



Participatory Policy Engagement

A LEARNING PAPER

Produced by the
Life & Peace Institute

*We need your feedback
and want to learn
about your experiences!*

This paper is the result of an internal reflection and learning process with LPI staff and partners. As such, it is not a definitive analysis. It has, however, allowed us to identify areas in need of more evidence and further exploration.

If you have questions, contributions or insights to share, please reach out to info@life-peace.org.

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Abbreviations

APC	Action pour la Paix et la Concorde
ADEPAE	Action pour le Développement et la Paix Endogènes
AU	African Union
BUPE	Bottom-Up Policy Engagement
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CBSG	Cross-Border Security Governance
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism
CPAE	Collaborative Policy and Advocacy Engagement
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
HARP	Horn of Africa Regional Programme (LPI)
IAG	Inter-Africa Group
ICBT	Informal Cross-Border Trade
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LPI	Life & Peace Institute
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
OSSREA	Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PPE	Participatory Policy Engagement
RIO	Reseau d'Innovation Organisationelle
SWSO	Somali Women Solidarity Organization
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
UPDI	Union Paysanne pour un Développement Intégrale

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Executive Summary

Nairobi, Kenya
February 2020

Life & Peace Institute (LPI) work in the area of Participatory Policy Engagement (PPE) in peacebuilding is an ongoing journey. This discussion paper serves as an initial touchstone to test if the terminology, concepts, and principles drawn out and articulated so far hold true, or whether they require adjustment or supplementation.

Participatory Policy Engagement processes (otherwise referred to as ‘bottom-up policy engagement processes’) have an interesting relationship to the context. On the one hand, their design and form often emerge from, or are shaped by the contextual constraints imposed on programming activities and the need to adapt to them, and on the other the processes themselves simultaneously seek to impact on these structural and institutional dimensions.

It remains to be further evaluated whether policy emerging as a result of PPE is in fact better, or more effective than policy developed through non-participatory, top-down policy formulation processes. Nonetheless, it is evident that policies developed through PPE processes have different characteristics and provide other benefits, such as building relations, empowerment, and a closing of the governance gap between levels within systems, as well as across policymakers and the people involved in such processes. It is also clear that PPE processes—through the use of peacebuilding principles and the overall approach—can be likened to a dialogue, whereby both formal and informal realms and spaces are used in the bridging of values and systems to find alternative ways to approach a policy issue. In other words, the process is as important as the possible outcomes.

This importance is manifested in the relational dimensions between actors, the levels of participation, and the types of participation in which different actors are involved. The move to shift the policymaking arena into community-level spaces, or those far from the centre, changes the type of experience, understanding, and empathy it produces, and impacts positively on the process. It also raises up the weight and gravitas of experiential knowledge, which contributes to various types of evidence being incorporated and thus provides a richer mix upon which to draw to shape policy content. In short, PPE processes allow for the inclusion of different kinds of evidence, in particular that which is derived from the lived experiences of those who are caught up in violent conflict. This potentially results in deeper and more reflective policy content that is more likely to meet the needs of the conflict-affected people whose lives are impacted by the policy.

This reflection on PPE processes also points to a set of principles that need to be investigated and developed further. Consideration about how they are applied and the role of INGOs in the process would also benefit from further scrutiny.

Introduction

The Intention Behind Learning about Bottom-up Policy Engagement

When we began our workshop in Amani Gardens in Nairobi in May 2019, we asked ourselves three questions: What is Bottom-Up Policy Engagement? Are we bottom-up? Why is local participation critical for policy engagement for peace-building?

The room was silent for long minutes as people from across LPI programmes and units reflected on these questions, only interrupted by occasional quiet small talk and movement as post-it notes made their way onto the wall. We took a round and shared. Beliefs and insights that we had seemed so certain about for years quickly faltered. In fact, there was an emerging consensus that LPI was not bottom-up in its approach to peacebuilding. How could we – an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) – be genuinely, fully bottom-up? A feeling of discomfort and concern developed as we questioned the mantra we had been repeating for years: local people need to participate because they know the issues best. Maybe they do not necessarily or cannot know better than others because the issue may be larger than individual experience. A colleague captured the feeling in the room, saying: *“I am almost afraid to look into this.”*

This initial process of writing down assumptions we hold dear, listening to one another and being open to question our beliefs set the tone for the rest of this three-day reflection process. The peeling away of layers of discourse was critical in exploring our (or to be more accurate – LPI-supported) experiences of influencing policy in three distinct cases. Our reflective process involved heated and passionate exchange, laughter and craziness, and deep thought. More than drawing conclusions, learning lessons or documenting best practices, this process allowed for new questions, observations, and even speculations to emerge and old assumptions to be looked at in new light.

This paper is a stocktake of our journey. The original intention was to compare and contrast experiences and insights from three different experiences that occurred in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and at the regional level, which aimed to affect Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) policy across the Horn of Africa.¹ The hope of this stocktaking was that it might lead to a series of principles or practical

¹ A summary table of the cases under scrutiny can be found in Annex 1.

guidelines to assist other programmes and practitioners more broadly. This reflective paper does not, however, pretend to hold many answers, let alone definitive truths. Rather it offers up a humble consideration of our struggles and doubts about the meaning of this type of work. We hope it will encourage others to share their journeys and thoughts on these concepts, so that broader contributions may also unearth other dimensions, shared principles, and questions to explore.

Structure of the Reflection Piece

This paper presents the reflections around the thematic clusters that emerged through the documentation of the three cases and a joint reflection in Nairobi. It is divided into three sections:

Section One

includes working definitions of key terms used in the paper and a summary of the cases that were the primary source material drawn on for the reflection.

Section Two

consists of the four major themes that emerged from the discussions and experience. It has proven challenging to group and place topics and issues into the discrete themes because some fit under several. The four major themes that emerged are:

1. *Aspects of the participatory policy process, with specific focus on participation*
2. *Policy content and the nature and functionality of evidence*
3. *The relationship between peacebuilding and participatory policy engagement (PPE)²*
4. *The role and positionality of intermediaries.*

Each theme is introduced, sometimes considering the concepts before sharing some of the issues and our experience. In each thematic discussion, we land on further questions for internal and peer reflection

Section Three

aims to draw these reflections together in a series of useful considerations for practitioners and those thinking of undertaking PPE. This includes risks and considerations for practitioners aiming to facilitate PPE, and an invitation in the form of a few questions and recommendations for the sector to explore and share in future.

² The reflection process started out with reference to bottom-up policy engagement. It seemed, however, more accurate to refer to those processes as participatory, as the directionality of engagement on policy issues has varied throughout processes. This is elaborated in subsequent discussion.

Section One

Background

Key Terms

A number of the key terms and definitions we frequently use were subject to intense discussion and exploration in the reflection and learning process. For reference, the most important working definitions are included here. These definitions remain works in progress to be further refined and adapted.

Policy

This term is used to describe the broad realm (formal and informal) in which policies as frameworks guiding political actions and the functioning of interactions in broader society are being developed, amended, implemented, and evaluated. It encompasses a broad range of possibilities, not simply the formal official statutory policies developed by a government or formal institution. The term ‘policy’ also covers the customary governance arena, which is of critical import in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes regions. It likewise includes blurred areas where common or shared practice may reflect an implicit or unwritten policy, albeit not formalised through legislation or written policy. The term ‘policy’ further includes the behaviours of key policy actors.

Policy process

This is considered to include agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and assessment, and the evaluation of policies.

Policy engagement

This term captures efforts to interact with the policy process and affect policy positions, approaches, behaviours, and outcomes. Policy engagement for peacebuilding aims at influencing policy/policies addressing or hindering positive changes towards peace.

Bottom-up

Based on John Paul Lederach’s track model (1997),³ the term ‘bottom-up’ refers to peacebuilding actions that seek to be driven by actors directly affected by conflict. Bottom-up efforts are grounded in the assumption that genuine conflict transformation can only take place if those living in conflict participate meaningfully throughout, in different ways and at different moments. LPI has been describing its work in policy engagement as bottom-up. The alignment of LPI practice with the definition given here is explored further below.

³ Lederach, John Paul, ‘Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies’, Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace, 1997.

Local actors

In this paper, the term 'local actors' refers to national and sub-national civil society organizations (CSOs), individual peacebuilders, community-based organisations, authorities,⁴ relevant private sector actors (e.g. small businesses), grassroots movements, and people living in conflict areas. This definition emphasises that in reality the term 'local' reflects a complex set of actors, with various positions and interests in relation to peace and conflict issues, and different sources and forms of power. It calls for an intersectional perspective that involves people from a diversity of backgrounds understanding how variable factors may be compounded to affect their relative positions within the local setting.

