

# REBALANCING POWER AND RELATIONSHIPS

FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

A stylized illustration on a textured yellow background. A large orange sun with rays is in the center. Below it is a rainbow. At the bottom, there is a brown landmass with green trees and small brown houses. A red circle is at the bottom right.

IMPACT REPORT  
2021

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**Twenty years ago, Peace Direct stood alone in calling for local peacebuilders to receive more international recognition, support, and funding. We also called on policymakers to acknowledge the role of local people and communities in tackling violent conflict and building sustainable peace. For many in power at the time, investing in local capacities was very far removed from the conventional approach to peacebuilding, with its focus on top-down and externally led efforts. Our mission was too radical for many governments and our message struggled to gain traction.**

## FOREWORD

**Dylan Mathews**

Chief Executive, Peace Direct

We knew that we could make a difference if more people could see for themselves the power of local action. So, we set about working with local partners across the world, in some of the most hostile and fragile circumstances, to help support and scale their work and to build an evidence base to demonstrate that investment in local leadership is effective, cost effective and builds the foundations of sustainable, long-term peace. We shared their stories, learnt their approaches, and celebrated their successes. We became more vocal about the importance of putting local peacebuilders front and centre of all efforts to tackle violence. Over time, people started to take notice.

The pace of change has been slow, but over the years we have seen a gradual recognition that long term peace cannot be built and sustained without the leadership of local people.

COVID-19 and renewed calls for racial justice have helped accelerate the process of change: forcing policymakers, donors, and INGOs to look inward and uproot the deeply embedded structural racism that is only beginning to be acknowledged in the sector.

It has taken us many years to be where we are now: part of a growing network of organisations, donors, and governments who value and invest in local efforts, not only in peacebuilding but across the international development and humanitarian sectors too. We are no longer a lone voice, but our message remains the same as it was back then: support local organisations and local leaders to build peace, and let's build a system that works for all local peacebuilders and the communities they serve.

In 2021 we helped more peacebuilders in more countries than ever before; 257 local peacebuilding organisations were supported by us, in fifteen countries. That's thousands of agents of peace, helping tens of thousands of people affected by conflict. We also worked with more allies in the sector than at any other time in our history to amplify our shared messages.

In the following pages you will see just a small selection of what we achieved with our partners and allies in 2021, including some stories from the people directly impacted by this work. We believe that the individual stories paint a picture far more vividly than pages of statistics and facts. We hope you will agree.

**We've come a long way, but there's still a long way to go until we see a sustained commitment to local leadership in peace. We'll never stop pushing for it, and we hope you'll join and support us.**

# WHERE WE WORK

## 1 AFGHANISTAN

Due to the unprecedented crisis that consumed the country with the Taliban takeover of the country in 2021, we moved quickly to consult with local Afghan peacebuilders inside and outside the country to understand what their needs were. They all said the same thing to us: help those who remain in the country to keep hope alive. Less than two months after the fall of Kabul, we established our newest partnership, with Equality for Peace and Development, a local organisation with a commitment to gender equality and locally-led peacebuilding. We provided them with a lifeline grant to help cover staff salaries at a time when all other donor funding was frozen, and we supported them to provide basic food and materials for their provincial women's committees who were struggling to survive. We launched a solidarity fund (see page 08) to scale their efforts to support other Afghan civil society organisations struggling to survive and we are now looking to help them revitalise some of their local peace committees.

## 2 BURUNDI

In 2021, we worked with our local partner, REJA, to strengthen the involvement of young people in peacebuilding. REJA worked with 69 youth groups to identify and respond to community challenges, which – if left unaddressed – could lead to a relapse into violence. Their work seeks to enhance employability and responsible citizenship among young people, and support community groups in building peace. We also supported REJA's advocacy for greater youth participation in decision making at the local authority level and in particular to change the mindsets among policymakers on the role of youth in peacebuilding.

## 3 CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

In CAR, we worked with Uru, one of the hub organisations for our 'Youth Action for Peace' programme (see page 07). Uru is a youth-led organisation working to build bridges between young people and decision-makers in the country, as well as enabling young people to play an active role in peacebuilding. With our support, Uru helped 37 youth groups across the country to tackle violence and build peace in their communities.

