Peace Direct Youth Action for Peace Programme Evaluation Report

September 2022

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Disclaimer

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Cover Photo: A social cohesion session with girls organised by young peacebuilders, CDA, Pakistan

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Abbreviations

ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AJCAD	Association des Jeunes pour la Citoyenneté Active et la Démocratie (Youth Association for Active Citizenship and Democracy)
CAR	Central African Republic
CDA	Chanan Development Association
CPC	Coalition of Patriots for Change
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FARDC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGA	Income Generating Activity
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPCYP	National Partnership of Children and Youth in Peacebuilding
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PALM	Participatory Action Learning Methodology
PD	Peace Direct
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PWD	People with Disabilities
SAS	Stopping as Success
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YAPP	Youth Action for Peace Programme
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

Executive Summary

In response to UN Security Council Resolution 2250 which calls for young people to have a greater role in peacebuilding efforts, Peace Direct co-created a three-year programme with five local youth organisations across four conflict-affected countries. With funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Youth Action for Peace Programme (YAPP) supported promising young activists to design and lead their own peacebuilding initiatives at a local level.

The YAP programme distributed $1 million USD through 218 small grants to local young peacebuilders, reaching over 305,293 people directly and an estimated 950,375 indirectly in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and Pakistan.

Peace Direct believes that those who are directly impacted by conflict are best placed to seek out and implement solutions, if only they are afforded the resources, decision-making power, and space to do so. YAPP's flexible funding model enabled 218 emerging young peace actors– whether individuals, informal groups, or registered organisations – to design and manage innovative peace projects.

These projects were grounded in young grantees own lived experience of conflict, embedded in their communities, and adapted to rapidly changing and nuanced local conflict dynamics.

Communities were astonished that such informal and relatively inexperienced groups would be entrusted with international funds, but young people and their communities rose to the challenge, held one another accountable and created ripple effects, often far beyond what was initially envisioned.

The result has been a tapestry of varied approaches to peace and conflict, innovative project designs that challenge conventional silos of aid, and emerging examples of sustained community investment in youth-led initiatives.

Meanwhile, there is evidence that young peacebuilders are building a track record in project management and community credibility that is positioning many of them to go on to expand their work and successfully approach new donors for support.

Global Summary

Total Number of Grants Awarded: 218
Total Funds Distributed: $998,823
People Reached Directly: 305,293
People Reached Indirectly: 950,375
Smallest Grant: $124
Largest Grant: $17,253

Country	Number of Grants	Average Grant Size	Smallest Grant	Largest Grant
CAR	37	$5,343	$2,232	$17,253
DRC	78	$3,940	$550	$12,000
Mali	64	$4,444	$124	$10,579
Pakistan	39	$5,370	$885	$13,213

YAPP Hub Organisations

AJCAD
(Association des Jeunes pour la Citoyenneté Active et la Démocratie), Mali

CDA
(Chanan Development Association), Pakistan

HIVE Pakistan

NPCYP
(National Partnership of Children and Youth in Peacebuilding), Democratic Republic of Congo

Organisation URU
Central African Republic

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation is a composite of 5 independent evaluations commissioned locally by each YAPP hub organisation. The findings are enriched by the results of a Peace Direct internal reflection process, a thorough document review, partnership review discussions, and an online reflection meeting bringing together Peace Direct and hub organisations to validate cross-cutting themes.

Cross-Cutting Themes

The diversity of evaluation approaches in each context provided a multifaceted view of a complex programme and illuminated cross-cutting themes that offer insight into the contributions of YAPP's flexible funding model.

Youth Action and Empowerment

Elevating Young People as Peacebuilders

YAPP has reached promising young peacebuilders who otherwise would not have had access to funds, increasing their credibility and visibility. Youth are playing more prominent roles within their communities. Informal groups have been supported to officially register as organisations, and in some cases, they have gone on to access funding from other sources.

Inclusion of Marginalised Groups

Marginalised groups can be under resourced and less likely to conform to strict eligibility requirements set by funders. YAPP's selection process prioritised innovative ideas and applicants' credibility within their communities over conventional due diligence requirements such as organisational legal standing, financial accounting experience and governance structures.

> **"The empowerment of women and youth as both the main beneficiaries and the actors in the implementation of social cohesion and peacebuilding activities is a major innovation in the Central African context."**
>
> URU Evaluation, CAR

Learning and reflection session with young peacebuilders in Bamako, Mali (AJCAD)

> **"Such flexible funding opportunities, which did not require a lot of documentation and compliance requirements, are like a breath of fresh air for us. We are a small organisation and often are not able to meet the comprehensive documentation requirements of the funding organisations…the main impact of this project was in providing our organisation with an opening. Now we are working on many projects. We are in negotiation with many donor organisations. All this was made possible because of the [YAP] Project. They believed in our idea and gave us the start which we needed."**
>
> Trans Rights Organisation, local grant recipient in Pakistan

Impact of the Flexible Funding Approach

Innovation: Defying Conventional Silos

Projects funded through small grants worked at the intersection of conflict drivers, bucking conventional funding silos and more closely reflecting young people's lived reality. Projects often combined environmental, health or income generation aims with social cohesion and intercommunal dialogue, leading to sustained interest and investment from communities.

> **"The YAP project has done what others have failed to do. Today through my job I am reintegrated into the community."**
>
> 18-year-old male former child soldier, DRC

Flexibility with due diligence

Flexibility and a trust-based approach did not mean that due diligence was downplayed or compromised. In prioritising young people's innovative ideas, the programme still aimed to hold each grant recipient to account – both to the funders and to the community. The programme sought to broaden and contextualise due diligence. For example, community credibility in complex conflict settings can be more indicative of an applicants' likelihood of managing funds responsibly than formal registration or governance structures. Hub organisations rooted locally can more readily access the local knowledge needed to assess prospective grant recipients beyond conventional and externally imposed indicators of applicant capacity.

Evolving, Shifting and Responsive Strategies

Without strict log frames and pre-established outcomes to adhere to, young grantees had the flexibility to adapt to their rapidly changing contexts and as a result many had unintended outcomes that exceeded initial expectations. YAPP took a learning approach with local grant recipients, allowing them to shift and sharpen their strategies as they grew in experience and confidence.

> **"Contrary to the international grants, this model of funding focused more on the organic network building through various set of activities, instead of adopting an outcome-based model with limited flexibility. This is one of the key reasons that many projects were able to adopt newer implementation strategies."**
>
> HIVE Evaluation, Pakistan

Capacity of Hub Organisations and Local Grant Recipients

Role of Hub Organisations

The flexibility, support, training and capacity building offered by hub organisations to young grantees was a key component of the programme. Many grant recipients were very new to accounting, reporting, and project management, but they had good ideas, energy and the trust of their communities. They needed more accompaniment than had originally been planned and most hub organisations went above and beyond to ensure the success of the supported projects.

Trust-based partnership approach

YAPP's flexible funding model stemmed from a partnership approach based on international solidarity, accompaniment and mutual accountability. It entrusted local, often unregistered groups and individuals with international funds. It also inspired hub organisations to take a similar approach with young grantees, and in some cases, to push for similar treatment from other international partners.

> **"Young girls have been forgotten for a long time in the process of positive transformation of conflicts.... But we have the capacities and knowledge to bring our stone to the building of peace!"**
>
> Young female local grant recipient, DRC

Partnership Transitions and Sustainability

Assessment of Sustainability

Short-term YAPP grants were designed to jump start initiatives by supporting innovative ideas, and there is evidence that some of these grants have had a ripple effect that has lasted months beyond the life of the project. Communities have invested land, volunteer time, and financial resources. Young activists are now directly involved in peacebuilding mechanisms in their communities and regions. Some projects have received further funding. For example, a student debate project in Pakistan – Speak Karachi – received its first ever grant through YAPP. It has since received two $50,000 USD grants from USAID to continue and scale up the project.

Short-term Nature of the Funding

Survey respondents queried the short-term nature of the grants (most were 1-6 months in duration), as many projects dealt with long-term intractable problems. There are compelling examples of projects continuing with community support, external funding, or volunteerism, with gains expected to last beyond the life of the programme. However, all country evaluations indicated the potential value in granting in several phases over a longer period to allow those gains to be fully embedded, and to build on the increasing confidence and skills of the local grant recipients.

Shifting Power, Accountability and Power Dynamics

Accountability to Communities

One aim of the YAPP was to reverse the directional current of predominant accountability structures, so that accountability to communities was as important as to the funder. The novelty for local groups to be entrusted directly with funds inspired a level of responsibility and care for the resources, as well as a pressure to demonstrate the value to the community.

> **"Thanks to the YAPP project, we have awarded micro-grants to more than 70 initiatives without any incident of fraud and have accompanied them to the end and even to the sustainability of these initiatives. Thanks to this project, the community agrees with us that youth can play a great role in positively changing the context of our country for its development and stabilisation."**
>
> Steven Malaki, NPCYP Executive Secretary, DRC

Conclusions

YAPP has been as much about investing in young people and ideas as it has been about investing in peacebuilding initiatives. Young people have grown in confidence and skill, and in every country, there are reports of youth being increasingly seen as agents of peace rather than violence. Whether through community mediations, neighbourhood watch initiatives, youth councils, government advisory boards, or innovative art projects, emerging young peacebuilders have been elevated into positions of leadership and visibility because of their involvement in YAPP.

The evaluation has identified several key ingredients for success:

1. The **flexible model** – with no strict log frame or predetermined outcomes – enabled the testing of innovative ideas, building trust with young peacebuilders, adapting projects to rapidly changing contexts and attracting community investment.

2. Some of the most successful and sustainable grants were given to young people with no prior experience of managing projects. **Investment in skill building and accompaniment by hub organisations** provided essential mentoring to help young peacebuilders craft their ideas into achievable projects

3. **The flexible funding model allowed due diligence to be redefined** beyond documentation and governance, centring community credibility, relevance and innovation in the selection criteria.

4. **Accountability to local communities is a stepping-stone to sustainability.** Projects designed by community members were viewed as relevant and communities were watching to see if these young people deserved the investment, allowing projects to take root.

5. **Successful projects engage with diverse stakeholders in the local communities, not just young people.** Intergenerational relationship building enhances youth credibility and leads to longer term changes. For young people to be respected as key agents for peace, they needed to bring elders and others along.

Recommendations

A) To international and local organisations:

Programme design

- ✓ **A co-design process** at the outset involving all partner organisations (INGO, local hubs) is critical in establishing relations of trust and mutual and tailoring the flexible funding model to the realities of the country and conflict context. It is also a space for unlearning harmful practices and actively listening and learning from one another.
- ✓ During co-design, develop strategies for **gender and inclusivity mainstreaming.** Place specific efforts on mapping and reaching out to young girls, women and marginalised groups at early stages of the design, with a view to integrating them as key leaders and stakeholders of local projects.
- ✓ Place as much emphasis on **capacity development,** day to day accompaniment of subgrantees and peer to peer learning as on the initiatives supported through small grants. This is crucial to both sustainability of groups and their initiatives and increases connectedness between groups with potential for joint action.
- ✓ **Include finance staff** in the co-design process, to build buy-in of the trust-based partnership approach and to develop financial reporting systems at all levels (INGO-hubs-local grant recipients) that build capacity and embody a trust-based ethos.
- ✓ **Do not underestimate the staff time and resources** required to effectively manage, deliver and monitor a programme designed to be adaptive, flexible and locally-led. Invest in local hub organisations staff and organisational development priorities, contributing to their sustainability as dynamic, local civil society actors beyond the funding period.
- ✓ On **small grants,** publish transparent selection criteria and offer feedback to unsuccessful local grant applicants. Put in place clear procedures to report, investigate and respond to any allegations related to the selection process. Consider extending the duration for initiatives funded through small grants, with grant recipients eligible to apply for more than one cycle. Include flexibility in the grant ceiling to allow investment in innovative ideas, including those that may use technology in new ways in communities.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

- A flexible, locally-led model requires a new way of approaching MEL. **Design participatory processes** with local hub organisations that encourage local grant recipients and their communities to think about and identify impact in meaningful ways, using locally relevant, indigenous ways of learning and harvesting outcomes. Co-design a shared monitoring system that allows evidence from impact stories and inclusion data to inform ongoing reflections on strengths and weaknesses. Explore innovative use of **technologies and social media** used and promoted by young people.
- **Build in regular learning and reflection spaces** during programme implementation at all levels: funder, INGO, local hub organisations and local grant recipients.

B) To funders:

- **Invest in local civil society:** Bridge the gap between donors and marginalised communities by entrusting and directly funding well-established, credible local organisations. Consider flexible, institutional support to support local civil society over the longer-term. Acknowledge that peace takes time to build and foster.
- **Increase access to funding for young people:** Remove barriers by reducing the administrative burdens of applying and reporting, while also investing in skills development young people may need to apply for and manage larger grants.
- **Adopt flexible approaches:** Be willing to take joint risks with your grantee to fund innovative and responsive programmes with potential for high impact.
- **Move away from rigid MEL frameworks:** Remain open to innovative and transformative approaches to MEL. Recognise that conventional models such as log frames are not well-suited to local realities and rapidly changing conflicts and are often imposed on local partners from top-down. Support grantees to invest in and capture learning from adaptive, context-sensitive and responsive project implementation approaches.
- **Support inter-generational approaches:** Youth-centred work also requires an intergenerational lens to enhance community buy-in, youth credibility and project success. Projects that support youth should be co-created by and with youth-led CSOs and young people, and may also need to include elders, parents and others in project design.

Introduction

In recognition of UNSCR 2250 which calls for young people to have a greater and more meaningful role in local and national peacebuilding efforts, Peace Direct co-created an innovative three-year programme with five local youth organisations (referred to in this report as 'hub' organisations) in four countries to support youth led-CSOs and promising young peace activists to collaborate and lead their own peacebuilding initiatives at a local level, while at the same time creating spaces and opportunities for their voices to be heard by local and national policy makers.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, adopted in 2015, urges member states to increase youth representation in decision making at all levels. The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security presents a set of insights into the work that young people are doing to end violence and build peace and the ways they can and should be supported in this work.

The study highlights the need for locally driven peacebuilding which genuinely places young people at the forefront of attempts to transform their conflict affected societies. It stresses the importance of "investing in the upside", i.e., a focus on prevention rather than risk, and the resilience of young people. The study underscores the need to protect space for youth to participate and stresses that often youth are not hard to reach, they are simply not listened to.

