



BUILDING PEACE DIFFERENTLY

Peace Direct & partners:
2023 Impact Report highlights



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Cover image: Shakeel and Tayyaba, sitting in Aman Chaupal. Shared by HIVE in Pakistan.

Foreword

2023 will not be considered a testament to the impact of peacebuilding. Instead, we will think of Palestine, and the ongoing devastation that has rightly drawn much of our attention.

But our partners haven't given up on peace. That's why it's vital to also remember the other parts of the world where peacebuilders worked tirelessly, against insurmountable odds, in 2023. Places like the DRC, Myanmar and Sudan, which have been broadly forgotten despite facing extreme crises. Our partners there have been protecting their communities, defending human rights, and working to prevent further division. They deserve our attention, and our support.

Our partners have not lost hope and neither should we. Their work inspires us to continue – including continuing to push the international community to do better to support them.

That's why in this year's Impact Report, you'll hear directly from our partners about how different approaches to partnerships and to peacebuilding can help pave the way to sustainable peace. This PDF covers some of our key highlights of 2023: diverse, innovative and locally led approaches to peace; supporting the launch of a global campaign for and by peacebuilders; and working to rebuild a better system for peacebuilders.

We hope this report will inspire you, as it does us, to believe that peace is possible with the leadership of local peacebuilders. And we hope you'll take action with us, to better support them.



Dylan Mathews,
CEO of Peace Direct

Building peace together

MEET OUR PARTNERS

27
Partners

14
Countries

The majority of our ongoing partnerships are across Africa, where 14 partners delivered diverse, impactful initiatives in 2023.

In DRC and Burundi, these initiatives ranged from building local early warning systems and using sports to bridge divides, to psychosocial support and peace radios.

In Sudan, Adeela pivoted its work in 2023 to respond to the outbreak of civil war, including to provide trauma support. In Nigeria and Zimbabwe, our partners worked with women and young people to prevent election-related violence and address gender-based discrimination.

Our partners in Mali and the Central African Republic focused on the role of young people in conflict transformation and development.

AFRICA

Mali

- L'Association des Jeunes pour la Citoyenneté Active et la Démocratie (AJCAD)

Sudan

- Adeela
- Framework Mechanisms

Central African Republic

- URU

Nigeria

- Ladies Empowerment Goals and Support Initiative (LEGASI)
- Peace Initiative Network (PIN)

Burundi

- Anonymous

Democratic Republic of Congo

- Beni Peace Forum
- Bureau De Soutien A La Consolidation De La Paix En Rdc (Bs-Rdc)
- Centre Résolution Conflits (CRC)
- Fondation Chirezi (FOCHI)
- The National Partnership Of Children And Youth In Peacebuilding (NPCYP)