## 4 DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Despite the ongoing state of siege in the east of the country, we were able to continue our support to five local organisations working to tackle violent conflict. Our partner, Centre Résolution Conflits, continued its pioneering 'Peace Gold' initiative to produce ethical gold as a pathway to peace in Ituri province, and to support communities to rebuild after conflict. The Beni Peace Forum and the Local Peacebuilding Support Office led activities to monitor and prevent violence across North Kivu province. We worked with the National Partnership of Children and Youth in Peacebuilding to support 52 youth-led peacebuilding groups across eastern DRC. And in South Kivu, our partner FOCHI led activities to build livelihoods and reduce the impact of conflict on communities.

## 5 MALI

Amidst the turbulence caused by a second coup in the country and the ongoing violence between various armed groups across the country, we supported 36 youth and community-led peacebuilding initiatives with our local partner, AJCAD, as part of our 'Youth Action for Peace' programme. Peacebuilding activities included healing workshops for young people affected by violence and setting up a 'Peace Brigade' to tackle early warning signs of violence (see page 14).

## 6 MYANMAR

The context in Myanmar has become increasingly difficult since the military coup on 1st February 2021. This has posed significant problems for our local partners. In 2021, we partnered with four local organisations. Overall, these organisations distributed small grants to 40 local groups active in peacebuilding and social cohesion efforts. The focus of activities supported was on tackling hate speech and monitoring disinformation. They also worked on interfaith inclusion, tackling gender-based violence and resolving conflicts caused by strain on natural resources.

## 7 NIGERIA

We worked with two local organisations in 2021, Peace Initiative Network (PIN) based in Kano State, and the Ladies Empowerment Goals and Support Initiative (LEGASI) based in Plateau State. PIN focused on responding to early warning signs of violence and conflict, and addressing its root causes, through running vocational training and peacebuilding leadership programmes for women and youth. LEGASI's goal is to support women and young people to heal and reconcile after war, and to support their economic empowerment. Through our partnership with LEGASI we were able to support 5 local groups working to build peace.

## 8 PAKISTAN

In 2021, we partnered with two organisations in Pakistan as part of our Youth Action for Peace programme (see pages 07 and 17): the Chanan Development Association (CDA) and HIVE. CDA's efforts focus on supporting women peacebuilders, promoting social cohesion and peaceful co-existence between religions, and creating an inclusive society for minority groups. HIVE's work focused on stopping young people turning to violence. Their activities included promoting debate between youth groups in Karachi and supporting young girls from minority groups to gain skills for employment. They also created spaces for community-based conflict resolution. With our support, HIVE and CDA helped 39 groups across the country to build peace.

## 9 SOMALIA

In Somalia, we worked with a local organisation, SADO (Social-Life and Agricultural Development Organization), to enhance their role as a prominent peacebuilding actor regionally and nationally. Last year, we supported training on stakeholder mapping, organisational development, and monitoring and evaluation. We also accompanied them in the development of a five-year strategy.

## 10 SUDAN

In Sudan, we continued our partnership with Adeela, a youth-led organisation that supports young people to be agents of peace across the country. Following the October 2021 coup and resulting insecurity, Adeela shifted the focus of their activities to support youth and community initiatives on issues of political participation, civic education, and co-existence. Adeela was able to provide funding to 23 youth groups working to tackle violence in their communities.

## 11 SYRIA

The war in Syria has had a devastating effect on the country's young people. In 2021, we worked with the Hurras Network in Idlib, Northwest Syria. They provided urgent and critical protection to Syrian youth, supported those displaced by war, and provided trauma healing for young people. We also worked with Sawaad'na Al Sourya, based in Aleppo, on their Peace Education in Syria project. They supported over 200 children to go back to school and in some cases receive psychological support (read more on page 12).

## 12 ZIMBABWE

In Zimbabwe our partner, Envision Women's Trust, continued their work in spite of the challenging environment for civil society organisations and the ongoing challenges of COVID-19. They led training for women, young people, and traditional leaders on leadership, conflict transformation, and women's rights. They also created local peace committees to reduce political and gender-based violence, and so communities can resolve their own conflicts.

**Beyond the activities we supported in 2021, we have longstanding partnerships with Aware Girls in Pakistan, KI in the Philippines, and CPBR in Sri Lanka. Our commitment to, and solidarity with, these organisations continues, despite us not supporting active projects at this time.**

# HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR WORK IN 2021

## The Local Action Fund

**Last year we supported 257 organisations and groups to build peace in 15 countries. That's a tenfold increase in the number of groups we supported just five years ago. This wouldn't have been possible without the deep relationships we have forged with 11 strategic partners of Peace Direct who are dedicated not only to building peace in their countries but also in supporting others to do the same. Our ambition is to reach even more in the years ahead, and we have plans to expand our work into other conflict affected countries as well as scale up our support in Afghanistan and Myanmar.**

### The Local Action Fund: Strengthening the ecosystem of local peacebuilders

Every ecosystem needs nutrients to thrive, and the local peacebuilding ecosystem is no different. Made up of tens of thousands of organisations and groups in each country, including religious leaders, women's groups, youth groups, community-based organisations, NGOs, and many others, they are the lifeblood of their communities, and are an enormous source of peacebuilding potential globally. However, just like any natural ecosystem which is deprived of natural light or food, the health of the local peacebuilding ecosystem has suffered through years of wilful neglect. Starved of funds, recognition, and support, the rich diversity of local groups operate hand to mouth, often competing rather than collaborating for the meagre funding that trickles down to them. By some estimates, less than 2% of funding for peacebuilding reaches local actors.

The Local Action Fund is designed to tackle this problem by providing small flexible grants to groups and organisations in some of the most conflict affected countries worldwide. We do this by working with some of our strategic partners who take on the role of 'hub organisations', committed to strengthening the ecosystem of local peacebuilding actors in their country. The role of the hub organisation is to support local groups to learn from each other, grow and experiment, and to fund existing projects and initiatives to scale and adapt.

This programme, funded by Sida, provides support to the next generation of peacebuilders in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and Pakistan. Our local partners play a key role in identifying local youth-led initiatives and distribute grants (typically ranging from \$1,500 to \$15,000) directly to them. This model promotes greater local leadership in peacebuilding, allows local organisations to have greater decision making in the funding process, and strengthens the ecosystem of peacebuilders. Decisions are made by local people with expertise and experience of their context and the organisations they want to support. In 2021 we supported 153 organisations through the YAPP programme, almost all of which had not received any international funding before. Working this way ensures that our resources reach those who would otherwise be cut off from funding and support.

### The Local Action Fund: Preventing violence, before it starts

To prevent atrocities and violence, every second counts. By the time most international donors have responded to the signs of escalating conflict, it can often be too late.

Through the Local Action Fund (LAF), we aim to provide support and funding to organisations quickly and flexibly, at the earliest signs of violence. We established the LAF in 2019 to provide a more flexible approach to funding peacebuilding through swift, small grants in places at risk of atrocities breaking out. More than just a fund, this work focuses on strengthening local peacebuilding groups working to prevent violence. LAF is currently active in Nigeria, Myanmar, and Sudan, to support organisations committed to preventing outbreaks of violence, which can often lead to atrocities being committed. In 2022, a new LAF programme will be launched in Afghanistan to support civil society organisations and women's rights networks at a time of crisis.

### The Local Action Fund: Supporting young people

In countries and regions affected by conflict, young people are often the most affected. They are deprived of an education, struggle to find work, are often at risk of being recruited into armed groups, and are disproportionately affected by violence. At the same time, young people are actively challenging poverty, injustice, and inequality in their communities, yet their voices and actions are often isolated or ignored. Our partners identified the need to support more youth-led and youth-focussed work and as a result, we established a youth strand of the Local Action Fund, called the Youth Action for Peace Programme (YAPP).

## The Local Action Fund in numbers:

257

Local groups supported

7

Countries  
(Sudan, DR Congo, Mali, Nigeria,  
CAR, Pakistan, Myanmar)

\$850,000

In small grants awarded  
to local groups

### Responding to emergencies

When war is raging or violent unrest grips a country or community, peacebuilders are often the first to respond. However, we know that our work is as vital in the midst of violent conflict as it is before and after conflict, even if the prospects for peace feel so remote when violence descends on a community. We know that even during appalling violence and injustice, there are always people working to save lives, prevent further violence, and begin rebuilding communities.

In 2021, we set up the Afghanistan Solidarity Fund to support peacebuilding and women's rights organisations in response to the growing crisis in the country, following the Taliban takeover of the country. We raised £18,000 through public donations and mobilised over \$500,000 in private philanthropic funding. We also established a partnership with Equality for Peace and Development (EPD), a dynamic local organisation that continues to work across the country despite the immense challenges. We also mobilised support to respond to other urgent situations faced by our partners last year. We used the emergency grant facility under the Local Action Fund, as well as our own partner emergency support funds, to respond to specific outbreaks of violence and unrest. We helped protect and relocate peacebuilders in Myanmar immediately after the coup, and to respond to violence in eastern Congo.

