted that many participants are currently part of LPI’s country or regional work.

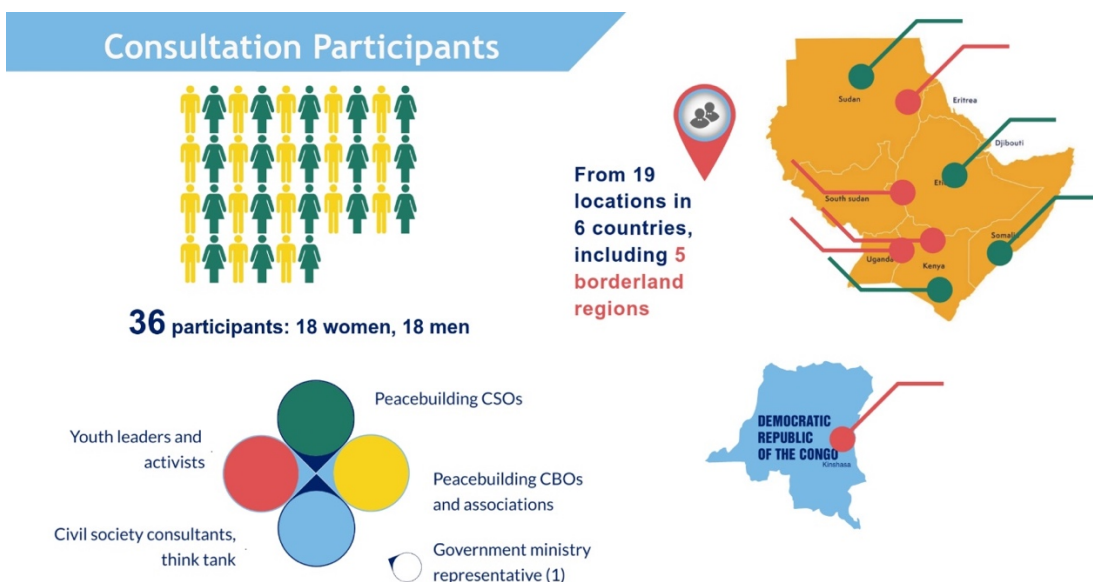
Box 2: Criteria guiding the identification of peacebuilding practitioners from diverse domestic civil society

- Peace actors with strong experiences of peacebuilding in practice
- Bring in diverse voices, including people who rarely are heard in global policy discussions
- Have a balance of analysts and those working closely with communities
- Bring representatives of certain community peacebuilding platforms
- Practitioners who live in the locations and interact with local peacebuilding daily
- Ethnic and gender diversity

Diversity of Participants

As can be seen in the infographic below, altogether, 36 peacebuilding practitioners contributed their expertise and perspectives to this report. They broadly represent a diversity of actors in what may be referred to as ‘domestic civil society’ so organisations or people engaging in the civic space, either on national or sub-national, grassroots level. Participants work in local peacebuilding organisations, associations of traders or

fishermen, peacebuilding structures and dialogue groups, as youth leaders and activists or in a think tank. Some of them had participated to similar consultation processes in the past, others were consulted for the first time in this manner.



Where Did the Participants Come From: The Peacebuilding Contexts

Peacebuilding practice emerges in a specific context, and the UN has varied mandates and takes on different roles depending on the country or region, and the peace and security contexts within that space. Some of the countries are eligible for funding through the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) (Somalia, DRC, Sudan, Ethiopia), while others do not; none of the countries are currently on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commissions (PBC)³; three currently have UN peacekeeping operations. While the varied mandates of the UN limit its ability to engage in some contexts, this too also affects how the UN’s role is perceived, especially when there is a disconnect between expectations of the UN and the role it is mandated to play. The specific contexts covered in the consultation experience a myriad of conflicts, and when and where violence erupts and what space and challenges exist for peacebuilders is highly contextual.

The following conflict issues and everyday challenges for the peacebuilding practitioners were identified by participants as affecting their contexts:

³ Traditionally, for a country to be on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, a Country Specific Configuration (CSC) had to be created for that country. A CSC is seen as a unique platform and the principle tool for the PBC for addressing a country and its main interface with the respective government. Each CSC is headed by a member state which is willing to take on the leadership role. The chair is charged with organizing informal meetings and numerous visits to the respective country. In order to be added to the PBC Agenda, according to resolutions 60/180 of the General Assembly and 1645 of the Security Council adopted on 20 December 2005, a country may be added to the agenda of the PBC by a request from the Security Council or the Secretary General or, in “exceptional cases where the country is on the verge of lapsing or relapsing into conflict” by a request from the General Assembly, ECOSOC, or the concerned country itself. In recent time, the PBC, however, has adapted its working methods to allow for more flexibility to hold meetings on countries (with their consent) on an ad hoc basis. Despite this, the majority of the meetings are still focused on the Country Specific Configurations: Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau and Liberia.

- Formal peace processes have either failed or are not implemented – the example of the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process in DRC, or of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement in Sudan was highlighted
- Contested state authority and presence of armed groups, which was particularly highlighted in the Somalia and DRC consultations
- Ethnic- and religious-based conflict which is triggered by political and business forces
- Borderlands experience conflict around territorial boundaries, cross-border displacement, trade conflict, impacts of disharmonised policies and practices on cross-border interactions and trade
- Piracy was highlighted as a security threat for fishermen
- Land conflict, including connected to land use through pastoralism, is a commonly experienced issue.

“Le travail de la paix est exécuté chez nous en faisant nos activités de routine. Je travaille surtout avec les femmes. Je les montre qu'en tant que pilier de la famille et de la nation elles doivent commencer la cohabitation pacifique dans leurs familles respectives. Pendant les activités de sensibilisation de masse et de petits groupes je fais toujours passer le message de la paix qui n'est pas seulement l'affaire des agents de sécurité mais l'affaire de tous et chacun doit y mettre sa part pour arriver à la paix durable.”

Peacebuilding for us consists of doing routine activities. I work mostly with women. I discuss with them how women, as the main pillar of the family and the nation, they need to start peaceful cohabitation in their families. During awareness raising activities I always emphasise that peace is not only the issue of security agents but that everyone needs to contribute to achieve sustainable peace.

Participant from the DRC consultation describing her daily work as a peacebuilder

Why did Participants Join? What is the Plus They Expect from Participation?

During the consultations, we asked participants why they took time to get involved and what they were hoping would emerge from the consultation process.

Visibility and uptake of outcomes: Across the board, what really mattered was that the outcomes of the consultation should be made visible and be taken up in the UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review process. Some also reflected that they had been asked many times before, and never heard back or saw any influence or change. This meant that there was a mix of anticipation, with a degree of scepticism. The element of feedback on what happened with their inputs therefore was foregrounded too.

Box 3: What is ‘Participation+’

Participation+ refers to the ambition that the value of participation by a given actor is sustained beyond individual, short-term attendance at an event or workshop – through additional engagement before or after this individual moment of participation, and – importantly – yielding an outcome that matters for them at individual, organisational, community level.

Influencing policy: Related to this point, participants shared that they engaged as this consultation gave the opportunity to influence decisions on peace at highest level, and for these decisions to take into account the real needs and priorities of communities.

“Désormais la base est prise en compte avant que les décisions ne soient prises par les grands décideurs” Now the basis is taken into account before decisions are taken by the major decision-makers. (DRC Consultation)

“This is an opportunity for us to get our voices heard and hopefully influence decisions at the UN level.” (Borderlands consultation)

Representing their constituency: Several of the participants also highlighted that, in addition to participating in their own right, they recognised the opportunity to speak up for the people they work with every day.

“I feel the need to stand in for the women cross-border traders to express their experiences and challenges in this process, with the hope that their voices will be heard and therefore contribute to shaping policy agenda internationally.” (Borderland consultation)

Learning from other peacebuilding practitioners: Another plus of participation was the opportunity to meet other peacebuilders and learn from their experience, as well as strengthen networks.

Make the consultation process more continuous: Participants also hoped that the process of consultation could be more continuous, through the formation of coordination structures which would include international actors. Sentiments were shared that local and international peace efforts often lack coordination and due to the lack of coordination forfeit learning and working to support one another.

Emerging Themes from Local Peace Actors

Who is the UN? Competing and Complementary Identities

A clear theme emerging through all consultations is the lack of a singular identity for the UN – there is no one definition and perceptions of the institution are varied. The UN takes on a diversity of tasks, and local peace actors often experience it as a multifaceted organisation in which one hand is unaware of the actions of the other. For participants, position defines perspective – individuals in conflict-affected contexts apply their needs, and their areas of work, onto the UN’s identity and function: what they see of the UN, and what they demand of it, constitutes its identity. Everyday, granular engagement are the ingredients by which local civil society form their ideas about the UN as a whole.

The UN, therefore, is political, humanitarian, development and military actor – depending on who is asked. Definitions from local peace actors also focus on functions – the UN as an institution-builder, mediator, facilitator, or government. At the same time, individual agencies were often mentioned: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and individual UN missions, for instance – only by their acronym, with limited information provided on their specific function. Further, the UN, based on consultations, is represented by individuals (Special Representatives and Rapporteurs, among others), member states, and the multilateral agency itself. There is a national UN and an international UN, in the views of participants.