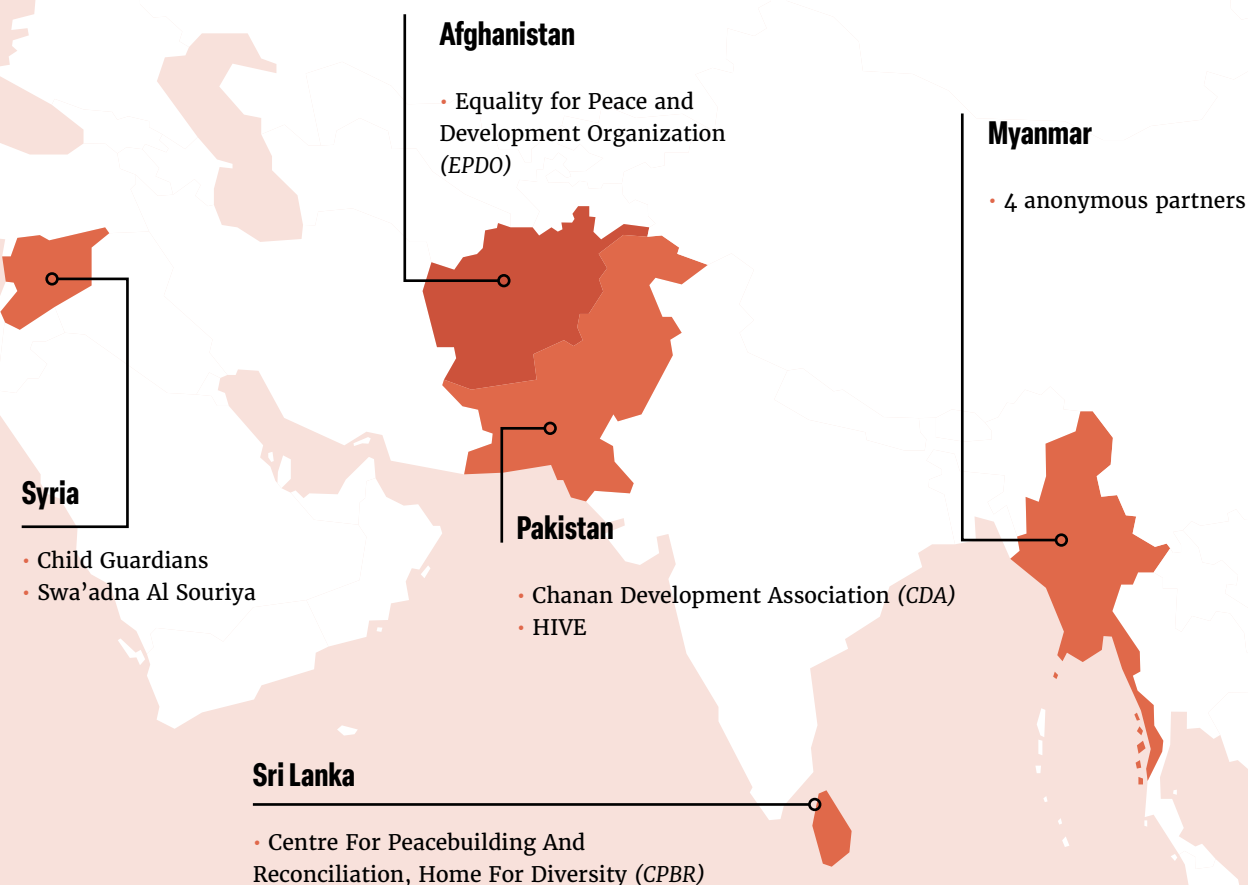
Zimbabwe

- Envision Zimbabwe Women's Trust
- Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation (CCMT)

Across Asia and the Middle East, we worked with 10 peacebuilding partners in 2023. Four of these are anonymised in this report, as their work responding to the ongoing devastating violence in Myanmar puts them at great risk.

In Afghanistan, EPDO spent 2023 adapting to an ever-changing environment while still providing community-based support. In Pakistan, our partners ran their own projects – including a youth peace summit – as well as using the Local Action Fund model to support innovative new initiatives for peace, particularly by young people. In Syria, our partners supported children affected by the ongoing conflict to receive education, established youth peace committees, and empowered families. While, in Sri Lanka, CPBR focused on addressing conflict between ethnic, religious and regional groups.

ASIA & THE MIDDLE EAST



AMERICAS

Colombia

- Agenda Joven
- Justapaz
- Redepaz

In 2023, we set up new partnerships with three peacebuilding organisations in Colombia: Agenda Joven, which focuses on participation of young people in peacebuilding; Justapaz, which promotes non-violence through training for civil society; and Redepaz, a network with a 30-year history of promoting citizen participation in peacebuilding.

In every region, our partnerships include peacebuilders running their own versions of our Local Action Fund – a flexible funding model to support grassroots peacebuilding. In addition to their own projects, these ‘hubs’ supported small, grassroots organisations and individuals to deliver community-based and innovative peace initiatives. The hub partners supported these peacebuilders with funding, training and collaboration opportunities. Learn more about our Local Action Fund later in the report.

Partnership approaches foster sustainable peace

We know that without local peacebuilders like our partners, sustainable peace is not possible. We also know that they require meaningful, trust-based and transformational partnerships.