### Listening to local peacebuilders and sharing their insights globally

Local peacebuilders rarely have the opportunity to share their insights with their peers around the world, and even less opportunity to do this with international donors and policymakers. The gap between local knowledge and global policymaking and response is, we believe, one reason why violent conflicts persist in some parts of the world. To bridge this gap, we invest time and resources in convening local peacebuilders to discuss topics that matter to them, and we share this information with donors and policymakers around the world.

In 2021 we hosted consultations through Platform4Dialogue (see [www.platform4dialogue.org](http://www.platform4dialogue.org)) which involved close to 1,000 peacebuilders around the world. The insights they shared with us have helped us to raise critical issues with the peacebuilding sector, including on structural racism and the role of local peacebuilders in peace processes.

### Researching conflict issues that matter to local peacebuilders

Working closely with our partners and other organisations around the world, we research issues that we and our partners believe remain neglected or poorly understood nationally and internationally. In 2021, we launched our groundbreaking 'Time to Decolonise Aid' Report which explored racism within the peacebuilding, aid, and development sector (see page 20). We also worked with our partner in DR Congo to explore the causes of violence in Eastern DR Congo.

### Advocating for systems change

We know the peacebuilding system needs radical reform. For almost 20 years we've called for change within the sector so that local peacebuilding is better resourced and integrated into national and international efforts.

In 2021 we worked in many ways to shift power and resources in the peacebuilding system to local actors. In the US, our advocacy team discussed with officials from USAID and the US State Dept the importance of tackling structural racism and the persistent problem of how little funding reaches local organisations. We were delighted that in October USAID committed to channel 25% of all funding to local organisations, a huge step forward for an institution as large as USAID. To support this effort, we coordinated the drafting of an open letter to USAID with two prominent civil society networks, CIVICUS and the NEAR network, signed by almost 1,300 local organisations worldwide, requesting USAID to listen to their needs and to stay firm on their new commitment. We also worked with members of Congress on various pieces of legislation to strengthen the US government's commitment to local peacebuilding, and we expect to see the fruits of these efforts in 2023.

At the UN we worked closely with the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office to explore different models for financing local organisations, and our work was cited in a report published by the UN Secretary General. The UN PBF also launched the first ever small grants programme for local peacebuilders, focused on the border areas of the Liptako Gourma region of the Sahel. Peace Direct was instrumental in this work, having provided support to the PBF in the mapping of local peacebuilding capacity and in advising on the design of the fund.

In the UK and EU, we established new staff positions focused on advocacy aimed at the UK government and various EU institutions.

Much of our systems change advocacy is behind closed doors and rarely is publicised. But we have seen over the past year just how impactful it can be, and we are committed to doing more in the coming years.



# STORIES OF IMPACT

The region of South Kivu in DRC has been the scene of clashes for many years. Instability has led to economic chaos and many young people have become unemployed, with some having even joined armed groups. Last year, local organisation Cadre de Concertation Intercommunautaire (CCI) was selected as one of the grantees in our Youth Action for Peace project. They received a grant of \$1,134 which they used to work with ex-combatants in the village of Kalehe.



## SÉRAPHIN'S STORY

Democratic Republic of Congo

A few years ago, Séraphin Cubaka was part of a militia. After a troubled childhood, he decided to join the Nyatura armed group where he hoped to find fortune. He was recruited by two of his former classmates into the group and left his family.

*"Leaving my brother in bed, I took a small suitcase, put some clothes in it: a jacket, two or three pairs of trousers and three pairs of shoes. On my way out of our room, I opened the door carefully and was greeted by the vast darkness of Tshibanja and the bitter cold"*

For about five years, Séraphin took part in robberies, killings, and lootings, and enlisted other young people in the militia. He didn't manage to get rich as he had hoped, and desperately wanted to run away, but couldn't figure out how to. If the militia leader found out, he would be dead. He lost weight, his hair and beard grew long, and he became a shadow of himself. For more than a year he looked for an opportunity to escape, until one day a group from CCI was sent to their camp. They managed to help him leave and accompanied him home.

*"I had a long discussion on the way with Baudoin from CCI, we spoke for most of the journey: - My friend, he had told me. Life is offering you a second chance today, and you must seize it."*

**For Séraphin, this was a second chance to rebuild his life. He returned home and found his family.**

*"My father arrived, followed by my mother and brothers. My heart began to pound, and tears streamed from my eyes onto my messy beard. My father hadn't changed in five years, he was still as elegant, and my mother was still as regal. But they didn't recognise me.*

*Dad, come and greet me," I shouted. Then my mother collapsed and joined me, followed by my father. They all threw themselves on top of me. We cried for a few minutes like children."*

Séraphin joined a training course organised by CCI to support young people who had been in armed groups. They helped him reintegrate into his community and taught him shoemaking. He has set up a small workshop to make shoes and sandals that he sells in his neighbourhood or gives to local schools.