A variety of answers emerged when participants were asked to describe what the UN does, depending on their level of experience and exposure to the institution. Participants from a consultation held with civil society actors in the borderland regions of the Horn of Africa listed the following roles, in their own words:⁴

- *We understand the UN to be a body that mostly does conflict resolution and prevention, based on what we have heard about them and not from directly interacting with them*
- *[The] UN is a global organisation working to protect young people through agencies like UNICEF [the United Nations Children’s Fund] and platforms like the Youth Envoy which allow for youth voices to be articulated through social media, surveys, quizzes, and working groups*

⁴ It should be noted that the consultation in the Democratic Republic of Congo differed from others, in that participants focused their attention on the role of the UN in peacekeeping, primarily through the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This reinforces findings indicating that an individual’s definition of the UN is based largely on their direct interaction with it.

- *[The] UN is perceived to be concerned with peacekeeping only, more than peacebuilding*
- *It is an international organisation for improving economic and social welfare of the people*
- *The UN is a global body working on humanitarian assistance*

What does the UN do? A Multi-Mandate Specialist Generalist

A wide variety of roles played by the UN in conflict were identified by consultation participants, from the highly specific and technical to the broad and overarching. This reflects both the challenges faced by the UN in articulating its mandate, meeting the expectations held of the UN and also the potentiality held by the institution, and the legitimacy it has to engage in many processes and spaces. This balanced picture was also applied to the practical actions of the UN – complex, vast, often slow-moving, but seen as having near limitless capacity and reach. Further, while there was divergence among participants in their understanding of the role the UN plays in conflict-affected settings, the UN as a whole was viewed as an important, and necessary, institution in these environments. A few of the key roles noted by participants are explored below.

1. *The UN as a peacebuilding actor*

In general, the UN was not viewed by consultation participants as a peacebuilding actor – its role in this area of work is neither seen nor understood, and there is very little awareness of the broader UN peacebuilding architecture. Where the UN is known at the local level, among civil society actors, it is not generally for its efforts to support peacebuilding (understood as multi-track dialogue and community-level reconciliation work), and when peace processes were identified as examples of UN activities, these were confined within formal, official, Track I spaces for mediation and conflict resolution, or the militarised elements of peace support, for instance peacekeeping.⁵ For a participant in Ethiopia it was clear that *“the UN is humanitarian and does peacekeeping, rather than peacebuilding.”* (Participant in Ethiopia Consultation)

For some participants, the UN’s work seemed to prioritise ‘hardware activities’ (such as service delivery or humanitarian assistance) rather than work that is focused on more attitudinal and behavioural outcomes. These ‘software activities’ being core elements of peacebuilding, this contributes to the perception that the UN is not a peacebuilding actor. In the Somalia consultation, for instance, participants reflected that the UN was not seen to be implementing peacebuilding (understood in this context as multi-track dialogue and reconciliation work) but rather humanitarian and development-based work. Elsewhere, a number of participants described a UN that is focused on specific conflict sectors, as a source of technical expertise – on mine clearance or disarmament, for instance – as above, directing its attention at the tangible machinery and tools of conflict, rather than the relational or social elements. In Sudan, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), as well as mine clearance and mine risk education, were emphasised as roles played by the UN. In DRC, civil society participants highlighted engagement in security sector reform, and in particular, support to government security actors, as part of their knowledge of the UN. This also highlights the ways in which competing definitions of what constitutes ‘peacebuilding’ also creates differing understandings of the UN as a peacebuilder. Questions were asked about whether the UN wanted to engage with communities in peacebuilding activities, with the sense shared that its mandate was not designed for this purpose.

“With frequent fatal violence between the host and refugee communities, there is no single day UN responded to create peaceful coexistence in the region. They consider peace building at community level as none of their business.”

Participant in Ethiopia Consultation

The UN’s peacebuilding role, however, was among the least discussed among consultation participants – with the following two UN functions highlighted more regularly during conversations. In addition, it became clear

⁵ The consultations themselves, however, were seen as a means by which this gap between locally led peacebuilding and UN support could be closed, and an entry point for local peace actors to understand and access the UN system. This was highlighted, particularly, in Somalia.

that the UN's actions in a humanitarian or development capacity have an impact on how it is perceived, and able to act, in the peacebuilding space. Although humanitarian or development functions are distinct from peacebuilding, they influence how the UN is perceived as a peacebuilder, and opportunities in promoting peace may be created (or sacrificed) via work in other areas. This indicates the need for coordination and common understanding across these functions – while different agencies have their mandates, to communities the UN is the sum of its parts.

2. The UN as a broker and mediator

According to participants, the UN's perceived neutrality gives it a unique ability to bridge conflicting parties (even if this positionality is not always used). Local peace actors in Somalia noted that the UN was seen as “*more neutral*” than other international stakeholders present in the region, and therefore able to engage more effectively in politicised environments than others. The UN's role in mediating conflicting parties throughout the civil war in Somalia, and more recently in the conflict with al-Shabaab were highlighted, as well as the UN taking a significant role in facilitating exchange between the national government and Federal Member States. Further, during sensitive and tense political disputes in Somalia, the UN may be well-positioned to mediate between political elites. The UN was seen as neutral most specifically when compared to national governments in the Horn of Africa that have aligned themselves with particular conflicting parties.⁶ Participants in Sudan held similar views: “*The UN is a neutral actor and is playing a large role around the negotiations in the country and its transition. The UN is seen to have the ability to leverage the government and push issues forward.*”

This neutrality is not guaranteed, however, and is easily compromised. Local peace actors recognised that the UN navigates a challenging political landscape, balancing the interests and perspectives of multiple actors (both within and outside the UN itself). “[*The*] *tricky issue is that the UN is a neutral actor but will have to uphold the position of the transitional government in the country and this can be seen as supporting the government which compromises this neutrality*”, stated a participant in Sudan. The UN's neutrality may be leveraged by governments, in addition, as a means of limiting the institution's engagement in particular political processes – claiming that UN influence over a given issue is in conflict with its intention to remain neutral. With this concern, in-country UN actors may avoid substantive input on sensitive issues as they fear being seen to overstep their mandate. Further, the UN's ability to act impartially in conflict is also constrained by its constituent parts – the ways in which its actions may be subject to the will of its members. In Ethiopia, for instance, participants noted that: “[*The UN*] *is a donor dependent institution to implement the wishes of sponsoring countries. Look at the peace agreements in South Sudan [as examples of this]. [The] policy orientation of countries influences how the UN operates*”, and further, that “*the UN [is] designed to work on global challenges – it is a global entity. [However], the constituting entities want UN to remain weak.*”

In addition, the UN, in its role of broker and mediator, should also take on coordination responsibilities, according to discussions during the consultations held across the region. In Sudan, specifically, participants noted that while national ownership was necessary for sustainable peace, the UN is expected to, or explicitly seen to, coordinate international support to national efforts, and the work of various non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

3. The UN as an inactive military force, a passive peacekeeper

During the consultation held with peace actors in the borderlands of the Horn of Africa, a participant stated that: “*Presently, the UN is viewed as a highly militarised agency and some people are afraid of the UN policies because they don't understand them.*” This view of the UN as an external military force, and generally as a security actor, was shared in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where participants explained their

⁶ However, consultation participants in Somalia also questioned the UN's long-term role – “*Is the UN the government? What role does it play in terms of liaising with and advising the government, and is the UN an alternative government and voice for Somalia?*”

view of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) as improving access (through defensive capacity), but perceived as inactive, armed but unable to protect – with deadly attacks taking place in their presence (or a “few metres from their base”) in Eastern DRC with little reaction.⁷ This has created, according to participants, a sense that MONUSCO is inactive, with a mandate to protect which it does not perform: “Generally, she [MONUSCO] replies that it has an observation mandate.” This is, in part, due to a lack of community understanding of the role of MONUSCO, or broadly the UN’s, and the mandate of which may change without the public being aware of why, and in what ways these changes will meet their needs or change the way the UN can intervene.

In Sudan, similar views were articulated around the inability of the UN to protect local communities, with particular reference to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). A participant asked: “What is the role of the UN when the state is committing many of the protection violations?”⁸

Perceptions of the role of the UN in these fields were more critical in DRC and Sudan, with no comments made on the UN as a peacekeeper in the consultations held with borderlands peacebuilders, or in Ethiopia. Where the UN’s military presence is seen, and interacted with on a regular basis, more criticism emerged. A question emerges in regard to this peacekeeping role: who is the UN *for* in these environments? Who is it serving? Who is it working for, and who are its bosses – communities, governments, or other stakeholders? This may also be due to a lack of clear understanding of the limitations of the UN in this role, and what is possible under the specific mandate of the peacekeeping forces in question – expectations among community members may not be in alignment with what is possible.

⁷ The local peace actors referred to the current security situation in Uvira and Ruthshuru territories, where MONUSCO is perceived as passive. Despite being present in areas where armed groups operate, MONUSCO is seen to do “nothing to prevent them from committing abuses” (DRC Consultation). While participants specifically gave the example of the June 2014 Mutarule massacre – where MONUSCO was present, but did not intervene, resulting in 38 people were reported to have been killed and 24 wounded, this lack of intervention continues to be a challenge. More recently, and most reported about, in Goma and Beni City, over the last year, there have been protests against MONUSCO for these same reasons.

⁸ Participants in Sudan also highlighted the ways in which, where protection is provided by the UN as a “large military presence”, this can also cause other challenges, for instance making border crossing more complex (in this case, between Sudan and South Sudan).

