



international
alert

Practical approaches to localisation in peacebuilding Rwanda

SUMMARY

The Practical Approaches to Localisation project, based in Lebanon, Syria, Kenya and Rwanda, documents local realities and voices on localisation and incorporates them into the international conversation around the topic.

The research findings were drawn from an in-depth literature review, key informant interviews with senior stakeholders in local and central government, academia and CSOs and focus group discussions with technical staff from local government, CSOs and local community members. In total, 167 people participated from four provinces and the capital city, Kigali.

Rwandan context

- The concept of localisation is increasingly recognised and incorporated into humanitarian, aid and peacebuilding discussions in Rwanda, reflecting a global shift towards more inclusive and sustainable development practices.
- Rwanda's journey from the devastating genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 to the country's current state of stability and development demonstrates the importance of effective peacebuilding at different levels.
- The active participation of citizens in peacebuilding in Rwanda is facilitated through state-led consultation channels such as community assemblies (*inteko z'abaturage*), community work (*umuganda*) and the National Dialogue Council (*Umushyikirano*), and non-state-led channels including CSO initiatives at community level.

Findings

Localisation in Rwanda

- Localisation relates to a process and outcomes relating to the redress of power imbalances within the peacebuilding sector, and refers to the transfer of power from international peacebuilding agencies (donors, multilateral agencies and international non-governmental organisations) to local actors, as defined by the needs of the specific contexts.

- Participants felt that the process of localisation would lead to stronger locally led peacebuilding in Rwanda.
- Local actors include a wide range of stakeholders such as community leaders, local NGOs and other local CSOs such as faith-based groups, local government institutions, conflict-affected communities and individuals operating within affected communities.
- Focus groups identified community-led peacebuilding initiatives and socio-economic development as crucial for effective localisation of peacebuilding.
- CSOs in Rwanda promote localisation through community-centred approaches, focus on human rights and justice, dialogue and reconciliation. These are done in partnership and collaboration with government agencies and international organisations.
- To be feasible, sustainable and impactful, localisation of peacebuilding in Rwanda needs to reflect local values, culture and the historical and political context behind local needs and priorities.

Challenges to localisation in peacebuilding

- Funding pressures and dependency on donors and INGOs limit the ability of CSOs to make their own programming decisions and limits their sustainability.
- Poor coordination between local, national and international actors and lack of alignment between the priorities of INGOs and local organisations means that approaches are not always developed in line with local needs.
- Power imbalances between local, national and international actors impact decision-making processes and resource allocation disadvantaging locally-led peacebuilding efforts and risking interventions being disconnected from local needs and realities.
- Limited capacity locally affecting local organisations' autonomy and ability to ensure accountability and transparency.

Elements for successful localisation in peacebuilding

- Networking and collaboration among stakeholders (local, national and international) to share learning, coordinate efforts and break out of silos with the aim of amplifying the impact of local level work.
- Flexibility in the design, implementation, monitoring and resourcing of peacebuilding interventions to respond to evolving local needs and priorities.
- Equity in funding through increasing direct funding to local actors, greater flexibility in funding requirements, and funding core costs.
- Capacity-building in local organisations to enable full ownership of local peacebuilding efforts
- Building trust, accountability and transparency between local, national and international organisations, and between these entities and communities.
- Inclusive, gender-sensitive community participation to ensure communities play a central role in decision-making.

Recommendations

For all international development partners

- Tailor interventions directly to citizens' needs, based on research conducted in partnership with local NGOs.
- Facilitate regular conversations with local NGOs and CSOs around their capacity to effectively implement activities and manage funds.
- Establish connections with local government entities at district and sector level through ongoing and tailored capacity building based on a clear development plan. Resolve internal bureaucratic barriers that make it difficult to grant funds directly to local NGOs and CSOs.
- Develop transition plans to progressively hand over direct implementation of peacebuilding activities and systems to local NGOs.

For the Government of Rwanda

- Ensure all practical approaches to localisation take shape within the existing national peacebuilding framework.
- Revise the systems for direct funding to local CSOs to enhance accessibility and inclusivity to help ensure citizens' needs and priorities are represented.

For local NGOs and CSOs

- Invest in developing capacities to effectively lead peacebuilding initiatives.
- Strengthen existing community-based initiatives.
- Facilitate local dialogue to allow local stakeholders to voice their concerns, share their experiences, and collaboratively find solutions to conflicts.
- Ensure that inclusive approaches are encouraged to promote participation by specific groups (e.g. women, girls and people with disabilities in conflict-affected areas) in all peacebuilding processes and ensure their voices are heard.
- Work on income-generating activities to help local NGOs become self-sufficient and independently design and implement peacebuilding initiatives for more impact and sustainability.

Read the full learning paper [here](#).

Find out more about the project: <https://bit.ly/localisation-IA>

Funded by:

