

# Leveraging Local Knowledge for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding in Africa

EDITED BY **ANDREA Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN**



**Cover Image:** Kibera, the largest of Nairobi's slums, and the second largest urban slum in Africa, with an estimated population of between 800,000 and 1.2 million inhabitants. Nairobi, Kenya, 2010. Ollivier Girard.

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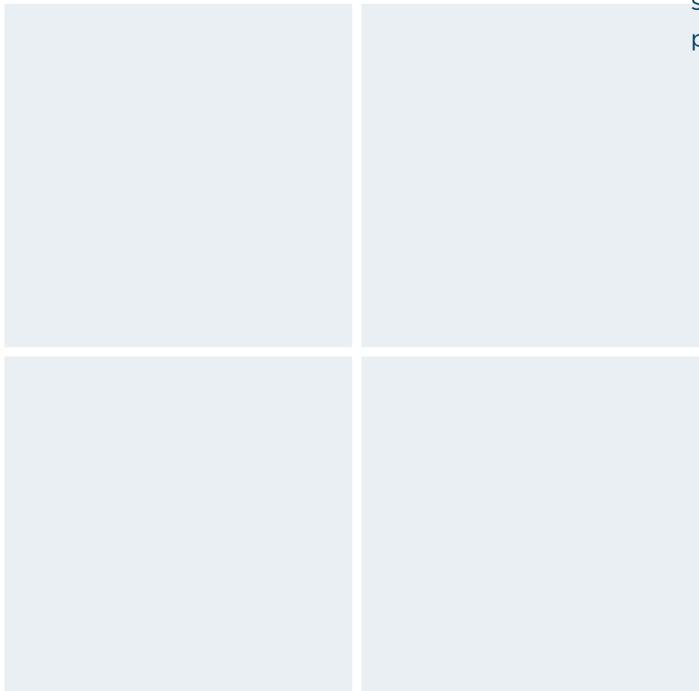
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## Executive Summary

The call for national and local ownership of peacebuilding and statebuilding design and practice has grown louder in recent years. The principles of leveraging local knowledge and attending to local context have gained increasing prominence and visibility in international policy. Standards of field practice for international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and peacebuilding missions now regularly include consultation of local perspectives and engagement of local actors. But regional, national, and community-level knowledge have not found effective channels to influence and inform the international decision-making process. Translating these principles into practice—in terms of peacebuilding and statebuilding mechanisms, processes, and programs on the ground—is an enduring challenge for the United Nations and international actors.

This report aims to highlight examples of innovative peacebuilding and statebuilding at the community and local level across Africa. Five case studies explore the work of local actors, their relationship to and interaction with national actors and policies, and their influence on international programs and planning. The case studies include women’s statebuilding initiatives in Egypt; youth-centered peacebuilding programs in Burundi; efforts to build local governance in the face of transnational organized crime in Mali; violence transformation training in Zimbabwe; and the use of online and mobile technologies to counter election violence in Kenya.

These cases illustrate an array of innovations and adaptations in locally driven peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives, and they examine the challenges and opportunities in linking local knowledge to international policy and practice.

The lessons emerging from these cases point to seven recommendations for those seeking to promote or learn from local knowledge:

### 1. Define and redefine the “local”.

It is incredibly difficult to define what is “local,” and external actors should be critical of this concept in relation to peacebuilding and

statebuilding. The meaning of “local ownership” is often unclear and needs to be negotiated, defined, and redefined in each individual context and community. This continuous examination of local or community-level approaches and perspectives can lead to greater inclusion and participation of civil society, women, youth groups, and other stakeholders in conflict-affected areas.

### 2. View local knowledge as an existing source of capacity and an ongoing resource.

International actors often use local knowledge as a passive source of inputs for project design or conflict assessment. But local knowledge has more to offer as an existing source of capacity and an ongoing resource. International and national actors should not only analyze conflict but also look closely at what is working—thoroughly mapping peace resources and networks in local communities, to utilize existing structures and capacities for peace.

### 3. Bridge the divide between local and national.

In the countries studied, the divide between local communities and national governments often undermines community initiatives. External actors need to engage with the population beyond national elites, and yet they are not well positioned to intervene between the state and its citizens. Still, if peacebuilding is about increasing the resilience of societies to prevent and manage conflict, then local citizens must be included—particularly those individuals and organizations already undertaking peacebuilding projects. International actors can create links, channels, and opportunities for communication between local communities and national policymakers, in addition to calling for responsible national leadership.

### 4. Do not presume legitimate representation.

In peacebuilding and statebuilding programs, participation and representation are complex and contested processes. According to many African practitioners, international actors are selective in choosing “local” partners, often

focusing on elite groups in national capitals. This inhibits deeper buy-in for projects implemented in communities without consultation on priorities and program design. Still, many civil society groups in Africa face challenges of internal governance, representativeness, and legitimacy. As the case studies demonstrate, community-level and grassroots actors do not speak with one voice, and they are not all or always committed to peace.

**5. Accept that peace takes time, and plan accordingly.**

Today's conflicts are cyclical, and relapse is common. When the international community focuses on a country emerging from conflict, institution building often receives commitments for four to eight years of funding, when it typically requires forty to eighty years to achieve. The transformation needed to bring inclusive governance and sustainable peace to conflict-affected countries requires long-term planning.

**6. Measure the impact of local knowledge.**

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that higher levels of inclusivity in peacebuilding are associated with more sustainable peace. Still, civil society and local groups remain often excluded from top-down peacebuilding processes. It is time for international actors to

prioritize local ideas and community priorities, and to invest in more research demonstrating that this approach leads to success.

**7. Operationalize local engagement.**

The recent attention on inclusivity has not yet led to major changes in the approaches of international actors. An immediate obstacle is the lack of guidance, as international actors need specific strategies and tactics to operationalize national ownership, and they require planning mechanisms that formally take local knowledge into account. Partnerships between external and internal actors can build on and learn from peacebuilding initiatives already undertaken locally, and address regional and global conflict drivers.

The nature of conflict settings today, the repetition of violence, and the frequency of relapse in most conflict-affected states require new strategies and approaches from actors seeking to build peace and governance. Following years of collective peacebuilding experience and hard lessons learned from recent relapses into conflict in South Sudan and the Central African Republic, more work is needed to ensure that peace is locally owned, that international operations build on existing capacities for peace, and that these capacities are leveraged for statebuilding and peacebuilding practice.

# Introduction

Andrea Ó Súilleabháin\*

Over the past two decades, the concepts of peacebuilding and statebuilding have emerged in tandem with extensive institutional developments related to peace and security. Many of these institutions, interventions, and programs have focused on peacebuilding and statebuilding in Africa. Nine of the United Nations' sixteen peacekeeping missions are deployed in Africa.<sup>1</sup> All six countries placed on the agenda of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission since its founding in 2005 are in Africa, alongside UN regional peacebuilding offices for West Africa, Central Africa, and the Great Lakes region.<sup>2</sup> Other major international stakeholders maintain ongoing peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts in Africa, such as the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Alongside this international attention, the last twenty-five years also witnessed the rapid development of continental, regional, and national peacebuilding initiatives inside Africa. Regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa, have launched early warning and conflict prevention mechanisms. In the last decade, the African Union created its Peace and Security Council and the Panel of the Wise, among many other initiatives to support peacebuilding efforts.

Peacebuilding is now widely understood as a range of activities that help prevent and reduce violence in conflict-affected spaces.<sup>3</sup> According to the OECD, these include activities “designed to prevent conflict through addressing structural and

proximate causes of violence, promoting sustainable peace, delegitimizing violence as a dispute resolution strategy, building capacity within societies to peacefully manage disputes and reducing vulnerability to triggers that might spark violence.”<sup>4</sup> Peacebuilding is a process consisting of several dimensions and phases, from disarmament and demobilization to institution building, transitional justice, and economic recovery.<sup>5</sup>

Statebuilding comprises actions undertaken by national or international actors to establish, reform, or strengthen the institutions of the state.<sup>6</sup> The relationship between peacebuilding and statebuilding is complex. Peacebuilding and statebuilding can be mutually reinforcing processes that establish and support effective, legitimate, accountable, and responsive states; indeed, in practice, “the state is the primary vehicle through which domestic and international peace is sought.”<sup>7</sup> However, in some cases, peacebuilding and statebuilding priorities may be in tension with one another.<sup>8</sup> Definitions that view statebuilding as a national process can help ease these tensions, by prioritizing citizens' concerns, their participation, and state-society relations.

The mandates of UN missions often include “strengthening state institutions,” or statebuilding, as a necessary component of sustainable peace. This support typically focuses on the national level. At the same time, there are increasing calls for local ownership of peacebuilding design and practice, to take local knowledge fully into account in program design and conflict assessment, and to strive for the meaningful participation of local actors—what has been called “the local turn” in peacebuilding policy

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1 As of January 2015. See “United Nations Peacekeeping,” available at [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping).

2 See Devon Curtis and Gwinyayi Dzinesa, eds., *Peacebuilding, Power, and Politics in Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2013), pp. xi and I.

3 Robert Muggah and Christian Altpeter, “Peacebuilding and Postconflict Recovery: What Works and What Does Not?” New York: International Peace Institute, June 2014, p. 3.

4 Alliance for Peacebuilding, “Peacebuilding 2.0: Mapping the Boundaries of an Expanding Field,” Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, Fall 2012, p. 12.

5 Muggah and Altpeter, “Peacebuilding and Postconflict Recovery,” p. 3.

6 Charles T. Call and Elizabeth M. Cousens, “Ending Wars and Building Peace,” *Coping with Crisis Working Paper Series*, New York: International Peace Academy, March 2007, p. 9.

7 Lauren Hutton, “Internal and External Dilemmas of Peacebuilding in Africa,” Institute for Security Studies Paper 250, January 2014, p. 2.

8 See Devon Curtis, “The Limits to Statebuilding for Peace in Africa,” *South African Journal of International Affairs* 20, No. 1 (2013): 79–97.

and practice.<sup>9</sup> In 2010, an International Peace Institute (IPI) report asserted, “it is now commonly accepted that statebuilding and peacebuilding are deeply political, context-specific processes: to be effective, international responses to fragile situations must therefore grapple with local context.”<sup>10</sup>

United Nations policy has echoed and responded to this call, repeatedly affirming the need for inclusivity, national ownership, and local ownership in its peacebuilding and institution-building efforts. Indeed, a key policy in the 2012 secretary-general’s report *Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict* was the principle that inclusive processes can reduce relapse into violence and that exclusion is one of the most consistent factors in the breakdown of peace.<sup>11</sup> The secretary-general’s 2014 report reaffirms this idea, linking inclusive peacebuilding to the development of positive state-society relations: “Where peacebuilding efforts are rooted in inclusive societal consultation and efforts to minimize exclusionary practices, they generate trust and legitimacy in the State and its institutions.”<sup>12</sup>

In addition to these policy principles, standards of field practice for international NGOs and peacebuilding missions now regularly include local consultations, incorporation of local perspectives, and engagement of local actors. But regional, national, and community-level knowledge has not found effective channels to influence and inform the international decision-making process. And much work remains to realize national ownership in practice and to prioritize local knowledge across the UN’s postconflict planning and programming.

It is with this disconnect in mind—between the policymaking process of the UN and the realities and urgent demands of communities on the ground—that IPI launched a project to investigate innovations in locally driven peacebuilding and

statebuilding initiatives, and the challenges and opportunities in linking local knowledge to international policy and practice.

## PROJECT RATIONALE

The decline in interstate conflict since the end of the Cold War and the rise in intrastate conflict are frequently noted trends. These intrastate conflicts include not only rebellions against the state but also many intercommunal conflicts between two or more nonstate groups. Today, conflict and its root causes frequently occur at the subnational level, playing out among local populations.<sup>13</sup> It is the changed nature of conflict itself that makes community-level engagement a necessity. Indeed, it has become a constant refrain that peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts should not have a one-size-fits-all approach and should take into account the uniqueness of each local context. However, the UN and the international system remain essentially focused on and organized around states. As a result, for international organizations, “community approaches, and direct and regular engagement with populations, are often very challenging and difficult to undertake.”<sup>14</sup>

There is a consensus around the need to build bottom-up peacebuilding policy and inclusive statebuilding policy that is anchored in, respectful of, and responsive to local needs, local capacities, and local knowledge. But on the whole, international actors still do not know how to achieve this. Engagement with local actors, by UN missions and other in-country teams, tends to consult primarily with national counterparts in capitals rather than with a broader cross-section of society. Local perceptions tend to be incorporated in situation analysis and early warning as background information but tend not to be directly leveraged for peacebuilding and statebuilding policymaking and practice.

Given this divide, how can the wealth of

9 See Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond, “The Local Turn in Peace Building: A Critical Agenda for Peace,” *Third World Quarterly* 34, No. 5 (2013): 763–783.

10 Jenna Slotin, Vanessa Wyeth, and Paul Romita, “Power, Politics, and Change: How International Actors Assess Local Context,” New York: International Peace Institute, June 2010, p. 3. See also Call and Cousens, “Ending Wars,” and Charles T. Call and Vanessa Wyeth, eds., *Building States to Build Peace* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008).

11 See United Nations Secretary-General, *Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/67/499, October 8, 2012.

12 United Nations Secretary-General, *Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/69/399, September 23, 2014, p. 7.

13 See Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, *Conflict Barometer 2013* (Heidelberg, 2014); and Meredith Reid Sarkees, Frank Whelon Wayman, and J. David Singer, “Inter-State, Intra-State, and Extra-State Wars: A Comprehensive Look at Their Distribution over Time, 1816–1997,” *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (March 2003): pp. 49–70.

14 Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for peacebuilding support, speech delivered at the International Peace Institute, November 13, 2014.

knowledge and policy analysis on peacebuilding and statebuilding in Africa be better identified, supported, and integrated into global scholarly and policy networks—to advance local lessons and strengthen knowledge and action at all levels? New approaches are needed to connect these levels of analysis and intervention, and to move local knowledge from the bottom up.

### SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Looking at select countries affected by violence across the African continent, IPI commissioned five African scholars and practitioners to produce case studies that map original and experience-based peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives across five thematic areas. The cases illustrate a range of innovations and challenges:

- In Egypt, women are leading initiatives on local governance and statebuilding, using strategic mechanisms to link their work to national policy-making processes.
- In Burundi, youth-centered peacebuilding is challenged by state mobilization of youth groups according to their political affiliation, causing tensions with grassroots initiatives.
- In Mali, coalitions of civil society groups come together to advance effective governance in local communities, in the midst of the complex and ingrained presence of transnational organized crime.
- In Zimbabwe, locally adapted peace training demonstrates the need to transform politicized narratives in local communities in the aftermath of election-related violence.
- In Kenya, new technology initiatives contribute to conflict prevention following outbreaks of violence, highlighting the complementary roles that grassroots, national, and international actors can play in peacebuilding.

These case studies of locally driven and locally adapted peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives explore (1) the impact of the initiatives in the communities where they are situated; (2) barriers the initiatives encountered in reaching and influencing national processes, and where they were successful in doing so; (3) how the initiatives

were or could be linked to international peacebuilding and statebuilding policy and practice; and (4) lessons for the international community. Each researcher also addressed the specific national context, including the preceding and/or ongoing conflict dynamics and the political and social factors affecting local initiatives to build peace and governance.

The project included two cross-regional meetings in Africa that brought together the case study authors and practitioners from peacebuilding organizations and civil society groups, national governments, subregional organizations, the African Union, and the UN.<sup>15</sup> At each meeting, thirty participants from more than a dozen countries discussed local peacebuilding and statebuilding programs. Drawing on their diverse experiences, these practitioners discussed how local actors can reach and influence national processes, and how international actors can engage local practitioners and integrate their perspectives into peace and conflict assessment and planning. This dialogue and knowledge sharing informed the findings of this project, together with inputs from a small virtual advisory board of experts from African academia, think tanks, and government ministries (see annex).

### A CHALLENGING CONTEXT FOR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

In the past few decades of peacebuilding policy and programming, international and multilateral actors have increasingly considered the strengthening of state institutions as a necessary component of sustainable peace—typically focused on the national level. Since this project began in early 2013, difficult relapses into conflict have occurred in Africa, particularly in South Sudan, the Central African Republic (CAR), and Mali. These tragic events have raised the need to critically examine the relationship between statebuilding and peacebuilding. In some cases, a disproportionate focus on state structures can undermine local actors' efforts to build peace in their communities and to influence national processes. The events in South Sudan and CAR demonstrated this tension; international efforts concentrated largely on

<sup>15</sup> The first cross-regional meeting on West and North Africa was held on May 1 and 2, 2014, in Dakar, Senegal. The second cross-regional meeting on East, Central, and Southern Africa was held on September 4 and 5, 2014, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Project authors also presented their case studies in New York on November 21, 2014.

building up national institutions and ministries in the capital, while in the meantime, community-level dynamics unraveled.<sup>16</sup> This raises a pressing question: are international actors perpetuating the very institutional models that cause conflict in the first place?

Despite these challenges, the case studies that follow demonstrate that local initiatives are having positive impacts at the community level and beyond. Local efforts are shown to strategically and successfully influence state structures, from improving service delivery to countering radical-

ized political narratives. The challenges throughout the case studies demonstrate how vulnerable stability can be when the presence of the state is limited, when society loses trust in those governing, and when peace is not locally owned. With a view to facilitating more effective and sustained use of local knowledge in peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives, the report's conclusion captures cross-cutting lessons and recommendations for international organizations, governments, and civil society groups.

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<sup>16</sup> See Meron Tesfamichael, "South Sudan and the Complications of Peacebuilding through State Building," *Kujenga Amani*, March 12, 2014.

# Women, Local Governance, and Statebuilding in Egypt

Yasmin M. Khodary\*

The Middle East has witnessed a wave of political demonstrations in recent years, resulting in the overthrow of authoritarian regimes. In Egypt, shoulder-to-shoulder with men, women were present in the revolution that began on January 25, 2011, in Tahrir Square and across the country—many times at the forefront of street protests and demonstrations. They chose not to campaign for their rights as women but to align with the national goals and slogans of the revolution: social justice, equality, and freedom.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Egyptian women learned from their mistakes in previous revolutions and were determined not to allow any violation or neglect of their political rights or their equality with men, especially in the public sphere. They recognized that transitions and post-revolution settlements can provide a window of opportunity to reshape existing political settlements, to address underlying power dynamics, and to enshrine the principles and promote the practices of gender equality and women's rights.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate women's roles in statebuilding in Egypt, to enrich knowledge-sharing of women-led initiatives in local communities aimed at national policy formation. This chapter documents Egyptian women's efforts to influence policy and alter the process and outcomes of statebuilding, through four distinct initiatives. Based on in-depth interviews and research, the study offers lessons to strengthen statebuilding knowledge and actions in local programs and at the global level. The statebuilding initiatives described herein aim to

bolster democratic and participatory political processes and settlements, as well as more inclusive decision making at all levels.

Statebuilding is defined as a long-term, nationally owned, and historically rooted internal process driven by a wide range of actors, both at the national level and in local communities.<sup>3</sup> Statebuilding is concerned with the state's institutions, capacity, and legitimacy, and the political and economic processes reinforcing state-society relationships. It also tends to reveal the degree to which the state is equipped to maintain strong and inclusive linkages with society at large. Research increasingly shows that the degree to which the state maintains both balanced and inclusive state-society relationships—especially with women—determines the country's prospects for peace and development.<sup>4</sup> Participatory and inclusive statebuilding sets the foundation for peace and can be viewed as a complement to peacebuilding activities occurring in local communities and driven by civil society groups.

## The Role of Women in Statebuilding

While inclusiveness is a key factor in building sustainable peace, women tend to be left out of state reconstruction and political settlements. There is a lack of robust analysis of efforts to promote women's political participation, economic empowerment, and access to quality services in fragile and postconflict contexts.<sup>5</sup> Still, women have an undeniable role in economic development and

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1 Basma Atassi, "The New Egypt: Leaving Women Behind," Al-Jazeera, March 8, 2011.

2 Helen O'Connell, "What are the Opportunities to Promote Gender Equity and Equality in Conflict-Affected and Fragile States? Insights from a Review of Evidence," *Gender and Development* 19, No. 3 (2011): 455–456.

3 UK Department for International Development, "Building Peaceful States and Societies," Practice Paper, London: DFID, March 2010.

4 See World Bank, *World Development Report: The State in a Changing World*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century, 'Beijing+5,'" 23rd Special Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, June 5-9, 2000; Francis Fukuyama, "Women and the Evolution of World Politics," *Foreign Affairs* 77, No. 5 (September/October 1998); and Barbara Ehrenreich et al., "Fukuyama's Follies: So What if Women Ruled the World?" *Foreign Affairs* 78, No.1 (January/February 1999).

5 Helen O'Connell and Wendy Harcourt, "Conflict-Affected and Fragile States: Opportunities to Promote Gender Equality and Equity?" Study prepared for the UK Department for International Development, June 2011.

the promotion of peace and security,<sup>6</sup> and there is a strong correlation between gender equality and stability.<sup>7</sup> Women have led numerous pro-peace movements around the world; prominent examples include mothers' movements in the former Yugoslavia, Latin America, and Russia; movements started by relatives of the detained and disappeared in Chile and Kashmir; and associations of widows in Guatemala and Rwanda.<sup>8</sup> Women's informal peacebuilding and statebuilding contributions at the grassroots level have been documented in empirical studies, despite the continued exclusion of these bottom-up groups in official peace processes.<sup>9</sup>

Postconflict and transition processes can serve as key opportunities to secure greater gender equity and equality.<sup>10</sup> Political settlements, constitution making, and regime changes can establish gender equality and empower women politically, economically, and socially.<sup>11</sup> In cases such as Uganda, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, and Nepal, women obtained higher participation both in formal politics and in small-scale economic enterprises.<sup>12</sup> Women were able to mobilize, communicate their views, and become more politically active in postconflict moments where democratic space opened at the national and local levels.<sup>13</sup> Women's roles and contributions should be nationally owned, cautiously prioritized, and tailored to the specific needs of the country and location concerned.

## HISTORY OF WOMEN'S ROLES AND INITIATIVES IN EGYPT

At the start of the twentieth century, modernized statebuilding in Egypt saw the creation of new political and economic processes, privatization of ownership, and the emergence of an Islamic modernist movement.<sup>14</sup> A small group of early influential feminists called for girls' education and framed the education of women as an act of nationalism.<sup>15</sup> Women began completing secondary school and attending special lectures for women at universities, and women's periodicals began to flourish, with thirty publications founded before 1919, arguably having a positive impact on women's lives and in raising their awareness.<sup>16</sup> Female philanthropists also launched many initiatives, including a health care association for poor women called Al-Mabarra.<sup>17</sup>

In 1919, Egyptian women from all classes took part in the revolution to end colonialism, playing significant roles in both organized and spontaneous protests. Yet Egyptian women were excluded from voting and from political participation in the 1923 constitution. In response, the Egyptian Feminist Union was established—the first nationwide feminist movement in Egypt—calling for Egypt's independence and women's equal rights to education and employment, as well as fair personal status laws.<sup>18</sup> In 1948, another feminist union called Bint al-Nil, or "Daughter of the Nile," was formed for a more radical purpose—to remove social,

6 Women's economic participation reduces poverty, increases the proportion of wage earners, and improves family social status, because, more than men, women tend to reinvest their earnings in items that benefit their families (i.e., health, education, etc.). See Cheryl Benard et al., *Women and Nation-Building* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008).

7 See, for example, David Carment et al., "The 2006 Country Indicators for Foreign Policy: Opportunities and Challenges for Canada," *Canadian Foreign Policy*, 13, No. 1 (2006): 1–35.

8 Heidi Hudson, "Human Security and Peacebuilding through a Gender Lens," DIIS Working Paper no. 2006/37, Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2006, p. 3.

9 Elisabeth Porter, "Women, Political Decision-Making, and Peace-Building," *Global Change, Peace and Security* 15, No. 3 (2003): 256.

10 O'Connell and Harcourt, "Conflict-Affected and Fragile States."

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14; 31–32.

12 O'Connell, "What are the Opportunities to Promote Gender Equity and Equality in Conflict-Affected and Fragile States?" pp. 455–466.

13 *Ibid.*

14 This modernist movement was for diligence in Islam (Ijtihad), led by Sheikh Mohamed Abduh and occurring simultaneously with some Western modernist movements.

