



international
alert

RESEARCH PAPER

Trust, legitimacy, capacity and power:

Practical approaches to
localisation in peacebuilding

Funded by:

**SVENSKA
POSTKODLOTTERIETS**

STIFTELSE

Contents

Introduction	2
About this report	2
Framing localisation for peacebuilding	3
What does localisation look like across the four different contexts?	5
Three elements of localisation in peacebuilding	7
Element 1: Legitimacy and trust building	7
Element 2: Transforming power relations	15
Element 3: Recognising and developing local capacity for peace	19
A context-sensitive approach to engaging with complexity	22
Grappling with complex, non-linear processes	23
Localisation, like peacebuilding, needs to be context-specific	23
Addressing potential spoilers and those who incite violence	24
Learning from existing localisation efforts	25
Recommendations	27
Donors and policy-makers	27
INGOs and international agencies	29
Local civil society organisations	29
Recommendations for all actors on conflict-sensitive and participatory approaches	30
Endnotes	31
Acknowledgements	33

Introduction

Localisation is widely discussed across the international development system, driven by an underlying desire for greater equity and effectiveness; however, there is little consensus on what it means in practice. The visions of international actors are often different to what local organisations seek and need, and those needs differ among local organisations themselves.¹ In many cases, localisation has been approached from a particular angle, such as financial, or in sector-specific ways for humanitarian aid, development or peacebuilding. Although the discourse has advanced, many international commitments have failed to translate into significant change.² Moreover, the debates in this area focus on important principles, but often fail to provide practical steps.³ Indeed, the rhetoric around localisation has been criticised for being performative, led by new trends, rather than responding to the needs and priorities of local organisations.⁴

Maintaining and growing spaces for locally led peacebuilding is an established tenet of global peacebuilding and has long been recognised as a critical component of good practice.⁵ The international peacebuilding architecture, space and efforts still, however, face similar challenges to those in the international humanitarian and development sectors, including unequal power dynamics, lack of involvement and visibility of local actors in decision-making, and restrictive funding and administrative requirements, amongst others. In practice, local organisations are sidelined from decision-making on peacebuilding processes, funding and genuine engagement in peacebuilding mechanisms at different levels.⁶ Furthermore, the tensions within localisation processes can be more fraught in conflict contexts, where the legitimacy of the actors involved (and those who have been excluded from these processes), and visions for localisation are more contested. In these contexts, the risks of replicating exclusionary power structures and increasing tensions are more pronounced. In active conflict and contexts of compound crises, the vital work of local peacebuilders can slip from the agenda amidst efforts to address immediate and growing humanitarian needs.⁷

About this report

This paper was produced as part of the Practical Approaches to Localisation project, funded by the Swedish Postcode Lottery Foundation. It draws on research conducted by International Alert between November 2023 and July 2024 in Kenya, Lebanon and Rwanda, and by Alert's partner, Mobaderoon, in Syria. Research design in each location varied to respond to local realities. Qualitative methods included dialogues, focus groups and in-depth interviews with 426 local and international stakeholders (205 women and 221 men). In Lebanon, a quantitative survey was also conducted with 51 people to gain input from a broader range of organisations. Individual country practice papers focus on what localisation in peacebuilding can and should look like in each country. This paper synthesises key findings from the four countries. It seeks to provide guidance to donors, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs, including International Alert), local NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) on how to provide effective support for localisation in peacebuilding.

This report frames localisation within the peacebuilding space, explores the different ways in which localisation is perceived and conceived, and discusses how it can enable and support locally-led peacebuilding. It then looks at key elements of localisation for peacebuilding: legitimacy, trust building, transforming power dynamics, capacity for peace and engaging with complexity in a

context-sensitive way. Finally, the report provides targeted recommendations aimed at donors, INGOs and local NGOs, along with cross-cutting conflict sensitivity recommendations.

Framing localisation for peacebuilding

Debates on localisation have been active in the literature on peacebuilding since the 1990s, building on discussions that started in international development in the 1960s in relation to addressing dysfunction in the colonial aid system,⁸ and then later through the 'localisation agenda' of the 1980s and 1990s.⁹ Within the peacebuilding sector, concepts of 'local ownership' began to emerge in the 1990s as a critique of the top-down 'liberal peace' approach.¹⁰ The term 'localisation' has gained currency in recent years alongside concepts of 'locally led peacebuilding' and 'local ownership'.¹¹

The concept of 'local' in peacebuilding discourse has evolved and can be seen in three phases. The first emphasised the central role and agency of non-elite, national actors in peacebuilding. The second saw a rejection of externally driven peacebuilding efforts and sought to integrate a context- and conflict-sensitive approach to developing a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics between diverse actors. This second phase emphasised calls for the decolonisation of peacebuilding.¹² A new third phase, as advanced in the article by Paffenholz, Poppelreuter and Ross, seeks to move "peacebuilders toward a pragmatic discussion of how to transfer power, agency,



and funds from international to local actors". This requires the sector to "decolonise the knowledge that informs peacebuilding interventions; to support direct, flexible, and risk-positive approaches to funding; to replace technocratic programming and monitoring with creative and participatory approaches; and to help create an environment conducive to local peacebuilders' work".¹³

Box 1: Distinguishing localisation in peacebuilding from locally led peacebuilding

Localisation in peacebuilding refers to a process and outcomes relating to the redress of power imbalances within the international peacebuilding sector and refers to the transfer of power from international peacebuilding agencies (donors, multilateral agencies and INGOs) to local actors as defined by the needs of the specific contexts. This is distinct from, but recognises and encompasses the learning from, the longstanding experiences of ongoing locally led peacebuilding work.

In practice, this means supporting effective localisation processes that enable locally led peacebuilding. In terms of process, this involves localisation processes that are contextually relevant, actively informed and led by local peacebuilders, and that transform power dynamics and address exclusive barriers within systems and structures that maintain power imbalances. This includes decision-making related to funding priorities and the distribution of resources, funding mechanisms, shaping policy and programming. In terms of an end goal, such processes should strengthen inclusive, participatory, gender-sensitive peacebuilding responses, which respond to diverse local needs and address local conflict dynamics and, where appropriate and necessary, are supported and facilitated by international partnerships, systems and structures based on principles of equality, equity, justice and inclusion.

Although the term 'localisation' is growing in currency, definitions are inconsistent and contested, varying from top-down, internationally driven to contextualised and hyper-local. For some scholars and practitioners, localisation is seen as a process, whereas others focus on the outcome.¹⁴ Many local actors call for greater equality in the global system and greater freedom to design programmes based on local needs.¹⁵ For them, localisation provides opportunities to address both these issues.

For these reasons, some international organisations have supported calls for localisation. Others such as Peace Direct have, however, expressed criticism of the localisation agenda since the language used often continues to treat Global South actors as passive recipients of support from the Global North, with the emphasis being on how Global North actors should 'engage' them. These organisations also raise the point that 'to localise' suggests transforming something that was imported (i.e. humanitarian intervention) into something that is more locally managed, rather than a more holistic approach to supporting genuinely locally-owned civil society efforts. Both of these linguistic critiques feed into the wider criticism that the localisation agenda is often being approached as a technocratic fix, rather than seeking to address underlying structural problems and imbalance of power.¹⁶

These views support a greater focus on 'decolonisation' rather than 'localisation' – the "deconstructing and dismantling of colonial-era and neo-colonial ideologies regarding the superiority of western thought and approaches".¹⁷ This shift in power seeks to enable local organisations and peacebuilders and has the potential to offer more sustainability of action,¹⁸ greater inclusivity for local communities,¹⁹ and increased contextual relevance and legitimacy.²⁰ Gulfs remain, however, between academic discourse and the policy commitments to localisation, and the realities of shifting the

power on the ground, ending gatekeeping by international agencies, increasing funding to local NGOs, and implementing pragmatic, concrete and creative initiatives.²¹

Across the research there was broad support for localisation in peacebuilding, although aims, framing, perspectives and approaches varied. For some parties, localisation is an approach driven by ideology and principles; for others, localisation is part of a drive for greater efficiency and better value for money.²² Although efficiency and ethical arguments for localisation are not mutually exclusive, these different driving forces for, and approaches to, localisation are likely to produce different localisation processes and outcomes. In practice, if approaches to localisation are only framed around and grounded in efficiency arguments, it is unlikely that power imbalances will be fully addressed. On the other hand, however, focusing purely on ethical arguments may not sufficiently consider institutional incentives and barriers and therefore may not be enough to shift donor practice.

What does localisation look like across the four different contexts?

International Alert's research focuses on four very different countries: Rwanda, Kenya, Lebanon and Syria. The conflict dynamics and their intensity and impacts, the extent of state legitimacy and capacity, the experiences of colonialism, and the impact of geopolitics vary greatly between these contexts. All, however, have a relatively strong and developed civil society (although in Syria much of the civil society is based in the diaspora). At present in these countries debates and initiatives on localisation are live and ongoing. These discussions are continuously influenced by changes in the local and national contexts. In Lebanon, the focus of local organisations in parts of the country has shifted to respond to the humanitarian emergency resulting from the war in the southern of the country and Gaza since October 2023. From September 2024, war has engulfed the whole country and all organisations (including peacebuilding actors) have focused their work on the growing needs caused by mass displacement, injury, loss of life and damage to livelihoods, property and infrastructure. As a result, discussions around localisation have been temporarily deprioritised, although in practice local organisations are central to the response.²³

Across the contexts there were diverse views on what constitutes localisation in peacebuilding. Emphasis ranged from focusing on the outcome (related to locally led peacebuilding) to process (such as the practical transfer of power) and its potential benefits. Most participants underlined the need for local peacebuilders to have a greater say in decision-making. In many cases, respondents believed that greater local decision-making power would increase the effectiveness of peacebuilding because it would ensure that initiatives better reflect and respond to local priorities.

“Localisation is amplifying international investment and acknowledgment of the role played by local actors, aiming to enhance the reach, effectiveness, and accountability of peacebuilding assistance.” – Research participant, Rwanda

“Localisation will allow responding to the communities' needs according to their priorities. It will minimise ineffective interventions and limit the harm resulting from ignorance of the sensitivity of contexts.” – Research participant, Lebanon

Some participants also stressed the fact that localisation would increase the capacity of local organisations.

“Localisation is an innovative approach to enable local actors at community level to take the lead in delivering peacebuilding support, aiming to enhance the capacity and resources of local organisations to respond to crises and foster long-term sustainability.” – Research participant, Rwanda

“Localisation, if applied correctly, will enhance the role of civil entities as their interventions will be sustainable, their structures will be more robust, and they can act as a main player rather than a follower.” – Research participant, Turkey

Others emphasised more the need for international organisations to transform their mindset and their practices. This was referenced across all the research contexts.

“The Global North and Global South division has to come to an end. This requires [a] change of mentality and decolonisation of knowledge.” – Research participant, Syria

A representative of an INGO in Syria underlined the need for a change in mindset and practice:

“INGOs should ... be open to creating more flexible frameworks in terms of finance and M and E [monitoring and evaluation], even if it takes more time for synthesis. This is the least we can do when working with people who have been experiencing conflict, its effects, and working with minimum resources.” – Research participant, Syria

The research did not arrive at a specific definition of ‘local’ for all the countries. Participants’ definitions of localisation in peacebuilding in Kenya framed localisation as both spatial and ideological. Adapted to the specifics of different contexts, this framing could be useful across contexts. The spatial dimension means planning and locating peacebuilding interventions in the places where conflict occurs and among the communities who are directly affected. This is opposed to planning interventions from a distance, such as in capital cities and by those who have no direct link to the conflict. The ideological dimension of ‘local’ refers to a bottom-up approach where grassroots voices define the conflict and the interventions needed, and their implementation, rather than international donors and partners. The ideological element allows for considering localisation as an outcome as well as offering a broader definition that can capture some of the many variations observed across the contexts. For example, this can allow for the broadening of the term ‘local’ in contexts of displacement and to include diaspora communities. This is particularly relevant in the case of Syria where diaspora civil society groups play a role in peacebuilding through funding and coordinating civil society initiatives in Syria.

In this paper, localisation is presented as grounded in “principles of justice and effectiveness ... norms, principles, and practices that transfer power, agency, and funds from international to local actors”.²⁴ This report does not seek to lay out a specific definition of localisation of peacebuilding, rather it presents a framing that entails the deliberate empowerment and engagement of local stakeholders, involving diverse communities and entities (CSOs, grassroots movements and local authorities, according to the context) in shaping, driving, sustaining and connecting peacebuilding initiatives. It involves shifting power and decision-making authority, resources, and capacities to the local level, thereby fostering local ownership, sustainability, and effectiveness.

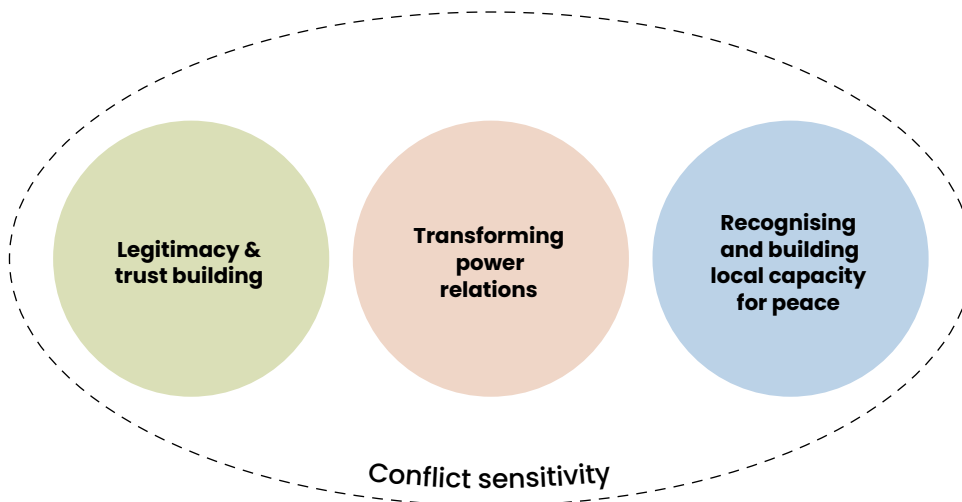
The findings in this paper explore key elements and underpinnings of localisation in peacebuilding and how these processes and outcomes are discussed and approached in the different contexts.

Three elements of localisation in peacebuilding

Despite the diversity of the four country contexts and the differences in how localisation is conceptualised, perceived and practised in each, along with differences in the nature and scope of locally led peacebuilding efforts, some common elements for successful localisation and enabling locally led peacebuilding emerged: legitimacy and trust building, transforming power relations, and local capacity for peace.

Underpinning these three elements is the need to accept the complexity of conflict situations and the need for context and conflict sensitivity, which are particularly relevant to peacebuilding. In conflict contexts, localisation processes, objectives, concepts and approaches can be contested. As such, it becomes increasingly important to acknowledge the complex relationships and roles of actors, patterns of exclusion, multiplicity of processes and the different potential outcomes in localisation efforts in peacebuilding. It is also important to recognise that peacebuilders can face specific risks to safety and that peacebuilding organisations (local and international) are not neutral and have the potential to interact positively and negatively within these dynamics.

Figure 1: Elements of localisation in peacebuilding



Element 1: Legitimacy and trust building

One of the key questions relating to localisation in peacebuilding is which actors are defined as 'local'. It is also important to consider who defines them, by what process and using which criteria. For localisation in peacebuilding to be successful, the actors driving and shaping it at a local level need to

have legitimacy in their context, known as 'grounded legitimacy' in the literature.²⁵ This can, however, be fraught with challenges, especially in divided contexts.

Trust is central to the question of localisation. This includes trust between actors and stakeholders – most often characterised by trust between local and international actors. In peacebuilding, however, trust between local actors (state and non-state) becomes more crucial, as does trust in the processes and mechanisms of localisation.²⁶ Among practitioners there is a growing recognition that trust building between local and international actors (INGOs and donor agencies) is a necessary part of localisation.

Potential pitfalls of the 'local' label

One source of tension that needs to be addressed relates to when international actors engage with local actors and "organise bottom-up approaches to aid in a top-down manner".²⁷ International donors, multilateral agencies and INGOs identify and work with a range of actors that they see as local and legitimate, such as local government bodies and local NGOs; however, by giving the label 'local' to these organisations, they grant 'top-down' legitimacy, which can be harmful if it is not paired with 'bottom-up' legitimacy.²⁸

There is an assumption among some international actors that local actors are inherently more legitimate than international ones. This simplifies their diverse roles (including in conflict and peace), experiences, perspectives and interests, and creates a risk that 'local actors' becomes a catch-all term that negates heterogeneity. Within the peacebuilding sphere especially, this can be complex and even play into local divisions. These divisions relate to diverse social, economic, political, ethnic, cultural, gender and identity dynamics and can expose competing interests, power dynamics, patterns of exclusion and experience, and perspectives of conflict and peace. Indeed, various peace processes have come under criticism for being constructed from a western perspective and engaging a small number of local elites whose ability to represent and reflect broader local communities has been contested.²⁹

One issue highlighted in practice and literature relates to the disconnect between local organisations that are based in the capital city or urban centres and those based in more remote, rural areas.³⁰ Often, due to capacity and ease of access, international organisations partner with the larger, city-based NGOs, which do not necessarily represent diverse local needs and priorities. This can be exacerbated in conflict settings, where security concerns and destruction of transport and communications infrastructure increase the challenges of engaging in more remote areas. Similarly, NGOs can be seen to reflect certain communities and not others (whether due to displacement, ethnicity or other social markers), even within the same local area. Local authorities, formal and informal, are also part of these dynamics and may not always work to support local needs and all communities inclusively. As discussed below, for example, state actors are widely considered to be legitimate by participants in some contexts such as Rwanda, but in Syria some participants perceived them as illegitimate because national authorities are an active party in the conflict.

Role of state actors

This research shows that the role of the government varies widely between and within contexts, depending on its capacity, presence and reach, legitimacy with local communities and role in conflict and tensions. In some cases, the government can and does play a key role in localisation in peacebuilding, and in enabling or (co-)owning locally led peacebuilding initiatives, including by

creating subnational platforms for peacebuilding planning (such as the country-level Women Peace and Security (WPS) National Action Plans (NAP) and peace plans in Kenya). As with all peacebuilding platforms, however, these need inclusive participation and meaningful decision-making to avoid benefitting specific groups, elite capture and co-option of local peacebuilding priorities by political agendas, and perpetuating conflict dynamics. Moreover, governments were seen as having a responsibility to create a wider enabling environment for all civil society, including protection of freedom of expression and ensuring the safety and security of local peace actors. Although many donors work with national and local government agencies, this can risk a state-centric localisation process that disconnects peacebuilding at a national and local level.³¹

In Kenya, while local government is seen as having a role in localisation and the government has taken steps towards peacebuilding at a national level that are represented in policy infrastructure, not all state-led policies are leading to peace. Indeed, in one example, a state-led, securitised approach was seen as counterproductive and not addressing wider community needs:

“The conflict in Tiaty will never end as long as the government keeps deploying the military to deal with the warring groups. Instead, the government should invest in the community’s social, economic wellbeing including education, food security and health, and work with community leaders in community peace and safety. That way, government is seen as an enabler of peace and not as a source of insecurity as is currently happening.” – Research participant, Kenya

Research participants in Kenya also noted that government involvement in structures such as local peace committees has also drawn control of the agenda away from local peacebuilders and turned peace committees into “an arena for politicians and state actors to reward their cronies”.³²

The role and legitimacy of the state in localisation in peacebuilding and in locally led peacebuilding efforts varied hugely across, and sometimes within, the four contexts of this research. For example, in Rwanda, traditional, community-based approaches have been largely integrated into formal processes and there is joint ownership of such community initiatives led by volunteers with the government, which provides overall oversight. In this context, some research participants saw a strong role for the state in localisation and supporting peacebuilding at a local level. Some respondents also felt that the state should take the place of international organisations in providing funding for such efforts. This is included in the framework of a new law that encourages Rwandan CSOs and local NGOs to diversify funding and reduce reliance on international donors.

“I strongly believe that localisation in Rwanda cannot be fully implemented when our CSOs and [local] NGOs still depend [so] much on donors or international organisations. There is a need for the government through their institutions to internally finance and build capacities necessary for our CSOs/[local] NGOs to design peacebuilding interventions that are aligned with local realities, citizens needs and priorities as these are leading factors. Otherwise, localisation will remain in theory but not in practice.” – Research participant, Rwanda

In Lebanon, overall, local government (municipalities) was seen to have a relatively high level of legitimacy as a local actor for peace compared with other actors, but with very limited capacity in the context of the intersecting political and economic crises that grip the country.³³ Thus, in some areas, municipalities are not only unable to directly work on peacebuilding themselves but may also need support from peacebuilding actors to integrate peacebuilding into their work.³⁴ Perceptions on levels of legitimacy of municipalities were by no means universal, being community and location specific and influenced by the triple postponement of municipal elections, the resignation of some

municipal councils and the level of political division within specific municipalities. In Syria, the state does not control all of Syrian territory and, as an actor in the ongoing conflict, the state is rejected by many within the country and the diaspora as a legitimate actor. At the same time some states in the region are beginning to normalise relations and acknowledge the legitimacy of the Syrian state. In the research, local government was identified by participants as a 'capable' actor, but not as a 'trustworthy' one.

Navigating these tensions and spaces between state and non-state actors is especially challenging where local civic spaces are contested, there are challenges to state legitimacy, or the state is absent and civil society space is threatened. As the research shows, in Syria, for example, legal frameworks can directly restrict civil society through limiting funding sources (such as restricting international funding), registration and operations. If initiatives to transfer power to local entities focus purely on CSOs, this can pose direct risks of a backlash where the local authorities see civil society as an opposition and repressive legal frameworks as a tool to control and limit political space.³⁵

Local NGOs and other civil society actors

For localisation efforts to be successful, it is important that those involved in peacebuilding are widely trusted by communities.³⁶ There was wide consensus among interviewees across the four contexts that local NGOs are seen and accepted as key actors to lead local peacebuilding and play a central role in the process of localising peacebuilding. The functions, reach, scope and size of these local NGOs varies across and within the countries. In Kenya, such groups include councils of elders, women and youth groups, religious institutions, self-help groups, peace committees, community-based organisations (CBOs), and business associations. In Lebanon, for example, local NGOs referred to a range of CBOs and CSOs, including those at a municipal level that act as service providers, responding to local needs as well as networks focused more specifically on peacebuilding. In Rwanda, local NGOs include local CSOs and CBOs. In Syria, local NGOs include organisations led by local people, authorised to work in Syria, and charities, CSOs, CBOs, and voluntary groups. Local NGOs were the actors most trusted by communities and most able to tailor programmes to the local context, decreasing the knowledge gap that can exist between local programming and international methodologies.

"I would say that [local] NGOs and other CSOs are only closest to community and should know that citizens at their grassroots know much better than anyone, their needs and priorities. So, it would be an easiest way to making localisation more effective and impactful."
– Research participant, Rwanda

Local organisations may have access within specific locations and to certain actors that is not available to international actors. For example, in Syria, international organisations face barriers in accessing specific locations because of the controlling authority, as well as to more remote communities. In other contexts, access to specific communities can be challenging for international actors because of the low levels of trust in international or external interventions in that area. It is not uncommon, however, for civil society to be divided along conflict lines or politically polarised, as seen in the divisions in Syrian civil society. In Syria and, to a lesser but growing extent, Lebanon, local NGOs and CSOs can struggle to have access and legitimacy to engage in areas controlled by other political actors.

It should not be assumed that trust, access and capacity go hand in hand. In Syria, for example, where participants were asked to categorise actors as trustworthy, having access, and having



Valeria Mukhula, research participant in Kenya, displaying her medal of recognition for her contribution towards the Mabanga peace process © Valeria Mukhula

capacity, not all local actors were identified in all three categories. Location, political affiliation, age, gender, other aspects of identity and experiences of conflicts can all cause perceptions of trustworthiness to vary hugely. In Syria, participants in government-controlled areas were more likely to identify doctors and teachers as trustworthy than those outside these areas. By contrast, in Northwest Syria, Turkey and Lebanon participants were more likely to trust and value the work of NGOs. This disparity is likely to be a result of participants' experiences during the conflict and the presence, or absence, of NGOs in different areas and the extent to which participants are reliant on NGOs for service delivery where state services are absent. This may also reflect the level of trust in the state.

It is also important to note that civil society and local government were not the only legitimate local actors identified, as we see in the example above from Syria. In Rwanda and Kenya, the private sector and local business associations were also identified among local peacebuilding actors. It is therefore crucial that local actors are determined according to the local context and not preconceived ideas.

The research highlighted the importance of building a broad network of actors to overcome challenges to legitimacy and trust and to maximise the impact of locally led peacebuilding efforts. Depending on the context, this may include actors working for peace across different sectors, in different areas and in collaboration with actors at different levels. Such an approach can reduce the risk of isolation and atomisation of localised peacebuilding efforts.³⁷ Participants in Syria, for example, expressed frustration at the limit of what they could achieve at a local level when the wider conflict remained unresolved.

Despite the varied contexts of this research, there was consensus that successful localisation needs local actors to work together across their different roles, areas and conflict lines. They need to build

a shared understanding of civic values and localisation in their context, as well as ways of working together that amplify their impact and their voices. These may include sharing analysis of the context and developing strategies for peacebuilding and social stability within it, sharing learning and skills related to peacebuilding, and sharing learning about which approaches work most effectively in their local context. Moreover, local actors may wish to engage in joint advocacy to government officials, donors, or international peacebuilding platforms, which will be strengthened if undertaken together.

Advocacy at a national or international level is one of the areas where it can also be beneficial for local actors to form networks with national and international peace actors. There are also many other ways in which collaboration with national and international organisations can benefit local actors, if the relationship is constructed to equalise power relations and enable local actors to make decisions about what is relevant to their context.

Networking was also identified as an approach that can help to join up local initiatives and support local NGOs to influence actors at national and international levels, including where conflicts stretch across national borders.

“Rwanda is not an isolated country or an island, therefore through international collaboration, I believe that peacebuilding involves cooperation among different countries, international organisations, and other actors to address conflicts, promote stability, and support the establishment of peaceful and resilient societies.” – Research participant, Rwanda

Box 2: The legitimacy of traditional peacebuilding processes

Recognising the legitimacy, effectiveness and cultural relevance of traditional peacebuilding helps to create an enabling environment for localisation by supporting the cultural shift towards empowering local peacebuilders. The integration of traditional practices into formal peacebuilding processes would be an additional beneficial step here. In some contexts, this is already happening to an extent: Rwanda has a wide range of home-grown and state-sponsored local peacebuilding initiatives that have roots in traditional practice and Kenya has seen a range of local peace agreements emerge for traditional peacebuilding practices.

It is important, however, to ensure that building on traditional peacebuilding practices does not mean only including traditional decision-makers. It is critical to include women in local peacebuilding, as well as other groups that may be marginalised, such as young people, people with disabilities, people from minority ethnic or religious groups, and displaced people. Local NGOs should seek to strengthen local peacebuilding institutions and structures and empower local actors to take ownership of peacebuilding initiatives. Local institutions include councils of elders, women and youth groups, religious institutions, self-help groups and peace committees. Local actors not traditionally engaged in peacebuilding such as business associations must also be brought into the fold of holistic peacebuilding.

Trust between local and international actors

More broadly, localisation requires greater trust between local, national and international actors, which is a crucial component to shifting power dynamics and enhancing meaningful participation and collaboration. Building this trust will include addressing tensions in how local and international

actors see localisation, including prioritising the decision-making power of local actors and increasing their access to resources and funding.

The research showed that INGOs can play a positive and important role in facilitating collaboration and networking across local actors, working to share experiences and supporting local capacities for peace, connecting local actors with international policy-makers and mechanisms, supporting access to funding, and convening and holding spaces for local peacebuilders, especially in contexts where safe spaces for local actors are shrinking.

Research participants across all four contexts consistently reported that, in order to play this positive role, international actors need to find ways to collaborate that put priority setting in the hands of local actors without dominating decision-making or marginalising those voices. In Lebanon, key informants from donor agencies and international organisations placed more emphasis on the integration of local perspectives into peacebuilding programmes than on a shift to locally led decision-making and increased access to resources for local NGOs. Moreover, many local actors across the research contexts felt that international actors do not trust them, their intentions or their capacity, and that this contributes to the complex compliance mechanisms required by international actors. In Lebanon, international organisations' lack of trust in local organisations was the second most commonly chosen barrier to localisation (35% of survey respondents, with only insufficient resources for local actors coming higher at 43%). This was echoed in testimonies from the other countries.

“Partnerships with international organisations can often feel abusive, especially when local organisations have to continually undergo due diligence and capacity assessments with parameters defined by the donors. Furthermore, transparency and accountability in these partnerships is often one way, with donors and INGOs hardly disclosing their own capacity gaps and weaknesses.” – Research participant, Kenya

The conflict in Gaza and southern Lebanon has exposed and deepened deficits in trust between local and national NGOs on the one hand and INGOs and donors on the other. There have been disagreements and recriminations in terms of what positions different organisations feel comfortable, or feel it necessary, to publicly state, with little understanding of the local dynamics that may inform these – both in terms of the dynamics faced by local organisations in Lebanon, and also the pressures that international organisations are subject to within their home countries or from funders. Furthermore, this conflict has undermined local communities' trust in international peacebuilding and the human rights protection system more broadly. Such examples highlight the increased importance of trust building in complex environments, especially where conflicts are internationalised and international actors are seen as having alignment with specific positions.