Box 4: The UN bound by borders, and the untapped potential of an international actor

From the consultations, a picture emerges of the UN as operating primarily within the borders of its constituent parts – its member states – and not engaging effectively with a cross-border approach – addressing international dimensions of conflict. Borderlands are complex peacebuilding spaces requiring international efforts, and the UN may be well-placed to think and act with borders in mind, by virtue of it being a supra-national body that operates ‘above’ national spaces. Specific issues of a cross-border nature were suggested by consultation participants as ripe for UN engagement – disharmony in national policies that affect how cross-border conflicts are resolved, a lack of clear demarcation posing challenges to fishing communities sharing water resources, or a lack of awareness of national territories causing misunderstanding. These were all noted, during consultations, as areas in which the UN may add value. Where the distinct dynamics of borders are not taken into consideration, greater problems can be created. In Kassala, Sudan, for instance, participants recalled an incident in which mine clearance was implemented successfully on the Sudanese side of the border, yet *“there is a problem regarding cross border area that the mine field was extended between the borders of Sudan and Eritrea – the border from Eritrean side was not cleared and the border population used the same field and same resources, for that reason such intervention needed an international agreement.”* The UN, here, could more effectively leverage its international status to play a positive role. Another aspect highlighted was the lack of a coherent approach between UN efforts in neighboring countries, and lacking attention to dealing with cross-border challenges, as one participant shared: *“UN gives no attention to community level atrocities and suffering of people. For instance, in the Horn of Africa particularly South Sudan with its spillover effect in Gambella, Ethiopia, people’s security is in the hand of their own ethnic group and ethnic base conflict, children abduction and cattle raiding have become routine activities in the region but neither the governments nor the UN gives its ear to it.”*

Far from Partnership – Experiences of (lack of) Interaction with the UN

“I am the Chairperson of the Busia Women Cross-Border Traders. Having had the experience and exposure personally, through such initiatives as FEMWISE, a UN Women initiative in collaboration with the African Union to promote women mediators at local level, I feel the need to stand in for the women cross-border traders to express their experiences and challenges in this process, with the hope that their voices will be heard and therefore contribute to shaping policy agenda internationally.” Participant, borderlands consultation

Perceptions of Partnership with the UN

Partnerships with the UN – either directly or via an international intermediary such as an NGO – were rare, or entirely absent from the experiences of participants. A participant in Sudan emphasised that: *“It is unclear how one even does this [partners with the UN]”*, and that there is little public information on how to work in partnership with the UN. The majority of participants saw collaboration between the UN and international NGOs and government, rather than the UN partnering with local peace actors, civil society or community-based organisations.

The view that the UN is primarily a partner to government, and has limited engagement with civil society, was a common theme. During the consultation in Somalia, for instance, for one participant it was clear that: *“If there was no UN, there would be no government in Somalia... what would be Somalia without the UN?”* This refers to the support provided by the UN to the statebuilding process in the country – it emphasises the perception that the UN constructs, builds the capacity of, and partners with, state institutions, rather than civil society. Where there is a focus on community needs, this was seen to be with the aim of legitimising government through improving, for instance, service provision or security.

In addition, the consultations held by LPI often cast the UN as confining itself within its compounds, inaccessible to communities. *“We hear them, but we don’t see them”*, stated a participant in Somalia, referring to the pronouncements that they view the UN as emerging from behind the walls of a secure office, but not felt in practice in communities – the UN is not working *“on the ground”*. The UN, according to participants in Somalia, is overly focused on political reconciliation, with local communities excluded, and that engagement at the local level is either non-existent, inadequate, or unhelpful (see box 5). The UN is *“for the high-ups, and not for communities”*. Participants see decisions as being made without consulting community-level actors, and yet peacebuilding, according to consultations, is fundamentally concerned with community engagement. As a result of this lack of interaction, there remains a negative perception around how the UN plans, and how it operationalises these plans – it is elitist, disconnected from local concerns and experiences. These are further challenges to (equitable, mutually beneficial) partnership between the UN and civil society.

“Stop being at the top and start going down to the communities. This way community level actors can start owning their [UN] policies and support their implementation locally.”

Participant in borderlands consultation

Box 5: The UN as its physical infrastructure – locks, gates, ID cards and keys, bullet-proof vests, Land Cruisers, helicopters and compounds

Many participants, across the consultations, spoke of the UN confining itself within its compounds, inaccessible to local peace actors. Communities see the UN through the prism of its securitised infrastructure, bought elsewhere, and flown in to protect itself – *“money should be spent in Somalia and not in Nairobi – not on helicopters or cars but in communities and with local actors.”* This imposing presence, constituted by helmets, walls and barbed wire, furthers the perception of the UN as difficult to understand or approach.

During the consultations, participants also reflected on the way in which the UN acts without seeking input from local communities – agendas and initiatives selected and advanced outside conflict contexts, and few partnerships with grassroots organisations – subsequently having limited influence over local peace actors. However, while participants in Kenya emphasised the overall lack of awareness about the UN’s programmes and policies, and almost no direct interaction, participants in Kenya were also clear that the UN *“is a critical [policy and decision-making] institution... and these decisions are very crucial for communities to prosper and mitigating a lot of risks in communities.”* Individuals taking part in the consultation in Ethiopia went further – *“The UN has to step in as a global actor, [and] restructure its relationships. It should be people driven organisation – to be there for the people and not for the governments. [The] UN should empower people.”*

In DRC, participants talked through established roles ascribed to local peace actors – when they are indeed involved, they are only at the *“implementation level”*, not influencing the definition of strategies or approaches. Connected to this, when funds are disbursed, it is not clear how they reach communities, are already *“fixed”*, or do not *“take into account the reality on the ground.”* This also demonstrates a problem of communication and prioritisation between the UN and civil society organisations (CSOs). While local peace actors currently outline a lack of transparency and flexibility from the UN, those in DRC spoke of the potential for greater effectiveness and impact in peacebuilding work if connections are made, for instance *“if decisions adopted at the level of the United Nations Security Council are based on consultations with people at the local level, then the population will better understand and support these decisions and the actors who must implement them.”* Attention to the differences between conflict contexts, and exchange between peace actors working in each – perhaps supported by the UN – is also important. A participant in Kenya explained the logic of this:

“As local community peacebuilders, we have better access to information to sense when there is tension at a community level, and this allows us to act in a more preventative manner before violence occurs... It [international actors and local communities working together] is vital for all projects. Local communities provide local analysis and context specific information which is vital to accurate interventions. By working with the communities, one is able to ensure the impact of the programs can be felt more long-term. In addition, when projects are co-designed, they are better able to meet the needs of the communities.”

Inadequate, Irrelevant, or Insensitive – The Risks of Top Down Interventions

Local peace actors participating in consultations provided a range of practical examples of UN-led or supported interventions in conflict-affected contexts having an unintended (or negative) impact, linked to a lack of consultation with civil society and communities, and the provision of support that does not match reality.

In Somalia, participants described interventions that were seen as overly slow, based on flawed priorities, and not in line with community needs – *“too little, too late”*. The operationalisation of policies and frameworks are, in their view, disconnected from communities in formulation and implementation, meaning they are neither practical nor implementable. *“The UN is not seen to take into account the way of life in communities”*, and due to this detachment, the information that the UN acts on is outdated or even incorrect, leading to *“less than ideal responses... which are either not appropriate or in-line with communities, and can exacerbate crisis.”* In another example, a participant described an instance in which when the UN delivered food, it was during the harvest season, thereby flooding the market, reducing demand for food and resulting in a loss of income for local farmers. Linked to the 2011 to 2012 famine in Somalia, this participant recounted the World Food Programme (WFP) distributing food in Bay and Bakool regions, as well as Lower Jubba, when farmers had recently harvested. This damaged trust between local community members and UN actors, with some suspicious that the WFP was trying to disrupt the market for local farmers by bringing in external foodstuffs, intentionally sabotaging farmers’ products and pushing them to lose their market share. According to the participants, following a large public outcry and protest at the WFP’s actions, a meeting between government and the UN took place, and provisions were halted. This reflects a wider public perception, described to LPI, that aid organisations including the UN provide relief of this kind intentionally during the harvest season.⁹

In Kenya, participants described an organisation approaching a community to implement an intervention aimed at assisting young people that were involved in crime to find alternative livelihoods opportunities. The organisation did not interact with community members in order to understand the local dimensions of the problem, and the intervention did not address the issue – the organisation began providing financial stipends to young people, assuming this would reduce their dependence on crime for income. However, no guidance was provided to recipients on how to use the funds, how often they would be provided, and the length of the programme. Eventually, the funding stopped, and *“had an [adverse] effect in the community as young people got used to having the funds and living a certain lifestyle, but still lacked employment opportunities, and thus returned back to crime to seek a similar income.”* In Kenya, in addition, consultation participants highlighted the ways in which the UN (and other multilateral institutions) offer a form of legitimacy and

⁹ While we acknowledge that this example is from a pre-2016 period, it was raised during the discussions with participants in Sudan. The post-2106 marker (as specified for this review process) is one that the UN uses for its own internal purposes and not something that participants are concerned with. The fact that this example and experience is front-of-mind shows that it clearly impacted the perceptions participants hold of the UN and remain both relevant and current, indicating that perceptions have not changed over time.

credibility to the civil society actors with which it engages. However, there is also a risk, according to participants, that partnership with the UN alters local perceptions of the civil society actor in question, and their collaboration with an international actor means they are perceived as “*chosen organisations, which can contribute to increased tension [among civil society].*” There are, therefore, conflict sensitivity imperatives in partnership with local peacebuilders.

Box 6: The importance of individual leadership

In Sudan, participants described the critical role played by the Executive Director of the World Food Programme – David Beasley – in bringing conflicting parties together. In January 2020, the Executive Director facilitated a meeting between Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok and leader of the Sudan People’s Liberation Front-North Abdelaziz El Hilu. This highlights the potential for UN actors to connect up humanitarian and development efforts for peacebuilding outcomes, and to leverage comparatively neutral positioning for support to peace processes.

