



Global Peace Powered Locally

GPPAC's Network Approach



A Network of People
Building Peace

About GPPAC

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is the world's largest global network of local peacebuilders. We bring together over 250 local civil society organisations active in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and it is these local members who lead our network.

GPPAC was launched in 2003 in response to the 2001 call of then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for local, national and international NGOs with an interest in conflict prevention to organise a conference on their role in conflict prevention and their future interaction with the United Nations.¹

The resulting Global Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict took place in 2005. Organised by GPPAC, it brought together 900 civil society peacebuilders from 118 countries at UN headquarters in New York, and launched the Global Action Agenda for the Prevention of Violent Conflict.

Since then, GPPAC has evolved into a rich global network of local peacebuilding organisations. We consist of fifteen regional networks, each with their own priorities, character, and agenda, tailored to their regional context and needs. We work through partnerships at local, national, regional and global levels. We specialise in connecting, convening, exchanging ideas and learning together to find peaceful solutions to conflict.

Introduction

It is increasingly evident, and increasingly recognised in international policy discourse, that sustainable peace requires the meaningful involvement of local stakeholders. Without effective local ownership, peacebuilding efforts and aid investments are unlikely to produce lasting results. Under the 'localisation' agenda, donors and policymakers recognise the need to shift their approach to partnerships, empowering local actors to set their own peacebuilding priorities and inform global debates, rather than relying on intermediary organisations to manage relationships with local actors.

Supporting member-led networks of local organisations offers an alternative approach. Such networks foster local ownership and leadership while reducing the administrative burden on local member organisations as well as donors to manage a large number of smaller contracts. At the core of any network are relationship-building, trust-building, and facilitating peer-to-peer learning and exchanges. Being part of a network allows members to strengthen their organisational capacities, build solidarity, and enhance their ability to contribute to and influence peacebuilding efforts at local, regional, and global levels.

For over 20 years, the GPPAC network has championed a locally-led network approach to peacebuilding. While the concept has gained global traction, there remains a lack of clarity about what an effective network approach truly entails and why it is an effective tool to advance impactful action. This paper aims to serve as a living resource to enhance understanding of the unique value that network organisations bring to their members, policymakers and donors. It shares best practices, lessons learned, and recommendations from GPPAC members and policymakers; and looks ahead at how the GPPAC network can continue to adapt and grow stronger to contribute even greater impact to peacebuilding efforts around the world.

¹ [A/55/985](#), Recommendation 27: Secretary-General Kofi Annan formally called for "NGOs with an interest in conflict prevention to organise an international conference of local, national and international NGOs on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with the United Nations in this field." Responding to Kofi Annan, "a diverse and inclusive worldwide movement" started forming under the leadership of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention. This movement eventually became the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC).

GPPAC's network approach to peacebuilding

GPPAC's network approach

Structures, processes and values

With the right approach, networks can strengthen and support local initiatives and address disparities in power and resources that affect our relationships and peacebuilding work. Together, we can be stronger than the sum of our parts.

In order to realise this potential, the GPPAC approach to networking is guided by structures and processes that are member-led, decentralised, diverse, and inclusive. We follow three strategic pathways to maximise our collective impact:

- **Amplifying member expertise,**
- **Influencing policy and practice, and**
- **Mobilising collective action.**

GPPAC's network approach is unique: It genuinely redistributes power to local peacebuilders through structures that promote local ownership and leadership. GPPAC has a decentralised governance model that promotes regional autonomy. Members set network-wide priorities, for example by co-creating our Strategic Plans. It allows those directly affected by conflicts to design and implement contextually-appropriate solutions, and co-create global strategies that support them. The GPPAC Global Secretariat in turn serves the members by supporting them in their priorities and needs, over those of policymakers and donors.

Moreover, **the diversity of our membership is a unique asset, incorporating a broad range of expertise and perspectives from across the globe.** In addition to their local peacebuilding knowledge, our members include experts in gender, climate, mediation, and peace education among other fields. Members co-developed and adhere to our Gender and Youth Policies, which guide our efforts to ensure the meaningful inclusion of women and young people in all of our efforts. GPPAC is deeply committed to balanced participation across the network, fostering an environment where all voices are heard and respected.