Intermediaries

This refers to all those actors who aim to or play a role in connecting across levels, brokering knowledge, providing access to another level, and translating messages from one space to another. This category is fluid, depending on context, and may include INGOs, regional and national civil society, as well as think tanks, research institutions, academia, and others.

Background Summaries of the Participatory Policy Engagement Processes

Our learning process drew on LPI experiences supporting or facilitating policy engagement in three contexts: Somalia, the DRC, and the regional level in the Horn of Africa. As a backdrop to the considerations presented here, the three PPE efforts are described in brief. Annex 1 includes a comparative description of the key elements of these engagements.

Somalia : women's inclusion and their complex roles in peace and conflict

The PPE process in Somalia took place in Kismayo, a city located in the Jubbaland Federal Member State. This process was situated in the context of the wider LPI Somalia Programme, operational since the 1990s. Specifically, it drew on existing multi-stage dialogue-to-action work facilitated by the Somali Women Solidarity Organization (SWSO) with women in Kismayo focusing on inter-clan reconciliation. LPI has been supporting this process since 2016. Research was undertaken with dialogue participants, exploring the relationship between gender norms, roles and expectations, and the continuation of violence at the local level. Following the publication of [the study](#),⁵ LPI and SWSO then sought to mirror the participatory process used for the research, applying this to the

4 Authorities in this case refers to institutions and those people and leaders within them, that are taking some responsibility for governance at a community level. This includes traditional governance mechanisms, non-state authorities and local forms of government representation.

5 Life & Peace Institute (LPI), Somali Women Solidarity Organization (SWSO), and Peace Direct, 'Increasing Women's Participation and Inclusion in Jubbaland Peace Processes: Learning from Kismayo', 2018. Access here: <https://life-peace.org/resource/learning-from-kismayo/>

development of policy recommendations. The team returned to research respondents, presented the findings back to them, and asked: what do policymakers need to do? What are the implications of these findings? Critically, what do those that have lived the research content believe needs to change in the policy space – who, when, and how? Discussions were then fed into a policy brief, which was directed at international policy actors. Further, this particular PPE process forged greater ownership over the research by the participants, informed and strengthened the broader LPI Somalia Programme, and prompted deeper discussions on the relationship between a programme participant and a programme implementer.

The DRC : seeking inclusive mechanisms to govern land conflict

This experience draws on efforts with four partner organisations⁶ emerging as part of Participatory Action Research (PAR)⁷ processes. In all cases, research focused on deep-seated inter-community conflicts evolving around complex inter-relationships of land access, power, and identity (ethnic, gender, socio-professional). These PAR processes analysed and created space for dialogue around issues tied to land as a space where power relationships are being played out between and within communities (including between gender groups at the family/household level), as well as between people and political leaders in the state and customary realm. The structural weakness and complexity of land governance, where customary and state mechanisms for land tenure overlap and compete, provides another dimension for contestation. Following inter-community dialogue, action plans to address conflict issues included discussing land access and use with local policy stakeholders. The policy engagement processes involved: comprehensive stakeholder involvement; facilitating inclusive platforms for developing new ways of governing land access; and advocacy work to convince policy actors to come to agreements to apply such new ways. The extent to which these efforts entered the formal policy space varied across processes, with one of them reaching provincial level and another engaging with the national land reform process.

Horn of Africa : the nexus between informal cross-border trade and cross-border security governance

The Collaborative Policy Analysis and Engagement (CPAE) pilot began in 2014. It is a joint initiative between the Intergovernmental Authority on Development–Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (IGAD–CEWARN), Inter Africa Group (IAG), Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), and LPI through its Horn of Africa Regional Programme (HARP). The organisations referred to their collaboration as the ‘Quartet’.

⁶ Action pour la Paix et la Concorde (APC), Action pour le Développement et la Paix Endogènes (ADEPAE), Réseau d’Innovation Organisationnelle (RIO), and Union Paysanne pour un Développement Intégrale (UPDI).

⁷ Participatory Action Research (PAR) for Conflict Transformation aims at the identification and acquisition of non-violent solutions to conflict. It differs from classical research and other interventions because it establishes a new relationship between research and action, theory and practice, and researcher and conflict stakeholders. The process produces knowledge at the same time as it transforms reality and, as the name implies, is inherently participatory. All parties involved in a destructive or intractable violent conflict are engaged in a process of analysing the range of interpretations of conflict causes and consequences, and in the identification of constructive (joint) actions for the future. UPDI collaborated with the women’s rights organisation Solidarite des Femmes Activistes pour la Défense des Droits Humains.

The CPAE sought to identify pressing regional policy dilemmas and develop policy solutions in response to them. After a thorough process of discussion, criteria development and a policy scoping study, the Quartet identified the Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICBT) – Cross-Border Security Governance (CBSG) nexus as the policy dilemma upon which to work. The Quartet adopted a knowledge harvest methodology to gather evidence and perspectives from a range of stakeholders (government officials, borderland communities, academia, and civil society).⁸ The process of generating evidence and holding consultations to reflect on the evidence sought to be participatory and involved different types of stakeholders from across the Horn of Africa. This extended process of consultations enabled the Quartet to identify gaps in the evidence base and the distinct (if ultimately complementary) needs and interests of various stakeholders.

A draft policy framework document was produced using the evidence that was generated (through both creating new and consolidating existing evidence) and drawing upon the consultations. The policy recommendations in the framework document sought to enhance cross-border economic exchanges through lowering barriers to ICBT, thereby strengthening the socio-economic resilience and food security of millions of people in the IGAD borderlands. The recommendations also aimed to enhance community participation in policy discussions and implementation in cross-border regions. Finally, the meetings in Mombasa, Kenya in June 2018 (the first with IGAD member state experts and the second with IGAD member state trade ministers) provided the opportunity for a final review of the policy framework and culminated in its adoption by IGAD member state trade ministers.

⁸ The scope of the knowledge harvest included seven member states of IGAD (Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Sudan). It covered eight borderlands and border crossing points: Busia (Kenya–Uganda), Liboi–Dobhley (Kenya–Somalia), Moyale (Kenya–Ethiopia), Togowajale (Ethiopia–Somalia), Nimuley (South Sudan–Uganda), Abyei–South and West Kordofan (South Sudan–Sudan), Afar–Dikhil (Ethiopia–Djibouti), and Metema–Al Qadarif–Kassala–Gash Barka (Ethiopia–Sudan–Eritrea).

Section Two

Emerging Themes and Questions

Unpacking Terms, Assumptions, and Practices around the Process and Participation

Are we bottom-up?

Internally, LPI has been describing its work in policy engagement as being bottom-up, drawing on the work of John Paul Lederach (see Background section above). This immediately begs a series of questions. What does LPI mean by bottom-up policy engagement? Is LPI actually working bottom-up? What are the assumptions underpinning LPI approaches?

The term '*bottom-up*' suggests a variety of features that appear to be a matter of degree rather than absolutes. These characteristics overlap but can be explored loosely around the following two dimensions:

- 1. The identification of a policy issue or starting point, and the degree to which the policy issue at stake emanates from conflict-affected people themselves*
- 2. The level and quality of participation (how meaningful it is), and the degree to which it is inclusive across both vertical and horizontal axes*

Identification of the policy issue

How the policy issue was identified in each of the three different cases is briefly elaborated below.

Somalia

This was a circuitous route to identifying policy issues, as the original impetus for this process was a piece of research on the role of women in promoting peace and/or violence (see above). The research outcomes suggested opportunities to apply the findings to influence the policy arena. This consequently entailed a return to the participants in the research project to discuss and identify specific policy issues and their implications.

The DRC

The policy issue (land ownership and governance) emerged from a clear community priority. This was influenced by the fact that the policy engagement had its roots in peacebuilding objectives rather than being intentionally policy oriented from the outset. The issue to be addressed was a fundamental driver of conflict. It was therefore central to advancing conflict transformation in the areas where LPI partners work.

Horn of Africa

The policy issue grew out of direct discussion with policy actors, although it was known to be of importance to border communities.⁹ Agreement on the issue required negotiation over a number of competing factors that could affect progress, such as levels of political interest, appetite (or political will), and the potential for achievement of a concrete outcome. The intention was to create a policy convergence between community and policy actor priority issues. The issue (informal cross-border trade in the Horn of Africa and its nexus with security governance) needed to be relevant to communities and preferably already on the IGAD agenda (to ensure political will at upper levels so as to maximise potential progress). It was also important for the issue not to be too controversial or sensitive in order to avoid the possibility that it might be derailed by potentially competing national interests in this intergovernmental organisation.

