



EU-CIVCAP

Preventing and Responding to Conflict: Developing EU CIVILIAN
CAPabilities for a sustainable peace

Report on the EU's support to the conflict prevention work of other actors

Deliverable 3.5
(Version 3.3; 30 September 2018)



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 653227.

SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT

Title	DL 3.5 Report on the EU's support to the conflict prevention work of other actors
Last modification	30 September 2018
State	Final
Version	3.3
Leading Partner	EPLO
Other Participant Partners	Conciliation Resources
Authors	Nabila Habbida, Janet Adama Mohammed, Kennedy Tumutegyreize, Lisa Heinzl, Felix Colchester, Daniel Tucker
Audience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Internal
Abstract	<p>This report explores the EU's support to the conflict prevention work of others and identifies key challenges and best practices for EU support to local actors and civil society organisations in Security Sector Reform (SSR), dialogue and peace processes. It analyses the place of local actors and civil society in donor interventions and EU external action policy and evaluates EU support to local actors in practice through three case studies: SSR in Nigeria Plateau State, approaches to the LRA in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and EU support to the peace process in Mindanao, the Philippines.</p>
Keywords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EU support ● Conflict prevention ● Local ● Relationships ● Conflict sensitivity ● Conflict analysis ● Conflict transformation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	6
Methodology	7
I. EU INDIRECT SUPPORT: AN OVERVIEW	8
The local turn in EU peacebuilding	8
EU support to peacebuilding and conflict prevention through CSOs	9
II. CASE STUDIES	12
A. Conflict analysis and early warning in Nigeria’s Plateau State	12
B. Support to peacebuilding actors in the peace process in Mindanao, Philippines	17
C. Lessons from local protection mechanisms in response to the Lord’s Resistance Army	23
III. KEY LESSONS, CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES	32
CONCLUSION AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY	40
LIST OF INTERVIEWS	44

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a growing recognition of the importance of the “local” in EU policy and an increasing awareness of the implications of externally-driven intervention. This report maps the recent EU commitments towards local needs and fostering “local ownership”. The EU is committed to, and does provide support to, a substantial number of initiatives where “others” are implementing peacebuilding initiatives. This research found that the EU is sometimes well-placed to provide support to non-state local actors. In some instances, it is perceived to be a fairer and more neutral actor compared to other donors. In spite of the time-consuming reporting requirements that come with EU support, EU funding (IcSP) and EU programme managers are understanding of the need for projects to adapt to local dynamics. It is also one of the few international actors that maintain a rights-based approach in complex conflict-affected settings.

However, this report also identified key obstacles to the EU's effectiveness and demonstrated that the EU is not consistent in its practices. The report confirms that supporting local third parties does not guarantee local ownership or effectiveness of peacebuilding actions and that it is not conflict-sensitive in and of itself. Moreover, the EU still fails to achieve its commitments in terms of local ownership, conflict sensitivity and expectations when it comes to peacebuilding initiatives, direct or indirect. The EU's assumptions in this regard are often unrealistic, which can create frustration and even do harm. The EU is not always realistic about its interests either and does not have the systemic due diligence tools required to be able to intervene with full awareness of the risks it will generate, including through the influence of its trade, development and migration policies and bilateral cooperation agreements (and those of its Member States).

This report highlights the added value of local peacebuilders in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and identifies best practices stemming from EU support, thus also demonstrating how they can continue to be supported. Supported local actors provide detailed analysis which the EU cannot conduct on its own. Conflict analysis is in and of itself a process of conflict transformation, and the EU should systematise this type of support and approach across its action in conflict-affected settings. With small but steady accompaniment, local peacebuilders can contribute to ensuring durable and effective responses. The inclusion of civil society representatives in high-level meetings goes a long way in building relationships and bridging the political and grassroots levels. Support to security-focused capacity building is most effective when it places as much importance on the relational aspects as it does on logistical and material considerations.

This report explores the EU's support to the conflict prevention work of others, focusing on the work of local actors and civil society organisations in the area of Security Sector Reform (SSR), dialogue and peace processes. It first examines the place of local actors and civil society in donor interventions and EU external action policy. It then analyses EU support to local actors in practice through three case studies: (1) SSR in Nigeria Plateau State, (2) approaches to the LRA in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, and (3) EU support to the peace process in Mindanao, the Philippines. In the third section, the report summarises the main lessons and best practices identified in the case studies and compares these with the findings of recent evaluations of the EU's SSR and mediation support interventions in other contexts, in particular that of Northern Ireland. Finally, the report provides a list of key recommendations to EU policymakers, which are summarised overleaf.

Key recommendations

Based on the key challenges and best practices identified, this report recommends that the EU:

1. Continues to provide civil society representatives and local peacebuilders with small but steady support that allows those on the frontlines the time and resources they need to build trust and meaningful relationships with conflict parties and stakeholders;
2. Ensures that conflict analysis is a continuous process across external action, by:
 - a) at the micro level, providing local actors with the space and the means required to carry it out themselves, and
 - b) at the macro level, making sure that external donors' analyses are informed by locally-led analysis and that opportunities for joint EU-local conflict analyses are regularly created;
3. Prioritises support for community-centred and -led conflict prevention initiatives;
4. Ensures that EU technical assistance and funding to peacebuilders supports and is supported by a political process and dialogue;
5. Ensures that it periodically re-examines its assumptions about a conflict and its support to SSR and peacebuilding through institutionalised, regular conflict analysis exercises (the EU could use theories of change more systematically to link realistic objectives, the capacity of local actors and tailored EU support);
6. Uses its convening power to promote greater coordination and engagement with local actors; and
7. Strengthens the capacity of EU Delegations to build relationships with and support local peacebuilders.

INTRODUCTION

This report will explore the EU's support to the conflict prevention work of others, focusing on the work of local actors and civil society organisations in the area of Security Sector Reform (SSR), dialogue and peace processes. To do so, it will first explore the place of local actors and civil society in donor interventions and EU external action policy. It will then look into EU support to local actors in practice through three case studies: (1) SSR in Nigeria Plateau State, (2) approaches to LRA in north east Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, and (3) EU support to the peace process in Mindanao, Philippines. In the third section, the report will summarise the main lessons and best practices identified in the case studies and compare and contrast these with the findings of recent evaluations of EU interventions on SSR and mediation support in other contexts, in particular that of Northern Ireland. Finally, the report will provide a list of key recommendations to EU policymakers.

In the past two decades, a strand of academic research and civil society organisations in peacebuilding and EU studies have analysed and critiqued traditional approaches to externally-supported peacebuilding (Ejdus and Juncos, 2018; Hoffman et al., 2018). A number of studies have demonstrated that international actors tend to build peace through building the capacities of the central state, based on a Western, Weberian vision of the nation-state. According to this logic, a state of this type is the only model that is able to bring stability, good governance and security (Hoffman et al., 2018). This approach has been criticised on a number of counts, including the lack of legitimacy of state governments in situations of fragility (because of and resulting in their bad record of human rights violations and their negative contribution to conflict dynamics), the ineffectiveness of state-focused support, and the lack of involvement of affected populations in peacebuilding processes (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2016).

In light of the critique of interventions that reinforce the marginalisation of segments of populations affected by conflict, researchers and policymakers have shifted their attention to the experience and expertise of local actors and civil society practitioners. For instance, EU-CIVCAP's Work Package 6, and in particular DL 6.3 (Christie et al., 2018) explored in detail perceptions of local ownership in a set of conflict-affected countries and identified best practices for EU support.¹ Increasingly in the peacebuilding expert community, local ownership is perceived as a relationship between stakeholders rather than solely a top-down, one-way dynamic (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2016). Increasingly, international interventions look to support subnational local peace actors. This shift has been referred to as the "local turn" in peacebuilding (Ejdus and Juncos, 2018).