Growing spaces for diverse local voices

In our research, there was a strong emphasis on localisation as a process that should focus not on states, but on the active role of citizens and communities, with community ownership being key to success. Localisation in peacebuilding is seen as requiring participatory local approaches. In Syria, participants discussed the need for “active citizens”; in Rwanda, they frequently highlighted that “a citizen is the centre of governance”; while in Kenya, participants referred to “community ownership”. In Rwanda, one participant also suggested that localisation would create a virtuous circle whereby localising to a community level would have a positive impact by responding to local needs more effectively, while the recognition of citizens' agency would inspire them to engage more proactively and positively.



“When communities feel that their voices are heard and that they have agency in shaping their environment, they are more likely to feel a sense of ownership and pride in their community. This in turn leads to increased civic engagement, social cohesion, and overall wellbeing.”

– Research participant, Rwanda

Even at the most grassroots level, however, there will be different, even opposing, views on which communities have the right to participate, who has the right to represent them, and who can be considered an ‘authentically local voice’. Moreover, what happens when the desires of communities are fundamentally at odds with peacebuilding principles? The Lebanon report discusses these issues in relation to refugee populations. In Lebanon, there are intense and increasing tensions between Syrian refugee communities and the Lebanese communities alongside whom they live; many Lebanese citizens would reject the idea of Syria refugees being included in their definition of the ‘local community’. In Kenya, the legacy of the politicisation of ethnic identities has ongoing consequences, meaning that some communities such as the Maasai feel that, as the indigenous inhabitants of a region, they should have a greater say in local peacebuilding processes. The desire to claim the legitimacy of being the ‘authentic’ local community can create tensions that are relevant not only for peacebuilders to address, but also for organisations in other sectors to consider when delivering work in a conflict-sensitive manner.

The advantage of peacebuilding approaches is that they provide the tools to be able to work with diverse and even conflicting voices to build relationships and identify shared interests. Local peacebuilding can be especially effective in improving relationships between and among people and peoples (i.e. ‘horizontal relationships’) and improving relationships between people and those who govern them (‘vertical relationships’).³⁸ Such approaches can help those working towards localisation in peacebuilding to navigate the potential challenges of developing a common understanding of

desired outcomes and approaches and help ensure that such localisation processes do not reinforce existing dynamics of exclusion or conflict.

Element 2: Transforming power relations

Power asymmetries in the international system

There is a close and mutually supporting dynamic between processes of 'peacebuilding' and 'localisation'. Effective peacebuilding and localisation require that power imbalances are recognised and addressed. Peacebuilding approaches can help to identify how localisation can be effectively realised. "[A]ctors can embody ownership of peacebuilding and development processes and practices, thereby leading to unique innovations towards transforming conflicts and their dynamics, especially power."³⁹ The eventual success of peacebuilding efforts can hinge on engaging in different ways with a wide array of actors from grassroots to international players, those who support efforts for peace and those who have a vested interest in maintaining conflict, those with power and those who are excluded and marginalised.⁴⁰ For example, in some contexts, women-led peacebuilding efforts may be rejected by male elites and other community members because this is seen as transgressing traditional social and gender norms.

Relationships within the existing international aid system are asymmetrical and hierarchical, with power lying largely with donor states in the Global North that fund humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions.⁴¹ This system does not grant local NGOs equal status and it is common practice that they are not included in planning how funds are used. This was raised by participants in Lebanon:

"I think that until now there has been a lot of imposing of agendas on local organisations – they [donors] would decide on the needs and trends. There are no spaces for communities to identify needs, priorities, dreams." – Research participant, Lebanon

Across the research contexts, respondents underlined that localisation should transform power relationships within the international system and not just be a technically-focused change process (i.e. simply channelling more funding to local organisations without examining power dynamics between donor and local partners or understanding the wider context). This means changing the power relationships between local, national and international organisations, between the state and local civil society and communities, and even within communities, to address marginalisation and discrimination.

There was consensus across the research that international actors should not dominate decision-making but should engage local actors in joint priority setting. International actors will also have to address the complexity of the systems that they use for financial management, reporting and monitoring and evaluation if they want to work directly and more collaboratively with local organisations. Both international and local organisations face the challenges of navigating donor requirements in these areas. Thus, there is a combination of tangible process changes and less tangible cultural shifts that international actors need to embrace to change power dynamics.

“During our partnership most of us here encountered challenges related power dynamics where there are imbalances between international and local organisations which affect decision-making processes, resource allocation, and the overall direction of partnerships. International organisations do inadvertently dominate decision-making processes, marginalising the voices and priorities of local partners.” – Research participant, Rwanda

“The relationship is patriarchal. We are still crawling in this field, there is a need for funding, training, and guidance. Due to the many needs and the absence of a vision and plan in Syrian civil society, we have come to agree to any policy of global civil society. Our role is to implement without participating in planning.” – Research participant, Syria

Internationally, funding for peacebuilding has been decreasing steadily in recent years as many donors cut their overall aid budgets or focus funding on immediate responses to a range of major humanitarian disasters. Structural barriers to localisation and funding for locally led peacebuilding efforts are exacerbated by falling budgets, including staff cuts at donor agencies which mean that donors are more likely to give fewer, larger grants because this is less resource intensive.

Furthermore, the flexible funding that local peacebuilders need also requires more work on the part of donor staff, especially if working within their current inflexible systems. Funding shortages have contributed to shorter-term grants, which often especially affect the sustainability of local organisations. In some cases, there has also been a shift from upfront payments to the reimbursement of costs, a practice that particularly impacts smaller organisations that lack the financial resources to implement work before receiving funds.

Donors (and INGOs) often have inflexible, complex and bureaucratic systems and requirements that are challenging for local organisations to adhere to, such as detailed reporting in the donor’s language, compliance procedures involving sharing numerous documents and policies, and specific practices for financial monitoring and audits.⁴² Contrary to the support that many donors have expressed for localisation, research participants reported that donor requirements were becoming more demanding in the context of reduced funding and the need for donor agencies to justify their spending ever more strongly to a domestic audience. One participant in Lebanon described this as a “reversal of the trend” towards localisation.

Even when international funds are secure, they often do not meet local organisations’ needs. For example, donors often have restrictions on overheads and cap human resources costs, which limits the development of sustainable local organisations. This particularly affects peacebuilding organisations because staffing is the main overhead in many peacebuilding projects.

Some research participants felt that reliance on international funding and the priorities of donors decreases local civil society’s independence and sustainability to such an extent that localisation should include exploring other funding sources at a national or local level or how to do things more cheaply and use community resources.

“Community meetings that ordinarily used to be held in open spaces, under trees and other community facilities, have since been moved into expensive hotels where participants are provided with food and transport allowances. This is wasteful and leads to wastage of resources and creates a culture of commercialisation of peacebuilding at the community level, which kills volunteerism.” – Research participant, Kenya

Moreover, some participants, particularly in Kenya, felt that reliance on international funding has led to the formalisation and institutionalisation of peacebuilding initiatives in a manner that undermines local, traditional and voluntary approaches. They noted the irony that although institutionalising peacebuilding was intended to support sustainability, in some cases it can have the opposite effect because it ties initiatives to short-term funding cycles, rather than relying on volunteerism and community resources.

Some donors are already exploring this shift. In Lebanon, there are examples of donors seeking ways to restructure grant-making to favour local organisations. These include:

- providing financial incentives to local organisations (such as a recent European Union (EU) call for proposals in several Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries, which encouraged locally led projects with a much smaller co-funding requirement than that required from EU-based NGOs);
- horizontal engagement with grantees from project design through to implementation;
- use of pool funding or consortia;
- flexible grants in emergency situations; and
- including a strong capacity-strengthening component that targets local NGOs but focuses on mentoring and institutional strengthening, rather than standard training.