We spent much of 2023 talking to peacebuilders about their experiences in their international partnerships with NGOs and funders. We learned that many have negative experiences. Some international partners don't trust local peacebuilders. They don't see local peacebuilders as experts, and don't fund them in a way that enables sustainable, long-term peace. At worst, they see local peacebuilders as implementers for short-term projects designed internationally, rather than supporting local peacebuilders to take a community-centred approach with lasting impact.

We try to do things differently. We are proud to have meaningful partnerships with local peacebuilders, based on principles of trust, respect, flexibility and mutuality. We shift power and resources to them, supporting their adaptive, community-embedded approaches and their long-term sustainability.

Partner perspective PIN, Nigeria

Commitment to long term relationships and partnership is the main reason PIN chose to work with Peace Direct. Other reasons are: mutual trust, respect, open and transparent communication, participatory decision-making and shared learning. What sets Peace Direct apart from other INGOs is the power of local action.

Peace Direct believes in the potential and expertise of local people to affect change and build peace in their communities. PIN share a common vision with Peace Direct in terms of community-led approach and inclusion. Local participation and ownership is at the core of our work in the community.



LOCAL EXPERTISE

We believe that local peacebuilders are the experts in the conflicts that affect them and their communities. That's why we are led by them and respect their expertise.



TRUST & RESPECT

We trust our partners, and don't burden them with unnecessary, demeaning due diligence or reporting requirements.



FLEXIBILITY

We fund local peacebuilders flexibly, so they can adapt to their community's changing needs, respond to emergencies, and be creative.



MUTUALITY

We are as accountable to our partners as they are to us. We listen to their feedback and learn from them, so that we can build peace better together.

MORE SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Local leadership for lasting peace

Lasting peace is only possible with the leadership of those closest to the conflict. They are best placed to react to emergencies, bridge divides and recognise the most effective pathways to peace.

That's why we're locally led. To us, that means:

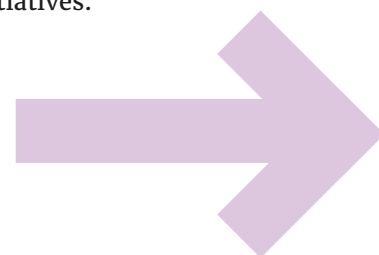
- 1 Local peacebuilders truly own the work. They aren't managing or implementing an initiative developed outside the community or context. In our partnerships, local peacebuilders set the programmes and priorities, while we support however we can – like co-designing projects, accessing funding, or connecting them with our networks.
- 2 We respect local expertise. It is our local partners who define what peace means to them, and who determine which approaches to peacebuilding will have the greatest impact on their communities. We may share our perspectives and challenge their thinking, but we don't know better than them. It's vital that they are the ones defining what peace means in their context, and determining which approaches to building that peace will have the greatest impact.
- 3 We don't have country offices. However well-intentioned, INGO country offices often end up in competition with locals for funding, and reduce the visibility of local activists for donors and policymakers.
- 4 We support a diverse range of peacebuilders. We don't only work with large, internationally recognised organisations. We map and support grassroots, informal and unregistered peacebuilders who often get overlooked.

This approach works.

When local communities create, implement, and evaluate their own initiatives for peace, they see high levels of community buy-in, ownership and, crucially, real change.

The result we see, on an international level, is a rich ecosystem of peacebuilding through diverse and innovative initiatives.

Discover the power of this work in these case studies from our partners' work in 2023



Amal in an Arabic lesson



Swaadna Al Souriya Organization (SAO) focuses on supporting children affected by the Syrian conflict to return to school, which reduces their vulnerability to recruitment by armed groups or early marriage and provides them with a safe space to recover from the trauma of the conflict.

In 2023, SAO's activities included providing:

- psychosocial support and a theatre programme on identity, emotions, peace and human rights;
- stationary supplies, clothes and meals; and
- educational classes for children and mothers.

