



Wilton Park



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Report

Peacebuilding in Africa: sustaining inclusive civil society engagement

Sunday 19 – Tuesday 21 March 2017 | WP1525

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The recent series of conflict in Africa – notably in Central African Republic, Mali and South Sudan - have once again highlighted the challenging nature of the peace and security landscape, and the necessity of involving all relevant experts ranging from scholars, policy makers, practitioners as well as civil society in the peacebuilding process.

Inclusion of civil society in these processes is not new. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been increased attention to the roles that local civil society actors can play in peacebuilding and the possibilities that international support contributes to their efforts. Research argues that even if civil society has no direct influence on the political processes, it is perceived as crucial in creating the critical mass necessary for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The role that African civil society actors can take in African peacebuilding needs to be further unpacked and analysed to raise pertinent questions and reshape approaches on the continent, as well as widen engagement with broader global discourses and practices.

Previous events in our 'African perspectives on peacebuilding' series have assessed the progression of African approaches to peacebuilding, in response to the changing dynamics of conflict and emergence of new conflict actors on the continent. The first event, [Peacebuilding in Africa: evolving challenges, responses and new thinking](#) held in 2015, began the process of consolidating African perspectives within the discussion, the findings and conclusions of which were tested by African scholars and practitioners in the 2016 meeting [Peacebuilding in Africa: developing African approaches](#). This third event, aimed at exploring the role of, and engagement with, Civil Society Organisations (henceforth CSOs) throughout the process to identify ways forward.

The meeting broadly aimed to:

- Interrogate the concept and practices of civil society in the context of African and global peacebuilding;
- Engage African policymakers, civil society actors and scholars in collective efforts to identify concrete measures and ways forward for sustainable peacebuilding efforts, including their financing;
- Raise awareness of the obstacles and evaluate solutions for inclusive peacebuilding focusing on the role of (empowered) African CSOs in mediating state and society relations;

- Develop further findings of, and allow policy makers, practitioners and civil society actors to respond to, issues raised in the previous two Wilton Park meetings in this series.

Key points

- A number of countries in Africa are witnessing a gradual drift into authoritarianism, characterised by the shrinking of space occupied by CSOs. There is a need to understand the factors underpinning the diminishment of civil society space and explore appropriate ways CSOs can engage these states constructively, especially in countries currently witnessing violent conflict.
- Investing in increasing the professionalism of CSOs is essential in building effective, credible and legitimate organisations. This entails boosting internal capacities and accountability structures, forming and strengthening partnerships and alliances with other CSOs and developing transitional structures to ensure the longevity of organisations.
- CSOs need to develop models for engagement that are simple and can be consistently executed, for example by adopting strategic and non-combative approaches, especially when engaging authoritarian states.
- Emerging extremist and other non-state armed groups have disrupted the responses of peace and security organisations in Africa. In order to respond effectively, CSOs and other actors need to reframe and rethink peacebuilding approaches, including countering violent extremism.
- Present engagement programmes for youth and violence are mainly reactive, especially in conflict areas. Successful youth engagement requires the ending of conflict and the opening up of political space for youth engagement. The expansion of spaces where the state can connect with the youth such as utilising state-CSO collaborations would also be beneficial. This will require the evaluation of the long-term impact of these programmes on youth to crucially determine whether the processes yield any dividends.
- Financing the African Union (AU) is an existential issue; since its inception the organisation has relied on unpredictable financing from both its member states and international partners. The recently proposed initiative of raising funds from a common tariff imposed on imports from outside the continent could potentially enable the AU to confront this long-standing challenge. In addition, it enables the AU to prioritise preventative and long-term initiatives, as opposed to short-term, reactive and ad-hoc peacebuilding initiatives which have, until now, characterised responses to violent conflict on the continent.
- The majority of peacebuilding processes, especially those at the political level, are inherently flawed as far as gender inclusion is concerned. Current processes are mainly elite-driven, resulting in dominant masculinities constantly being produced, reproduced and preserved. The lack of inclusion of women in these processes creates flawed outcomes. Therefore, there is a need to reconceptualise the peacebuilding agenda in terms of the role and place of women.
- Transformative peacebuilding discourses need to rethink peacebuilding beyond state-centred approaches. Structural issues should be targeted by examining conversations between state and society, and learning what they can tell us about sustainable peace. This is particularly important on issues of exclusion at various political and socio-economic levels. The role of civil society in these discourses should also be considered due to their role in providing an arena where the structural and social tensions are embedded.
- There is a need to find creative ways of translating previous discussions in the *African perspectives on Peacebuilding in Africa* series into policy-speak. This could entail

utilising various digital technologies to publish debates, developing digestible policy briefs and/or publishing volumes that are accessible for different audiences including young emerging leaders.