Despite the increasing focus on the local and on promoting "local ownership", there are still problems associated with the "local turn". In practice, the "locals" are often seen as an obstacle to international standards, and as a burden not aligned with underlying values (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2016). Others have pointed out that the agency of domestic actors is underestimated by European and Western powers, in particular their capacity for resistance. There are also

¹ Country cases in DL 6.3 included: Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Somalia/Somaliland and Burma/Myanmar.

problems relating to the definition and implementation of the principle of **local ownership**. While this term currently underpins most peacebuilding interventions by international actors (including the EU), there is no official definition or consensus on this concept. Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic (2016) has demonstrated the blurriness of the term. “Local ownership” is used by a variety of peacebuilding actors rooted in different history and with a variety of interests. The term may have different connotations depending on who uses it, for example: a) buy-in and cooperation with national state actors, b) involvement of sub-national actors such as local elites, civil society and citizens in peacebuilding activities, c) control over decision-making processes in external interventions, d) local agency, e) citizens-based processes, f) hybrid peace, etc. The imprecise use of concepts such as “local ownership” or “buy-in” in internationally-supported peacebuilding has also been criticised as potentially (neo-)colonial (Ejdus & Juncos, 2018). This critical view asserts that under the umbrella of ‘local ownership’, the local is forced to comply with an externally-determined agenda, regardless of how much agency they have in doing so.

This report highlights the growing recognition of the importance of the “local” in EU policy and practice and maps the recent EU commitments toward local needs. It confirms that supporting local third parties does not guarantee local ownership or effectiveness of peacebuilding actions and that it is not conflict-sensitive in and of itself. The EU is committed to, and does provide support to, a substantial number of initiatives where “others” are implementing peacebuilding initiatives. This research found that the EU is sometimes well-placed to provide support to non-state local actors and identified a set of best practices and recommendations which can be used as guidance for EU policymakers. However, it also identified key obstacles to their effectiveness and demonstrated that the EU is not consistent in its practices. The EU still fails to achieve its commitments in terms of local ownership, conflict sensitivity and gender sensitivity, and expectations on peacebuilding initiatives, direct or indirect, are often unrealistic – which can create frustration and do harm.

Methodology

This paper focuses on EU support to civil society, including NGOs and, to a lesser extent, to international organisations. In order to do so, it uses case studies relating mostly to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, Security Sector Reform (SSR) and peace process-related initiatives. The report evaluates EU-supported peacebuilding initiatives through three empirical case studies: SSR in Nigeria Plateau State, approaches to the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in north east DRC and South Sudan, and EU support to the peace process in Mindanao, Philippines. It also provides a review of relevant and recent research on EU support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding,² drawing, in particular, on the case of EU peacebuilding initiatives in Northern Ireland. Data for this report was collected through a desk study of primary and secondary literature, field trips to DRC and South Sudan in September 2017, and interviews with civil society and NGO representatives, UN agencies, local government officials and practitioners involved in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the case studies. The three case studies examined also rely on informal exchanges and observations of EU policymaking and practice collected through the activities and networks of the peacebuilding organisations EPLO and Conciliation Resources, who are the authors of this report. The data was analysed and triangulated with recent relevant academic literature and practice-oriented reports to confirm and contrast initial findings.

² This is narrowed down to research on SSR and peace processes in order to allow for a comparative analysis.

I. EU INDIRECT SUPPORT: AN OVERVIEW

The local turn in EU peacebuilding

In order to determine how the EU understands “the local” and how it seeks to engage with it, this section will employ a discourse analysis of key EU policy documents and contribute to mapping relevant EU terminology.

The so-called “local turn”, or the increasing focus on bottom-up peacebuilding activities, is reflected in the most recent EU foreign policy documents. A closer analysis of the EU Global Strategy (hereafter EUGS), the subsequent 2018 Council Conclusions on the Integrated approach and the 2016 EU-wide Strategic Framework to support Security Sector Reform (hereafter the EU Framework to support SSR) reveals that references to local actors’ experience or participation in peacebuilding processes, however vague, are widespread in EU policy documents. Principles such as inclusiveness, civil society engagement and partnership tend to be associated with incorporating the local’s experience in peacebuilding interventions.

Various terms are used to refer to the national and local actors with whom the EU seeks to interact in its interventions. In particular, “partnerships” and “partner” are often used to refer to the EU’s institutional counterparts, national authorities, and international and regional organisations. On occasions, the documents refer to contexts of fragility, development and transition to specify *when* the EU will provide support. These documents also refer to a wide range of action and support the EU intends to use to promote peace and stability, within the frame of international law.

Other terms used to refer to the “local” are more vague, but imply unifying purpose (“local actors for peace”, “champions of human security and reconciliation”), growing international relevance (“emerging” or “new players”), and/or sources of expertise (“relevant local and international actors and sources of expertise”) (European Union, 2016). The EU Framework to support SSR is more precise about *whom* it wants to engage: while it uses the EU partnership terminology, it also specifies that it intends to cooperate with local security services, urban planners, and marginalised groups, for example (Commission and HR, 2016). The EUGS, being a strategic document, contains more perceptions of conflict stakeholders as a collective – including the EU – and is more specific about the EU’s intention and vision, but less so about *how* it wants to engage (European Union, 2016).

References to non-European populations in conflict-affected countries are also widespread (“local societies” or “populations”, national and local “communities”) and often passive: they are mentioned as the end target of joint interventions, including, for example, Women and Youth (Council of the EU, 2018). A few times, however, they are a potential “actor” to engage, e.g. in the EU Framework to support SSR: “the EU can finance support initiatives... through a community security approach, involving (official and/or traditional) local authorities, where possible, the residents of the communities and neighbourhoods in question and local security forces” (Commission and HR, 2016: 15).

Overall, the EU intends to “engage” and “speak with” all actors it deems relevant in a given conflict situation. Funding and capacity building are the two main forms of support mentioned in all three documents. They are more significantly applied to national governments, including “Train and Equip” support. Conflict analysis is mentioned repeatedly as a key area in which the EU should partake in joint efforts, and even follow the lead of local and national partners. The EU also deploys civilian and military CSDP missions through Member States’ seconded personnel and financial resources. While CSDP cooperation and support focuses on national authorities, cooperation with civil society does take place formally and informally through consultations, advisory meetings, dialogues and consultancies. EU funding instruments, CSDP missions and operations, and diplomacy are tools which are mentioned in all three policy documents.

Civil society, qualified by terms such as “local”, “national” or “rooted”, is consistently referred to as a key actor in conflict-affected settings that the EU should not do without, as a matter of principle and/or effectiveness. Sometimes, specific members of civil society are referred to, for instance religious and cultural actors or insider mediators (Council of the EU, 2018). Together with national authorities and international organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs) are the main “third parties” the EU seeks to support in conflict-affected settings. It is often indicated that CSOs should be “involved” or “engaged” by the EU before and during interventions. Their feedback should be considered in policymaking and in the design of interventions. As laid out in the EU Framework to support SSR, in the absence of a functioning government, the EU should seek to strengthen civil society’s involvement to achieve local ownership (Commission and HR, 2016). The next section discusses this support in more detail.

EU support to peacebuilding and conflict prevention through CSOs

The EU’s indirect intervention in peacebuilding takes place through the support of CSOs, INGOs, international and EU Member State expert agencies, individual consultants, regional intergovernmental organisations, local authorities, security forces and residents of conflict-affected communities and neighbourhoods. This report focuses on the first two of these – CSOs and INGOs – as recipients of EU indirect support.

