

The Peacebuilders' Manifesto

Five demands from local peacebuilders.



[Peace Starts Here](#) is the global movement for local peacebuilders, co-created by 10 local peacebuilders. **We want to change attitudes and behaviours in the peacebuilding sector.**

When we are supported by the wider international community we strengthen our local efforts, expanding and protecting the civic spaces we operate in.

In consultation with other local peacebuilders, we call on international institutions, Global North governments and NGOs to implement these five asks:

1 Make Space for Local Peacebuilders to Lead

*The power to influence and drive change within community members, lies with the local actors of change. It is imperative to **create more inclusive and intentional ways for local peacebuilders to lead, shape, and influence the peace process in their regions and communities.***

Why?

- Local peacebuilders have a **deep understanding** of the social and political context, culture, and dynamics of their communities.
- Local peacebuilders have greater **trust and legitimacy** within their communities.

How?

- **Find, support and advocate for local communities, peacebuilders and civil society actors.** Ensure they can participate, engage in and lead the agenda for the peace negotiations, mediation efforts, policies and peacebuilding programmes that impact them. Do this through policy and governance reforms in current international peacebuilding infrastructures.
- Establish inclusive dialogue platforms as a core priority in conflict prevention programmes. These platforms must **bring together local peacebuilders, community leaders, government officials, religious leaders, and international stakeholders** to jointly address conflict-related issues and shape peacebuilding strategies.
- Invest in and join peace processes where the agenda is clearly led and delivered by local peacebuilders and civil society. **Stop creating alternative structures.**

2 Fund More Local Peacebuilding Efforts

Remove barriers and proactively channel resources- financial and material - to local peacebuilders working in communities closest to conflict.

Why?

- Investing in local peacebuilding efforts fosters **greater community ownership** and participation in peacebuilding processes.



How?

- Streamline the funding process by **reducing bureaucratic and language hurdles**, and offer flexible, unrestricted funding for local civil society for the long term.
- Encourage and support sustainable grassroots grant making initiatives. These initiatives should be self-sustaining and **based on indigenous and local solutions**.
- Fund local peacebuilders. Allowing for more equitable resource allocation mechanisms that **ensure adequate, pressure-free space and time** is given to local peacebuilding initiatives.

Support and Strengthen Local Peacebuilders

Provide comprehensive support that addresses not only technical skills but also resilience and mental health.

Why?

- Local peacebuilders neglect their own mental health for their communities, which often can lead to **burnout, compassion fatigue, and other psychological challenges** that can hinder their effectiveness and well-being.
- The continuous and systemic minimalising of local actors' capacities has an **impact on the peacebuilders and their self-esteem**.

How?

- Invest in both existing and new peer support networks and communities of practice. This would enable local peacebuilders to connect, share learnings and experiences, seek advice and provide **mutual peer support in addressing all challenges**. These could operate at the local, national or international levels (including Global Majority networks).
- Fund and invest in access to culturally sensitive, and contextually appropriate, mental health services for local peacebuilders. These should include counselling, psychosocial support and trauma healing initiatives. **Money for wellbeing and mental health should be a formal and normal budget line in all peacebuilding programmes**.
- Work to strengthen the fundraising, budgeting and grant management skills of local peacebuilders (and according to their expressed organisational needs).

Centre Peacebuilding around Local People

Investment in more human-centred, collaborative and community-led approaches to global peacebuilding efforts, encouraging local peacebuilders to play an active role in decolonising the role of global actors.

Why?

- **Decolonising the role of global actors in peacebuilding** involves recognising and challenging historical power imbalances and prioritising local knowledge, agency, and leadership in shaping peacebuilding agendas and strategies.



How?

- Prioritise existing Indigenous and local solutions by assessing ongoing efforts at the local level, and the needs and capacities of all communities, before introducing external solutions. This must be done in a way that **embraces and recognises the diversity and intersectionality of local peacebuilders.**
- Rethink the traditional and often neo-colonial methods of working with local communities by avoiding the “empowerment” and “capacity-building” approaches. **Local capacities don’t need to be built, but recognised and encouraged.**
- Incorporate traditional institutions such as elders’ councils in all conflict resolution and community cohesion efforts. **Encourage platforms for intergenerational dialogue and storytelling** to showcase the contributions of young peacebuilders.
- **Invest in your own analysis**, time and institutional knowledge to understand the multiple factors at play in the conflict at hand, the dimensions of its triggers, and its impact on community members. Incorporate this into all relevant strategies, agendas, policies and programme design.

5 Learn from Local Peacebuilders

Learn from, promote, and support the invaluable contributions of local peacebuilders in fostering sustainable peace worldwide.

Why?

- **Normalising and formalising learning and knowledge exchange** not only improves the external actors’ understanding of the context but also helps to fill the knowledge gaps of fellow actors of change.

How?

- Facilitate spaces where local peacebuilders learn from each other. **Promote knowledge sharing and facilitate learning partnerships** that enable safe and receptive spaces for local peacebuilders to learn from each other’s experiences. Share this learning with the international community and discuss negative and positive partnership experiences.
- **Diversify and challenge the typical approach** to monitoring, evaluation and learning by supporting approaches and tools that resonate with individuals on the ground. This will allow traditionally marginalised voices to express themselves, for example through art, prayers, healing sessions, interviews and group consultations.
- Set up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that ensure **constituent accountability for funders, NGOs and local partners.**

Sign The Peacebuilders' Manifesto [here](#).

To get in contact, please email us at campaigns@peacedirect.org.