Tracking trends: the evolving role of non-state actors in peacebuilding

1. Several countries in Africa are witnessing a gradual drift into authoritarianism, many of which are experiencing shrinking of space occupied by CSOs. This drift is particularly evident in states experiencing political and social-economic instability, violent conflict and humanitarian challenges.
2. Evidence indicates some authoritarian states are investing in different ways to limit civil society space, including introducing suppressive legal instruments that constrain their operations. CSOs monitoring state accountability are targeted disproportionately more than those conducting other activities. This suppression is largely engendered by governments' lack of trust of CSOs, which they suspect of promoting the agenda of foreign entities or opposition groups.
3. At the time of a wave of nationalism and anti-globalism in many Western countries, institutions such as the European Union and the United Nations are under scrutiny with support for their globally oriented activities, including statebuilding and peacebuilding, rapidly declining.
4. This situation has been further complicated by global geopolitical rivalries that are increasingly challenging the norms and approaches of peacebuilding. Currently, Western states prefer focusing on short-term securitised and often militarized approaches when engaging in peacebuilding rather than long-term engagements. Ongoing geopolitical changes are compelling Africa to rethink peacebuilding norms and how peacebuilding approaches should be undertaken in the future. This entails asking certain key questions including:
 - a) What are the impacts of these shifts on states currently affected by violent conflict and more importantly to CSOs working at the local level in these countries?
 - b) With declining support for civil society and non-governmental organisations, especially those who provide entry points to grassroots societies, what are the implications of this on the future of open societies? There is a need not only to understand the factors underpinning the closing space, but also to develop appropriate ways for CSOs to engage with these governments positively and constructively, especially those in countries currently experiencing violent conflict.
 - c) How can funders be prompted to re-evaluate their apathy towards funding long-term statebuilding and peacebuilding activities and redirect their funding priorities towards preserving space for CSOs in peacebuilding?
5. There is need to understand and evaluate inclusivity and ownership within CSOs, particularly how larger international CSOs can engage with those at the local level. It is equally important to find means of engaging local communities, especially in an environment dominated by elites with a multitude of actors and competing interests among CSOs. This could include traditional CSOs engaging with newly emerging 'unconventional' local CSOs which often tend to enjoy grassroots loyalty and influence. A case in point is the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) who have utilised networking mechanisms to help build cohesiveness and align diverging constituencies. Such networks provide a common platform for engagement irrespective of political or ideological leaning. WANEP, through its networks offers a common platform for engagement as well as providing space for solving and engaging actors, especially the state.
6. It is important to acknowledge the multitude of diverse civil society actors across the continent, some of which are considered legitimate, others illegitimate. These actors employ a variety of approaches to peacebuilding. A paradigm shift toward strategic engagement may provide a creative and inclusive way of involving these disparate

actors in peacebuilding

7. Africa's diverse CSOs have a wealth of knowledge to contribute to the peacebuilding discourse, drawn from a wide range of experiences. Their skills in handling intermittent violent crises and engaging proactively with multiple actors needs to be documented and disseminated to the wider civil society community.