When analysing the EU’s indirect action in peacebuilding, one must evaluate when the EU is *not* best/well placed to act directly in peacebuilding processes. The various motivations that incentivise the EU to support others in peacebuilding processes include:

1. Ensuring local ownership and sustainability;
2. Attempting to counteract the extant or foreseeable negative perceptions of the EU in the conflict-affected context;
3. Counteracting the fact that the EU does not have relevant in-house expertise or knowledge to intervene directly;
4. Offering a solution to the fact that the EU is not able or willing to carry responsibility in sensitive contexts, and seeks to externalise its action; and
5. Providing basic services where local or national security forces are unable to.³

³ The 2016 SSR Strategy states that the EU will favour community security approaches “involving (official and/or traditional) local authorities, where possible, the residents of the communities and neighbourhoods in question and local security forces” (Commission and HR, 2016).

EU-CIVCAP Deliverable 3.2 (Davis et al., 2017) identified four main categories of capabilities the EU has at its disposal to intervene in conflict prevention: to engage, to lead, to fund, and to coordinate and cooperate with third parties. The report argues that all capabilities can be and are used in indirect action. However, the third capability seems most consistently used by the EU regarding indirect action through funding instruments. The EU’s geographic and thematic instruments all have the legal basis to support third parties in conflict prevention and peacebuilding (Davis et al., 2017). The dedicated Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) supports a majority of “labeled” peacebuilding initiatives led by civil society organisations. As Terri Beswick (2017) demonstrated, it is challenging to track and monitor all EU-funded civil society initiatives that contribute to capacities for peace beyond IcSP projects. However, it is evident that the EU’s indirect support to peacebuilding extends beyond the IcSP, through projects funded in conflict-affected countries, including through European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) (see Box 1). As part of its support, the EU also cooperates and coordinates with third parties.

Box 1: Types of EU support to civil society and local actors in peacebuilding
<i>Support provided</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advising on structuring mutually-beneficial arrangements to share power and resources⁴ ● Analysis and information sharing ● Backchannel diplomacy ● Capacity building ● Dialogue and consultations ● Convening meetings, conferences and dialogues ● Connecting with power wielders and high-level representatives ● Coordination ● Funding ● Civilian monitoring
<i>Areas of support</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community security ● Demining / Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) ● Development assistance ● Early warning and protection mechanisms ● Governance (Rule of law / Democratisation) ● Mediation support / peace process support ● SSR ● Transitional justice

As with other donors, the local turn in EU conflict prevention took place gradually over the past two decades. We have seen that engagement with and support to civil society and local actors in peacebuilding is a priority in the EU’s external policy. The EU commits to use its funding, engagement and cooperation capabilities to support relevant stakeholders to promote peace and stability in conflict-affected countries.

⁴ See, for instance, International Crisis Group, 2016a: 2.

The following three case studies, as well as the experience of practitioners and the findings of EU-CIVCAP's research, confirm that meaningful engagement, and cooperation and coordination with third parties (in particular with civil society) is a priority in EU policy. The EU seeks to support peacebuilding organisations who engage with under-represented groups, officials and citizens at subnational level. The EU seeks to have its peace and stability programming informed by in-depth conflict analysis involving diverse views of security and governance. Depending on the level of neutrality the EU is assumed to have in a given country, the EU is often found to be more trustworthy and more flexible than other large donors in peacebuilding activities. However, the diversity of feedback from supported actors show that both the level and quality of support is not consistent or institutionalised across the EU's external action, and that it remains particularly weak in SSR.

II. CASE STUDIES

A. Conflict analysis and early warning in Nigeria's Plateau State

Since 2001, Plateau State, Nigeria has experienced recurring crisis and violence leading to the deaths of between 4,000 and 12,500 people, the displacement of 150,000 and the disruption of livelihoods for millions (Krause, 2011). In this period, Plateau State communities have experienced a multitude of threats including cattle rustling, farmer-pastoralist clashes, election-related violence, "silent killings," reprisal attacks and abuses by military and security forces.

A key strand of the conflict prevention strategy of the EU and other international institutions in Plateau State has been to support a range of participatory conflict analysis projects and early warning initiatives. This case study looks to draw lessons from these initiatives and to provide recommendations on how to better support peacebuilding interventions in the future. Analysis will draw directly from the joint engagement of Conciliation Resources and its local civil society partners with conflict-affected communities and local peace structures in four Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Plateau State between 2012 and 2018.

Background

At the heart of the conflicts has been an increasing cycle of tension and violence between "Indigène" and "Settler" ethnic groups who, for the most part, migrated to the region several generations ago. The groups struggle to gain superiority in terms of their political power and influence and access to land. Many of the "Settler" groups migrated to the region from Northern Nigeria and are predominantly Muslim, unlike the majority Christian "Indigènes". Political actors, seeing the opportunity to mobilise a larger proportion of the population, increasingly shifted away from rhetoric appealing to their traditional ethnic power bases, towards instead rhetoric based on religious affiliation. Over the last 15 years, this shift in power structures has resulted in the terms of the conflict being increasingly viewed through a religious lens, which has further entrenched notions of difference. Additionally, this framing means that the Plateau State crisis is often wrongly perceived – both in Nigeria and internationally – as being driven by religious difference. This has served to limit the efficacy of any peacebuilding response.

Since 2009, the devastating Boko Haram insurgency has added further complexity to the violence in Plateau State and strongly affected Plateau State's prospects for peace and security. Whilst the vast majority of Boko Haram-related violence has been constrained to North East Nigeria, Plateau State has experienced a series of deadly bombings attributed to or claimed by Boko Haram, most recently in July 2015 when two bombs killed at least 44 people. This attack was seen as an attempt to aggravate religious tensions and to demonstrate Boko Haram's reach beyond the North East of the country. Accusations and fears that dissatisfied Plateau State youth might be attracted to join Boko Haram, or that Boko Haram fighters are infiltrating communities, are widespread. These fears have been exacerbated by the suspicions of local populations against the estimated 325,000 internally displaced people from the North East now residing in Plateau State (Daily Trust, 2015).

Local perspectives

In 2011, through an EU-funded project, the “People’s Peacemaking Perspectives” (PPP), Conciliation Resources (CR) and Saferworld undertook a series of participatory research studies in 18 conflict regions (Saferworld and Conciliation Resources, 2012). Their purpose was to highlight to the EU’s (and other international actors’) areas for potential intervention based on the priorities and needs of local populations. In Nigeria, CR facilitated a participatory research study in Delta and Plateau States, engaging stakeholders across all sectors and levels of society.

Importantly, the PPP project explicitly sought to engage and capture the viewpoints of individuals and groups normally overlooked by development research initiatives. Rather than engaging with high-level officials, PPP purposefully engaged with those middle- and lower-level government and security officials responsible for implementing policy at the local level. The research also avoided the practice of grouping together a given sector’s stakeholders and assuming that their views were homogenous. It became clear, for example, that the respective concerns and needs of Nigeria’s security agencies are incredibly diverse. The findings from this research directly informed the EU’s subsequent call for proposals on peace and stability programming in Plateau State and its focus in the subsequent years. This case study explores the main findings and lessons of the PPP project and more recent initiatives, in particular regarding the role of youth in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The role of youth

At the heart of the research was the analysis of a widespread perception that young people were at the heart of the violence, as both its architects and its primary victims. The findings identified the social, political and economic exclusion of young people as the key driving factor behind young people’s involvement in violence and crime in Plateau State.⁵ This exclusion is best demonstrated by the rampant youth unemployment rate in Nigeria (Taiwo, 2017). High levels of drug and alcohol abuse have further exacerbated the marginalisation and vulnerability of youth. These factors make youth particularly susceptible to being paid, recruited or manipulated to commit violence.