Box 3: The role of international actors in conflict resolution in Syria

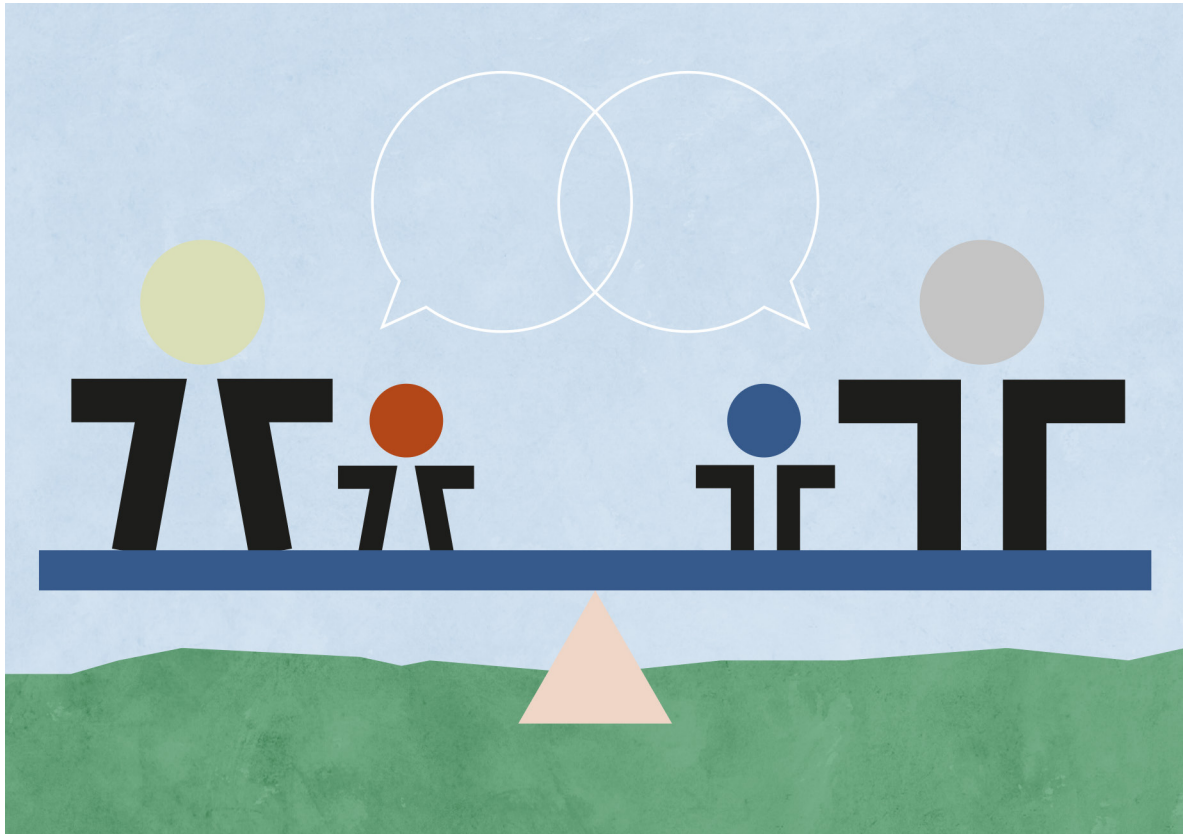
There is much that international actors can do to support localised peacebuilding, including sustained international efforts for inclusive Track 1 conflict resolution. Such efforts can give space to local peacebuilders to take a key role, while tackling the geopolitical dynamics of the conflict. A greater role in national and international peacebuilding processes for local peacebuilders, in contexts such as Syria, would not only ensure local concerns are considered, but would also strengthen networking and collaboration between civil society at different levels.

Power, gender and inclusion

Across the four contexts, there was consensus that localisation needs to be inclusive and participative for it to work. Shifting power relations through localisation also creates potential to transform gender norms and build greater gender equality and inclusion. As a participant in Rwanda expressed:

“[We] prioritise inclusivity and participation in peacebuilding processes, advocating for the involvement of diverse voices, including women, youth, and marginalised groups. Therefore, we may see localisation as an opportunity to ensure that everyone’s voice is heard in order to contribute to sustainable peace and stability.”

Simplified approaches, however, or those that place blind emphasis on the ‘local’ factor may end up replicating non-inclusive social norms and power structures, such as the dominance of local male elites. In some participatory, local processes, although women are included, it is only nominally or as victims of violence, rather than as agents of change in their own right.



This was the case with the Amani Mashiani model in Kenya, which took a broadly participatory approach to conflict transformation in the Rift Valley. Local gender dynamics meant that women were involved largely in activities providing relief for victims of violence, rather than being there as stakeholders in the peace process.

Box 4: Navigating traditional gender roles in women-led, bottom-up conflict resolution and peacebuilding

Kenya provides an example of bottom-up local peacebuilding led by local women. The Wajir Peace and Development Committee grew out of the determination of a group of women from different clans to build peace. The women leveraged their traditional gender roles as mothers and wives who traditionally unified clans through marriage. As women were not considered to belong to a particular clan, they could travel more freely between warring clans and broker peace. It was deemed necessary, however, to find a group of elders from a minority clan to work with the women to help broker the peace, taking the public role in the negotiations. In parallel, the women travelled the county, recruiting more people into the peace initiative. Publicly transforming the gendered role of women in peacebuilding faced considerable opposition in this example and the women had to find creative approaches to negotiate these dynamics.

Shifting gender norms can often encounter considerable opposition. In the context of debates around localisation, this can be framed as external imposition of an international agenda that is alien to the local culture. Within Lebanon, for example, government institutions have opposed the use of terms such as ‘gender mainstreaming’, which is mistakenly understood by officials as advocacy for

LGBTQIA+ rights. This has led to the government stopping projects and publications related to gender issues, and also to intensified pressure on local and international NGOs dealing with gender issues.

International Alert's work in Lebanon has encountered a lack of capacity for gender mainstreaming among local organisations working on social stability. Even though there are strong women's organisations in Lebanon, they are not necessarily represented in the peacebuilding sector. Alert is seeking to address this by working with networks of individual women peacebuilders, each embedded in her community. At the same time, it is important to recognise the intersectionality of women peacebuilders. Women from different communities and locations in Lebanon have very different experiences of conflict, opinions and work within different gendered expectations. This is also mediated by other aspects of identity such as age, legal status and disability. Gender-inclusive, localised peacebuilding cannot therefore be designed as a 'one-size-fits-all' model for any context and needs to take into account this intersectionality.

Element 3: Recognising and developing local capacity for peace

Building on existing structures and processes

In addition to the trust and legitimacy discussed above, local actors need to have the power and ability to take ownership over peacebuilding in their context. Across the four research contexts there was recognition that localisation in peacebuilding means localisation of approaches (and local ownership of them), not just resources and actors. Acknowledging the value of local knowledge and experience is one element to shifting power towards local peacebuilders. This was most clearly articulated in the research in relation to Syria:

"Localisation will increase ownership of the communities and local civil society. This is essential to create deeper impact." – Research participant, Syria

In Lebanon, there are formalised civil society structures to progress localisation, such as the Localisation Taskforce (see Box 5). In other contexts, the state plays a central role in enabling localisation. For example, political decentralisation was seen as a potential enabler for localised peacebuilding in both Syria and Rwanda. In Kenya, the trajectory of political decentralisation has led to an increase in the politicisation of ethnicities in multi-ethnic counties. This is in part because of the scramble for resources and power at the county level, which has created local tensions and presents challenges for local peacebuilding.



Participants at the INGO and Donors Dialogue Forum on Localisation in Peacebuilding, Nairobi, Kenya, 2024
© International Alert Kenya

Box 5: Examples of mechanisms of localisation in peacebuilding

In **Lebanon**, localisation debates have been ongoing among the humanitarian and development communities and mechanisms for coordinating and advocating for localisation have been established. The Lebanon Humanitarian and Development NGO Forum (LHDF), for example, is a network of 85 international and national NGOs, facilitating coordination, strengthening capacity, and advocating for localisation.

Awareness sessions on localisation and coordination among national and local NGOs have been supported through several mechanisms, most notably the Lebanon Localisation Taskforce. The Localisation Taskforce was established in 2022 to oversee the implementation of the Localisation Action Plan developed under the Shabake project of Expertise France. The taskforce has 10 member organisations, national and international, and two observers. The taskforce developed the National Localisation Framework with the input of more than 500 stakeholders. The framework has four components: capacity strengthening, partnership principles, fundraising, and coordination. Amongst the stakeholders, one Lebanese, one Syrian and one international organisation with clear peacebuilding missions were included in the process of developing the framework.

In **Syria**, political fragmentation and ongoing conflict have limited any state response to localisation. The Syrian government is working on the decentralisation of procedures through Law 107. At civil society level, various initiatives have been attempted, such as the Citizens Engagement Programme, the Civil Society Room, the National Agenda for the Future of Syria, and the Women's Advisory Board, all of which aimed to engage representatives from local communities in decision-making and to gain their input into directing work in Syria to meet people's needs.⁴³ These initiatives have seen varying levels of success and sustainability.

In **Kenya**, there has been a drive to localise planning and participation in peacebuilding through county-level frameworks. For example, 16 counties have developed local action plans to localise Kenya's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2020–2024 (KNAPII). The development of these county action plans has involved extensive dialogues with stakeholders at the county level, especially targeting women from different backgrounds. As a result, the action plans are diverse and innovative, responding to the diverse challenges facing women in the different county contexts.

The County Peace and Security Forums provide another example of localised spaces anchored in legal frameworks for local actors to participate in peacebuilding and security decision-making processes. These consist of a diverse array of stakeholders at the county level, including community leaders, government officers at both national and county levels and CSOs. Additionally, conflict-prone counties, especially the arid and semi-arid counties and those on the coast, have institutionalised county peacebuilding and conflict-management policy instruments that shape peacebuilding at the local level.

In **Rwanda**, the state has a range of policies and initiatives intended to strengthen decentralisation of power and localisation in development. These include the National Decentralisation Policy, which empowers districts, sectors and cells to make decisions tailored to their specific needs; Vision Umurenge Programme, which focuses on local development, poverty reduction, and improving citizens' wellbeing at the sector level⁴⁴ through community participation in planning and decision-making; and the Joint Action Development Forum at a district level, which coordinates CSOs and other local NGOs to oversee the implementation of localisation.

Building connections among diverse local actors, including across conflict lines, is also important. For example, the social stability sector in Lebanon prioritises NGO support to municipalities to alleviate some of the pressures on service provision that create tensions in communities (as service provision – such as sanitation, healthcare and education – are significant sources of tension). The ability of municipalities to contribute to peace more directly, however, depends on the political will of the leaders, the size and capacity of the administration, and its ability to raise and manage funding. Where municipalities were able to be directly involved, research participants believed that it provided a strong basis for localisation and should be supported and encouraged.

Fragmentation and polarisation of civil society were identified as a major problem in some contexts, so some participants suggested the development of common principles across civil society that could unite organisations from different backgrounds. In Syria, this took the form of the suggestion of a shared ethical code. Work on this is ongoing with dialogue spaces bringing Syrian civil society leaders from different areas to work together. For example, a space was created in Basel, Switzerland that brought together civil society leaders from across Syria to discuss critical issues relating to the context and conflict, advocacy strategies and ways to create safe environments for civic activists. One of the outcomes of this process was a draft ethical framework to protect activists and guide their work with their communities.

Developing local capacity for peace and the role of INGOs

In some contexts, respondents emphasised the need for contextualised and tailored capacity-building support to develop local capacities for peace in a sustainable way.