Case Studies: the role of civil society across the region

8. Evidence from various countries across the continent has shown that CSOs which emerged organically are considered to be more authentic, and are therefore able to attract and engage a wide network of actors to contribute towards their agenda; this is in comparison to CSOs that have not emerged organically, but rather in reaction to one issue, or a shift in the funding priority of donors.
9. The role of CSOs in peacebuilding varies depending on how they are structured and the context in which they exist. For instance, in some conflict areas, kinship and clan structures – although not considered to be conventional CSOs – have more influence since they frequently offer a more functional relationship with communities: a necessary condition for effective peacebuilding.
10. Understanding the role that CSOs play in peacebuilding is critical. Focusing more on governance issues, as observed in most CSOs, means that less attention is paid to other areas, such as socio-economic issues, that contribute to improving people's livelihoods, political culture and behaviours which can influence various dynamics of violent conflict.
11. Investing in increasing the professionalism of CSOs is essential in building effective, credible and legitimate organisations. This entails building internal capacities, partnerships and strengthening accountability and transition structures.
12. There is a need for CSOs to capitalise and learn from existing knowledge and institutional memory generated from academic establishments, policy institutions and the communities they engage with.
13. Partnership and collaboration are essential, especially in building the tenacity of CSOs against manipulation. Linking local and national CSOs with regional and international actors is not only a useful means of labour division, but also amplifies the voices of smaller actors.
14. Networking and collaboration between different civil society actors is helpful in building cohesiveness and aligning divergent constituencies and interests. Networking provides a common platform for CSOs to engage with other CSOs and stakeholders, including the state, irrespective of divergent political or ideological leaning.
15. CSOs must re-evaluate how and when they can exercise influence, including lending support to alternative influential actors.
16. CSOs need to develop models for engagement that are simple and can be consistently executed. For example, CSOs should adopt strategic and non-combative approaches especially when engaging security actors in authoritarian states. In other words, CSOs need to speak truth to power without necessarily excluding the state. This could include collaborating in areas of mutual interest by building trust in ways that protect the civic space, while finding common ground on a range of issues that advance sustainable peacebuilding, such as conducting conflict mitigation and security exercises.
17. It is essential to investigate challenges facing CSOs on the continent broadly, and also on a case by case basis. Some of these challenges include: sustainability; resource mobilisation and management; ability to engage diverse actors; staff retention and the monitoring and evaluation of their activities.
18. While funds are essential in the running of CSOs, they are not necessarily the only form of resources needed; the intellectual capital held by various CSOs working

together is equally important.

19. With the shrinking sources of funds to CSOs and/or the disruption of funding mechanisms by state authorities, especially for those focusing on governance issues, such organisations need to capitalise on existing digital technologies such as mobilising funds and resources through online crowd-funding. A case in point was the *Bring Back our Girls Campaign*,¹ which utilised digital technologies as well as traditional media for high level engagement and to amplify the advocacy causes by raising its profile publically.

The impact of 'emerging' non-state groups

20. Scholars, policy makers and practitioners are yet to adequately understand the challenges posed by non-state actors and faith-based armed groups to peacebuilding. In addition the modus operandi of non-state actors differs widely throughout Africa, especially in their attitude toward and engagement of the state. This further hinders a comprehensive understanding of these groups.
21. While the majority of African states have adopted national responses and regional responses are increasing, there is an absence of adequate knowledge on how to address the structural issues underlying emergence of these groups amongst such responders.
22. Non-state groups have developed extensive networks which enable them to tap into global webs beyond their geographical and state boundaries. Moreover, the borderless, fluid, and indiscriminate nature of their activities as well as the variety of their targets makes it challenging for states to deal with these groups and their activities.
23. Non-state groups, including extremist armed groups, have a dynamic ability to adapt to change and leverage existing capital and opportunities in the areas they operate. Al Shabaab has demonstrated this through their extraction of revenue from the trade in charcoal. Boko Haram has also extracted revenues from trade within the territories which it operates.
24. Non-state armed groups have toxic attitudes towards violence and their ability to go beyond the norm is exceptional. This has been demonstrated by the increased use of young, predominantly female, suicide bombers to attack public spaces and institutions.
25. Non-state groups have proven their capabilities of tapping into and exploiting societies' existential disaffection over socio-economic issues in order to recruit potential supporters.
26. In the last decade, there has been an emergence of faith-based non-state armed groups on the continent. Their evolution is characterised by changes to their membership, combat, communication styles and ability to adapt to changing circumstances in areas they operate. These groups are highly mobile and exhibit very violent and destructive traits. Whilst the scopes of their operations are local, they are also increasingly regional and transnational, underlining their capacity to destabilize entire sub-regions with implications for global peace and security. At present these groups have not been adequately studied, resulting in greater understanding to be gained by examining them with the wider network of armed groups.
27. Faith-based armed groups have not only led to the renegotiation of the ideas of statehood in Africa, but have also re-generated more general debates and questions over the international state system.
28. Faith-based and other non-state armed groups have disrupted responses of peace and security organisations in Africa. Therefore, CSOs and other actors must reframe and rethink peacebuilding responses, especially those modelled on dominate global