During election periods, youth have been used and sponsored by politicians and other elites to intimidate voters and stoke identity politics in the state. Increasingly, youth are using violence as a counter to the lack of power and status they experience in their everyday lives. As argued by one of the interviewees:

I’ve been involved in religious violence to defend my community and involved in youth gangs. I felt nobody cared about me and felt neglected. I was lost and felt there was no hope for the future.⁶

The perception that youth were primary agents of violence became prevalent, leading to sustained arbitrary detentions and intimidation by security forces. This coupled with the widespread mistrust and suspicion they have received from their own communities has served to push youths towards violence.

⁵ The PPP study’s findings corroborated earlier research by Jeremy Ginifer and Olawale Ismail (2005).

⁶ Interview 1.

Whilst the vulnerability of youth in Plateau State has long been recognised by federal and state governments as well as international and local civil society, responses to this have faced challenges. State-run initiatives in support of youth employment and empowerment have been beset by perceptions of their politicisation and accusations of embezzlement, which in turn have limited their uptake. Civil society initiatives have also prioritised activities sensitising community leaders to the necessity of implementing and delivering peace education for youth over directly engaging with those who are vulnerable and often deemed too dangerous or “beyond help”.

Youth Peace Platforms

Since 2012, CR and its partner – the Centre for Peace Advancement in Nigeria (CEPAN) – have worked with conflict-affected communities in four LGAs in Plateau State to build community cohesion across religious and ethnic divides, and to empower communities to work with government to improve community security. This has been achieved by establishing and supporting a network of 11 community-based youth coalitions to identify tensions, resolve conflict through dialogue and raise the voices of local community members to be heard by duty bearers at LGA and State levels. These Youth Peace Platforms (YPPs), comprising over 300 youths, specifically target at-risk youths. The initiative has helped these previously disenfranchised youths to transform from potential sources of insecurity to empowered, trusted and respected members of their community committed to being proactive agents for peace. One of the interviewees mentioned that:

I used to be a drug dealer and a political thug. I used to turn down the YPP's invitations to focus on selling drugs. But they showed me they wanted to listen. They made me realise that I could have a future, so I joined. That decision saved my life. I'm beginning to gain respect from people in my community. Working with the project changed my mind-set and gave me the choice to be part of peace rather than violence.⁷

Empowering these youths – through a combination of targeted capacity building, mentoring and accompaniment – has not just led to transformation on an individual level, but has also contributed to a wider shift in the attitudes and behaviour of communities and security actors towards youth. This has improved security and reinforced prospects for peace. The YPPs have three main streams of work: (1) empowerment of other youth, (2) dialogue and mediation, and (3) engagement with duty bearers at the community, local government and state level. These are unpacked further below.

1. Empowerment of other youth

The YPP members reach out to fellow vulnerable and marginalised youth to encourage them to participate in the YPP and be positive actors in their community. All outreach activities are conducted by the YPPs' Reformed Youth Clubs, comprised of YPP members who are former drug and substance abusers/dealers and/or members of armed gangs. Their pasts give them a better understanding of the challenges the targeted youths are presently facing, whilst also serving an example to others that personal transformation is possible. These Reformed Youth Clubs create a space for vulnerable youths, facilitating discussion and learning whilst introducing links to counselling and skills acquisition programmes.

⁷ Interview 2.

2. Dialogue and mediation

The YPP members are provided with training and support to facilitate dialogue and conflict resolution at the local-level. Their primary focus is on mediating inter-/intra-communal divides and tensions between youths and other members of the community. YPPs identify emerging conflict issues through a combination of ongoing conflict analysis, engagement with community actors and community referral. In the space of five years, the YPPs have led over 320 community dialogues in 22 conflict-affected communities, reaching approximately 15,000 people. The YPPs have contributed to improved relations within and between formerly divided groups, best exemplified by a dramatic reduction in reprisal attacks, as newly established links and communication channels have helped to de-escalate tensions and agree non-violent resolutions.

3. Engagement with duty bearers at the community, local government and state level

The YPPs are mandated to raise the concerns of local populations with the individuals and institutions who implement responses to insecurity. YPPs regularly facilitate meetings between their community and locally-based duty bearers, such as military and/or police patrols, the Ward chairperson and community and religious leaders. This has fostered more consultative and considered responses to insecurity by duty bearers, based on local needs and concerns.

Increasingly, YPPs are conducting advocacy to raise the collective voice of their community on the issues of youth inclusivity, civilian protection and good governance. To date, individual platforms have engaged with representatives from the Local Government Council, State House of Assembly, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, and the Ministry of Justice. Despite institutional challenges, YPPs have made considerable progress in engaging government, as evidenced in the establishment of a designated Youth Desk Officer at the House of Assembly whose sole responsibility is engaging youth on issues affecting them.

Key lessons and recommendations for conflict prevention

- 1. The prioritisation of support for community-centred and community-led conflict prevention initiatives is paramount*

Through the PPP project and the subsequent work in Plateau State, Conciliation Resources and its local civil society partner have sought to gain the perspective of those most affected by the conflict. The need for inclusive and participatory conflict prevention has long been widely accepted.

What is meant by local participation, however, clearly operates on a sliding scale. In many circumstances, what is labelled as a participatory process involves nothing more than engaging with prominent local civil society representatives, government officials and/or local elites. All too often the community perspective is omitted entirely from “participatory conflict analysis” processes and where it is not, community leaders are often the only ones to be consulted. Ongoing international support for initiatives that only strive to engage with a very narrow section of society can serve to undermine community perspectives and reinforce assumptions around the homogeneity of experiences. Analysis and programming that does not offer a concerted focus on community perspectives alongside those of elite individuals and institutions will always fail to capture the nuances, dynamics and full complexities of the conflict.

It is imperative that communities and the variety of groups that make up these communities are not only placed at the heart of all conflict prevention initiatives, but that they are fully supported in actively taking ownership of the process and leading it.

2. Conflict analysis should be viewed as a tool for transformation

The PPP study and subsequent work in Plateau State shows how one of the greatest benefits of a community-centred and community-led conflict analysis can be a transformative process in itself. A conflict analysis procedure within conflict-affected communities initiates, reignites or improves a community's thinking about issues from the perspectives of others. As such, it provides the foundation for improved mutual understanding.

Community-centred conflict analysis can therefore be used as a tool for encouraging dialogue and building relationships between divided groups. In Plateau State, the YPPs used joint conflict analysis as a mechanism to bring together disenfranchised youth and security agencies. Hearing the other side's perspective and developing a shared analysis served to break down some of the misconceptions and assumptions that they held about one another, as exemplified by a quote from one interviewee:

I did not know how many challenges and struggles they [the Police] themselves face. From the outside, it is easy to view them in a particular way, but I have a better understanding now of why they are the way they are.⁸

The slight easing of mistrust and suspicion through these activities provided an opportunity for further engagement between the two groups. Years later, the relationship between disenfranchised youth and the security agencies in Kabong has been transformed from one of complete mutual suspicion to one where there is regular, voluntary information sharing between the two groups through a well-defined mechanism of designated contact persons and joint meetings organised on a regular basis.