“Capacity building and infrastructure challenges can indeed pose significant barriers to the process of localisation. I believe that localisation is well connected to the development of local capabilities and resources to address needs and challenges within a specific Rwandan context.” – Research participants, Rwanda

In some instances, local actors have found tailored accompaniment processes useful for institutional strengthening, as seen in International Alert’s projects in Lebanon. In practice, however, experiences with capacity development varied. Other participants highlighted that standardised training as part of familiar INGO capacity-building packages fell short of the needs of local organisations. Participants in Kenya, for example, complained that the training offered to them is often not based on their specific needs, is not tailored to their local context and does not recognise and value existing capacity and structures.

“Capacity development through workshops and conferences in hotels far away from the community is one of the most favourite activities of donors and INGOs. They don’t even undertake a needs assessment, instead preferring a uniform approach across the country. No wonder when conflicts arise, we often find ourselves back to square one, responding in traditional ways that have fallen short of transforming these conflicts.” – Research participant, Kenya

Some respondents refuted the idea that they did not have sufficient capacity for localisation, highlighting that the focus should be on the need for complex donor systems to change rather than for them to learn to manage them. In Lebanon, for example, only 8% of survey respondents felt that capacity was a barrier to localisation. Respondents felt that local expertise should be treated with the same degree of respect as expertise from international organisations. Indeed, INGOs can learn from their national partners. In Lebanon, a national health and protection partner reported that it had trained the staff of its INGO partners on a consortium project on integrating social stability approaches into primary healthcare. This is a key aspect of addressing power dynamics and treating local actors as equal, or indeed leading, partners in peacebuilding.

Resources are also strongly linked to capacity. If local organisations lack funding to have sufficient staffing, build internal systems or develop sustainably, this should be addressed by changes to funding models, rather than simply training to build capacity.

Learning should also play a key role within localisation. Building local and multi-level networks that support learning and collaboration emerged clearly as a recommendation in several countries. This can include providing support to organisations for whom peacebuilding is not their main mandate, but who integrate conflict-sensitive approaches into their work.

A context-sensitive approach to engaging with complexity

While the importance of addressing political sensitivities related to values, legitimacy, representation, local power dynamics and elite capture are increasingly recognised in international development

discourse,⁴⁵ deliberate and active engagement with these issues are all the more important in conflict contexts.

Grappling with complex, non-linear processes

Peacebuilding processes are deeply contextual, complex and multi-faceted, and non-linear.⁴⁶ Similarly, localisation processes do not necessarily involve a progressive move along a continuum of 'not local' to 'local'.⁴⁷ As highlighted in this report, issues related to trust, legitimacy, power, agency, resources and capacities are not static. These evolving factors may be accelerated by conflict and the roles of actors may change as conflict evolves. For example, localisation processes that engage government partners are dependent on national interest, or local interest in the case of local authorities; however, these interests, like interlocutors, are not fixed and therefore are not necessarily reliable.⁴⁸ In instances where conflict intensifies, the capacity of local actors may be reduced or their focus diverted, and their roles and stakes in the conflict may change or new actors may emerge. Additionally, escalation of conflict can complicate relationships between local and international actors and erode trust. These shifts cannot be fully anticipated, but developing deeper mutual understanding between parties and understanding the local dynamics that interact with trust and legitimacy can help navigate these challenges.

Localisation, like peacebuilding, needs to be context-specific

Each context has its own unique barriers to, and entry points for, localisation, which are detailed more fully in the country practice papers that accompany this report. Challenges are particularly acute in Syria and Lebanon, which are experiencing active conflict in addition to acute socio-economic crises and deep political polarisation. In Syria, participants identified greater freedom for civil society as a precondition for meaningful localisation:

"The civil society must have a minimum level of freedom and independence and must be accountable to act according to reasonable laws to gain legitimacy of representing communities." – Research participant, Syria

Restriction on the movements of Syrians limits the ability of Syrian activists and civil society to access international peacebuilding platforms and make their voices heard, as well as undermining their ability to work together across the three areas of the country. In addition, the economic sanctions in Syria, and the restrictions applied to Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Turkey, restrict Syrian civil entities' access to funds, and impose practical barriers to receiving funding directly from international organisations. Furthermore, the intersecting crises that people are facing risk crowding out discussions about peacebuilding and localisation more broadly – people have more immediate and life-threatening concerns.

“The economic and political crises are also blocking localisation. There is no security and peace of mind for people to have these conversations – to identify our trends and our needs. They are pressured by the crises; they are firefighters rather than creating something customised and tailored.” – Research participant, Lebanon

Box 6: Keeping local peacebuilders safe

In both Lebanon and Syria, the physical safety of local peacebuilding actors is of real concern. In Lebanon, risks relate to the intense Israeli strikes, the regional conflict context and growing inter-communal hostility. In the context of such intense violence and communal divisions, the space for working on peacebuilding, social cohesion and gender equality has been shrinking, with the government and security agencies, as well as political parties across the spectrum, questioning the use of terms (including peace, peacebuilding, social cohesion and gender). In Syria, the risks relate to government restrictions and repression and backlash from other political and/or armed actors.

It should also be recognised, however, that there are situations where it may not be feasible for local and national NGOs to coordinate and advocate for peace, if this involves seeking to influence a government that is hostile to a peace agenda. We see this clearly in Syria, but also in Lebanon where the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel is strengthening the role of traditional political parties and deepening sectarian divisions. As a result, local Lebanese NGOs in some areas are not comfortable discussing the political context, which is limiting the possibility to conduct in-depth analysis and design projects that extend to the political realm.

Box 7: Taking a conflict-sensitive approach to support local peacebuilding in complex environments

A context and conflict-sensitive approach has the potential to help navigate the challenges and pitfalls highlighted in this research. In practice this involves having an in-depth understanding of the context and actors and the ability to develop and update this over time. It requires building in sufficient time and flexibility within processes to allow for evolving visions of localisation to emerge and regular reflection on how processes are being implemented and if there are any unintended outcomes emerging (positive and negative). It is also dependent on having the ability to seize the moment when windows of opportunity emerge, creating space to engage flexibly with different actors over time and having an appetite for a certain degree of risk because some initiatives may not work or have the desired effect.

Addressing potential spoilers and those who incite violence

The issue of inclusion not only involves engaging local peacebuilders, but also considering the roles of actors who incite or perpetrate violence (including local armed groups) in a specific context. This is

a critical component to understanding local power dynamics.⁴⁹ Not engaging these actors – whether perpetrators of violence, those who can influence the use of violence, or those with a vested interest in maintaining violence – risks them becoming spoilers.⁵⁰ Engaging with such actors involves risks (such as security or reputational risks), but understanding their role and influence, and applying this understanding to decision-making around engagement, are crucial to reduce the risks of them derailing local peacebuilding efforts or co-opting localisation processes.

Box 8: Supporting peace by engaging with actors involved in violence

In Kenya, local actors who have a role in violence and are seen as spoilers have been constructively engaged in peacebuilding activities. The involvement of these actors in these cases was seen as important to inclusion and to the viability and sustainability of violence prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. This involved programmes to train ex-gang members to be peace ambassadors, supporting activities that engaged current gang members and local militia. In Mount Elgon region, former members of the Sabaot Land Défense Force (SLDF), a local militia involved in inter-communal violence, were trained as peace ambassadors who could reach out to local gangs and other violent groups. The same strategy, working with reformed gang members, is used in Mombasa county to reach out to the numerous gangs active there.

Learning from existing localisation efforts

The research highlighted examples of positive progress towards localisation that is already underway. This paper has discussed the locally led peace and security mechanisms in Kenya, the Localisation Taskforce established in Lebanon, the integration of traditionally and culturally relevant locally led peacebuilding efforts in Rwanda, and shifts in relationships between local and international actors, including in terms of funding, in Lebanon.⁵¹ The research also identified lessons from past and ongoing efforts where barriers were more apparent; these can be grouped into nine lessons on what positive localisation efforts in peacebuilding look like in practice (see Box 9).

Box 9: What do positive localisation efforts in peacebuilding look like in practice?

1. Approaches should explicitly aim to build on and strengthen existing capacities for peace and develop local sustainability into design and ultimately reduce the role of external actors.
2. Collaboration between international and local organisations should be robust and equitable – partnerships built on shared values that leverage the respective knowledge and expertise of local and international organisations and through their design seek to place local organisations at the forefront of decision-making.

3. There should be a strong, ethical framework for engagement, including commitments on common principles across civil society (local and international) that can unite organisations from different backgrounds to lay the foundations for more inclusive and positive collaboration. These ethical frameworks should be based on human rights and principles of equality, inclusion and transparency. They should also emphasise safety and safeguarding.
4. Approaches should be inclusive and build positive collaboration, networking, dialogue, trust and active engagement, engaging a diverse range of actors, including women, young people, marginalised groups and those with diverse experiences and perceptions of the conflict (including across divides).
5. Approaches should be flexible so they can be adapted to different local contexts and leverage existing capacities and entry points. For example, in active conflict or crisis, local organisations are focusing on humanitarian needs and space for peacebuilding is shrinking, so they should identify opportunities for integrating conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding approaches into service delivery, such as health and social services for refugee and host communities that build in activities to strengthen social cohesion.
6. Approaches should explicitly recognise and address risks related to the context, guided by the knowledge and lived experiences of the communities affected by the conflict. This involves an in-depth understanding of the conflict dynamics, the roles and interests of the actors, existing peacebuilding initiatives and mechanisms, and current localisation efforts. This includes understanding how localisation in peacebuilding in a specific context may interact positively or negatively with other processes (such as decentralisation efforts and existing formal and informal conflict resolution mechanisms). Additionally, this involves a willingness to engage with risks and support local actors, and even when this does not work, to test new approaches, while ensuring that local actors do not hold all the risk.
7. Approaches should emphasise collaboration among local actors to overcome fragmentation and leverage impact. Building connections among local NGOs across conflict lines, across different sectors (such as civil society, religious actors, and the public and private sector), across different areas and at different levels (local and national) is important to reduce silos and combat fragmentation of peacebuilding efforts. International actors have a role to play in facilitating networking among actors, linking with international efforts and with donors. This role, however, can be seen as timebound and based on the needs of the local actors and context dynamics. Once these connections have been facilitated by international actors, their ongoing engagement should be reviewed.
8. Flexible programming should integrate the experiences of local peacebuilders in design and allows for adaption to respond to changing context dynamics and needs. This includes supporting adaptive management, providing adequate resources and support for responding to changing needs and dynamics, relevant and useful tools for adaption (such as context monitoring), and creating space for reflection and learning.