The study's findings confirmed Peace Direct's understanding and belief that countering the violence of exclusion is the best way to counter the violence of extremism, calling into question the often-narrow policy focus on violent extremism and radicalisation which fails to take the conditions of exclusion of youth into account.

With funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Peace Direct worked alongside established local peace organisations in the Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali, and Pakistan to support youth-centred peacebuilding by disbursing micro grants (under US$5,000) and small-grants (under US$15,000) to local groups and individuals who might otherwise fall under the radar of conventional donors.

Rooted in country-specific analysis of conflict drivers, the Youth Action for Peace Programme (YAPP) was designed to enable contextualised and responsive peacebuilding that is accountable to the communities in which it occurs.

Through networking, mutual learning, and skills sharing, local grant recipients inspired and supported one another, with the aim of enhancing their collective impact.

The result has been a tapestry of varied approaches to peace and conflict, innovative project designs that challenge conventional silos of aid, and emerging examples of sustained community investment in new projects.

Meanwhile, there is evidence that young peacebuilders are building a track record, experience in grant and project management, and community credibility that is positioning many of them to go on to expand their work and approach new donors for support.

A Flexible Funding Model

The project's flexible design and funding mechanisms placed youth and community at the heart of the process and encouraged authorities at the local and national level to engage young people more in decision-making and peacebuilding processes.

Over two years, the YAP programme distributed $1 million USD in 218 grants to young peacebuilders, informal community groups and local civil society organisations, reaching over 305,293 people directly and an estimated 950,375 indirectly.

These small grants were distributed and managed by five youth-led hub organisations, all local, credible and well-established organisations working for peace in each country:

AJCAD (Youth Association for Active Citizenship and Democracy) was created in 2014 by young leaders committed to the development and consolidation of democracy in Mali. A dynamic youth organisation, AJCAD Mali has demonstrated leadership through advocacy, training and mobilisation of young people to challenge corruption, poor governance and more. The organisation has focal points and 200 Citizen Action Clubs (CLAC) in all 8 regions of the country. Each CLAC has 100 young people, at least 50% of whom are women.

CDA (Chanan Development Association) is a national organisation based in Lahore, Pakistan. It strives for meaningful participation and empowerment of young people, working in 110 districts across Pakistan through its network of 360 youth-led organisations, 15,000 active volunteers and more than 100,000 peer educators across Pakistan.

HIVE Pakistan is a social-impact organisation working to address issues of extremism and marginalisation through community-led research, facilitative grant-making, upstream mobilisation, innovative campaigning, needs-based mentorship and participatory collaborations. Headquartered in Islamabad, HIVE strives to work for an inclusive, equal and peaceful Pakistan.

NPCYP (National Partnership of Children and Youth in Peacebuilding) is a network of 90 youth-led member organisations operating across North and South Kivu, DRC. Established in 2015, they focus on youth engagement in peace consolidation, promoting UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security, youth training and mentoring, and providing youth spaces for dialogue.

Organisation URU is a youth led organisation in CAR, established in 2014 to provide a safe space for young people from different social backgrounds. URU promotes youth and adolescent access to sexual and reproductive health information, services and rights. The organisation trains youth leaders to become community change agents in conflict resolution, social cohesion and peacebuilding, agriculture, and sexual and reproductive health.

In addition to the distribution of small and micro-grants, hub organisations closely accompanied local grant recipients, to provide mentoring and training in project management, to help them on request to formally register their organisations, to set up bank accounts where necessary, and to build a broader network of youth peacebuilders and activists who mutually supported one another.

YAPP also created opportunities for young peacebuilders to influence donors, local authorities and policy makers. Hub organisations coordinated local and national advocacy efforts. Peace Direct's US-based advocacy team worked to build a case to policymakers in the US and the UN as to why it is important to not only include young people in their strategies for peace and security, but also to provide youth with the necessary resources to lead initiatives for positive change through more inclusive and flexible funding models. The YAPP model and emerging success stories offer an example of what is possible.

This evaluation report focuses on the main implementation phase of the project, from September 2020 to February 2022. It compiles findings from five separate evaluations led by each of the hub organisations, complemented by Peace Direct's internal learning review. After an analysis of key cross-cutting themes, the report summarises each distinct evaluation and offers recommendations and areas for further research.

About Peace Direct

Peace Direct is an international peacebuilding organisation that works with local people to stop violence and build sustainable peace. Its vision is of a just world free from violent conflict. Peace Direct believes that local issues require local solutions and ownership, and that empowering innovative grassroots organisations will help ensure sustainable peace and development. Peace Direct aims to build upon the agency, capacity and effectiveness of the people and communities most affected by conflict and working to build peace. Peace Direct currently has partnerships with local organisations in Afghanistan, Burundi, CAR, DR Congo, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sudan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Syria and Zimbabwe.

Methodology – Evaluation as Learning

This evaluation was designed primarily to generate learning[1] useful for Peace Direct, the hub organisations, and the local grant recipients, and other actors interested in supporting youth and peace initiatives.

The evaluation aimed to:

- harvest outcomes
- highlight lessons, challenges and good practices
- capture the most significant changes from the perspective of partners and grantees
- discover unexpected results and collate emerging themes across contexts
- feed insights into ongoing and future work on YPS and small granting models
- contribute to the body of evidence on flexible local funding models

The evaluation report draws on data compiled from:

a. Five independent evaluations commissioned by each hub organisation
b. Internal reflection process with Peace Direct staff
c. Partnership reflection and feedback sessions between Peace Direct and hub organisations
d. Review of project documents and reports
e. Final validation meeting with hub organisations and Peace Direct

Taken together, these provided a multifaceted view of a complex programme active across four countries with five local partners. As a result of this locally-led approach, the country-specific evaluation reports vary widely. Some are qualitative, interviewing fewer respondents but in more depth, gathering stories of change. Others are more quantitative, surveying larger numbers of community members, project participants, and local leaders. Some used conventional evaluation questions and methods, with the funder in mind as a primary audience. Others were more focused on internal learning and shared learning with grant recipients.

1 Peace Direct commissioned and completed an impact and process evaluation in 2020, and its findings were factored into the subsequent design and implementation of the programme. This end of programme evaluation was positioned first and foremost as a joint learning process.

2 Stopping as Success: Locally Led Transitions in Development (SAS+), is a collaborative learning project that explores how to make INGO transitions more responsible. Led by CDA Collaborative Learning, Peace Direct, and Search for Common Ground, SAS+ listens and learns alongside communities and organisations who have lived through and led transition processes from international to local leadership to understand how to put locally-led development into practice. https://www.stoppingassuccess.org

Joint Learning Questions

Youth action and empowerment

- How has the project been catalytic in opening new avenues for youth participation and empowerment locally and nationally?
- How has the project enhanced livelihoods for young people and promoted sustainable peace?
- How has the project placed marginalised groups e.g., young women, at the forefront of peacebuilding?

Impact of flexible funding approach at the community level

- How did the funding mechanism facilitate peacebuilding, prevent, or resolve conflicts and tensions?
- What are the key ingredients for success? What are the inhibitors?

Capacity of hub organisations and local grant recipients

- What capacities were improved in the implementation of this programme? And at what level/s? (grant recipients, hub organisations, Peace Direct)
- Do hub organisations and youth groups have the capacity to pursue other sources of funding?

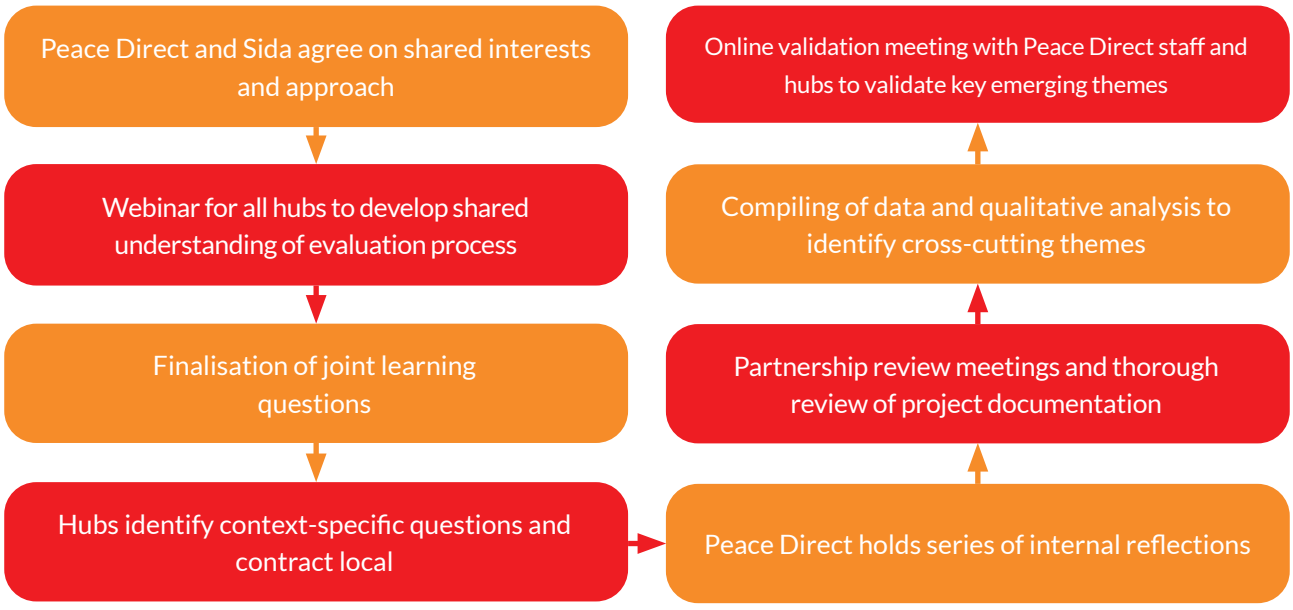
'Stopping as Success', partner transitions and sustainability

- Are there case studies to continue to follow to assess the effectiveness of the transition/exit and the longer-term impact of the initiatives?
- How can we sustain the gains of the programme?
- To what extent are the initiatives embedded in the communities and avoid dependence?

Shifting power, accountability and power dynamics

- What are the insights towards shifting power and policy around peacebuilding?
- How has the project and the flexible funding approach contributed to improving social and community accountability, lateral and vertical accountability

Evaluation Process



This report offers high level summaries of each of the evaluations, key themes that cut across geographies, and several stories and case studies to illustrate those themes. For more in-depth findings in each country setting, the full country evaluations can be made available on request.

By using a locally-led, learning-based approach, the evaluation highlighted local knowledge, ownership and empowerment. Peace Direct framed this as 'evaluation-as-learning' to highlight the need for the evaluation to first and foremost generate insights to enhance the work, to enable Peace Direct, partners and funders to learn from challenges and to gather best practices that can improve sector-wide peacebuilding. The evaluation enabled a joint assessment of progress and impact from various world views, particularly noting the most significant changes from the perspective of hub organisations, local grant recipients, and communities.

Reflection on learning and evidence systems

YAPP distributed 218 small grants in 4 different country contexts. With a flexible, community-led approach, rigid MEL frameworks are not fit for purpose and there is a need to seek creative, locally relevant ways to monitor and demonstrate evidence of how the diverse initiatives are contributing to change.

Over the life of the project, Peace Direct staff worked on developing tracking tools, determining together with partners what evidence and data was important to collect, and began to create systems for reflection and learning. These systems are still being refined and further developed, drawing on local ways of monitoring and collecting stories.

Contextualising and streamlining evidence gathering – particularly in a way that serves the work and the youth peacebuilders at the heart of the project – is challenging and complex and remains an ongoing challenge.

The evaluation has been an important component of the YAPP project. The locally-led approach has helped to transition Peace Direct and hub organisation partnerships into a 'post-YAPP' chapter.

Peace Direct is shifting its own approach to MEL to embrace a more locally-led model, and this process enabled Peace Direct to test and learn an alternative evaluation approach.

Limitations

Conducting a locally-led evaluation increases the likelihood that the evaluations are more context-sensitive and directly relevant to local peacebuilders. However, it does come with some limitations.

The evaluation instruments were not standardised which makes it more challenging to draw quantitative conclusions across geographies. The report relies on qualitative coding to identify themes, using stories to illustrate them rather than quantitative data.

This too was a limited approach, because several evaluations – particularly for hub organisations who had disbursed large numbers of grants and covered a wide area – were heavily quantitative and did not collect as many stories.

Overall, most of the country-specific evaluations focused on the small granting component and less on the capacity building and advocacy efforts of the hub organisations.

Other reporting mechanisms and reflection processes indicate that the less visible and informal accompaniment offered by hub organisations was crucial to the success of the projects.

Although overarching joint learning questions were developed on power shifts, none of the country evaluations included specific questions about power. Some evaluations measured community accountability and involvement, offering examples of how the local flexible funding model disrupted some conventional power dynamics. This is something that should be more deeply explored in future research.

In some cases, Covid and security concerns limited field visits, impeding evaluators' ability to fully absorb the complexities and specificities of conflicts. In these cases, evaluators used phone and zoom calls to reach a diversity of interviewees.

Some evaluations found that large percentages of those surveyed credited YAPP with decreases of violence and increased social cohesion, but the findings were not always validated with examples or testimonies. Thus, this consolidated evaluation report is careful in what it claims and may err on underreporting impact due to insufficient evidence.

The areas of expertise of the evaluators varied greatly. Some were more experienced in statistical analysis, while others did basic computations. Some had a background in development, while others were well versed in peacebuilding. This was evident in the analysis – some evaluations focused more on the impact on livelihoods while others emphasised the linkages between income generating activities and social cohesion, good governance and peacebuilding strategies.

Although the diversity of approaches limits our ability to standardise findings, overall, this diversity of methodology is a strength – the varied approaches lend insight into local dynamics and priorities and provide a multidimensional view into the flexible funding model. Each evaluation uncovers new strengths and weaknesses in the model which taken together give a thorough picture of what has worked well and what still needs to be improved.

Artwork produced by young artists as part of the YAPP-supported project 'Invisible Resilience'. The artwork portrays the culture and beauty of the Hazara community in Quetta Baluchistan and the psychological effects of violence and discrimination committed against the Hazara in Pakistan (CDA)

Cross-Cutting Themes

Despite the broad diversity of evaluation approaches in each context, cross-cutting themes have emerged that give insight into the contributions of YAPP's flexible funding model. This section will explore how YAPP has elevated youth as peacebuilders, including marginalised youth. It will interrogate the ways that the flexible model allowed projects to defy conventional funding silos and address sensitive issues with evolving, shifting and responsive strategies. The importance of close accompaniment of local grant recipients by hub organisations was a consistent theme, and this section will look at the variety of methods used to build organic networks and an ecosystem of local youth peacebuilders. Lastly, this section will examine the ways in which the model enabled sustainability and accountability to the community.