Our reflective discussion found that issue identification is influenced by a mixture of factors. To achieve progress, it is necessary to have an appropriate balance between these various factors (see box on next page).

⁹ LPI and its partners have been working with border communities for many years on various programmes.

Box 1: Factors affecting policy issue identification

Political salience at national or regional levels



Level of political controversy

In the case of the Horn of Africa, informal cross-border trade was chosen as the policy issue. An issue closely linked to cross-border trade – the livestock trade – was intentionally excluded, however. This was because it was known that IGAD members held strongly divergent views on the topic of livestock trade, which would make it hard to achieve some degree of consensus to move forward with the issue.

Community salience and pertinence



Level of sensitivity

In the case of the DRC, land governance, including the contradictions that have arisen between customary and statutory governance mechanisms and perspectives on legality, was chosen as the policy issue. This issue was directly relevant to communities as it was a structural cause of conflict. It also held the opportunity to make decision-making processes around land more inclusive. Not all issues identified during the inter-community dialogue that were seen to require political action were selected. For instance, land access and ownership in connection to displacement within the DRC and the region was raised as one of the most pressing issues in need of being addressed but this was deemed too sensitive to take forward at that point. In another partner-led process in DRC, while women's access to land and to land management mechanisms was not considered the most pertinent issue by a number of community actors, it was chosen in alignment with the overarching goal of the specific PAR process. This therefore required buy-in and negotiation on the part of partners and LPI with some community actors.

Immediate development issues at community level



Addressing long-term structural needs in a narrower peacebuilding sense

In the case of Somalia, the starting point of departure from the research had been around the complex roles of women in peace and conflict at the community level. The policy issues participants prioritised when formulating recommendations, however, evolved around broader issues such as women's education, access to livelihoods, and structural issues related to poverty. This was in contrast to the narrower issue area of the research. This divergence reflects a key challenge in policy formulation: policy agendas at international levels may be focused on particular frameworks and themes that actually play out in a much more inter-connected manner at community level; for instance, women's literacy and access to economic resources as necessary prerequisites to participate in peacebuilding.

The brief descriptions indicate that LPI-supported processes have not necessarily been bottom-up. This is especially the case when considering the identification of the policy issue selected to be addressed and the stakeholders that have suggested it. The question is, then, does this matter? One aspect to consider is that even when the issue has a top-down element (such as in the Horn of Africa policy process), nonetheless there can be a known resonance with the issue at community level, albeit as seen from a different perspective. In this case, the view from the regional policymaker outlook was how to manage cross-border trade in more effective and efficient ways. In particular, this focused on two issues: how to collect duties (import or export taxes) that are lawfully owed; and how to ensure that illegal cross-border trade is curtailed. In contrast, the community perspective on the same issue – cross-border trade – was how to reduce barriers to their subsistence livelihoods, which are obtained from very small-scale trade with neighbouring communities across the border.

This suggests that if issues directly impact on the daily lives of conflict-affected people, and there are marked differences in positions and interests, then their involvement is critical, even if the issue is identified at the top or middle arena.

These different experiences and perspectives on the same issue indicate that it may be possible to tentatively disaggregate various types of approaches to policy engagement: bottom-up, middle-out, mixed methodology approaches (that might also include top-down elements), and top-down (a more traditional and narrow approach). Perhaps not surprisingly, there is a complexity here that suggests key aspects include the nature of the issue, its relevance to conflict-affected people, and their interest and participation – all of which renders on what level the issue was identified first of lesser importance. As such, the term ‘participatory policy engagement’ may more accurately reflect the main commonality between the disparate experiences captured here.

The tentative typology also raises questions as to whether top-down policy is always the least attractive option, or whether it is unlikely to yield the optimum outcomes. As with many of the questions posed in this paper, we do not know the answer. It is, however, probable that it depends on the intention and nature of the policy issue at hand, as well as the historical moment and the broader governance environment (and the degree to which other processes for public influencing exist). The nature of all policy is a compromise and balance between multiple factors, but the use of the different types of policy engagement approaches may reflect different balances between these factors.

Complex dynamics of participation: who participates, how, and when?

This section considers the degree and nature (quality) of the participation and involvement of conflict-affected people in policy processes. Similar to many practitioners in the peacebuilding ecosystem, LPI tends to use and repeat terms and jargon when describing its work without necessarily scrutinising the assumptions underpinning the terminology. The term 'participatory' is a good example. We often use this term prescriptively in our work and it is aspired to in our values. The actual practice, however, may vary considerably depending on context, issue, and process. When considered in the context of policy development, it is worth exploring why participation is important, in particular as this compares to top-down approaches.

There are two lines of argument as to why local participation is important to policy processes. The first is the performance or effectiveness assumption. That is, local participation will lead to policies that are more relevant, effective, and sustainable. In short, participation will lead to improved outcomes. Consequently, it may be assumed that these policies are also more likely to be applied and adhered to in practice, reducing the possibility of a gap between policy on paper and the reality of its application. The second line of argument for local participation is a rights-based or moral one. This view of participation implies there is no need to prove specifically that outcomes are better because participation per se has intrinsic value as a critical ingredient of inclusive governance. This perspective points more to constructing the type of world we want to live in, and how we want to operate in that world.

In some cases, it is arguable that those most affected by a policy issue also have the deepest knowledge about it to contribute to policy formulation, and their perspectives take into account aspects important for successful implementation. In addition, assuming the policy is relevant to the experience of local people, addressing it successfully is likely to require their support and involvement. If they are not comprehensively involved, driving or informing the process, there is a possible greater risk of enhanced conflict resulting from the policy (given that these are conflict-affected environments). Further, it can reasonably be assumed that inclusive forms of participation may lead to more effective and relevant policy – in particular where input is sought across conflict lines, and from multiple parties to a given issue. Otherwise, policy outcomes may reflect only the views of one set of stakeholders and may therefore be conflict insensitive.

These assumptions are reflected in the increasing efforts by development and peace actors to involve local participants in policy-influencing work. This is particularly the case at the global level, where multilateral institutions are attempting to take these issues into consideration. While stakeholders wrestle with how to improve in this regard and create more meaningful interactions that bridge various levels, the most common attempts are minimal, despite good intentions.¹⁰ They usually involve some sort of community consultation at which information is extracted and taken to inform the policy. Another approach is that a community representative (a local voice), selected by intermediaries, is invited to attend a global forum to represent local views. There is a danger that these efforts are seen as, or actually are, tokenistic in nature, and at worst patronising. Nevertheless, there is an increasing trend in the development and peacebuilding sectors that the assumptions described above underpinning the importance of local participation are seen as valid.¹¹

Box 2: Who is local in LPI work?

Inevitably perhaps, considerable debate took place over whether it is important to arrive at a shared definition of who is local. There was no consensus on the definition of the term 'local'. It was also noted that this is a highly contentious and political term: it encompasses important aspects of identity, depending on location. This means it is important to consider each context separately and examine who is included or excluded in the term, by whom, and why. The term also goes far beyond location and geography. For instance, in the Somali diaspora, migrants originally from a particular place may consider themselves to be locals, whereas they may not be seen as such by those who actually live in that geographical location. People may also consider themselves local to several geographical places. Other important factors in determining whether someone is perceived as local include: their degree of education or exposure to other ways of life (for instance, in urban environments or other countries); or whether they are considered to be part of the elite, which may be defined in terms of land ownership or having the power and authority to represent a larger group.

The use of the term 'local' may also be very divisive as it implies or lends legitimacy to an actor, especially with respect to who is representing whom.

As a result of our reflections and discussion, we concluded that use of the term 'local' needs careful management, with a critical aspect being broad inclusion of minorities and diversity of voice to avoid entrenching existing power dynamics.

¹⁰ LPI has been exploring questions of global engagement with the local and barriers to meaningful participation as part of the Inclusive Peace in Practice Initiative.

¹¹ Based on informal consultations, workshops, and key informant interviews conducted as part of the Inclusive Peace in Practice Initiative.