15 Such as Nabawiyya Musa.

16 Leslie Lewis, "Convergences and Divergences: Egyptian Women's Activisms over the Last Century," in *Mapping Arab Women's Movements: A Century of Transformations from Within*, edited by Pernille Arenfeldt and Nawar Golley (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012), pp. 43–62.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Founded by Hoda Shaarawy and Saiza Nabarawy.

cultural, and economic barriers and attain a greater role for Egyptian women in the public sphere.<sup>19</sup> Following the 1952 revolution and independence, Egypt's second president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, initiated a series of reforms for women's equality. In 1957, Rawya Attiya was elected as the first female parliamentarian. The years that followed witnessed a huge wave of state feminism—either initiated or accepted by state—but this was sometimes at the expense of independent feminist organizations. Still, women continued their activism within the confines of the post-independence authoritarian state.

The period from 1970 to 2003 brought the adoption of economic liberalization policies. It also witnessed the second wave of feminism represented in the emergence of multiple women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and associations, such as the Arab Women Solidarity Association, the New Woman Magazine, the New Woman Research Center, Bint al-Ard ("Daughter of Earth") Society, the National Council for Women,<sup>20</sup> and the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood. Through different economic, social, and political activities and initiatives, these women-oriented NGOs and entities aimed to contribute to the new era of statebuilding.<sup>21</sup>

## Women's Initiatives after the 2011 Revolution

Eager to reap the rewards of their participation in the January 2011 demonstrations, Egyptian women were met with multiple drawbacks. Like previous revolutions dating back to 1919, women were strong participants in calling for change but were later excluded from postrevolution political settlements. Some political actors even attempted to withdraw the gains that women had made before the revolution, framing them as part of the legacy of the overthrown regime. This reflects the alarming yet recurrent dichotomy of depicting

women as strong partners in the revolution and political struggle, but as victims or incendiaries in postrevolution settlements and processes.

Evidence shows that progress toward gender equity requires multiple systematic actions in a number of areas and at several levels. These include constitutional frameworks, legislation, national and local policies, new practices and mindsets, and capacity-building programs that promote gender equality and equity. To that end, this section presents and analyzes four initiatives in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution that seek to strengthen women's influence and rights in the emerging state, as well as improve governance and the social contract more broadly. Beginning at the local level, these initiatives include women-led community evaluations and dialogues on service provision, and then, at the national level, they include women's roles in labor unions and women's efforts to influence high-level policy as constitution drafters and parliamentary candidates.

### WOMEN AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE: COMMUNITY EVALUATION AND DIALOGUE

Following the 2011 revolution, with no clear or effective mechanisms for transparency, participation, and accountability in local governance, many people in Egypt continued to carry out demonstrations and street protests to express their grievances. In 2013, young women from six villages in Senuris and Tamiya, two districts in Faiyum Governorate in northern Egypt, began to use a different mechanism to hold their service providers accountable—namely, community evaluation. A think tank called the Social Contract Center (SCC) provided training on social accountability and community evaluation to a group of young people representing NGOs, traditional leaders, village communities, and local service providers.<sup>22</sup> The trainings included: (1) coaching on the purpose and forms of community services; (2) skills development on strategic communication, consensus building and

19 Founded by Doria Shafik. See Yasmin Khodary and Nadine Sika, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back? Egyptian Women within the Confinement of Authoritarianism," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13, No. 5 (October 2012): 91–100.

20 For more information about the National Council for Women, see [www.ncwegypt.com/index.php/ar/](http://www.ncwegypt.com/index.php/ar/).

21 Lewis, "Convergences and Divergences," p. 55.

22 Egypt's 2005 Human Development Report pointed out the lack of trust among the different stakeholders in Egypt leading to a fragmented and hazy social contract in the country. As a result, in 2007, the Social Contract Center (SCC) was created as a joint initiative between the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Egyptian Cabinet to provide evidence-based policy advice and capacity-building programs to improve trust among stakeholders in Egypt. The SCC enjoys independence financially and in planning and implementing its annual activities and workplans. See UNDP and Institute of National Planning-Egypt, "Human Development Report 2005," Cairo, 2005.

teamwork, and leadership skills; and (3) planning and implementing advocacy and awareness campaigns. The program placed a special emphasis on gaining the participation of young women, accomplished by using female trainers and planning the sessions to accommodate female participants' other daily responsibilities.

Composing 78 percent of the trainees, thirty-nine young women (aged eighteen to thirty-five) from six villages conducted six community evaluations. After the trainings, participants formed evaluation groups and prepared questions to assess public services of their choice, which included village schools, village primary health care, and water and sanitation services.<sup>23</sup> The evaluation groups then interviewed their fellow citizens about the availability and accessibility of these services, the quality of the services, and the efficiency of the staff delivering the services. Subsequently, the women-led evaluation groups called for meetings with decision makers to present the findings of their evaluations in a series of "community dialogues."

The community dialogues were conducted with decision makers at the village, district, and governorate levels. In the dialogue sessions, officials at each level committed to solve select problems identified in the evaluations. For example, in the Senuris district, service providers agreed to change the school management strategy and educational plans in line with the findings of the community evaluations and the recommendations of the evaluators. Higher-level governorate authorities agreed to address larger infrastructure problems, such as linking water lines throughout two districts and completing a stalled construction of a wastewater station.

After the community dialogue meetings, the evaluation groups followed up with officials on these commitments. To fill the gap between what services providers committed to do and what communities said they needed in the evaluations, the evaluation groups then carried out awareness campaigns to engage the public. These diverse campaigns centered on issues such as the community's role in supporting the village school

through the board of trustees, student unions, and volunteerism; wise use of water resources; and the maintenance of hygienic water resources.

### Impact

The community evaluation and dialogues provided a peaceful alternative, through effective and organized channels, for citizens to express their opinions and demands, and to hold service providers accountable. The initiative offered citizens constructive opportunities to communicate with local officials and participate in local governance decisions. As the head of the water authority's Citizens Services Department in Faiyum stated during the community dialogue in Forkos village, "We are met with too many problems; it helps us a great deal to communicate with citizens who are aware of the problems and know exactly what they need from us. It is even more important to deal with them in a constructive dialogue rather than hear their demands and requests in street protests and demonstrations."<sup>24</sup>

The evaluation process also strengthened partnerships among different stakeholders. The evaluation groups included Egyptian grassroots actors, NGOs, community development associations, village community leaders, and service providers on all local levels. It built links horizontally among civil society groups but also vertically with decision makers across three levels of local governance.

The evaluation process placed its women leaders and advocates in credible roles in their communities, as their demands for improved services were evidence based and drawn from citizen interviews. Through the community dialogues, the women-led evaluation groups gained experience in negotiating with their local state representatives, toward solutions in service provision. In addition, the local government officials gained experience in community engagement and responsive governance.

The complementary awareness campaigns, designed and implemented by the women-led evaluation groups, communicated vital information among community residents while exerting

23 In an interview with SCC senior officer responsible for the trainings and their follow up, Mr. Ahmed Nassim mentioned that post to the author in January 2014 at the Social Contract Center, Cairo.

24 The representative of the water authority in Faiyum, Eid Abdelsattar, Forkos Community Dialogue, Faiyum, December 2013.

pressure for improved service provision on decision makers. In sum, these activities engaged citizens in improving good governance on the local level—through transparent, dynamic, participatory, and accountable decision making for better basic services.

### Lessons Learned

- Including local service providers as an integral part of the process can lead to changed mindsets and changed behavior among these officials, and positively influence the political relationships between service providers and service recipients. In this case, instead of excluding service providers from the community-led evaluations, they were engaged to participate as interviewers or respondents. Their involvement added a degree of credibility to the initiative for citizens participating in the survey interviews. On the other hand, it bolstered the legitimacy of the evaluations' findings for the officials who were considering and implementing them.
- Including both men and women while mainstreaming a gender perspective can change the power relations, dynamics, and mindsets within the implementing groups and the outside community. In this case, the evaluation group members became more accustomed to women participating in the public sphere, holding decision makers accountable, leading dialogues, pressuring officials, and intervening in policy-making to improve services. This likely presents a better approach to changing social relationships than women-only initiatives, which may not reshape power relations or change the mindsets of men to the same extent.
- Investing in young women and men to hold service providers accountable and lead awareness campaigns remains an unconventional approach in Egypt, but youth participation is increasingly recognized as a critical component in transition processes. This initiative communicated young women's voices, gave them a channel to participate constructively, and enabled them to influence decision making. This empowerment

contributes to changing social relationships among youth, their communities, and political officials.

### LABOR RIGHTS: MOBILIZING FEMALE WORKERS

Women's contributions to the labor market and state economy are immense in Egypt. Their contributions have an economic impact and a positive social impact on women and their families, because women tend to spend a large portion of their incomes on health, education, and other social goods.<sup>25</sup> In 2000, a draft labor law was met with huge resistance by Egyptian female workers who protested repeatedly against the discrimination and violence they met in the workplace. In the same year, the New Woman Foundation (NWF) started to focus on the rights of working women. Dating back to 1984, the NWF vision focuses on women's emancipation as inseparable from broader efforts for democracy, freedom, and social justice.<sup>26</sup>

In an interview, the NWF's "Women and Work" program coordinator Mona Ezzat stated that during the last five years, NWF's activities to empower Egyptian working women were intensified through three gradual phases:<sup>27</sup>

**Phase 1: Policy research** was undertaken on the working conditions and rights enjoyed by Egyptian working women, to influence decision makers on both national and international levels, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Trade Union Confederation, and the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower and Immigration. The studies were disseminated widely and directly presented to stakeholders. One example is a study on women's realities in the labor market, which uncovered the situation of women working in the public and private sectors in six Egyptian governorates in female labor intensive sectors (e.g., textiles and medicine).

**Phase 2: Policy advocacy** was conducted after the January 2011 revolution, as space for civil society voices was contested in the public sphere. NWF exerted pressure on decision makers to adopt new or alternative policy options, presented statements

25 See Ana Revenga and Sudhir Shetty, "Empowering Women Is Smart Economics," *Finance & Development* 49, No. 1 (March 2012), available at [www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2012/03/revenga.htm](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2012/03/revenga.htm); World Bank, "Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan," Washington, DC, 2006; and World Bank, "Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice," Washington, DC, 2001.

26 Though formally registered in 1991, the NWF's activities date back to 1984. See "About Us," New Woman Foundation, available at <http://nwrcegypt.org/>.

27 Author's interview with Mona Ezzat, NWF "Women and Work" program coordinator, Cairo, February 3, 2014.

of support to female workers whose rights had been violated, and brought cases and testimonies by working women (such as nurses from Giza, Tanta, Alexandria, and Ismailia) to media outlets, public fora, and the courts—where they provided legal support.

**Phase 3: Worker mobilization** built on these activities, to empower female workers to better organize themselves through unions and collectively advocate for their rights. Following NFW's research and advocacy, in this phase, workers themselves became the source of influence to change the status quo. To offer facilitation and support, NFW organized a series of awareness campaigns and trainings for women and men representing Egyptian unions on the local level.

The campaigns and trainings addressed female workers' rights according to the latest constitution as well as international agreements and standards, the history of unions in Egypt, the realities of female representation among the different unions (including actual demographics),<sup>28</sup> the barriers and challenges to equal representation of female workers, and the importance of their representation. During the past ten years, in the Professional Syndicates Union, not more than ten women managed to enter the boards of the twenty-four syndicates despite their large membership. Only two female lawyers and one female journalist managed to enter the board of their syndicates. However, in the labor syndicates, women succeeded to occupy seats in nine out of seventeen syndicates, sometimes exceeding the percentage of men.

The trainings concluded each time with the collective planning of possible strategies to engage women extensively in the unions. They also explored effective support that NGOs could offer, such as trainings for the unions on engaging in the lawmaking process in regard to labor and ownership laws. Each awareness campaign or training was attended by nearly thirty men and women from unions and NGOs seeking to change power structures and mindsets, especially those of the men who dominate the unions.

## Impact

In response to the advocacy of women trained by NFW, some unions, such as the Real Estate Tax Collectors Union and the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), created committees for women to empower them, improve their work conditions, guarantee equal labor rights between men and women, and adopt strategies to encourage women's participation in the workplace and inside the unions.<sup>29</sup>

A list of unions adopted affirmative action policies to set quotas for women on their boards of directors, such as the EFITU, the Egyptian Democratic Labour Congress, and the Real Estate Tax Collectors Union.<sup>30</sup>

By undertaking a support role in the third phase of its strategic activities, the NFW witnessed the positive impact of indirect interventions. The organization supported women who changed the institutional behavior of several unions, where female workers gained access to influence policy-making and decisions in the unions and in state politics at large. Through their work in the unions, these women leaders can exert pressure and influence national labor laws and policies within the unions.

## Lessons Learned

- Empowering women and facilitating their access to decision making and policymaking can prove more effective than direct interventions to meet their needs. In NFW's third phase of work, women were better able to express themselves and defend their rights in an organized manner. These initiatives can transform political relationships, rather than operating within the confines of existing limitations and inadequate state-society relations.
- As mentioned earlier, including both men and women while mainstreaming a gender perspective appears to change power relations, power dynamics, and mindsets within the target group, which becomes more accepting of women's roles in the public sphere.

28 Taher Abulnaser, "Women and Professional Syndicates," The Arab Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession, September 2012.

29 See, for example, the EFITU website, available at [www.efitu.com](http://www.efitu.com).

30 Marwa Saad, "EDLC Announces the Names of Its Elected Heads of Committees," *Rosa Elyoussef*, September 2013.

## CONSTITUTION MAKING: CONSOLIDATING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

While the constitution-making process in Egypt was carried out mainly at a national level, its impacts reverberate locally, and the process of consolidating women's constitutional rights requires the inputs, efforts, and initiatives of women from all levels. Indeed, women's engagement on the local level through civil society groups often informs their engagement in national, high-level fora.

Egypt has experienced two constitution-making processes since the 2011 revolution. First, in 2012, the parliament and the Shura Council convened a 100-member constitutional committee to draft Egypt's 2012 constitution, where only eight female members were included, which soon became five members after the withdrawal of three women. Following the June 2013 revolution and the change of government, the 2012 constitution was put to amendment. An all-male ten-member committee reviewed the general framework, and then passed a preliminary version to a fifty-member committee for amending the constitution, referred to as the C-50, to draft and explore the articles further. Five members of the C-50, or 10 percent of its members, were women. In January 2014, the resulting constitution was passed with a 98 percent approval rate.<sup>31</sup>

Dr. Hoda Elsadda was one of the five women in the C-50. She asserted that the five female members had different views on many topics in the constitution, but they had a nearly unified vision when it came to women's rights and the barriers to realizing them.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, despite their limited representation, women managed to insert important clauses and articles protecting women's rights and participation into the constitution, with particular impacts for women at the local level. In addition to important provisions regarding discrimination, state support for women in the workplace, sexual harassment, and protection from violence, the five women of the C-50 promoted a quota for women's representation in local councils.

## Impact

Having long engaged with the so-called "track two" or civil society that integrates more women than formal processes and being aware of the discrimination women face on the ground, female members of the C-50 emphasized in Article 11 of the 2014 constitution not only equality between men and women in all civic, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, but also in recruitment, upper-management positions, and judiciary posts, where they were most discriminated. In addition, they highlighted the state's "commitment" to enable women to balance work and family obligations and to support certain categories of women who need special attention, such as needy or older women and female heads of households.<sup>33</sup>

With the increase of violence against Egyptian women, especially sexual harassment, female members in the constitution committee succeeded in securing the commitment of the Egyptian state to protect women against *all* types of violence. The constitution also included the creation of an independent anti-discrimination commission to abolish all types of discrimination.

In the 2014 constitution, at least 25 percent of the seats of the local councils were allocated to women. Following future elections, this should enable women to monitor and evaluate state policies at the local levels and hold government employees accountable. Yet, despite strong advocacy, women in the C-50 did not manage to pass a similar quota or affirmative action policy for women in the national parliament. Instead, an article affirms the state's commitment to "proper representation" of women, weaker language than many advocates aimed to include.<sup>34</sup>

## Lessons Learned

- Women's participation in constitution making is about quality, not quantity. Women represent diverse political and social views, and are not always strong defenders of women's rights. In fact, during the 2012 constitutional process, women representing the Muslim Brotherhood

31 "Egyptians Overwhelmingly Back Constitution: Official Results," Reuters, January 18, 2014.

32 Author's interview with the C-50 member, Hoda Elsadda, Cairo, February 15, 2014.

33 *Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt*, 2014, Article 11.

34 *Ibid.*

repeatedly failed to defend women's rights; indeed, they opposed women's right to divorce and defended early marriage of girls as young as nine years old.

- By contrast, women in the C-50 were united in their defense of women's rights. This unified vision can be difficult to achieve among women representing diverse communities and perspectives, but it is crucial for successful passage of articles for gender equality in the constitution.
- Open-minded male members in the C-50 were excellent partners in the fight for women's rights. Despite women comprising only 10 percent of the C-50, men's support in the committee allowed majority approval of articles such as those specifying a quota for women in local councils or creating the anti-discrimination commission.

The 2014 constitution has garnered considerable gains for women. In the future, for the gains women accrued in the new constitution to be meaningful, laws on women's rights and equal opportunities need to be adopted and implemented, and women's participation in national and local councils needs to increase. If these gains are not realized in practice, then Egypt may become a case that demonstrates the drawbacks of limited inclusion in peace and transition processes: despite women's meaningful (if limited) representation, the process may not be the precondition to guarantee long-term political empowerment for women. Enforced laws, policies, and rightful practices should follow.<sup>35</sup>

### POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS: SUPPORTING FEMALE ELECTION CANDIDATES

The Egyptian constitution now affirms that at least 25 percent of local council seats should be filled by women. However, without planning, fundraising, training, and alliance building, women's representation is likely to be nominal. Accordingly, women's associations have undertaken initiatives to make the best use of this new opportunity. The Egyptian Feminist Union's "Women for Women"

initiative offers a broad package of support and training for candidates for parliament and local councils.<sup>36</sup>

The Egyptian Feminist Union's deputy manager, Sara Ghoneim, asserted that in multiple preceding Egyptian administrations, women could not engage in political life unless they belonged to the president's party.<sup>37</sup> Under the Women for Women initiative, female recipients are not selected by their party affiliation or their level of education. Instead, they are chosen based on a set of criteria including competencies, vision, community representation, record of serving their community, and personal characteristics. The initiative aims to empower those women who face administrative, financial, technical, or social barriers to competing for seats in the parliament or local councils. The program engaged 100 women from twenty-seven governorates, offering a full package of trainings plus technical and financial support for the women and their campaign managers. The package included coaching on speechmaking, addressing the media and public fora, mobilizing public support, and financing their meetings and campaign materials.<sup>38</sup>

### Impact

In January 2014, twenty-eight female candidates from Aswan, Luxor, Qena, Alexandria, and Cairo and their campaign managers completed a package of technical trainings by a team of professional trainers. Backed by a union of various NGOs, the initiative succeeded in attaining huge media and public support. It also received many public donations of financial and technical support for women's trainings. Encouraged by the publicity and public support given to the initiative, the union decided to move forward with pressure for the presence and active participation of women inside the committee that will formulate the parliamentary election law, and to call for a 50 percent quota for female parliamentarians.<sup>39</sup> As a result of the advocacy and pressure, the law of the new Egyptian Parliament approved women's representation by at

35 Rajeev Pillay, "Evaluation of UNDP Assistance to Conflict-Affected Countries: Case Study Guatemala," New York: UN Development Programme, 2006.

36 The EFU, which includes 240 NGOs, was directly created after the January 2011 revolution, reviving the historical EFU founded in 1923. It is currently the coordinating organization of the coalition in Egypt for the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

37 Author's interview with EFU deputy manager, Sara Ghoneim, Cairo, February 10, 2014.

38 Samia Abulnasr, "More than 100 Women Ask To Enter Elections," *AlAhrām*, December 7, 2014. available at [www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/345019.aspx](http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/345019.aspx).

39 Rasha Fathy, "Nazra for Women's Studies, A Roundtable on Women's Participation in the Parliament," *Alwafd*, August 7, 2014.

least 30 percent in the parliamentary election.<sup>40</sup>

### Lessons Learned

- Stressing gender equality and empowerment in the constitution is important but is not the sole determinate in the success of inclusive statebuilding. Laws for gender equality and empowerment should be made and enforced. Likewise, gender-sensitive policies and strategies should be enacted. Also, rightful practices should be encouraged and capacity-building packages should be offered for women to enhance their technical, fundraising, alliance building, and negotiation skills and knowledge.
- Initiatives carried out by multiple and allied NGOs or community actors are more powerful than those carried out by a sole organization. They reflect a common agreement among such actors about the importance and timeliness of an initiative. In addition, they compose a strong pressure group that is able to influence decision making and reach media outlets.
- Initiatives carried out on the local level or in governorates are in need of media support, to maximize participation and outreach and increase the impact of the initiative.

### Conclusion

The initiatives outlined above, taken together, aim to increase women's ability and capacity to influence policymaking, make demands on state institutions, and hold state bodies accountable, thus reinforcing local governance and bottom-up statebuilding for all Egyptians. There is no blueprint for enhancing women's roles in locally driven statebuilding or promoting gender equality in local governance initiatives. Yet some general lessons for knowledge or action can be drawn from the recent experiences in Egypt:

- Statebuilding and peacebuilding are political exercises and need to be nationally owned and locally driven. Both require reforming the mindsets, behaviors, and structures of local power politics to reflect the principles and practices of good governance (transparency, accountability, inclusiveness). As a result, both

statebuilding and peacebuilding are inherently political; approaching them through a merely technical exercise that involves knowledge and resources jeopardizes their success.

- Legitimate and effective initiatives require partnerships and coalition-building. Successful women's interventions require cooperation among many local communities and diverse organizations. Partnerships with different stakeholders, such as community development associations, village community leaders, and service providers can bolster success in implementation. Effective initiatives manage to establish cooperation early in the planning phase. Overall, this gives the initiative more legitimacy, reflects a common agreement on the initiative, grasps public and media attention, and strengthens the ability to bargain, pressure, or influence decision making as needed through the initiative.
- Strategic communication and advocacy are vital. Women's statebuilding initiatives that succeed in producing positive shifts in gender equity occur when women (1) are able to mobilize themselves; (2) are able to communicate their views through community dialogues, trade unions, media, meetings, committees, and workshops, as well as political fora where the democratic space is opened up on national and local levels; (3) engage with decision makers and service providers rather than disengage with them for the purpose of changing their behavior, mindsets, and structures or pressuring them; and (4) focus on targeted decision making and influencing policymaking through peaceful approaches. This contributes to changing political relationships between service recipients and service providers, and ultimately between citizens and the state.
- Facilitation can be more effective than direct services. Initiatives that empower women and facilitate their access to decision making and policymaking can prove more effective in transforming long-term gender relations, when compared to initiatives that provide women with economic and social services directly.

<sup>40</sup> New Woman Foundation, "A Collective Statement: Ignoring Women's Demands for Their Existence on the Electoral Map," December 2014, available at <http://nwrcegypt.org/>.

- A comprehensive gender approach with both women and men is needed. Initiatives that include both men and women while mainstreaming gender can transform power relations and power dynamics within the participating groups.
- Gender should be mainstreamed in statebuilding. Statebuilding involves many transitions—from political, legal, and justice systems to demobilization and reintegration schemes. But statebuilding can also espouse the transition from patriarchy to gender equality. These efforts should not be siloed; gender should be mainstreamed through all the processes of statebuilding in a participatory, inclusive, and transparent manner.
- Gender mainstreaming should not be a static policy. Gains in gender relations can easily be reversed, which is particularly true in fragile contexts. As a result, gender mainstreaming should not be a fixed process, but, rather, one that is developed, supported, and expected to evolve.