These cross-cutting themes are organised below in response to the joint learning questions that guided the evaluation process.

Youth Action and Empowerment

Elevating Youth as Peacebuilders

The flexible, small granting model has been able to reach promising young peacebuilders who otherwise would not have had access to funds. Many individuals and informal groups received support through YAPP which led to their increased credibility and visibility in their communities. As a result of the programme, young peace activists are now part of influential coalitions, government advisory groups, or actively protecting communities through mediation projects or neighbourhood watch initiatives. Informal groups have been supported to officially register as organisations, to open bank accounts, and in some cases, they have gone on to access funding from other sources. Some young grant recipients have reached a broader audience than they ever expected.

YOUTH VOICES

The youth of Bossangoa systematically destroyed public buildings and other government and private property that did not belong to their ethnic group. Today, several humanitarian and development partners have invested in the return of peace and social cohesion in the area, but I must admit that the road to building peace is very long. When URU came up with this project "Youth Action for Peace" our organisation took the opportunity to present its small initiative entitled "Social Cohesion Project" which aims at promoting peaceful cohabitation between communities. Through this project, influential youth and community leaders are equipped with knowledge and in turn raise awareness among their peers for the consolidation of peace in Bossangoa. As a result of the action, several young people were recruited and hired by national and international NGOs for the rehabilitation of the administrative building vandalised during the crisis.

President, Ouham Prefectural Youth Council, CAR

Enabling young people to act as peacebuilders is powerful in contexts where they are often seen as the perpetrators of violence. Steven Malaki, Executive Secretary of NPCYP, YAPP's hub organisation in DRC said:

> **"The community considers youth to be the main perpetrators of atrocity. This has provoked youth to create groups and associations at the local level to not only prove their innocence but also to contribute to the engine of peace and development at the local level. Over the past two decades, these youth have had difficulty accessing funding to enable them to achieve their goals and even influence their peers to build peace by addressing issues that plague the community. Thus, for us at NPCYP, the YAPP approach is the path to development and peace rooted at the community level by involving youth in piloting their own initiatives."**

There are many examples of young people being seen now as partners in community safety and peacebuilding. For example, young people in Mali formed a Neighbourhood Watch in an area where state presence is weak, and the initiative is still ongoing though funding from YAPP has ceased. In Pakistan, a group of youth successfully negotiated an end to annual violence between Sunni and Shia along a parade route. In Eastern Congo, where it is not uncommon for university student protests turn violent, young peacebuilders instituted a "Peace Oath" to be signed by incoming students of each new year and brought together representatives from five universities to establish an inter-institutional committee to manage disputes and grievances nonviolently.

Young people taking positive leadership in this way has particular meaning in contexts where youth are regularly recruited into armed groups

or used for political ends. In CAR, the independent evaluators made the following observation:

> **"Central African youth are subject to social constraints, which make them beneficiaries and learners rather than fully-fledged agents in the recovery of the country and the consolidation of peace. This situation limits their effective consideration and contributions to the various initiatives related to the peace process and fosters a feeling of abandonment that reinforces initiatives to rise up against the state and opens the door to the manipulation and recruitment of these young people into armed groups or urban militias."**

Some young people surveyed said that the fact the projects were designed and led by youth themselves made the initiatives more relevant, contextualised and effective than programmes they had participated in in the past. YAPP's approach elevated youth and expected them to take responsibility and to lead positive change in their communities.

YOUTH VOICES

I was an anti-Balaka (armed militia) who fought against armed groups with a Muslim majority (ex-Séléka) in 2012-2013 and joined the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC)[3]. I participated in the looting of administrative buildings in Bossangoa, the destruction of private property and armed robbery in neighbouring communes. Several social cohesion and consolidation projects have been implemented in the city of Bossangoa, but they have not been successful like the URU project has been. The URU project focused on youth and women's own initiatives to raise awareness in order to build peace. Today, after the URU intervention, I regret having taken up arms to carry out criminal acts and vandalism.

Young male project participant, CAR

A youth-led project in Pakistan brought together an interfaith group of young people to train them in peacebuilding. After the training, they went back into their communities to implement 15 social action projects. In one such project, a team of youth decided to tackle the annual violence and conflict that arose in their community between Shia and Sunni Muslims. Each year, followers of the Shia faith hold processions to mourn the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, grandson of the Prophet. It used to be that Sunnis would also join these processions, but when the seeds of sectarian intolerance were sown in the 1980s, conflicts began to arise. In one area, there was a house whose wall protruded into the street, narrowing the passageway, and making it impassable for the annual procession. Shia marchers accused the homeowner of obstructing their procession, and the homeowner accused them of vandalism and damage to his property. The conflict had been going on for years, with multiple complaints to police and courts. The young people decided to approach the two parties and try to convince them to meet. After multiple efforts, they were close to giving up. They looked at maps to find an alternate route, and in so doing discovered that the homeowner had in fact overextended his reach beyond his legal boundary. But he had spent a lot in building this wall and was not willing to take it down. The youth approached the procession organisers and asked if they would be willing to pay for the wall to be retracted to the legal boundary. They readily agreed, and the homeowner shifted his wall. The procession took place without violence for the first time in many years. Sunni Muslims joined, and some residents even provided refreshments to those passing by. The youth were seen as peacebuilders, as active, positive agents in their community.

3 A Central African armed movement created on December 17, 2020 by the merger of six armed groups: four from the Séléka and two from the anti-balaka.

Inclusion of Marginalised Groups

The flexible funding model enabled hub organisations to prioritise inclusion of underrepresented groups as project leaders or key stakeholders in project design. Marginalised groups can be under resourced, meaning in turn that they are less likely to conform to strict eligibility requirements set by funders. However, they are often key stakeholders in a conflict.

In total, of the 288,206 direct project participants who were disaggregated by gender through the programme's data tracking, 80% were women and girls, and 239 were from sexual and gender minorities.[4]

Deliberate inclusion of marginalised groups is challenging, and not all hub organisations were successful – particularly in encouraging participation and leadership of women and girls. Uru's evaluators found that despite efforts to include women, only 21% of programme participants in CAR were women and 7 of the 37 initiatives were led by women.

Those who are considered marginalised are specific to each context. For example, in CAR, YAPP reached 900 Fulani.[5] In Pakistan, the Hazara[6] and Christian residents of slum areas were among those awarded small grants.

Funding those who are directly impacted by the conflict they are trying to solve is at the root of YAPP's success. It is made possible because the selection process prioritised innovative ideas and applicants' credibility within their communities over conventional due diligence requirements such as organisational legal standing, financial accounting experience and governance structures. Many of the projects were designed and run by young people with lived experience of conflict, and this enhanced the projects' relevance and therefore investment by local communities.

For many of those funded, it was the first grant they had ever received. A 10th grade student, who was just sixteen years old, worked with other girls her age to raise awareness about girls' education in Pakistan. They ran campaigns to convince parents to enrol their daughters in school. The project with its special focus on young people and especially girls, has not only given young people and girls the opportunities for implementing their ideas but has also encouraged more young people to start similar initiatives in their areas.

Small grants also offered opportunities and the means for young peacebuilders to reach out to marginalised groups, even when that was not the explicit focus of their projects.

> **"The empowerment of women and youth as both the main beneficiaries and the actors in the implementation of social cohesion and peacebuilding activities is a major innovation in the Central African context."**
>
> URU Evaluation

4 Disaggregated gender data is not available for 5.6% of direct project participants, including URU's second round of funding, which was analysed by the evaluators to have low representation of women.

5 Fulani are one of the world's largest nomadic groups. In CAR they have been involved in Muslim/Christian clashes as well as in conflict with farmers and have been targeted in massacres. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/26/mass-killings-as-rebels-target-ethnic-fulanis-in-central-african-republic

6 A Shi'a Muslim ethnic minority group in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Hazaras are widely discriminated against and have been targeted in violence and massacres. https://minorityrights.org/minorities/hazaras/

YOUTH VOICES

It is my dream that girls of my area get education as it is the door to opportunities in life. This grant provided me an opportunity to practically work for the promotion of girls' education in my area. The good thing is that now I am not alone. There is a group of young girls working with me.

16 year old female student and YAPP micro-grant recipient, Pakistan

YOUTH VOICES

I personally invited the representative of the Muslim community to the presentation of the project envelope to our organisation and he responded favourably at this event. This is a tangible indicator of the inclusion of vulnerable groups: one year ago, the Muslim community was not accepted in the city of Bossangoa due to the inter-community conflict that was triggered during the takeover of power by predominantly Muslim armed groups.

President of the Bossangoa Moto-taxi Association, CAR.

Building Organic Networks

Small, localised projects can respond to the specificity of the conflict dynamics at play – which can often vary from town to town, and even neighbourhood to neighbourhood. The evaluation found that therefore even small projects which are not scaled up, can have a meaningful impact.

To scale the impact and contribute to peace writ large, hub organisations facilitated a variety of formal and informal methods to nurture, in HIVE's words, an "eco-system of nascent peacebuilders" who supported and inspired one another, and grew each other's skills, confidence and exposure. The methods ranged from youth peace exchanges, skill auctions, and active and thriving WhatsApp groups, to spontaneous or facilitated collaborations beyond the life of the project.

"The participatory nature of Simurg [local name for YAPP] grant enabled the youth groups and communities to join hands for fostering sustainable partnerships to carry the work forward. Contrary to the international grants, this model of funding focused more on the organic network building through various set of activities, instead of adopting an outcome-based model with limited flexibility. This is one of the key reasons that many projects were able to adopt newer implementation strategies after revisiting need assessments. HIVE facilitated this learning-while-doing model by providing opportunities for network growing, registration of the non-profit organisations, and providing funds for implementation."

Hive's Evaluator

Impact of Flexible Funding Approach

Innovation: Defying Conventional Silos

One benefit of supporting young peacebuilders is that many of them came with innovative and creative new approaches to intractable problems. Across all YAPP implementation countries, grant recipients designed projects that worked at the intersection of several conflict drivers, bucking conventional silos. Some agriculture and income generation projects had intercommunity dialogue or demobilisation and reintegration as a primary goal, for example. Others infused social cohesion projects with health awareness messages. Some educational projects specifically prioritised inclusion of marginalised groups or victims of violence or encouraged interreligious cooperation. For example, in DRC, a collective pig breeding project brought together Hutu, Tutsi and Hunde to work alongside one another, addressing both lack of development/food insecurity as well as inter-ethnic tensions. In Mali, the repair of a dike not only enabled better control of irrigation and flooding of rice fields, but it also integrated conflict management training and community building between groups that had been in conflict. This intersectional approach more closely reflected young people's lived reality and may have been instrumental in garnering community support.

One benefit of locally-led evaluations is that they can lend insight into local priorities and analysis. In DRC, the evaluators intertwined and almost equated income generation with being able to contribute to positive changes in the community. The two were inextricably linked and analysed together. Income generation was seen not only as a means to reintegrate ex-combatants, but also as a preventative measure to dissuade youth from joining militias. But the link extended beyond that: when investigating opening avenues for youth to contribute to peacebuilding, the evaluators looked at income generating activities, and how those then allowed youth to contribute positively to their communities, rather than looking separately at social cohesion projects. And this was a salient way to do it. Out of their research we learned that 45.5% of the youth surveyed reported spending $10 or more of their own money (some earned through YAPP funded income generation activities) to support peacebuilding in their communities. 10.6% of the 198 young people surveyed reported spending over $50.

Peace exchanges organised by URU in CAR (left) and NPCYP in DRC (right), bringing together peace actors and young peacebuilders

YOUTH VOICES

I grew up loving weapons because as a child I only saw young people taller than me handling weapons and I was obsessed with them, which is why I joined an armed group that I will not name.

It is thanks to the sacrifice of my parents that I came out of this life in the bush and was reintegrated into the community without any support from any NGO; but when I encountered the inequalities that were embedded in the community, my only desire was to return and use the force of arms to continue to live without discrimination. I continued with banditry in the neighbourhood, taking money by force from passers-by every night... Then I started counterfeiting coins and risked prison. Then one day, a young father from our neighbourhood came to make me aware of the YAPP project saying that it is from CONCORDE[7] and they want to integrate young people like me in the project to allow them to set up their own actions to consolidate peace. I joined the project and received training on peaceful cohabitation, conflict resolution and hairdressing. Amazingly, after the training, we were provided with all the materials to open a barber shop which today allows me to support myself but also to have friends and interact with a large part of the community through this profession. I saw the difference between life in the community and life in the bush because in the bush we slept under the stars with boots all day and kill as well as steal; it is a pitiful life that does not give the opportunity to enjoy the gift of life. That's why I appeal to the other young people who are in these groups to leave and join the community life and those who want to go there that it is not a life to envy. The YAP project has done what others have failed to do. Today through my job I am reintegrated into the community.

18 year-old male project participant, DRC

Successful reintegration of former combatants is often linked with income generation projects, but less commonly recognised is the role that money and competition over resources play in domestic and neighbourhood conflicts. Women Vision for Peace (WVFP) is an informal group of girls in DRC who received a $2,400 USD grant to train members of Village Savings and Credit Associations in peacebuilding and conflict transformation. The leader of this group said,

"Young girls have been forgotten for a long time in the process of positive transformation of conflicts, especially in the setting up of the Community Baraza[8]. But we have the capacities and knowledge to bring our stone to the building of peace! That is why we said to ourselves that we must begin by making our peers aware of the good attitudes to adopt in the face of conflicts, especially since the Village Savings and Credit Associations are places where conflicts between girls and even families arise because of money."

Young female grant recipient, Women Vision for Peace, DRC.

7 Referred to as Baraza, these are revived traditional courts or community gatherings that serve as community dispute mechanisms. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17531050701846682

Evolving, Shifting and Responsive Strategies

Without strict log frames, pre-established outcomes, and fixed outputs to adhere to, the small grants had the flexibility to adapt to their changing contexts and as a result many had unintended outcomes that exceeded initial expectations. YAPP took a development and learning approach with local grant recipients, allowing them to shift and sharpen their approach as they grew in experience and confidence.