3. Steps should be taken to ensure that conflict analysis is a continuous process

One of the key successes of the YPP initiative in Plateau State is the way in which conflict analysis is being approached as a constant process. Conflict dynamics are constantly shifting and, as such, a standalone conflict analysis can only ever be a snapshot of the conflict at a particular time. There is a risk in conflict analysis being conducted on a solely periodic basis, that any emerging security issues may escalate in the intervening period to such an extent that they become more intractable. An ongoing process of conflict analysis is critical to effective early warning and early response mechanisms.

A major benefit of empowering conflict-affected communities to take the lead is their access to and awareness of the minute internal shifts in conflict dynamics. Shifts alert the community to the need to re-evaluate their analysis, which in turn allows for timely identification of issues as they emerge. An opportunity is hereby provided for the development of much more timely responses addressing potential sources of insecurity before they escalate.

⁸ Interview 3.

4. *“Small but steady” funding streams prioritising operational support and accompaniment can consolidate progress in local-level early warning and conflict prevention*

Effective early recognition of and response to conflict based on ongoing conflict analysis requires modest but sustained levels of support from externals. Capacity building should mean a long-term accompaniment process rather than occasional training workshops. An accompaniment process serves not only to reinforce skills learnt during formal training, but to ensure that local civil society actors can refine their approaches in consultation with supporting partner organisations. Conciliation Resources' engagement in Plateau State has been enabled by the PPP project, and reinforced by the EU-funded “Capacities for Peace” project (2013–16) (Conciliation Resources, n.d.), both of which have allowed Conciliation Resources to provide ongoing support to existing local peacebuilding networks such as the civil society-led Plateau Peace Practitioners Network, the Grassroots Peace Advancement Team and the YPPs. Yet, international actors should explore how to create more multi-year “small but steady” funding streams which allow for sustained accompaniment to local civil society actors working on early warning and conflict prevention – monitoring the uptake of conflict analysis skills, shadowing and enabling local civil society advocacy activities, and providing guidance and encouragement where necessary.

B. Support to peacebuilding actors in the peace process in Mindanao, Philippines

Historical overview

Conflicts in Mindanao, Philippines can be traced back to as early as the Spanish rule which started in the 16th century. The Spanish colonisation (1565–1898) and, more strikingly, the US rule (1898–1945) left a legacy of impoverishment, displacement and dispossession which accelerated after the independence in 1946. Decades of resettlement policies placed groups of Christians and families from the Northern parts of the archipelago into Mindanao. This turned Mindanaoans, who were 80% Muslim in 1898 and made up the majority of Indigenous Peoples⁹ of the Philippines, into a set of minorities and stripped them of their control over land, traditional governance and autonomy. This did not cease after independence in 1946, when a new central, “Filipinised” government in Manila settled and continued a policy of assimilation and settler-colonisation of the South (International Crisis Group, 2016b). This government of the Philippines (GPH) was perceived by the Mindanaoans as an invader, and Mindanaoan resistance (including armed resistance) was subsequently organised.

Following increasing violence and incidents involving state security forces, Nur Misuari's Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was created in the late 1960s. The MNLF aimed to achieve self-determination for the Bangsamoro, a future Muslim Nation, against what it saw as an imperialist central entity which was forcefully disrupting their existence, culture and lifestyles. It was

⁹ Commonly called Lumads. Under this acceptation, Indigenous peoples did not convert to Christianity or Islam, even though many in Muslims in Mindanao would identify as Indigenous.

followed by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and other breakaway armed groups such as the Abu Sayyaf Group, whose respective claims to armed struggle and tactics differed from and sometimes clashed with one another. Between 1972 and 2004, it is estimated that 120,000 civilians died. The conflict crystallised around religion, religious affiliation and ethnicity, and continues to be framed as such in mainstream narratives.

Peace negotiations started in the 1970s, as the conflicts were developing. The MNLF and GPH signed an agreement in 1996 and eventually the GPH-MILF process struck a milestone in 2015 with the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), laying the foundations of a future autonomous Bangsamoro entity and transition to it. The Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), passed by Congress in summer 2018, will be submitted to a plebiscite in January 2019 and will determine the powers of the new entity. Meanwhile, another peace process is under way between the GPH and the NDF (Heydarian, 2015). Criminal activity, armed confrontations, displacement, arms trade and other shadow economies continue to proliferate in Mindanao (International Alert, 2017; Strachan, 2015), in particular in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), the poorest region in the Philippines (Philippinesdata.org, 2015). A total of 445,000 people were internally displaced due to conflict by the end of 2017 (IDMC, n.d.).

EU support to peacebuilding in Mindanao: successes and challenges

Starting in the late 2000s, international support started flowing in Mindanao and Manila as the GPH-MILF process was picking up. The EU is one of many actors supporting the peace process in Mindanao directly or indirectly. The other actors doing this include Australia, Japan, Norway and the US. EU Member States have also been active in supporting civilian monitoring, economic growth and agricultural projects in Mindanao, directly or indirectly in relation to the peace process.

While the EU has been active in the conflict area since the 1970s with small-scale support (Houvenaeghel, 2015), it started to be formally involved in the peace process when the negotiations between GPH and MILF resumed in the early 2010s. With limited resources, it started providing humanitarian and development assistance to the poorest areas of the Philippines, which is how Mindanao became a focus of EU assistance. The EU became involved in peace process support as violence escalated and started having an impact on the EU's development assistance strategy in the 2000s (Houvenaeghel, 2015: 10). The peace process became a priority of EU engagement in the Philippines in 2007 with the EC Philippines Strategy Paper 2007–2013: in this strategy, peace was stipulated as a condition for the implementation of the EU's development goals (Houvenaeghel, 2015: 10).

MINPAD is the biggest EU development cooperation programme with the Philippines, and it could bring significant support to Mindanao. It is however dormant as the GPH has not yet signed the framework agreement authorising it. The Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the

Instrument for Stability (IfS) (later IcSP) have provided by far the largest EU contribution to peace actors in the Philippines¹⁰.

Most of the EU’s peace interventions are conducted through third party support or secondment. The EU is politically involved in the peace process through its diplomatic relations and its participation in the peace process, however this involvement has recently been hindered by tensions with the current Duterte administration based on the EU’s stance on human rights violations in the Philippines and perceptions of external interference (Dela Cruz, 2018; Rappler, 2018).

Box 2: Overview of EU support in peacebuilding processes in Mindanao¹¹		
<i>Support</i>	<i>Tool</i>	<i>Recipients of support</i>
Civilian protection	Secondment / Contracting of experts	International Monitoring Team
Local governance	Funding (CSO-LA via DCI)	National and local civil society organisations Local authorities
Conflict prevention and civilian protection	Funding (IcSP) Informal information sharing	INGOs Local NGOs International organisations
Dialogue and peace process support	Funding (IcSP) Informal information sharing Invitations to high-level meetings	INGOs Local NGOs International Contact Group (ICG)
Humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected settings (including Marawi)	ECHO	NGOs Local authorities
Cross cutting development Cooperation	MINPAD (<i>dormant</i>)	National government Local authorities
<i>Recent initiatives</i>		
Social and economic recovery, development planning and local governance (close in June 2017)	Trust Fund (MTF-RDP – 70% of funding) Multilateral approach	World Bank

The EU supports and works with a variety of local, national and international NGOs, local and national authorities and international agencies. The EU started supporting peacebuilding NGOs with the start of IfS/IcSP in 2009. For instance, it has supported dialogue initiatives between GPH, MILF, MNLF and other conflict parties facilitated by Center for Humanitarian Dialogue. It also has provided support for early warning and unarmed civilian monitoring and protection through the

¹⁰ DCI provided over 163 million Euros to the Philippines since the late 1970s and IfS/IcSP’s endowment has consistently increased between 2009 and 2015, reflecting the EU’s prioritisation of peace in its Philippines engagement (Houvenaeghel, 2015).