Key elements of GPPAC's member-led approach:

- **GPPAC's highest governing body is the International Steering Group (ISG)**
Is composed of elected representatives from GPPAC's regional networks and working groups. The ISG determines our global agenda based on member input.
- **The GPPAC Charter**
Outlines the network's principles and operations. It is developed and regularly updated by the ISG, representing the wider GPPAC membership.
- **GPPAC's 5-year Strategic Plans**
Are developed through a truly participatory, inclusive, and collaborative process, engaging all network members. Together, they identify key themes and strategic pathways that guide the network's peacebuilding efforts over the course of five-year strategic cycles.
- **GPPAC's 15 regional networks**
Design and implement their annual plans based on their priorities and needs, coordinated by their elected regional secretariat.
- **GPPAC Thematic Working Groups**
Facilitate cross-regional learning and exchange on a variety of thematic areas chosen by local peacebuilders.
- **GPPAC's Global Secretariat**
Serves the needs of the network, guided by the strategic plan. It supports network governance processes and structures, and facilitates advocacy, communications, fundraising, monitoring, evaluation, and learning for the global network.
- **The GPPAC Foundation**
Is the legal base for the network. The ISG nominates the members of its **Board**, the majority of whom must also be ISG members, ensuring a direct connection to member perspectives and priorities.

While GPPAC members use and benefit from the network in diverse ways, they find common ground in their shared mission and vision, which ensures that all network members are working towards a common goal: a “shift from reaction to prevention.” To achieve this goal, the following core values serve as our guiding principles:

■ **Trust:**

Underpins all relationships within the network, whether it’s trust in one’s own skills, confidence in their organisation and local communities, or trust in fellow GPPAC members.

■ **Generosity:**

Collaboration within GPPAC is marked by a spirit of generosity, with members eager to contribute and support one another, even in the face of adversity.

■ **Persistence and Patience:**

In the face of challenges like a global pandemic or escalating conflict, members draw strength and support from the network, enabling them to remain flexible and maintain a long-term focus on their peacebuilding goals.

■ **Community and Culture Sensitivity:**

As part of a global, multicultural network, members are naturally attuned to and respectful of local cultures and communities. While this virtue may be expected in a global network, the structure and governance of the network actively promotes and reinforces it.

■ **Reflectivity:**

Participating in regional and global sense-making sessions during planning and reporting processes institutionalises collective reflection, which in turn fosters joint learning, exchange, and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

These core values are at the heart of our network approach, ensuring that, no matter our different roles and contexts, we harness our collective strengths to enable a shift from reaction to prevention.

GPPAC's network approach

In action

Our network approach to peacebuilding is implemented through three mutually reinforcing pathways, each contributing to our goal of shifting from reaction to prevention:



How

- Facilitating formal and informal exchanges, learning, and technical assistance between members to share experiences, enable peer-to-peer consultation, and promote best practices – across the full range of peacebuilding action and in intersection with other issues and agendas, such as the Triple Nexus, climate change, YPS and WPS.
- Conducting workshops and training to strengthen organisational development skills.
- Co-developing and sharing handbooks, guidelines and other materials to collect and boost knowledge and skills.

- Ensuring local peacebuilding interests and needs are represented at and included in various policy fora such as the United Nations and regional inter-governmental organisations.
- Amplifying local perspectives and insights, along with locally-led research, to ensure national, regional, and global policies are contextually informed and effective.
- Providing targeted support to members and to policymakers to make policies more realistic and impactful.

- Co-designing and implementing joint activities, regionally, cross-regionally, and globally.
- Offering advice, support, resources, and collaboration in times of crisis.
- Enabling participatory grantmaking by providing small grants and emergency funding created for and managed by local peacebuilders.
- Fostering solidarity through offering support space, issuing joint statements, and running global campaigns.