## Youth Peacebuilding in Burundi

Nestor Nkurunziza\*

Youth are an essential constituency in all phases of peacebuilding. In most conflict situations, young people are both perpetrators and victims of violence and conflict. In postconflict societies, they often represent the majority of the population. As future leaders, young people play a significant role in the viability of peacebuilding and statebuilding programs.<sup>1</sup> Yet during peace negotiations, young people can act as dissidents under the manipulation of political actors, and, throughout the peacebuilding process, they can be instrumentalized to benefit the interests of political groups.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, young people are acutely affected by the structural issues that undermine sustainable peace, including inequality, chronic poverty, and unemployment.<sup>3</sup>

It is therefore understandable that youth peacebuilding initiatives are receiving more attention on the international agenda. In 2010, the UN World Programme of Action for Youth provided “a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support” to address youth issues.<sup>4</sup> It suggested a series of proposals for action aimed at the realization of identified youth priority areas. In 2014, the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development launched the “Guiding Principles for Young People’s Participation in Peacebuilding,” an overarching guide on meaningful youth engagement and participation in conflict or transition settings.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the African Youth Charter urges states parties to

“facilitate the creation or strengthening of platforms for youth participation in decision making at local, national, regional, and continental levels of governance.”<sup>6</sup>

Focusing on postconflict Burundi, this chapter examines youth-targeted projects that aim to increase the involvement of young people in peacebuilding and facilitate their political participation. Burundi is a small country in the Great Lakes region of Africa, and its population is very young, with those under thirty years of age representing more than 60 percent of the population.<sup>7</sup> This paper identifies and discusses youth peacebuilding initiatives that have been undertaken by local stakeholders in Burundi, and their interactions with the formulation and implementation of national youth policies.<sup>8</sup>

### Burundi’s Troubled Emergence from Conflict

Burundi has a long history of tensions between its main ethnic groupings, the predominant Hutu and the Tutsi minority. Ethnic tensions go back to the period between 1958 and 1961 in the context of the decolonization process.<sup>9</sup> Shortly after its independence in 1962, Burundi was ruled by three successive Tutsi military regimes over more than three decades.<sup>10</sup> Postcolonial Burundi was then marked by repetitive large-scale ethnic strife and

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1 See, for example, Henry F. Carey, review of *Troublemakers or Peacemakers? Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building*, by Siobhan McEvoy-Levy, ed., *Political Science Quarterly* 122 No. 2 (June 2007): 355–364.

2 As was the case in Burundi in the context of the so-called ville morte (dead city) of Bujumbura that was left paralyzed by youth militias in 1996.

3 Siobhan McEvoy-Levy, “Youth as Social and Political Agents: Issues in Post-Settlement Peace Building,” Kroc Institute Occasional Paper #21, December 2001, pp. 4–5, available at [www.unoy.org/downloads/resources/YandP/2001\\_McEvoy-Levy.pdf](http://www.unoy.org/downloads/resources/YandP/2001_McEvoy-Levy.pdf).

4 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Programme of Action for Youth,” June 2010, available at <http://undesadspd.org/Youth/WorldProgrammeofActionforYouth.aspx>.

5 See The UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development’s Subgroup on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding, UN Peacebuilding Support Office, and Search for Common Ground, “Guiding Principles for Young People’s Participation in Peacebuilding,” April 2014, available at [www.sfcg.org/guidingprinciples](http://www.sfcg.org/guidingprinciples).

6 African Union, “African Youth Charter,” Article 11(b), July 2006.

7 Institut des Statistiques et d’Etudes Economiques du Burundi, “Enquête Démographique et de santé,” May 2012, p. 18.

8 The research is based on analysis of legal and/or policy documents and reports, and data collected from consultations with key actors. Thirty interviews were conducted with both officials and young people—including youth leaders as well as beneficiaries of youth-targeted initiatives.

9 For more discussion, see René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 55.

10 The country was ruled by successive military regimes as follows: Michel Micombero, 1966–76; Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, 1976–87; Pierre Buyoya 1987–93.

widespread human rights violations. While important figures in the decolonization process were recognized as youth leaders—including Burundi's independence hero, Prince Louis Rwagasore—the youth population today is more widely recognized for an enduring involvement in political violence across Burundi's post-independence history.<sup>11</sup>

On August 28, 2000, the *Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi* was signed in an effort to end Burundi's decades-long, ethnic-political conflict. Together with subsequent accords, the Arusha agreement represents Burundi's most advanced attempt toward political stability and transition to democracy. It laid down principles for a multiparty system and conditions for election processes.<sup>12</sup> Following the Arusha agreement, a transitional government shared power between the country's two main ethnic groups. Indeed, power sharing between the two main ethnic groupings as well as proportional representation within political institutions and the public sector were the central approaches to build peace.

On November 16, 2003, the government signed the Global Ceasefire Agreement with the National Council for the Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), the largest rebel movement led by Pierre Nkurunziza. The CNDD-FDD was then registered as a political party and integrated into political and administrative institutions, as well as the army and security administration. The 2005 elections brought a landslide victory for Pierre Nkurunziza as the presidential candidate of the CNDD-FDD. After his election, Nkurunziza announced an ambitious program revolving around reconciliation, good governance, the eradication of corruption, and

transparency. Less than a year later, however, the frequency of large-scale and gross human rights violations and corruption scandals reached alarming proportions.<sup>13</sup> The regime's governance and human rights record worsened with several arrests of political opponents and civil society activists as the 2010 elections approached.<sup>14</sup>

As a result, the preparation for the 2010 elections took place amid political tensions. Political violence increased with the three Hutu-dominated parties, the CNDD-FDD, the National Forces of Liberation (FNL), and the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) competing for the support of the Hutu majority electorate, and using their respective youth wings to instigate violence.<sup>15</sup> The elections resulted in an overwhelming victory for the CNDD-FDD with 64 percent of the vote. Immediately following the announcement of the results, twelve parties including the main opposition parties FRODEBU and FNL formed the Alliance des Démocrates pour le Changement (ADC), or Democrats' Alliance for Change. The parties jointly denounced "massive fraud" by the CNDD-FDD with the alleged complicity of the National Independent Election Commission.<sup>16</sup> They requested the organization of a new election and the replacement of the commission. In contrast to such claims, national and international observers recognized the elections as "free and fair" despite some minor irregularities that could not discredit the results.<sup>17</sup>

As mentioned, a power-sharing governance system was incorporated into Burundi's constitution as a central peacebuilding tool. Thus, Article 164 of the constitution provides that the National Assembly must be composed of 60 percent Hutu and 40 percent Tutsi members of Parliament (MPs), with a minimum of 30 percent women,

11 For a more detailed account of youth political manipulation and their active participation in outbreaks of violence, see former president and sitting Senator Sylvestre Ntibantunganya and the Forum pour la conscience et le développement, "Les Facteurs à l'origine des pratiques de manipulation et d'instrumentalisation des jeunes et les stratégies pour juguler ces pratiques," January 2013.

12 *Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi*, August 28, 2000, Protocol 4.

13 See, for example, Human Rights Watch, "Warning Signs: Continuing Abuses in Burundi," New York, February 2006; and Human Rights Watch, "We Flee When We See Them": Abuses with Impunity at the National Intelligence Service in Burundi," New York, October 2006.

14 See for example, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Rapports mensuels publics sur la situation des droits de l'homme et de la justice au Burundi," October/November 2008.

15 Human Rights Watch, "Pursuit of Power: Political Violence and Repression in Burundi," New York, May 2009; and International Crisis Group, "Burundi: Ensuring Credible Elections," Africa Report No. 155, Brussels, February 2010. Major Burundian political parties have youth branches, most of them with war-like denominations.

16 ADC-Ikibiri, "Mémorandum sur les irrégularités et fraudes massives des élections communales du 24 mai 2010," Bujumbura, 2010.

17 The European Union observer mission, for example, declared that the elections were generally in accordance with international standards. See Stef Vandeginste, "Power-Sharing as a Fragile Safety Valve in Times of Electoral Turmoil: The Costs and Benefits of Burundi's 2010 Elections," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 49, No. 2 (2011): 318.

while the Twa ethnic group is entitled to three representatives.<sup>18</sup> Similar quotas apply to the government's composition. Overall, the institutions put in place following the 2010 elections reflected the power-sharing regime in terms of ethnic, regional, and gender representation.

However, the political landscape following the 2010 elections left little room for pluralism. Within the political institutions, the CNDD-FDD had the required majorities to act unilaterally. Amid a “semblance” of political pluralism, the CNDD-FDD did not hesitate to adopt laws and policies on key issues unilaterally.<sup>19</sup> The ADC coalition weakened after the election, as key opposition leaders fled the country claiming threats of arbitrary arrest.<sup>20</sup> Although these leaders have been allowed to return, the narrowing of political space and increase in political intolerance continue to prevent opposition parties from engaging in many activities. For example, opposition party meetings are regularly cancelled by the administration.

In 2014, political tensions increased ahead of the 2015 elections, particularly over the CNDD-FDD unilateral project to revise the constitution, even touching key provisions on presidential term limits.<sup>21</sup> Violence involving political parties' youth wings, particularly the CNDD-FDD youth league known as the *imbonerakure* (“those who can see from far”), is reported daily in the media.

## Youth Peacebuilding Initiatives in Burundi

### TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

At the national level, a number of governmental initiatives seek to engage young people in activities relating to peacebuilding. The Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture is the central governmental

body in charge of youth policy and programs in Burundi. According to Burundi's youth policy, the ministry has the main objective of engaging youth in the implementation of peacebuilding, security, reconciliation, and statebuilding.<sup>22</sup> Specifically, it is tasked with promoting education and socioeconomic integration, sensitizing and promoting the ideals of reconciliation, peace, and human rights among youth, and enhancing youth participation in public affairs through the promotion of youth organizations, as well as income-generating activities.

These are common goals and objectives for dealing with youth issues in postconflict settings. In the Burundian context, however, most national initiatives are yet to be implemented. The country has a rudimentary national youth policy that provides effective means and tools for implementing the designed activities.<sup>23</sup> What is referred to as a national youth policy is actually a document addressed to the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the purpose of cooperation in the framework of the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sport of French-Speaking Countries. Therefore, it has a limited scope. For example, the document does not show how it fits and relates to Burundi's 2020 vision.<sup>24</sup> At the time of the research, a more meaningful policy document had been adopted by the Council of Ministers but remained unofficial.

Otherwise, most of the officially designed and state-initiated projects target thematic areas that are parallel to those undertaken by civil society groups and revolve around the following thematic areas: reconciliation; social and economic reintegration; civic education and education for peace; participation; and employment and entrepreneurship. Before discussing these initiatives, it is worth mentioning the role and function of the National Youth Council, which is presented as the main

18 Law No. 1/010 of March 18, 2005 pertaining to the promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic of Burundi, B.O.B, No. 3rd/2005, March 1, 2005.

19 International Crisis Group, “Fields of Bitterness (I): Land Reform in Burundi,” Africa Report No. 213, Brussels, February 2014; and International Crisis Group, “Fields of Bitterness (II): Restitution and Reconciliation in Burundi,” Africa Report No. 214, Brussels, February 2014.

20 This was the case for the former rebel leader Agathon Rwasa (head of FNL), the then deputy and CNDD chairman Leonard Nyangoma, and Alexis Sinduhije, a former popular journalist, and founder and head of the Mouvement pour la Solidarité et le Développement (MSD).

21 For more discussion, see Benjamin Chemouni, “The 2015 Elections in Burundi: Towards Authoritarianism or Democratic Consolidation?” Democracy in Africa (blog), February 2014, available at <http://democracyinafrica.org/2015-elections-burundi-towards-authoritarianism-democratic-consolidation/>.

22 International Council on National Youth Policy, “National Youth Policy of Burundi,” 1998, available at [www.youthpolicy.org/national/Burundi\\_2008\\_National\\_Youth\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Burundi_2008_National_Youth_Policy.pdf).

23 For a similar observation, see *ibid.*

24 The limited scope of the document clearly appears in comparison to the Rwandese national youth policy.

representation and coordination mechanism to ensure effective youth participation. Ideally, the council would play an important role in the implementation of youth-targeted initiatives and serve as a bridge between youth-led initiatives and policymakers. However, as explored below, the council's efficacy remains limited.

### THE LIMITS OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL

The National Youth Council is structured to operate both centrally and locally. The council's organizational structure is composed of a national committee as the central organ, and it is decentralized down to the hills (*collines*), the smallest administrative subdivisions of Burundi's territory, where the council composition is three members per locality.<sup>25</sup> Most council committee members at all levels are elected. As such, the youth council could be viewed as a legitimate representative body and an ideal channel for youth participation. However, the council faces several challenges that severely limit its effectiveness. First, it faces a lack of financial resources to function and undertake essential activities. Perhaps more importantly, it suffers from a lack of legitimacy due to its perceived politicization. Most youth leaders among civil society viewed the election process of council members as politically manipulated—leading to a council with close relations to the CNDD-FDD ruling party and its *imbonerakure* youth league.

In relation to resources, the youth council struggles to conduct very routine activities even at the central level. Membership to the committee is voluntary, and only one individual is employed to manage the council on a daily basis, due to limited funding allocations from the government. Further, the council has failed to organize statutory meetings aimed at youth participation in policy-design processes. An annual national youth forum

was to serve as a unique opportunity for large-scale youth participation. Its objective is to collect youth opinions and expectations to be submitted to the government. However, the annual meeting has been repeatedly canceled due to a lack of funds to cover the cost associated with the event.<sup>26</sup> The council's financial challenges reflect the scant attention given to youth issues more generally. Indeed, the council chairman reports that the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture is the most underfunded of all ministries, and the section on youth is the least funded of the three areas of youth, sports, and culture.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to these operational challenges, the youth council faces a lack of legitimacy among the young people it purports to represent. Many view the council as having close ties with the ruling party. It is, for example, commonly believed that affiliation to the CNDD-FDD youth league is a de facto prerequisite for being elected to the central committee. The council's enduring silence regarding youth issues does not perhaps help dissipate this kind of suspicion. The council rarely, if ever, expresses its position on youth issues—failing to work on or speak about the persistent political violence involving youth. As one commentator notes, tongue in cheek, “Of course one would wish the National Youth Council to give its opinion about what happens, and organize meetings between youth from various backgrounds and parties...but perhaps this is asking too much.”<sup>28</sup>

In addition to these external criticisms of the council, the council's own leaders believe that they are not meaningfully associated with the design and implementation of youth policies and youth-targeted programs. They admit to very often being informed of important decisions affecting young people only after the decisions have already been made by the government.<sup>29</sup> One illustrative

25 Burundi's administrative division is as follows: Seventeen provinces including the capital Bujumbura and 129 communes. At the lower level are zones and then hills (*collines*) as the lowest administrative division.

26 According to an interview with the National Youth Council chairman, Mr. Jean Petit Ndikumasho, Bujumbura, Burundi, February 10, 2014.

27 The Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture is composed of three directors general: The director general for youth, the director general for sports, and the director general for culture.

28 Author's translation of Roland Rugero, “Attention, les jeunes: la transition entre les âges risque de nous faire très mal,” *Iwacu*, October 10, 2013, available at [www.iwacu-burundi.org/jeunes-transition-entre-les-generations-burundi/](http://www.iwacu-burundi.org/jeunes-transition-entre-les-generations-burundi/). The observation was initially made by Senator and former president Sylvestre Ntibantunganya at the occasion of peace training sessions with different political-party-affiliated youth leagues as well as youth leaders in civil society. See Jean-Marie Ntahimpera, “Ntibantunganya contre le ‘dent pour dent’ (Ntibantunganya against the ‘tooth for tooth’),” *Iwacu*, September 27, 2013, available at [www.iwacu-burundi.org/jeunes-partis-politiques-ntibantunganya-contre-le-dent-pour-dent/](http://www.iwacu-burundi.org/jeunes-partis-politiques-ntibantunganya-contre-le-dent-pour-dent/). Professor Gertrude Kazoviyo expresses similar criticism, see Forum pour le Renforcement de la Société Civile (FORSC), “La Participation politique des jeunes dans la gestion du pays: Un Long Chemin reste à faire...,” August 8, 2014, available at [www.forsc.bi/index.php/85-actualites/145-la-participation-politique-des-jeunes-dans-la-gestion-du-pays-un-long-chemin-a-faire](http://www.forsc.bi/index.php/85-actualites/145-la-participation-politique-des-jeunes-dans-la-gestion-du-pays-un-long-chemin-a-faire).

29 Interview with the National Youth Council chairman.

example was the selection process of beneficiaries of a government-run internship program: rather than being consulted throughout the preparation and selection process, the council was informed when successful applicants had already been selected.

In this context and in view of the 2015 elections, leading youth civil society organizations are now campaigning for a quota to ensure direct youth participation in the key institutions that affect them. They draw inspiration from neighboring countries, such as Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda, where such policies exist. This may be perhaps the only way to ensure youth representation in a context where political parties pay very little attention to youth-oriented initiatives in their political agendas.<sup>30</sup>

#### CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND PEACE

There is an obvious need to promote mutual understanding, tolerance, and the ideals of peace and conflict resolution in Burundi. Although national officials can point to some state-led initiatives in this area, most concrete interventions involving young people come from youth-focused civil society organizations.

The Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture is theoretically tasked with organizing peace training sessions for youth, with a particular focus on those living in rural areas. Youth centers (*centres jeunes*) are the ideal places and framework for undertaking these activities. There is at least one center in each commune of the country, making it possible to reach a large youth audience including in rural areas.<sup>31</sup> However, in interviews for this study, both officials and youth representatives agreed that very few centers are fully functioning.

According to the ministry's general director for youth, a policy gap inhibits the centers' efficacy since the youth centers started out with a narrow mandate that has not been expanded. Created early in the aftermath of the conflict and with significant participation of actors focused on HIV/AIDS, the

centers initially promoted health and sexual education among youth.<sup>32</sup> An additional intention was that young people would participate in rebuilding infrastructures destroyed during the war. Constraints in terms of human and financial resources are also commonly cited as the key barriers to effectively running the centers. In fact, youth denounced the mismanagement of some of the existing centers by the local administration, sometimes using the centers' existing infrastructure for administrative services to the detriment of youth activities.

On the contrary, many youth-focused civil society organizations are actively implementing various projects and activities linked to peacebuilding.<sup>33</sup> These interventions are largely organized around the following topics: promoting dialogue and tolerance among youth; conflict resolution; civic engagement; and responsible citizenship. Organizing and facilitating meetings and dialogue among youth with diverse backgrounds is a common peacebuilding tool. Activities consist mainly of training seminars and workshops, and they target youth leaders, including university students affiliated with political parties.

Projects run by two leading youth nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are outlined here as examples of this kind of work. The organizations are the Forum pour la conscience et le développement (FOCODE) and Réseau des jeunes en action pour la paix, la réconciliation et le développement (REJA). In addition to the prominent role of these NGOs in implementing peacebuilding initiatives with youth, the projects were selected because of their scope and targeted goals. Most of the activities cover the period from 2010 to 2015, at least, thus allowing lessons learned from the current CNDD-FDD term to inform the 2015 elections.

FOCODE is a youth NGO that has its origins in the University of Burundi, led by prominent activist Pacifique Nininahazwe. It was created in 2001, against the backdrop of a 1995 ethnically driven massacre on the university campus, with the

30 FORSC, "La Participation politique des jeunes dans la gestion du pays."

31 Interview with the General Director for Youth, Mr. Isaac Ndayisenga, February 17, 2014.

32 Ibid.

33 For a list of peacebuilding organizations focused on youth participation, see Peace Direct, "Burundi: Guide to Conflict and Peacebuilding in Burundi," *Insight on Conflict*, available at [www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/burundi/?tag=young-people](http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/burundi/?tag=young-people).

aim of promoting reconciliation among youth leaders. Its mandate has expanded; since 2011, FOCODE runs two major projects: (1) engaging student leaders toward the ideals of peace and (2) mobilizing youth against political manipulation.<sup>34</sup>

From 2011 to 2012, FOCODE implemented a project on mobilizing young students around peace values in Burundi. Workshops were held in cities across Burundi: in Ngozi in the north, Gitega in the center, and Bururi in the south. Each workshop gathered nearly fifty young leaders from different political parties and civil society organizations. Each workshop closed with a press conference to share the key points and outcomes with the broader public and local communities. Drawing lessons from the project's findings, FOCODE launched a project from 2012 to 2013 aimed at raising awareness among youth about political manipulation. Activities included a national workshop on youth political manipulation, podcasts calling youth to resist political manipulation, and a training workshop on political tolerance for leaders of political parties' youth branches.

FOCODE's work in promoting youth participation and addressing political manipulation is increasingly important as the 2015 elections approach; such projects can encourage advocacy for more youth-sensitive political agendas in the upcoming campaigns. In addition to facilitating dialogue among youth with divergent views and opinions, such activities have the added value of providing an opportunity for public figures with a moral authority among the youth to address young people on issues of interest.<sup>35</sup> In fact, most workshops and training sessions were facilitated by leading personalities from political and civil society. Providing space for debates between young leaders and public and civil society figures considered to have a strong moral integrity can be very important in a context where the youth and the

population in general have lost their confidence in politicians.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, many young people believe they have very few role models among Burundi's current political actors.

REJA, a broad network of youth peace organizations, has youth-focused activities in each of Burundi's communes. With similarities to FOCODE's interventions, REJA carried out trainings for thirty young leaders on civic education with a particular focus on youth conduct in the context of the 2010 elections.<sup>37</sup> It aimed to train youth leaders who, in turn, will undertake peer education on civic engagement and responsible voting behavior among the youth in their communities. This work grew out of a UNESCO-funded project from 2008 to 2009, when REJA trained 150 young leaders in eight communes.

Both FOCODE and REJA are currently implementing projects to strengthen youth capacity building and identify youth priorities—ultimately seeking to engage political party leaders around youth-sensitive political agendas for the 2015 elections. FOCODE has commissioned research to assess to what extent current political parties' agendas and programs are responsive to youth priorities. One key finding of the study is that such programs pay little attention to youth issues.<sup>38</sup> Its ongoing work, accordingly, seeks to engage young people across the country “on what they expect from political parties and their platforms, how those expectations should be met, and what role they envision for themselves not only in crafting the platforms, but in helping bring them to fruition.”<sup>39</sup>

With regard to peace education tools, both NGOs use training sessions and seminars to foster a culture of tolerance and dialogue among young people. REJA encourages and financially supports projects that are communally designed and managed by young people from diverse

34 The organization receives funding from the US organization National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Dutch NGO Spark.

35 Figures include the Senator and former president Sylvestre Ntibantunganya; the well-known Brother Emmanuel Ntakarutimana, head of the National Human Rights Commission; and a leading civil society activist, Pacifique Nininahazwe.

36 One example commonly mentioned as an illustration of the growing mistrust toward the political elite is the 2006 national consultations on transitional justice, according to which an overwhelming majority of participants believed that the process would succeed if it was conducted by civil society together with faith-based groups, excluding politicians in any way.

37 REJA states it is composed of 164 youth NGOs—it is commonly noted, however, that many NGOs in Burundi are legally registered but do not exist on the ground in terms of activities. REJA works in partnership with the UN Development Programme, the UN Population Fund, UNESCO, the Dutch NGO Spark, the EU Delegation in Burundi, CARE International, and the Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development (drawn from REJA organizational documents on file by the author).

38 FORSC, “La Participation politique des jeunes dans la gestion du pays.” According to the study, only the MSD has a program specifically addressing youth issues.

39 See National Endowment for Democracy, “Burundi,” 2013, available at [www.ned.org/where-we-work/africa/burundi](http://www.ned.org/where-we-work/africa/burundi).

backgrounds, who represent different political parties and civil society.

### GETTING BEYOND THE ELITE

In the initiatives outlined above, a notable limitation is an almost exclusive focus on elite youth. In fact, most training sessions and seminars target leaders of youth groups. The underlying idea is that these leaders will, in turn, share competences and skills they gain among the youth they represent. But such a goal is hard to achieve given the absence of civil society at the grassroots level. This is a severe limitation, especially in a context where most youth violence is reported in rural areas. Youth NGOs like REJA claim to represent a large network of community-level groups and have undertaken or intend to plan activities reaching rural areas. However, without viable structures or networks at the grassroots level, the activities risk a sporadic character with limited impact in the long run.<sup>40</sup>

Promoting activism at the grassroots level among the youth and the populations in general could prove an effective strategy to engage politicians on these groups' priorities. In a context of a high illiteracy rate among rural populations, who represent the majority of voters,<sup>41</sup> political leaders usually campaign over populist measures rather than programs genuinely articulated around the people's needs and priorities.<sup>42</sup>

## Education: A Priority for Young People

The peacebuilding initiatives above are closely linked to education issues in Burundi. While the

challenges facing Burundi's education system is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth noting that educational accomplishment is indisputably a top priority among young people globally.<sup>43</sup> Empirical studies suggest that this is particularly relevant for Burundi: research on the vision of Burundian youth found that "education was the single issue that came up most in the conversations about how (young) people try to make it in life."<sup>44</sup> As they point out "it is at the heart of individual social mobility and family strategies for survival."<sup>45</sup>

In 2005, the Burundian government made primary education free, leading to increases in enrollment and greater gender parity. According to the 2012 UNICEF annual country report for Burundi, net enrollment in primary schools increased from 60 percent in 2004 to 96 percent in 2010–2011, and the ratio of girls to boys at primary level had reached 100 percent.<sup>46</sup> However, the education system is still facing challenges in terms of low completion rate and resource pressures as a result of the rapid growth in enrollment. In response, the government is implementing a new reform consisting of the extension of primary education from six to nine years in duration.