¹ This was a campaign that emerged in Nigeria after schoolgirls were abducted from their hostels by members of the Islamic sect, Boko Haram, in Chibok, Borno State, in April 2014.

agendas. CSOs could consider taking the following steps to mitigate against the impact of these groups:

- a) Avoid spreading propaganda about these groups.
- b) Invest in research to understand the affiliate issues that underpin the emergence of these groups, including why some states are more resilient to violent extremism than others.
- c) Study the local idiosyncrasies that enable such groups to emerge in societies. Additional research is also needed to understand the points of convergences and divergences among faith-based and non-state armed groups.
- d) Avoid conflating the faith-based and other armed groups with religious groups.
- e) Avoid a one-size-fits-all approach when responding to these groups.
- f) Avoid fallacies associated with radicalisation and understand recruitment processes, including in unconventional areas such as higher education spaces.
- g) Examine issues of trust, especially why these groups often gain the loyalty of communities in place of state security actors in areas where they operate.
- h) Rethink 'state-making' conversation in Africa to enable the interrogation of structural issues that underpin the emergence of these groups.
- i) Focus attention on the nature and dynamics of violence in these groups.

29. It is essential to evaluate how to manage political economies that emerge from counter-terrorism responses.

Youth Peace and Security Review and implementation of UN security Council Resolution (UNSCR 2250)

30. Despite the adoption of UNSCR 2250, the broad spectrum of young people are without a voice in the peace and security process. An alternative space must be provided for these young people to be involved at national, regional and continental level. CSOs could consider expanding access to young people and bringing on-board private sector actors.

31. Efforts must incorporate listening to youth and re-evaluating how we engage them. In this way there is value in investing in studies, such as participatory research, that enables access to, and documentation of, the voice of young people left out of peace and security processes. Exclusion has a powerful emotional impact on young people; there is a requirement to advance efforts to understand the psychological component of youth marginalisation.

32. There are vast amounts of studies and research findings connecting young people to issues of peace and security. Certain themes among such studies derive from, and contribute to, a trend of 'policy panic' among practitioners when responding to youth peace and security.

These include:

- a) Assuming all young people are vulnerable to violence or extremist ideologies.
- b) Current approaches to countering violent extremism which focus on security and prevent a creative-preventive approach.
- c) The youth demographic change (youth bulge) discourse uses a causation narrative linking demographic trends and youth unemployment to violence, crime and other social deviancies. This simplistic narrative can lead to equally simplistic solutions.
- d) Gender stereotypes conceive young men as perpetrators of violence and young women and girls as victims

33. Analysis must go beyond viewing young people as a vulnerable constituency

predisposed to violence. In particular, simplistic, mono-causal narratives that create direct links between singular socio-economic factors, such as youth unemployment, and violence, should be avoided. Violence is a complex, multi-causal phenomenon. Seeing the relative value and stakes in these issues presents several valuable opportunities for CSOs peacebuilders. These include the need to:

- a) Adopt a preventative approach that focuses on inclusive and multi-sectoral ideas which recognises the various typologies of violence that can be associated with young people. Such an approach should consider young people as a dynamic constituency and acknowledge that how they interpret and engage with the world around them varies from time to time.
- b) Recognise diverse forms of youth organisation and identity.
- c) Nuance the gender dynamics within young people especially on how they influence peace and security.