Allowing an evolving, iterative approach to project implementation is particularly important in rapidly changing contexts. In complex conflicts, often the conflict analysis that informs projects is outdated by the time the projects are being implemented.

For example, in DRC the analysis in 2019 could not capture the new realities of the state of siege in North Kivu or the Nyiragongo volcanic eruption. In Pakistan, the influx of refugees following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan affected the country context. These changes happened after the formal conflict analysis, but Peace Direct's flexibility cascaded down via the hub organisations to the local grant recipients, rendering the small projects nimbler and more responsive than most institutional-funded projects can be. The emergency rapid response funds were particularly valued by hub organisations who said it enabled them to save lives directly without bureaucracy. "Lives of people were valued more than the process," said staff from AJCAD.

YOUTH VOICES

We thought we would only work on providing Hazara community members with the mental health support for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to those who fled from Quetta and came to Islamabad due to the fear of persecution and violence. Later on, we engaged them in creative arts workshops and painting. It was a success I would say because they were more open in terms of expressing themselves through arts than in open conversations because of the stigma associated with mental health in Pakistan. It is important to keep evolving your strategies periodically. If something doesn't work, why not try differently? We also provided them consultative services for working on their entrepreneurship ideas. That was the hallmark of our project.

Manager, Healing Souls, local grant recipient, Pakistan

We started off as a community centre for women affected by the chronic gang war in Lyari. Our idea was to provide physical and emotional support to the women from there because they were the most impacted segment of the community. Young girls had dropped out of their schools and the highest number of casualties were of women in the gang war. When we started working on the community centre, we thought of incorporating newer ideas into our work. The latest one was to arrange film making trainings for the young film enthusiasts. They were ecstatic to learn this new skill. You get redundant if you are unable to devise new strategies and adopt newer methods. Novelty remains a key aspect of such community building work. Your aim is to make it more effective; novelty helps in achieving this.

Young female grant recipient, Lyari Women Community Forum, Pakistan

Flexibility with due diligence

Flexibility and a trust-based approach does not mean that due diligence is downplayed or compromised. In prioritising innovative ideas of local youth peacebuilders within their communities, the project still aimed to hold each grant recipient to account – both to the funders and to the community. The project sought to broaden and contextualise due diligence. For example, community credibility in complex conflict settings can be more indicative of an applicants' likelihood of managing funds responsibly than formal registration or governance structures. Hub organisations rooted locally can more readily access the local knowledge needed to assess prospective grant recipients beyond more conventional and externally-imposed indicators of applicant capacity. Peace Direct worked to reduce the burden on partners and continues to seek creative and diligent ways of ensuring accountability at multiple levels – to communities, to hub organisations, between local grant recipients and to funders.

NPCYP'S Executive Secretary, Steven Malaki said:

> **"For NPCYP, this project has also proven the opposite of the narrative attached to local organisations: that they lack capacity and are at high financial risk of embezzlement and fraud. Thanks to the YAPP project, we have awarded micro-grants to more than 70 initiatives without any incident of fraud and have accompanied them to the end and even to the sustainability of these initiatives. Thanks to this project, the community agrees with us that youth can play a great role in positively changing the context of our country for its development and stabilisation."**

Such flexible funding opportunities, which did not require a lot of documentation and compliance requirements, are like a breath of fresh air for us. We are a small organisation and often are not able to meet the comprehensive documentation requirements of the funding organisations... The importance of the [Amn Rang, local name for YAPP] project to our initiative can't be just measured by the results which it has achieved. We did manage to achieve very good results and all our outcomes were met. But the main impact of this project was in providing our organisation with an opening. Now we are working on many projects. We are in negotiation with many donor organisations. All this was made possible because of the Amn Rang Project. They believed in our idea and gave us the start which we needed.

Trans Rights Organisation, local grant recipient in Pakistan.

Addressing Sensitive Issues

The small grants and responsive nature of the approach allowed local peacebuilders to address highly sensitive issues that can be more difficult to tackle for larger established organisations who come under greater scrutiny from government. For example, in Mali young peace activists explored ways to challenge the caste and slavery system, a taboo subject that met with intense resistance from some elders and opinion leaders. Forced conversions and blasphemy laws were confronted through small grants in Pakistan.

Youth activists in Mali and Pakistan met with significant resistance when they took on these sensitive issues. For example, in Pakistan one subgrantee was creating a film on blasphemy and tried to shoot some footage in a community where they did not have good links. They were forced to stop and then were chased away. The group learned that they needed a more sensitive approach and with the support of the hub organisation, they reflected on their mistakes and designed a new plan. When confronted with these types of challenges, local grant recipients often worked with hub organisations to develop strategies to navigate the resistance and find entry points. This required nuanced understanding of the context, the key influencers and potential triggers.

Another project in Pakistan wanted to address the question of forced conversion of Hindu girls through grooming for marriage. It is a highly sensitive topic that could not be addressed head-on. After some brainstorming and consultation, the local grant recipient decided to frame their intervention in terms of strengthening parent-child communication, with the theory of change being that girls were less likely to be successfully groomed for early marriage if they had strong relationships and open communication with their parents.

With these nuanced and carefully crafted approaches, projects saw success. In Mali, for example, young peacebuilders learned that they needed to strategically secure buy-in from the older generations in their communities. Young people managed to facilitate meaningful dialogue between the generations and began to see some shifts in perceptions and acknowledgment of universal human rights. As a result of the campaign, these conservative leaders agreed to rename a neighbourhood that had been called "Slave Quarter."

Young peacebuilders leading peace awareness sessions with communities affected by conflict DRC (NPCYP, left) and Mali (AJCAD, right).

Capacity of Hubs and Local Grant Recipients

Role of Hub Accompaniment

The flexibility, support, training and capacity building offered by hub organisations to local grant recipients was not only universally appreciated, but a key component of the project. Many subgrant recipients were very new to accounting, reporting, and project management, but they had good ideas, energy and the trust of their communities. They needed more accompaniment than planned and most hub organisations went above and beyond to ensure the success of the grants. This came with challenges. Sometimes second instalments of grants were delayed because hub organisations had to guide local grant recipients in reporting and accounting for expenses.

Some hub organisations reported their staff team being available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to offer guidance and support. They used creative ways to gather stories to communicate, via WhatsApp, video messaging, voice notes and more. They built human relationships with local grant recipients to the point that some hub organisations are receiving updates well after the funding has stopped. This is evidence that the relationships have gone beyond reporting and that the interactions and support from hub organisations have begun to nurture this nascent ecosystem of young peacebuilders that HIVE envisioned.

> **"The CDA team was regularly in touch with us and guided us about the compliance requirements. Even if there were some delays from our side, they were quite patient. They listened to our reasons and accommodated us. They also helped us in completing the documentation required for financial reporting."**
>
> Local grant recipient, Foundation for Awareness and Civic Engagement (FACE), Pakistan

The role of hub organisations bringing grantees together was also important in building a more collective impact beyond the individual projects. HIVE made it compulsory for each grant recipient to allocate a few hours of their time to offer some skill development or training to the other recipients, drawing on their own strengths and capacities. In addition to this, they integrated a Skills Auction into a Peace Exchange, in which local grant recipients would offer mentoring or training in some area in exchange for a capacity development opportunity from other grant recipients.

Young peacebuilders leading peace awareness sessions with communities affected by conflict in CAR (URU, left) and Mali (AJCAD, right).

Skills Share workshops were a mandatory component of Simurg Fund (local name for YAPP) run by HIVE in Pakistan where each local grant recipient imparted at least one skill to other recipients. Each group offered to share two to three skills that they were good at out of which one was chosen based on results of the needs assessment carried out by HIVE and a transparent voting process by the local grant recipients. The workshops were arranged to engage the grant recipients in a mutual learning process. In total thirteen Skills Share sessions were conducted online, with diverse topics including:

- non-violent communication
- basics of qualitative and quantitative research
- online hate speech and common logical fallacies
- storytelling
- narrative building for peace promotion
- engaging diverse groups including minority communities and women in the peacebuilding processes
- community engagement principles
- photography
- report writing
- social media branding and marketing
- different learning styles

HIVE also organised a Skills Auction as part of its Youth Peace Exchange to explore potential partnerships and/or collaboration possibilities among the attendees of the retreat. Each participant came on stage and offered skills and in-kind support to the audience. Those who were interested in the offer then proposed the skills or in-kind support in return, which became an informal pledge of mutual collaboration.

YOUTH VOICES

Skills Share workshops were very helpful for exploring diverse themes related to mobilisation of marginalised communities, and exclusion, digital literacy and hate speech. The best part was to witness the amazing work that the fellow participants were producing. We got to learn so much through the skills share workshops. If you insist on asking which was the best session, I would say the session on logical fallacies was the best. We commit them in our lives every day, but we have no clue about them whatsoever. It helped us in navigating our ways of responding to the queries that we face while engaging with the young people

Manager, Young Christian Emerging Leaders, local grant recipient Pakistan

Recognising the strategic role played by hub organisations, some evaluators recommended increasing the number of staff and focal points.

Just as Peace Direct initially underestimated the staff time it would take to manage a diverse, complex and adaptive programme that focuses on flexibility and responds to changes in context, hub organisations underestimated the level of accompaniment they would need to provide.

Trust-based partnership approach

Peace Direct believes in the potential and agency of local people to affect change and build peace in their contexts. Partnership with local peacebuilders is at the heart of the organisation's mission.

Peace Direct understands partnership to imply a **mutual, respectful and committed relationship.** Peace Direct staff feel strongly that their work must be based on a model of **international solidarity, accompaniment and mutual accountability**, which is not one directional but rather reciprocal and allows Peace Direct and partners to mutually benefit from the skills, understanding and influence of one another.

YAPP's flexible funding model took this trust-based approach a step further, entrusting local, often unregistered groups and individuals with international funds. It also inspired hub organisations to take a similar approach with local grant recipients, and in some cases, to push for a similar approach with their other international partners. The human connection that springs from this ethos infused the work and has meant that hub organisations have continued their relationship with Peace Direct and with local grant recipients for months after funding has ended.

Several hub organisations are actively engaged in sharing their experiences with international partners and funders, to inspire and encourage others to adopt more flexible, trust-based approaches to accompany local peacebuilding actors in their continued efforts to tackle root causes of violence.

Speak Karachi brings university and madrassa (religious seminary) students together for healthy debates. The project has built bridges across differences through creating a youth network, training youth on critical thinking, public speaking, narrative building and the ethics of debate. Youth belonging to different identity groups and academic streams often stay within their own echo chambers, with little opportunity for a cross-pollination of ideas on controversial topics. This further entrenches divisions and increases polarisation between religious youth and those from relatively secular academic backgrounds. There are divisions as well between different religious sects and different madrassas, and students from those seminaries often were surprised to find themselves on the same side of big issues.

The debates addressed a variety of controversial topics, such as feminism, religious extremism, Sufism, technology and more. The motion of the parliamentary debate final in the Karachi Championship was "This house supports the ban on religious politics." Another topic was "This house supports the matriarchal societal system across the world."

In addition to the debates, Speak Karachi has formed a youth network of 25 student ambassadors from ten educational institutions. The YAPP funding of $6,300 USD was its first grant. HIVE staff supported this new vision by helping to brainstorm strategies to encourage madrassa participation. HIVE staff also wrote a letter of recommendation to USAID and gave technical support on a successful application. Since the small HIVE grant, Speak Karachi received two rounds of $50,000 USD grants from USAID to replicate the project on a bigger scale in Sindh.

Stopping as Success, Transitions and Sustainability

Assessment of Sustainability

Early indications of community ownership and investment point to the sustainability of several projects, and there are multiple examples of initiatives that have continued to operate for several months beyond the life of the project.

Some income-generating and other development-oriented activities continue to operate after the programme's completion. Evaluators in CAR pointed to the example of a youth and women's network that was formed to create communal market gardens after their farms were occupied by militias, assessing that project as likely to continue for some time to come.

HIVE estimated that at least 8 of the 19 initiatives they supported have found a way to continue, with volunteers still active in the community or new funding coming through. Youth in CAR told evaluators that while they had created informal mutual saving and loans associations before, 'they had no knowledge of accounting or cash management.

After the YAPP intervention through training on topics related to accounting, they have set up their Village Savings and Credit Association and were able to organise the first sharing in the presence of local authorities.'

It is not only income-generating activities that seem to have a lasting impact. Youth peace champions are still active in their communities. Telefilms and stories developed with YAPP funding are still online and being used by local groups.

In Pakistan, a computer centre set up with YAPP funding that offers not only computer training but also a safe space for dialogue among different groups, is now owned by the community who takes responsibility for operation and maintenance.

In one village in the region of Sikasso, Mali, young peace activists wanted to address literacy of women and girls in their community by installing solar lights. During the day women and girls are often taking care of household chores or are working in the fields. By night fall when they would have free time, it is too dark for them to study. A local entrepreneur was so impressed by the youth initiative that he donated additional lamps.

This project not only has impact for women and girls in this village, but it has also brought together young people who want to continue to increase the wellbeing of their community. After the YAPP grant ended, they continued to meet. Their latest initiative is the creation of a Karate club for young people in the community.

Beyond skills building, many local grant recipients were supported by hub organisations to set up bank accounts and formally register as organisations, so they would be better placed to receive funding in the future.

Hub organisations also view some of their internal changes as sustainable. For example, many point to the early Participatory Action Learning Methodology[8] (PALM) training as pivotal, shaping the way they now engage with communities and stakeholders, beyond the YAPP project.

8 PALM is an emerging practice for supporting communities to lead their own crisis/development/conflict transformation response. The process also supports advocacy for changes in institutional relationships, roles and systems that improve local ownership and decision making and enable the link between short term response. and addressing root causes of endemic social problems. Partners were trained to use a variety of tools including stakeholder identification, stakeholder analysis, consultation matrix, partnership assessment, grievance mechanisms, institutional mapping and social impact and opportunities assessments.

Peace Direct supported URU to become an officially registered organisation (the others were already registered at the start of the partnership) and that has now positioned the organisation to further its collaborations and partnerships.

Hub organisations report an increase in confidence and credibility with funders, and have secured additional funding or new partnerships, in part based on their track record with YAPP. For example, AJCAD has received further funding to continue the YAPP model, this time with a particular focus on women and women-led projects.