In a few months, Séraphin will marry a girl from Kalehe, thanks to support from his community, his family and the money he has managed to save from his job. Now, he has almost forgotten his life with the armed group and is now a key player in helping other young people stay away from armed groups and sharing his new skills.

*"Every day I risked my life in the bush, so I would like to invite young people like me who are still in the bush to leave without delay. I urge those who are disappointed in life, not to go and take up arms."*



# NOUR'S STORY

Syria

Nour is just 12 years old, she lost her father during the war in Syria, and was forced to leave her home with her family to Aleppo, in the North. They lived in a camp there. Her mother married again, and she was left with her brother and his wife. Nour was incredibly sad and felt lonely, "I wish all camps will disappear very soon, and the people suffering will no longer suffer." During this challenging time, Sawaad'na provided the opportunity for her to study and mix with other children.

Before the Sawaad'na educational centre, Nour had not attended school. Here she started learning to read and write, "After learning reading, I find myself between the books". Nour and her family had no electricity, so she had to wake up at sunrise to get her homework done. She was one of the best students at the centre in all subjects.

After studying for one year at the centre, Nour passed her exams and moved to a formal school to continue her education. Through this project, Nour has been able to move closer towards her aspirations in life, "I dream to be a doctor and treat sick people for free."

Thousands of children like Nour have been displaced and miss out on school because of war. We are grateful for all our partners who are there for them.

**In 2021, we partnered with a local organisation, Sawaad'na Al Souriya, based in Northern Syria. They work in some of the regions that are most heavily affected by war, such as eastern Ghouta and Homs. After more than ten years of conflict, children in the North of the country are feeling the impact of no access to schools. Supporting over 200 young people to return to education and achieve their dreams, Sawaad'na gives assistance to many children to rebuild their lives and plan for the future.**

**Since 2020, we have been working with local peacebuilding organisation, LEGASI, (the Ladies Empowerment Goals and Support Initiative).**

Religious crises in Kaduna state, North Nigeria, have displaced many families from their homes. In 2018, a flare-up of violence claimed the lives and property of many, and created hatred within the community, ruining relationships.

Catherine and Marwanatu are both victims of this violence and shared their experience of how LEGASI's trauma healing and forgiveness programme helped them through this difficult time.

Catherine is Christian and Marwanatu is Muslim. They used to be neighbours who lived together peacefully in the Kasuwan Magani community.

Catherine's only daughter and husband were killed in front of her eyes. She only survived because the perpetrators were arguing amongst themselves, "Everything in my daughter's room was stolen and our house was burnt."

Marwanatu's house was also burnt, and she too lost her husband, "We escaped late in the evening during the maghrib [Muslim] prayer. Now I live in a rented house. I have six children, three girls and three boys."

Following the terrible crises, the women became enemies. They blamed each other's religion for their losses. Both Catherine and Marwanatu stopped talking and refused to have anything to do with the other for over a year.

Through LEGASI's work, they were able to reconcile. Participants were given space to share their experiences, supported by an expert on trauma healing and a co-facilitator who ran a session reflecting on scriptures from both the Bible and the Quran that discuss love and forgiveness.

Today, both Marwanatu and Catherine are leading the "Women Peace Council" together, and support others through their journey to overcome trauma. LEGASI's work has supported them to heal and led them on a journey towards peace. They are now role models to others who are holding on to the past and struggling to heal.



# CATHERINE & MARWANATU'S STORY

Nigeria



In Mopti, Mali, l'Association pour le Développement Communautaire au Mali were given a grant as part of the Youth Action for Peace project. With it, they set up a 'Peace Brigade' to support community safety. This work was supported by our partners there, AJCAD. The Peace Brigade trains young people to monitor incidents of violence, and collaborates with citizens and the police to keep the streets safe at night.

# THE PEACE BRIGADE

Mali

We spoke to three young people who took part in the training and joined the Brigade, who shared their experiences.