9. Funding mechanisms and grant-making requirements should facilitate easier and more flexible funding for local peacebuilding organisations. This can include support for institutional strengthening, core funding, and mechanisms which facilitate collaboration in consortia. There are successful examples of new ways of funding and new support mechanisms that bring together grantees to enhance voice and encourage the mutual exchange and development of skills. This includes examples from Lebanon and the Middle East funded through the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP), Expertise France and the EU that encourage local organisations through advice, technical support and more favourable funding conditions (such as low co-funding requirements for projects led by local NGOs).

Recommendations

These recommendations are primarily drawn from the research data from the four countries and analysis by International Alert based on broader peacebuilding experience and literature review. The recommendations are grouped by actor, although it should be noted that there is crossover in the recommendations aimed at donors and policy-makers and those aimed at INGOs and international agencies. Where the recommendations refer to INGOs, we include International Alert under that banner.

Donors and policy-makers

Funding mechanisms

- Restructure grant-making facilities to develop organisational sustainability and establish financial mechanisms with local actors based on a thorough understanding of context dynamics and actors. This can be done through horizontal engagement with grantees from context analysis and project design through implementation, providing financial incentives for local organisations, and the use of pool funding or consortia. Funding should be flexible, allow for adaptation, be predominantly long term, and provide sufficient coverage of core costs (such as overheads relating to staff, systems etc.).

Policy, requirements and compliance

- Design country strategies and programmes that are inclusive of, and actively shaped by, local voices, priorities, demands and actions. Design processes should be conducted with communities and local peacebuilding organisations. Consider co-designing processes and elicit input from peacebuilders outside the capital and that represent more marginalised groups in communities.
- Simplify demands and reduce compliance burdens within grant-management processes and foster mutual trust and collaboration. This can include simplifying proposal formats, recognising ranges of experiences as part of organisations' track records, building flexibility

into expected results (and considering more contextually relevant measures of success) and simplifying monitoring and evaluation processes, and narrative and financial reporting.

Partnerships

- Incentivise networking, exchange and peer learning between local partners. Build in resources for spaces for collaboration and learning at different levels. Convene spaces for local partners to share analyses, skills and experience, and lessons from practice.
- Encourage partnerships between local and international organisations that have local organisations in central decision-making roles. Place a value on local peacebuilding expertise. Build in processes for mutual skills and knowledge exchange between local and international NGOs and ensure that capacity-strengthening components for NGOs are focused on mentoring and institutional strengthening based on their own assessments of their organisational priorities, rather than standardised training packages.

Staff and structure

- Align performance management systems to prioritise collaboration with local peacebuilders and provide training to staff on conflict-sensitive and effective working practices, as well as having more flexible reporting requirements that include different ways of capturing results in participatory processes.
- Plan for adequate staffing models within donor agencies with relevant context expertise and commitment to locally led peacebuilding. This includes staff managing the funding of programmes that support 'localisation by design' (i.e. a deliberate and explicit transfer of power and that supports locally led peacebuilding as an outcome), as opposed to 'localisation by default' (such as localisation due to staffing cuts).

Engagement with a diverse array of local actors

- Decolonise knowledge in the field of civic activism. This involves identifying and working against attitudes and practice that reinforce power imbalances, recognising and reclaiming local communities' beliefs and practices, making information accessible, and learning from successful decolonisation efforts.
- Use diplomatic channels and political leverage to safeguard and expand the operating space for local peace actors. Work to protect them from undue restrictions or threats from both national and international actors.
- Support evidence generation and the development of guidance on how to integrate peacebuilding practices into humanitarian and development interventions, and vice versa, and how peacebuilding programming can support specific development and peacebuilding outcomes, especially in contexts where non-specialist local organisations can play a constructive role in peacebuilding.
- Include peacebuilding organisations within existing localisation frameworks in the humanitarian and development spaces (even if not geared towards peacebuilding) to strengthen linkages and reduce silos between humanitarian, development and peace actors. Strengthen the role and voice of peacebuilding actors in these spaces. This also includes engaging peacebuilding organisations in the process of monitoring progress on the localisation agenda. INGOs can also play a role in advocating for the inclusion of local peacebuilding organisations.

INGOs and international agencies

Role and culture

- Understand what local organisations most want from INGOs and listen to what local partners know as experts in their context. Develop ways of working that increase local partners' decision-making power and that leverage respective partners' (local and international) expertise. This could include, for example, support for connecting to and learning alongside NGOs in other countries working on similar issues or leveraging INGOs' access to international influencing spaces.

Partnerships

- Develop genuinely locally led partnerships, which have local organisations taking a leading role and reduce the burden of risk on local partners. Examine partnership approaches to ensure they are not replicating power imbalances and that they redress the burden of risk, which is often shouldered primarily by local partners.
- Establish long-term partnerships that go beyond financial support to emphasise mutual learning and reciprocal support. Provide tailored technical assistance to local peacebuilders, based on a joint assessment of their unique opportunities, challenges and capacity needs. Leverage the complementary strengths of local and international knowledge and expertise.
- Work with local peacebuilding actors to support innovative pilots, scale activities and build links with other local actors, especially across divides. Facilitate partnerships and consortia that engage local organisations from different sides of the conflict, work with diverse local actors and assist local organisations in building relationships with local authorities.
- Facilitate and fund meaningful participation and influence of local actors in national peace processes. Facilitate access to decision-makers and political actors who may be reluctant to engage directly with NGOs. Advocate with international actors that mediate and convene peace processes to include local peacebuilders, including women, youth and representatives of minority communities.
- Ensure that local NGO and CSO partners have direct communication lines with donors so that donors are aware of the needs and challenges experienced by local NGOs and by communities. This includes direct lobbying and advocacy by local and national NGOs and work with INGO partners to advocate for capacity development with donors.

Local civil society organisations

Collaboration

- Build networks and alliances between those working in different geographic areas, and diverse peacebuilding themes, across conflict lines. Build connections with actors at different levels (national, international) and explore partnerships with the private sector.
- Build a shared understanding of civil society values and of localisation, through dialogue and network engagement – for example, by developing an ethical code of conduct and by co-developing recommendations for localisation such as those in Lebanon's Localisation Framework.

- Develop shared analysis of the context and of strategies for peacebuilding and social stability, through knowledge sharing and coordination between national and local NGOs and CSOs. Share results with INGO partners and donors to inform donor strategies and realistic goal setting for peacebuilding and social-stability programmes and projects.
- Strengthen the transfer of knowledge and skills from specialised peacebuilding organisations to non-specialised ones (e.g. NGOs and CSOs who primarily pursue development objectives but recognise the need to work on preventing violence), while supporting local organisations to adapt approaches and document results in their own contexts.

Advocacy and influencing

- Engage with policy-makers (national and international) in advocating for policies that support peacebuilding at both national and subnational levels, such as increased funding for local initiatives, legal recognition of CBOs, and integration of local knowledge into national peacebuilding strategies.
- Support and sustain locally led decision-making mechanisms engaging diverse voices at all levels, from community forums to national dialogues. This helps ensure that peacebuilding policies and programmes are responsive to local needs and priorities. These mechanisms should provide transparent feedback to communities and donors to enhance two-way accountability and (re-)build trust.

Recommendations for all actors on conflict-sensitive and participatory approaches

- Regularly conduct conflict analyses, ensuring they inform programme design and foster flexibility, adaptation and learning. This includes actor mapping to understand the political economy of localisation and peacebuilding processes, context monitoring and identification of contextually relevant outcomes related to social cohesion and localisation of peacebuilding. Adaptation should be based on an in-depth understanding of context dynamics that prioritises local knowledge and experiences and the evolving needs of communities through participatory decision-making in project management, regular consultation and participatory budgeting.
- Consider and plan for the risks of operating in a conflict context, including the roles of actors with an interest in co-opting or derailing localisation and locally led peacebuilding efforts. This can include political actors, local elites, and armed actors (such a local militia and gangs), as well as the risks of backlash from sectors of the community. Contextualised risk assessments and actor mapping can support these efforts, alongside learning from positive examples where spoilers have been constructively engaged in locally-led peacebuilding efforts through outreach by former members of those groups.
- Conduct conflict-sensitivity and gender-sensitivity reviews of localisation processes. Ensure that these are based on an understanding of the context, drivers of conflict, tensions and grievances, capacities and resources for peace, the roles of various actors (including local and international NGOs, state actors, international agencies and donors), power structures and gender dynamics.