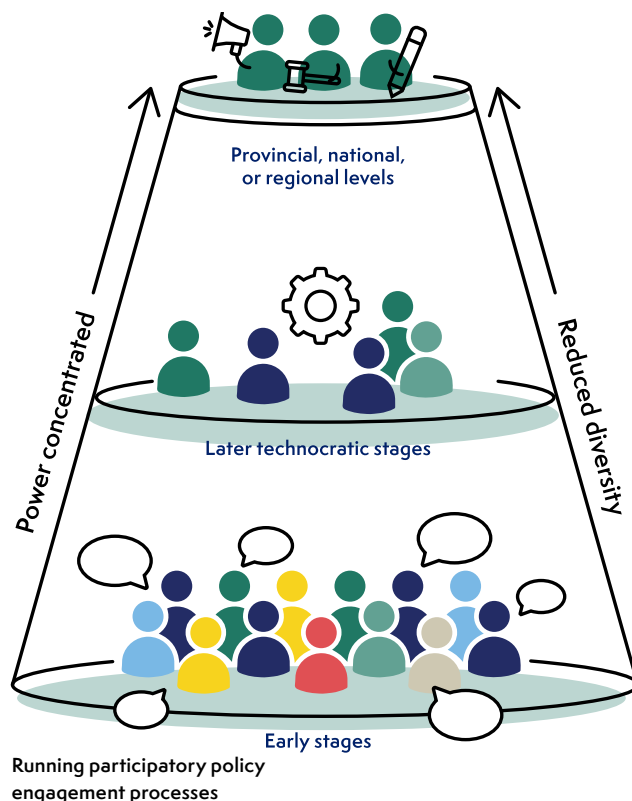
A bias towards the local?

LPI and its partners are positioned much closer to the local level than to institutional policymakers and this has implications. Inherent in this position is the risk to characterise top-down or traditional policy formulation processes as being authoritarian and disempowering to local level communities, while simultaneously viewing participatory processes through rose-tinted glasses. Viewing participatory processes through an uncritical lens may not always be warranted, however. It remains necessary for intermediaries to take account of their own potential biases (for further discussion of intermediaries, see below).

Who is driving the process? The inverted funnel effect

While there is clearly no single linear process common to the three LPI policy-related, it was observed in all cases that the degree of community or local participation tended to reduce as the process continued through the policy cycle. In the early stages of policy engagement, there appear to

be far more opportunities for local participation. This is particularly the case in relation to the identification of the policy issue, as well as consultation to provide input to develop new policy content. During the later technocratic stages of policy development, the nature and frequency of participation changes and reduces. As the process moves to provincial, national, or regional levels (shifts on the vertical axis), the quantity and quality of involvement of local stakeholders reduces. Consequently, the relationship between levels reverts back to the status quo – being largely disconnected. This can be described as an inverted funnel process.



The question then becomes: is this pattern of participation problematic? In our reflection process, a tension emerged between a pragmatic stance, whereby this tendency might be accepted as the reality and intrinsic nature of policy processes reflective of established patterns of power, and a more normative stance oriented to exploring whether we could and should do better to mitigate this funnel effect.

When considering the three cases, there is considerable variation in the number of efforts to foster local engagement and in the available opportunities to return to provide feedback or seek validation. There were also variations in the levels of local ownership and control of the process, and in the degree of local participation. To try to better understand these variations in opportunities for local input along the policymaking journey, it is useful to break down the process into elements. This may enable practitioners to see how communities can be included in each element and whether doing so is worthwhile, for communities and for the quality of the policy process. *Such elements might include:*

- Facilitation of initial context analysis
- Identification of policy issue
- Development of policy content
- Consideration of the practical implications of various elements of the policy
- Validation of the draft policy, and validation later down the track
- Involvement in piloting actual policy implementation
- Refinement of policy subsequent to piloting policy implementation

This approach continues to work on the assumption that maximising community level involvement throughout the policy development process, in line with peacebuilding principles, constitutes the optimum PPE model, which will enhance the appropriateness and relevance of the policy and increase accountability to those people the policy most affects. Given the relative paucity of involvement of community level participation in most policy processes at present, it could be argued that any improvement in participation is a positive outcome (in line with the second assumption highlighting the intrinsic value of participation), as long as the risks associated with the potential use of this approach to legitimise poor policy are well managed. Further consideration is required to better understand what the level of community or local input should be across the elements, and whether participation matters more at specific moments or stages in the process.

Who participates? The politics of inclusion and exclusion

As with all peacebuilding programming, the issues of who is included and who is excluded, along with the nature of the inclusion or exclusion, are critical. As noted earlier, implicit power dynamics, including those at work in questions about the legitimacy of representation, belonging, and who is classified as local are embedded in these issues (see Box 2.)

A good example of these power dynamics emerged in the Somalia PPE process. Despite targeting a specific part of the population – women in Kismayo – issues related to who was speaking still emerged. An initial recognition of the complex role of women in peacebuilding and conflict resulted in the decision that the process should be mainly aimed at women (although male representatives from government and other stakeholder groups also had input). Because of their peacebuilding work and involvement in civil society (through NGOs), they already had been exposed to many ideas and perspectives, even when they came from the same community and shared the level socio-economic strata of the broader population. The participants were from a relatively small geographic area (as process and starting point had been defined by original programmatic parameters). Given that Kismayo is an urban setting with strategic positioning,¹² is also highly exposed to development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding initiatives, often externally funded. This had an impact on the levels of prior exposure to policy-related efforts on the part of some of the women included in the process. In other words, Kismayo is a place where there is a relatively large amount of (externally financed) development work, which may mean that some participants in the PPE process were comparatively more familiar and comfortable with the discourse and priorities of development processes and activities.

In the DRC case, critically, from a peacebuilding perspective, the processes promoted ethnically diverse participation, and addressed power differences horizontally between ethnic groups. It emerged, however, that community selection processes largely mirrored in-group power relations. This approach was generally perceived as natural by the community and reflected how things work in that specific context. Representatives, including the women who were sometimes selected, were considered able to speak for their communities. Therefore, this type of process reflects existing power relations within each community and reinforces them simultaneously. Cognisant of contextual gender-based dynamics of exclusion, partners and LPI made intentional efforts to bring more women to the table. This included negotiating female membership in cross-community peacebuilding structures. While not addressing gender power relations directly, this has over time created more space for women to influence land decision-making on community level.

12 Kismayo is an important economic hub and port that is critical for trade and business. Control of the Kismayo port will generate revenues from the trade in goods that enter the country (and that may then be transported to Kenya and Ethiopia as well as across Somalia). It is therefore also important from a peacebuilding perspective as it is a source of contest between different clans, al-Shabab and the Somali Federal Government.

13 The online Oxford English Dictionary defines intersectionality as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/429843>

These issues raise a perennial question for PPE work (and development work more generally). To be considered inclusive, how broad should consultation with conflict-affected people actually be? This question also applies to issues such as geography and the intersectionality of participants.¹³ Additional phases were added to the Somalia process to

broaden stakeholder participation and remedy this shortcoming, including supplementary national and regional stakeholders. It is, however, open for discussion as to whether the inclusion of such actors was sufficiently compensatory and comprehensive. Levels or degrees of inclusion are important to consider and determine at the beginning of any processes as they affect the perceived legitimacy of the outcomes.

The quality of participation

In addition to how local participation in a PPE process changes over time and who participates, the quality of participation is another critical element. This again links to the underlying assumptions about the value of participation as understood from both the performance and rights-based arguments: participation should be meaningful. The key question is what counts as meaningful participation? This can be disaggregated into various components such as the degree of inclusion and the capacity of participants; e.g. to verbalise their ideas and experiences; or in advance of this, to be able to explore their ideas and implications of their experiences before being able to speak about them; their confidence levels; their ability to listen and hear, etc.

Degree of Inclusion: The issue of inclusion applies in all development and peacebuilding processes. In particular, it is often discussed with respect to women and increasingly youth. While women may be physically present, they may not actually participate in the formal discussion, voice their opinions and thoughts, or influence decisions (although they may still do so in informal domestic spaces). In many countries around the world, gender norms and behaviour mean that men still dominate formal public spaces, despite the presence of women, due to the cultural codes that define male and female roles. This has consequences in terms of levels of confidence and agency. This is also true for other actors; for instance, marginalised groups. Such dynamics may be present in private (although not always), community, and policy spheres, and may reinforce each other.

Preparing for voice and preparing for listening: What are the optimum ways to overcome these constraints and deepen the quality of participation in policy engagement? In the LPI Somalia programme, this has been attempted by creating different parallel spaces, where excluded groups can offer their views and thoughts without competing directly for space with those who may hold more power in their shared context. An alternative approach is to try and change the nature of existing spaces and norms of behaviour; for instance, by creating pressure on power holders to be more inclusive and to provide spaces in these arenas for contributions from others.