Despite these interventions, observers conclude that the education system is inadequate and that reforms are informed by incoherent policies and a lack of vision.<sup>47</sup> Further, the mismatch between training received and employment opportunities is cited as a cause of youth unemployment.<sup>48</sup> The World Programme of Action for Youth proposes that education should be "relevant to current and prospective employment conditions," but this is yet to materialize in Burundi.<sup>49</sup>

40 The lack of grassroots activism is a challenge to Burundi's civil society interventions in general. For ways of promoting activism and engaging youth and Burundi's diverse populations as agents for positive change see, for example, Nestor Nkurunziza, "The Potential for and Limits to an Approach from Below to Transitional Justice in the Burundian Context" (master's thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2012), 70.

41 The ruling party, the CNDD-FDD, is mainly voted for in rural areas.

42 For a study confirming a tendency "to vote by way of populist adhesion rather than for a particular political program" in rural areas, particularly as far as CNDD-FDD voters are concerned, see Hélène Helbig de Balzac, Bert Ingelaere, and Stef Vandeginste, "Voting Practices and Voters' Political Thinking during the 2010 Burundi Elections," Discussion Paper 2011-6, Antwerp, Belgium: Institute of Development Policy and Management, November 2011, p. 39.

43 According to the UN MyWorld 2015 survey, "a good education" came up as a top priority for youth. See United Nations Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, available at <https://crowdsourcing.itu.int/category/>.

44 Marc Sommers and Peter Uvin, "Youth in Rwanda and Burundi: Contrasting Vision," Special Report 293, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, October 2011.

45 Ibid.

46 See UNICEF, "Annual Report for Burundi 2012," available at [www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Burundi\\_COAR\\_2012.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Burundi_COAR_2012.pdf). For a critical evaluation of the free primary education policy, see Joseph Ndayisaba, "Gratuité de l'enseignement de base: Bilan et perspectives," Bujumbura, Burundi: Observatoire de l'action gouvernementale, January 2009.

47 See Fidele Rurihose, "Système éducatif Burundais: Crise, tâtonnements et incohérences," Observatoire de l'action gouvernementale, January 2001, available at [www.oag.bi/IMG/pdf/Etude\\_sur\\_le\\_systeme\\_educatif\\_burundais-2.pdf](http://www.oag.bi/IMG/pdf/Etude_sur_le_systeme_educatif_burundais-2.pdf). Sommers and Uvin observe an education system in shambles, and the national government's capacity to formulate and execute a coherent education policy is far lower. See Sommers and Uvin, "Youth in Rwanda and Burundi."

48 Burundi, Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan (PRSP) II (2011-2015), p. 11.

49 See United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World Programme of Action for Youth," pp.16–17.

## Youth Employment and Socioeconomic Integration

Unemployment and economic exclusion are recognized drivers of violence, particularly in nations with large youth populations like Burundi. There are no official unemployment statistics in Burundi, but a 2008 partial survey recorded that the unemployment rate in three urban centers was higher for those between fifteen and twenty-nine years of age, reaching 17 percent in Bujumbura, 11 percent in Gitega, and 7 percent in Kirundo.<sup>50</sup> According to the survey, those seeking a first job represented 60 percent of the unemployed. Drivers of unemployment factors may include “lack of a national employment policy, poor knowledge of the labor market, mismatch between training and employment, lack of access to credit, and absence of relevant vocational training programs.”<sup>51</sup>

Several initiatives to promote socioeconomic (re)integration of youth and address their unemployment have been undertaken by the government and within the private sector. With financing from partners such as the World Bank and the United Nations, the government has initiated work programs targeting vulnerable groups such as ex-combatants and returnees, partnering with NGOs for implementation.<sup>52</sup> The World Programme of Action for Youth recommends training programs for young people in individual and cooperative enterprises.<sup>53</sup> While these projects are rare in Burundi, ones promoting youth self-employment and entrepreneurship appear to be the most viable to bring young people into the economy. Burundi’s private sector remains small, and as a result, typical job skills training programs may have a limited impact in the socioeconomic context.<sup>54</sup> Encouraging entrepreneurship and youth self-employment is a critical way forward.

To this end, a nonprofit organization called the Burundi Business Incubator is implementing a project on rural youth employment.<sup>55</sup> At the time of writing, the project was in its initial phase in two pilot provinces—Bubanza in the west and Ngozi in the north. The project is comprehensive in design and aims to create 20,000 jobs by the end of its four-year cycle. Multiple actors are involved in the various aspects of the project offering specialized services.<sup>56</sup> Specifically, the project promotes job creation through trainings in business planning and offers coaching and technical assistance for young entrepreneurs individually or in associations. It also facilitates easier access to microcredit either individually, on a solidarity chain basis, or through cooperatives.<sup>57</sup> The target group is composed of youth aged between sixteen and thirty chosen according to various criteria, including vulnerability and belonging to marginalized groups.

Further microcredit programs could be an important component of delivering a peace dividend to young people in Burundi, as they could encourage self-employment and innovative paths into the economy. The government is debating the creation of a national microcredit fund for young people. However, a key challenge for new initiatives of this kind is transparency in the management of government-run projects. There is a general perception among youth that service delivery within governmental youth initiatives is governed by favoritism and majority party affiliation.

## Conclusion

Burundi is embarking on a peacebuilding process to address the legacies of its civil war. Given the country’s socioeconomic and political context, youth concerns need to be at the center of

50 Institut de Statistiques et d’Etudes Economiques du Burundi, “Enquête 1-2-3, Phase 1 : Enquête emploi, rapport d’analyse,” Bujumbura, Burundi, November 2008, available at [www.isteebu.bi/images/enquetes/enquete%20123.pdf](http://www.isteebu.bi/images/enquetes/enquete%20123.pdf). A larger scale survey was ongoing at the time of this study.

51 See Burundi, Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan (PRSP) II (2011-2015).

52 The Centre d’encadrement et de développement des anciens combattants (Training and Development Center for Ex-Combatants) is one youth organization worth mentioning. See [www.cedac.org.bi/index.php/en/home/2-uncategorised/6-wc-w](http://www.cedac.org.bi/index.php/en/home/2-uncategorised/6-wc-w).

53 See UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Programme of Action for Youth,” pp.16–17.

54 The PRSP II (2011-2015) identifies the existence of a small private sector as one of the major development challenges facing the country.

55 Burundi Business Incubator is a nonprofit organization founded by local financial institutions, enterprises, associations, and academic institutions.

56 The project involves Burundi Business Incubator, SPARK, the International Labour Office (ILO), Agro Business Chamber, and Opportunity Across Africa (OAA).

57 The project description, on file with the author.

peacebuilding programs for the country to achieve sustainable peace and stability. This study identified initiatives in this direction, although much more needs to be done. The National Youth Council exists as the main youth representative body to ensure youth participation. But the council faces operational challenges as well as a legitimacy deficit among the youth.

Interventions aimed at promoting the ideals of peace and mutual tolerance were identified mostly within civil society. These activities are of particular significance in the context of increasing political tensions ahead of the 2015 elections. More attention should be paid to youth in rural areas. Promoting youth activism at the grassroots level can significantly contribute in reducing youth violence, which is mostly observed in these areas.<sup>58</sup> It also can help hold political leaders accountable regarding youth issues, since the rural populations constitute the largest electorate.

Initiatives also exist that are aimed at addressing youth unemployment, and most of these initiatives were at their implementation phase at the time of the study. These interventions need to be monitored and evaluated on completion of projects and in the years to come.

Against this backdrop, a number of recommendations can be made for those seeking to support young people and contribute to a more peaceful society in Burundi:

- Ensure effective youth participation by

supporting and strengthening youth representation in governmental programs.

- Adopt a comprehensive and integrated national youth policy. At the time of the research, Burundi still had a rudimentary youth policy. An updated document recently adopted by the Council of Ministers was still under review at the time of research. Youth concerns should be given more priority and granted more national funding.
- Address governance issues, to ensure transparency in governmental youth programs and projects. The National Youth Council is the main youth platform. However, its effectiveness is limited due to a lack of financial support and perceptions of politicization of the council. The functioning of the council needs to be reviewed to address the legitimacy questions it faces among the youth whose interests it is supposed to represent.
- Promote civil society and youth activism at the grassroots level. Given high levels of illiteracy among rural populations in Burundi and youth violence in rural areas, grassroots activism is needed to promote the ideals of peace and civic engagement. Partially due to the lack of civil society organizations in rural areas, politicians pay little attention to the populations' needs—including youth priorities—in their political agendas, even though these communities constitute the largest electorate.

<sup>58</sup> Throughout 2014, most youth violence involving the *Imbonerakure* was reported in rural areas, particularly in northern provinces such as Kirundo.

## Statebuilding, Local Governance, and Organized Crime in Mali

Frank Okyere\*

Countries in the Sahel region are among the poorest in Africa, sitting at the periphery of the development spectrum, and at the heart of an expanse that is confronted by a complex web of state fragility, internal conflicts, and humanitarian, governance, and security challenges, including cross-border crime, increased threats of terrorism, and all forms of illicit activities.<sup>1</sup> Instability in the Sahel has culminated in multiple security challenges for several states in the region. Coupled with easy availability of weapons emanating from the crisis in Libya, these complexities have deepened “unholy alliances” in the Sahel region, which have created an enabling environment for multiple criminal enterprises that pose serious threats to states and populations at large.<sup>2</sup> Mali illustrates the convergence of terrorism and transnational criminal networks and the impact of this nexus on stability and statebuilding. Mali also typifies the nature of many African states, with authorities limited to metropolitan areas and with vast ungoverned or “alternatively” governed spaces, consequently marginalizing large areas of the population and opening up opportunities for exploitation by criminal networks.

This chapter highlights some of the challenges engendered by state weakness and its impact on local governance in the Sahel, and Northern Mali in particular. It also analyzes the complexity of transnational organized crime and its effects on statebuilding in the Sahel and local strategies to address governance deficits and crime. The increasing absence of the state and the emergence of alternative governance structures have contributed to a gradual re-conceptualization and trivialization of organized crime in marginalized communities, which complicates efforts to address it.

Due to the benefits that may be derived by local communities from organized crime and related activities, the case of Mali demonstrates a willful complicity in such activities, or at least some reluctance to address what is seen as a critical means of survival to a vast segment of the local population. In this context, local initiatives aimed at building governance, rather than aimed at reducing crime directly, may prove the most effective to reduce illicit activities and build a positive presence of the state in the long term.

### Governance and Organized Crime in Mali

Owing to their vast underpopulated territories and high levels of poverty, most countries in the Sahel have limited state capacities that are directed toward areas of high population and resource wealth. As a result, there is a wide gap between the state and local communities. Significant segments of communities in the Sahel have endured long years of marginalization as a result of high levels of centralized governance. Multiple security dilemmas have resulted that continue to pose complex challenges for these states. Porous borders expose Sahelian countries to multiple challenges, including drug, arms, and human trafficking, irregular migration, and the proliferation of terrorist networks. For instance, it is part of the operational strategy of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to occupy sparsely populated and “ungoverned spaces.”<sup>3</sup> AQIM has stretched its operational theater to cover other West African states and transformed its modus operandi by actively participating in the drug trafficking business, illegally taxing drug smugglers, recruiting

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1 UN Security Council, *Progress towards the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel: Report of the Secretary General*, UN Doc. S/2014/397, June 6, 2014.

2 Kwesi Aning, “Transnational Security Threats and Challenges to Peacekeeping in Mali,” *Conflict Trends* No. 2 (2014): 11–17, available at [www.accord.org.za/images/downloads/ct/ACCORD-Conflict-Trends-2014-2.pdf](http://www.accord.org.za/images/downloads/ct/ACCORD-Conflict-Trends-2014-2.pdf).

3 Kwesi Aning, “Potential New Hotspots for Extremism and Opportunities to Mitigate the Danger: The Case of the Sahel,” paper presented at the Pluscarden Program conference on “The Future of International Cooperation in Countering Violent Extremism,” Oxford University, 2010.

and training radical groups, and kidnapping for ransom.<sup>4</sup>

In early 2012, Mali experienced a severe political and security crisis, in a context of ongoing poor governance and socioeconomic fragility. The overthrow of the president by a military junta combined with the resurgence of a rebellion in Northern Mali was followed by the occupation of three regions in the north by Islamist groups. As a result, with little state control, Northern Mali is particularly vulnerable and appealing to criminal networks, as drug barons have virtually taken over Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu.<sup>5</sup> Although poverty is widespread across the Sahel, its effects on local ethnic populations are diverse. Typically, Tuaregs have been noted for a long history of trafficking both licit and illicit goods.<sup>6</sup>

The lack of government institutions, political authority, and border controls in Northern Mali has meant limited provision of critical social services and infrastructure, and has created space for alternative governance structures such as those led by tribal groups, religious authorities, communal organizations, insurgent groups, and other nonstate armed groups. These alternative governance structures, particularly those with a monopoly over the use of force—usually organized criminal networks—tend to control economic as well as political spheres in the communities. Transnational organized criminal networks lead and benefit from illicit activities of all kinds that often dominate the local economy. In a region where armed and uniformed personnel are perceived to represent the state, these actors often assume the functions of the state.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, “criminality and governance have become intertwined in some countries of the Sahel

and West Africa, and the systems of security and justice have been oriented to protect and facilitate illicit trade, creating an aura of impunity.”<sup>8</sup> In such an environment, a conspicuous division exists between citizens and the state as organized crime and illicit trafficking combine with corruption among state actors to become alternative and sometimes overlapping sources of legitimacy and service provision at the local level.<sup>9</sup> This argument is corroborated by an African Union study on drug trafficking and organized crime in West and Central Africa. The study indicated that West Africa and the Sahel are witnessing an important period of change in which an increase in organized crime and illicit trafficking is shaping socioeconomic dynamics as well as the nature of governance in the region.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the broad definition of what constitutes organized crime in policy circles conflicts with the understanding of the concept in some Sahelian communities, where engagement in certain forms of criminality is often glorified and considered as an enhancement of one’s social capital. Just as engagement in such criminality is partly a result of poverty, social deprivation, and general underdevelopment, the proceeds from such illicit dealings can benefit local communities in terms of provision of infrastructure such as educational and health facilities, donations for social gatherings, and charity.<sup>11</sup> Trafficking has thus become accepted among many as a source of livelihoods and wealth, as many residents in Mali broadly view the earnings through such activities as a sign of success rather than as criminal acts.<sup>12</sup> As a consequence of this notion of drug trafficking and illicit trade, young people appear to be increasingly partaking in criminal acts, with detrimental effects for society at large.

4 Lydia M. Amedzrator and Kwesi Aning, “An Overview of West Africa’s Security Situation,” in *Flexible Frameworks—Beyond Borders: Understanding Regional Dynamics To Enhance Cooperative Security*, edited by Federico Casprini, Sonia Lucarelli, and Alessandro Marrone, Brussels: NATO, 2014, pp. 90–98.

5 Boubacar Daouda Diallo, “Organised Crime in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger,” in *The Impact of Organised Crime on Governance in West Africa*, edited by Etannibi E.O. Alemika, Abuja, Nigeria: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013, pp. 85–94, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nigeria/10199.pdf>.

6 Interview with program officer, Special Program for Peace, Security, and Development in Northern Mali, Bamako, Mali, February 13, 2012. See also Kwesi Aning and Lydia Amedzrator, “Security in the Sahel: Linking the Atlantic to the Mediterranean,” in *Transatlantic Security from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa*, edited by Riccardo Alcaro and Nicoletta Pirozzi (Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2014), pp. 59–69.

7 Tuesday Reitano and Mark Shaw, “People’s Perspectives of Organised Crime in West Africa and the Sahel,” Paper 254, Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, April 2014, available at [www.issafrica.org/uploads/Paper254.pdf](http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/Paper254.pdf).

8 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

9 Reitano and Shaw, “People’s Perspectives of Organised Crime in West Africa and the Sahel.”

10 Mark Shaw, Tuesday Reitano, and Marcena Hunter, “Comprehensive Assessment of Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime in West and Central Africa,” Addis Ababa: African Union, January 2014.

11 Interview with a military instructor at Alioune Blondin Beye School of Peacekeeping (EMPABB), Accra, Ghana, November 2014.

12 Reitano and Shaw, “People’s Perspectives of Organised Crime in West Africa and the Sahel,” p.6.

## Organized Crime and Society

As noted by Kwesi Aning, “the most serious challenge to the survival of the Malian state is not only the influx of multiple trafficked goods but also the links and relationships among these transnational organized criminal groups.”<sup>13</sup> These linkages and relationships among criminal groups extend far into Sahelian communities. A close relationship exists between organized criminal networks and the local population in Northern Mali. The activities of transnational organized criminal networks are facilitated by the existence of a network of corrupt state officials as well as by local dynamics. By providing critical social services such as access to food and water, affordable health care, and education, organized criminal networks are able to gain social acceptance and legitimacy for their clandestine activities. Local communities, in turn, provide safe havens for these criminal groups. It is also common practice for organized criminal groups, terrorist groups, and insurgent groups to provide safe passage and run protection rackets for traffickers in return for a fee that is usually a fraction of the overall face value of the trafficked goods.<sup>14</sup> The financial gains from such “taxes” enable these groups to continue their activities and lead to traffickers impacting the public and private sectors as well as community institutions. Similarly, and even more critically, there is increasing co-optation of state officials, such as security service providers, into organized criminal business. This can lead to the capture of critical state institutions, compromising the neutrality and integrity of security services such as the army, the police, and the judiciary.<sup>15</sup>

Due to high levels of marginalization and inequality, and the absence of an effective state presence, communities and individuals have become susceptible to acting as support networks, and in some cases as willful participants, in

trafficking and smuggling activities. Quite worrisome is the fact that illicit activities are an important source of livelihood to a sizeable portion of the local populations. Consequently, smuggling and trafficking activities have been underplayed by such communities, which is also due to the blurring distinction between licit and illicit activities. Through the provision of logistical support services and intermediary functions, local people are inadvertently or otherwise coaxed into the informal and illicit economy. In Kidal, for instance, some local people are a valuable source of intelligence to organized criminal networks and are believed to cooperate with AQIM operatives.

In Northern Mali, several elements underpin the relationship between organized crime and communities that enable organized criminal networks to operate with impunity.

- **Assimilation through intermarriage with local communities:** Organized criminal groups can only successfully obscure their operations if they secure community support or benefit from sympathetic elements within the security services. Support for such networks is facilitated through exploitation of traditional Tuareg marriage rites, which grants terrorists traction within local communities. Marriage creates an opportunity for “strangers” to be accepted as part of the community within Tuareg cultural practices.<sup>16</sup> Thus, terrorists and traffickers earn the right to protection accorded to members of the family by marrying into the community. Through child bearing and the provision of goods and social services, such as education and health care, these groups are able to form stronger bonds with families and the larger community.<sup>17</sup> This has led to a growing antagonism between communities and local authorities and security personnel—who are often perceived as threats to the survival of families dependent on Tuareg smugglers, traffickers, and terrorist groups.

13 Aning, “Transnational Security Threats and Challenges to Peacekeeping in Mali.”

14 Ibid.

15 Etannibi E.O. Alemika, “Organised Crime and Governance in West Africa: Overview,” in *The Impact of Organised Crime on Governance in West Africa*, edited by Etannibi E.O. Alemika, Abuja, Nigeria: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013, pp. 15–33, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nigeria/10199.pdf>.

16 Kwesi Aning, “Potential New Hotspots for Extremism and Opportunities to Mitigate the Danger: The Case of the Sahel,” paper presented at the Pluscarden Program conference on “The Future of International Cooperation in Countering Violent Extremism,” Oxford University, 2010. This argument is contrary to Clionadh Raleigh and Caitriona Dowd’s assertions of “ethnic inaccessibility” whereby AQIM tried unsuccessfully to integrate into northern communities due to their rejection by native populations as “foreign.” See Clionadh Raleigh and Caitriona Dowd, “Governance and Conflict in the Sahel’s ‘Ungoverned Space,’” *International Journal of Security & Development* 2, No. 2 (2013): 1–17.

17 Aning, “Transnational Security Threats and Challenges to Peacekeeping in Mali.”

- **Cultural and religious ties:** The Tuaregs benefit from an extensive regional network to facilitate cross-border operations and trade. The use of a common language and similar cultural practices also opens several channels of interaction. Tuaregs rely on distant family ties to benefit from privileged treatment within communities. “The exploitation of religious sentiments is also an important part of the strategic processes terrorists and rebels use to connect with local communities. AQIM and its supporters use the medium of preaching to convert would-be members to their cause.”<sup>18</sup> In Kidal, two recruitment systems operate in parallel: marriage with local people and religious indoctrination, in which new converts are wooed into the “kind” of Islamic faith practiced by AQIM’s members.<sup>19</sup>
- **Exploitation of purchasing power:** The ability of terrorists and traffickers to purchase goods at prices above market rate also helps them to gain loyalty and support from the local communities where they operate. These groups also provide social welfare through supply of goods and services to sparsely populated and ungoverned regions. This can create a long-term bond between them and the local community, making them “legitimate” actors in such communities. They are able to pay for services that the average person cannot afford and bribe local officials and agents. Thus, it is not surprising that local government officials, particularly in the security sector, are complicit in the organized crime business. The financial inducements offered by criminal organized groups facilitate corruption from high-level to local government offices.

## Correcting Governance Deficits: International and National Approaches

Addressing governance defects in the Sahel, particularly in Northern Mali, requires the establishment of legitimate and functioning institutions capable of delivering critical social services and security. In these marginalized communities in the Sahel,

governance typically revolves around “the politics of bread and butter.” Thus, there can be no meaningful and effective measures to address the effects of organized crime on governance if local structures are not de-coupled from the grips of criminal patronage networks. There have been calls “for a renewed emphasis on ... decentralization and increased citizen participation, which provides a potentially useful framework to strengthen democracy and improve the socioeconomic situation for the people in the region.”<sup>20</sup>

At the international level, several initiatives also have been undertaken to support the Malian government’s efforts against corruption, drug trafficking, terrorism, and related security challenges. The European Union Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, the United States counterterrorism strategy, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Sahel strategy, and the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel all seek to address issues of poverty and underdevelopment, social exclusion, organized crime, and violent conflict. The African Union Strategy for the Sahel Region prioritizes the three core areas of governance, security, and development, and addresses issues such as: administrative decentralization; integration of nomadic communities; promotion of national cohesion through religious and traditional leaders; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of armed groups in Northern Mali; and security sector reform in the Sahel.

While this multiplicity of strategies in the Sahel demonstrates the commendable international attention to the region, there is a need to ensure effective coordination of these initiatives to avoid duplication of efforts and repetition of past mistakes. This could be achieved by focusing on the comparative advantages of the implementing actors. It is important to note, however, that the UN has made extra efforts to ensure coordination of these Sahel strategies by engaging in extensive consultations at the national and regional levels.

Another potential pitfall to avoid is the near exclusive reliance on state institutions by the donor

<sup>18</sup> Aning, “Potential New Hotspots for Extremism and Opportunities to Mitigate the Danger.”

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Mireille Affa’a-Mindzie, “For Progress in Mali and the Sahel, Local Governance Cannot Be Ignored,” *The Global Observatory*, March 5, 2013, available at <http://theglobalobservatory.org/2013/03/for-progress-in-mali-and-the-sahel-local-governance-cannot-be-ignored/>.

community to channel aid. Due to the challenge of weak institutions confronting many governments in Africa, regime security is often prioritized over human security. As a result, some external assistance is misdirected or misapplied due to improper design. The Special Program for Peace, Security, and Development in Northern Mali (PSPSDN) illustrates the effects of well-intentioned, yet poorly designed assistance programs. The program—backed by the EU, US, World Bank, and the UN Development Programme—envisaged the creation of eleven governance and development centers in Northern Mali, with a heavy focus on the security component. The program was situated in the office of the president, highly micro-managed by the presidency, and staffed mostly by military officers. Thus, the government used it to reassert state authority as well as reward political patronage networks in the north, neglecting the governance and development components.<sup>21</sup> The resulting militarization of the region was perceived as confrontational, igniting long-standing cleavages that contributed to the crisis in Mali. Furthermore, strengthening the capacity of government structures inadvertently supported corrupt officials complicit in organized crime.<sup>22</sup>

Addressing these lapses and correcting governance deficits call for the promotion of the political and economic inclusion of marginalized groups through deliberate policies that ensure the provision of social safety nets in Sahelian communities. In this regard, emphasis should be placed on strengthening and using nonstate actors as valuable partners in governance, security, and development. Nonstate actors, such as traditional and religious institutions, can be an important source of resilience in places where the state is absent or terminally weak. Due to their expansive reach and influence in cultural settings, nonstate actors can serve as an effective tool for local

governance and development.