> **"Such flexible funding opportunities, which did not require a lot of documentation and compliance requirements, are like a breath of fresh air for us. We are a small organisation and often are not able to meet the comprehensive documentation requirements of the funding organisations…the main impact of this project was in providing our organisation with an opening. Now we are working on many projects. We are in negotiation with many donor organisations. All this was made possible because of the [YAP] Project. They believed in our idea and gave us the start which we needed."**
>
> Trans Rights Organisation, local grant recipient in Pakistan

Short-term Nature of the Funding

Survey respondents across all implementing countries queried the short-term nature of the grants (most were 1-6 months in duration), especially because many projects dealt with long-term intractable problems. There are compelling examples of projects continuing with community support, external funding, or volunteerism, with gains expected to last beyond the life of the project. However, all country evaluations indicated that there may be added benefit to considering granting in several phases over a longer period to allow those gains to be fully embedded, and to build on the increasing confidence and skills of the local grant recipients.

> **"Now we know what worked and what did not work in the first phase. If we had a second round of funding, we could build on the successful parts of our project. We now also know, which activities were not very useful, so we can stop them."**
>
> Individual grant recipient, Pakistan

Shifting Power, Accountability and Power Dynamics

Accountability to Communities

One aim of the YAPP model was to reverse the directional current of predominant accountability structures, so that Peace Direct, hub organisations and local grant recipients were as accountable to the communities in which they were operating as they were to the funder. Some evaluations had interesting approaches to try to measure the degree to which communities were invested in these projects. For example, AJCAD's evaluation measured leaders' involvement in launch and closing activities, and whether they had received reports and feedback from project implementers. This was very telling data – it showed that leaders were more engaged in social cohesion and peacebuilding projects than they were in development projects, and with 75% of leaders saying they had received feedback about the initiatives, it showed that the reporting was flowing back to the community and not only outward to Peace Direct and the donor.

In almost every evaluation, evaluators pointed to the involvement of local authorities and community leaders as key to the success of projects. Again, here, an intersectional (and intergenerational) approach was enabled. Rather than confining funding to youth-only interventions, many local grant recipients understood that for young people to be respected as key agents for peace, they needed to bring elders and others along. The flexible and responsive nature of the funding mechanism allowed for this expansion of the target audience. This was also a matter of survival – peacebuilding projects being led by marginalised young people could become targets without the protections that mainstream members of society might enjoy.

As CDA's evaluator wrote:

> **"Most of the organisations and individuals whose projects were approved were already working within the communities, as these are community-based organisations representing the communities. In a way, the projects submitted by the organisations and individuals were submitted by the communities themselves… When developing projects for promoting peace, harmony and conflict resolution in target communities, it is necessary to engage the communities in the proposal development process, not only to develop ownership of the communities but also to minimise the risk of backlash for the vulnerable and marginalised communities."**

Communities actively invested in some projects, thereby inherently increasing the need for project leaders to account for how they used those resources. In every country, there were examples of community investment: donations of land or facilities, volunteerism, authorities commissioning training as a result of campaigns, and community groups forming to oversee a newly developed project or resource. When communities invest, then they will expect a return for that investment. Most evaluations did not go deep enough to explore the ways in which communities held local grant recipients accountable. This could be an area of further research.

Aman Chaupal is a new communal space that was established in Sandan Kallan, Pakistan to promote the culture of inclusivity through dialogue and to recognise the voices of marginalised communities. Since the 1980s, mosques have replaced inclusive spaces for communal gatherings, and as a result, religious minority communities were gradually excluded from decision-making processes. The citizen-led social structures were not minority and gender inclusive, and religious minority groups were systematically side-lined.

A youth group had the idea to create a new communal space that would be open to all. A local landowner donated a piece of land for the project – worth $80,000 USD – and other community influencers donated in-kind support worth an estimated $3,800 USD for the environmentally-friendly construction of Aman Chaupal. Hive reports that "for the first time in the history of Sandan Kallan, landowners and peasants gathered for one common goal – to establish a communal and inclusive space to revive the old tradition of Chaupals (community spaces) in Punjab which has gradually disappeared". Here, youth were at the forefront of honouring a past tradition and because of this culturally rooted strategy were able to get buy-in from community elders, while simultaneously challenging the marginalisation of minority residents of the community. HIVE reported, "The idea of Chaupal was hailed by all ages, those who had witnessed the Dera (common social space) in their lifetime were enthusiastic about the prospect of a revival of such space, while young people were excited about something new happening in their village."

A variety of different discussions and events have happened in this space. For the first time in the history of the village, women's issues were discussed publicly. Poets in a poetry event shed light on various issues related to women, such as dowries and women's right to inheritance. Lower-class villagers sat together with key local influencers to discuss and participate jointly in Chaupal's management. Women were included – another first. As women saw that this space was inclusive, they began to mobilise other women in the village. As a result, women attended community discussions, which had originally been organised exclusively for a male audience.

A proposal has been put forward to the district council to replicate Aman Chaupal in all 125 union councils of district Kasur, and a local politician has this goal as part of his platform in the upcoming election.

A community association led by young women and girls in Goma, DRC received a $5,000 USD YAPP grant to train young people in tailoring. But they decided they also needed to do something more visible and tangible in the community. The young people had noticed that poor waste management was one cause of tension and conflicts between families. They mobilised the community for a neighbourhood clean-up, bringing people together across divisions and planting more than 1,000 trees. They combined this with 24 dialogue sessions and trained over 5,000 community members in peaceful cohabitation and care for the environment.

A community member said: "In my street, we always had violent exchanges between neighbours asking who should clean up our street regarding the domestic waste that was lying around here and there. Thanks to this community work, we are doing it together and are now discovering that we can all contribute to the protection of the environment in our neighbourhood."

Lastly, in partnership reviews between Peace Direct and hub organisations, a theme emerged around the novelty for local groups to be entrusted directly with funds which inspired a level of responsibility and care for the resources, as well as a pressure to demonstrate the value to the community that is not always apparent in more conventionally managed projects in the international aid sector. This respect for the ideas and energy of young peacebuilders engendered a shared sense of accountability. While the hub organisations had to work closely with inexperienced grantees to help them develop management and reporting systems, the approach started from a place of trust and was framed as capacity building to enable these young groups to access more funding in the future. This experience was not measured explicitly by the evaluators but is evidenced in part by the fact that out of 218 grants, only one case of fraud was identified.

Shifting Power

The shift in power is an ongoing journey, but through YAPP there are pockets of best practice and examples that can be built on and further researched. In Pakistan, with HIVE, there is evidence of a real shift: the primary audience for the evaluation was not Sida nor Peace Direct, nor HIVE, really – but the local grant recipients themselves. It was a gathering of lessons learned for youth peacebuilding work more than a report of how well they did. This was refreshing and illuminating and something that other hub organisations might choose to replicate in future.

Some hub organisations said that the experience with YAPP has emboldened them to call out bad practices with some international partners and funders, and to push back against INGOs that view them merely as implementing partners rather than agents in the design.

Learning and reflection session with young peacebuilders in Bamako, Mali (AJCAD)

Some of these youth-led hub organisations report a sense of increased confidence in their own vision and mission, and a greater awareness of their power and value. The experience of being the grant maker was also eye opening and gave hub organisations the confidence to approach new partnerships with donors from a more equal footing.

AJCAD's was the only evaluation that specifically measured accountability to communities. The fact that 75% of elected officials and community leaders and 86% of beneficiaries received feedback in one way or another on the initiatives implemented in their communities is evidence that the flexible funding model is beginning to find ways to share and shift power.

In CAR, communities initially expressed disbelief, and then embraced a model that entrusted local groups to implement their own solutions. It was viewed as novel and exciting, and inspired a sense of greater agency among marginalised youth. This sense of agency was expressed across the board.

Pressures on Hub Organisations

Entrusting unregistered organisations, individuals and informal associations with international funds is unusual in many contexts, and without the proper protections, it opens hub organisations to enormous amounts of pressure and potentially allegations of favouritism or nepotism. In CAR, evaluators noted that "the flexible funding mechanism experimented with by the URU hub organisation was very poorly perceived and/or misunderstood by national actors, particularly the government and sectoral stakeholders." It was initially greeted with suspicion until hub organisations worked to bring authorities on board, and communities began to see the successes and transparency of the approach.

> **"As my project moved forward and I came across more people, I started to realise that peace and conflict resolution is not just one dimensional. There are many ways we can contribute in peace and conflict resolution. Art is one of them, dialogue is another and forums for sharing their thoughts and speaking up yet another. It is not just the responsibility of governments and administration to bring peace. We all need to contribute in it."**
>
> Young individual grant recipient, Pakistan

In both CAR and DRC, hub organisations were accused of favouring certain applicants over others: nepotism is not uncommon in the implementation of international projects in a context such as Eastern DRC, and so suspicion and mistrust are very high and allegations like this are common. In Mali and elsewhere, the first round of grants was so successful that in the second round they received an overwhelming number of applications and pressure from local authorities to fund specific projects. AJCAD received 313 applications for the second round of funding and funded 36. Similarly, in CAR, URU received 294 applications for the second round of funding and funded just 22 projects.

Hub organisations protected themselves by involving community members in transparent selection processes and publishing clear grant management manuals and selection criteria. Nevertheless, these dynamics in complex conflict zones must be considered in each hub's risk assessment and project design process. Competition over resources, histories of exploitation and colonialism, entrenched conflict dynamics, widespread trauma, and high levels of distrust, mean that there is a risk that injection of funds in this manner can cause harm, particularly to hub organisations, if not managed with sensitivity and sophistication.

Summary of Country Findings

Global Summary

Total Number of Grants Awarded: 218
Total Funds Distributed: $998,823
People Reached Directly: 305,293
People Reached Indirectly: 950,375
Smallest Grant: $124
Largest Grant: $17,253

Country	Number of Grants	Average Grant Size	Smallest Grant	Largest Grant
CAR	37	$5,343	$2,232	$17,253
DRC	78	$3,940	$550	$12,000
Mali	64	$4,444	$124	$10,579
Pakistan	39	$5,370	$885	$13,213

YAPP Hub Organisations

AJCAD
(Association des Jeunes pour la Citoyenneté Active et la Démocratie), Mali

CDA
(Chanan Development Association), Pakistan

HIVE Pakistan

NPCYP
(National Partnership of Children and Youth in Peacebuilding), Democratic Republic of Congo

Organisation URU
Central African Republic

Country: Central Africa Republic
Hub organisation: URU

Grants distributed: 37, of which 7 were women-led
Total amount distributed: $197,685 USD[10]
Smallest grant: $2,232 USD
Largest grant: $17,253 USD
Average size of grant: $5,343 USD
People reached directly: 7,036

YAPP PROJECT AREAS

Context and Project Overview[9]

CAR was plunged into turmoil in 2013 when a coalition of mainly Muslim groups (Séléka) from the north of the country took power from President Bozizé. A transitional government took over in 2014, but fighting has continued between armed groups including ex-Séléka factions and anti-balaka militias (predominantly Christian militias which formed to fight Séléka). During programme implementation, two coups further destabilised the country, and the Rebels of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC)[10] attacked several towns and villages in which the YAPP programme was being rolled out, including the capital city Bangui on 13th January 2021.[11] As of June 2022, UNCHR recorded 734,923 CAR refugees in neighbouring countries and 610,265 internally displaced people.[12]

Within this context, **Uru supported a total of 37 youth-led peacebuilding organisations reaching a total of 7,036 direct beneficiaries** over the life of the project.

The locally supported initiatives aimed to address conflict drivers that were identified early on in the project and included:

1. **Lack of economic support and development –** addressed through employment and income generation projects, farming initiatives, etc.

2. **Lack of social inclusion (women, minorities, and youth in remote and ghettoised minority areas) –** addressed through projects to boost youth and women's participation in elections, inclusion of people with disabilities in peacebuilding processes, etc.

3. **Interreligious tension due to a lack of credible information –** addressed through Muslim and Christian dialogue projects, integration of IDP children into schools, and community sports events

9 Grants were distributed in local currency. This report uses estimated USD exchange rates
10 Comprised of Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC), Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC), Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R), Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) and the two anti-balaka branches- https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/final-report-panel-experts-central-african-republic-extended-4
11 https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/4/car-rebels-seize-central-town-of-bangassou
12 https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/car

4. **Absence of state control and justice –** addressed through campaigns against child marriage, initiatives to obtain legal documentation for children, etc

5. **Poor understanding of the peace agreement –** addressed through awareness raising campaigns and support for young female conflict survivors to become peace ambassadors

6. **Lack of support for youth leadership, networking and collaboration –** addressed through URU's collective capacity building and networking activities

Evaluation Methodology

URU's evaluators structured the data collection using OECD's framework of relevance, coherence, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. In addition, they looked at the themes of communication, gender equality, and inclusion – particularly of people with disabilities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent was there gender equality in the implementation of the project?
2. How has the project fostered inclusion, including people with disabilities?
3. RELEVANCE – is the intervention doing the right things?
4. COHERENCE – how well does the intervention fit?
5. EFFECTIVENESS – is the intervention achieving its objectives?
6. EFFICIENCY- how well are resources being used?
7. IMPACT – what are the significant changes as a result of YAPP?
8. SUSTAINABILITY – Will the benefits last?
9. How effective was the communication strategy?

DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

- Semi-structured interviews (86 – 54 men and 32 women)
- 9 focus groups Estimated 81 (8-10/group)
- Document review

MEANS OF ANALYSIS

- Quantitative

LOCAL METHODS TO LEARN FROM

- An in-depth gender analysis that identified gaps and made distinctions between regional approaches to inclusion of women and girls

The approach was participatory and iterative, involving URU's project team, Peace Direct staff, young grant recipients, project participants and members of the impacted communities at large. The evaluators developed three instruments – one to interview URU staff involved in the project, a second interview guide for local grant recipients and those directly involved in small projects, and a third guide for local authorities and community members.

Country: Central Africa Republic
Hub organisation: URU

Key Findings

RELEVANCE

The local initiatives addressed social cohesion, peacebuilding, the fight against gender-based violence and income generation. All of which directly relate to several key pillars in CAR's National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan 2017-2021.

Flexibility, combined with close accompaniment of URU's team allowed local grant recipients to adapt to the shifting security, political and health context.

COHERENCE

The programme was compatible with a sensitisation campaign involving youth and related to the Khartoum Peace Agreement on secularism, citizenship, and the culture of peace organized by the Human Rights Division of MINUSCA.