An insight that emerged through our reflection process is the importance of preparing different stakeholders to play their roles more effectively when opportunities arise throughout the process. Alongside this, it is also important to be able to recognise that this may not have been undertaken effectively enough in the processes at the time. Among other things, preparing for listening entails ensuring that policymakers, along the other stakeholders, are ready to hear the voices of the people with whom they are interacting

For community participants, there may be a need for preparation to be able to express their thoughts, reflections, and experiences in ways that provide the best chance of being heard and so have an impact on the discussions. In the DRC, to some extent this was achieved by anchoring policy engagement in existing community spaces created as part of broader peacebuilding processes. Those spaces both worked on negotiation capacities and provided a platform to discuss options to enhance land governance mechanisms. In one case, which aimed to increase women's role in decision-making related to land issues, the process intentionally formed a group of women facilitators, who together developed their own advocacy agenda. The group of women then used dialogues to bring those agenda points to formal and customary authorities operating in the land space. The women facilitators were also supported through specific capacity development measures over several years to strengthen and address any inequalities in skill levels to their counterparts.

In the Horn of Africa PPE process, stakeholders were brought together in meetings to explore various aspects of evidence. Several features emerged as being important to facilitate meaningful engagement between diverse actors. This included emphasis in process design and facilitation on active listening, which requires a conscious willingness to become aware of prior implicit views and assumptions. Critical importance was also given to the framing of issues and key points; for example, avoiding labelling and framing policy issues as a problem or conundrum instead of blaming a specific actor or decisions. This allowed a deeper and more searching engagement with the subject matter. Further, logistical aspects can also be important, such as translation facilities, and allocation of time and opportunities for speaking.

The Somalia participants were well prepared for engagement, having already been engaged in the research and dialogue process. This means they were familiar with the issues, what they wished to say, and how they wished to say it.

While every effort might be made to include otherwise excluded groups, including minorities or marginalised groups, their views may or may not be taken into account or heard, even when it is well-articulated and prepared. Overall, it seems that to date less thought has gone into how best to prepare policymakers to hear messages they will receive. While it is important that all groups learn to listen to others, this facet requires further work in the future.

Policy Content: The Nature and Function of Evidence

A critical dimension of policy content and its relevance is the extent to which it is considered valid by the various stakeholders. While there has been a global move towards the concept of evidence-based policy formulation, the reality of its application – even in more stable, peaceful policy contexts – is that policies are shaped by many aspects. These include ideology, the influence of particular interest groups, technical input, and sometimes perceptions around public opinion. In the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes, practice is varied. Given the critical purpose of PPE processes to incorporate community perspectives and experiences in policies that impact on them, this has implications for the nature and functionality of the evidence presented in a PPE process.

Everyday reality: Firstly, incorporating community voices helps to reframe the overall policy approach from a purely technical process to one that is also shaped by lives and lived experiences of people. The direct relevance of community perspectives brings everyday reality into the policy process.

Equality of voice: Secondly, through PPE processes, experiential knowledge and perspectives are raised to a similar level of importance as that given to technical or academic voices and research. This means there is greater parity with respect to the different types of evidence on the table. Consequently, the policymaking process is not only based on academic research and quantitative data. Lived experience is also taken into account in framing policy content. In this regard, policy engagement efforts need to find ways to ensure that evidence based on the lived experiences of people affected by the policy becomes centralised and legitimised. Moreover, such evidence should not simply be regarded as tokenistic – a few supplementary anecdotes and supporting testimonials.

When gathered from multiple perspectives, qualitative experiential evidence becomes broader, deeper, and more substantive.¹⁴ It then becomes more professional and functional evidence rather than merely being seen as personal, emotive anecdotes at the individual level. Bringing such experiential data to the fore enables it to become more useful for policymakers, on a level with social science-style data, so that quantitative, statistical, and peer reviewed data is no longer the dominant or exclusive form of evidence considered to be legitimate.

All stakeholders in the three cases recognised that the elevation of this type of experiential evidence creates a stronger, more accurate picture of what is happening in the lives of those people and communities affected by the policy. The question to explore is this: to what extent does this translate into increased motivation or energy on the side of policy actors to take better policy-related actions? In the Horn of Africa PPE process, intriguingly, other forms of evidence such as oral and visual testimonies were critical in providing support for the proposed policy framework. For example, the June 2018 meetings, which led to the adoption of the ICBT policy framework, included a video containing interviews with informal cross-border traders, as well as with academics, and this played a key role in generating support for its adoption among the assembled experts and government officials.

It should also be noted that in the Horn of Africa PPE process, experiential evidence was also presented by the IGAD technical experts and IGAD Member States experts, who spoke about their years of experience in the different borderlands of the IGAD region. In the course of the various consultative workshops, it became clear that this experience was a rich vein of evidence to tap and integrate into the consultations. The consultative/validation workshops were useful in this regard but to supplement their efficacy, alternative mechanisms such as side discussions and email communications were also employed.

Deeper evidence collection builds relationships and helps negotiate interests: The evidence collection (and collation) process, sharing, understanding, and raising awareness of different perspectives, experiences, and realities has been important in all three cases. In the DRC, evidence collection created a platform and opportunity for various diverse actors to come together and engage on sensitive issues. In part, the intention was to enable participating actors to hear one another and listen. This process allowed participants to identify areas of contention, divergent understandings, and different perceptions of

14 Although moving to the quantification of qualitative data has intrinsic difficulties and researchers should beware of See for instance Lu, C and Shulman, S.W, (2008) 'Rigor and flexibility in computer-based qualitative research: Introducing the Coding Analysis Toolkit' International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches (2008) 2: 105-117

history. Collating the evidence that was gathered was integrated with the dialogue process. This combination proved critical for achieving broad horizontal shared agendas around policy content. In the Horn of Africa case, evidence and information to shape policy content was intentionally collected from three different sector sources; namely, relevant academic research, grey literature (e.g. reports from NGOs, institutes, think tanks, and other civil society and practitioner or policy influencers), and civil society organisations and communities. Experiential evidence was not only collected from conflict-affected community members but was also presented by IGAD technical personnel and sector ministries, as well as by border officials, who all brought their own experiences to the discussion. The process of soliciting experiential evidence also built up rapport between specific government and regional intergovernmental institutions and interlocutors in the process.

The Relationship between PPE and Peacebuilding?

Policy engagement in conflict contexts with governance challenges

All three policy engagement contexts involved specific complex conflict and governance challenges that shaped the participatory approach taken. For example, it was fortunate that the Horn of Africa experience was a regional policy process being coordinated from Addis Ababa, where the space for civil society involvement in governance in Ethiopia had been severely constrained, particularly since the implementation of the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation. The shrinking space for civil society engagement was critical in terms of shaping the direction of the engagement. It meant that it was necessary to raise these policy issues to the regional level, which was deemed a more conducive environment for this type of process. In particular, working at the regional level helped reframe relationships and alter the way engagement with stakeholders was possible, despite the legal constraints. It also created the illusion of some distance and space between national governance structures and the type of activities being undertaken, which were sensitive. This was important, as otherwise activities may have been perceived as being too directly involved in conflict and governance. (Under the 2009 proclamation, NGOs were not allowed to engage in peacebuilding and governance activities; this proclamation was amended in 2019.) Thus, the constrained space at national level catalysed the regional approach.

In Somalia, the relative absence of women's inclusion in peace processes, particularly at community level, catalysed a deeper look at their role in peacebuilding and conflict in LPI programme work, which then shaped the

policy engagement around women's perspectives in particular. In the DRC, the role of land in conflict shaped the direction of the process, where governance challenges, including dynamics across customary and statutory governance spaces, play a critical role in driving land-related conflict.

This suggests there is a duality operating through PPE processes and how these processes interact with a given context. On the one hand, the form of engagement emerges from the constraints of the context and the need to adapt to them. On the other, the PPE process also impacts on the structural and institutional dimensions of a given context.

A question that engaged us as we looked back on and reflected about these three experiences was linked to this duality. That is, did the strength of participation and form of the PPE processes emerge because of the governance environment? As is the nature of this type of speculation, no conclusions were reached but some areas for further consideration emerged, as follows.

Direct democracy: It was observed that the nature of all three contexts meant there were few if any other forms of governance participation by communities; for instance, through representative governance systems. Therefore, it was suggested that the PPE processes might be a form of direct democracy, whereby to some extent people are able to decide on policy initiatives, which could directly encourage their high levels of participation and motivation. While it was not uppermost in the minds of LPI and partner staff during implementation of the processes, nevertheless these processes could be said to compensate for the inadequacies of existing governance mechanisms in these conflict-affected contexts. These processes appear to enable those who are often most, or at least relatively, disenfranchised from existing power dynamics to participate in and have a say in policies that impact on them, rather than rely only on government officials, who may not have the capacity or desire to take diverse views into account. In that regard, PPE processes take on additional significance.

