



Peace Financing Case Study



Lessons from the first experience of direct funding from the UN Peacebuilding Fund to a civil society organization under the Gender and Youth Peacebuilding Initiative in Somalia

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The Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) is part of the United Nation's Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).¹ The GYPI is designed to support the empowerment of women and the advancement of gender equality and recognizes the important and positive role youth people play in peacebuilding. While the majority of PBF funding is distributed internally to UN agencies, the GYPI provides funds to civil society organizations in addition to UN agencies and UN-Civil Society partnerships. In 2019, the PBF named Somalia a GYPI eligible country.

Following the inclusion of Somalia in the GYPI, LPI's Somalia Country Programme in partnership with a Somali peacebuilding organization, Somali Peace Line (SPL), received funding for the project titled "*Connecting across divides: Youth building peace in Somalia.*" The project was the first direct funding of a civil society organization by the GYPI in Somalia.

The project was designed in partnership between SPL and LPI, and included inputs from UN officials in Somalia. The project implemented a Sustained Dialogue methodology that brought together a diverse group of young people from across clan, gender, socio-economic, political and other divides in the Somali cities of Baidoa, Jowhar and Abudwak to peacefully discuss contentious topics and identify ways of resolving conflict in their community.² The project convened 45 Sustained Dialogue groups (20 in Baidoa, 15 in Jowhar, and 10 in Abudwak) that resulted in 630 Sustained Dialogue sessions with 540 youth participants. Inclusive design and genuine partnership were central to the project's conceptualization and resulted in a project that was more relevant and exciting to youth participants and responded to specific local conflict dynamics.

A key aspect of the project's design and implementation was the connection between the communities, SPL and LPI, and the UN. The project's design addressed challenges faced by the UN personnel in their direct implementation of projects. Somali civil society organizations like SPL have more community connections and access as a result of staff who were raised and continue to live in the communities where projects are implemented, less onerous security protocols, and established connections with local officials. Even when UN officials are citizens of the countries that they are based, these factors ensure that local organizations have easier community access, the ability to adjust more rapidly to new local dynamics, and daily inputs to track the progress of project implementation.

Utilizing LPI and SPL's close community connections, youth participants were given opportunities to engage with local and national government officials, build relationships with clan elders, and

1 The GYPI is an expression of the Fund's commitment to inclusive peacebuilding. It supports the empowerment of women and the advancement of gender equality and recognizes the important and positive role young people play in peacebuilding. For more information, see <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/gypi>

2 Sustained Dialogue is an intercultural dialogue-to-action methodology promoting sustained interactions between diverse and adversarial identity groups to influence positive attitudinal change (trust, understanding) and awaken the creative potential for imagining and contributing to a shared future through the implementation of collaborative actions. LPI has been using Sustained Dialogue as a peacebuilding approach since the early 1990s in the Horn of Africa. See: <http://life-peace.org/increasing-support-for-sustained-dialogue-as-a-peacebuilding-tool/>

organize community service projects. For example, in Jowhar, through support initiated in the Sustained Dialogue activities, 30 youth participants organized a community initiative titled “Pay \$1 to Jowhar” where community members contributed \$1 per week into a pooled fund that was used for community services like purchasing COVID-19 personal protective equipment or providing food to families in need during Ramadan. Government offices like the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, and South West State’s Ministry of Labour all engaged youth participants. Through connections developed by SPL and LPI, the Ugas of the Marehan (clan leader) invited 72 youth to attend an inter-clan dialogue between the Marehan and Ogaden clans. Similarly, in Abudwak, the Gurti (council of elders) allocated 10 positions for the youth to learn traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.

SPL and LPI’s close community connections facilitated these unique, and peace advancing, opportunities for youth. For this project, SPL maintained an office and two staff in each of the project’s implementation areas. In addition, SPL provided support to regional staff from their headquarters in Mogadishu. LPI’s Somalia team accompanied SPL staff in all the activity implementation. The close relationship between SPL, LPI, the communities where the project was implemented created opportunities to share information and insights with UN officials.

Originally, the project team hoped to be able to directly connect UN officials with the communities with in-person convenings. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic removed these opportunities particularly given that many non-Somali UN staff and officials left the country. The project was able to continue with COVID-19 sensitive precautions and the support provided by a project extension because SPL and LPI staff are Somali and live in the country. Therefore, even though many UN staff were unable to interact directly, the project team provided regular updates to UN partners on the stories and insights from the communities.

This new funding partnership led to reflections on the efficacy of UN partnerships with international and local non-governmental organizations through GYPI funding and how accessible funding mechanisms that are responsive to civil society can advance shared peacebuilding goals.

Directly funding CSOs offers ‘value of money’

Somali civil society’s reduced movement and security costs create significant savings over international governmental and non-governmental organizations operations will providing similar, if not stronger, peacebuilding results. Local knowledge, sourcing, and community support all help to reduce a project’s budget compared to internationally-led initiatives. The result is that direct funding to locally-based civil society offers value for money.

Funding CSOs creates closer community connections

The project’s independent evaluation found that LPI and SPL’s connections allowed youth participants to connect with local authorities including regional members of parliament, district administrators, the business community, and women’s organizations.

Leaders and local authorities attended and shared perspectives on youth inclusion in peacebuilding and community decision-making, and youth representatives presented collective youth positions on regionally-based peace and conflict dynamics. These forums resulted in strong support for an ongoing commitment to youth inclusion in peacebuilding activities supported by local authorities. The evaluation found that the project was effective in advancing community cohesion.

Funding mechanisms are avenues for stronger UN-CSO partnership more broadly

With a commitment from all parties to ongoing engagement, the partnership developed beyond typical donor-grantee relationships. As one PBF representative stated:

“It is not just about money. Money is a facilitator that helps move things, but when we talk of the UN working with civil society it is not just being a donor, but engaging with civil society as equal partners, and actually sometimes with them as superior partners given their contextual understanding and knowledge.”

The partnership facilitated relationships between the UN and Somali youth and CSOs, which included Somali organizations providing contextual information to UN representatives. This information allowed UN staff to update their peacebuilding initiatives to better fit local needs.

Bringing targeted recipients into the design allows for more meaningful participation

The provision of pilot period funding created the space and time to respectfully and meaningfully conduct a planning process that included those directly affected by conflict. Including the people who are typically project “participants” in the design, planning, deliver, and learning created deeper community ownership and buy-in. High levels of inclusion throughout the process allowed the project to evolve with information from the community that helped to adjust and advance the project throughout the implementation period that was responsive and appropriate to the communities needs and the context.

The PBF can create meaningful conversations between global and local actors

By including partnerships with civil society through the GYPI, the PBF can create the space for local, national, and international actors to engage in meaningful conversations. During the project period, the UN was able to facilitate conversations with LPI, SPL, and other civil society actors to share their understanding of national and international level conversations such as developments on the Somali National Reconciliation Framework. Civil society actors were able to, then, share these insights with the communities the work with. This information sharing influenced feedback from the community to civil society organizations that was then communicated back to the UN.