- The programme complemented related projects implemented by INGOs in the country (for e.g., Search for Common Ground, War Child UK, etc)

EFFECTIVENESS

80% of youth interviewed confirmed that the programme effectively contributed to creating opportunities for their participation in the peacebuilding and youth empowerment processes at both local and national levels.

- The main strengths of the project lay in the involvement of the local grant recipients (youth associations) in the execution of their own initiatives, as well as community ownership and involvement of local authorities. These were key features of the funding model design

EFFICIENCY

- The budget and project were managed efficiently, with 94% of activities and spending carried out as planned. One case of suspected fraud from among 39 awarded grants was detected and is currently before the court.

IMPACT

- A large majority of those interviewed credited URU and YAPP with contributing toward peace and social cohesion. In Mbaiki, for example, 82% of people interviewed believed that URU had directly contributed toward improved relations between Christians and Muslims, and a reduction in discrimination against the AKA Pygmy community

- 80% of respondents observed positive changes in the behaviour of young people who used to engage in banditry, motorcycle robbery, etc.

- Testimonies collected during focus groups with project participants report "cases of armed robbery, GBV, and vandalism of public buildings have decreased considerably thanks to the awareness-raising and capacity-building activities carried out by the various youth initiatives."

- A member of the local authority in Bangui testified that vigilantism and intolerance of the Muslim community are reducing, leaving more room for "conventional justice, local harmony, and cultural and religious pluralism".

SUSTAINABILITY

- Community ownership – a key ingredient of sustainability – was built through:
  - The early involvement of local authorities and community leaders in project implication
  - The involvement of young people themselves in designing and implementing projects through their youth associations that met the needs in their communities
  - Regular contact with the communities through community focal points
  - Investment in the communities, with income generating activities
  - The capacity building of local grant recipients to support them to reach their full potential
  - While these are all signals that many projects have a chance at sustainability, many of the projects are still fragile and need more support to be embedded in communities.

GENDER EQUALITY

- Despite intentional efforts to include women, only 21% of project beneficiaries were women and 7 of the 37 initiatives were led by women. This is an area that is still weak, given that women make up 51% of the population. A young woman in Bossangoa explained some of the obstacles to involving women: "In Bossangoa, a woman must ask her husband for permission to participate in a community activity outside the home. That explains the low participation levels of women in our project."

INCLUSION

- The innovative funding model, according to URU's evaluators "involved women and youth who until now had had limited formal involvement in conflict management and peacebuilding processes in CAR."
- Projects in Mbaïki were more successful at inclusion of marginalised groups such as young women, religious ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities. This included 577 youth with hearing impairments, 20 ex-combatants, and 900 Fulani[13].

COMMUNICATION

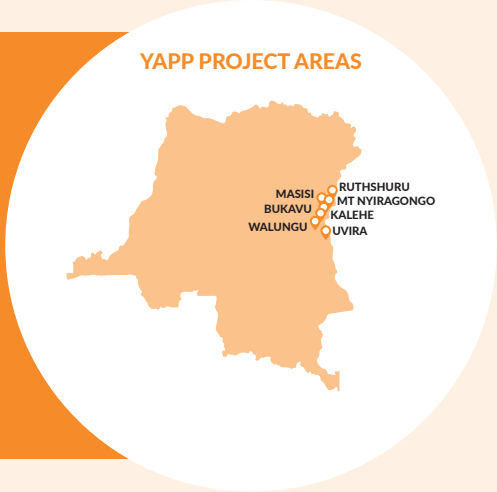
- While not an initial component of the project, URU used radio and television broadcasts to raise the profile of dynamic youth peacebuilders and this was identified as a key ingredient to success. The impact could have been enhanced by a well-formulated communication strategy.

> **"By involving young people as beneficiaries of the project, they have become aware that they can contribute to the development process in their neighbourhood. The IGAs [income generating activities] have allowed them to have daily activities and to benefit from the income generated by these activities. The action of the young people has reassured the local authorities and the community of their commitment to peace."**
>
> URU's evaluation report

13 Fulani are one of the world's largest nomadic groups. In CAR they have been involved in Muslim/Christian clashes as well as in conflict with farmers and have been targeted in massacres.

Country: Democratic Republic of Congo
Hub Organisation: NPCYP

Grants distributed: 76
Total amount distributed: $307,309 USD
Smallest grant: $550 USD
Largest grant: $12,000 USD
Average size of grant: $3,940 USD
People reached directly: 20,837
People reached indirectly: 312,555



Context and Project Overview

Eastern DRC continues to be destabilised by a toxic mix of interethnic conflict, weak governance, land disputes and poor resource management. There are an estimated 122 active armed groups in Eastern Congo, with three million people forcibly displaced in 2021 – a 170% increase over the same period in the previous year.[14]

In May 2021, the government declared a state of siege in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu, with the proclaimed aim of 'eradicating' the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Despite being intended as a temporary measure, the state of siege remains in place. This instability was exacerbated during the project implementation by natural disasters and a series of health epidemics: outbreaks of Ebola, cholera, and measles alongside Covid put pressure on a weak health system.

Torrential rains and floods destroyed 26,000 homes, while the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in May 2021 displaced 400,000 people, and left 195,000 without access to safe water.[15]

In the first half of 2022, rising tensions with Rwanda over the resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23), defeated by the FARDC in 2012, have closed the borders and put strain on the interconnected trade corridors, cutting off many people's livelihoods.

UNHCR estimates that over 160,000 people had been driven from their homes in Nyiragongo and Rutshuru territories by fighting between the FARDC and M23 as of July 2022.[16]

Within this context, NPCYP distributed a total of 76 small and micro grants to 72 separate youth-led and youth-centred initiatives, reaching a total of 20,837 people directly and an estimated 312,555 people indirectly over the life of the programme.

The locally-supported initiatives aimed to address conflict drivers that were identified early on in the project and included:

1. **Lack of employment opportunities, food insecurity and lack of development** - addressed through vocational training, collective pig breeding bringing Hutu, Tutsi and Hunde together, etc

14 UNICEF, DRC Annual Situation Report, 2021 https://www.unicef.org/media/116276/file/DRC-Annual-Humanitarian-SitRep-31-December-2021.pdf
15 Ibid
16 https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/briefing/2022/7/62da4d724/unhcr-gravely-concerned-death-toll-displaced-dr-congos-east.html

2. **Inter-ethnic and inter-communal tensions –** addressed through radio plays tackling conflict themes, intercommunal dialogues, establishment of community conflict resolution mechanisms, etc

3. **Exclusion of youth from decision making –** addressed through mechanisms for students to relate to university administrators, formation of local youth councils, dialogues between youth and authorities, etc

4. **Lack of effective Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) –** addressed through beekeeping, communal agricultural and vocational activities for former combatants

5. **Perception of youth as violent actors –** addressed through dialogue (between youth and police and between demobilised youth and community members), young artists using art for peace messages, etc

6. **Lack of safe spaces –** addressed through creation of an inclusive "peace hut," intercultural peace dance competition, community-based trauma healing, etc

7. **Land –** addressed through helping youth legally register and access land titles

Evaluation Methodology

According to the evaluators, the purpose of their evaluation was to facilitate learning spaces, to capture innovations in response to conflict, and to identify indigenous methods of monitoring and evaluation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Has the project opened new avenues for youth participation and empowerment at local and national levels?
2. Were there positive changes in community behaviours and perceptions?
3. Did the funding mechanism promote peacebuilding and prevent or resolve conflicts?
4. Was there improved organisational capacity of funded youth groups and NPCYP?
5. Was there community ownership of supported initiatives?
6. How do the results link to the initial context mapping at the beginning of the project?

DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

- Interviews (11)
- Focus Groups (68 (39 men, 29 women)
- Surveys (198 (105 men, 93 women)
- Document Review (0)

MEANS OF ANALYSIS

- SPSS 21.0 and qualitative analysis of key themes, five case study examples

LOCAL METHODS TO LEARN FROM

- Reached a large number of respondents through surveys and focus groups in spite of limited time, achieving a very high survey response rate (198 / 200)

The evaluation covered six out of eight zones of the project (Maisisi, Rutshuru, Nyiragongo, Goma, Uvira, and Kalehe) in North and South Kivu. It used individual interviews, focus groups and surveys to gather data. Evaluators also did a thorough review of all project documentation, manuals and reports.

Surveys were distributed to 200 young people who had been directly involved with the project. Six focus groups of 9-12 people were organised, one in each project implementation zone. The focus groups consisted of a mix of youth beneficiaries, local authorities, members of the local community and representatives from local civil society organisations. In addition, the evaluators interviewed 11 members of NPCYP staff.

Country: Democratic Republic of Congo
Hub organisation: NPCYP

Key Findings

NEW AVENUES FOR YOUTH

- Young people reported that members of their communities were now trusting them. The evaluators' analysis was that this was "due to the fact that they [the youth] were given flexible funds to implement their own initiatives…that their expectations for changes in youth empowerment were met after implementation, that their conflict resolution capacities were strengthened at the local level, and most importantly that they had proven that they can be responsible for changes in their communities if they have the means."
- NPCYP facilitated opportunities for CSOs and youth-led groups to meet with local authorities, politicians, military and other actors to express their views on peacebuilding.

> **"Within our communities, youth are treated with all the negative labels that have been attached to their tarnished identity for over twenty years. The affiliation of youth to armed groups and gangs is motivated by several parameters related to the daily challenges of the community: poverty, unemployment, the history of tribal conflicts....**
>
> **Nevertheless, in all this trouble, these youth have remained dynamic by joining several initiatives of the youth peacemaker groups, despite the fact that they have remained the most discriminated against due to this identity stuck to them.**
>
> **YAPP has given these youth the opportunity to change this narrative by proving that they are capable of responding to various challenges at the local level"**
>
> Erasme-Eraste Serume, NPCYP Research and MEAL manager

POSITIVE CHANGES

- 99.5% of the 198 young project participants surveyed expressed satisfaction with the YAPP activities that took place in their communities.
- 98% of the young respondents agreed or strongly agreed that YAPP has strengthened social cohesion within their community while mitigating community conflicts and disputes. Examples of this were offered in the focus groups, including one example where the Peace Hut had succeeded in amicably resolving a land boundary dispute.
- 88.3% of the young respondents said that YAPP had improved their livelihoods. 73.7% had taken part in income-generating activities in the six months preceding the evaluation, many of which were a result of YAPP funded interventions.
- 98% of the young respondents reported sharing conflict resolution methods that they had learned through YAPP with friends, colleagues, classmates and family members.
- Success stories demonstrated positive conflict transformation, young people's financial autonomy, youth commitment to peaceful cohabitation, and youth involvement in peacebuilding processes.

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

- 88.9% of the young respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with NPCYP's capacity building and management of the project.

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

- 45.5% of youth reported spending $10 USD or more of their own money (some earned through YAPP funded income generation activities) to support peacebuilding in their communities. 10.6% of the 198 young people surveyed reported spending over $50 USD.

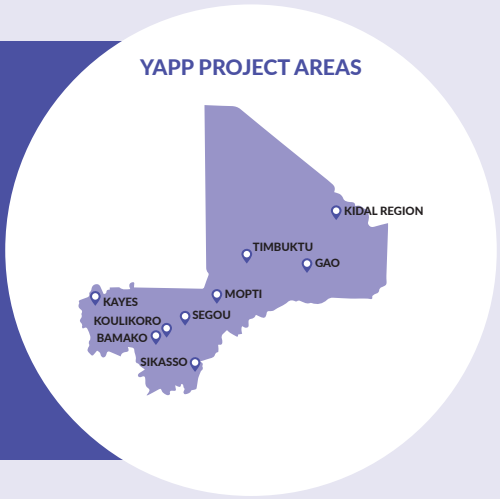
LINK WITH CONTEXT MAPPING

- Young people's ability to generate income is inextricably linked with their ability and commitment to contributing to peace in their communities. While conventional funding streams have historically separated peacebuilding and livelihood programming, NPCYP's evaluation has demonstrated that when youth participants had livelihood options, peacebuilding and social cohesion was a priority for many of them, and viable employment was an avenue toward more peaceful life choices.

> **"The study found that the flexible funding mechanism…has allowed marginalised youth with limited access to financial resources to carry out their own actions that are considered priorities for the stabilisation of their provinces. This has allowed the funded structures to mentor youth for their own empowerment, and then these youth can contribute to peacebuilding in their communities by promoting positive conflict transformation methods. It should be noted that in all the areas evaluated, the impacts of these interventions are visible with the success stories identified among the youth participants in the program."**
>
> NPCYP Evaluation

Country: Mali
Hub Organisation: AJCAD

Grants distributed: 64, all of which included at least one woman in the project leadership team
Total amount distributed: $284,394 USD
Smallest grant: $124 USD
Largest grant: $10,579 USD
Average size of grant: $4,444 USD
People reached directly: 261,429



Context and Project Overview

Mali's 2012 coup threw the country into disarray and since then the country has experienced a significant deterioration in all development sectors. The insecurity primarily has affected the centre and north of the republic, harming the economy and the private sphere, and disrupting access to basic education, health, and civic protection.

The coup also opened the way for Islamist militant groups to take control of the north of the country, provoking international military intervention – mainly from France. In August 2020, the president was forced to resign in a military coup, and then again in late May 2021 the interim transitional civilian government was forced out. Violent killings surged in 2021, with over 370,000 people displaced, according to UNHCR.[17]

Corruption and impunity are rampant, with a deep-seated mistrust between the population and the state. Regular droughts further destabilise a fragile economy, and Covid has added pressure to an already struggling health system.

Within this context the youth-led organisation AJCAD supported **a total of 64 initiatives over the life of the YAP Programme,** of which some were disbursed on an emergency track to respond to an urgent need from communities. The projects implemented over 996 distinct activities, and reached over 261,429 people, of whom 219,069 were women or girls. The initiatives aimed to address conflict drivers that were identified early on in the project and included:

1. **Absence of the state –** weak governance, rampant corruption, lack of access to the justice system and mistrust between the state and the population is at the root of much of the violence. In some areas, people see armed groups as defending them against an abusive and poorly disciplined national military. Examples of initiatives that responded to this include anti-trafficking training for local chiefs, leadership and governance training for youth, and debates and public meetings between national military/police and youth.

17 https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/mli

2. **Lack of local investment and employment opportunities –** young people have very few viable work opportunities. They then see the "luxurious living" of members of armed groups and are attracted to that option as an alternative. This was addressed by regeneration of a community garden, creation of a fish farm, communal repair of a dike to regulate irrigation to rice fields and more.

