

THE LOCAL ACTION FUND MODEL

SHIFTING POWER TO LOCAL PEACEBUILDING



Addressing a critical funding gap

Peace Direct's 20 years of research and experience show that **local peacebuilding organizations and leaders are often best placed to prevent and address violence and sustain peace**. Peacebuilders working at the grassroots level have deep contextual expertise; strong local ties and networks; and high levels of trust within and accountability towards communities affected by conflict. All this ensures that direct and strategic financing to local peacebuilders can have an outsized impact in conflict transformation.

Despite various commitments to increase resources going directly to local organizations, **little international funding is reaching directly locally led peacebuilding initiatives**.

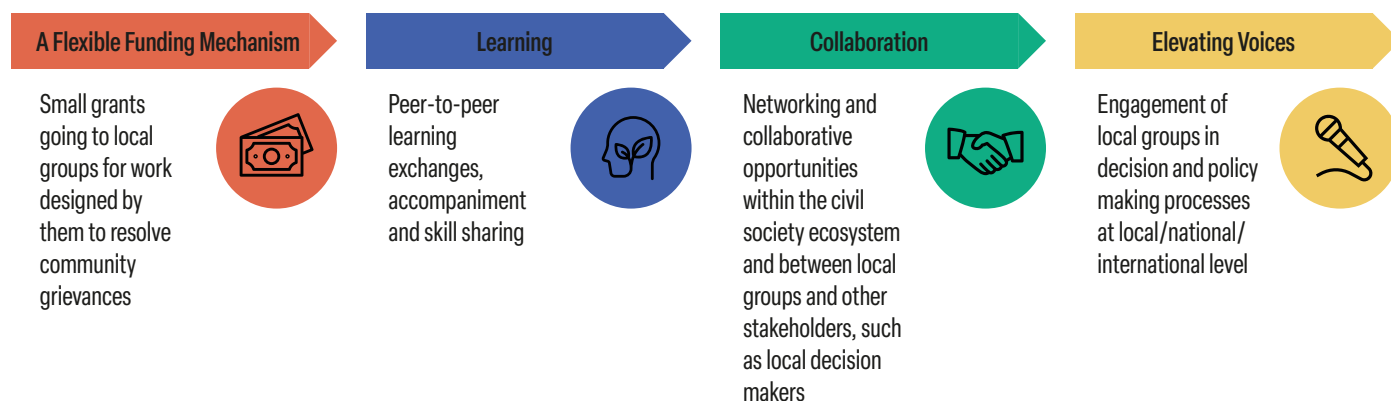
To address this gap, Peace Direct developed the '**Local Action Fund**' (LAF): a comprehensive support model, which targets local peacebuilding and civil society initiatives operating at the grassroots or sub-regional level, i.e., below the field of vision of most international donors.

What is the Local Action Fund?

The Local Action Fund (LAF), created in 2015, supports **frontline** peacebuilding efforts in some of the most complex and volatile conflicts worldwide. It is designed to provide **flexible and rapid support** to local groups to help them prevent conflict, respond immediately to community needs, and build resilience.

In close partnership with dynamic national civil society organizations, Peace Direct implements the Local Action Fund models to support community-led initiatives (including by youth and women) with small grants aimed at tackling the root causes of violence and rapidly responding to sudden outbreaks of violence. These grants are complemented with training, mentoring, information sharing, and opportunities for wider collaboration, networking, and local-regional-national-international advocacy. The flexibility of the LAF model allows local peacebuilders to act swiftly to overcome challenges to peace in their communities, to adapt to sudden changes and to gain the tools, connections and skills to continue their impact beyond the grant.

Every application of the LAF model is adapted to each unique conflict and context through **highly participatory methods and co-design with national partners**, ensuring it is as locally led and impactful as possible. The main features of the Local Action Fund are the following:



How does it work?

After a thorough mapping and context analysis, Peace Direct identifies well-established, respected national and local peacebuilding organizations to work with as **'hub organizations'**. Peace Direct and the hub partner(s) codesign and implement the small-grant mechanism: from defining and supporting a transparent selection process, to supporting program implementation and skill sharing with local grant recipients. Peace Direct's partnership with the hub partner(s) recognizes that meaningful and trust-based relationships with local organizations are essential to identifying and supporting grassroots actors working at the hyper-local level.

The LAF provides a wide range of support, consisting of rapid turnaround micro-grants (below \$5,000) and small grants (below \$15,000) coupled with mentoring, training, advocacy and other forms of support and peer learning.

More than just a grant-mechanism, a central component of the LAF is to strengthen networks of local peacebuilders within each country to raise their collective impact. Relationship building, learning exchanges, peer-to-peer capacity sharing, and other convening activities are built into each LAF program.

Recommendations

Local peacebuilders have substantial impact in their communities but need more support to expand and further their efforts. To establish more effective funding models which tackle power imbalances, policymakers, donors, and INGOs should:

1 ENGAGE LOCAL PEACEBUILDERS DIRECTLY IN DECISION AND GRANT-MAKING THROUGH TRUST-BASED PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

- Engage in respectful partnerships based on **principles of inclusion, participation and equality**.
- Develop a new granting and partnership model that **blends local and international expertise and priorities** while not drowning out local voices in planning and reporting.
- Co-develop a **clear timeline and plan for phasing out and responsibly transitioning** program activities and resources to **make way for local ownership and sustainability** beyond international partnerships. Learn more at stoppingasuccess.org

2 INCREASE THE LEVELS OF DIRECT, FLEXIBLE, SUSTAINED FUNDING TO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS AND INITIATIVES AT ALL STAGES OF THE CONFLICT CYCLE

- Use **longer and more flexible funding cycles**, including core funding for **operational and organizational costs** which builds civil society resilience and sustainability.
- Audit the volume of funding currently applied to local civil society peacebuilding initiatives and **increase this to at least 25%** of all peacebuilding funds

3 ADDRESS THE BARRIERS THAT DISADVANTAGE LOCAL AND NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN ACCESSING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT LOCALLY LED PEACEBUILDING

- Simplifying grant allocation, lightening the compliance burden, adopting greater risk tolerance, and tailoring application processes so that **local initiatives are welcome**.
- Ensuring application processes are shared widely in **local colloquial and indigenous languages**.
- Invest in **innovative and unconventional context-specific approaches** to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL).
- Shift internal processes and policies to be more risk-tolerant and incentivize staff to **spend more time with local civil society organizations** – beyond capital cities and INGO/UN hubs.

LAF BY NUMBERS

Between 2019 and March 2023, LAF awarded

669 SMALL GRANTS

and provided more than

2.08 MILLION USD

to local groups across:

-  **AFGHANISTAN**
-  **CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**
-  **COLOMBIA**
-  **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**
-  **NIGERIA**
-  **MALI**
-  **MYANMAR**
-  **PAKISTAN**
-  **SUDAN**