In Sudan, participants described irrelevant interventions being based on limited adaptation to the local environment, and a lack of context analysis. Conflict insensitivity in programming was highlighted, with UN actors seen as “*trying to implement as soon as possible*”¹⁰, compromising quality for expediency – implementation not leading to the desired results, and a lack of tangible benefits for the community. In addition, a focus on outcome over process has also contributed to lower levels of relevance and responsiveness to local realities. A consultation participant described a specific example of conflict insensitivity – a UN-supported DDR initiative in South Kordofan after the 2005 to 2011 Comprehensive Peace Accord worked through specific individuals, rather than

collectively with communities as a whole. As those that held arms were eligible under the initiative, people were incentivised to take up weapons in order to receive UN assistance, where coordination with the wider community in the area of intervention may have avoided this.¹¹ Another participant described issues with the selection of communities in which programmes will be implemented, noting that the choice of only certain communities, perhaps at the expense of others, may exacerbate conflict.

Partnership Limited by Scale and Bureaucracy – The UN as Slow, Monolithic, Unresponsive

The UN, based on the perspectives of participants, is too huge to comprehend, too convoluted to respond quickly, and often unable to act decisively. In Somalia, participants described responses as overly slow, immobilised by bureaucracy and layers of hierarchy – “*by the time information is sent to headquarters and an intervention agreed on, it is no longer relevant.*” In Ethiopia, consultations explored the ways in which the “*response from these institutions [the UN] has always been late – they do not focus on prevention.*” In Sudan, participants explained, in reference to the UN presence in Eastern Sudan, that “*they should move more quickly to wind down operations that have outlived their usefulness, improve mission assessment and planning, and shorten the time it takes to deploy personnel and assets to the field.*” Institutional processes – from planning, to budgeting, to employment – require streamlining to better reflect conflict dynamics and meet the needs of local peace actors. A participant in Sudan summarised the blockages as follows: “*Since UN*

¹⁰ In the DRC consultation, participants also shared about the Community Violence Reduction project, funded by the DDR/RR section of MONUSCO, which usually last 1 to 7 days, with small funding. They usually work with local organisations as implementers, and while the possibility for small grants may be a positive aspect, overall those short-term actions are not sustainable, as not able to address drivers of conflict. Quick implementation may also come with conflict sensitive challenges, such as unintended bias towards certain groups in stakeholder engagement.

¹¹ While we acknowledge that this example is from a pre-2016 period, it was raised during the discussions with participants in Sudan. The post-2106 marker (as specified for this review process) is one that the UN uses for its own internal purposes and not something that participants are concerned with. The fact that this example and experience is front-of-mind shows that it clearly impacted the perceptions participants hold of the UN and remain both relevant and current, indicating that perceptions have not changed over time.

staff in a country come from different parts of the UN family, there are often structural barriers to working as a team, for example different planning and budgeting cycles, different ways of getting funding, accountability to different governing bodies and different working practices such as the proportion of national staff employed. These policy and institutional differences often lead to misunderstandings.” It should be noted, however, that participants recognised that the UN is itself restricted by the way it is constructed – often operating on budgets lower than required, and receiving financing from its donors that means it cannot meet everyone’s needs. In addition, participants also understood that the time in between a request being made by the UN for support to its member states and this support materialising can increase the risk of actions reflecting dated information.

Funding as a Tool for Partnership

The specific instruments of the UN’s Peacebuilding Architecture, for instance the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), were either unknown to participants, or seen as channels for financing UN agencies or government actors, with limited funding being provided to civil society. When asked about the PBF specifically, a small number of participants in Somalia had engaged with the Fund- mainly those LPI partners working with LPI on our recent PBF funding- and while it was praised for providing financing directly to civil society for the first time in 2019, it remained too early to assess the impact of this partnership.

Participants described a lack of clarity on the ‘how’ of funding from the UN (the means to secure financing) as well as the ‘why’ (the decision-making processes behind certain funding choices). Consultations demonstrate the view of local actors, as noted above – that the most effective means to support local peacebuilding initiatives is to take direction from grassroots civil society actors on the direction of funding. Currently, based on participants’ views, most financing is channelled to UN actors themselves, rather than local civil society. In addition, there is a need to remove layers of bureaucracy in order to ensure funding is more available to communities – *“if partnership with local actors can move forward, interventions will be more relevant”*, stated a participant in Somalia.

Three key areas for development were outlined by participants in relation to how the UN could use funding as a means to partner with civil society:

1. Who is funded – greater financing for local peacebuilders, with higher levels of accountability on where development funding is spent, including a standard on how much should be provided to local peace actors
2. How funding is provided – increase transparency, and move away from short-term, conflict insensitive financing toward a flexible approach
3. How programmes are designed – based interventions on needs at community level through co-design processes.

Box 7: Lucrative peacebuilding and the peace business

In Ethiopia, participants highlighted the potential for peacebuilding to be a source of income, to act as a cover for motives other than sustainable peace, or to be directed toward the interests of individual actors. For instance, participants stated that: *“Peace and conflict have their own dividends—political and economic connotations are there. Some try to advance their agenda”*, and *“Local peacebuilders are strategic. They can be hijacked.”* In this consultation, local peace actors articulated a potential threat from international funding – coming with *“agenda and interest”* and asking whether international actors *“come to resolve the problem... [or if] there is an ulterior motive.”* The UN may add value, here, in moderating these interests, and should play a *“comprehensive and active role”* in reducing political influence over peacebuilding and ensuring it does not become overly connected with insular national interests.

It should be noted that the perspectives outlined by participants also emerge from particular contexts, where the nature of civic space, relationships between government and civil society, and other factors, will influence the demands made upon the UN, as well as the role the UN is able to play – technical, political, or something else.

Part Two - Recommendations: What is needed for UN support and action to make a difference for local peacebuilding efforts?

When asked what the UN needed to stop doing and invest more in, a broad range of suggestions and ideas were raised by the participants. Looking across the six contexts, there was a strong degree of alignment. They may not be novel – which should give them more weight and urgency for action – as they request changed ways of acting, rather than more rhetoric commitments to do what is right, – and could be contributing to transformative energy in building peace.

Part Two takes the broad themes and recommendations from the consultations, as shared in Part One, and develops these into specific recommendations to the UN Peacebuilding Architecture. The recommendations focus on where there is the most space for transformation within the Architecture with the goal of supporting a more inclusive space for decision-makers and practitioners, working towards aligned goals to sustain peace. While the recommendations in Part Two have been drafted by LPI, they should be seen as an elaboration of the recommendations from the participants involved in the LPI-UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review consultation process and perspectives shared in Part One.

The four broad recommendation areas put forward in this report are inter-connected and, if implemented together in practice, would create UN – civil society synergies at all phases of a sustaining peace process. Each recommendation area has been structured with focus on UN in-country and subsequently reflected on what UN Headquarters should do to better support this in-country implementation.¹² The section ends with a series of recommendations for the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and United Nations Security Council.

¹² While the role of national and local governments is paramount in sustaining peace as well as their relationship with civil society, the recommendations in this report focus on the interface between the UN system and civil society. As such, this report does not look at UN-civil society- government relations in depth as this was outside of the scope of the consultation process. However, in forthcoming LPI-convened processes around the operationalisation of these recommendations, the unique role of each key stakeholder as well as the inter-relationships in the broader ecosystem of actors critical for sustaining peace, including government, will be explored further.

Recommendations to the UN in-country and Headquarters

Recommendation Area 1:

Understanding Context and Peacebuilding Opportunities Better Through Joint Analysis

A clear finding from the consultations is that peacebuilding – and what to prioritise in terms of a peacebuilding agenda – is often understood differently by communities and local peace actors and actors in the UN system. The starting point for coalescing understanding of what is needed to advance and sustain peace in a given context is joint context- and conflict analysis which draws on insights and collective wisdom of all actors engaged in peacebuilding – government, the multilateral system and civil society. In several of the contexts, participants encouraged the UN to include local actors in analysis to ensure that efforts are aligned with actual priorities. Civil society is particularly untapped at present when it comes to drawing on their first-hand evidence, lived experience and nuanced knowledge of the situation, the actors, the issues, the risks and the practical challenges to peacebuilding implementation. Further, conflict insensitivity of international action was a recurrent theme in the consultations, and analysis serves as one ingredient for working in conflict-sensitive ways. By working more closely with a greater number and a broader range of civil society in context analysis, the UN would have more relevant and accurate information which could then more effectively guide strategy development, funding decisions and implementation.

“Tenir compte de la sensibilité au conflit dans l’implémentation ou l’appui aux projets de consolidation de la paix.”