Transformation through empathy and understanding: An interesting observation that emerged through our reflections was how the participatory processes appeared to have a transformative effect on both sides of the governance equation (policymakers and citizens), albeit to differing degrees. In this regard, the bridging of realities between policymakers and community-level participants is potentially a key ingredient. Its importance should not be underestimated. On

the community side, having an opportunity to have input appeared to increase the understanding of participants of the issues involved. This also provided an opportunity to engage with and hold those with power to account. This is unusual in this type of context and closes the governance gap between political authorities and the people. The exposure to perspectives is two-way, enabling community-level participants to learn how government works in relation to formulating policy (even if ironically the actual process in which they are engaged may not reflect the traditional process or policy formulation behaviours) and vice versa. That is, government policymakers also learned about community-level processes and experiences. An example, of the transformative and empowering nature of the process was evidenced by the way that those women participating in the Kismayo (Somalia) process were empowered not only to present their perspectives, but at their own initiative to take follow-up actions, including independently advocating with government at the regional level, and offering policymakers insights into community perspectives on the policy issues.

This was also true in the DRC context. In several cases, partners continued the processes, despite LPI having to end its financial support prematurely.¹⁵ Partner organisation emphasis and effort on creating platforms for collective engagement at the community level and with local authorities should be seen as a key ingredient for process continuation. These platforms intentionally seek to overcome barriers for more equal engagement between the various stakeholders, beyond the community-policy actor dichotomy. In the DRC, the intent was also to bridge the gap between statutory and customary authorities in land management. In the Horn of Africa, many of the IGAD and member state officials who engaged in the process had served for years (sometimes decades) across the different borders. Their knowledge of the issues facing borderland communities was more substantive and deeper than many of the other stakeholders. The CPAE process generated empathy and understanding between different stakeholders. It also fostered support for seeking an alternative and more collaborative way to develop policy through this model.

Peacebuilders do it differently?

During our reflective process, LPI and partner staff highlight the perception that PPE processes undertaken from a peacebuilding perspective lead to critical differences in the approach to policy formulation (the how) compared to traditional state-centric policy formulation usually undertaken in relatively stable situations.

¹⁵ In 2016, due to the early termination of programme funding from its two main donors, LPI downsized its operations in DRC and was therefore unable to provide further support to partner-led PPE processes.

Table 1 on next page explores this further by comparing the PPE process with the Strategic Peacebuilding Principles developed by the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego.¹⁶ In particular, Table 1 analyses whether PPE processes adhered to these principles. There appears to be a strong correlation between these principles and PPE approaches (emerging from the reflections) suggesting some validity to the hypothesis. Table 1 also compares traditional policy formulating approaches found in the Horn of Africa, demonstrating some essential differences between them. This leads to several important questions and assumptions underpinning the PPE approach.

Better policy? Firstly, as noted earlier, questions remain as to whether PPE approaches actually lead to greater success in terms of formulating a good policy, its degree of appropriateness (sustainability and relevance and for whom), and its successful application. It is too early for this to be seen within LPI-supported experiences. Nonetheless, the outcomes from the Horn of Africa process should be tracked including the implementation of the agreed IGAD policy framework for ICBT.

PPE as a process for peacebuilding: A second question getting to the heart of the distinction between the traditional approach to policy formulation and the PPE approach is whether the latter could or should be considered a legitimate approach for peacebuilding? This is not to equate peacebuilding and PPE; but suggests that PPE can be useful as a part of a peacebuilding approach addressing difference due to the inherent similarities in the principles and approaches being adopted. This question arises because of PPE emphasis (in the cases being considered) on addressing key drivers of conflict; for example, in the DRC case. The PPE focus on creating new, more constructive relationships between stakeholders; for example, in the Horn of Africa programme, between regional and local actors, in cross-border areas, also shows the strong alignment between peacebuilding and PPE.

A tentative answer suggests there are many similarities between this form of policy engagement and broader peacebuilding approaches. This may not be so surprising given that the PPE processes described are taking place in conflict-affected contexts, by/with peacebuilding organisations, and through the application of peacebuilding principles. It can be seen that PPE processes are transformative for both people and structures, thereby potentially creating substantial changes in the conflict environment.

¹⁶ The list was sourced at the Alliance for Peacebuilding website. <https://allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/>

Table 1:
Comparison between Strategic Peacebuilding Principles, emerging features of Participatory Policy Engagement approaches and Traditional Policy Formulation

	Strategic Peacebuilding Principles	Participatory Policy Engagement	Traditional Policy Formulation Approach
1	Is complex and has multiple actors	Multi-stakeholders, both vertically and horizontally	Formulated at the government centre – usually top-down
2	Requires values, goals, commitment to human rights and needs	Places a premium on inclusion, participation, and community needs, with human rights implied	Content may be informed by political ideological foundations
3	Goes beyond conflict transformation	Also goes beyond conflict transformation (governance dimensions)	Is not usually interested in conflict transformation at all as a driver of policy formulation
4	Cannot ignore structural forms of injustice and violence	Aims to improve policy that may entrench structural injustice	Inevitably the policy process is a function of and reflects the prevailing governance system within which it is located
5	Is founded on an ethic of interdependence, partnership, and limiting violence	Aims to bridge hierarchies and levels of power, equalising forms of evidence and lived experience, and limits injustice	The policy formulation process does not involve many stakeholders
6	Depends on relational skills	Emphasises and enhances relations, reducing gaps between power holders and communities	Evidence informing content may only be technical or scientific, not taking into account social and cultural dimensions, or community perspectives, in particular those affected by the policy
7	Analysis is complex; underlying cultures, histories, root causes, and immediate stressors are essential	Underlying cultures, histories, root causes, and lived experiences are essential	Evidence informing content may only be technical or scientific, not taking into account social and cultural dimensions, or community perspectives, in particular those affected by the policy
8	Creates spaces where people interact in new ways, expanding experience and honing new means of communication	Creates spaces where people interact in new ways, expanding experience and honing new means of communication	Policy content is usually drawn from technical, often scientific and expert dominated perspectives
9	Peacebuilding heals trauma, promotes justice, and transforms relationships	Promotes justice and transforms relationships	Not taken into account
10	Peacebuilding requires capacity and relationship building at multiple levels	Requires capacity and relationship building at multiple levels	Not taken into account

Peacebuilding also seeks to transform structures, moving them toward the promotion of non-violent approaches. PPE seems one approach to further this.

When considering this interplay between the approaches, it is worth noting that the rigorous application of peacebuilding principles to a PPE process can also occasionally create tensions. For instance, during the Somalia process, a short-term opportunity emerged to raise the voices of some women participants to inform global thinking at the UN in the context of the Swedish Security Council Presidency in July 2018. This created a choice between continuing the process at the pace and demand of the participants (adhering to sound peacebuilding principles) or foregoing these principles on pragmatic grounds (to take advantage of a significant short-term opportunity and cutting corners so as to try and achieve a policy outcome more quickly). Trying to force the pace of the process in Somalia to fit this external event did not work. The bending of principles risked having adverse effects on both the peacebuilding outcomes and the quality of the outcomes of the PPE process. This suggests that how a PPE process is undertaken in a peacebuilding context is of particular importance.

The criticality of the relational approach: Another feature highlighting the peacebuilding nature of these processes is the heavy reliance on long-term relationships and partner legitimacy with communities and key actors. For instance, in addition to long-term LPI relationships with IGAD and the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), LPI partner, the Inter-Africa Group (IAG), also had a ten-year relationship with CEWARN. This provided a strong basis for trust and understanding to weather possible bumps in the road emerging from sensitivities associated with operating in the context. Trust and relationships between all actors at all levels of involvement (for instance, between policymakers and community-level participants) were intentionally fostered as a critical part of the processes to implement this work.

When blockages in processes occurred, relationships provided the opportunity to move forward through informal avenues and discussions. The importance of constructive communication approaches, including active listening and tact in engagement, cannot be overstated in that regard. The use of relational social capital to understand issues, untangle misunderstandings, or bring other key actors in to the process was also able to create momentum. In this way, PPE approaches can be said to be working in a politically smart manner – brokering relationships, interests,

and incentives – and working iteratively. All three cases identified times that relied heavily on the social capital of LPI and partners, either to convene key actors and facilitate parts of the process or to have the legitimacy to raise sensitive political issues that otherwise might have been off limits.

Intermediary Positionality: Bridging Structures, Processes, and Institutions

There are many questions and issues to be explored regarding the role of LPI throughout these processes. As an international civil society organisation, LPI has access to resources that de facto provide a starting point for its involvement, in alignment with its mandate. This also inevitably creates power dynamics and provides choices around whether to be merely a supporting grant manager with partners or to play a more direct role in implementation, as well. The balance struck varied from case to case. What did not vary across all three PPE experiences, however, was the role LPI played as a trusted objective insider–outsider. The consistency of this role in all three contexts suggests a number of responsibilities.