¹¹ See also European Union, 2010. This is by no means a comprehensive mapping of the EU’s cooperation or interactions in Mindanao or in conflict-affected settings in the Philippines.

NGO Nonviolent Peaceforce and to local governance and multi-party democratic transformation through Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) and the Institute for Autonomy and Governance. It also supported international organisations such as UNDP and the World Bank. From 2005 to 2017, the EU co-funded the World Bank-led Mindanao Trust Fund for Reconstruction and Development (MTF-RDP), which focused on economic and social recovery of conflict-affected communities.

Conciliation Resources in Mindanao¹²

In 2011, Conciliation Resources was invited to the International Contact Group (ICG) as a witness observer to the peace process during negotiations in Malaysia. The ICG became a technical assistance platform for the MILF, in which peace experts could share expertise on negotiations and technicalities of the process. Having been supported in recent years by a range of donors including the EU, CR focused on the political inclusion of peace actors, especially non-revolutionary actors, on community policing and transitional justice. In concrete terms, this translated into developing advocacy projects for underrepresented groups to lobby senators and congress representatives on the drafting of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (now BOL) - including applying a gender lens - and on enhancing Indigenous and Moro women's empowerment and participation in the peace process. Among the successes highlighted, 11 out of 13 recommendations in relation to women's rights and participation were adopted in the version of the BBL passed by the lower house. On community policing, in cooperation with the World Bank, UNDP and the EU, the organisation helped develop early warning community-based mechanisms with the aim to foster community organisation and resilience.

Key lessons and recommendations for the EU's support to peacebuilding in Mindanao: Perspectives from civil society representatives and international agencies

Observations

INGOs tend to act as liaisons with other international actors and have a privileged relationship with international donors, including the EU.¹³ A number of the INGOs are staffed by Filipino experts, as well as experts from Mindanao and the Bangsamoro. They seem to act as connectors as well as a vehicle for information between key stakeholders and external actors. A small number of national NGOs seem to be playing a similar role.

¹² Interview 8.

¹³ Interviews 8, 9, 10 and 11.

Overall, the EU is viewed positively by practitioners on the receiving end of financial support.¹⁴ In particular, international NGOs and international agencies are able to conduct reporting adequately and to adapt to developments: EU requirements are not a hindrance to the achievement of their objectives and indeed are more understanding of and flexible toward their aims compared to other donors (e.g. USAID). Several practitioners mentioned that the EU is a trusted partner of CSOs and people in Mindanao. One in particular highlighted that it is easier to work with the EU on initiatives involving non-state armed groups, especially Muslim ones, because the EU is not (perceived as) anti-Muslim: it appears measured and more reasonable than other external powers.¹⁵

However, some challenges were raised, some more foreseeable than others. Firstly, by supporting others, the EU's action is less visible than that of implementers such as the World Bank and UNDP, and therefore gets less traction with EU Member States at Council level (Houvenaeghel, 2015).¹⁶ Secondly, financial reporting for EU funding is consistently a challenge, especially for (smaller) Mindanaoan organisations, and is said to be comparatively time consuming.¹⁷ Thirdly, small local NGOs do not have the capacity to access EU support and work with larger organisations as intermediaries. A "start-up" grant scheme for smaller NGOs could help, however this means intense monitoring and tracking, which the EU does not have the capacity to undertake with decreasing staff.¹⁸

Moreover, working with EU support has become politically more problematic than it in the past. On the one hand, the EU is one of the few external actors visibly supporting human rights defenders in the Philippines and one of the largest peacebuilding donors present there. On the other hand, it is also the only power taking a vocal, principled stance on human rights violations, including those allegedly perpetrated and encouraged by the current administration, which has created tensions that resulted in the EU being shut off from development cooperation in the Philippines and in Mindanao. According to Enrico Dela Cruz (2018), "[t]he European Parliament and its members have criticized the Philippines' brutal anti-narcotics crackdown several times, infuriating Duterte, who has directed his frustration at the European Union, rather than its legislative branch". One practitioner argued that this principled approach reduces the EU's influence on the government and the EU is bearing a cost. The complexity and the fragmentation of the EU institutions with various roles and sensibilities has contributed to the tensions and affects the way NGOs are perceived by the government.¹⁹

How external donors determine who the "local" is has been problematic, in particular in the context of the Philippines where governance is widely dominated by a system of political families

¹⁴ Interviews 8, 9 and 12.

¹⁵ Interview 9.

¹⁶ Interview 9.

¹⁷ Interviews 8 and 9.

¹⁸ Interviews 8 and 9.

¹⁹ Interviews 8 and 9.

and oligarchies. “Local partners” is often taken to mean the national government. One practitioner regretted that cooperation with external donors often disregards the oppressive relationship between the state and the local populations. This results in the reinforcement of power structures that create conflict: in the case of the Philippines much of the economic and social power is constitutionally concentrated at the level of mayors, and there is a higher proportion of dynasties. By identifying the local as the state or as the devolved organs of the state, programmes that are not conflict-sensitive unwittingly reinforce these power structures which are exploitative, oppressive and drivers of violence.²⁰

Engaging and supporting civil society to facilitate the development of the capacity to be resilient in the face of these power structures was raised by interviewees as an essential prerequisite for successful conflict prevention. However, flagship civil society organisations can mirror the system they are trying to influence and unintentionally keep the funding door closed for the more traditional, lower-key, local grassroots organisations. Supporting local CSOs and dynasties can also reinforce conflict dynamics if power relations are not fully considered. Donors’ attentions can also overstretch the capacities of those organisations that are deemed effective as those organisations receive too much attention from donors.

Key lessons and recommendations

This report has identified a number of best practices and recommendations relating to EU funding and external support in general, which could be informative for policymakers and peacebuilders seeking to maximise conflict sensitivity:

- 1. Invitations to participate in high-level informal meetings convened by the EU help bridge the gap between the political level and the grassroots level²¹*

The EU provided opportunities for experts and CSOs from Mindanao to network with international and national power holders, e.g. at receptions, roundtables and working dinners. This inclusive practice has opened the door for new strands of cooperation and relationship building.

Civil society experts can inform integrated, cross-sectoral stabilisation approaches and help the EU to connect its peace process support to other dimensions of daily life in Mindanao, in particular in the economic sphere: creating jobs and stimulating economic growth is likely to decrease the levels of violence in Mindanao.

Based on existing engagement, the EU could better locate and formalise the role of CSOs, including INGOs, in the EU’s strategy in Philippines. This would help define how they complement the work of other organisations and groups in Mindanao, in particular local authorities, front

²⁰ Interviews 10 and 11.

²¹ Interview 9.

leaders, community leaders and the private sector. It could also help communicating the outcome related to the BBL, as the process so far has revealed that its content is not well disseminated across the population.

2. Support joint learning exercises and exchanges for communities, parliamentarians and the media

EU-supported joint learning exercises involving various stakeholders in Mindanao, in the form of conflict analyses, roundtables and workshops, provided opportunities to continue to build trust while aiming to understand and address conflict dynamics as the BBL process fluctuated.²² IcSP-funded projects such as the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) co-managed by EPLO were mentioned specifically: CSDN, for example, was cited as a useful mechanism of dialogue with the EU on peacebuilding.