They supported over 130 children and 19 mothers. Amal, a class attendee, said: "I hope all women learn reading and writing, even if they are 50 or 60 years old, we can do that. ... Before I couldn't read anything, now I could read the pharmacy banner, the streets' names, now I walk and read everything."

Ahead of Nigeria's 2023 elections, **Peace Initiative Network (PIN)** noticed an increase in politically motivated violence, which in turn heightened ethnic and religious tensions since political class tends to play on ethnic and cultural differences. They took a multi-pronged approach to address this:

PIN ran advocacy events where 60 local and national stakeholders met to discuss barriers to a peaceful election and created a unified campaign to improve election conduct. Secondly, they engaged 40 young people in a 3-day Peace Education seminar covering civic education, human rights, democratic processes, conflict resolution, combating hate speech, and more.

Finally, PIN accompanied a popular, weekly, 1-hour live phone-in radio show in Yoruba on a local radio station, delivering interactive episodes exploring issues around the elections, with key electoral figures invited for discussion.

Envision Zimbabwe Women's Trust is a local conflict transformation, women's rights and development organisation. "In Hurungwe, under our conflict transformation programme, we have established sustainable violence prevention mechanisms such as Peace Committees, intergenerational women's groups, Peace Gardens and Early Warning Early Response (EWER) platforms whose membership have been trained in leadership, conflict transformation knowledge and other skills.



Grace Musvuti from Hurungwe Ward 13

The community solidarity and comradery generated around working the gardens, together with the trainings in womens' rights, gender equality and leadership provided by Envision, has gone a long way in preventing gender-based violence."

Grace Musvuti, a training participant, said: "I am seeing a change in conflict transformation through a decrease in gender-based violence and domestic violence and we attribute this to Envision Zimbabwe trainings, [where] knowledge was imparted to us as a community on conflict transformation. More so, as a young woman who chose to marry early I am also noticing an increase in the awareness of the need to protect the girl child in the community from social and traditional ills such as early child marriage."

Building peace in new ways

Getting support to peacebuilders in active conflict zones is rarely simple. Neither is designing and delivering peacebuilding work in an ever-changing and volatile context. Both require creativity, flexibility and innovation.

In 2023, we and our partners have continued to explore innovative ways of building peace around the world.

Together, we're developing new, community-embedded and decolonial approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning. This is a partner-led approach focused on community accountability, and measuring success through more meaningful metrics.

We've evaluated and expanded our Local Action Fund (LAF): a flexible model for resourcing grassroots peacebuilding efforts. In 2023, we:

- started LAF projects with three new partners in Colombia;
- kicked off a second phase of the global LAF model, supporting wide ecosystems of peacebuilders in six countries across Asia, Africa and the Americas; and
- hosted a learning exchange with LAF partners in Pakistan, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Sudan, who shared their learnings on innovative approaches to peacebuilding in highly restricted civic spaces.

We've adapted together to ensure peacebuilding work can continue in the face of radically changing contexts. Our innovative and flexible approach to getting funding into Afghanistan means we've been able to support civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations, to continue their community-based work in 2023.

Innovative funding with Amanacard:

The complex humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan makes access to cash extremely difficult for civil society organisations giving vital support to women and girls. Since the Taliban takeover in 2021, there are strict limitations on banking, with no access to wire transfers and many international governments banning aid from entering the country altogether.

This lack of access to funding severely restricts an already decimated civil society, and demands innovative ideas to get money to where it is most needed.

We're working with our partner Equality for Peace and Development (EPDO) and Amanacard, which provides a secure and transparent method for sending funds to organisations and people outside of the formal banking system.

We've worked with EPDO to identify 25 civil society organisations operating in Afghanistan without access to traditional funding. Using Amanacard we are now able to move money safely and directly to them, which helps them continue their important work.

Hear from EPDO on the importance of peacebuilding, humanitarian, and community empowerment projects in post-Taliban Afghanistan:

"Since 2010, the EPDO has been steadfast in its commitment to promoting peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, and empowering local communities in Afghanistan. However, following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, our efforts have encountered significant obstacles due to restrictions imposed by the Taliban on NGO activities in these critical areas. Despite the challenges, the necessity for such projects in Afghanistan has never been greater.