34. Present engagement programmes for youth and violence are mainly reactive, especially in conflict areas. Successful youth engagement requires the ending of conflict and the opening up of political space for youth engagement. The expansion of spaces where the state can connect with the youth such as utilising state-CSO collaborations would also be beneficial. This will require the evaluation of the long-term impact of these programmes on youth to crucially determine whether the processes yield any dividends.
35. UNSC Res 2250 has been viewed by many as largely inadequate in addressing the impact of violent conflict on young people and some have even questioned for whom it is relevant. This is in addition to its potency, considering that the resolution draws parallels with other similar platforms, such as the African Union Youth Charter which has been in existence for longer.
36. Despite its deficiencies, UNSCR 2250 does provide an opportunity to put youth engagement on the global agenda. However, its impact remains restricted at both the national and regional level due to limited commitment to the resolution. This has also been the experience with regional organisations such as the AU and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Gender dynamics in peace and conflict

37. While women have some level of involvement in various peacebuilding initiatives, their participation is still minimal especially in decision making processes. The underrepresentation and marginalisation of women in decision making is particularly predominant at the political level.
38. The majority of these processes are inherently flawed as far as gender inclusion is concerned. They are predominantly elite-driven with dominant masculinities constantly produced, reproduced and preserved. The lack of inclusion of women in these flawed processes creates flawed outcomes. Therefore, the role and place of women in the peacebuilding agenda needs to be reconceptualised.
39. New security threats need to be viewed with a focus on gender. Women play multifaceted roles in extremist organisations, both as recruiters and perpetrators of violence. Their role is founded in the exploitation and manipulation of gender stereotypes. This is evident in some faith-based armed groups such as Boko Haram who exploit young girls, as well as young boys, to carry out attacks.
40. Understanding the role of gender in violence and conflict as well as peacebuilding and statebuilding is a critical area worthy of further research. Potential areas include:
 - a) Examining the impacts of investing in gender sensitive policies and building on initiatives from varied African contexts in order to gain insights in decision making. For instance, in the case of Ethiopia, where despite women playing a critical and near equal role during fighting the Derg rule (1974 – 1987), these gains were

- reversed when they took power.
- b) Exploring the impact of gender on security sector reforms.
 - c) Investigating how increased funding and the prioritisation of women's empowerment policies can have a positive effect on conflict situations, peacebuilding and state-building
41. The implementation of gender inclusive peacebuilding processes tends to focus predominantly on forms of representation that either favour elite or 'politically-well connected' women. While increasing the percentage of women involved in such processes is pragmatically essential, they could be conceptually divergent. Equal emphasis should also be paid to active participation of women from various classes at all levels of decision making processes.
 42. Despite the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions, there has been a general failure to implement these resolutions, for example through national action plans. This has included a lack of commitment of resources as well as poor enforcement of relevant laws by states. CSOs need to constantly prioritise the inclusion and centring of women in peace and security processes in their agenda.
 43. Scholars and researchers need to consider incorporating feminist theories in knowledge production, especially on discourses of peacebuilding and statebuilding in Africa.
 44. Scholars and researchers need to recognise their role as well as their privileges and how this not only influences knowledge production, but more importantly, how their positions may contribute to reproduction and entrenching conservative ideas of gender norms.

Moving forward: roles and responsibilities

Key highlights from case studies

45. A majority of CSOs are currently dependent on donor funding from Western governments; in order to ensure continuity and sustainability there must be increased national ownership of CSOs.
46. CSOs on the continent have had to confront various challenges including a lack of cohesion and trust amongst various partners and organizations. There is need for CSOs to go beyond partisan engagement by working with all actors who engage in peacebuilding, including influential local actors.
47. Different ideologies and actors among CSOs have resulted in varying outcomes in peacebuilding processes. Where there are fewer external partners, peacebuilding processes tend to be long-term and transformative in nature, as well as locally owned. On the other hand, where more external actors are involved, the resulting geo-political and ideological differences results in peacebuilding processes being divisive amongst various civil society actors, short-term in nature and weaker since they are reliant on external support.
48. There is need for international CSOs to assist in the facilitation and coordination of collaborative projects that allow local CSOs to engage and learn from other organisations across the region and continent.
49. The UN Sustainable Development Goals framework, particularly goals 16 and 17, presents a valuable opportunity for governments to begin engaging CSOs.

