



international
alert

Practical approaches to localisation in peacebuilding Kenya

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 are drawn from regional workshops and cross-regional dialogue sessions held across Kenya in 2024. This was supplemented by a literature review and follow-up interviews.

The participants represent local peacebuilding structures, including civil society, community leaders, religious institutions and government agencies.

Kenyan context

- Kenya has experienced cycles of unresolved conflicts, during both the colonial and post-independence eras. The causes and dynamics of these conflicts are multifaceted and overlapping, and peace and social cohesion remain elusive.
- A key challenge to sustainable peacebuilding is the application of externally oriented peacebuilding models that lack resonance with communities' values and realities and therefore lack community ownership.
- The introduction of financial incentives for participation has distorted the value-based nature of peacebuilding, turning it into an income-generating exercise.
- Formalising local peace structures has introduced bureaucratic obstacles, hindering the ability of local peace actors to respond to local needs and reinforcing power inequalities.

Findings

- Kenya has a long history of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, including local, traditional approaches, but sustainable peace remains elusive.
- A key challenge of sustainable peacebuilding is the use of peacebuilding models borrowed from the West that lack resonance with communities' values and realities.
- Localisation involves locating peacebuilding interventions within communities where conflict occurs and enabling local actors to define the conflict and interventions needed.

- Peacebuilding approaches must be grounded in local realities, values and traditions for enhanced adaptability, resilience and sustainability, but cultural barriers can hinder peace.
- Effective localisation needs meaningful and inclusive participation by local communities, strong partnerships and collaboration at all levels, and targeted capacity-building and enhancement of local resources and knowledge, against the backdrop of a robust policy framework.

Challenges for localisation in peacebuilding

- A shared understanding of the concept of 'local' in Kenya is challenging. Conflating it with 'national' ownership does little to engage local communities and risks suppressing local initiatives and grassroots voices.
- Tensions between ethnic groups may present challenges to inclusive peacebuilding processes.
- Political interference or the influence of business actors can undermine the localisation of peacebuilding efforts.
- Cultural barriers and traditional beliefs can sometimes hinder peacebuilding efforts if they conflict with modern approaches to peace and reconciliation, such as gender equality and inclusivity.

Elements for successful localisation in peacebuilding

Research participants identified seven elements as central to effective and holistic localisation rooted in local history, social and culture.

- **Meaningful participation and inclusion:** Localisation should shift power and decision-making to local actors, recognising their insight into the context, conflict dynamics and specific needs. Conflict sensitivity and active inclusion are essential to avoid exacerbating tensions and divisions.
- **Capacity development:** This involves providing local actors with technical skills and expertise in conflict analysis and peacebuilding, as well as mapping and enhancing local knowledge and resources for peace.
- **Institutional strengthening:** Local institutions such as peace committees, community-based organisations and grassroots initiatives need to be equipped to plan, implement and monitor peacebuilding activities.
- **Resource mobilisation and management:** This involves facilitating access to financial resources, networks and partnerships that strengthen the capacity of local peacebuilding actors to implement, sustain and scale up their work.
- **Networking and collaboration:** There needs to be effective collaboration and coordination of initiatives at a local level, as well as efforts to foster partnerships with national and international actors to secure funding and support.
- **Community engagement and ownership:** Active participation and leadership by local communities during peacebuilding processes, including marginalized groups, are essential to ensure that local needs and priorities are addressed.
- **Policy development:** National peacebuilding policies must be grounded in the local context and support local peacebuilding efforts.

Recommendations

For donors and international NGOs

- Empower and collaborate with local peacebuilders to amplify the reach and effectiveness of their initiatives.
- Facilitate and fund the meaningful participation of local actors in national peace processes.
- Enable local actors to lead in designing, overseeing, and implementing initiatives.
- Enhance sustained funding and use flexible, transparent funding models that are responsive and adaptable to local needs.
- Adopt transformed practices and attitudes in support of local peacebuilding actors.
- Simplify demands on grant management by fostering mutual trust and collaboration.
- Design country strategies and programmes that are inclusive of local voices and actions.

For local communities and actors

- Identify, learn and scale up what works locally in peacebuilding. Document, evaluate and share successful, local peacebuilding interventions and best practice across local networks.
- Build strong partnerships with government and institutions at national and county levels, other CSOs, and international organisations and donors to ensure coordination of peacebuilding efforts and access to funding and technical expertise.
- Raise awareness about the importance of local ownership and participation in peacebuilding and localisation efforts.
- Undertake research and evaluation to assess the effectiveness and impact of local peacebuilding initiatives.
- Use technology such as online platforms, social media, and mobile phones, to enhance communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing among local actors.
- Encourage community members, especially marginalised groups including women, youth and people with disabilities, to actively participate in all stages of peacebuilding initiatives and ensure peacebuilding work incorporates their needs.
- Identify and support local leaders who can champion peacebuilding efforts within their communities.
- Diversify away from an over-reliance on western donor funding by mapping local resources such as local philanthropy and identifying community resources including in-kind contributions and volunteers.

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

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

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