Additionally, the EU could support workshops and peer-to-peer exchanges for media institutions and individuals to learn how to include a peacebuilding lens in report writing; in particular journalism courses should include components that provide exposure to Mindanao and conflict stakeholders. Similarly, the EU could facilitate the organisation of courses for policymakers and members of parliament, as well as their staff and advisors, as most of them are not from Mindanao and are informed through biased narratives and based on intuition.²³

In calls for proposals, the EU should systematically require that applicants have a capacity building component on various aspects of peacebuilding, in particular on fundraising.

C. Lessons from local protection mechanisms in response to the Lord's Resistance Army²⁴

The collapse of the Juba peace talks between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in late 2008 marked the beginning of the geographical extension of LRA operations into the border region between north east Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and what was then south-western Sudan (and is now South Sudan). A heightened level of violence against local populations in these border regions continued from early 2009 through to 2012. Since 2012, LRA activity in South Sudan has been limited to occasional forays over the border from DRC, due to the effectiveness of local defence groups, the presence of the African Union Regional Task Force (see below) and, more recently, the steady spread of South Sudan's ongoing civil war into Western Equatoria state, which borders north-eastern DRC. In north-eastern DRC, however, the

²² Interviews 9, 10 and 11.

²³ The last two recommendations were described as not having traction with funders.

²⁴ This case study is based on peacebuilding activities which were supported by non-EU donors and whose lessons can inform the EU's action in conflict-affected settings.

LRA has continued to pose a significant threat to communities in Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé provinces, as well as in the northern parts of the Ituri province. The LRA has taken advantage of the inaccessibility of rural areas surrounding Garamba National Park in Haut-Uélé to consolidate a largely continuous base of operations from which to prey on local communities (Lancaster, 2014). The displacement of LRA activities from South Sudan since 2012 has increased the concentration of LRA operations in north-eastern DRC.²⁵

Despite the violence inflicted on local populations, neither the Congolese government nor the South Sudanese government have considered LRA insecurity as a priority issue. Waves of violence in DRC's Kivu provinces, constitutional and electoral crises in Kinshasa, the Darfur conflict and the independence (and subsequent collapse) of South Sudan have all proved far more pressing challenges to the authority and territorial integrity of both governments during the period in which the LRA has been active in DRC/South Sudan border regions. The half-hearted participation of both governments in the African Union Regional Task Force (AURTF)²⁶ attests to this lack of prioritisation.

Local protection mechanisms – the development of Local Peace Committees

Following the collapse of the Juba peace talks in December 2008 and the geographical expansion of the LRA, attacks on local communities in Haut-Uélé, Bas-Uélé, northern Ituri provinces and Western Equatoria began to escalate rapidly. Many local communities entrusted their defence to local armed hunters, who proved highly effective at monitoring LRA movements and warning the community of impending LRA incursions.

By early 2010, the Congolese government, fearful that these local self-defence mechanisms would develop into militias capable of threatening the authority of the state, began to dismantle the traditional armed hunter networks. Communities acquiesced, fearful of reprisals from the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) if attempts were made to reinstate them; yet in the absence of protection from the FARDC, local communities were once again left vulnerable to attack.

In response, local actors decided to shift their approach. In late 2010 SAIPED (Solidarity and Integral Assistance to Destitute People) – a local NGO based in Dungu (Haut-Uélé province) –

²⁵ This case study will concern itself primarily with local protection mechanisms in north-east DRC, as the emergence of the Local Peace Committees discussed coincides with a sharp reduction of LRA attacks in South Sudan.

²⁶ The AURTF was the military component of the African Union-authorized Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA (AU RCI-LRA), a multilateral political framework to oversee long-term recovery of LRA-affected areas. Both South Sudanese and Congolese governments contributed few military personnel to the AURTF (headquartered in Yambio, Western Equatoria province in South Sudan), and cross-border coordination and collaboration between the countries' troops was poor. The AURTF, overly reliant on Ugandan troops and American funding, suffered from poor coordination and was eventually closed in May 2017.

suggested the creation of a network of early warning monitors under the rubric of Local Peace Committees (LPCs). In Ituri province, the Diocesan Commission for Justice, Peace and Reconciliation (CDJPR) organised a series of community gatherings to address multiple issues threatening peace at the local level, which would later be folded into the LPC network. The shift in language was significant – up to this point, “self-defence” measures had been perceived by government actors as a threat to their authority, whereas LPCs offered a clear non-violent mandate with protection as a primary aim.

In South Sudan, however, both communities and the government began to support local defence groups, known variously as “arrow boys” or “home guards”, as a means to counter LRA-generated insecurity.²⁷ At their height, in Western Equatoria state an estimated 17,000 people participated in these self-defence groups. These groups, nominally under the supervision of Western Equatoria’s state governor, effectively took over policing tasks and militarily pursued the LRA; in 2011, the South Sudanese national legislative assembly earmarked \$1.2 million to support their operations (Tumutegereize, 2012).²⁸

Between 2011 and 2015, twenty-one LPCs were initiated in Haut-Uélé, Bas-Uélé and northern Ituri provinces in north-eastern DRC. A further five were created by the Inter-church Committee (ICC) over the border in Western Equatoria state in 2012. Whilst most of these were completely new structures, a considerable number were reformulations of peace efforts initiated by local churches in parallel (such as the CDJPR’s community gatherings). In the initial phase, the mandate of the LPCs was:

- To gather information of LRA activities, to map insecurity and to provide early warning to other communities so that they could take necessary precautions;
- To report security incidents and local conflicts to security forces, UN missions and local authorities; and
- To enable the successful reintegration of LRA returnees by raising awareness and encouraging acceptance amongst local communities.

LPCs were premised on the notion of inclusion, sharing the information they gathered beyond their own communities and, where possible, with local government officials, armed forces and peacekeeping missions. LPCs benefited from the participation of customary authorities as well as the Catholic and Protestant Churches, whose standing within local communities and deep-rooted investment in issues around peace and justice helped to build bridges and allay community concerns about engagement with security and state actors who hitherto had done little to

²⁷ Community militarisation and local defence groups are discussed in further detail in Schomerus and Tumutegereize, 2009.

²⁸ These funds were never disbursed, deteriorating the relationship between Western Equatorians and the national government in Juba.

support them. There were, however, limitations; whilst LPCs were able to improve relations with the FARDC, MONUSCO and the AURTF, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA – South Sudan's armed forces) were largely dismissive of LPCs.²⁹

Each LPC typically consisted of about 12 committee members, drawn from across the community, and elected by the communities themselves. During periods of heightened insecurity, committee members met on a daily basis to assess the information they had collected, cross-referencing and collating information to produce situation reports. LPCs drew on a large network of sources – particularly fishermen, hunters and traders – who regularly accessed remote forest and bushland where they were likely to come across traces of LRA movements or discarded camp materials. During extended lulls in violence, members met less regularly, on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

Situation reports were then sent to SAIPED and CDJPR to inform other communities and engage security actors, notably the Joint Intelligence and Operations Centre (JIOC)³⁰ in Dungu, an information-sharing hub for militaries, peacekeepers and civil society organisations involved in countering LRA activity, including through the protection of civilians. LPCs were also encouraged to engage directly with local communities and FARDC patrols.

Successes and challenges of Local Peace Committees

Women's participation

Women in the region have experienced significant gender-based violence due to the LRA conflict, yet they remain poorly represented in community-level decision-making mechanisms, where social custom takes precedence over national and international laws³¹ that are meant to stop exclusionary and patriarchal practices. Years of insecurity have, however, challenged and changed gendered relations, providing opportunities to formalise women's participation in local decision-making. Interviewees mentioned that the authority of local male elders has been compromised by their handling of the LRA crisis; women have increasingly become breadwinners or heads of households, and have led efforts to encourage and reintegrate LRA returnees (Corneliussen et al., 2017).