Success Stories

Developing:

- [the human security toolkit](#)
- [the Step-by-Step Guide for local peacebuilding experts worldwide to conduct a climate security risk assessment](#)

- [Making the case for working with peacebuilding networks at the global level](#)
- [Contributing to the Peacebuilding Architecture Review](#)

Establishing:

- [a Youth and By Youth funding mechanism](#) and
- [a member-led Emergency Response Fund](#)

Coordinating the campaign [Stop the war in Ukraine, stop all wars!](#)

Building on the previous chapter's exploration of how our network approach is put into action, in this chapter, GPPAC members highlight the key benefits they experience from being part of the network. These benefits are directly linked to the strategic pathways and governance structure outlined above, reflecting the value of our decentralised set-up. By amplifying members' expertise, influencing policies, and mobilising collective action, our network brings with it a range of advantages, not only for members but also for policymakers.

Benefits of the GPPAC network approach for members

■ **Space for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and learning, strengthening peacebuilding capacities:**

This peer-to-peer learning broadens perspectives and strengthens peacebuilding practices by exposing members to diverse approaches in different contexts. It strengthens individual and collective capabilities to enhance social cohesion and community resilience and advocate for peace. These exchanges not only provide local peacebuilders with new insights and skills, but also build confidence in their own knowledge and expertise.

■ **Global connectivity:**

Through its decentralised structure, GPPAC members have access to diverse stakeholders on the national, regional, and global levels.

■ **Bringing local voices to the global level (and vice versa):**

GPPAC facilitates direct engagement between local peacebuilders and policymakers, creating a more inclusive and equal space for dialogue. Through processes such as the annual [CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding](#) and the regular [Peacebuilding Architecture Review](#), we move beyond one-off exchanges with global policy actors. The benefits of this approach work both ways: it enables local voices to be better heard and taken into account at the global level, and it increases the likelihood of global policies being translated to national and local settings.

■ **Solidarity in action:**

The networking activities, both within and across regions, generate deep relationships and connections that build resilience against adversity. Local peacebuilders know that they are not alone and that there is a global community of peacebuilders behind them, allowing them to draw on the support, knowledge and resources of the network. This includes risk- and capacity sharing in times of turmoil, as well as providing psychosocial support to each other as peers.

Benefits of working with a network like GPPAC for policymakers and donors

■ **Access to comprehensive, grounded analysis and understanding of complex conflict situations:**

GPPAC facilitates joint reflection and participatory analysis involving local communities and peacebuilders, resulting in contextually-relevant, consolidated information. This access enables policymakers and donors to address complex conflicts more effectively and engage in a conflict-sensitive manner. Furthermore, working with a network like GPPAC streamlines the process, allowing policymakers and donors to access a diverse range of insights through a single collective representative, rather than coordinating with numerous individual organisations.

■ **Access to diverse know-how and expertise on peacebuilding approaches and methodologies:**

GPPAC members bring a wealth of peacebuilding knowledge and thematic expertise. Within the network, they actively share this through regional, cross-regional, and intergenerational learning and exchanges. By engaging with GPPAC, policymakers and donors gain access to a broad range of skills and insights on effective peacebuilding practices, helping to guide their decisions on how to prioritise support for these initiatives. The network's diversity ensures that expertise is available across countries, regions, and policy areas. This access helps policymakers and donors strengthen their own peacebuilding approaches, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of their efforts.

■ **Strengthening the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts:**

Engaging with a locally-owned and locally-led network of peacebuilders enables policymakers and donors to reinforce local ownership of peacebuilding initiatives, thereby improving their sustainability and long-term impact. Recognising that most conflicts transcend borders, the regional and cross-regional aspects of a network like GPPAC provide a more grounded foundation for policymakers and donors to base their peacebuilding efforts on.

■ **Advancing international commitments under the 'localisation' agenda:**

In recent years, many donor governments have committed to strengthening locally-led development, through initiatives like the Grand Bargain, the USAID-led Donor Statement on Supporting Locally-led Development, and the OECD DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance. However, many are struggling to implement these commitments, partly because their primary partners—multilateral organisations and INGOs—are not locally-owned nor locally-led. By incorporating locally-led networks into their partnerships, donors can overcome entrenched interests within the aid system and demonstrate progress toward their commitments to support locally-led development.

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Next Steps Towards Growth and Greater Impact

At GPPAC, we view networks as dynamic and evolving ecosystems that must be continuously nurtured and strengthened. To be effective, the GPPAC network must remain adaptable and responsive to the needs of its members, thereby sustaining the value of participation even in ever-changing contexts. Networks such as GPPAC also depend on policymakers' support for taking on board the input collected through the network approach.

While the flexible nature of GPPAC's network enables adaptation, no network is immune to the volatility of external shock – whether unprecedented global crises like the COVID19 pandemic or a significant change in donors' priorities and funding. It is therefore crucial to invest in strengthening the network structure to increase resilience, ensuring that effective local peacebuilding and conflict prevention can continue in the face of such disruptions.

Looking ahead, GPPAC will prioritise reinforcing and embedding the network approach across all processes and structures. From developing a member-driven network-wide learning agenda to revamping the way we measure impact; from targeted capacity-building to channelling local peacebuilding input across the full spectrum of policy engagement; from reflecting on our longer-term vision for the network to collectively developing our 2026–2030 strategic plan, GPPAC will set the course for the next era of the network's global peacebuilding impact.

This will also shore up the systematic sharing of how networks learn and adapt with policymakers, through which GPPAC can contribute to the development of more locally-informed policies, integrating these insights for greater effectiveness.

How GPPAC will strengthen its network

■ **Strengthening network governance and engagement:**

This is essential for tackling internal and external challenges, ensuring the network remains valuable to members and policymakers alike. We will evaluate and review the roles and responsibilities of the network's governing bodies, from the International Steering Group to the Board and the Global Secretariat, and reflect on how existing processes and policies are implemented and to what extent they need adapting.

While GPPAC's decentralised structure ensures focus on the local level, it is not without its challenges. Limited regional capacity (often due to limited funding), the vast variety of languages across the network, the mirroring of global geopolitical power imbalances amongst and between regions, and the potential for competition (again, often in relation to limited funding) are all elements which must be taken into account. Rather than assuming we're already getting it right, GPPAC's commitment to local ownership and leadership means we must continue to critically reflect on our own behaviours and examine what is needed to ensure we are living up to our values.

External challenges faced by the network include the limited and decreasing funding available for peacebuilding; shifting donor priorities; shrinking civic space, and sudden and volatile emerging conflicts. Strengthened governance and engagement and the solidarity they bring are vital to building resilience to weather these circumstances.

To address these challenges, we will also further invest in cultivating a network mindset across our membership – one which embraces collaboration, shared leadership, and coordinated joint action, and which ensures our governance and decision-making structures and processes are inclusive and fair.

■ **Enhancing space for collaboration, knowledge-sharing and exchange:**

Members express a strong desire for more opportunities to share best practices, resources and experiences across regions and Working Groups. To meet this need, GPPAC will expand the use of interactive learning and exchange formats like roundtable discussions, peer-to-peer learning, and storytelling, and explore ways to make them accessible to more members, addressing digital and language divides. Robust feedback mechanisms will ensure continuous improvement and adaptation of these sessions, fostering collaborative knowledge exchange and growing collective expertise among members.

■ **Capturing multi-layered impact:**

GPPAC aims to more effectively capture its formal and informal impact not only at the individual level (what a GPPAC member gains from the network) but also at the collective level (what the network achieves as a whole through its collective approach). Building on insights from the 2021-2023 Mid-term Review, GPPAC is co-designing a flexible, user-centered Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning strategy with its members. This strategy will integrate various methods to support learning, accountability, outcome, and impact tracking and foster continuous improvement and adaptive programming through participatory approaches like Outcome Harvesting and storytelling.

■ **Increasing targeted training and capacity building:**

Demonstrating how actively contributing to and supporting the network approach benefits members will be a cross-cutting element in capacity building. If members better embed, implement, showcase, and advocate for the network approach, this will in turn help to sustain their own activities. This will be supported by targeted training programs focused on key skills identified by members, including:

- **Fundraising and Proposal Writing:** Strengthening proposal writing skills to help members access more funding opportunities, including funding for network activities.
- **Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (PME):** Ensuring effective PME practices for project design, impact measurement, progress tracking, and strategy adaptation; and gaining great insight into how being part of the network increases members' impact.
- **Engagement with Policymakers:** Equipping members with the skills to work together to effectively influence public policy, secure institutional backing, and drive systemic change in favor of peacebuilding efforts.
- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS):** Integrating trauma-sensitive approaches, resilience-building, and trauma healing in peacebuilding to address the psychological needs of communities, as well as those of peacebuilders themselves.