Governments in the Sahel largely rely on top-down approaches to governance, which make it more difficult for local actors and groups to have a say in public life, even though their participation can help their governments' struggle against instability and extremism.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, power should be dispersed among a wider group of actors and institutions, including local leaders and civil society organizations, to control the excesses of state power and foster a culture of accountability. Decentralization through the promotion of local autonomy is integral to addressing long-standing Tuareg grievances. In this regard, both the Tamanrasset Agreement (1991) and the National Pact (1992), which granted special status for local and regional assemblies in the north, need to be revisited.<sup>24</sup> Again, decentralized governance would require implementing the provisions of the failed 2006 Algiers Accord, which was signed to address the Tuareg rebellion and the security challenges in the north.

## Local Efforts To Address Governance and Organized Crime

Increasingly, there is an appreciation of the role of local actors and civil society organizations in building local governance structures and addressing organized crime and security challenges in the Sahel. A number of local actors such as the National Coalition of Civil Society for Peace and the Fight Against the Proliferation of Light Weapons (CONASCIPAL),<sup>25</sup> the Malian Association for Survival in the Sahel (AMSS), and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding in Mali (WANEP-Mali) have initiated several projects to bridge the gap engendered by the absence of state institutions, particularly in Northern Mali.

21 Interview with an advisor, Office of the President of the Republic of Mali, Bamako, February 13, 2012; and interview with officials of the National Coalition of Civil Society for Peace and the Fight Against the Proliferation of Light Weapons (CONASCIPAL), Bamako, Mali, February 15, 2012.

22 The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, "Development Responses to Organized Crime," background paper for the Development Dialogue, The Hague, April 8-9, 2014, available at [www.globalinitiative.net/download/global-initiative/Global%20Initiative%20-%20Organized%20Crime%20and%20Development%20-%20Background%20Paper%20-%20April%202014.pdf](http://www.globalinitiative.net/download/global-initiative/Global%20Initiative%20-%20Organized%20Crime%20and%20Development%20-%20Background%20Paper%20-%20April%202014.pdf).

23 International Peace Institute, "Building Peace and Development in the Sahel and Maghreb: Enhancing the Political Participation of Women and Youth," panel discussion, November 5, 2014, available at [www.ipinst.org/events/panel-discussions/details/584-top-down-governance-hurts-women-youth-participation.html](http://www.ipinst.org/events/panel-discussions/details/584-top-down-governance-hurts-women-youth-participation.html).

24 Susanna D. Wing, "Mali's Precarious Democracy and the Causes of Conflict," Special Report 331, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, May 2013, available at [www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR331\\_Malis\\_Precarious\\_Democracy\\_and\\_the\\_Causes\\_of\\_Conflict.pdf](http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR331_Malis_Precarious_Democracy_and_the_Causes_of_Conflict.pdf).

25 Created in 1999, CONASCIPAL is an umbrella group of Malian civil society organizations (CSOs). Its member CSOs include the founding families of Bamako as well as civic, religious, women's, youth, and artisan groups. See "CONASCIPAL: Mali," Insight on Conflict, available at [www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/mali/peacebuildingorganisations/conascal/](http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/mali/peacebuildingorganisations/conascal/).

For instance, CONASCIPAL has undertaken several initiatives in the three northern regions of Mali since its creation in 1999. CONASCIPAL has developed a strategic plan to re-focus attention on decentralization as a new paradigm to address peace and security issues. Although it aims to promote peace and security in Mali, focusing on the control of small arms and light weapons proliferation within the area, its long-term goal is the reduction of armed conflicts and drug and human trafficking, among other organized crimes. To this end, in April 2000, an inter-regional workshop was organized in Gao on “the place and the role of civil society in the fight against the proliferation of small arms,” under the patronage of three High Commissioners in the regions of Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, a 2002 civil society campaign in the fight against insecurity and small arms proliferation resulted in the creation of an action plan to combat insecurity.<sup>27</sup> Issues of governance are also at the core of the organization’s activities. CONASCIPAL supports the strengthening of the capacity of civil society groups in Mali and also provides resources to generate increased knowledge and understanding of conflict dynamics, developing a joint strategy for their contributions to peace, security, and development as well as to address governance challenges.<sup>28</sup>

AMSS implements projects in close collaboration with local communities to ensure the promotion and development of grassroots initiatives and locally led design and implementation of development action.<sup>29</sup> The organization’s approach has largely focused on local empowerment and inclusive governance. AMSS has implemented projects such as the Walaikum Project for Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation in Northern Mali; Strengthening Youth Citizenship and Civil Capacity for Conflict Management; and the Peace, Security, and Women in Governance Program in Northern Mali.

The purpose of the Walaikum Project for Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation in Northern Mali is to create a viable network of peace officers that will influence the behavior of key actors in Northern Mali to promote and choose peace.<sup>30</sup> The Walaikum Project focuses on capacity-building activities, reconciliation, protection against remnants of war, and the fight against the recruitment of young people in armed conflict, including training of women’s groups, youth, imams, community leaders, leaders of community radio stations, and Koranic teachers and students. The involvement of local key actors is of paramount importance in achieving widespread receptivity.

Similarly, the AMSS initiative aimed at strengthening youth citizenship relies on the active participation of decentralized structures, organizations, and representatives to promote local ownership. AMSS participates in improving the living conditions of marginalized groups of women and youth in civic life and the reduction of poverty through income generation and growth initiatives such as the Cash for Work project. An emphasis on economic alternatives to crime and smuggling is key in Northern Mali, where there are few alternate sources of income. Without viable alternative employment and livelihoods, efforts to reduce organized crime could further alienate local communities from their state.<sup>31</sup>

Through the Peace, Security, and Women in Governance initiative of AMSS, local communities have developed employment opportunities for young people to prevent them from being co-opted by armed groups and drug traffickers. In this regard, vulnerable and at-risk youth have been identified and reintegrated into communities through the provision of socioeconomic alternatives. However, the changing dynamics of security threats in the Sahel have negatively affected the expected impact of some of these initiatives. The

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> CONASCIPAL Mali in partnership with Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

<sup>29</sup> The AMSS was founded in Bamako in 1991. From January 1992 to the present, AMSS has undertaken various programs in Northern Mali including the Community Development Program; the Shared Governance Program; Sustainable Management of Natural Resources Program; the Project on Increased Participation of Women in Public Life; programs on “Women and Politics”; Project on Governance of Local Organizations for Equitable Development (GOLDE); ProMali the North Project (promoting youth employment in Northern Mali); Strengthening of Civil Society for Peace and Development in Northern Mali; the Walaikum project (conflict mitigation based on “Do No Harm” approach); and the project on “Promotion of Effective Decentralization in Timbuktu.”

<sup>30</sup> The project is funded by USAID-Mali through World Education.

<sup>31</sup> Wolfram Lacher, “Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region,” *The Carnegie Papers*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 2012, p. 19, available at [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/sahel\\_sahara.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/sahel_sahara.pdf).

widespread availability of arms in the Sahel makes involvement in crime an easy option. While sensitization programs have made some positive gains in re-orienting youth perceptions of crime in the Sahel, the existing socioeconomic conditions continue to dictate local involvement in organized criminal activities.

In January 2014, WANEP-Mali launched a project on “Civil Society for a Human Security Strategy in Mali.” With this project, the organization asserts the belief that military action in Mali must be accompanied by “political dialogue, intra- and inter-communal dialogue, and the full involvement of the population as drivers of change.”<sup>32</sup> The project seeks to promote national ownership and build national capacities to prevent violent conflicts, as well as contribute to human security and sustainable peacebuilding efforts in Mali. A key component of the project is its focus on supporting a vibrant and resilient civil society to counter violent extremism and promote peacebuilding.

Through these local initiatives, local communities have developed mechanisms for nonviolent conflict management through dialogue between local peace actors. The implementation of these frameworks in previous years has facilitated the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence in local communities—despite the presence of criminal networks.

## Impact of Local Initiatives and the Challenges Ahead

Despite these efforts, the impact of the various initiatives to develop local capacities and promote social inclusion is not enough to offset the lure of organized crime to local communities, particularly for the youth. Furthermore, while addressing local governance challenges will significantly diminish the presence and activities of transnational organized criminal networks, there seems to be a dearth of initiatives to directly confront organized crime in the region. Several factors may account for

this deficiency or reluctance to address this complex issue. First, the sheer size and extent of infiltration of these criminal networks into both civil and political spheres may make any attempt to address it an uphill task for civil society organizations. Second, and as noted above, the benefits of organized crime for local communities make them unwilling to counter what is a source of livelihood to large segments of the population. Third, there is also the perception that the fight against organized crime is the preserve of security and law enforcement agencies, which are either absent in the region or often complicit in such activities.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

If peace and development efforts in the region are to succeed, then they need to shift away from a top-down approach and place citizens at the heart of their strategies. Citizen participation should be enhanced beyond elections to an ongoing process of consultation and involvement in decision making.<sup>34</sup> To reduce organized crime and conflict, local northern communities in Mali must be at the center of future approaches. Local groups who hold criminal actors responsible for the collapse of state institutions and isolate their networks are critical allies for peace and governance efforts. Organizations such as CONASCIPAL, WANEP-Mali, and AMSS are important examples of alliances of local people taking public positions against organized crime and its negative effects on governance. In light of the absence or complicity of formal state actors, these kinds of community-driven initiatives may prove to be the most effective way to contain criminal networks.<sup>35</sup> In this context, a number of lessons emerge from the Malian case for peacebuilding and statebuilding priorities:

- An effective approach to statebuilding and peacebuilding in Mali should start with addressing poverty and marginalization in the region. Fortunately, there are existing blueprints to address the root causes of underdevelopment and insecurity in Mali. Promoting political and economic inclusion of marginalized groups

32 West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, “WANEP at UN General Assembly Debate on Human Security,” June 18, 2014, available at [www.wanep.org/wanep/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=619:wanep-at-un-general-assembly-debate-on-human-security&catid=67:slide-show](http://www.wanep.org/wanep/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=619:wanep-at-un-general-assembly-debate-on-human-security&catid=67:slide-show).

33 Interview with a military instructor at Alioune Blondin Beye School of Peacekeeping (EMPABB), Accra, Ghana, November 2014.

34 International Peace Institute, “Building Peace and Development in the Sahel and Maghreb.”

35 Lacher, “Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region,” p. 19.

should start with implementing policies that ensure the provision of social safety nets for at-risk populations in the Sahel.

- To avoid the drawbacks of previous multilateral initiatives in Mali, it is necessary to realign all the Sahelian strategies with national priorities and local dynamics to incorporate each country's unique circumstances. For instance, the Nigerien government has developed a five-year strategy, since 2012, for development and security in the Sahelian-Saharan areas of the country that should guide external support, though civil society involvement is also crucial. In Mali, these strategies should ensure the implementation of

the agreements of the 1990s to address the Tuareg grievances that contributed to Mali's recent slide into violence and instability.

- More attention should be focused on developing local governance structures to bridge the gap created by the weaknesses of the state. While state capacity needs to be strengthened to ensure national ownership as well as visibility in remote areas, the demographic vulnerabilities and unique cultural settings of many Sahelian communities highlight the need to emphasize decentralized governance structures and the centrality of unarmed nonstate actors as a source of resilience.

## Local Alternatives after Election-Related Violence in Zimbabwe

*Webster Zambara\**

In February 2009, a coalition government was inaugurated in Zimbabwe, which stabilized the country after a decade of political crisis and sharp economic decline. The government was formed following the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in September 2008 by the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), and two factions of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition party.<sup>1</sup> Article VII of the GPA led to the creation of the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation, and Integration (ONHRI),<sup>2</sup> commonly referred to as “the Organ,” to spearhead peacebuilding efforts in a country that had witnessed extreme levels of election-related violence that resulted in hundreds of deaths and community trauma following the contested presidential and parliamentary elections in March and June 2008.<sup>3</sup> Sadly, this national initiative did not trickle down to rural communities due to continuing political polarization throughout the tenure of the unity government. As such, a need emerged to create bottom-up approaches to complement this national effort. The author of this chapter initiated one such initiative: the training of youth militia members in the principles of a nonviolent conflict resolution program called the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP).

This case study draws on research conducted during fieldwork in the rural Gutu District of Zimbabwe.<sup>4</sup> After describing the dynamics of election-related violence in Zimbabwe, the chapter turns to an illustration of the AVP approach and how it was launched in two wards of the Gutu District. In the district, the AVP training engaged

young people who had participated in the government-initiated National Youth Service (NYS), often the same young people who spearheaded election-related violence in Zimbabwe. A brief analysis of the immediate impact of AVP is provided, which argues that, if localized, the program has the potential to transform conflictual relations into peaceful ones. Finally, recommendations for civil society organizations and local peacebuilding actors are offered, based on the insights gained from the research and fieldwork experience.

### Dynamics of Election-Related Violence in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, election periods have become synonymous with violence, the worst being the inconclusive 2008 elections that left communities with deep physical and psychological scars. The violence only stopped when the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) intervened.<sup>5</sup>

The history of election-related violence in independent Zimbabwe can be traced to the first general election held in 1985, which was accompanied by widespread human rights atrocities targeting opposition candidates and their supporters. The violence intensified after the ruling ZANU-PF lost to the newly formed opposition MDC in a constitutional referendum of February 2000, and nearly lost in the highly contested and disputed parliamentary elections that followed in

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1 ZANU-PF, led by Robert Mugabe, was Zimbabwe's ruling party from 1980 until the advent of the GPA, and it was re-elected in 2013 in an allegedly flawed election. The MDC was formed in 1999 but split into two formations in 2005: the larger MDC-Tsvangirai, and the smaller MDC, led at first by Arthur Mutambara and later by Welshman Ncube.

2 The GPA was signed on September 15, 2008 by ZANU-PF and the two MDC factions.

3 “Zimbabwe Won't Prosecute Those Behind 2008 Violence,” CNN, August 9, 2010, available at [www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/africa/08/09/zimbabwe.mugabe/](http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/africa/08/09/zimbabwe.mugabe/).

4 For author's PhD study submitted to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

5 Pan-African Parliament, “The Pan-African Parliament Election Observer Mission to the Presidential Run-Off and Parliamentary By-Elections in Zimbabwe: Interim Statement,” June 2008, available at [www.pan-africanparliament.org/News.aspx?ID=352](http://www.pan-africanparliament.org/News.aspx?ID=352). See also Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM), “Preliminary Statement on the Zimbabwe Presidential Run-Off and House of National Assembly By-Elections Held on 27 June 2008,” June 2008, available at [www.sadcpf.org/](http://www.sadcpf.org/).

June of the same year. Among the most common forms of violence were assault, murder, kidnapping, arson, rape, looting, extortion, torture, bombing, bodily mutilation, and destruction of property.<sup>6</sup> The heavy electoral losses of ZANU-PF also triggered government-supported violent land invasions, dubbed the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme, targeting 4,000 white commercial farmers in Zimbabwe, who were accused of supporting the newly formed political opposition. Proponents of land reform christened it the Third Chimurenga (meaning third “revolutionary struggle”) to give it the status of what some considered the unfinished business of the Second Chimurenga, Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle.<sup>7</sup>

### THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE

At the same time, the then minister of youth, gender, and employment, Border Gezi, created the Zimbabwean National Youth Service (NYS) program. As such, NYS training centers are often referred to simply as “Border Gezi Training Centers.” The government promised that graduates would gain a sense of national pride and knowledge of their history, as well as skills suitable for employment. The intention was to instill “a sense of nationalism and patriotism,” and to make youths “proud of their culture, history, and country.”<sup>8</sup> Contrary to these ideals and claims that the youth training would be politically nonpartisan, there was overwhelming evidence that the youth camps were aimed at forcing a ZANU-PF view of Zimbabwean history and current events. All training materials in the camps consisted exclusively of ZANU-PF campaign materials and political speeches. The material was crudely racist, and it vilified the major opposition party, the MDC.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, despite government claims that the training would not impart military skills, military drills and training in the use of weapons were major elements of NYS training since the first

classes in August 2001. In July 2003, the government acknowledged its hitherto denied policy of weapons training for all trainees in the compulsory service, with the national army declaring itself as a concerned party in the training. The then minister of defence, Sydney Sekeramayi (reappointed after the disputed 2013 elections won by ZANU-PF), defended training in weapons use, arguing that all youth trainees would form a reserve force to defend their nation when the need arose. This also linked with government rhetoric that pronounced that the youth militia must defend the country against imperialists and neocolonialists. Combined with ZANU-PF’s political pronouncements that Zimbabwe has enemies within, including the alleged neocolonialist opposition party MDC, it was not surprising when those believed to be MDC supporters were the most common targets of youth militia attacks.<sup>10</sup>

Since January 2002, the youth militia has been one of the most commonly reported violators of human rights in Zimbabwe, with accusations including murder, torture, rape, and destruction of property levelled against them. It has been used by ZANU-PF as a campaign tool with impunity and implicit powers to mount roadblocks, disrupt MDC rallies, intimidate voters, and set up bases to conduct political re-orientation classes for known or suspected supporters of opposition political parties (these often became centers for illegal interrogation and even torture).<sup>11</sup>

Other activities by the youth militia include the politicization of government food handouts and the denial of access to basic services, such as health care, to political opponents, real or imagined, on partisan grounds. The militia has an ambivalent relationship with law enforcement agencies, including the police and the army, but more often works under the direction of veterans of the liberation war. Conspicuous with their green uniforms from which the derogative term “Green Bombers”

6 The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF), *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report of the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980 to 1988* (Harare: CCJPZ and LRF, 1999).

7 The First Chimurenga refers to the 1890s revolt against the British South African Company.

8 Solidarity Peace Trust, “National Youth Service Training – ‘Shaping Youths in a Truly Zimbabwean Manner’: An Overview of Youth Militia Training and Activities in Zimbabwe, October 2000-August 2003,” September 2003, available at [www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth\\_militia.pdf](http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth_militia.pdf).

9 See Richard Smith, “Fear, Terror and the Spoils of Power—Youth Militias in Zimbabwe,” Johannesburg, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, March 2005.

10 Solidarity Peace Trust, “An Overview of Youth Militia Training and Activities in Zimbabwe.”

11 See Brian Raftopoulos and Alois Mlambo, eds., *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-Colonial Period to 2008* (Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2009).

emanated, the youth forces have become a menace in many urban and rural communities. Apart from committing crimes against political opponents, youth militia members have become notorious even to family members and neighbors.

Political violence perpetrated by the youth militia reached unprecedented levels around the June 2008 presidential run-off election. After a relatively peaceful election in March 2008 in which the MDC defeated ZANU-PF,<sup>12</sup> a five-week delay in announcing the presidential election results fueled suspicions of manipulation of the outcome. When the results were finally released, there was no outright winner. This outcome entailed a run-off election between MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai and ZANU-PF's Robert Mugabe. A wave of politically motivated violence erupted in several parts of the country and prompted Tsvangirai to withdraw from the June run-off election citing violent ZANU-PF retribution against his supporters. Although the run-off election went ahead and Mugabe was declared the winner, election observation teams from SADC and the AU's Pan-African Parliament were unanimous in condemning the June 27th run-off election as neither free nor fair.<sup>13</sup>

Hundreds of opposition party activists and supporters, mainly from the MDC, were killed in the 2008 elections; thousands were injured; and thousands more were displaced.<sup>14</sup> Gutu District did not escape this violence. Indeed, it became one of the epicenters of the 2008 election violence because four out of five constituencies in the district were won by the MDC. In Wards 1 and 2, bases were set up by the youth militia, and serious human rights violations were committed by local young members.<sup>15</sup> These are the young people whom the AVP training targeted, and changing their attitudes toward violence was the ultimate objective of training them in nonviolent methods of conflict resolution.

## GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO PROMOTE PEACEBUILDING AFTER THE 2008 ELECTION-RELATED VIOLENCE

The violence that followed the March 2008 election and the disastrous run-off in June of that year prompted SADC to embark on new mediation efforts with the blessing of the AU. In September 2008, following a prolonged mediation process facilitated by former president of South Africa Thabo Mbeki, the three political parties represented in parliament signed a Global Political Agreement (GPA), with SADC and the AU as guarantors. The GPA was meant to stabilize Zimbabwe politically and economically, and led to the creation of a power-sharing coalition government that was inaugurated in February 2009, as noted above. This arrangement came to an end in July 2013 after another disputed election in which MDC lost to ZANU-PF, amid allegations of serious irregularities in how the plebiscite was conducted.<sup>16</sup>

But an important aspect of the GPA was Article VII that was specific on the creation of a mechanism to promote "equality, national healing, cohesion, and unity." In that regard, the unity government had an Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation, and Integration (ONHRI) whose aim was based on Article VII to "strive to create an environment of tolerance and respect among Zimbabweans and that all citizens are treated with dignity and decency irrespective of age, gender, race, ethnicity, place of origin, or political affiliation."<sup>17</sup> Article XVIII was more specific, as the leaders agreed that "all political parties, other organisations, and their leaders shall commit themselves to do everything to stop and prevent all forms of political violence, including by non-state actors, and shall consistently appeal to their members to desist from violence."<sup>18</sup> It was therefore an institution created to promote peacebuilding in the aftermath of election-related violence.

12 Pan-African Parliament, "The Pan-African Parliament Election Observer Mission to the Presidential Run-Off and Parliamentary By-Elections in Zimbabwe: Interim Statement." See also Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM), "Preliminary Statement on the Zimbabwe Presidential Run-Off and House of National Assembly By-Elections Held on 27 June 2008."

13 Ibid.

14 See Lloyd Sachikonye, *When a State Turns on its Citizens: 60 Years of Institutionalised Violence in Zimbabwe*, (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2011).

15 The forms of violence included murder, rape, torture, assault, kidnapping, and denial of access to resources, in particular food, to perceived or actual members of the opposition. See *ibid.* See also, "SADC, JOMIC, Zuma Please Note, and Act," *The Zimbabwean*, December 7, 2011, available at [www.thezimbabwean.co/news/africa-news/50814/quotsadc-jomic-zuma-please-note.html](http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/africa-news/50814/quotsadc-jomic-zuma-please-note.html).

16 Zimbabwe Election Support Network, "Report on the 31 July 2013 Harmonised Elections," Harare, 2013, available at <http://263chat.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ZESN-2013-Advance-Harmonised-Election-Report.pdf>.

17 Global Political Agreement, Article VII, September 15, 2008. The GPA was signed by the three political parties represented in the Zimbabwean parliament that led to the creation of the inclusive government.

18 Global Political Agreement, Article XVIII, September 15, 2008.

Unfortunately, in the four and a half years of its existence, the ONHRI failed to make any tangible impact through its efforts to promote peacebuilding. The failure of such a national initiative to trickle down to rural communities often created a vacuum that was filled by localized community interventions, such as the AVP approach, which acquired a greater imperative.

## Alternatives to Violence Project

The AVP has its origins and philosophy tied to the Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, but it is not a sectarian organisation. The program began in 1975 in the New York State prison system in the United States of America. Its first workshop was held in Green Haven Prison.<sup>19</sup>

AVP begins with two assumptions: firstly, that conflict, while natural to all human interaction, does not have to be destructive but can be a source of positive change and growth; secondly, that societal injustice lies at the root of most violent conflict. AVP therefore has a two-pronged approach to nonviolence: (a) changing attitudes toward conflict; and (b) addressing the injustices at the root of the violence. Many children grow up surrounded by violence, and they learn to see violence and abuse of power as normal and effective responses to conflict. Violence often appears to be the only option available when responding to conflict. AVP teaches that conflict does not need to be avoided and does not need to be met by violence. Instead, conflict can be addressed directly and constructively. In the ideal, conflicts can be resolved with “win-win” solutions that meet everyone’s needs.