3. **Manipulation of youth for political purposes –** addressed by fighting fake news through training journalists to verify information and training young people in citizenship and conflict resolution.

4. **Exclusion of youth from decision-making –** addressed by the creation of a youth neighbourhood watch to reduce banditry and violent incidents in a community.

5. **Rivalries between social groups –** there are conflicts between farmers and cattle ranchers, between internally displaced people and host communities, between state actors and the population, and more. Examples of projects that addressed this include inter-caste dialogues on slavery, a journalism project investigating conflict between farmers and herders, and street theatre.

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation aimed to assess the participation and accountability of elected officials and community leaders; the relevance and the quality of the implementation approach from the point of view of young project participants and community members; and any changes within the target communities as a result of the project.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What was the relevance and the quality of the implementation approach from the point of view of the beneficiaries and community members?
2. Were there any changes within the target communities as a result of the project?
3. What was the participation and accountability of elected officials and community leaders?

DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

- Surveys (36 community leaders and elected officials)
- Video (180 community members and activity participants (81 women and 99 men)

MEANS OF ANALYSIS

- Quantitative

LOCAL METHODS TO LEARN FROM

- Use of video to establish baseline and then track progress
- Indicators used to measure community leaders' engagement and local grant recipients' accountability to communities

The evaluators designed two questionnaires – one for opinion leaders and the other for project participants and members of the communities in which the initiatives were carried out. The surveys were conducted by three teams, with two people per team. After a day-long training of the teams, they were deployed to all project areas to conduct the surveys. This included the regions of Bamako, Gao, Kidal Timbuktu, Koulikoro, Segou, Kayes, Sikasso and Mopti.

In addition, the evaluators created a series of videos to document change stories and lessons learned, and to build on a video that was created after the first phase of the project.

Key Findings

PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO ELECTED OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

- 89% of community leaders and elected officials knew the YAP project leader in their community and 92% had received a presentation or introduction of the activities before they began.
- 75% of elected officials and community leaders received feedback in one way or another on the projects implemented by youth in their communities – through feedback meetings, sharing of activity reports and informal feedback. The evaluator suggested as an area for improvement to enhance mechanisms for collecting the opinions and ideas of community leaders as well as feeding back to them.
- Leaders were most engaged and involved in social cohesion and peacebuilding projects, as compared to income generating projects. Evaluators interpreted this and other responses to indicate that peace and social cohesion were community priorities.

RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

- 97% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the projects' implementation approach
- 94% of community members surveyed found that the initiatives were relevant, contextualised and provided a solution to a community problem.
- The evaluators found a direct positive correlation between community members' perception of relevance of peace and social cohesion projects, and the degree to which those projects were adapted to the local context.
- For peace and social cohesion initiatives (70% of total portfolio): 74% said that the initiatives fit their expectation in terms of content, length and themes.
- For emergency grants (14% of total portfolio), 57% of those surveyed said that a needs assessment would be good to carry out.

CHANGES WITHIN TARGET COMMUNITiES

- Surveyed community members and project participants reported[18] increased skills in:
  - being a peace ambassador (48%)
  - organising social dialogues (35%)
  - conducting advocacy (8%)
  - conducting livelihood activities (8%) as a result of the initiatives.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO COMMUNITIES

- 86% of survey respondents received feedback, mostly through small meetings, at the end of project implementation. Feeding back to communities was one of the recommendations that came out of the evaluation of the first phase, and it is evident this was improved in the second phase.
- The integration of the recommendations from the first phase allowed for a significant improvement related to the involvement of community leaders and accountability to stakeholders.

> **"The initiatives were adapted to the Malian context... Those that had a direct link to building a culture of peace and social cohesion presented the best outcomes in all criteria. The initiative leaders' work in terms of design has resulted in a better match between the needs of the communities and the initiatives implemented. This approach should be maintained to have a 100% alignment of future projects."**
>
> AJCAD Evaluation

18 In this survey question, respondents were only given an option of selecting one of these four choices, so respondents may have indicated increased skills in multiple areas if given the opportunity

Country: Pakistan
Hub Organisations: CDA and HIVE

Grants distributed: 39, of which 10 were women-led
Total amount distributed: $209,434 USD
Smallest grant: $885 USD
Largest grant: $13,213 USD
Average size of grant: $5,370 USD
People reached directly: 15,991

YAPP PROJECT AREAS

Context and Project Overview

Pakistan is one of the youngest countries in the world, with more than 64 percent of the population under the age of 33. Where this provides an opportunity to achieve fast economic growth and development, it poses serious threats of deepening fault lines in a country that already faces multi-pronged conflicts and hosts extremist ideologies centred around competing sects, ethnicities, religion, and hyper masculinity.

Extremist narratives have gained significant popularity among the middle-class urbanised youth over the last couple of decades. This stems from the state-sponsored populist narratives that feed on the extremist discourses for political gains, and deteriorating socio-economic conditions such as unemployment, widespread corruption, and mistrust in the democratic and justice system.

There have been instances when youth from relatively affluent backgrounds have either directly or indirectly been part of the violence against marginalised segments of the society including religious and sectarian minorities, ethnic groups, and women. Attacks and systematic discrimination against Hazara Shia, Christian, Sikh and Hindu communities have intensified in recent years.[19]

> **"Peacebuilding efforts need to be directed at young people in urban centres in particular, who have access to the most modernised tools to connect with their respective communities, and the wider world. In the presence of the populist politics in Pakistan that feeds on the polarisation of the society, it becomes even more important to engage young people from diverse backgrounds in peacebuilding efforts to neutralise the impact of extremist narratives on them. Young people have time and again exhibited radicalisation or latent tendencies to radicalisation in Pakistan in the form of hate speech as well as direct action against the dissenters, people belonging to different groups and have showed acute vulnerability towards falling for conspiracy theories that frame 'others' as evil and have led them to take extreme actions such as lynching, killing, and perpetrating violence."**
>
> HIVE YAPP Evaluation/AJCAD Evaluation

19 Excerpted from CDA and HIVE's evaluations

The dynamics of violence against minorities and intolerance in the society are extremely complex, as motives of politics, sectarianism, economics, and crime overlap with historical forces. Pakistani society has many fault lines, such as a sectarian divide, ethnic lines and religious intolerance. Ethnic conflict has also been seen in the province of Balochistan, where a separatist movement has driven violence against "outsiders." Disharmony exists between many communities in Pakistan, and this is frequently exploited for political gain.[20]

Within this context, YAPP in Pakistan was administered by two separate hub organisations – Chanan Development Association (CDA) and HIVE.

CDA distributed a total of 20 grants to individuals, informal and formal community groups. They supported 10 individuals and 10 organisations for 3 to 6-month long projects. Collectively, **these initiatives reached 3,991 people directly and 605,621 people indirectly.** The large number of people reached indirectly was a result of innovative use of media, citizen journalism and social media campaigns leveraged to have the broadest impact possible. On the request of the local grant recipients, the project name was changed from "Youth Action for Peace" to "*Amn Rang*" which means "Colours of Peace."

Meanwhile, **HIVE distributed a total of 19 grants over the life of the project, reaching** 12,000 direct beneficiaries and 22,199 indirect beneficiaries across 10 cities. 14 of the 19 funded groups had never received a grant before. 40% were women-led, 65% were led by marginalised people. Eight of these projects have secured further support and continue to operate. Due to distrust in communities of international projects, HIVE renamed the initiative the "Simurg Fund." Simurg is a mythical bird that comes to the rescue of those who call for it.

The initiatives aimed to address conflict drivers that were identified early on in the project and included:

1. **Lack of economic opportunities and skills development has contributed to radicalisation of youth –** addressed through creation of a computer centre to develop skills and provide a safe space for dialogue, job skills training for Shia women and Christian girls, and a Rapid Response fund for 40 Afghan refugee families

2. **Lack of productive platforms/networks for youth (both for advocacy and to counter extremist views) –** addressed by animated videos and a social media campaign to promote inclusion of marginalised youth and to raise awareness of the impact of discrimination, and the creation of an inclusive community centre for dialogue and traditional forms of conflict resolution

3. **The weak government education system and curriculum contributes to limiting the identity and critical thinking of young people –** addressed through youth champions countering hate speech and fake news through social media, girl-led action to provide solar panels for girls' schools, training for religious seminary students in peace and nonviolent communication to counter religious extremism, and critical thinking and debate competitions with madrassa and urban youth.

4. **Interreligious and inter-ethnic tension and violence have caused mistrust and fear –** addressed through diversity Baithaks (traditional gatherings) and community dialogues to challenge stereotypes of other religious communities, a telefilm on local cable channels to promote peace, and a creative arts project with Afghan refugees and host communities to counter extremist values.

20 https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2016/06/attacks-minorities-understanding-intercommunal-violence-pakistan-160614110134028.html

5. **Exclusion of women and minorities (those with disabilities, as well as Afghan refugees and other minority communities) have been causes of tension –** addressed by training citizen reporters to write stories on oppressed religious minorities, filmmaking highlighting discrimination against girls and transgender women, an art exhibit to highlight atrocities suffered by Hazara families, and a "DisInfo Lab" to tackle online hate speech and misinformation
6. **Lack of capacity** particularly in project design, monitoring and evaluation of peacebuilding interventions. To address this, the two hub organisations hosted skills auctions, facilitated mandatory skills exchanges between local grant recipients, and held a series of trainings and conferences to exchange best practices.

Chanan Development Association

Evaluation Methodology

CDA's evaluation was primarily a qualitative evaluation based on semi-structured interviews and a thorough document review. The evaluation reviewed the project's effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What was the impact and relevance of thematic areas (countering hate speech, gender, inclusion, social cohesion, peaceful co-existence, harmony) and project interventions in the overall context of peacebuilding?
2. How did community engagement enhance ownership of project interventions, and does it contribute to sustainability?
3. How did CDA's internal systems support youth organisations and individuals and what improvements can be made to better support young peacebuilders (financially and technically)?

DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

- Semi-structured interviews (19)
- Document review

MEANS OF ANALYSIS

- Identification of themes and 5 Stories of Change case studies

LOCAL METHODS TO LEARN FROM

- Use of stories of change to capture unexpected outcomes and intersectional results

Evaluators developed an in-depth interview tool with CDA's feedback and input. The findings of this qualitative study were based on 19 key informant interviews with six randomly selected subgrantee organisations, six randomly selected individual grant recipients, five key stakeholders, and 2 CDA staff members.

Key Findings

IMPACT AND RELEVANCE

- The programme successfully promoted youth leadership from vulnerable and marginalised communities. 13 of the 20 grants were awarded to organisations and individuals including young women, religious and ethnic minorities, and transgender persons. The projects placed marginalised groups at the forefront of peacebuilding.

- The programme proved to be a catalyst for youth participation and brought forward new leadership in communities. For example, members of a youth-led transgender organisation reported that YAPP opened new avenues for influencing and relating to government and other civil society actors. Another project saw young people stepping forward to successfully resolve a years-long dispute between Sunni and Shia Muslims in their community.

- CDA and local grant recipients found that the results of the project often exceeded expectations. Some unintended results included:
  - youth peace champions negotiating peace between different sects in Rajanpur
  - young people managing to convince families to end decade old rivalries which had led to many killings
  - an animation movie shown on a mainstream TV channel and BBC Urdu
  - a transgender young person now working in the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Islamabad

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Since the local grant recipients were already from target communities, there was significant community ownership and engagement in project implementation and activities. This was reflected in the interviews not only with local grant recipients, but also with stakeholders and beneficiaries.

- Discussions with the respondents revealed that the projects have been able to achieve results which are not only sustainable but also contributed to "bringing very positive changes in the society," according to the evaluator.

CDA'S INTERNAL SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT TO GRANT RECIPIENTS

- The transparency, flexibility, and consultative nature of the advertising, identification and selection process resulted in high numbers of applicants and enabled selection of the best and most relevant project ideas.

- Selection prioritised innovative ideas over organisational capacity. This unique approach was much appreciated by interview respondents as it enabled youth and marginalised groups to benefit from funding that they otherwise would not have had access to.

- Local grant recipients have implemented some very innovative projects and have also been able to achieve significant results. However, some of them found it difficult to articulate those results and their long-term impact in the community. Along with building capacity in project management, financial management and reporting, capacity development efforts should include capturing and documenting the long-term social impact of the projects.
- The support and facilitation provided by the CDA team during implementation was appreciated by all partners. The partners were provided with swift and supportive responses to the queries and offered technical assistance whenever required. The support from CDA to local grant recipients was instrumental to the success of the project.
- Local grant recipients with limited institutional systems reported significant improvement in their capacities as a result of YAPP.
- Respondents felt the interventions needed to continue for a longer period in the community in order to increase sustainability.

An artist traumatised by the killing of a family member during a massacre in her Hazara community in Pakistan, began using her art and drawings as a way of processing her trauma. With a small YAPP grant, she was able to invite others with similar experiences to join her. They listened to others in their community and reflected this in artwork that went on to be exhibited nationally to raise awareness of what was happening to their people. This exposure led to further opportunities and the young artist is now looked to as a leader and role model.

Painting by a young artist titled 'Fragile Hope', inspired by a photo of a sit-in of grieving mothers, sisters and daughters mourning the loss of family members after an explosion rocked a Hazara town. The girl depicted in the centre is in mourning yet still holds a sense of hope.

HIVE

Evaluation Methodology

The focus of this qualitative evaluation was primarily to harvest key lessons learned during the project implementation phase, and to elicit strategies that worked and those that did not. HIVE's evaluation was markedly different from the others, in that it centred the local grant recipients as the primary audience, and focused on learning and best practice.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How to engage young people in efforts to build a peaceful society
2. How to make peacebuilding efforts inclusive
3. How to create ownership of peacebuilding activities among youth
4. How to expand a peacebuilding network over the long term

DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

- Semi-structured interviews (22)
- Document review

MEANS OF ANALYSIS

- Strengths-based evaluation eliciting advice and learning

LOCAL METHODS TO LEARN FROM

- Use of WhatsApp, voice notes, and video messages as alternate forms of reporting and evidence gathering
- A power-sharing evaluation approach that centred local grant recipients as the primary audience

An external consultant conducted 22 semi-structured interviews with organisers, facilitators, the project implementing team, coalition partners and project participants. The interviews were based on an interview guide developed in collaboration with HIVE, with some input from Peace Direct. The consultant also reviewed all project reports, documents, proposals and HIVE field notes. Despite Covid restrictions, he was able to make in-person visits to record stories and make field observations to better understand the specificities of particular contexts.