Peacebuilding initiatives are essential for fostering stability and reconciliation in post-conflict environments. Humanitarian assistance is crucial for addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable populations affected by conflict and displacement. Empowering local communities is fundamental for sustainable development and resilience. However, the Taliban's restrictions and the reluctance of international donors to allocate sufficient funds present formidable barriers to our mission.

EPDO recognises the importance of joint innovative efforts to ensure that international funding reaches peacebuilders, humanitarians, and local communities in Afghanistan. We advocate for a coordinated approach that leverages the expertise and resources of diverse stakeholders, including governments, multilateral organisations, civil society, and the private sector. This approach should prioritise transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in distributing funds to those who need them most.

The role of international donors in supporting peacebuilders in Afghanistan is crucial. Donors should provide financial resources, technical expertise, and capacity-building initiatives to enable peacebuilders to implement programs focused on conflict resolution, dialogue, reconciliation, and community engagement. Donors should adopt approaches that empower local communities to take ownership of peacebuilding efforts, foster partnerships with local organisations, and promote inclusive decision-making processes.

In conclusion, the importance of peacebuilding, humanitarian, and community empowerment projects in post-Taliban Afghanistan cannot be overstated. EPDO remains committed to advancing these critical agendas and calls upon the international community to prioritise and support the needs of Afghan peacebuilders, humanitarians, and local communities."

Building a better system for peacebuilders

We shouldn't have to say we do things differently. But locally led, trust-based, flexible and sustainable approaches to peacebuilding aren't common. Instead, our partners still face significant structural barriers that undermine their work.

Local peacebuilders can't easily access international funding directly. They struggle to be perceived as valuable experts in conflict resolutions and peace negotiations. And their impact on peace is under-recognised.

So, it's not enough for us to support our partners directly. We must look at the bigger picture. In 2023, we've been influencing the sector to better recognise the value of locally led peacebuilding.

Amplifying peacebuilder voices

For our sector to do better, the voices of peacebuilders need to be heard. In 2023, Peace Direct not only advocated on behalf of our partners, but ensured they had the opportunity to speak directly to powerholders in our sector. We collaborated with our partners to advance their advocacy priorities, including supporting partner visits to the UK, EU, UN and US. We supported our DRC partners to deliver a high-level policy webinar ahead of the December elections, and our Afghanistan partner to create an influential report for policy-makers on the situation for local women and girls.

Influencing peers and power holders

In 2023, we and our partners continued to be recognised as thought leaders by those in the sector who recognise the need for change. We were asked to deliver talks and resources, and even supported major organisations like the UN, as well as our other peers, to redevelop their own flexible funding mechanisms and improve their policies.

We also released resources to support our sector's efforts: a paper highlighting the nine roles that intermediaries can play to better support local activists; and a research-led guide *Transforming Partnerships in International Cooperation*.

And we have influenced major power holders this year, including strengthening both the UK and US government policies on locally led development and local partnerships.

Partner perspective Beni Peace Forum, DRC

PD's approach so far has been good. In fact, thanks to it, BPF has opportunities to speak directly to the big players, in particular donors and representatives of the international community. It is therefore a path towards the decolonisation of civil society organisations.



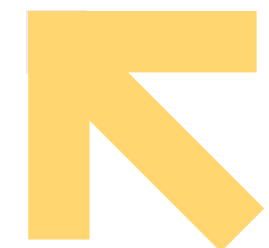
Over 2023 we supported ten local peacebuilders from around the world to design and launch a campaign created by and for local peacebuilders. Throughout the year, we and the co-creators met online every week to connect over shared questions, problems and aspirations.

After countless hours of conversations, networking, brainstorming and collaborating with colleagues across the globe, the co-creators launched Peace Starts Here in 2024.