Nonviolence is not just a state of mind or an attitude toward conflict; it is a commitment to actively change the forces or situations that degrade or oppress people; and it is a commitment to address violence at its roots. AVP teaches that the best way to overcome injustice is to come together as a community and turn to each other as resources for change. This grassroots approach to ending

injustice emphasizes that change is possible if communities unite and that each person has an important role to play in the process. The situation in Zimbabwe was ripe for such an intervention, and the training of youths in AVP, particularly youth militias, could contribute positively to changing their attitudes toward conflict, as well as empowering them to nonviolently confront the root causes as a means to build more peaceful communities.

The AVP approach is guided by its mission statement that it is “a multicultural volunteer organization that is dedicated to reducing interpersonal violence in [our] society.”<sup>20</sup> AVP workshops present conflict management skills that can enable individuals to build successful interpersonal interactions, gain insights into themselves, and find new and positive approaches to their lives. The AVP program offers experiential workshops that empower people to lead nonviolent lives through affirmation, respect for all, community building, cooperation, and trust. Each workshop lasts from eighteen to twenty hours over a two- or three-day period.

The fundamental objectives of AVP are to encourage individuals to take responsibility for themselves and the consequences of their behavior; to serve as one another’s community; and to find nonviolent options other than “fight or flight” when faced with conflict.<sup>21</sup>

### THE AVP MODEL

AVP offers workshops on three levels—Basic, Advanced, and Training for Facilitators—that are modeled along the following guidelines:<sup>22</sup>

- **Experiential learning and reflection:** The AVP program teaches through experiential learning with minimum lecturing. It is structured in such a way that each participant’s experience is recognized and becomes the basis of learning. This also ensures that each participant feels valued. While intellectual knowledge is recognized, it is generally not helpful in the midst of conflict, whereas replicating nonviolent behavior that has been previously practiced is helpful. Role plays are a key focus of AVP

<sup>19</sup> Alternatives to Violence Project/USA, “AVP Basic Manual,” 2002, available at [www.avpusa.org](http://www.avpusa.org).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

workshops. They help participants to discover new ways of dealing with conflict nonviolently and give them an opportunity to practice and reflect on new behavior. In this case, this approach helped to thaw the tensions among participants coming from adversarial political persuasions.

- **Volunteerism:** A fundamental requirement of AVP is voluntary participation on both individual and institutional levels, because when a program is made a requirement or is imposed by others, it may be ineffective.
- **Training manuals:** Manuals were organically developed from growing experience in training workshops. The AVP training manuals are in a constant state of evolution and updating with creative ideas. In that regard, the manuals themselves do not limit the facilitator's creativity but allow for innovation to capture the context and dynamics of the participants. As such, the manuals were useful even though the context was in Zimbabwe's Gutu District, far away from the origins of AVP.
- **Bottom-up approach:** The AVP model is one of building upward from the grassroots. It is not about hierarchy but about community, about acknowledging and encouraging the potential for growth and development, and about working together by agreement and without coercion. The concept of community building as envisaged by the AVP model was vital since Gutu District, particularly Wards 1 and 2 where the research took place, was essentially polarized along political affiliations. Such polarization had created hierarchies that eventually became structures of coercion during periods of political contests. The bottom-up approach advocated by AVP has potential to transform the existing infrastructures of violence into infrastructures of peace.<sup>23</sup>
- **A "win-win-win" model:** The participants win because they receive the training they need to cope with violence. The AVP facilitators win because they have an opportunity to improve

their leadership and training skills, and gain new insights about themselves, other people, and a nonviolent life. Communities also win, as their lives are enhanced when their members learn new skills to cope with violence and build community. In this study, it was envisaged that training youths in Gutu District in AVP would eventually result in a win-win-win situation.

Considering that AVP is continuously evolving, the list of principles and processes above is not exhaustive. As new communities embrace the values of AVP, variations emerge as the program adapts to meet the dynamics of different contexts. AVP "seeks to offer trainees the opportunity to learn about different ways of dealing with violence and conflict," and it is a program that rests on "five pillars" of affirmation, cooperation, communication, community building and trust, and transforming power.<sup>24</sup>

The bedrock on which AVP rests is the concept of transforming power, which is able to transform violent and destructive situations and behavior into liberating and constructive experiences and cooperative behavior.<sup>25</sup>

## TESTING THE IMPACT OF AVP

AVP was introduced in Zimbabwe in May 2008 at the peak of election-related violence that engulfed the country that year. A number of Zimbabweans were already familiar with AVP in their individual capacities.<sup>26</sup> Some participated at AVP International Gatherings held in South Africa in 2006 and in Kenya in 2008, but no comprehensive program using the concept was introduced in Zimbabwe until the author's own training initiative from August 2009 to July 2011. The training involved thirty-two youths from various political affiliations who were involved in politically motivated violence as victims or perpetrators, a quarter of them female.

## METHODOLOGY

Among other data collection methods that I employed, I placed two groups of youths who included militia members into an experimental

23 See John Paul Laderach, "Identifying Key Actors in Conflict Situations," in *Peace-building: A Field Guide*, edited by Luc Reyhler and Thania Paffenholz (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001), pp. 145–156.

24 Alternatives to Violence Project/USA, "AVP Manual."

25 Ibid.

26 The author first encountered AVP in 2005.

group and a control group and subjected them to pre- and post-test experiments. The main purpose for conducting pre- and post-tests was an attempt to answer the following question: Can training in nonviolence influence behavioral change in a person who would otherwise react to conflict in a violent way? To try to answer this question, I subjected youths in the experimental group to a pre- and post-test experiment where they responded to a conflict quiz before and after each of the three AVP training sessions. For comparative purposes, youth in the control group who were not trained in AVP answered the same set of questions.

I combined questions from the Kraybill Inventory<sup>27</sup> with insights from other conflict-handling inventories to come up with a conflict quiz with twenty statements corresponding to the five distinct conflict styles (avoiding, forcing, problem-solving, compromising, and harmonizing) presented in a random order. The twenty statements aimed to elucidate each participant's conflict-handling styles from among the five—from their most-used strategy to their least-preferred strategy.

Although the conflict quiz asked what the youths would do when in a conflict, their responses reflected their behavioral intentions rather than actual behavior. It was not certain that such intentions would automatically translate into their behavior in real-life circumstances. Given this, the classical experiment in this study limited itself only to monitoring possible changes before and after training in AVP, particularly among the experimental group. If any significant changes could be observed, then one could assume that training in AVP would have been the stimulus for change. However, such changes can only be regarded as immediate results as they were specifically linked to the training itself, while their behavior in later life might be different.

The data collected from the pre- and post-tests could not give a scientific explanation as to why AVP could produce change beyond a comparison

of attitudes before and after AVP. In an attempt to gain more insights into the impact of AVP on the participants, as well as devising a way to validate the findings, participants in the experimental group were asked to write self-reports of how training in AVP had impacted on their attitudes to conflict in particular, and their lives in general. I borrowed the idea of focusing on the narrative aspect of the impact of AVP from the work by Ivar Halfman and Tijn Couzij.<sup>28</sup> Another hint was by Ronald Kraybill, who encourages users to “take numbers lightly.”<sup>29</sup> He proposes that numbers should be thought provoking but not the final word, and he invites people to trust their own honest self-reflection as a guide and to use the inventory to think about options for the future rather than as a statement of who they are. In view of this fact, selected excerpts of the participants' self-reports from the experimental group are provided in Boxes 1, 2, and 3 on page 39. Self-reports were not requested from participants in the control group, because they did not have the same stimulus (AVP) to which they could compare their attitudes before and after.

#### COMPARISON BETWEEN EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS

The most important finding for this study was that the experimental group had a complete shift away from force among the participants. In the same period, no significant change occurred among the control group. And the only obvious reason for the difference between the experimental group and the control group was the attitude change induced by AVP as the stimulus. This was validated by the experimental group participants' self-reports, discussed below.

The other significant shift was how training in AVP bolstered the experimental group's inclination toward problem-solving strategies. Even though the trend increased in both groups, that of the control group was minimal, while that of the experimental group rose significantly and remained very high throughout the training period.

27 The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory was developed by Ronald Kraybill in 2005. It borrows from the widely used Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (1974). See Ronald Kraybill, *Style Matters: The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory* (River House ePress, 2011), available at [www.riverhouseeypress.com/](http://www.riverhouseeypress.com/).

28 Ivar Halfman and Tijn Couzij carried out evaluations of AVP workshops in South Africa in 2008. They concluded that the impact of AVP workshops was better understood from participants' narratives than by other methods.

29 See Ronald Kraybill, *Style Matters: The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory*, p. 5.

From this trend, one could reasonably conclude that it was the AVP stress on seeking a nonviolent solution when in a conflict that gave the impetus to shift and maintain the resolve to use problem-solving methods.

Another important difference was in the participants' inclination toward avoiding conflict. In the experimental group, this fell and remained low for the one and a half years of observation during the study. On the contrary, conflict avoidance remained high among participants in the control group. Again, this difference can be attributed to training in AVP, which teaches that nonviolence is not passivity but a method that involves respect for the worth of every person and actively seeks justice for all. On top of that, AVP does not encourage allowing some people to take advantage of others but teaches that everyone's rights are worthy of respect and that they are entitled to be appropriately assertive.<sup>30</sup> A sustained reduction in the experimental group's inclination toward conflict avoidance was a desired change directly influenced by AVP as the stimulus. A similar trend also was observed with the inclination toward compromising, which went down gradually in the experimental group but increased in the control group. This is because AVP trains people to be able to transform hostility and destructiveness into cooperation and community. As such, one can conclude that training in AVP taught participants in the experimental group that compromising may not be the best option.

Comparing the pre- and post-test results of both the experimental group and the control group was the main strategy from which I expected to get important insights into how AVP could influence changes in attitudes toward conflict, as discussed previously. However, I realized that more important insights could be learned from the participants themselves reflecting and sharing their feelings and experiences before and after training in AVP. To achieve this, participants in the experimental group were requested to write self-reports before and after the training, a selection of which are discussed below.

## PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES

The pre- and post-test experiments for both experimental and control groups gave some important insights into the participants' attitudes toward conflict and the styles they would most likely choose. The positive changes observed among participants in the experimental group can be attributed to the immediate impact of training in AVP, as discussed above. However, as alluded to earlier, not a great deal can be read from the numbers that show the participants' shift in inclination. Deeper insights were, instead, gained from the participants' own narratives of how AVP had impacted on their attitudes toward conflict in particular, as well as in their lives in general. In the boxes on the next page are excerpts from selected narratives, followed by a discussion of the observations that I noted throughout the training process.

The three boxes on the next page are self-reports of participants who were youth militia members trained in the NYS and were my main targets after reports had emerged that they were the key actors in perpetrating politically-motivated violence and other human rights abuses in Gutu District. There is a similarity in all three as they reflect on their lives before and after training in AVP. Their reflections are consistent with a change from combativeness toward cooperation.<sup>31</sup> More importantly, these self-reports provide convincing evidence that training in AVP can be a sufficient stimulus to transform a person's attitude toward conflict from a violent to a nonviolent predisposition. As the AVP program stipulates, the high level of violence among people is in part a response to the violence embedded in our institutions and values, yet it teaches that in the universe there is a power that is able to transform hostility and destructiveness into cooperation and community.<sup>32</sup> The training that the youth militias underwent in the NYS contributed to the lifestyles that they reflected before AVP, which suggest that violence was embedded in their lives. Their personal "confessions" also corroborate the allegations of politically-motivated human rights abuses that they inflicted on the communities in Wards 1 and 2 of

30 Alternatives to Violence Project/USA, "AVP Manual," p. A-2.

31 Morton Deutsch, "Cooperation and Competition," in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, edited by Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman, and Eric C. Marcus (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006) pp. 23–42.

32 See Alternatives to Violence Project/USA, "AVP Manuals," 2002, 2013.

**Box 1. Impact of AVP on participant 1**

<p><b>Before AVP</b></p> <p>Since I was a ZANU-PF party youth leader in Gutu West Constituency, I used to torture people who did not belong to my party. I did not care about the social position of anyone who was not supporting my party. I developed a spirit of individualism. People used to call me “Boss,” and I was very proud of that. It could not take me time to beat or fight if someone did something that I regarded as wrong. I also fell in love with married women.</p> <p>Before AVP I could not share anything or ideas with others. I could not let anyone argue with me. I thought that was a sign of disrespecting me and my position. I was not even able to use “I message” [a key concept in AVP used to train communication skills] in any dialogue.</p>	<p><b>After AVP</b></p> <p>I am now a kind of leader who can share ideas and what I have or possess with others. I now hate violence. I learnt to respect other people and respect the position of others, and I am no longer interested in prostitution. I learnt to use “I message,” and I am applying it whenever I have dialogue which needs “I message.” Because of this, I was even promoted to the post of Gutu District youth leader, and I am very much proud of what I am. I now hold some conferences with youths teaching them not to fight or beat others in politics. If I happen to meet anyone who criticises my party, I share ideas with him/her with the intention to promote oneness. AVP workshops brought change in my life. I wish the whole country could receive what I learnt.</p>
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**Box 2. Impact of AVP on participant 2**

<p><b>Before AVP</b></p> <p>Before participating in AVP, I was a person who was generally cruel. My only solution to anyone who would have wronged me was to beat him/her up. Also, when I was with the other boys I would so much encourage violence. I would not allow anyone to go against my wishes. My life was full of arguments and use of force.</p>	<p><b>After AVP</b></p> <p>AVP is a program that has changed my life and how I relate with my neighbors. It has led me from a life of violence to a life that is good. I feel like AVP has had a born-again effect on me, getting me out of bad habits. I now have a forgiving heart. Today as I walk, people now see my humane side as I now agree with other people’s wishes as well.</p>
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**Box 3. Impact of AVP on participant 3**

<p><b>Before AVP</b></p> <p>Personally, I was a person who lacked knowledge of how to live well with others in life. As people, we often hate each other for nothing, and sometimes we act out of ignorance.</p> <p>I used to do wrong things to others. I was not polite to others, and I believed that violence was a solution whenever there was a problem.</p> <p>I could not relate with supporters of MDC because I support ZANU-PF. I was always shouting at my wife and my neighbors. I also confiscated other people’s belongings and never returned them. And I had general hatred of those people who are not Zimbabwean.</p>	<p><b>After AVP</b></p> <p>From today, the 18th of April 2011, which is also the day of our national independence, I can declare that I am now a new person. I now have knowledge that, if I want to do anything, I can consult to find out whether it is good or bad. I now consider the feelings of others when I do anything. This AVP program has taught us to live in peace.</p> <p>Probably the most important lesson for me is that I can live alongside supporters of opposition political parties without violence. I learnt that there are other ways of approaching them and luring them to support the president without having to beat them.</p>
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Gutu District. Nevertheless, while there is no guarantee that these self-claimed attitude changes are indeed lifelong changes, it can be reasonably argued that institutions such as churches and civil society organizations can use AVP to inculcate a culture of nonviolence that can potentially build a more peaceful Zimbabwe.

## Conclusion

This case demonstrates that training in nonviolence contributed to peacebuilding at the community level in rural Zimbabwe. By training youths in AVP, the program contributed to transforming power dynamics—from the power to use violence to the power to build community peace and development. Overall, nonviolence training such as AVP holds great potential to rehabilitate youth militia members in tense and divided local contexts.

By the time the youth camps were disbanded in Zimbabwe in 2007 (largely due to lack of funding to support them at the height of the economic meltdown), more than 80,000 youth militias had graduated from the NYS. The elections held in 2013 to end the unity government were largely peaceful, and many in the community of Gutu, where this research took place, attributed it to the AVP workshops even though there were other variables that contributed as well. Currently, no remedial program has been created to rehabilitate the youth militias. However, six of the trained militias have since been recruited into the national army. If more programs such as AVP are implemented at the community level, then civil society organizations and other actors may reach out to the recruitment ground of the security sector and a more peaceful Zimbabwe can be possible.

Besides helping to build peaceful communities after electoral violence in Zimbabwe, this study has important lessons to those initiating peacebuilding processes at a local level. As a rule of thumb, it is important to take time to earn the trust of the locals before embarking on a peacebuilding program. Where there is trust, there is an increased likelihood for truth to emerge, which is critical for peace and community healing.

Many civil society actors working to promote

human rights, peacebuilding, and civic education in rural Zimbabwe have cited the political and legislative environment that has created difficulties for the fulfillment of their work, as evidenced by the arbitrary arrests of human rights defenders. While this is true, the success of localized interventions discussed in this paper can be attributed to two main reasons. Firstly, the direct involvement of local community leaders throughout the training process cleared the environment of any suspicions. As the community gatekeepers, the local leaders' buy-in was sought so that they identified with the AVP training as beneficial to them as well. In rural Africa, the role of community elders should not be underestimated. Their role was cemented when it was accepted that traditional leaders would issue the AVP certificates at the end of each level.

Secondly, AVP has clarity of purpose. Many civil society organizations and other actors run workshops on all the relevant concepts that promote peacebuilding at the community level, including mediation, conflict resolution, conflict transformation, and nonviolence (usually over a period of two days) but often lack clarity in methodology that promotes knowledge and skills transfer for rural settings. My impression is that the strength of a program such as AVP lies in its comprehensiveness and clarity on the knowledge and skills that individuals acquire for everyday use. AVP is culturally sensitive so as to increase its adaptability for use across different cultures.<sup>33</sup>

Some key lessons that can be drawn from this intervention include the following:

- Peacebuilding initiatives at the local level are most effective when community leadership is involved at all stages of the process—from planning to implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation. Such inclusivity creates a sense of ownership necessary for acceptance, which increases the possibility of its effectiveness. In the event that the intervention faces some hurdles or even fails, a high likelihood exists that such eventuality will be accepted as a collective effort that did not achieve desired results, and an acceptable successor project can be worked out with much ease.
- When initiating peacebuilding programs at a

33 This is emphasized in Alternatives to Violence Project, "Facilitators Training Manual with Continuing Learning Material," 2013, p. 7.

local level, it is advisable to begin by identifying local individuals or groups who are familiar with the conflict, terrain, language, customs, and beliefs of the community. Even in the midst of war and violence, there are always individuals and groups making efforts to promote peace. These are invaluable contacts whose local intelligence is important to guide the process. I undertook this study in the communities that I grew up in. I therefore knew who to approach and who to leave out. Regardless, it took me a year to plan and agree with both the community leaders and the youths themselves before embarking on the training exercises.

- Contextualizing a foreign training program to suit the needs of the local community makes it relevant and increases the chances of its effectiveness. Similar programs that have been developed to promote peacebuilding should also be adapted to the local context so that concepts and method-

ologies are more relevant and effective. In this study, I adapted the AVP manuals (AVP recognizes and accepts this need) to suit the local context by replacing games and other exercises with those that were familiar to the youths and that could serve the same purpose. For example, when explaining a concept through the behavior of animals, in an African setting trainees will be confused by a reference to a kangaroo and will relate better to local animals. The other concept I had to adapt was the "I Message," a key concept in AVP used to train communication skills. It works well in the Western world where communicating in the first person singular is accepted. However, in most communities in sub-Saharan Africa, it is regarded as a lack of respect, thus unacceptable especially for young people to speak in the first person singular when talking to adults.

# New Technology for Peace in Kenya

Grace Maina\*

## Introduction

Kenyan political life has long been characterized by factors that undermine democracy and development: income inequalities, land grievances, weak government institutions, and poor ethnic relations. Meanwhile, Kenya has experienced outbreaks of violence that can be categorized as intrastate conflicts.<sup>1</sup> Elections have often been the space in which grievances have been expressed and ethnicity manipulated as politicians play one ethnic community against another to expand and protect their political space.<sup>2</sup> The winner-takes-all nature of democracy in Kenya has continued to challenge a country coping with ethnic divisions. Questions of vote manipulation and electoral fraud have dominated the electoral dialogue. The ruling elites' approach to politics and the widespread use of hate speech have sparked violence during elections.<sup>3</sup>

Recent efforts to address some of these issues include the adoption of a new constitution and reform of the judiciary and electoral institutions. There have also been transitional justice processes, such as the creation of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, the Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence of 2007 and 2008, and the controversial intervention of the International Criminal Court. Other measures to avert conflict have involved police reforms and the institutionalization of local prevention initiatives.

It is in this context that the use of technological innovations has enhanced transparency and undergirded accountability by creating new opportunities and outlets for communication, tracking, and monitoring. The spread of cell

phones, crowdsourcing technologies, and social networks has enabled faster transmission of information and encouraged citizens and communities to get involved in prevention and peacebuilding activities in various phases of the conflict cycle.<sup>4</sup>

Peacebuilding can be defined as “a process that seeks to prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms.”<sup>5</sup> Peacebuilding in the context of this paper is a process that seeks to develop and strengthen social relations, create accountable and transparent institutions, and ensure that human rights and dignity are upheld. Peacebuilding processes therefore involve anticipating potential problems, engaging in ongoing analysis of conflict dynamics, and coordinating different actors and activities at all stages of conflict and at all levels of society.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, technology can enhance avenues for participation, local engagement, and social change that are key principles of peacebuilding. It can increase communication between different actors, improve the processing of data, and provide platforms for engagement and subsequent ownership of peacebuilding initiatives within a community.

There are 31.3 million cell phone subscribers in Kenya—about 76 percent of the population—and the number is increasing.<sup>7</sup> In Kenya, as elsewhere, the Internet provides a useful platform for political debate and mobilization around critical issues.<sup>8</sup> Yet Kenya is also a global frontrunner in the innovative use of technology for peacebuilding. Ushahidi, an Internet platform initially developed to map reports of post-election violence in Kenya in 2008,

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1 Uppsala Conflict Data Program, “UCPD Conflict Encyclopedia,” 2010, available at [www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets).

2 Daniel Forti and Grace Maina, “Danger of Marginalisation: An Analysis of Kenyan Youth and their Integration into Political, Socio-Economic Life,” in *Opportunity or Threat: An Engagement of Youth in African Societies*, edited by Grace Maina (Durban: African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 2012), pp. 55–85.

3 Forti and Maina, 2012.

4 Diane Coyle and Patrick Meier, “New Technologies in Emergencies and Conflicts: The Role of Information and Social Networks,” Washington D.C.; London: UN Foundation and Vodafone Foundation Partnership, December 2009.

5 Lisa Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding* (Good Books: 2004).

6 Maina and Razia, 2012.

7 Communications Commission of Kenya, “Quarterly Sector Statistics Report, First Quarter of the Financial Year 2013/14,” Nairobi, 2014.

8 Search for Common Ground, “Communication for Peacebuilding: Practices, Trends and Challenges,” Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2011.

is now breaking ground in the integration of mobile and Internet content in peacebuilding around the world.<sup>9</sup>

As peacebuilding actors increasingly adopt a bottom-up approach, interactive tools are enabling a variety of individuals, including those from communities not traditionally associated with peacebuilding, to contribute information and inputs to peacebuilding practices. A bottom-up approach facilitated by technology has also meant better and more consistent communication with different individuals and organizations and has created natural points of interaction and cooperation during times of crisis and conflict.<sup>10</sup>

## Peacebuilding with New Technologies during Election Cycles

The December 2007 elections in Kenya and the violence that followed into 2008 raised concerns over the abuse of technology and social media.<sup>11</sup> The election campaign period was characterized by divisive speech and political propaganda in different social media fora, such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. This prompted a number of individuals and entities to create social media platforms to campaign and advocate for peace.

With growing technological awareness and access in Kenya, there has been heightened interaction on issues of governance and political participation. There was increased use of ICTs, social media tools, and crowdsourcing platforms to disseminate information in the 2013 election period.<sup>12</sup> Local actors in Kenya have taken up the use of new technologies and applied it to different strands of peacebuilding activities on the ground. Improved communication channels between individuals, communities, and the different

political actors involved in elections has opened up new possibilities for dialogue between stakeholders locally, regionally, and internationally, particularly as guidelines and regulations enhance transparency and increase accountability in the use of different communication technologies.<sup>13</sup>

Technology can play a role across the many phases of peacebuilding, including early warning and early response activities, conflict and community monitoring, initiatives for social change within and between groups, and advocacy for policy change.<sup>14</sup> Technology has enhanced the effectiveness of programs in each of these phases of peacebuilding initiatives in Kenya. The following initiatives involve the integration of new technologies in building national and local capacities to manage, prevent, and address conflicts, particularly during elections.

## Reclaiming New Technologies for Positive Social Change

During the 2007–2008 election-related violence, new technologies were mobilized for propaganda and to fuel ethnic tensions. For example, the Mashada bulletin board became overwhelmed with hostile and ethnically divisive messaging. The administrator took the decision to shut down this platform and to create a new one called “I Have No Tribe.” This encouraged users to find constructive messaging and to identify first as Kenyans as opposed to members of tribes.<sup>15</sup> The case of the Mashada message board exemplifies communication technology as a mechanism that can be used to provoke violent conflict or to facilitate peace.