*"This training has been so beneficial for us; we have learnt lots of things. We are now able to prevent accidents, assist if accidents do occur, and we know how to sound the alarm to signs of danger. We have learnt that if we're witness to drowning, even if we don't dive in ourselves, we can help rescue the victim. In case of fire, we have learned how to limit damage and get help quickly. We are truly happy; this training has been a real eye opener"*  
**Aruona Pleya**

*"We established the youth association, and we lead a brigade that starts at midnight. Everyone we meet is told to stay put until dawn, and anyone without an identity card is taken to the authorities... the training has been really beneficial for us"*  
**Ousman Coulibaly**

*"At 11pm, young people gather and get into groups to cover the area better. Others stay in town by the town hall, others go into the bush...we have learnt a lot from this training, for example how to keep children away from fires, or how act if you witness a traffic accident"*  
**Anonymous**

Through its work, the Peace Brigade supports collaboration between local citizens and the police. It helps young people gain knowledge of conflict prevention and the role they play in peacebuilding. The group shared their work on local radio stations and gave training to others in the area so that more people can hear about their impact.

A key part of resolving conflict is ensuring that communities are alerted when violence is on the rise.

Six local peace committees, set up through workshops organised by our partner, the Peacebuilding Support Office, have formed a network. The network is comprised of regional focal points, and a core group of volunteer citizen reporters to flag violence and alert communities to attacks. The information the network collects is shared with the local government, other organisations in the region, and the UN Mission, MONUSCO. Seeing the value of their work, local authorities are now sending telephone credit to the local network members to enable them to communicate and inviting them to security meetings. Intercommunal violence has declined, and citizen participation has increased thanks to their work.

The Support Office's network has been successful in interrupting violence, stopping the spread of rumours, providing training in peaceful coexistence, and encouraging local organisations to work together to support one another.

A local community member from the Hema ethnic group, who wished to remain anonymous, shared their experience with the network.

*"A few days ago, I was barely saved from a fatal attack by the Lendu. I've lived in Bunia for several years, but from time to time I go to the village to greet my family and see my cows. Last Friday when I was coming back from the village, I received an SMS from a member of the Bunia early warning committee, asking me not to come the same day and to wait until the next day, because there is a group of Lendu who are kidnapping people along the way (especially the Hema). I thought it was a simple intimidation, so I decided to turn back to Bunia. Arriving a few meters from Bogoro, I saw two motorcyclists coming towards our motorbike and asking us to go back, because three Hema had just been taken into the bush by unknown men."*

# A STORY ABOUT A NETWORK WITH A DIFFERENCE

Democratic Republic of Congo

Decades of war and political instability has left more than five million people displaced in the DRC. The eastern of the country has been particularly hard hit.



*"A few days ago, I was barely saved from a fatal attack by the Lendu..."*



In the last 20 years, Pakistan has seen an unprecedented rise in religious hatred and extremism. The Hazara community in Quetta have been particularly victimised, targeted by suicide attacks, street bombings, and killings. This has left a lasting mark on the mental health of young people.

# ZAINAB'S STORY

Pakistan

Zainab is a girl from Quetta, "I learnt sketching in my school as I wanted to become a doctor and knew that in medical education, I will need to draw diagrams."

The violence against the Hazara community increased drastically during her time studying.

"One day, there was an attack on our community and a number of people died including my paternal aunt."

"I got so traumatised by this situation that I had to get medical treatment in Lahore...The doctors saw my sketches and asked me to express my feelings in this form. This was the first time that I got inspiration to highlight the issues of my community through drawings."

Fortunately for Zainab, there were many other young Hazaras who felt the same and wanted an opportunity to express their anxiety and frustration in a positive way.

At this time, Aman Rang, one of the partners involved in our YAPP project, was calling for programme ideas. Zainab submitted a project idea using art to express feelings and send messages of peace. She was successful and received a grant.

"This project provided us a platform to develop sketches and exhibit them to show people the suffering of our community...We visited the Hazara Community in Quetta, met with the families of martyrs and recorded their expressions. Out of the project funds, we bought material and started drawing...This was much appreciated by our community members."

The success of the project gave Zainab and her colleagues the confidence to take on greater challenges. Zainab's work has now been recognised at the national level.

"This project gave me courage to chair the Peace Festival. I led a team of five executive members and twenty volunteers. My artwork was exhibited in Quetta and Lahore."

Today Zainab is an icon and a role model in her community. Many young girls aspire to follow her work, and she has made it possible for people from other communities to understand the issues being faced by the Hazara people. Zainab considers it to be her biggest achievement yet.