The adoption and impacts of sustainable finance

50. Financing the AU has been an existential issue since its inception. This is largely due to its dependence on funds from a handful of African member states and external sources. Over 60 percent of the AU's operating budget has predominantly been

sourced from five member states, Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa and Libya (before the collapse of the state). This has exposed the organisation to unpredictable financing, especially when contributing member states are unable to meet their obligations due to political or economic instabilities. In addition, over 90 per cent of the AU program budget, including the peace and security budget, is funded by external partners. This has resulted in the organisation's agenda and priorities being externally influenced by those funding it.

51. Ongoing and emerging conflicts on the continent have put financial pressures on the AU, prompting the organisation to rethink how it funds its peacebuilding activities. The major areas include how the AU finances its operational budget (staff and administrative costs) and how the AU member states fund the programme budget and the peace support operations, which alone take 25 per cent of the total programme budget.
52. The AU member states have recently made decisions on how to fund AU's peace operations costs and proposed a common tariff of 0.2 percent import levy on all eligible imports from outside the continent. The levy will apply to the Cost Insurance and Freight (CIF) for imports. This model has been chosen because:
 - a) The levy has the potential to raise approximately \$1.2 billion annually.
 - b) Total funds generated from the levies will be non-treasury resulting in direct deposit into a national account held with Central Bank in the Member State. These funds will then be remitted to AU.
 - c) The remittal amounts to the AU will be limited to the assessed contributions of the member state for that financial year. This means that member states can choose to retain the excess funds or draw out their regular AU contributions from the excess funds.
 - d) This model is uncontroversial and efficient not only because it will provide an equitable and predictable source of financing for the AU but it has already been tried and tested by ECOWAS, ECCAS and CEMAC.
53. Although it is not sure how these decisions will be implemented, especially with regards to the funding of peace support operations, they have inadvertently led to broader discussions on how to fund the entire AU budget. The current proposed AU Peace Fund, for example, is unique in that it goes beyond a reactive approach to violent conflicts and instead focuses on a proactive framework.
54. This model enables the AU to fund 100% of its Operational Budget (estimated to be \$100 million annually), 75% of the Program Budget and 25% of the peace support operations budget. Contribution from the 0.2% levy will raise it from its current budget of about \$266 million to about \$400 million in four years' time. The main structures of the peace fund include: mediation and preventative diplomacy; critical institutional capacity; peace support operations and crisis response reserve.
55. The new AU Peace Fund framework highlights several implications:
 - a) First, the fund shifts the power dynamics between core and periphery institutions, i.e. between AU and regional economic communities as well as between the AU and external actors. Although existing partnerships will continue in the peacebuilding processes, the Peace Fund will improve the quality of engagement between the AU and its external and regional partners. Discussions of how these partnerships will be framed, without creating tensions in the power dynamics over control and peacebuilding mandates, will be essential.
 - b) Second, the Peace Fund enables the AU to confront the long-standing challenges of unpredictable financing and the undue influence that derives from reliance on external or two few financiers. In addition, it enables the AU to prioritise long-term preventative initiatives over short-term, reactive and ad-hoc peacebuilding

- initiatives that have characterized recent responses to violent conflict on the continent.
- c) Thirdly, the choice of the AU Peace Fund to model financing on import levies for goods produced outside the AU will potentially promote competitive trading and economic integration within the continent.
56. The AU Peace Fund needs to confront the following challenges as it seeks to operationalise the collection of funds:
- a) How to ensure that member states commit and comply with their contribution obligations. Experiences from similar regional models such as the ECOWAS' common external tariff initiative have shown that member states have varied levels of commitment.
 - b) How to ensure member states have the necessary financial and economic governance structures to implement and administer the funds. Operating the collection and remittance of funds from import levies often requires complex and expensive institutional structures.
 - c) Trade policy is an important element of industrial policy which contributes significantly to structural transformation. Therefore, it is important to consider the impact of implementing a common tariff at the continental level, on member state governments particularly at national level.
 - d) Hinging AU contributions solely on imports levies has the potential risk of member states defaulting due to fluctuating commodity prices. The impact of lower commodity prices on the ability of member states to make contributions needs to be carefully analysed and determined.
 - e) How the new import levy will be administered within existing trade agreements between African countries, international trade partners and emerging trade partners, such as China, needs to be examined.
 - f) It is essential to evaluate how the import levy on already existing mechanisms such as the ECOWAS common tariff will be administered. It is also necessary to determine how the model will potentially impact on the relationship between regional economic communities and the AU.
 - g) Tariffs on imports from outside of Africa could potentially increase the competitiveness of inter-African trade. The impact of increased inter-African trade on member states needs to be determined, especially with regards to the high influx of goods coming from more established economic states to less established economic states.
 - h) Taxes on trade have been an essential source of revenue for national governments. Therefore, the impact of sharing this revenue with the African Union needs to be examined.
57. It is important to consider how independent financing of the AU will impact its engagement with CSOs. For instance, do CSOs need to explore the opportunities associated with playing an oversight role, especially in the implementation processes of the funds? In addition, there is need to consider opportunities for CSOs to access the AU peace fund, particularly for those who have traditionally relied on external sources for funding.