Leadership and ownership

Leading from behind and ownership: LPI considers its partnership approach to be one of accompaniment, not simply being a grant giver. In this accompaniment role, we prefer to take a back seat in the implementation of our broader peacebuilding programmes. During the PPE processes, however, the line between leading from behind and leading from in front (to drive the process forward) may have become blurred. For instance, the Somalia process found LPI taking a much stronger leadership role – driving the process, taking decisions on its direction, and determining who to involve – than in other components of the programme. While our intention was to draw on, and utilise a bottom-up model, in practice LPI zoomed in from above and exited relatively rapidly, with the familiar associated issue of insufficient allocation of resources to follow-up on actual policy engagement.

In the DRC and the Horn of Africa PPE processes, the LPI role was more aligned with the principles and practices of leading from behind, while occasionally stepping up, as needed. More critical than the level of LPI leadership, however, is the level of ownership by the stakeholders themselves. If strong ownership is demonstrated, then LPI leadership or facilitation in the process becomes less significant. The danger appears

if levels of ownership reduce and LPI steps into the vacuum to lead the processes. Feedback from stakeholders and their exhibited behaviour all reflected strong ownership across the three cases. Even in Somalia, where LPI ended up in a much stronger leadership role than it would normally take, the women who participated have undertaken initiatives independently as a result of the process. In the DRC, partners and local stakeholders were able to continue the peacebuilding and PPE processes after LPI disengagement. In the Horn of Africa PPE process, levels of leadership and ownership by all the stakeholders has fluctuated and varied at different times during the process to date and it will be interesting to see whether this continues to wax and wane or stabilises in one direction as time goes on. The programme and process are still underway and unfolding.

Adaptive role changing: Another aspect to consider is the changing role of LPI during the course of the different processes. In the DRC, it appears as though we stayed fairly constant as the partners took the lead in bringing the different parties together within the broader PAR process and PPE-specific activities. In the Horn of Africa process, our role fluctuated far more. We had to work hard behind the scenes at different times to encourage and keep processes moving forward. The actual policy formulation in this case was not the direct responsibility of LPI. Rather, IGAD was the primary proprietor of the written document that resulted from the process.

Tensions around bridging: Does a greater vertical distance between the community and the policymaker mean that there is greater danger of gatekeeping and shaping the information and evidence by intermediaries (if only subconsciously)? This touches on the heart of the tension between representing views from one set of constituents and presenting them to another, or acting as a channel or conduit for the upward (and downward) flow of information.

Disengagement: These three different PPE experiences also raised another question. When should LPI exit a process? This is an ongoing dilemma due to the fact that some aspects of these processes are continuous. While there may be natural exit points, such as the completion of an agreed and ratified policy, what level of responsibility is there from participating organisations in relation to continuing to explore and influence the policy implementation so as to bring about real change for those on the ground? This partly depends on the primary purpose of the programme. Is this focused on the process and its benefits?¹⁷ Or is this focused on the

17 For example, the relational strengthening between policymakers and the people (community); different levels and sides of the governance equation.

change(s) expected from policy implementation? If the former, then the next stage is to find a new policy process to pursue, to continue addressing the governance gap. If the latter, then this tends to entail longer-term engagement, especially if the change(s) a policy is intended to put into effect are expected to be long-term processes.

In the case of the DRC, LPI had to disengage because the programme was closed prematurely (please see footnote 15 above). Given the ongoing conflict over land and the peacebuilding emphasis of the programme (where PPE emerged as part of the programme), however, there is an imperative to continue supporting these processes, especially if external resources and facilitation is required. In the case of Somalia, despite insufficient and slow follow-up by LPI on policy recommendations, the women who participated in the process took the initiative to engage local and state-level authorities.

There are also dangers associated with stopping a process once it has started and before a suitable end point has been reached. The disillusionment and disenfranchisement of participants may be a result, along with reputational and relational damage that may impact different stakeholders for many years to come. In managing all these risks (see below for further discussion of risks), it is important to work for the application of the peacebuilding principles presented in Table 1 at every step of the way. It is also important, however, that the donor partner has a sound understanding of the risks. A sudden withdrawal of funds at an inopportune moment can potentially have very negative consequences for a range of stakeholders.

Translation across language, culture, and systems

Similarly, a key characteristic associated with vertical distance between policymakers and grassroots participants is translation and potential dilution or distortion of messages. The greater the vertical space between them, the greater the potential for a translation gap. This translation is across a number of dimensions. The most obvious issue with translation is a literal one – the need to translate in the various languages being used, the need to translate to a national language, and the need to possibly translate everything into English (as the *lingua franca* of the peacebuilding world).

Equally significant are translation gaps associated with culture, which in this case may refer to the use of concepts, jargon, and technical language. This may also include other aspects of culture, such as institutional and

systems cultures in contrast to customary and traditional worldviews and ways of operating. It appears that norms and organisational cultures springing from experiences in northern political cultures predominate in global institutions. This means that the translation gap is further exacerbated when taken to the level where global institutions and paradigms operate.

A cynic might suggest that by the time all this translation and massaging of information has taken place, what remains is a form of meaning that is a mild variant of the system itself to meet the needs of the system. In other words, meanings may have been over translated and miss the point that community-level actors are trying to make. A critical follow-up point, then, is to understand whether and how communities can recognise their own voice and input in the final policy product.

Section Three

Considerations for Practitioners

Risks to Consider when Undertaking PPE as an International Actor

Expectation management: Expectations around continued community participation or involvement may be raised as part of a PPE process. In particular, there may also be heightened expectations that community input will indeed be taken into consideration. This not only applies to the formulation of policy. Perhaps more importantly, this also relates to expectations that there will be change and improvement resulting from these inputs. In light of policy processes taking years to develop, and that they may fail to gain sufficient traction, there is a risk that expectations will be disappointed, leading to more disenfranchisement and a sense of further marginalisation.

Complexity, multiplicity of perspectives, and exacerbating conflict: Involvement of multiple stakeholders, including community actors, increases the complexity of a process considerably. It also likely extends the duration of the process. The demands on management, costs related to the process, and the risks of alienating different actors all increase as the interest or participant base is increased. In conflict-affected contexts, the process and potential content may become a new arena for conflict dynamics and fault lines to be expressed. In a worst-case scenario, this may actually increase conflict if it is not well managed. Moreover, it is only in rare cases in the current funding environments in the peacebuilding ecosystem that available resources match the need for long-term outlooks and flexibility. Lack of long-term funder commitment potentially reduces the chances of success.

Legitimising poor policy: Given the inadequacies of governance environments where these processes are taking place, there is a risk that compensating for the poor governance systems in place does not lead to change. In fact, such processes may legitimise the authorities and institutions in question. They may also legitimise the production of a poor policy. If the PPE process is not sufficiently comprehensive, there is a risk of legitimising inefficient and authoritarian governments or policymakers by increasing their functionality. Given the scale of the processes to date and the types of government or bureaucratic personnel involved (who are not central powerbrokers in their governments or institutions), however, this risk does not seem to have materialised in the three cases examined here.

Confirmation of poor participatory process: Closely related, there is a risk of creating a false impression of the strength and validity of the process itself, rather than the product (a relevant policy) and the institutions, when in fact participation may not have been sufficiently robust. As it is assumed that PPE processes lead to better outcomes, this may motivate an increased use of poor processes that pretend to be participatory, and so may result in poor policies. This may be further exacerbated when compromises are made in implementing the process to ensure an outcome is achieved. Compromises on process may be due to economic realities (the availability of resources), time pressures, or insufficient breadth of voice and participation. Thus, a PPE process may also be a concession to poor governance and provide the authorities with evidence that they are representing the wishes of the people.

Formal or informal realm: In the DRC, customary leaders played a critical role in the PPE process, with the policy arena primarily located in the customary realm. Because the process was not primarily operating in the statutory realm, this meant it was not official in a legal sense. This raises a question. Although connecting the two realms (statutory and customary) was a key objective of the PPE process, did the primary location of the process in the customary realm mean that outcomes could be revoked, side-stepped, or ignored by officialdom? In fact, the partner organisations identified this as a key impetus to work toward the codification of agreements reached in the community or customary realm by scaling the regulatory efforts to provincial and even national levels. The risk here consists of the possibility that government authorities would not take responsibility for the policy or could even actively undermine the policy unless it became harmonised with the formal policy arena and statutory law. At the same time, partners reflected there was also a risk of extrapolating vertically from locally bound agreements and mechanisms directly into the provincial or national policy arena with the possibility that the critical dimension of comprehensively negotiating interests horizontally would be missing.