Last year marked 20 years since 9/11 – and the start of the war on terror and US occupation of Afghanistan. For International Day of Peace 2021, we held a special #PeaceTalks with Sofia Ramyar, an Afghan activist and peacebuilder. Our #PeaceTalks programme is one way we highlight the voices of peacebuilders and allow our supporters to exchange and hear directly about their work.

# SOFIA'S STORY

## Afghanistan

*"I am encouraged when events like this give the mic to Afghans. I have a passion to share about my homeland with communities across the globe. Thank you for providing me with this opportunity... I would be keen to stay in contact with the audience and invite people to get in touch. We are developing new programmes while we continue to journey through the process of a transition."*

### Sofia was born in Kabul in 1991

*"After a bomb destroyed our house and the Taliban took control of Kabul, in 1996, my family fled to Pakistan. I was four years old and lived as a refugee for the next six years. This tragic period and the ingrained violence against Afghan women fuelled my ambition to make my country safer and more tolerant."*



When Kabul fell last year, she helped evacuate dozens of families at risk. Then, she designed a series of online sessions to help them process their trauma and embrace their new homes in Asia, Europe, and America. She speaks at Forums in the United Nations and European Union, and each time shares the voices and perspectives of local communities.

*"We, young Afghans, are connected to the world. If only more of the world would connect with what we, young progressive Afghans stand for."*

Afghanistan continues to face a humanitarian crisis: banks are closed, people don't have houses or food to eat, and many are living on the streets without food.

The #PeaceTalks audience was inspired by Sofia's words, and many questions flooded in from supporters and listeners who had tuned in: how could the Taliban takeover have been avoided? How can women's rights be protected? What is the role for the international community to support the plight of peacebuilders?

Sofia told us her message to the group:

*"Do not define Afghanistan by the Taliban. Our country is vast, diverse, and culturally rich. Please see beyond the horrors of one particularly group. War is not our identity. It is only a harsh reality. We want peace. Stand with us to achieve it...I want to urge the audience to view Afghans as humans, nothing less and nothing more. Humans just like anyone else. Unfortunately, some war mongers have tainted our beautiful cultural and Islamic identity in the eyes of the world. Go beyond the news headlines. Afghanistan is a beautiful country, and we will reclaim it. Stand with us."*



# TIME TO DECOLONISE AID:

## a warning and a roadmap

In 2021, we published our ground-breaking report exploring racism in the international, development, and peacebuilding sectors.

'Time to Decolonise Aid' was based on a global online consultation convened by Peace Direct, Adeso, the Alliance for Peacebuilding, and Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security.

158 activists, decision-makers, academics, journalists, and practitioners attended from across the world. Participants and guest contributors exchanged insights and local experiences on the imbalances that exist within the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors.

The report found damning evidence of neo-colonial attitudes and structures in the aid sector. But it also presented solutions.

**Half measures to decolonise the aid system are no longer a viable option.**

The recommendations in the report show the need for consistent, collaborative effort to unpick the harmful attitudes that underpin much of the work in the sector. We need to be the first ones to change the way we fund, partner, and communicate, and so as we continue to advocate for changes in the peacebuilding system, we are also reflecting on our own practice to ensure that we change ourselves too.

Here are some of the many responses we've had from colleagues and peers in the sector in response to the report.

*'Thank you for your report. It has been ground-breaking for our organization'*  
**UNDP Manager**

*'Thank you for this landmark report'*  
**President, US Foundation**

*'Vital reading for anyone committed to challenging structural racism in the sector, or for anyone who doesn't believe this is a problem.'*  
**Author and Consultant, International Development**

*'I have read this report, and it was a game changer! So insightful!!! I have recommended it to so many people'*  
**International Project Advisor, UK INGO**

*'Your efforts with this study are paying off and creating ripple effects.'*  
**Manager, Swedish INGO**

*'Your report is the 'go-to' resource in our organisation'*  
**Manager, Oxfam**



### Ten steps to decolonise aid

We hope that the changes we call for in the report will ripple across the sector for years to come. Here are ten actions for positive change in our sector to decolonise aid:

- **Acknowledge:** Acknowledgement of structural racism is the first and most critical step. Do this internally and externally and examine how you may have benefitted from such a system.
- **Language:** Stop using outdated language such as 'beneficiaries' and involve communities in choosing new ways of describing terms that are no longer appropriate.
- **Funding:** Support local organisations with courage, flexibility and generosity – trust that they know what they are doing and ensure they have ownership over their activities and projects.
- **Recruitment:** Hire differently and reassess the need for recruiting expatriate staff for any position based overseas. Commit to recruiting a greater diversity of staff in offices in the global North.
- **Dialogue:** Encourage conversations with grantees and communities about the power dynamics that influence the relationships between funder and grantee or INGO and local partner.
- **Knowledge:** Invest in sources of indigenous knowledge and value how local knowledge is created and shared.
- **Reflections:** Think about your personal and organisational identity and motivations for working in the sector. Reflect on the privileges and 'baggage' you bring to your work, and the impact they have.
- **Partnerships:** Re-evaluate relationships with local organisations so that they are more equitable, and mutually accountable. Support and strengthen local leadership and sustainability.
- **Communications:** End the practice of 'White gaze' fundraising and audit your communications so they incorporate a diversity of perspectives and groups.
- **Power:** Shift access and power to those who don't have it, in whatever ways you can.

These are not new suggestions. We and others have been saying them for years now, and so have many other organisations and activists. Our hope is that in bringing them together at a time of flux and reflection for the aid system, we can drive change at a pivotal moment.

By the end of 2021, over 30,000 people had downloaded our report, from over 170 countries. The report was translated into 13 languages and Peace Direct staff gave talks to over 1,500 people and over 100 organisations and institutions worldwide, including to government departments from 6 countries. The report, the first in the sector to highlight the problem of structural racism, has sparked a growing movement of activists and organisations who are talking publicly about the need to decolonise the sector. We are immensely proud to have played an important part of that movement.

Our consolidated income in 2021:

**\$4,989,356**

and our consolidated expenditure was:

**\$4,357,146**

USD.

# WITH THANKS



All of the work in this report, and much more, would not have been possible without the generosity of our supporters.

We are very thankful to the hundreds of people who continue to support Peace Direct with donations of all sizes. Their generosity is so important to us in order to help us respond quickly and flexibly to the needs of our local partners.

We are also grateful for the continued financial support of a number of governments, foundations, and companies who supported our work last year.

- Alan & Babette Sainsbury Trust
- Commonwealth Foundation
- UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- European Partnership for Responsible Minerals
- Google
- Humanity United
- Network for Social Change
- Pax Sapiens
- People's Postcode Lottery
- Ploughshares
- Pracedo
- Principles for Peace
- PRBB Foundation
- Robert Bosch Stiftung
- Sir James Reckitt Charitable Trust
- Sulney Fields Trust
- Swedish International Development Agency
- UN Peacebuilding Fund
- USAID
- Within

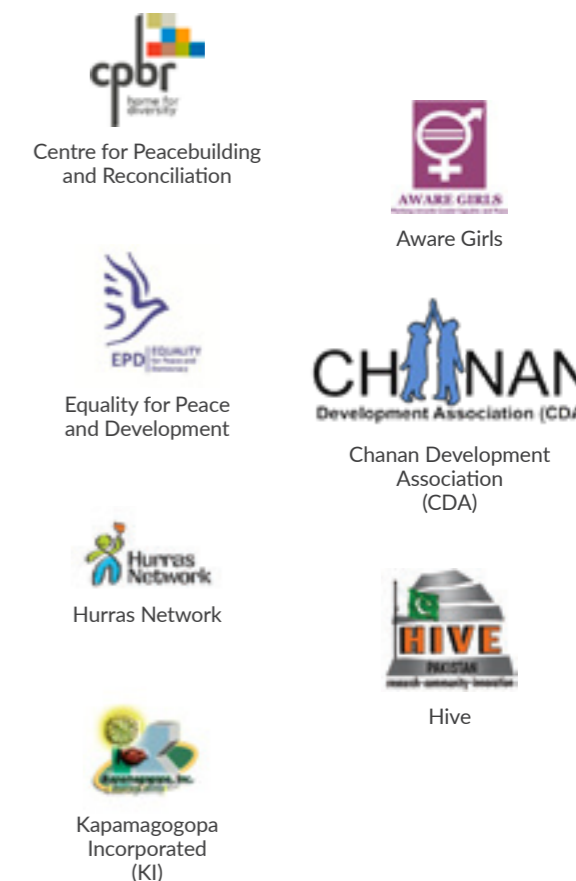
## OUR PARTNERS

As always, we owe a debt of gratitude to our partners. They are working on the frontlines of conflict, at great personal risk, to stop violence and build peace. We continue to be inspired by their bravery and are honoured to be working with them.

### AFRICA



### ASIA





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