How Policymakers and Donors Can Strengthen Locally-Led Networks

■ Institutionalising support to networks:

Donors like [Sida](#), the [Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), [USAID](#), or [Irish Aid](#) have increasingly opened partnerships to networks and alliances, recognising their inherent value in supporting peacebuilding. However, it remains challenging to secure long-term sustainable financial support for cross-regional networks like GPPAC, as peacebuilding funding is often focused on projects in specific countries or regions and on specific themes. In addition, many donors still don't see the core activities of a network, i.e., joint learning, exchange and coordination, as primary peacebuilding activities. Yet, based on our members' experience, it is precisely the possibility that a network brings to build trusting relationships and foster a resilient practitioner community that allows them to come together to discuss the challenges they are facing and jointly identify possible solutions – and as such, strengthen their own peacebuilding capacities. There should be more consistent and institutionalised support for cross-regional networks to conduct their networking activities, specifically as donors working with networks have found that networks excel in promoting local leadership, sharing perspectives, and providing access to global platforms, creating more equal and inclusive spaces for both local and global actors.

■ Institutionalising policy engagement with networks at the local level:

Recognising the value of networks and engaging with them at the global advocacy level doesn't always translate to impact at the local level. Since local networks are best equipped to address the regional dimensions of conflict – which often extend beyond national borders – national and regional representatives of policymakers and donors (e.g., country offices and embassies) should ensure that they meaningfully engage with these networks when developing and designing their country- or region-specific policies and strategies. This will not only strengthen the relevance and effectiveness, and ultimately, the sustainability of those policies and strategies, but it will also strengthen the position of the networks in the peacebuilding field as relevant and strategic partners for national and international stakeholders.

■ Redefining impact and results:

Policymakers and donors should redefine how they understand the results and impact of peacebuilding action, and rethink how they measure progress in this regard. When outsiders dictate the indicators of success, these often fail to align with local realities, leading to projects and programs that do not monitor nor address relevant developments to determine the true impact of the activities. Networks like GPPAC are able to provide local determination of impact as seen through the eyes of local stakeholders. Specifically, GPPAC members have been advocating for shifting away from superficial, quantitative measurements to more holistic approaches that consider qualitative changes in behaviour and attitudes, offering a deeper and more meaningful understanding of peacebuilding progress.

■ Investing in Learning and Adaptive Programming:

Learning, knowledge-building, and adapting practices are essential for any successful organisation, and GPPAC has the unique possibility to foster learning across and beyond its global network, contributing to strengthened local, regional, and global peacebuilding outcomes. GPPAC has been pioneering a results-oriented learning approach to assess its impact and identify areas for adaptation. Policymakers are also increasingly focusing on adaptive programming, integrating continuous learning and feedback loops into their programs to enable ongoing learning. By engaging with GPPAC, policymakers can support and learn from each other in the implementation of adaptive programming.

Conclusion

GPPAC's network approach emphasises the dynamic nature of peacebuilding, viewing the network as a living ecosystem that requires ongoing nurturing. For local peacebuilders and policymakers, the key takeaway of this living document is that collaboration with and within this network enhances both local action and global policy.

GPPAC members will continue refining this living document, inviting practitioners, policymakers, and key stakeholders to contribute. It will feed into the development of GPPAC's 2026-2030 strategic plan, as we imagine the world we want to help shape, and the network we need to be in order to do so. By staying adaptable and inclusive, GPPAC will ensure that its network remains responsive, fostering stronger peacebuilding initiatives on both local and global scales.

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The paper is informed by multiple sources, including a review of GPPAC’s public resources and internal records since its founding, the findings from GPPAC’s 2023 mid-term review of its 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, insights from the International Steering Group (ISG) meeting held in Japan in January 2024, a survey conducted in Spring 2024 with responses from 100 GPPAC members across 14 regions, and numerous informal consultations with GPPAC members and policymakers around the world.

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