Conclusions, commitment and continuity

The following ideas were proposed as follow-up strategies that can be considered for implementation.

58. Unpack the process of how CSOs in Africa can tap into sustainable and predictable sources of funding, especially private-public funding opportunities.

59. Broaden uptake avenues for conference deliberations to other constituencies. This could be done through: disseminating the proceedings and lessons cumulated from the *African perspectives on Peacebuilding in Africa* series to communities of practice; tapping into existing networks such as the Commonwealth multi-lateral forum; creating networks that also include media platforms, which can serve as a resource for nuanced research concepts and ideas on policy and practice in peacebuilding.
60. Strengthen collaboration with all stakeholders in these debates. This involves bringing on board additional academics and researchers, the francophone constituency in Africa and more young people.
61. Further understand the evolution of civil society in Africa. Debunking the perceptions and attitudes towards civil society actors and amplifying their visibility will ensure the sustainability of their role on the continent. In addition, there is a need for understanding their experiences and learning about the challenges facing civil society actors, as well as appreciating the numerous unique challenges faced in each individual country context.
62. Explore the relevance of various themes discussed throughout the *African perspectives on Peacebuilding in Africa* series, in terms of how to understand the emerging trends of immigration and refugees. How can the outcomes enable us to examine the trends of migration in Africa and foster a common agenda within CSOs?
63. Embrace the youth agenda by investing in resilient ideas of youth. This will involve promoting new voices and challenging old modes of thinking by translating youth voices into accessible and actionable points.
64. Re-engage on the conceptual narratives underpinning peacebuilding in Africa. One entry point could be to develop the capacity to utilise empirical data generated from the continent. This approach not only assists in developing critical theories on peacebuilding discourses but also enables us to diagnose some of the structural challenges identified, such as closing civil society space and how to fill the gaps.
65. Transformative discourses on peacebuilding need to rethink peacebuilding beyond state-centric approaches. There is a need to begin focusing on structural factors by examining conversations between the state and society to identify their relationship with sustainable peace. This is particularly important on issues of exclusion at various political and socio-economic levels, and the role of civil society in these discourses.
66. Diversify the knowledge production and reproduction by finding creative ways of translating roundtable discussions into policy speak. This could entail utilising various digital technologies, developing digestible policy briefs and publishing several volumes that are accessible to different audiences including young emerging leaders.

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Wilton Park | July 2017

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Appendix Case Studies

Burundi

- CSOs have contributed significantly to the expansion of the democratic state, especially in promoting good governance, justice, peace education, women and youth participation in peace and advocacy.
- However, CSOs have also been on the receiving end of negative discernment, most prominently when being accused of involvement in the attempted coup d'état in 2015.
- The majority of CSOs are significantly dependent on donor funding from Western governments, meaning there is a need to establish national ownership of CSOs in order to ensure continuity and sustainability. This will involve:
 - a) Exploring their capabilities by tapping into their own strengths and improving their weaknesses;
 - b) Collaborating with other CSOs at the national, regional and international levels;
 - c) Increasing the professionalism of institutions for example through high accountability and corporate standards.
 - d) Promoting the visibility of civil society groups by adopting a multi-sectoral approach that engages multiple audiences including those within policy and practice fields.
 - e) Documenting knowledge and experiences from everyday engagements.
 - f) Including a transformational agenda within the CSO's goals and missions.