Endnotes

- 1 V. Viswanathan, Learning to be more 'locally led'? Current practice and evidence gaps in the international humanitarian sector, ALNAP, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/learning-be-more-locally-led-current-practice-and-evidence-gaps-international-humanitarian-sector>
- 2 ICVA and Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Unpacking localization, 2019, <https://www.icvanetwork.org/resource/icva-briefing-paper-unpacking-localization/>
- 3 T. Paffenholz, P. Poppelreuter and N. Ross, 2023, Toward a third local turn: Identifying and addressing obstacles to localization in peacebuilding, *Negotiation Journal*, 39(4), 2023, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/nejo.12444>, pp.349–275
- 4 See, for example, J. Pobi-Browne, Transforming partnerships: Peace Direct's partnership approach, Bond, 15 July 2024, <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2024/07/transforming-partnerships-peace-directs-partnership-approach/>
- 5 J. Öjendal, H. Leonardsson and M. Lundqvist, Local peacebuilding – challenges and opportunities, The Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA), 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316544073_Local_Peacebuilding_-_challenges_and_opportunities
- 6 Peace Direct, Transforming partnerships in international cooperation, 2023, <https://www.peacedirect.org/transforming-partnerships/>
- 7 This is seen in the findings of our research in Lebanon and Syria. See: International Alert, Practical Approaches to Localisation project: Lebanon practice paper, 2024; International Alert, Practical Approaches to Localisation project: Syria practice paper, 2024
- 8 Paffenholz, Poppelreuter and Ross, 2023, Op.cit, p.352
- 9 R. Van Der Bliek, International peacebuilding turned local, Alliance for Peacebuilding, 13 September 2021, <https://www.peaceagency.org/international-peacebuilding-turned-local/>
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.; L. Connelly, The local in peacebuilding: What we can learn from community-led organizations, International Peace Institute, 21 September 2018, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/09/local-peacebuilding-what-we-learn-community-led-organizations/>
- 12 Paffenholz, Poppelreuter and Ross, 2023, Op.cit, p.352
- 13 Paffenholz, Poppelreuter and Ross, 2023, Op.cit, p.352
- 14 M. Van Leeuwen et al, The 'local turn' and notions of conflict and peacebuilding – Reflections on local peace committees in Burundi and eastern DR Congo, *Peacebuilding*, 8(3), 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21647259.2019.1633760>; M. DuBois, The new humanitarian basics, HPG Working Paper, Overseas Development Institute, in S. Barakat and S. Milton, Localisation across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 15(2), 2020, pp.147–163, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1542316620922805>
- 15 Peace Direct, 2023, Op.cit.
- 16 Peace Direct, Localisation and decolonisation: The difference that makes the difference, 2022, <https://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/PD-Localisation-and-Decolonisation-Report-v3.pdf>
- 17 Peace Direct, 2023, Op.cit.
- 18 T. Karbo, Localising peacebuilding in Sierra Leone: What does it mean?, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) Conference Paper, Issue 3, 2012, <https://www.accord.org.za/publication/localising-peacebuilding-sierra-leone/>
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Saferworld and Save the Children, Turning the tables: Insights from locally-led humanitarian partnerships in conflict-affected situations, 2020, <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1253-turning-the-tables-insights-from-locally-led-humanitarian-partnerships-in-conflict-situations#:~:text=Commissioned%20by%20Save%20the%20Children,reality%20in%20conflict%20affected%20situations>
- 21 Paffenholz, Poppelreuter and Ross, 2023, Op.cit, p.351
- 22 This position was confirmed by a recent study (albeit one looking at official development assistance (ODA) as a whole, rather than focusing on peacebuilding spending): C. Cheney, Donors could save billions through localisation. Here's how, Devex, 7 February 2023, https://www.devex.com/news/donors-could-save-billions-through-localization-here-s-how-104862?mkt_tok=Njg1LUtCTC03NjUAAAGT7gejiyjd_rwOQODiNEe7QTRBzZYxb_-jskCnBBYJfTlpkdnngYBcCKhYgCzzO2Bh8iTRGANOWRy3I8HMXWO688gAMkf8VNxeotYbteQUcejoA&utm_content=text&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nLnewswire&utm_term=article-pro

- 23 It should be noted that the research was designed before the outbreak of war in Gaza and Lebanon in October 2023. As a result, the research in Lebanon and Syria had to be redesigned to address practical security issues, but also the fact that the conflict (and different actors' response to it) exposed the huge gap of trust between many local and international organisations. In Lebanon, where hostilities in the south expanded into a war affecting the whole country and displacing over a million people, local civil society launched an immediate response to the emergency. Over the first few weeks of the war, peacebuilding interventions were revised to address the immediate needs of people affected by the violence and displacement. The focus of both local and international peacebuilding actors shifted to ensure conflict sensitivity of the emergency response in the short term and to advocate for an integrated humanitarian-development-peacebuilding approach in the post-emergency period.
- 24 Paffenholz, Poppelreuter and Ross, 2023, Op.cit, pp.35 and 152
- 25 K.P. Clements, What is legitimacy and why does it matter for peace?, Legitimacy and peace processes: From coercion to consent, Accord Issue 25, April 2014, <https://www.c-r.org/accord/legitimacy-and-peace-processes>
- 26 Peace Direct, 2023, Op.cit.
- 27 F. Mulder, The paradox of externally driven localisation: A case study on how local actors manage the contradictory legitimacy requirements of top-down bottom-up aid, Journal of Humanitarian Action, 8, 2023, <https://jhumanitarianaction.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41018-023-00139-0>
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 R. Mac Ginty and O.P. Richmond, The local turn in peacebuilding: A critical agenda for peace, Third World Quarterly, 34(5), 2013, pp.763-4
- 30 See, for example, J. Awany, International development frameworks force civil society to mimic western NGOs, LSE, 17 February 2020, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2020/02/17/international-development-frameworks-civil-society-western-ngos/>
- 31 G. Rosenthal et al, Challenge of sustaining peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, A/69/968– S/2015/490, United Nations, 2015, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/challenge-sustaining-peace-report-advisory-group-experts-2015-review-united-nations>
- 32 International Alert, Practical Approaches to Localisation project: Kenya, 2024
- 33 78.4% of survey respondents identified local-level government officials (such as municipalities, *moukhtars* (village chiefs), and social development centres) as legitimate actors. However, the economic and political crises in Lebanon have negatively affected local government capacity and as one representative of a donor agency noted, "Many of the capacities that have been built up have disappeared."
- 34 These challenges for municipalities have increased during the war in Lebanon, in Beirut, in the south and in parts of the Bekaa, which have seen higher intensity of attacks by Israeli forces. At the time of writing the state-led response to the emergency has been coordinated at the national and governorate levels (Lebanon is divided into eight governorates (*muhafazah*); Akkar, Baalbeck-Hermel, Beirut, Bekaa, Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon, Nabatiyeh, and South Lebanon).
- 35 N. Cheeseman, Defending civic space: When are campaigns against repressive laws successful?, Journal of Development Studies, January 2023, p.15
- 36 L. Frennesson et al, International humanitarian organizations' perspectives on localization efforts, International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 83, December 2022, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S221242092200629X>, pp.1–17
- 37 International Alert, Practical Approaches to Localisation project: Kenya practice paper, 2024
- 38 Peace Direct and Alliance for Peacebuilding, Local peacebuilding: What works and why?, 2019, <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/articles/local-peacebuilding-what-works-and-why/?location=&theme=conflict-prevention-early-warning>
- 39 C. Kwuelum, Shifting power dynamics, localization, and decolonization: Implications for community-based peacebuilding, 4 December 2024, <https://mcld.org/2023/12/04/shifting-power-dynamics-charles-kwuelum/#:~:text=Through%20Localization%2C%20actors%20can%20embody,and%20their%20dynamics%2C%20especially%20power.>
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Peace Direct, Time to decolonise aid, 2020: <https://www.peacedirect.org/time-to-decolonise-aid/>
- 42 A. Baguios et al, Are we there yet? Localisation as the journey towards locally led practice, 2021, <https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ODI-SH-Localisation-Report-Oct21-Proof06.pdf>, p.18
- 43 A. Muto, The challenges and effects of externally driven and locally driven peacebuilding approaches in a complex context: A case study of the Syrian conflict, 2023, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-18219-8_7
- 44 Sectors (*imirenge*) are administrative subdivisions (sub-district level). There are 416 sectors.
- 45 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Pathways towards effective locally-led development co-operation, 2024, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pathways-towards-effective-locally-led-development-co-operation_51079bba-en.html, p.10

- 46 D. Chandler, Peacebuilding and the politics of non-linearity: Rethinking 'hidden' agency and 'resistance', *Peacebuilding*, 2013, 1(1), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.756256>, pp.17-32
- 47 This is not least because the 'end goal' or trajectory of localisation may be contested, but also because of the other dynamics and mechanisms of organisation within a context (such as the potential for competing processes related to decentralisation) and because this may involve trialling new initiatives, elements of which may not be taken forward, or may be adapted or transformed.
- 48 L.A. Patey and W.D. Macnamara, Non-governmental organizations and international conflict: An annotated bibliography, Queen's Centre for International Relations, 2003, https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/188150/LPatey_NGOsConflict_2_.pdf
- 49 G. Davies, V. Barbelet and L. Mayhew, Reducing violence and strengthening the protection of civilians through community dialogue with armed actors, 2024, <https://odi.org/en/publications/reducing-violence-and-strengthening-the-protection-of-civilians-through-community-dialogue-with-armed-actors/>, p.30
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 For example, in Lebanon, some donors have integrated co-design processes in their funding programmes, created spaces for exchange between grantees, and made technical expertise available to local CSO partners to support them in project implementation.

Acknowledgements

This paper was written by Alys Brown and Ruth Simpson with Ilina Slavova, Jana Alloush, Miriam Muturi and Pacifique Barihuta.

The authors would like to thank all the research participants for their engagement and openness to discuss these topics. We would also like to thank Enrica Lorusso, Jennifer Pobi-Browne and Rose Pinnington for their insightful review and feedback. The authors would also like to thank colleagues Angus Urquhart, Ariane Inkesha, Faith Dawes and Samatha McGowan for their review.

International Alert works with people directly affected by conflict to build lasting peace. We focus on solving the root causes of conflict with people from across divides. From the grassroots to policy level, we bring people together to build sustainable peace.

www.international-alert.org

International Alert

10 Salamanca Place, London, SE1 7HB, United Kingdom

info@international-alert.org

www.international-alert.org

Registered charity no. 327553



Published December 2024

© International Alert 2024. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without full attribution.

Layout and illustrations: Victoria-Ford.com