Consider conflict sensitivity in the implementation and support to peacebuilding projects.
DRC Consultation

“Re-analysing the context of Sudan for deep understanding. Conducting research and context analysis, accordingly, developing feasible project proposals that respond to actual needs. Not submitting ready projects.”
Sudan Consultation

To United Nations at country level

- As part of the UN Development System Reform, initiated in January 2019, and reiterated in the 2018 Secretary General’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework¹³ (hereafter known as ‘The Cooperation Framework’), guided by the UN Common Country Analysis (CCA)¹⁴, offers an opportunity for joint conflict analysis and planning, leading to coordinated strategies to build “peaceful and inclusive societies.”¹⁵ **As the new CCA process is initiated, the UN in-country, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator’s Office, should ensure that the process of developing the CCAs is truly an inclusive endeavour which specifically engages diverse civil society organisations, making a concerted effort to include community-based organisations, sub-national actors and informal groups, as well as relevant government actors, regional and sub-regional organisations, donors and international financial institutions.** By expanding the stakeholders engaged in the CCA process, the analytical exercise would better reflect – broadly agreed upon – priorities of a variety of actors in the country and set the course for a more inclusive strategy and subsequent implementation. The analysis is part and parcel of the peacebuilding effort as implementation of sustaining peace is often hampered by the key actors’ lack of shared understanding and vision for what is needed to build peace. **The UN in-**

¹³ The new UNSDCF guidance advocates for this process to be done in partnership with host governments as well as “civil society, academic, parliaments, private sector, bilateral partners”. https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019_1.pdf (page 5)

¹⁴ The CCA has shifted from a one-off analysis to a document regularly updated, based on input from multiple stakeholders and examines a host of issues central to the country. This new CCA process must include regular input from a diverse range of civil society actors in country.

¹⁵ UN General Assembly and Security Council, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General, UN Doc. A/72/707–S/2018/43, January 18, 2018.

country can play a unique role in facilitating a safe and neutral space for diverse peacebuilding actors, especially by mediating between different perspectives, to jointly explore critical issues in a way that furthers subsequent collaboration between different stakeholders.

The CCA should emphasise the following key features:

- *Regularly updated:* To guide adaptive programming in response to the evolving nature of the context, this report echoes the sentiment of the UN Development System Reform and highlighted in the 2018 Secretary General’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace that the CCA should be a living document which is regularly updated as stipulated in the guidance documents. **This process of updating the analysis should also be done in a joint manner with relevant stakeholders, including a broad and diverse range of civil society, and could thus serve as a vehicle to continuously nurture the relationships across actors involved in the initial analysis.**

 - *Hyper local:* To remain responsive to diverse citizens’ needs in country contexts, the analysis should also include community-based assessments and broad-based perception surveys on peacebuilding concerns, prioritisation of issues to be addressed and implementation progress. **To ensure wide reach, including outside capitals and government-held territories, the UN should seek partnership with deeply imbedded community-based organisations who have access and legitimacy with communities to carry out such ‘hyper local’ assessments on regular intervals.**¹⁶ In addition, wider public consultations, via social media and commonly used mobile-based and SMS platforms, should be explored further.

 - *Intersectional:* **It is essential that gender, youth and intersectional lenses are applied to ensure that findings highlight marginalised communities’ unique peacebuilding needs, concerns as well as their ongoing contributions to peace. These groups should be involved in the joint context analysis process throughout.** Delivering on the principle and promise to ‘leave no one behind’ begins with listening to all voices and especially of those whose perspectives are least reflected in standard conflict analyses. Understanding the compounded exclusion as well as agency of women and youth in conflict contexts is particularly critical given the Peacebuilding Fund’s particular focus on gender and youth.

 - *Cross-border:* The CCA should **incorporate stronger elements of regional analysis as well as focus on borderland areas.** This links to the pervasiveness of regionalised conflict systems and the Peacebuilding Fund’s new 2020-2024 Investment Strategy’s which includes increased investment in cross-border and regional approaches. Despite many of these ‘peripheral’ cross-border geographies being central to understanding conflict dynamics, perspectives and specific peacebuilding needs from these areas are rarely well-captured in national, ‘centre-oriented’, conflict analysis.
- **The UN in-country should support, engage with or, where necessary, create country level peacebuilding working groups,** chaired by the Resident Coordinator’s Office, which would bring together members of civil society, key government representatives and international actors. It would serve as a means to close the gap between information sharing, implementation and access, as well as build trust between the UN and civil society and build up connections between the local, national and global levels. This working group could also play a pivotal role in ensuring the inclusivity of the CCA process.

¹⁶ Civil society should be supported organisationally to conduct this work as a means of capacity building for organisations and as a means to create mutually beneficial processes and avoid the risk of exercises becoming extractive in nature.

- Further, where civic space is restricted and where there are protection concerns for civil society actors, **a separate process should be jointly designed to ensure protected space is availed to include actors with security concerns in the analytical exercises.**
- In order to capture the diverse perspectives in a given context, **the UN in-country should partner with domestic civil society (possibly through the above-mentioned working group) to conduct a mapping exercise to identify all relevant peacebuilding actors (formal and informal)** in the country, in order to identify relevant actors to partake in analysis, validation of findings and subsequent programming.

Box 8: Local Peacebuilding in borderlands

Throughout the consultation process, participants shared examples of peacebuilding practice happening, driven by local actors, often unnoticed by the UN and international actors. The **Bakalcha Self Help Organization**, a women’s cultural group in Moyale Kenya, and being part of a 26-member borderland CSO coalition supported by LPI and partners, holds an annual cultural event where they display food, music and dance from all of the ethnic and cultural identities present on both sides of the border between Kenya and Ethiopia. The event’s purpose is to create a community space for sharing positive cultural values, dialogue, learning on conflict resolution and building of community cohesion to prevent recurrent conflicts in the area. The event is cross-border and brings together ethnic groups– Borana, Garre, Burji, Gabra, and others – who are common to both neighbouring countries.

In 2019 the event was truly cross-border, as it was attended by over 600 representatives of those groups from both sides of the interstate border as well as adding an additional day of events for advocacy surrounding the AU Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation. The borderland CSOs in Moyale showed that they are now able to work in coalitions to engage policy actors within the county and articulate issues of cross-border policy. They were also able to mobilise policy actors from county and national level who attended the entire event.

To the United Nations Secretariat

- The UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) is a key peacebuilding actor having regular engagement with, and overseeing day-to-day management of, all Resident Coordinators. **DCO should ensure regular updating of the CCA to keep it as a living document, up-to-date with current contexts, and should share the CCA documents with a broad range of UN Headquarters actors** to support in the alignment of peacebuilding priorities across the UN system- both in country and Headquarters.
- The Secretary-General, with the Peacebuilding Support Office, **should design mechanism to ensure the systematic inclusion of perspectives of civil society working to support peacebuilding** – both from in country and policy capitals – in relevant reports by the Secretary-General on UN Peace Operations as well as reports of the UN’s Peacebuilding Architecture (PBSO, PBC and PBF). Box 9 includes suggestions for criteria of such mechanisms.

Box 9: Mechanisms for the systematic inclusion of perspectives of civil society working to support peacebuilding

The practice established with the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review and 2020 Secretary-General's Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Report of regular consultations with civil society ahead of key peacebuilding processes to seek input should be continued in subsequent processes. Civil society should also be invited to reflect during validation stages of reports and a civil society briefer should be included in the presenting these reports.

However, we advocate for a more permanent mechanism which involves a quarterly UN-Peacebuilders "townhall", organized by the UN-in country in each context the PBF operates, culminating in a yearly global consultation with the UN Secretariat and civil society representatives from the country townhalls. This consultation would gauge the state and progress of recommendations connected to the Peacebuilding Architecture. A mechanism of this nature would avoid having to wait 5 years for an inclusive reflection moment on progress being made as well as allow for adaptation to be made where there is a lack of progress.

Recommendation Area 2:

Thinking and Acting Long-Term Across Levels Through Multi-Year Peacebuilding Strategies

Participants to this consultation process re-confirmed a number of the findings in the 2015 Advisory Group of Experts Report on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, including the issue of multiple, incoherent and, at times, competitive strategies and international efforts as a major reason for peacebuilding failures to date. It is clear that an overarching peacebuilding compact and a strategy is needed to rally the numerous actors engaged in peacebuilding at all levels (from Track III to Track I) to envision and deliver on key jointly-conceived peacebuilding results collectively and as individual entities.

Participants, particularly in Somalia and Sudan, emphasised the critical role the UN should play to support formal peace processes while also ensuring linkages to community-level reconciliation efforts. Short-term, project-based support is still prevalent in UN and international support to peacebuilding. Given the complex changes needed, participants recommended implementing long-term work. Importantly, the design of this peacebuilding strategy requires input of community actors for effectiveness.

The UN should be a better bridge between bottom- and top-level processes:

"but should also work to ensure more synergy between grassroots/bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding and track 1 efforts"

Somalia consultation

"The UN should support strengthening of communication and connectivity systems to ensure eased flow of information from the lowest levels to the international."

Borderland consultation.

To United Nations at country level

- **Based on the joint context-and conflict analyses, recommended above, broadly-agreed upon peacebuilding outcomes and attendant multi-year, multi-level peacebuilding strategies should be developed for all countries with UN presence.** This strategy could be incorporated into the UN's Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF). **More than the final framework itself, the process of developing the vision and strategy should be a collective endeavour between the key peace-and development actors in a context such as governments, civil society, the UN, and key external actors (regional bodies, bilateral donors).** The strategy should be the shared centrepiece around which all actors resource, coordinate work around, as well as assess progress towards and against which they are held accountable by conflict-affected populations.
- **The strategy should deliberately seek to find synergies between the work of civil society actors and that of government, and of efforts across levels (Track I, II, III), in order to ensure joined-up work is invested in from the outset as opposed to being an afterthought.** The UN in-country can play a unique facilitative role in joint planning and in bridging between local, national, regional and international efforts given its positionality in the international peace-and security landscape.

- Where relevant, peacebuilding strategies should not have a narrow country-lens but also take stock of the cross-border dimensions of peace-and conflict in a given context. **The UN, alongside of regional bodies, could use its cross-context reach to push for harmonisation of policies across borders (e.g. small arms proliferation, cross-border trade, countering violent extremism and mine clearance) in ways that benefit communities on different sides of a given border.**
- Efforts should be given to communicating this strategy within the country of focus. **The UN in-country, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, should work to share information and provide regular feedback to communities about the role of the UN in this strategy, its focus, mandate and presences in a specific country.** This should be shared on a regular basis via context specific communication tools such as social media and commonly used mobile-based and SMS platforms.

To the United Nations Secretariat

- Given that peacebuilding is a long-term endeavour, **the timeframe for the strategy and support should ideally be no less than five years in line with the Peacebuilding Fund five-year eligibility timelines.**
- The UN should play a stronger role in encouraging bilateral donors, international financial institutions (IFIs), foundations and other financiers and global actors of peacebuilding to **align their strategies to an overarching country-level peacebuilding outcomes and attendant strategy** (as appropriate, housed under the Cooperation Framework) to ensure coherence and collective impact.

Recommendation Area 3:

Making Peacebuilding Financing More Accessible and Transparent

From the consultations, it was evident that civil society see funding as a key mechanism to deepen partnership with the UN. The UN’s main instrument to fund peacebuilding is the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Between 2006-2016, the Fund was only accessible to UN entities. As a result of a recommendation out of the 2015 UN Peacebuilding Architecture, since 2016, under its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI), the Peacebuilding Fund has been able to provide funding to civil society organisations as direct recipients or implementing partners (with UN entities). Between the latest PBF strategic planning period (2017 – 2019), the GYPI distributed a total of \$106 million (approximately 20% of total funding provided by the PBF between 2017-2019).¹⁷ Of this, \$33 million (31%) was allocated directly to 33 civil society organisations.¹⁸ While progress has been made and in recognising the difficulty in securing adequate support from Member States to peacebuilding despite the UN Secretary General’s 2018 request for a quantum leap of \$500 million/year for the PBF, the consultations hosted by LPI have shown that civil society peacebuilders are making pleas to UN itself to make a significant leap in availing more of its existing funding to a greater number and more diverse civil society peacebuilders in order to accelerate and scale proven peacebuilding efforts by civil society.

“The UN in New York should work to remove some of the layers of bureaucracy around the PBF to allow funding to be more accessible to communities.”

“The UN in New York should develop a quota on how much of funding can be spent on the UN versus local actors and share a process to track this.”

Somalia Consultation

“Consider availing resources directly to the local actors (CSOs) as opposed to the current practice of supporting national level actors only. STOP being at the top and START going down to the communities. This way community level actors can start owning their (UN) policies and support their implementation locally.”

Borderland Consultation

¹⁷ Data gathered from <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/fund/documents/investments>, and verified by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office.

¹⁸ Under the GYPI, civil society are either direct recipients of funds or are implementing partners with UN agencies and thus receive a portion of funds from the UN in country to implement the project.

To United Nations at country level

- As indicated in the [2020-2024 PBF Strategy](#), this report encourages the continued practice that when submitting applications for funding from the Peacebuilding Fund, **UN Country Teams, led by the Resident Coordinators Office, work closely with eligible governments to ensure that requests to the Secretary General are aligned with the above suggested joint analysis and attendant strategies.** This ensures that the PBF's priorities are in line with the contextual needs as agreed by diverse actors in the peacebuilding sector, including those most proximate to the issues.
- **The process of developing regular PBF project and portfolio evaluations, undertaken by the UN-in country, should be done together with implementing partners of PBF funds. These evaluations should be shared widely with relevant peacebuilding actors both in country and external.** This inclusive process and subsequent information would serve as feedback loops which are critical also to help redirect and adapt programming – and enhance effectiveness and impact – based on learning and insights from communities. These feedback mechanisms could be instituted as part of the regular community-based assessments recommended above¹⁹.

To the United Nations Secretariat

Expanding and improving current financing of peacebuilding

- The UN Peacebuilding Support Office should continue to place emphasis on **assessing and ensuring that all peacebuilding funding requests are in line with the joint analysis and peacebuilding strategy** and use PBF financing to catalyse joined-up multi-level work.
- Complementing the principles of timeliness and responsiveness through the Immediate Response Facility, the Peacebuilding Fund should consider **extending its project funding periods for all eligible countries from 18 months to at least 36 months (and up to 48 months)- as is the case in the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility.** A move of this nature recognises that peacebuilding priorities need adequate time frames to allow **to allow for high-quality, meaningful and thoughtful peacebuilding work** – especially given the complex and dynamic contexts under which the work is undertaken.
- The report recognises the progress made in funding civil society since 2016 and we welcome the **increase the amount of PBF funding going to civil society organisations through the GYPI mechanism to 25%** as stated in the 2020-2024 PBF Strategy.
- Additionally, the UN should make more **direct financing** available to domestic CSOs.²⁰ Direct funding, versus receiving funds as a sub-grantee, allows local and national actors to take a lead in designing, implementing and evaluating efforts in their own contexts – and is tangible recognition of their contributions and competence – as opposed to being relegated to sub-grantees as 'junior partners'. **The current 40% target of the GYPI fund going to CSOs is primarily as sub-grantees. In the coming period, the Secretary General should aim to increase this commitment to at least 40% of the GYPI going to a diverse range of domestic civil society as direct recipients.**
- **In order to make this possible, the Secretary General should consider revising its most exclusionary eligibility criteria for accessing the GYPI funds as a CSO (e.g. \$400,000 annual budget, minimum \$300,000 projects, proof of previously received UN funding or bilateral donor grants, audited statements and national government sign off²¹).** These criteria have been particularly prohibitive for sub-national actors, youth-led organisations (none have been direct recipient of PBF funding to date) and more informal civil society groups.

¹⁹ See Recommendation Area 1.

²⁰ Currently, civil society can receive funding from the PBF as direct Fund recipients if they meet the eligibility criteria, and as partners to UN and CSO fund recipients.

²¹ For a full list of GYPI criteria, see <https://www.pbfgypi.org/eligibility>

- Building on the recommendations to bolster support to youth-led organisations in the Secretary General’s 2018 report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining peace²², **the UN should set aside a dedicated minimum of all United Nations managed-funding in support of projects to advance youth, peace and security agenda, with a specific goal of directly funding youth-led organizations**, similar to the compact in the Secretary General’s Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding. Particular emphasis should be given to efforts that prioritize gender and/ or youth peacebuilding efforts at the local level as this is where peacebuilding investment currently lags behind most acutely.
- **The Peacebuilding Fund is encouraged to expand on its new initiative to fund more cross-border and regional initiatives as envisioned in its new 2020-2024 Investment Plan.** In addition to financing efforts of the regional organisations for cross-border work, the Fund should support borderland civil society organisations and those that implement regional peacebuilding work as part of this priority window.

Innovative ways of financing diverse civil society:

- In efforts to fund more diverse and smaller local CSOs, to complement existing funding mechanisms in the PBF, **the UN could consider setting up a separate, nimbler and more accessible support facility. Such a “Local Peacebuilding Support Fund” – with different eligibility criteria – would be attuned to the less-established but highly-effective local peace actors.** Vital to such a fund is the process of selection of projects under this fund being inclusive and in full collaboration with members of the communities in which the projects will take place. Box 10 includes suggestions for criteria of such a fund.²³

Box 10: The Local Peacebuilding Support Fund Criteria and Administration

- Only accessible to organisations with annual budgets *less* than \$50,000 (to give priority to actors with little access to funding from larger donors);
- Proposal budgets to not exceed \$20,000 for 36 months;
- In lieu of legal registration in countries with restricted civic space or organisation-specific audits: by-laws, demonstrated support from its core constituencies, audit reports of international partners as evidence of financial management or international organisations acting as guarantors of local partner’s grant
- Organisation demonstrates deep contextual awareness and conflict sensitivity considerations
- Applications should be possible to submit in any of official languages of the eligible country in addition to any of the UN languages in simplified application format.

Application reviews for this fund should be undertaken in partnership with the proposed UN-civil society working group in-country to ensure that actors from the context jointly decide what gets prioritised and funded.

Selected projects under this fund could be signed off by an independent steering committee consisting of other civil society organisations in-country as opposed to government to ensure support to pluralistic and vibrant civil society support, including those who play more of a watchdog role of government efforts.

Technical support and administrative follow-up work of grantees under this support facility could similarly be managed by the working group.

²² Secretary General’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, UN Doc. A/72/707 – S/20-1/43, 18 January 2018, Recommendation 63

²³ LPI recognises the steps taken toward establishing mechanisms to provide smaller grants (the current mapping initiative in the Sahel as the first step) and welcomes further discussions with civil society on how to develop and action such a fund.

Recommendation Area 4:

Enhanced Engagement and Partnership in Practice

It is those closest to the issue who know best what initiatives will work, how to adapt them and how to measure success. However, from the consultations, it became clear that the relationship between civil society and UN has been varied in the Horn of Africa. Reflections were shared that, at times, there has been great collaboration and support and other times, less so and often as competitive, where funds have been diverted away from CSOs into major UN programs and trust funds. Civil society representatives have largely found that partnerships with the UN are often ad-hoc, one-off and tokenistic with terms set by the UN, and too often resulting in poorly informed conflict analyses, interventions and support due to a lack of sustained engagement and consistent exchange of information, ideas and strategies.

Civil society should be seen as equal partners in all work of the UN in-country and headquarters. This should be done out of principle, but also because it makes practical sense. In many cases, the UN cannot implement outside capitals and government-held areas so have limited reach and legitimacy whereas civil society have another kind of reach, ability to navigate and manoeuvre and can actually better ensure the UN's 'leave no one behind' principle.