Peace Starts Here is a first of its kind campaign, innovatively co-created by local peacebuilders from around the world, with a goal of igniting a movement that will change the status quo. It is a movement created by, and for, local peacebuilders around the world.

With a five-part manifesto, Peace Starts Here calls for local peacebuilders to be seen, heard and better supported locally and globally.

Head to peacestartshere.world to discover more about the movement, and please join in.



Help us fund peace differently

Peacebuilders' work is not straightforward. They work in volatile contexts and are constantly forced to overcome new challenges. They need funders to be their allies. To provide flexible, long-term financial support that helps them meet local needs long-term and adapt to changing community needs.

We want to be able to be this ally for our partners. But we can't. Although the funding we receive from generous members of the public enables us to take a truly flexible approach with our partners, we mostly rely on institutional funding. And most funders provide short-term and time-bound grants, and place strict requirements on partners accessing that funding. But why, when we know that's not the kind of funding that best supports peacebuilders?

The truth is that too many funders, including Peace Direct, focus on satisfying their own administrative processes more than on providing effective support. In some of the worst cases of this, we've seen funders demand intensive reporting every two weeks, and request information that would endanger communities involved.

It's time for us to do better, together.

We can impose less arduous reporting requirements. We can build budgets that can be flexibly adjusted. We can make our measures of success more relevant to the context.

Throughout 2023, and well before, Peace Direct has been working with funders committed to funding peace differently. It's meant having difficult conversations internally, challenging assumptions, and recognising the way practices can reinforce problematic power dynamics. But they've made peacebuilders the priority, and succeeded in changing their approaches.

These changes look different for each funder. It could be speeding up decision-making processes to be able to respond more quickly. It could be removing the requirement to have to collect every single receipt and attendance register.

Whatever it is, these shifting sands are creating a world where funding is more fair and equitable. A world where peace is more possible. We want to work with more funders who share this vision, and we hope that's you.

Partner perspective AJCAD, in Mali:

It is essential for international donors to understand the impact of their funding approaches on our ability to build peace while promoting the decolonisation of development aid. Restrictive approaches inherited from the colonial past can hamper our long-term effectiveness. On the other hand, flexible financial support, adapted to local needs and based on mutual trust, can achieve more significant and lasting results.

International donors must recognise that the decolonisation of development aid implies a change of dynamic where local initiatives are valued and respected. Funding models that focus on empowering local actors and taking account of specific contexts are essential to building inclusive and sustainable peace processes.

By encouraging funding approaches that are more equitable, transparent and respectful of local actors, international donors are helping not only to strengthen our capacity to build peace, but also to create a truly collaborative and emancipating partnership. This change of perspective promotes more effective development aid that respects the aspirations and needs of local communities.

(translated from French)

If you are a funder who wants to help us fund peace differently, please contact us via ceo@peacedirect.org.

If you are an individual who wishes to support our work, please donate at www.peacedirect.org/donate.

Our funders

Alan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust

Blandford Lake Trust

Global Affairs Canada

Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

European Partnership for Responsible Minerals

Eva Reckitt Trust

Guernsey Overseas Aid

Harbinson Trust

Humanity United

Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

Jusaca Charitable Trust

J A Trust

LBM Jem Charitable Trust

Network for Social Change

Open Society Foundations

People's Postcode Lottery

Polden Puckham Charitable Foundation

Rhododendron Trust

Robert Bosch Stiftung

Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Sir James Reckitt Charity

Sulney Fields Trust

William P Bancroft Charitable Trust

Our partners



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Colombia



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Bureau De Soutien
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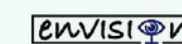
Chanan Development
Association
Pakistan



Centre For Peacebuilding
And Reconciliation,
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Centre Résolution Conflits
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Women's Trust
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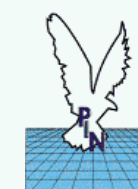
HIVE
Pakistan



Child Guardians
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Justapaz
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The National Partnership Of
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Redepaz
Colombia



Swa'adna Al Suriya
Syria



URU
Central African Republic



5 anonymous partners
in Myanmar + Burundi



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