The consultant, an academic and development researcher was also on the team of one of the YAPP local grant recipients, the DisInfo Lab. In consultation with Peace Direct, HIVE decided to hire this consultant for his insider/outsider perspective. He had been a part of the initial earlier scoping and evaluation work for the project, had participated in HIVE's networking and capacity building activities, and therefore had already built not only an understanding of the project and its aims, but also trusted relationships with other local grant recipients, enabling him to go deeper in the evaluative process.

Engaging external consultants with no prior knowledge of the power-shifting aims of this programme can result in a more traditional top-down evaluation, as evidenced by the more conventional approaches taken by some of the local evaluators in other YAPP countries. In contrast, this strengths-based evaluation elicited key lessons learned from the interviewees, by asking them for strategies that worked, and posing questions that drew out their advice and learning. Unlike the other evaluations, HIVE's evaluation focused on practical lessons that will be helpful to others engaging in similar initiatives. The lessons draw from on-the-ground experience of youth peacebuilders.

Key Findings

HOW TO ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE

- **Engage with diverse stakeholders in the local communities, not just young people.** Engaging community elders, local influential figures, and heads of households builds trust and buy-in, since decision-making in Pakistani households is generally not solely an individual decision.
- **Finding allies within the community is essential to attracting young people:** Working with people youth already trust expedites the peacebuilding process and reduces time needed to mobilise.

> "We reached out to key stakeholders in our community to engage with the young girls. Lyari has a history of gang wars, and families are particularly cautious about where they are sending their daughters and sisters. We spoke to the families, particularly fathers who are usually the household heads. We earned their trust and then they were willing to send their daughters to our workshops."
>
> Project Director, Lyari Women Community Forum

HOW TO PROMOTE INCLUSION

- **Appropriate and culturally sensitive language is key to successfully engaging communities:** For example, rather than "feminism", in Pakistan it is better to say "a movement to uphold women's rights". Or rather than "religion-based extremism", it is better to frame it as marginalisation faced by religious minorities.
- The Participatory Action Learning Methodology (PALM) helped local grant recipients learn from marginalised communities and design project activities that placed an emphasis on inclusion.
- Mobilisation and inclusion of minority communities, women and transgender groups was initially difficult because of the innate fear among these communities of being labelled as the dissenters. Continuous attempts at building trust with excluded groups proved to be instrumental towards ensuring their participation.
- **Meaningful inclusion requires trust and time.** Listening to minority communities, recognising bias and relearning new perspectives are essential ingredients of inclusive processes.

HOW TO FOSTER OWNERSHIP

- Fostering youth ownership of the initiatives leads to greater impact
- Simurg Fund allowed local grant recipients to initiate innovative ideas with complete autonomy.
- If people are engaged in the conceptualisation and execution of an initiative, they show enthusiasm and keen interest. Co-creation, believing their voice is heard and that they have meaningfully contributed, boosts the interest of young people involved in project activities.
- Innovative ideas – such as street theatre, debate competitions, and storytelling --- are more likely to generate youth ownership and investment in projects.
- Proactive use of social media platforms helps engage and sustain youth interest.
- Helping nascent youth and women-led groups register and become eligible for longer-term funding increases the likelihood of sustainability.

HOW TO EXPAND A PEACEBUILDING NETWORK

- Understand key aspects of belonging and identity formation of the emerging network of young peacebuilders to harvest growth and bolster the network.
- Engage and collaborate with diverse partners to scale up efforts.
- Bridge the intergenerational gap by promoting dialogue between youth and people from older generations.
- HIVE Pakistan provided support and technical assistance throughout the implementation phase, creating an eco-system of peacebuilders and linking them to resources to create long lasting impact.
- Some projects are continuing, and others are trying to build coalitions and partnerships to grow their work. A WhatsApp group of partners is still highly active.

Conclusion

Peace Direct believes that those who are directly impacted by conflict are best placed to seek out, design and implement solutions, if only they are afforded the resources, decision-making power, and space to do so. YAPP's flexible funding model enabled 218 emerging peace actors– whether individuals, informal groups, or registered organisations – to design and manage innovative peace projects that were grounded in their own lived experience of conflict, embedded in their communities, and adapted to rapidly changing and nuanced local conflict dynamics. Communities were astonished that such informal and relatively inexperienced groups would be entrusted with international funds, and with only one exception, local grant recipients and their communities rose to the challenge, held one another accountable and created ripple effects, often far beyond what was initially envisioned.

Communities stepped up and contributed land, volunteer time, and even money to expand the impact of the young peacebuilders' ideas. Some youth who would never have accessed funding through conventional means now have bank accounts and legal registrations and some have secured grants from new funding sources to continue their work. Not every project has continued, but the YAPP model is one that has clearly inspired community investment.

Young people have grown in confidence and skill, and in every country, there are reports of youth being increasingly seen as agents of peace rather than violence. Whether through community mediations, neighbourhood watch initiatives, youth councils, government advisory boards, or innovative art projects, emerging young peacebuilders have been elevated into positions of leadership and visibility as a result of YAPP. YAPP has been as much about investing in people and ideas as it has been about investing in peacebuilding initiatives.

Key Ingredients of Success

Peace Direct and its local hub organisation partners learned many valuable lessons over the course of the programme, notably:

1. **The flexibility of the funding model is essential to supporting emerging young peacebuilders.** The overall programme did not have a strict log frame or predetermined outcomes and outputs to adhere to. As a result:

    - The model enabled hub organisations to prioritise applicant qualities that pointed to likely success within each context, rather than imported criteria. As URU said, "Young people have initiatives, but they lack the technical and financial support that would allow them to flourish." The flexibility of the model allowed good ideas to flourish and be tested.

    - The flexible model built trust, not only between hub organisations and Peace Direct, but also between hub organisations and local grant recipients. People are working in conflict zones and highly stressful situations, so when an INGO or hub organisation can be flexible, it helps to de-stress and facilitates better understanding of the challenges on the ground, both of which lead to more impactful and creative implementation.

    - The model provided a framework for ensuring that hub organisations could respond to their changing context and specific local challenges. HIVE wrote, "The flexible grant structure and more autonomy for the programme direction helped HIVE Pakistan to carry out the programme more efficiently and in the context of local needs."

    - The flexible model also seemed to inspire some local peacebuilders to step up to find ways to attract community investment and look for creative ways to sustain the impact beyond the life of the project. NPCYP wrote: "Because the YAPP implementation methodology is an innovation in the partnership system in the DRC, it attracts more youth to want to collaborate with NPCYP and youth commit to more sustainable actions that require sufficient time to bring about change."

2. **Accompaniment from hub organisations is an essential component of the flexible funding approach.** If hub organisations are to use their understanding of the local context to select promising and emerging young peacebuilders, it will mean that often these young people will not yet have the experience in project management and reporting that is usually required of grant recipients. Some of the most successful and sustainable grants were given to people with good ideas and credibility within their communities, but without any prior experience managing projects. Capacity to write a proposal or to write reports was not part of the selection criteria. Hub organisations mentored applicants, answered questions, and helped them to craft their ideas into realistic and achievable projects. They drew on local grant recipients' strengths, inviting them to share the skills they had with one another, and they invested a lot of staff time in both formal and often informal skill building.

3. **The flexible funding model allowed due diligence to be more broadly and appropriately defined.** Rather than relying on conventional documentation and governance requirements, this model centred hub organisations' knowledge of local dynamics to assess the validity of an applicant's idea and their credibility within their community. The result was accountability, not only to hub organisations and funders, but as importantly, to communities and key stakeholders.

4. **Accountability to local communities is a stepping-stone to sustainability.** The Participative Action Learning Methodology (PALM) revolutionised hub organisations' thinking about how to involve key stakeholders in planning and project design. The PALM training offered to hub organisations and Peace Direct staff at the beginning of the programme was cascaded to local grant recipients and directly informed their approach to partnership and community engagement. The programme combined a participatory methodology, investment in young people's innovative ideas, and leadership from young people who were embedded in their communities and had lived experience of the conflicts. Taken together, these programme elements encouraged community ownership and allowed some projects to take root.

5. **Successful projects engage with diverse stakeholders in the local communities, not just young people.** Intergenerational relationship building enhances youth credibility and leads to longer term changes. For the youth to be respected as key agents for peace, they needed to bring elders and others along. The locally defined nature of the supported projects allowed each grant recipient to develop nuanced, context-specific strategies to secure community buy-in and to gain entry points. Many of these strategies included direct involvement of elders, parents, local authorities and community leaders. The flexible and responsive nature of the funding mechanism allowed for this expansion of the target audience. Project designs did not restrict themselves to youth as sole target participants or beneficiaries, or even implementers. In many of these cultural contexts, decision-making is centred around social hierarchies, and local grant recipients understood that involving elders was a key to enhancing youth activists' credibility, security and success.

Recommendations

Recommendations that emerged from the evaluation process primarily centred on the flexible funding programme design and included considerations for funders with an interest in supporting locally-led youth peacebuilding efforts.

A) To international and local civil society organisations:

Programme design

- ✓ A **co-design process** at the outset involving all partner organisations (INGO, local hubs) is critical in establishing relations of trust and tailoring the flexible funding model to the realities of the country and conflict context. It is also a space for unlearning harmful practices and actively listening and learning from one another. Repeat a similar joint exercise midway and at the end of the programme where possible.

- ✓ **Involve local (hub) organisations in initial mapping of youth led peacebuilding efforts and conflict analysis** to build ownership at the outset.

- ✓ During co-design, develop strategies for **gender and inclusivity mainstreaming**. Place specific efforts on mapping and reaching out to young girls, women and marginalised groups at early stages of the design, with a view to integrating them as key leaders and stakeholders of local projects. Recognise that these intentional efforts at inclusion are a long-term commitment to be considered throughout the life of the programme and beyond.

- ✓ **Place as much emphasis on capacity development,** day to day accompaniment of subgrantees and peer to peer learning as on the initiatives supported through small grants. This is crucial to both sustainability of groups and their initiatives and increases connectedness between groups with potential for joint action.

- ✓ **Include finance staff** in the co-design process, to build buy-in of the trust-based partnership approach and to develop financial reporting systems at all levels (INGO-hubs-local grant recipients) that build capacity and embody a trust-based ethos.

- ✓ **Do not underestimate the staff time and resources** required to effectively manage, deliver and monitor a programme designed to be adaptive, flexible and locally-led. Ensure adequate staffing – considering capacity, diversity and numbers – for local hub and international organisations to allow the necessary accompaniment of local grant recipients. Invest in local hub organisations' staff and organisational development priorities, contributing to their sustainability as dynamic, local civil society actors beyond the funding period.

- ✓ Establish a country specific and partner specific **risk assessment** and monitor any changes along the way. Include an analysis of potential pressures on hub organisations from government or peer organisations and develop a plan to proactively mitigate those pressures.

- ✓ Provide training in **financial management and financial reporting** for local grant recipients, local hub organisations, and INGO staff at the beginning of the project to empower all parties and develop a shared approach.

- ✓ Encourage local hub organisations and local grant recipients when preparing financial reports to include information on any **in-kind contributions** from organisations, individuals and their community. Estimating a monetary value for these contributions will give an indication of community support and empower them to value their own resources.[21]

- ✓ On **small grants**, publish transparent selection criteria and offer feedback to unsuccessful local grant applicants. Put in place clear procedures to report, investigate and respond to any allegations related to the selection process. Consider extending the duration for initiatives funded through small grants from up to 6 months to up to 12 months, with grant recipients eligible to apply for more than one cycle. Longer grant periods could be carried out in phases to allow learning and reflection. Include flexibility in the grant ceiling to allow investment in innovative ideas, including those that may use technology in new ways in communities.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

- ✓ A flexible, locally-led model requires a new way of approaching MEL. **Design participatory processes** with local hub organisations that encourage local grant recipients and their communities to think about and identify impact in meaningful ways, using locally relevant, indigenous ways of learning and harvesting outcomes. Co-design a shared monitoring and tracking system that allows evidence from impact stories and inclusion data to inform ongoing reflections on strengths and weaknesses. Explore innovative use of **technologies and social media** used and promoted by young people.

- ✓ **Build in regular learning and reflection spaces** during programme implementation at all levels: funder, INGO, local hub organisations and local grant recipients.

21 Murad, Nora Lester, "Chapter 20: Does your financial report make people feel poor?", Smart Risks: How Small Grants are Helping to Solve Some of the World's Biggest Problems," edited by Jennifer Lentfer and Tanya Cothran, 2017.

B) To funders

- **Invest in local civil society:** Bridge the gap between donors and marginalised communities by entrusting and directly funding well-established, credible local organisations. Ensure that deep-rooted and innovative CSOs and promising young peacebuilders are not overlooked when allocating funding. Consider flexible, institutional support to support local civil society over the longer-term. Acknowledge that peace takes time to build and foster.
- **Increase access to funding for young people:** Remove barriers by reducing the administrative burdens of applying and reporting, while also investing in skills development young people may need to apply for and manage larger grants. Increase the amount of direct funding allocated to youth-led CSOs and young peacebuilders.
- **Adopt flexible approaches:** Be willing to take joint risks with your grantee to fund innovative and responsive programmes with potential for high impact.
- **Move away from rigid MEL frameworks:** Remain open to innovative and transformative approaches to MEL. Recognise that conventional models such as log frames are not well-suited to local realities and rapidly changing conflicts and are often imposed on local partners from top-down. Support grantees to invest in and capture learning from adaptive, context-sensitive and responsive project implementation approaches.
- **Support inter-generational approaches:** Youth-centred work also requires an intergenerational lens to enhance community buy-in, youth credibility and project success. Projects that support youth should be co-created by and with youth-led CSOs and young people, and may also need to include elders, parents and others in project design.

C) Areas to consider for further research

- Longitudinal study of sustainability of projects initiated by young peacebuilders that are still operating beyond the life of YAPP
- Comparison study of community involvement and accountability mechanisms between flexible and conventional funding models.
- An examination of whether and how flexible funding models shift power and re-imagine conventional notions of accountability. How do local communities hold local grant recipients to account? Does the level of investment from community members impact the degree of accountability to communities? How does community ownership and accountability impact on inevitable transitions away from international support?

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