Indeed, conflict is a dynamic process in which structure, attitudes, and behavior are constantly changing and influencing one another.<sup>16</sup> In a

9 David Souter and Monica Kerrets-Makau, “Internet Governance in Kenya—An Assessment of the Internet Society,” Nairobi: ICT Development Associates, September 2012.

10 Daniel Stauffacher, Barbara Weekes, Urs Gasser, Colin Maclay, and Michael Best, “Peacebuilding in the Information Age: Sifting Hype from Reality,” Geneva: ICT For Peace Foundation, January 2011.

11 Freedom House, “Freedom on the Net,” Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2013.

12 Ibid.

13 Search for Common Ground, “Communication for Peacebuilding.”

14 Godfrey M. Musila, “Early Warning and the Role of New Technologies in Kenya,” in *New Technology and the Prevention of Violence and Conflict*, edited by Francesco Mancini (New York: International Peace Institute, April 2013), pp. 42–55.

15 Ethan Zuckerman, “Citizen Media and the 2007 Kenyan Election Crisis,” June 20, 2008, available at [www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2008/06/20/kenya-citizen-media-in-a-time-of-crisis/#sthash.JbsGZKxv.dpuf](http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2008/06/20/kenya-citizen-media-in-a-time-of-crisis/#sthash.JbsGZKxv.dpuf).

16 Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, No. 3 (1969): 167–191.

conflict setting, attitudes and perceptions of others can often present stumbling blocks to peace.<sup>17</sup> Peacebuilding processes therefore aim to change prevailing attitudes and encourage a social shift by providing communities with opportunities to know more about each other and to forge a common identity. Technology can play a critical role in spreading positive messages and a united narrative for peace.

In response to the misuse of cell phones to incite violence, several organizations set out to use the same technology to challenge social perceptions in their communities. In 2013, a civil society organization called the Youth Agenda used text messages to encourage voters to elect leaders based on issues and not on tribal lines.<sup>18</sup> Working at the grassroots level, the organization Sisi ni Amani (which means “we are peace”) sought to enhance civic engagement and provide alternative avenues by which those who were aggrieved in society could seek justice.<sup>19</sup> Through the PeaceTXT project, messages were sent to counter potentially violent narratives or reactions in tense environments.<sup>20</sup> This proved a useful platform in encouraging social and attitudinal change.<sup>21</sup>

The Umati platform was established with the objective of tracking inflammatory speech posted online by Kenyans.<sup>22</sup> *Umati* is the Swahili word for crowd. The project then engaged in positive messaging to counter the inflammatory speech. To this end, an outreach initiative called *nipe ukweli* (“give me truth”) sought to debunk myths and propaganda used to incite violence.<sup>23</sup> Another platform called Flashcast was used to target commuters by displaying peace messages in buses, on Facebook, and on the Flashcast peace-feed website. Flashcast broadened participation among commuters and other citizens, encouraging mass transit passengers to share their own messages of peace by submitting them through SMS.

## Civil Society Initiatives

In Kenya, stakeholders and government institutions are constantly employing a variety of data-gathering systems to help predict and prevent conflict. Access to new technologies has also empowered citizens to engage in peacebuilding. The popular Ushahidi crowdsourcing platform was used to track incidents of post-election violence in 2008. The platform then relied on SMS-generated information, which was gathered and presented on Google Maps.<sup>24</sup> Ushahidi has subsequently become a catalyst for other platforms. Crowdmap, the hosted version of the Ushahidi platform, gives users the opportunity to map issues and events that pertain to elections allowing interested stakeholders to visualize patterns and to note concerns by studying the trends emerging from information gathered from the election process and relevant local resources.<sup>25</sup> Another civil society organization called PeaceNet offered a “nerve center” that gathered information on probable attacks between rival groups through texts messages. These text messages were then relayed to local peace committees that engaged mediators and took steps to stop the violence.<sup>26</sup>

Properly analyzed data can help identify dynamics and trends within a country and point to potential spaces for violence on the local level. One example of this is an early warning and response system set up in 2010 before the constitutional referendum. The Uwiano Platform for Peace is a unique partnership initiative of the Kenyan government including the National Cohesion and Integration Commission, civil society groups, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).<sup>27</sup> It was implemented under the structures of the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (NSC), an interagency committee established in 2001.<sup>28</sup>

17 Anne Kahl and Helena Puig Lurrari, “Technology for Peacebuilding,” *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2, No. 3 (November 2013): 1–15.

18 Christa Odinga, “Use of New Media during the Kenya Elections,” Master’s Thesis, Uppsala University 2013.

19 Sisi Ni Amani Kenya, available at [www.sisiniamani.org](http://www.sisiniamani.org).

20 Kahl and Puig Lurrari, 2013.

21 Peace TXT, available at <http://poptech.org/peacetxt>.

22 Angela Crandall, “UMATI - Monitoring Dangerous Speech Online,” December 19, 2012, accessed January 17, 2014, available at [www.ushahidi.com/2012/12/19/umati-monitoring-dangerous-speech-online/](http://www.ushahidi.com/2012/12/19/umati-monitoring-dangerous-speech-online/).

23 Umati Project, iHub Research and Ushahidi, “Nipe Ukweli,” 2013, available at [www.research.ihub.co.ke/uploads/2013/february/1361639967\\_819\\_689.pdf](http://www.research.ihub.co.ke/uploads/2013/february/1361639967_819_689.pdf).

24 Musila, “Early Warning.”

25 Search for Common Ground, “Communication for Peacebuilding.”

26 UN Foundation and Vodafone Group, “Mobile Technology for Social Change: Trends in NGO Mobile Use,” New York, 2008.

27 Musila, “Early Warning.”

28 William Tsuma, Christy McConnell, Peter Mwamachi, and Anne Kahl “Crowdsourcing for Collaborative Prevention,” The Hague: Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, July 2011.

Uwiano means “connection” or “correlation” in Swahili. The platform crowdsourced its information using text messages. The data collected were then interpreted and analyzed by trained peace monitors to verify credibility before they were shared as a warning. Text messages received under this platform gave information on hate speech and possible locations of violence; the warnings then facilitated responses to situations of possible conflict by different actors at multiple levels. The platform also gathered information and relayed peace messages from media sources. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission established a similar initiative in the 2013 election period, in which there was a toll-free number that citizens could text to report hate speech. The commission also deployed nearly 100 hate speech monitors to complement the technological initiative and verify the information on the ground.

In early 2013, a partnership of civil society organizations launched a new platform called Uchaguzi (“election”) with the objective of monitoring election activities. Citizens could use the platform to report community tensions and issues related to voting—such as problems with polling stations or the announcement of results. Uchaguzi gathered data from a variety of sources such as Twitter, emails, and purpose-built cell phone apps.<sup>29</sup> The platform established partnerships with different stakeholders such as the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, the Red Cross, the police, and various first responders acting as intermediaries between the citizens and institutions that could respond to complaints.<sup>30</sup> Uchaguzi’s staff were also trained and equipped to verify complaints and then refer them to the appropriate authorities. This platform increased transparency in the reporting of complaints and thus contributed to conflict-prevention activities.<sup>31</sup>

New technology creates spaces for affected communities and the broader public to participate in preventing violence, and therefore to take ownership over solutions to the conflicts that the

community and society faces. A crucial aspect of preventing conflict is the speed with which conflict warnings are generated and relayed to those who can respond appropriately. Crowdsourcing can facilitate rapid sharing of important information during a crisis, which in turn can lead to faster responses. Evidence of the platforms’ success can be seen in the increased mobilization of different stakeholders to gather, analyze, and act upon crowdsourced data. As reporting on this platform created a sense of accountability, with incidences being documented in real time, it also allowed for speedier, more flexible, more effective conflict prevention initiatives.<sup>32</sup> Though the lower incidences of electoral-related violence in 2013 cannot be solely attributed to the use of new technologies, platforms such as Uchaguzi arguably enhanced monitoring of the election environment.

During the 2013 elections, other groups also used a variety of technologies to monitor polling and hate speech in virtual and physical spaces of political campaigning. The Election Observer Group, a consortium of civil society groups, deployed election monitors to a random sample of polling stations across the country to observe the process and conducted parallel vote tabulation. They used videos, data visualizations, and online maps to communicate their findings.

## National Efforts to Strengthen Electoral Governance

### NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR ELECTION MONITORING IN 2013

The Kriegler report on the 2007–2008 election-related violence attributed the violence to the defects and delays that characterized the election process in the country. The inability to promptly and accurately announce results in an ethnically charged electoral environment served as a trigger for the post-election violence. To counter these challenges, increase the accountability of polling

29 Christa Odinga, “Use of New Media during the Kenya Elections,” master’s thesis, Uppsala University 2013.

30 Kelly Gilblom, “Why Were Kenya’s Elections Peaceful? Technology Provides Only a Partial Explanation,” April 2013, available at <http://techpresident.com/news/wegov/23691/kenya-technology-proved-useful-tool-not-reason-peaceful-elections>.

31 Emily Moore, “Kenyan Elections, Uchaguzi Revolutionizes Crowdsourcing,” in *World News Publishing Focus*, May 2013, available at <http://blog.wanifra.org/2013/05/21/kenyan-elections-uchaguzi-revolutionises-crowdsourcing>.

32 Ibid.

stations, and eliminate excessive allegations of rigging, the reformed Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) introduced the use of new technologies for the 2013 elections. Biometric voter registration and electronic poll books were launched to address problems of transparency and accountability during elections.<sup>33</sup> To prevent electoral fraud, the biometric voter registration technology captured fingerprints, photos, and data on every registered voter. The electronic poll books were then used on the day of the election to check and validate every voter before they could vote.<sup>34</sup> The electronic poll book also informed IEBC of how many voters had voted in any particular polling station. As this use of technology was integrated into the resulting tabulation process, the computer system would check the number of votes reported on the tally form with the number of actual voters who came to the polling station, rejecting any results where the number of votes was higher than the number of voters.<sup>35</sup>

Party registration software is another example the use of new technology to manage political parties and their participation in elections. The new Political Party Act called for a minimum of 1,000 members in at least twenty-four counties for a party to be registered. Given that the registrar of political parties was not able to cope with the overwhelming data entry requirements introduced by this new act, a new software system was implemented that allowed political parties to do their own data entry.<sup>36</sup> This software then checked all names to ensure that no registered voter appeared on more than one party supporter list, a malpractice previously witnessed in Kenyan party politics. This resulted in enhanced accountability.

Despite the huge investment, many of the new

electronic mechanisms failed during the elections for a variety of reasons, including lack of preparation.<sup>37</sup> Still, the investment in encouraging transparency was commended by the public and appeared to increase citizens' trust in the electoral commission.<sup>38</sup> The IEBC also ensured that it had a fallback plan should the technology fail, by having layers of vote tallying and authentication. The failure of the biometric voter identification system did provide the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy—the alliance of parties led by Raila Odinga—with credible reason to challenge the results through a court process.<sup>39</sup> The IEBC argued that traditional methods that involved manual vote counting had still supplemented the new technology-driven approach.<sup>40</sup> On March 30, 2013, when the Supreme Court rendered its decision about the election results, many Kenyans used social media to send messages calling for peace and recognizing the legitimacy of the process.

## REGULATING POLITICAL MASS MESSAGING

To reduce the spread of content that could incite violence in the lead up to the 2013 elections, the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) issued guidelines in 2012 that mandated the pre-screening and approval of bulk messages containing political content before transmission.<sup>41</sup> These rules were aimed at regulating licensed content service providers (CSP), which had been tasked with communicating with the electorate on behalf of politicians or political entities.<sup>42</sup> Under the guidelines, the providers had to submit a request to a mobile network operator that included the content of the message and a signed authorization letter from the sponsoring party for approval before a bulk political message could be transmitted.<sup>43</sup> The operator would then screen and

33 Mike Yard, "In Kenya, Using Technology for Safer Elections," June 2012, available at [www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/Interviews/2012/In-Kenya-Using-Technology-for-Safer-Elections.aspx](http://www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/Interviews/2012/In-Kenya-Using-Technology-for-Safer-Elections.aspx).

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 See, for example, Warigia Bowman and Brian Munyao Longwe, "Technology, Transparency, and the Kenyan General Election of 2013," Al-Jazeera, March 29, 2013, available at [www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/03/2013329135519365308.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/03/2013329135519365308.html).

38 Author interviews with Paul Macharia, Hellen Oloo, and David Sang on January 2, 2014, in Nairobi.

39 See "Odinga Upbeat as Challenge Evolves," United Press International, March 28, 2013, available at [www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2013/03/28/Odinga-upbeat-as-challenge-evolves/UPI-35131364484736/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2013/03/28/Odinga-upbeat-as-challenge-evolves/UPI-35131364484736/).

40 Gilblom, "Why Were Kenya's Elections Peaceful?"

41 Communications Commission of Kenya, "Guidelines for the Prevention of Transmission of Undesirable Bulk Political Content/Messages via Electronic Communications Networks," September 2012, available at [www.cck.go.ke/regulations/downloads/Guidelines\\_for\\_the\\_prevention\\_of\\_transmission\\_of\\_undesirable\\_bulk\\_political\\_](http://www.cck.go.ke/regulations/downloads/Guidelines_for_the_prevention_of_transmission_of_undesirable_bulk_political_).

42 Freedom House, "Freedom on the Net."

43 Communications Commission of Kenya, "Guidelines."

vet the proposed message for inflammatory or hateful language, and relay its decision within eighteen hours.<sup>44</sup> Safaricom, the largest mobile network operator, also issued its own guidelines for advertising through its various media services to rein in negative political messages.<sup>45</sup> Safaricom's guidelines indicated that it would suspend or terminate CSP contracts for noncompliance with its bulk message approval process, which was identical to the CCK's process.<sup>46</sup> The National Cohesion and Integration Commission also realized the central role that the media played in exacerbating conflict in 2007 and 2008, and developed guidelines for media organizations on hate speech.

### INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY OF CELL PHONE USERS

In addition to these election-specific regulations, the government added regulations to information and communication technology more broadly. In 2009, the government instituted a SIM card registration requirement in collaboration with service providers. This was supplemented with public awareness campaigns aimed at informing citizens of the security and accountability objective, where each user could be now be held accountable for the content sent from their phone numbers.<sup>47</sup> In the previous election, text messaging had been used as a channel for hate messages and organizing violence; the effort to register numbers was seen as an effort to curb this practice. Following this exercise, approximately 2.4 million unregistered numbers were disconnected.<sup>48</sup> The CCK also demanded that mobile phone providers block messages inciting violence. More than 300,000 text messages were reportedly blocked on a daily basis to this end.<sup>49</sup>

## Impact of New Technology Projects in Promoting Peace

In the Kenyan context, the impact of new technology on peacebuilding processes has two sides: technology has been used adversely to incite violence and responsibly to promote peace. New guidelines and regulations have encouraged a more responsible use of technology in the quest to build peace. New technology has enhanced communication channels among citizens, grassroots organizations, state institutions, and the private sector. This increased collaboration helps to link local efforts to national processes and policy, and to transform peacebuilding into an everyday practice that is everyone's responsibility.

Peacebuilding practitioners have used new technology to collect, organize, and analyze larger quantities of conflict-relevant data more quickly and with greater accuracy. Organizations have been able to triangulate information received to check for accuracy and credibility—enabling a more effective response.

Digital tools have also been used to help change dominant, divisive narratives and create a sense of community. Newer technologies have complemented traditional media initiatives, such as television programs, in changing perceptions and influencing social norms and behaviors—often reaching otherwise isolated groups across the country.

New information and communication tools have also enhanced dialogue mechanisms for peace practitioners and connected communities across Kenya. Civil society initiatives have made use of

44 Freedom House, "Freedom on the Net."

45 Safaricom, "Guidelines for Political Mobile Advertising", 2012, available at [www.safaricom.co.ke/images/Downloads/Resources\\_Downloads/POLITICAL\\_MOBILE\\_ADVERTISING\\_NOTICE\\_FULL\\_PAGE\\_2b.pdf](http://www.safaricom.co.ke/images/Downloads/Resources_Downloads/POLITICAL_MOBILE_ADVERTISING_NOTICE_FULL_PAGE_2b.pdf).

46 Ibid.

47 Freedom House, "Freedom on the Net."

48 Communications Commission of Kenya, "More than 2.4m Unregistered Mobile Lines Disconnected," January 2013, available at [www.cck.go.ke/mobile/news/index.html?nws=/news/2013/Unregistered\\_lines.html](http://www.cck.go.ke/mobile/news/index.html?nws=/news/2013/Unregistered_lines.html).

49 Fred Mukindia, "Phone Firms Block 300,000 Hate Texts Daily, says Ndemo," *Daily Nation*, March 21, 2013, available at [www.nation.co.ke/News/Phone-firms-block-300-000-hate-texts-daily-says-Ndemo-/11056/1726172/-/ktkiafz/-/index.html](http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Phone-firms-block-300-000-hate-texts-daily-says-Ndemo-/11056/1726172/-/ktkiafz/-/index.html), cited in Freedom House, "Freedom on the Net."

online platforms to support dialogue and promote understanding between groups, and to communicate governance issues in a more accessible way. Citizens have also used social media platforms to engage in discussions on governance and to demand political accountability. They have participated in debates on an array of political and social issues in online fora—from election regulations to salary increases for Kenyan legislators.

### CHALLENGES FOR NEW TECHNOLOGY IN PEACEBUILDING

The use of technology in peacebuilding work in Kenya has not been without its challenges. The technologies have sometimes failed, spoilers have abused and misused technological platforms, and conflict dynamics have worsened as a result. The poor performance of the new election technology in 2013 shows the importance of complementing new technological initiatives with traditional modalities.

In many instances, the prevention of violent conflict depends on prompt communication and analysis of data, which can still be impossible due to poor communication infrastructures in some contexts, such as the northern districts of Kenya. The ability to respond and to avert conflict is often undermined by lack of connectivity.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, lack of access to internet and mobile technology is an overarching challenge. There are high volumes of mobile users in Kenya, but there is also a geographical divide, as those in rural areas often lack access to these technologies. Access also determines the bias of the data and information produced. Much of the more technically savvy section of the Kenyan society tends to be the youth and the urban class.

The “do no harm” principle has been hard to maintain when it comes to employing new technologies in peacebuilding tasks. Abuse of new technology is a big concern, especially ethical dilemmas regarding privacy and personal security. Individuals have been targeted for sharing information that has then been disseminated in online platforms. As such, practitioners need to

enshrine the principle of privacy when using technology in their work, bearing in mind the ethical responsibility to ensure that people are aware of the risks associated with sharing information via a particular technology.

The competing interests of different stakeholders also posed a challenge in the Kenyan case. In both the 2010 constitutional referendum and 2013 elections, there were different platforms working on similar objectives, which caused confusion and duplication of efforts. There is need for more coherent coordination and collaboration among different organizations, government institutions, and initiatives. Efforts have to be made to include state agencies not just in responses to violence, but also in warning mechanisms.<sup>51</sup>

The integrity of the data has also been a challenge. With increased interconnectivity and the flow of large quantities of data, information overload can set in.<sup>52</sup> Validation of the information collected and timely sifting and analysis of the data are critical. Technology cannot screen for political nuances; if not complemented with other validation methods, inaccurate conclusions can be drawn.<sup>53</sup> Such authentication to ensure the credibility of data is important if peacebuilding efforts are to be successful.

## Conclusion

Numerous lessons can be drawn from the Kenyan context for peacebuilding practitioners. For the internal actors in Kenya, both the government and nongovernmental organizations, a critical lesson is the realization that peace is only a result of human intention and that the individual and the community must desire peace. Social change is needed, and technologies have made peacebuilding in this regard more participatory. Those looking to build peace can enhance their use of technology, to explore the involvement and participation of communities in maintaining peace and improving governance.

Training is also a necessity when it comes to ensuring the integrity of data and the effectiveness

50 Tsuma et al., “Crowdsourcing for Collaborative Prevention.”

51 Ibid.

52 Search for Common Ground, “Communication for Peacebuilding.”

53 Ibid.

of the data collection process. This will require that communities are continuously skilled in the art of using technology for reporting purposes and in the importance of responsible reporting. Analysts will also require more specific training as they are tasked with interrogating and triangulating the data to ensure its authenticity.<sup>54</sup> It is this analyzed and verified information that will more effectively inform responses. Their training therefore has a bearing on the quality of warning and response mechanisms in any given context. Regional and international actors can play an important role in facilitating training in data verification standards and processes.

Partnerships between local, national, and international actors can help ensure the credibility and quality of the information collected. This can involve authentication of the source of information for reliability and the triangulation of the content as valid.<sup>55</sup> As third parties, international actors may bring an independent approach to validating the information; but at the same time, local and national experts must be consulted to understand the context. In the Kenyan context, when trust between communities was weak, it was useful to have an external third party involved in verifying the authenticity of data.

While technology offers new modalities for peacebuilding, practitioners should not shift their attention from holistic models of peacebuilding. Technology can only complement traditional tools and approaches. Richer engagement and dialogue among the technology sector, multilaterals, governments, and NGOs would yield more

effective programming and reduce duplication. This would also enhance response; in the Kenyan context, new technology has strengthened the warning capacities but much more is needed to build a greater capacity to respond.

In studying the use of new technologies in peacebuilding in Kenya, there are a number of outstanding areas that require more research. The impact of technology on statebuilding remains an under-studied area, as is the role of technology in influencing governance programming. Most documented work focuses on the preventive elements of peacebuilding. Research on how technologies strengthen postconflict work—and how communities participate in defining peace in their society—is an area for future work. The measurable impact of new communication tools is undefined and knowledge of such impact is imperative in redefining the nature and application of peacebuilding and statebuilding processes.

New technology initiatives have proven effective for collecting early warning information and facilitating localized responses in Kenya. There is an ongoing effort to empower and support local response mechanisms and to strengthen local conflict management systems, but there needs to be increased coordination among actors using technologies to do so. New technologies are not sufficient in themselves and need to function within a broader strategy that relies on more holistic means—community peacebuilding efforts and political processes. Finally, the use of new technologies must fit into the cultural context if it is to aid in attaining sustainable peace.

<sup>54</sup> Tsuma et al., “Crowdsourcing for Collaborative Prevention.”

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

Andrea Ó Súilleabháin\*

The frequent invocation of terms like “national ownership,” “local ownership,” and “inclusivity” in key peacebuilding and statebuilding policies and statements by the leadership of the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations points to a growing consensus on the importance of locally focused approaches. Translating these principles into practice—in terms of peacebuilding mechanisms, statebuilding processes, and programs on the ground—is an enduring challenge for international organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The nature of conflict settings today, the repetition of violence, and the frequency of relapse in most conflict-affected states require new strategies and approaches from actors seeking to build peace and governance. The International Peace Institute’s Leveraging Local Knowledge project aims to highlight examples of innovative peacebuilding and statebuilding at the community and local level across Africa. The case studies featured in this report explore the work of local actors, their relationship to and interaction with national actors and policies, and their influence on international programs and planning.

As evidenced by the diverse actors and stakeholders in each case study, there are many meanings of participation and inclusion in peacebuilding and statebuilding. To influence long-term outcomes, participation must be understood as a process of social change, which cannot be achieved through a series of technocratic and often disconnected interventions.<sup>1</sup> Together with the African participants in this project, IPI asked how the international community is supporting local participation in its peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts today. As argued in the 2012 report of the UN secretary-general on peacebuilding, “Inclusivity needs to be applied throughout peacebuilding, from analysis, design,

and planning to implementation and monitoring.”<sup>2</sup> Throughout these phases, how can the UN, donor governments, and international NGOs ensure that the support they offer contributes to broader sociopolitical transformation?

While affirming the importance of inclusivity and local ownership for peacebuilding, international and national actors acknowledge that they lack effective approaches to integrate local knowledge and broaden participation in practice. As a result, priorities for recovery, development, and the functioning of the state are often determined by national and international elites, without incorporating local knowledge and community expectations in the decision-making process.

The lessons emerging from these cases, the insights of the practitioners and experts involved in the project, and the analyses of the authors point to a number of recommendations for those seeking to promote or learn from local knowledge.