Practical Considerations for PPE

The discussions and reflections presented in this report give rise to a series of tentative questions and guidelines for the practical application of future PPE processes:

Buy-in to work differently

- a.* Commit to a new way of working. In particular, understand that PPE processes can start on different levels, as has been shown here. For an intermediary taking on a facilitative role in the effort, it is critical to ensure that the principles of PPE processes (as compared to other ways of policymaking) are understood, including the implications. This entails understanding what shapes the motivations of people to engage in a policy process. There needs to be genuine interest from all stakeholders in trying a different approach to policy formulation.

Relevance of the policy issue

- a.* Ensure there is a link between and relevance to the everyday lives and experience of the people affected by the policy. Simultaneously the policy issue must also have salience at higher levels.
- b.* Seek balance between the factors affecting issue choice to increase the opportunities of success, manage risks of failure, and handle the level of sensitivity of the issue. If the issue is too sensitive, it is unlikely to lend itself to convergence, compromise, and progress.

Process versus policy outcome

- a.* Adhere to peacebuilding principles throughout the process.
- b.* Remain flexible regarding entry and end points, and hold the process with a loose grip. Do not necessarily expect a specific policy outcome as the final result. Concentrate on process first and foremost and outcomes are more likely to accrue. In particular, be aware that the end goal may be negotiated along the process.
- c.* Do not rush or push the speed of the process beyond its natural pace to take advantage of opportunistic policy windows. This may compromise the process.

- d.* Use the PPE process to generate and deepen relationships as these are critical for success. Evidence generation is not just about evidence. During the process, this is the vector for developing relationships that bridge governance gaps and differences of perspective.

Bridging levels and systems

- a.* Be mindful of the power dynamics that need to be navigated. This entails investing in power analysis and understanding these power relations to best bridge the levels and systems.
- b.* Consider the ethics and practicalities of translation (including resources) when it comes to communication. It is important to know when to do it. Bear in mind that linguistic space is a dimension of power. Understand how it can constrain or enable participation, understanding, and degrees of involvement as a function of the type of language and jargon that is used.
- c.* Be cognisant of the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, asking who can speak on behalf of whom. Selection of representatives may entrench power dynamics or existing patterns of marginalisation.
- d.* Consider existing formal policy processes and how to link to them constructively. This can mean offering support to formal processes, feeding into them, or highlighting positive complementarity. Avoid doing harm through displacing government, deepening gaps between the people and the authorities, or creating alternative parallel policy processes.
- e.* Continue to advocate for flexible funding from donor organisations that can be used to support iterative, politically smart development rather than narrow project-oriented approaches. Develop further evidence to support constructive debate and introduce new types of evidence based on lived experiences.

Where do we go from here?

This pause for reflection captures LPI experience and thinking to date on experiences with implementing PPE processes. It would benefit from further consolidation and validation. It would also benefit from hearing about the experiences of other practitioners, who can add to the discussion and exploration in this journey.

The following areas could be entry points for deeper and broader learning and practice related to PPE processes:

Evaluation and development of an evidence base: The assumptions underpinning PPE, in particular that such processes result in improved policy and practical outcomes for conflict-affected people, need to be tested rigorously. Long-term observation and follow-up, including with conflict-affected communities, on these policies and their application need to be undertaken. Creative and possibly comparative approaches to such evaluations will need to be developed. Without a counterfactual or point of reference it is difficult to be conclusive.

Improved PPE practice: It is important to continue to further explore and develop PPE practice to test some of the questions that have been raised in this reflection paper. The following areas are important to better understand: how to close the governance gap by developing more intentionality around the relational dimension of PPE; and how best to increase the continuity and quality of participation in different aspects of PPE.

The nature of evidence: The equalisation and parity of types of evidence appears to be important in PPE. This might be influenced by the nature of the spaces in which experiences are shared. What other types of evidence should be considered in the policy arena? Is it therefore the space – formal or informal – that creates the equalisation effect for experiential vis a vis other types of evidence?

Intermediaries: What are the benefits and risks of the various roles that intermediaries between policymakers and local participants might take?

Annex 1

The Cases of Participatory Policy Engagement

	DRC	HORN of AFRICA	SOMALIA
Location	Fizi, Uvira, and Kalehe in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo.	Ethiopia and several border areas in the IGAD region.	Baidoa, Kismayo, and Jowhar, Jubbaland Federal Member State, and Mogadishu, Somalia.
Context	<p>There are multiple arenas of conflict. LPI focused on inter-community conflicts evolving around the complex inter-relationship of land access, power, and identity associated with weak governance and confusion between statutory and customary authorities.</p> <p>Minerals add another element of contestation between state and non-state armed actors.</p> <p>Gender dimensions also play a critical role.</p>	<p>The Horn of Africa conflict system is complex and characterised by the intertwining of inter- and intra-state conflicts.</p> <p>Conflict systems in the Horn of Africa are also interlinked with structural level dynamics in the form of governance, natural resources, and socio-economic issues such as poverty, unemployment, etc.</p>	<p>Strategic seaport and centre of commerce.</p> <p>Chronic intense violent conflicts have shifted from inter- to intra-clan fighting.</p> <p>From conflict between non-state armed groups, including al-Shabaab, and clan militias to resource-based violence around land and industry.</p> <p>Women affected – both participating in violence and promoting peace – yet lack avenues to influence decision-making on conflict and its non-violent resolution.</p> <p>Engagement in peace policies has been similarly lacking and is actively blocked by a variety of (often male) stakeholders.</p>
Policy Issue	<p>Land conflict, transhumance conflict.</p> <p>Women's role in land conflict and land governance.</p>	Informal cross-border trade.	<p>The ways women contribute to processes of conflict and peace in Kismayo, and more widely.</p> <p>How intra- and inter-clan conflict is mediated by normative gender expectations and roles.</p>
Purpose	The primary objective was peacebuilding and conflict management, out of which policy issues associated with land ownership and land use emerged as a key cause of conflict that needed to be addressed.	The intention was to address and improve existing policy to end up with an improved written policy that considered human security.	The process was more important than the end product output or outcome, which was not perhaps even needed.
Level of Policy Engagement	Community, sub-regional (provincial) and emerging national level.	IGAD, Horn of Africa regional level, and member state national level, with community-level involvement.	Community level with expectations of sub-regional and possible national relevance, although not yet realised.
Duration	2009 to present.	2014 to present.	2016 to present.

<p>Process steps</p>	<p>Initial analysis workshop.</p> <p>Participatory research.</p> <p>Inter-community dialogue and creation of conflict transformation action plans.</p> <p>Policy actor commitments to address issues.</p> <p>Development of models and agreements for governing land access.</p> <p>Local implementation.</p> <p>Provincial-level policy development. National policy influencing.</p>	<p>Issue selection.</p> <p>Evidence generation (3 tracks of knowledge harvest: academic, civil society, and government).</p> <p>Analysis to policy phase.</p> <p>IGAD experts workshop.</p> <p>IGAD member states expert validation workshop.</p> <p>Policy framework adoption.</p>	<p>Research.</p> <p>PPE decisions and design.</p> <p>Community consultations.</p> <p>Data analysis.</p> <p>Draft briefing.</p>
<p>Use of evidence</p>	<p>Evidence generated through the research stage.</p> <p>Facilitated alignment of perspectives on what needs to change.</p> <p>Evidence served as vector for horizontal and vertical relationship building.</p>	<p>Content input into the policy framework.</p> <p>Equalising and relationship building.</p>	<p>Input into considerations in a policy brief.</p>
<p>Policy outcomes</p>	<p>Local customary land title developed.</p> <p>Executive Order for the provincial government on the regulation of the agro-pastoral sector at provincial level.</p>	<p>Policy framework on informal cross-border trade.</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>Partners</p>	<p>APC, ADEPAE, RIO, UPDI (conducting several processes).</p>	<p>CEWARN, IGAD, IAG, OSSREA</p>	<p>SWSO, Peace Direct</p>
<p>Actors</p>	<p>Customary chiefs, Local authorities (state representatives).</p> <p>Technical services, e.g. fisheries and agriculture.</p> <p>Provincial government and assembly.</p> <p>Civil society actors, CBOs. INGOs.</p> <p>UN actors: MONUSCO, UN-HABITAT.</p>	<p>IGAD technical personnel, member state technical personnel.</p> <p>Government authorities, AU.</p> <p>Academic institutions</p> <p>Civil society.</p> <p>Borderlands community members.</p>	<p>Women members of peacebuilding platform.</p> <p>Kismayo authorities.</p> <p>Government actors in Mogadishu.</p>

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