Partnership on analysis and implementation, however, are one aspect. There is too a need for civil society to be seen as equal partners in the monitoring and evaluation of initiatives and provides ways to share feedback on interventions in their communities. Bottom-up monitoring and evaluation processes where civil society reflect on programming, advise on adjustments and play a role in keeping the UN accountable to its objectives and principles would play a large role in both long-term and effective peacebuilding initiatives as well as enhancing the relationship between civil society and the UN.

"The UN should go beyond working at national level with national governments and start venturing into community level partnerships."

Borderlands Consultation

"A new structure should be there to amplify the people from the bottom."

Ethiopia Consultation

"The UN should support strengthening of communication and connectivity systems to ensure eased flow of information from the lowest levels to the international."

Borderland consultation.

Box 11: Participant Recommendations on Partnerships

- I would like the UN to come down to the grassroots and engage with the communities instead of working with national governments only
- The UN should embrace bottom up participatory approaches and hence create avenues for local civil society organisations to participate in UN policy [processes]
- The UN should be more inclusive and intentional in engaging on borderland issues
- [There is a] need to provide space for capacity building of the youth
- Establish or look out for UN champions at the community level.

To the United Nations at country level

- Working with the **country level peacebuilding working groups**²⁴ and civil society groups identified in the mapping exercise²⁵, the UN in-country **should ensure that all peacebuilding initiatives are jointly**

²⁴ See Recommendation Area 1 for more detail on this.

²⁵ See Recommendation Area 1 for more detail on this.

implemented by a CSO-UN implementation team, where civil society are considered to have equal ownership over the initiatives.

- Following from this, **joint UN-CSO implementation team should develop a bottom-up monitoring and evaluation mechanism should be designed creating ways for civil society to share feedback on the progress of the project/initiative, adaptations needed and final evaluation.** Indicators of progress, outputs and outcomes should be designed with civil society based on the perceived changes they expect to see if the initiative is successful. Such practices of bottom-up monitoring and evaluation also create a vehicle for feedback loops and accountability.
- **The UN in-country should work to connect civil society to national policy processes such as processes to develop national peace architectures, reconciliation processes and efforts at constitutional reform.** The UN is in a unique position, with close connection to the government, in most cases, and is often a close companion of peace-relevant national policy efforts. These processes would benefit from close engagement with a diverse range of civil society who both have an interest in these processes as well as perspectives and analysis which may not be otherwise represented.
- **The Community Engagement Guidelines offer modalities on implementing many of the recommendations mentioned in this report (see box 12). This report encourages the UN in-country to use the Community Engagement Guidelines as a tool to guide its engagement with a diverse range of civil society in country.** The UN in-country, with support from civil society, should develop implementation plans to action these guidelines.
- The UN in-country should ensure that new UN staff to a country **undergo a deep-dive induction with local peacebuilders as a means of better understanding and working with civil society** in country as part of their induction process.

To the United Nations Secretariat

- The UN Peacebuilding Support Office should **use its recently completed Community Engagement Guidelines for enhanced UN-Civil Society Engagement as a practical tool and work to ensure its implementation in country contexts (see box 12).** In doing this, the PBSO should work with UN in-country to develop implementation plans whereby these guidelines are piloted in different country contexts. These implementation plans should be jointly developed with civil society who should be seen as a partner in measuring accountability in progress on the guidelines.
- The UN Peacebuilding Support Office should continue the **model of joint civil society-UN working groups at the UN headquarters level, as used in the Community Engagement Guidelines process,** to follow progress made on peacebuilding and sustaining peace approach and its connected recommendations. This model not only improves partnership with civil society but increases transparency and allows accountability models to develop.

Box 12: The UN Community Engagement Guidelines: A tool to advance UN- Civil Society Engagement

The 2018 Secretary-General’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace called for the development of guidelines to improve UN engagement with civil society at the local level. From this, a joint UN-civil society working group developed the *UN system-wide Community-Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining (CEG Guidelines)*, launched in August 2020, providing operational guidance to UN field presences on how to engage with civil society actors at the local level in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Many of the recommendations within the Guidelines resonate with the LPI recommendations in this report, echoing the point of the need for mechanisms to advance more meaningful engagement between the UN and civil society. Below is an overview of the interlinkages between specific UN Community Engagement Guidelines recommendations and the recommendations in this report. If implemented, these recommendations would greatly advance these essential partnerships.

CEG Recommendation	LPI Recommendation
Recommendation 1: The UN should undertake “gendered, conflict-sensitive and risk-informed joint community contextual analysis and mapping of communities and local civil society actors as part of the Common Country Analysis (CCA)”.	Recommendation 1: “As the new CCA process is initiated, the UN in-country, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator’s Office, should ensure that the process of developing the CCAs is truly an inclusive endeavour which specifically engages diverse civil society organisations, making a concerted effort to include community-based organisations, sub-national actors and informal groups, as well as relevant government actors, regional and sub-regional organisations, donors and international financial institutions”.
Recommendation 2: The UN should form “a joint UN-civil society standing body at the country-level for internal UN system coherence and coordination... [as a means] for improving targeted communication, training and knowledge management and information exchange at both national and local levels, including on community-engagement”.	Recommendation 1: “The UN in-country should support, engage with or, where necessary, create country level peacebuilding working groups, chaired by the Resident Coordinator’s Office, which would bring together members of civil society, key government representatives and international actors”.
Recommendation 3: “To ensure a conflict-sensitive “do-no-harm” approach before, during and after community-engagement, the UN should discuss with local civil society actors in advance the detailed elements of the UN’s community engagement so as not to expose these actors to risks and danger, and take preventive action in consultation with local civil society actors and their communities where necessary.” This would include “establishing regular risk assessments and early-warning mechanisms in consultation with local civil society actors and their communities as well as relevant regional and subregional organizations.”	Recommendation 1: The UN “should design mechanism to ensure the systematic inclusion of perspectives of civil society working to support peacebuilding...Where civic space is restricted and where there are protection concerns for civil society actors, a separate process should be jointly designed to ensure protected space is availed to include actors with security concerns in the analytical exercises”.
Recommendation 4: The UN should “ensure the meaningful participation of local civil society actors in decision-making, analysis, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting of peacebuilding programmes, engaging at an early stage and throughout the process with a guaranteed feedback loop and exit strategy with local resources for sustainable impact at the end of the project”.	Recommendation 4: In addition to recommendation 1, a “joint UN-CSO implementation team should develop a bottom-up monitoring and evaluation mechanism should be designed creating ways for civil society to share feedback on the progress of the project/initiative, adaptations needed and final evaluation”.
Recommendation 4: “The UN should identify the most context-appropriate communication channels, with consideration of reach and credibility Based on this information, the UN should develop user-friendly communication materials and platforms grounded in the capacities and context of communities. These could include leaflets, social media, television and radio programmes that are simplified with diagrams and translated into local languages, or community-level town halls aimed at local civil society actors and communities”.	Recommendation 2: “Efforts should be given to communicating this strategy within the country of focus. The UN in-country, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, should work to share information and provide regular feedback to communities about the role of the UN in this strategy, its focus, mandate and presences in a specific country. This should be shared on a regular basis via context specific communication tools such as social media and commonly used mobile-based and SMS platforms”.
Recommendation 4: “Recognizing that local civil society actors are the main agents of change, the UN should also advocate for the effective participation of local civil society actors, especially marginalized groups, in national peace processes and peacebuilding interventions.”	Recommendation 4: “The UN in-country should work to connect civil society to national policy processes such as processes to develop national peace architectures, reconciliation processes and efforts at constitutional reform”.
Recommendation 5: To accommodate smaller funding requests, “the UN should introduce innovative, predictable, flexible and risk-tolerant funding modalities that allow local initiatives to build measurable impact towards longer-term and structural change.”	Recommendation 3: “In efforts to fund more diverse and smaller local CSOs, to complement existing funding mechanisms in the PBF, the UN could consider setting up a separate, nimbler and more accessible support facility. Such a “Local Peacebuilding Support Fund” – with different eligibility criteria – would be attuned to the less-established but highly-effective local peace actors. Vital to such a fund is the process of selection of projects under this fund being inclusive and in full collaboration with members of the communities in which the projects will take place. Box 10 includes suggestions for criteria of such a fund”.

Recommendations to other actors

To the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission

Recognising that the PBC is primarily an inter-governmental body and noting the progress to include more civil society briefers in PBC discussions over the past five years, there is still space for improvement in terms of the Commission's interface with non-state actors. Currently, the only means for civil society to formally input into PBC meetings is as an invited brifer. Over the past five years, there has been an increase in the number of civil society briefers, but this is still ad-hoc in practice.²⁶ Civil society is able to observe public meetings in-person and are, at times, consulted on an ad-hoc and informal basis on the content of meetings. Civil society actors outside of the New York space struggle to access the PBC. One of the greatest challenges facing more meaningful PBC- civil society engagement is the lack of a systematic approach to both regularly consult and share information with civil society.