### 1. DEFINE AND REDEFINE THE “LOCAL”.

Defining what is “local” is incredibly difficult, and African participants from many countries challenged external actors to be critical of this concept in relation to peacebuilding and statebuilding. What constitutes local knowledge is very complex in each context; it has very different meanings for peacebuilding policymakers at the UN versus civil servants in African government ministries, and it varies even further for Africans residing outside national capitals in provinces and villages. Further complicating the concept of the local is its application to different approaches in peacebuilding and statebuilding. Some programs aim to support locally conceived and led initiatives, while others focus on local implementation or delivery of externally designed projects.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of the local can be understood “as an

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1 See Sam Hickey and Giles Mohan, “Relocating Participation within a Radical Politics of Development,” *Development and Change* 36, No. 2 (2005): 237–262.

2 United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on *Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict*, UN Doc. A/67/499-S/2012/746, October 8, 2012.

3 See Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, “Transforming Peacebuilding: Can the Internationals Put the Locals First?” *The Global Observatory*, September 12, 2014.

imprecise yet useful marker for being as close as possible to the problems and solutions, inclusive of varied voices and interests.”<sup>4</sup> By prioritizing local knowledge, international and national actors recognize that “to those who have suffered from conflict and who are struggling with its aftermath, peace and successful peacebuilding might mean different things than external actors presume.”<sup>5</sup> In short, the meaning of “local ownership” is often unclear and needs to be negotiated, defined, and redefined in each individual context and community. This continuous examination of local or community-level approaches and perspectives can lead to greater inclusion and participation of civil society, women and youth groups, and other stakeholders in conflict-affected areas.

Another area requiring definition is the operational space where international programs and local initiatives meet and interact. At the international level, the terms “local ownership,” “national ownership,” and “inclusivity” are often used interchangeably, and without much guidance for what they mean operationally. This is an important area for future definition, if local engagement is to become a more systematic practice in UN operations. However, this may prove problematic while local ownership of international programs remains largely an aspiration. In a 2012 study on local ownership in peace operations, both local and international respondents agreed that local actors have not directed peacebuilding policy in recent decades. Instead, they cited external factors as the determinants of peacebuilding priorities, “such as the domestic politics of intervening states or disputes among members of the international community.”<sup>6</sup>

African participants in the Leveraging Local Knowledge project agreed with such assessments, and they cited donor requirements as a further driver of the gap between aspirations and reality in

this area. While international programs, on the whole, tend to design peacebuilding and statebuilding projects without widespread local inputs, donors increasingly require local consultation and local ownership. While positive in principle, this risks the promotion of superficial interactions initiated by international actors with local stakeholders and community groups. As a result, local ownership becomes a buzzword to satisfy donor demands, without implementation in practice.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. VIEW LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AS AN EXISTING SOURCE OF CAPACITY AND AN ONGOING RESOURCE.

International actors often use local knowledge as a passive source of inputs for project design or conflict assessment. According to an examination of UN peacekeeping missions, local perceptions have been incorporated into situation analysis and early warnings to inform mission planning and activities but have not been utilized systemically or directly to support policymaking processes.<sup>8</sup> Local knowledge has more to offer as an existing source of capacity and an ongoing resource.

“The development of conflict assessment tools in the 1990s was motivated by a desire to understand local conflict dynamics and the effects of external action on those dynamics.”<sup>9</sup> Today, the UN still needs to work more closely with local actors and civil society to get a better sense of dynamics on the ground—not only in early assessment but also throughout program implementation. Many advocates for prioritizing local perspectives, such as the Local First initiative, argue that a further step is required; namely, “listening to local voices to develop responses and approaches,” and recognizing local knowledge as a primary source of solutions.<sup>10</sup> This requires avoiding prescriptive approaches to peacebuilding and statebuilding programs. As our African participants urged, avoid

4 Antonia Does, “Inclusivity and Local Perspectives in Peacebuilding: Issues, Lessons, Challenges,” Paper No. 8, Geneva: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, 2013, p. 2.

5 Robert Muggah and Christian Altpeter, “Peacebuilding and Postconflict Recovery: What Works and What Does Not?” New York: International Peace Institute, June 2014, p. 3.

6 Mary Martin et al., “Exiting Conflict, Owning the Peace: Local Ownership in International Peace Operations,” Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, p. 3.

7 Sara Hellmüller, “Owners or Partners? A Critical Analysis of the Concept of Local Ownership,” in *Is Local Beautiful? Peacebuilding between International Interventions and Locally Led Initiatives*, edited by Sara Hellmüller and Martina Santschi (New York: Springer, 2014), p. 5.

8 Niels Nagelhus Schia, Ingvald Magnæs Gjelsvik, and John Karlsrud, “Connections and Disconnections: Understanding and Integrating Local Perceptions in United Nations Peacekeeping,” *Conflict Trends* No. 1 (2014): 29.

9 Jenna Slotin, Vanessa Wyeth, and Paul Romita, “Power, Politics, and Change: How International Actors Assess Local Context,” New York: International Peace Institute, June 2010, p. 5.

10 Rosie Pinnington, *Local First in Practice: Unlocking the Power To Get Things Done* (London: Peace Direct, 2014), pp. 11, 28–44.

thinking that local people are always there to be trained; instead, they are already a source of capacity.

External actors' arrival in a conflict context often involves their extensive mapping of risks and incidents of violence. Participants in the Leveraging Local Knowledge project emphasized that international and national actors should also look closely at what is working—thoroughly mapping peace resources and networks in local communities, to fully utilize existing structures and capacities for peace.

To that end, it is critically important to link conflict analysis and assessment to long-term planning. According to a 2010 IPI report on assessing local context, “Even where assessments are linked to planning, there is a lack of mechanisms to revisit initial assessments when country strategies and programs are updated, or in later planning cycles.”<sup>11</sup>

UN peacekeepers already capture local perceptions in their daily work, particularly civil affairs officers in the host country who frequently meet with individuals and groups. While this detailed information on the local population's needs and opinions is used at the local level, it is often lost further up in the mission hierarchy and does not reach UN headquarters in New York.<sup>12</sup> More work is needed to ensure that assessments are consistently linked to an overarching planning cycle.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, participatory conflict assessment can be a peacebuilding initiative in itself, as World Vision emphasizes, “by including participants from excluded and marginalized communities and bridging gaps between communities in conflict.”<sup>14</sup> Engaging local communities in this way can facilitate local ownership of the peacebuilding processes to come.<sup>15</sup>

The case study on Zimbabwe offers important lessons for building local ownership, beginning with the context and conflict analysis that preceded the featured conflict transformation project. The Alternatives to Violence training was not only

adapted to the local context, but it also engaged community leadership in all stages of the process—from planning to implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Before initiating this external training program at the local level, the project leader identified local individuals and groups who were familiar with both the broad conflict dynamics and the community-specific effects of violence. This local outreach can identify individuals and groups working to promote peace in the midst and aftermath of conflict. These community peacebuilders are critical partners for any externally initiated programs, offering valuable local knowledge and capacity.

Where such individual-level outreach may not be possible, new technology initiatives can create space for broad participation in conflict assessment, monitoring, and prevention. As exemplified in Kenya, a country where 76 percent of the population has access to mobile phones, participatory programs for violence monitoring and reporting enable affected communities to participate in conflict prevention and to own solutions to the conflicts they face.

### 3. BRIDGE THE DIVIDE BETWEEN LOCAL AND NATIONAL.

In the violence-affected countries studied, much more work is needed to close the local-to-national gap. Case study authors and project participants asked a challenging question: How can we leverage local knowledge for international actors, when we still need to bridge a difficult divide between local communities and the national government? In some cases, national policies that cover an entire area of peacebuilding or statebuilding programming—such as state-initiated feminism in Egypt or national youth policy in Burundi—can undermine the space for locally led programs. This is especially the case where governments lack a national, inclusive peacebuilding or statebuilding strategy.

These tensions between state and citizen were a common obstacle for local efforts to build peace and governance across the Leveraging Local

11 Slotin, Wyeth, and Romita, “Power, Politics, and Change,” p. 18.

12 Schia, Gjelsvik, and Karlsrud “Connections and Disconnections,” p. 29.

13 Slotin, Wyeth, and Romita, “Power, Politics, and Change,” p. 2.

14 Tim Midgley and Michelle Garred, “Bridging the Participation Gap: Developing Macro Level Conflict Analysis through Local Perspectives,” Policy and Practice Paper, London: World Vision UK, September 2013, p. 28.

15 Does, “Inclusivity and Local Perspectives in Peacebuilding,” p. 4.

Knowledge case studies. In Egypt, women were active in demonstrations and political movements throughout the twentieth century but were excluded from formal politics and statebuilding. The feminist reforms initiated by several Egyptian administrations ultimately created barriers for independent women-led initiatives and organizations. In practice, women's efforts to build participatory governance were limited by the authoritarian state. In Zimbabwe, the National Youth Service promoted partisan views in its training for young participants, effectively mobilizing a youth militia rather than instilling a sense of civic duty. The ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF), presented its own interpretation of Zimbabwean history and politics through the government program, which fueled tensions at the local level. These examples demonstrate the divide between local actors and the governments that purport to represent them.

At times, the international community supports state institutions despite this governance deficit. According to a 2014 IPI report on governance in Africa, "...the gaps between citizens and their elected leaders appear to be widening, often stemming from governments' inability to deliver expected goods and services to populations combined with exclusionary governance practices."<sup>16</sup> However, the common and accepted partner for international and intergovernmental actors such as the UN is the national government.<sup>17</sup> International actors take for granted that the international system is state-centric, wary of "the risk of delegitimizing the national government to engage directly with local actors."<sup>18</sup> In Mali, international aid to support state institutions inadvertently contributed to a reassertion of state authority that favors political patronage networks while neglecting broader governance and development at the local level.

Where national policy regularly undermines or closes the space for local peacebuilding and governance efforts, what is the appropriate role for

the international community? What is the most effective role for external actors in national and local peacebuilding processes? External actors need to reach beyond national elites to engage locally, and yet they are not well positioned to intervene between the state and its citizens. Still, if peacebuilding is about increasing the resilience of societies to prevent and manage conflict, local citizens must be included—particularly those individuals and organizations already undertaking peacebuilding projects.

At the same time, in turning to local perspectives, international actors cannot overlook the importance of the national level. "Peacebuilding is essentially a process of state-formation, of narrowing the vertical space between the authorities and the population and thereby restoring the compact between the state and the society. It is therefore crucial not to circumvent but to bring in the state."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the Leveraging Local Knowledge case studies all demonstrate the importance of supportive state policies and structures, and the negative consequences that result from their absence.

Programs that prioritize state-society relations and the social contract can help ensure that national peacebuilding and statebuilding processes do not undermine local efforts. International actors can create links, channels, and opportunities for communication between local communities and national policymakers. Additionally, international actors can call for responsible leadership, supportive of local initiatives and bringing an end to the political manipulation of ethnic and religious identities.<sup>20</sup>

New technology projects compose one area of peacebuilding and statebuilding where partnerships across levels of engagement are increasingly common. In Kenya, new technology initiatives demonstrate the complementary roles that local, national, and international actors can play in implementing platforms for peace. One example is the Uwiano Platform for Peace, a joint initiative of

16 Mireille Affa'a Mindzie, George Mukundi Wachira, and Lucy Dunderdale, "Effective Governance in Challenging Environments," New York: International Peace Institute, December 2014, p. 8.

17 Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 94–96.

18 Derick W. Brinkerhoff, "Where There's a Will, There's a Way? Untangling Ownership and Political Will in Post-Conflict Stability and Reconstruction Operations," *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* 8, No. 1 (2007): 117, cited in Hellmüller and Santschi, *Is Local Beautiful?* p. 8.

19 Does, "Inclusivity and Local Perspectives in Peacebuilding," p. 4.

20 Affa'a Mindzie, Wachira, and Dunderdale, "Effective Governance," p. 18.

the Kenyan government, civil society groups, and the UN Development Programme, to prevent and monitor election violence. Through the program, peace monitors were trained in forty-seven counties, to help monitor signs of violence and virtually report to the platform.

New technology projects point to the following principles: (1) local groups and citizens are critical to implementation and uptake; (2) national policy and strategies are needed to make these programs available and to improve connectivity in remote areas; and (3) the international community can provide specific technical support and expertise. The same principles of complementarity could be upheld as a best practice guide across peacebuilding and statebuilding projects, to ensure that local knowledge and agency are at the core of design, planning, and implementation.

In closing the local-to-national gap, peacebuilding and statebuilding processes can engage sectors of the national government that may not typically be brought in to peace programming. To build inclusive institutions, local actors recommend partnering with state ministries that tend to be overlooked in peacebuilding, such as offices overseeing water, roads, and other infrastructure. In Egypt, local peace actors demonstrated how the mandates of these public officials affected community-level stresses and recovery, through community evaluations and constructive dialogue sessions. By connecting the tangible issues of sanitation and water to a larger dialogue around state-society relations, local actors succeeded in bridging the divide between government service providers and recipients.

#### 4. DO NOT PRESUME LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATION.

In peacebuilding and statebuilding programs, participation and representation are complex and contested processes. According to many African participants, international actors are selective in choosing “local” partners, often focusing on elite groups in national capitals. The resulting portrayal of local knowledge and local priorities represents

only a narrow subset of the society. International actors should be aware that gatekeepers among organized civil society and national elites may prevent them from reaching perspectives and policy preferences that are representative of the broader population.<sup>21</sup> This inhibits local buy-in for projects implemented in communities without consultation on priorities and program design.

On the other hand, “there is a risk to romanticize local civil society and the grassroots level as homogenous and inherently good entities.”<sup>22</sup> Civil society groups in Africa face their own challenges of internal governance, representativeness, and legitimacy.<sup>23</sup> As the case studies demonstrate, community-level and grassroots actors do not speak with one voice, and they are not all or always committed to peace.

For instance, in Burundi, the government-sponsored National Youth Council faces a legitimacy crisis among the young people it purports to represent. A common belief is that affiliation to the majority party’s youth league is a prerequisite for election to the council. While the council is tasked with representing youth from each district in Burundi and coordinating youth participation in peacebuilding and statebuilding processes, it rarely expresses a position on youth issues—particularly on political violence both targeting and committed by young people.

#### 5. ACCEPT THAT PEACE TAKES TIME, AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

Countries that are labeled as “postconflict” are often not postconflict.<sup>24</sup> Today’s conflicts are cyclical, and relapse is common; the majority of civil wars occur in countries already affected by conflict.<sup>25</sup> When the international community focuses on a country emerging from conflict, institution building often receives commitments for four to eight years of funding, when it typically requires forty to eighty years to achieve. The transformation needed to bring inclusive governance and sustainable peace to conflict-affected countries requires long-term planning.

21 Martin et al., “Exiting Conflict, Owning the Peace,” p. 5.

22 Does, “Inclusivity and Local Perspectives in Peacebuilding,” p. 4. See Thania Paffenholz, “International Peacebuilding Goes Local: Analysing Lederach’s Conflict Transformation Theory and Its Ambivalent Encounter with 20 Years of Practice,” *Peacebuilding* 2, No. 1 (2014): 11–27.

23 Affa’a Mindzie, Wachira, and Dunderdale, “Effective Governance,” pp. 8–9.

24 Participant remarks at project seminar in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 4, 2014.

25 The World Bank, “World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development,” Washington DC, 2011, p. 2.

As demonstrated by the case study on Mali, the most effective initiatives to counter organized crime adopt this long-view approach. With vast ungoverned spaces and limited state authority, the country has marginalized large segments of the population, a problem that cannot be corrected in a matter of years. Local communities derive benefits from organized crime, and efforts to reduce organized crime could further alienate these communities from their state if they are not offered viable alternative employment and livelihoods. In this context, local initiatives aimed at building governance, rather than aimed at reducing crime directly, may prove the most effective to reduce illicit activities and build a positive presence of the state—though this may well require efforts that last a generation.

In some cases, discussions of local ownership are driven by external actors' push for an exit strategy.<sup>26</sup> This risks withdrawing or bringing programs to a close too early, by citing the need for more local ownership.<sup>27</sup> In the long term, peacebuilding programs will only succeed if they respond to the needs and priorities of local communities and are accepted and supported by these intended beneficiaries.<sup>28</sup>

## 6. MEASURE THE IMPACT OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE.

While qualitative evidence shows that partnering with local actors is key to effective peacebuilding programs, more work is needed to measure the impact of local knowledge. As a growing body of evidence demonstrates, higher levels of inclusivity in peacebuilding are associated with more sustainable peace.<sup>29</sup> The preceding case studies also demonstrate that working with local knowledge makes programs more successful. Still, civil society and local groups remain often excluded from top-down peacebuilding processes.

To advance local knowledge, African practi-

tioners in our project called for research to measure the impact of local engagement on peacebuilding outcomes. For external actors working with local partners, they recommended periodic review of programs and evaluation of local-level engagement that captures whether local participation is ongoing or merely a standalone consultation. Finally, they called for the development of mutual accountability between international and local actors, based on joint planning and locally led monitoring of programs.<sup>30</sup>

In short, it is time for international actors to prioritize local ideas and community priorities—and to invest in more research demonstrating that this approach leads to success.

## 7. OPERATIONALIZE LOCAL ENGAGEMENT.

Despite a growing body of research on the importance of local participation for peacebuilding and statebuilding, the recent attention on inclusivity has not yet led to major changes in the approaches of international actors.<sup>31</sup> Instead, local ownership seems to be “one of those words that has to be in any document about end states and exit strategies, yet no one really expects it to be meaningfully pursued.”<sup>32</sup> Given the growing consensus that durable peace cannot be achieved in Africa without local approaches to conflict management, why is there continued resistance by international actors to realize inclusivity?<sup>33</sup>

One immediate obstacle is the lack of guidance to achieve these ends. International actors need specific strategies and tactics to operationalize national ownership, and they require planning mechanisms that formally take local knowledge into account. In 2011, a workshop organized by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office noted that “no definitive guidelines yet exist within the UN system on the question of operationalizing national ownership principles.”<sup>34</sup> This leads to confusion

26 Martin et al., “Exiting Conflict, Owning the Peace,” p. 5.

27 Hellmüller and Santschi, *Is Local Beautiful?* p. 5.

28 Jenny Aulin, “Introduction,” in *Empowerment and Protection: Stories of Human Security*, edited by Kristen Wall, Jenny Aulin, and Gabriëlla Vogelaar (The Hague: The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, 2014), p. 10.

29 See Thania Paffenholz, ed., *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010). See also Does, “Inclusivity and Local Perspectives in Peacebuilding,” p. 1.

30 Participant remarks at project seminar in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 4, 2014.

31 Does, “Inclusivity and Local Perspectives in Peacebuilding,” p. 2.

32 Cedric de Coning, “Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local,” *Stability* 2, No. 1 (2013): 1.

33 Issac O. Albert, “Understanding Peace in Africa,” in *Peace & Conflict in Africa*, edited by David J. Francis (London: Zed Books, 2008), p. 43.

34 Rhys Machold and Timothy Donais, “From Rhetoric to Practice: Operationalizing National Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding,” report of March 2011 workshop organized by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, Wilfrid Laurier University, and the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies, June 2011, p. 7.

and debate over the meaning of terms like national ownership. This matters for local engagement, because where national ownership is conflated with elite or government ownership, local actors and civil society tend to be left out of decision-making processes.

In June 2014, the UN departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support issued *Guidelines on Understanding and Integrating Local Perceptions in UN Peacekeeping*. This formal guidance aims “to help peacekeeping missions understand local perceptions and, in doing so, better tailor their interactions within the local context and design more effective, inclusive peacebuilding strategies.”<sup>35</sup> It addresses all field-based civilian and uniformed personnel who interact with local populations as part of their duties, in addition to those conducting situational analysis, integrated planning, and mission strategy development. The guidelines emphasize the importance of systematic collection and analysis of local perceptions, not only for a UN mission’s awareness but also to support inclusive governance and more effective contributions to peacebuilding.

Making the conceptual link between integrating local perceptions and effectiveness is an important first step, as foreign diplomats and peacekeepers in the field still tend to view fighting as the result of national and international dynamics. “They neglect to address the other main sources of violence: distinctively local conflicts over land, grassroots power, status, and resources...”<sup>36</sup> Focusing on the local level helps those who seek peace to understand violence in its local context and to support and develop localized responses.

However, focusing too much on the local level may ignore larger power dynamics that can influence conflicts. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, what started as local violence has transformed into and been affected by larger struggles for power and control.<sup>37</sup> Local approaches to building peace can be limited when facing governmental corruption, the presence of

organized crime, or other issues that require high-level regulation and enforcement. In these cases, “local peacebuilding efforts, such as...reconciliation initiatives, can only result in sustainable effects when these supra-local dimensions of conflict are also addressed.”<sup>38</sup> In these contexts, partnerships between external and internal actors can build on and learn from peacebuilding initiatives already undertaken locally, and address regional and global conflict drivers.<sup>39</sup>

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In 2015, a ten-year review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture will propose ways to strengthen its impact. At the same time, the UN High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations will explore, among other topics, peacebuilding and inclusive political processes. For both reviews, inclusivity provides a platform to deepen peacebuilding practice with operational guidelines and systematic approaches, to legitimize the participation of local actors in future processes. As both reviews explore the changing nature of conflict, in the context of recent relapses in countries like South Sudan and the Central African Republic, it may be necessary to reconsider current definitions of peacebuilding and statebuilding.

In recent years, the UN and international actors have defined peacebuilding in an increasingly narrow, technical framework. Peacebuilding policy conversations in New York are often limited to the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, and they fail to consider operational, field-based mechanisms and lessons. The conflation of peacebuilding and statebuilding has compounded this technical approach, with recent peacebuilding programs closely resembling externally driven exercises in statebuilding.<sup>40</sup> This risks restricting peacebuilding to a narrow conceptual framework, rather than understanding peace as a process of social change that requires interventions at various levels.<sup>41</sup>

In conflict-affected countries, at the local level,

35 UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, *Guidelines on Understanding and Integrating Local Perceptions in UN Peacekeeping*, 2014.

36 Séverine Autesserre, “Peacebuilding in Congo Needs To Be Reconsidered,” *New Routes* 18, No. 4 (2013): 20–21.

37 Koen Vlassenroot, “Why Local Dynamics of Conflict Are Never Only Local,” *New Routes* 18, No. 4 (2013): 22–24.

38 *Ibid.*

39 Hellmüller and Santschi, *Is Local Beautiful?* p. 7.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

41 Tony Karbo, “Peacebuilding in Africa,” *Peace & Conflict in Africa*, edited by David J. Francis (London: Zed Books, 2008), p. 118.

community peacebuilding groups are actively working to resolve conflicts, prevent relapses into violence, and build more peaceful societies. In highlighting examples of innovative local peacebuilding and statebuilding across Africa, the Leveraging Local Knowledge project aimed to draw lessons for global policy and practice. International actors have an important role to play in supporting

local initiatives, but they must do so in a way that does not undermine, distort, or overshadow local efforts. In short, international actors can prioritize inclusivity to ensure fairness and build trust, and their approaches should be continually reviewed and evaluated to promote stability and local ownership of peace.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Participant remarks at project seminar in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 4, 2014.

## Annex

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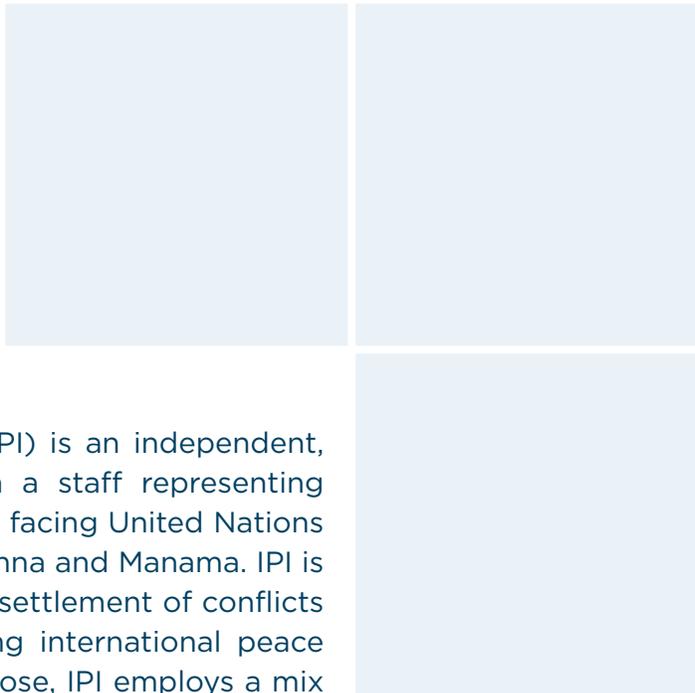
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