South Sudan

- CSOs in Sudan are major sources of alternative information, as opposed to state provided information. However, the state has tended to see CSOs as collaborative opposition groups aiming to sabotage the government, especially CSOs that call for accountability within government. Due to the historical role that CSOs and opposition parties have played in liberation, the government expects to receive the support of these organisations for the liberation agenda.
- CSOs have also played a key role in ensuring the government does not manipulate key elements of the peace agreements.
- Although CSOs are continuously engaging with external partners, some partners, for instance the AU, are hesitant to engage with CSOs in order to avoid being perceived as working in support of regime change.
- CSOs have also had to confront various challenges including a lack of cohesion and trust amongst various partners and organisations. There is a need for CSOs to go beyond partisan engagement by collaborating with various actors working in peacebuilding, including local actors like the church and cross-border partners
- CSOs also need to play a greater role in facilitating the national dialogue in South Sudan. This should be achieved not only by drawing lessons from civil society experiences from other partners within Africa and around the globe, but also by leveraging support from international partners willing to engage.

Somalia

Peacebuilding in Somalia is presently characterised by differences in ideas, actors and outcomes. The main differences include:

- In the North (Somaliland), approaches to peacebuilding result in women and youth being the most active participants amongst civil society. In the South-Central regions, peacebuilding is marked by contemporary but liberalist approaches with major support from diverse external (mainly international) actors. Here, women are less prominent and religious leaders and organisations are the major actors amongst civil society groups.
- Dominant discourses on peacebuilding in Somalia and Somaliland differ considerably. In Somaliland, cessation from the State administration based in Mogadishu is the main dialogue. In Somalia, on the other hand, the national discourse is dominated by discourses on Islamism and the irredentist idea of a greater Somalia, especially in political discussions.

- The differences in both ideologies and actors amongst CSOs have resulted in varied outcomes from the peacebuilding process. In Somaliland, there are fewer external partners and peacebuilding processes, and the outcomes have been more transformative and locally owned. In addition, emphasis is largely given to long-term agendas. In South-Central Somalia, geo-political and ideological differences deriving from varied external actors are reflected in the varied peacebuilding processes, which are short-term and largely reliant on external support. The processes often tend to be divisive and violently contested between various civil society actors.

Mali and the Mano River Region

- The inability of the state to address issues of insecurity and socio-economic challenges in society has resulted in the emergence of various civil society and other non-state actors to fill the gap.
- CSOs have played varied roles including raising core issues challenging the society, resisting authoritarianism, pushing for the end of violent conflicts, promoting reconciliation and providing viable solutions and ideas for implementation.
- Women and youth groups are a powerful group if included early in peacebuilding processes.
- However the role of CSOs has been insignificant in several areas largely due to;
 - a) competition for resources amongst CSOs,
 - b) lack of ownership and sustainable advocacy agendas on peacebuilding.
 - c) failure of the government to provide vision and leadership to the process,
 - d) the presence of external actors, such as the peacekeeping forces, who have crowded the space that civil society is expected to occupy,
 - e) limited funding which often leads the CSOs to focus on funders' desired outcomes,
 - f) limited government interest in addressing concerns raised by CSOs and implementing their proposed solutions,
 - g) tension between critical actors such the AU and ECOWAS, due to the plurality of mandates and uncoordinated cooperation with CSOs.
- The UN Sustainable Goals framework, particularly goals 16 and 17, as well as global attention to the situation in Mali, presents a valuable opportunity for the government of Mali to begin engaging CSOs.
- Larger CSOs must assist in the facilitation and coordination of collaborative projects that allow local CSOs to engage and learn from other CSOs in the region and on the continent.
- CSOs need to invest in professionalizing their organization and processes.
- The state needs to engage CSOs, not only in identifying possible solutions to structural problems, but also in their implementation.
- Addressing the tensions between CSOs and other actors engaged in peacebuilding, as well as better coordination with external actors, is key.