In the aim of greater inclusivity and transparency with civil society- both in New York and globally, this report recommends that:

- The PBC should, building from its [2007 Guidelines for Civil Society in Meetings of the PBC](#), develop a detailed plan for how it will systematically work with civil society on a more consistent basis, including having more civil society as briefers as well as ensure that its meetings take stock and make proper use of the deep multi-stakeholder generated analyses from the country level, proposed in this report in Recommendation Area 1. **More efforts at virtual engagement with civil society that are not able to travel to New York should be undertaken.**²⁷
- The PBC, together with PBSO, should make a concerted effort to operate in a more transparent manner, making detailed information available to civil society organizations on meetings well in advance (including details on the public status and webcast of meetings as well as concept notes and briefers). In line with this, a detailed website could be developed which provides such information ahead of all public meetings, as well as all public meeting summaries and recordings once the meeting is complete.²⁸
- The PBC should work to create more space for a diverse range of civil society to meaningfully engage in PBC meetings by creating alternative ways for civil society to input into discussions (in addition to the briefing modality).
- The PBC, during country visits, should continue its practice of engaging civil society but **should ensure this includes a diverse range of civil society beyond national level actors.**

To the United Nations Security Council

- The United Nations Security Council should take action, address international dimensions and drivers of the conflicts, and international blockages to peacebuilding, **based on analyses from the country contexts and working closely with a diverse range of civil society to ensure up-to-date information.**

²⁶ Based on publicly available data, at the public meetings held between 2016 – 15 April 2020, approximately 6% of the briefers were from civil society organizations. This is based on the data that is available at <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/documents>. LPI recognizes that there are non-public meetings which take place where they may too be CSO engagement. However, this information is not available publicly.

²⁷ This report welcomes the innovation used to convene virtually during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and encourages these practices to be continued in a post-COVID environment.

²⁸ The website developed for the PBC 2020 review and the virtual PBC meetings is a good practice and could be expanded and continued in post-COVID times (<https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/pbc-meetings-2020-review-0> and <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/peacebuilding-commission-virtual-meetings>)

- The United Nations Security Council should mandate that all relevant reports by the **Secretary-General on UN Peace Operations²⁹** as well as reports of the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture (PBSO, PBC and PBF)³⁰ include the perspectives of civil society working to support peacebuilding.
- The United Nations Security Council should ensure a **diverse range of civil society perspectives are heard in all mandate renewal, thematic and country specific discussions.**
- The United Nations Security Council should **mandate that UN country presences to create mechanisms to engage with civil society in all work of the UN in-country**, especially in conflict analysis.
- The United Nations Security Council **should continue its engagement with the PBC and more systematically request input from the PBC** on an expanded range of issues related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in countries considered by both PBC and Security Council.
- The United Nations Security Council should continue to request update reports from the Secretary General on progress made on sustaining peace. **The Security Council should request 'shadow reports' from civil society on progress on progress made in implementing the sustaining peace approach and connected recommendations on annual/bi-annual basis.** As an intermediary step to a shadow report, the Security Council could organise consultations with civil society feeding in to or following the Secretary General's Report, as well as seek a civil society briefer at the presentation of the report³¹.

Conclusion

The goal of LPI in engaging in this review process was to bring forward perspectives often unheard in global policy discussions to introduce new reflections and recommendations into the discussion on peacebuilding and sustaining peace and the role of the UN in supporting peacebuilding in practice. In undertaking this process, however, we have realised that many of the recommendations coming forward are in fact not new, but have been raised by civil society in the past. This further reiterates the need to focus on their implementation. This is the third review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, five years since the [Advisory Group of Experts Report on the Peacebuilding Architecture](#) introducing the shift towards sustaining peace, and third Secretary Generals' Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, yet many recommendations from the past processes seem to have been forgotten and the vision of a changed way of working still falling short.

Moving ahead, focus needs to shift away from discussions on principles and concepts towards implementation. Tracking progress more succinctly and creating accountability mechanisms to commitments are needed. Beyond understanding barriers that are preventing progress, we need to develop, test, and practice new ways to move past them as a peacebuilding community working to support long term peace and stability globally.

Two key areas have emerged as crucial pathways to do so: *Firstly*, it is vital that focus is turned to partnership with civil society. This is one – among other – weak link in creating real multi-level engagement which responds to multi-level dynamics in conflict contexts. Such partnership needs to depart from existing practice of extracting information and 'using' as implementing partners to civil society being equal partners to the UN in matters of peacebuilding work. This means focusing on the process as much as the outcome and building in processes which work to ensure diverse civil society actors are included from the analysis stages right through to the evaluation. Funding mechanisms need to be adapted *Secondly*, in synergy with solid and

²⁹ Most specifically reports on UN Peacekeeping Missions and country specific discussions should have civil society input.

³⁰ Most specifically reports on the Peacebuilding Fund, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, and country specific discussions.

³¹ See box 9 for more detail on mechanisms for engagement.

sustained partnership with civil society, the Peacebuilding Architecture and the peacebuilding sector needs to develop more functional links between people, organised civil society, governments and international efforts. Again, this starts at analyses and design stage. Creating inclusive and sustained frameworks of interaction on country level, as suggested by the peacebuilding practitioners consulted and emphasised in Recommendation Area 2, can create a container for the development of cross-sectoral and multi-level relationships.

For LPI, the process of engagement in the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review does not end with this report but is merely a stopping point on the journey. LPI is planning to continue engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders – civil society, national actors, regional and sub-regional organisations, the AU and the UN - to explore implementation of the recommendations from the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review and 2020 Secretary-General’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, with the aim to support the UN in playing a more effective peacebuilding role which meets the needs of those most directly affected by violence.

As we pause at this point, and in thinking about implementation, several considerations for exploration emerge (and will be further extended as the process continues):

- How can the UN make use of its positionality – and connector role – to facilitate addressing restrictions to civic space and create more inclusive spaces for collaboration between various actors concerned with peacebuilding aspects in country?
- What is the role of government in UN-Civil Society partnership? What multi-level collaboration frameworks for peacebuilding can be tested?

Annex 1: Overview of the Life & Peace Institute process for engaging in the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review

When the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) was approached by the United Nations' (UN) Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) in New York to host a regional consultation as part of the regional consultation element of the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review (see Box 1), we saw this as an opportunity to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders from the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region, particularly community-based peacebuilding practitioners whose perspectives are often neglected from global policy processes. In creating this space, we had the ambition to hold this two-day multi-stakeholder consultation in a manner that intentionally would contribute to bridging the disconnect between what is often referred to as 'global' decisions and local realities of people experiencing violent conflict and striving for peace. In line with LPI's Inclusive Peace in Practice Initiative (IPIP) (see Box 2), we aimed to democratise and disrupt current policy engagement practices and provide greater space for more diverse actors to weigh in on these global peacebuilding discussions.

In order to do this, we felt the process and the content of the consultation would be equally critical. We, therefore, set off with the commitment to make the consultation meaningful for those who would take time to contribute their unique perspectives to the process, and the global actors that would listen and think about those perspectives.

A central consideration of the consultation was to create an inclusive space, where all participants, independent of where they work, what language they speak, and how much they know about the technical, bureaucratic, and political intricacies of UN peacebuilding, would feel equally included. The ambition was to use this multi-stakeholder discussion in Nairobi in late March, to listen, explore and co-develop recommendations to contribute to a more responsive and effective UN Peacebuilding Architecture.

Box 13: LPI's Inclusive Peace in Practice Initiative

To promote peace, policy responses should address the needs and grievances of people in conflict environments. However, this is not always the case – partly because of the disconnect between global policymakers and those affected by conflict. Generally, interactions between global policymakers and local peacebuilders are shallow, one-off, and are characterised by a lack of mutual understanding and diverging interests. Too often, they are unequal and fail to build upon the diverse forms of power held by local peacebuilders. The **Inclusive Peace in Practice Initiative** (IPIP) aims to change how local peacebuilders and global decision-makers see each other and work together on policy responses to conflict. The initiative will support local peacebuilders and global decision-makers to test and develop new ways of fostering collaborative relations and practices between them. The initiative will support engagement that is meaningful before, during and after specific moments of interaction and that yields positive outcomes both for the participants and the process at hand.

Adapting to the Covid-19 Pandemic

However, then, social distancing, travel bans, border closures, and lockdowns happened as Covid-19 was declared a global pandemic. Having the ambition to make this consultation meaningful in process and outcome, we considered cancelling the process. We were fearful that alternatives, including connecting on phone or online conferencing, would not create an environment where all actors could engage meaningful. One of our colleagues referred to this moment as an 'elitist scare' – capturing eloquently how our

assumptions of what is possible and desirable for peacebuilding practitioners almost made us take decisions *for them*, rather than *with them*.

After much consideration, we decided not to cancel but to shift to an alternative engagement approach using a mix of in-person, online and telephone consultations. We were able to hold two in-person consultations (Mogadishu, Somalia and Bukavu, DRC), two virtual sessions (Kenya-Uganda cross-border area and Ethiopia) and two consultations took place through individual phone calls (Kenya and Sudan). In total, we consulted with 37 community-based peacebuilding practitioners from six countries. To complement these calls, we held a virtual engagement with 60 UN, African Union, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and international non-governmental organisation colleagues to understand their perspectives on the UN's role in peacebuilding.

Box 14: Adapting to virtual engagement

Working with our programme teams, LPI organised two virtual consultations online: on 29 March with four representatives of a Kenya-Uganda cross-border coalition supported by LPI and partners for several years; on 2 April with two peacebuilding practitioners and one think tank representative from Ethiopia. For Sudan, 10 phone conversations were held, and in Kenya two young peacebuilders participated through one-on-one phone calls. Further, a virtual consultation on 27 March brought together 60 representatives of regional and international organisations. Both LPI, as the convener, and the participants had to adapt to the virtual form of interacting.

Beyond needing to learn the technical basics of navigating the software (including questions such as how to bring in people on a regular mobile phone line and at what cost), we had to manage distractions in the background, deal with the fear of speaking first, no one speaking at all, or when everyone takes the microphone at the same time. What enabled adaptation to this environment to a great deal was the pre-existing relationship with participants, and everyone's openness to try.