²⁹ It should be noted that this was not a consequence of flawed strategy by LPCs, but more a reflection of deep historic politico-military mistrust between Western Equatorians and the national government in Juba which predates the LRA's arrival in Western Equatoria.

³⁰JIOC brought together the following actors: the FARDC, SPLA, the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF), les Forces Armées Centrafricaines (FACA, CAR's national army), MONUSCO, US military advisors and international NGOs. JIOC remains operational but its relevance has reduced significantly since 2014, as crises in Central African Republic and South Sudan have evolved, and American and Ugandan assistance has diminished.

³¹The Congolese government has ratified numerous international and national legal mechanisms and instruments promoting women's rights and gender equality, including: the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the modification of the Family Code, the Labour Code, the Commercial Code by Act No. 06/018 of 20 January 2006 relating to Sexual Violence, the 2010 National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325), and the Penal Code.

Early attempts to integrate women into LPC fora had limited success, as women did not feel they had the legitimacy or confidence to express their priorities and needs in plenary. A decision was taken to create parallel discussion groups for women only (Forums des Femmes – FdF), in order to articulate views and build consensus on the specific security and reintegration needs of women and children (Corneliussen et al., 2017). Key points would be raised in LPC discussions; in order to do so, each LPC would include at least two women from the local FdF. Conciliation Resources and its partners identified male champions amongst LPC members who would endorse FdF-generated concerns. Arrangements were also made to provide childcare for young mothers and care-givers, enabling participation in meetings and advocacy events which would otherwise not have been possible.³²

An unintended consequence of this work has been the extent to which FdFs have become fully-fledged structures in their own right. Whilst FdF representatives are vocal LPC participants, women have on the whole found it more effective to coordinate amongst themselves, effectively operating in parallel with LPCs. Conciliation Resources is now focusing increasingly on supporting the development of the FdFs alongside LPCs, and members are now regularly attending national and regional advocacy events as FdF representatives.

Relationships with officials and security actors

Since their formulation, LPCs have grown to become credible and recognised fora in community security decision-making, increasing levels of trust between local populations on the one hand, and local officials and security forces on the other. Although significant challenges remain, LPCs have helped to shift dialogue from recrimination and blame towards collaboration to solve common challenges. Local authorities increasingly include and recognise LPCs in local governance, and LPCs have reported being invited by local authorities to adjudicate disputes when they are better-placed than the local authorities to do so. As the LPCs have become more established, both their mandate and the demand for their mediation in neighbouring villages has grown. LPCs are increasingly tasked with adjudicating disputes over land ownership, a source of persistent tension and occasional violence within and between local communities.

Yet the success of LPCs has been limited by the inability or unwillingness of security providers to act upon the early warning analysis provided by LPCs. LPCs in north-eastern DRC have reported that FARDC and MONUSCO fail to react, or react often weeks late, to LPC alerts on LRA movements (Leeper, 2017). LPCs were particularly critical of MONUSCO, whom they felt used LPC analysis simply to cross-reference against other sources of intelligence. MONUSCO's Community Liaison Officers (CLAs) have not sufficiently or regularly engaged with LPCs to gauge their priorities or concerns. This has eroded the goodwill generated between communities and

³² Monthly activity reports of FdF (not published).

security providers, and reinforced the long-standing perception amongst local communities of an extractive and unresponsive state (Leeper, 2017).

Conciliation Resources adapted its support in the region from 2014 onwards in light of this challenge. As LPCs were already well-established at the local level, Conciliation Resources switched its focus to direct engagement with national and international actors in Kinshasa³³ to raise the profile of the security situation in north-eastern DRC. As well as to encourage a more proactive response from security actors present in the region, a key component of this engagement has been to change national and international perceptions of local community actors from sources of intelligence to key drivers of social change in their own right.³⁴

Reintegration of LRA “returnees”

LPCs in areas with high rates of LRA returnees have done much to prevent violence towards those who escaped from the LRA. Returnees are often both traumatised due to acts of violence they have witnessed or committed, and rejected by family members and communities. Young women were particularly targeted for abduction, and female returnees, particularly those with children born from sexual enslavement or coercion, are especially ostracised.³⁵ At the height of LRA violence in the border region (2009–12), acts of retribution towards LRA returnees were commonplace. Male returnees were often beaten, sometimes to death. Communities trying to cope with chronic insecurity, poverty and influxes of displaced people struggled to consider returnees as anything other than the cause of their suffering.

In response, LPCs and FdFs have directly facilitated the return and reintegration of people abducted by the LRA. LPCs and FdFs changed community attitudes towards returnees through a sustained sensitisation campaign based on community gatherings and radio messaging (Corneliussen et al., 2017).³⁶ By emphasising returnees' forced recruitment and victimhood through radio programmes and church services, the campaign helped to create safer conditions for their return. Radio programmes have also directly targeted LRA fighters with messages imploring them to return home, leading to a marked increase in the number of fighters “coming out of the bush” (Medeiros, 2014).

CLPs and FdFs have worked hard to ensure that returnees receive immediate medical and psychosocial help and have access to education and livelihood opportunities longer-term.

³³ Primary advocacy targets include MONUSCO, FARDC, the African Union Regional Co-operation Initiative for the elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (AU-RCI), and the International Working Group on the LRA.

³⁴ Conciliation Resources mid-term evaluation of EU project, created in January 2018 (unpublished).

³⁵ These women are often branded “*surungba LRA*”. “*Surungba*” in Zande dialect means “residue”, “waste” or “food left/abandoned” by someone who is satisfied.

³⁶ Conciliation Resources mid-term evaluation of EU project, created in January 2018 (unpublished); Conciliation Resources interim report of EU project, created in February 2018 (unpublished).

Resentment and suspicions remain, however, and stretched communities often struggle to successfully reintegrate returnees, exacerbating existing tensions (Conciliation Resources, 2017).

Emerging regional presence and influence

Due to a combination of ongoing insecurity and poor infrastructure, communities in LRA-affected areas have had few opportunities to engage with one another. This has led to a culture of mistrust, whereby communities in South Sudan, DRC and CAR blame Ugandans primarily, and one another, for “exporting” the LRA conflict.³⁷

In response, Conciliation Resources supported between 2010 and 2016 the development of a Regional Civil Society Task Force (RCSTF), which brought together civil society actors from across the four countries to develop a common understanding of the conflict and share experiences both of victimhood and resilience. The RCSTF played a key role in galvanising civil society consensus and facilitating coordinated action based on strong analysis. The RCSTF produced a quarterly bulletin called the *Voice of Peace*,³⁸ which explained conflict dynamics and showcased peacebuilding efforts across LRA-affected areas. The *Voice of Peace*, shared widely with national and international policymakers, maintained attention on LRA-generated insecurity and ensured that analysis by LPCs influenced national and international approaches.

LPC analysis continues to feature through Conciliation Resources' participation at LRA Focal Point/Experts meeting,³⁹ and conclusions from these meetings are presented at the International Working Group meeting on the LRA (IWG-LRA),⁴⁰ thus ensuring that community-generated analysis informs the international donor community's response and commitment to the LRA conflict.

³⁷ Interview 5, 6 and 7.

³⁸ Whilst the bulletin faced considerable logistical difficulties, and ran for three years only, it did much to dispel tensions between communities across national borders and to demonstrate the (potential) strength of a coordinated civil society response to LRA insecurity (Conciliation Resources, 2012).

³⁹ A bi-annual event bringing together key actors to coordinate responses to the LRA insurgency – co-chaired by the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), and attended by relevant UN missions and embassies in the region, INGOs/NGOs and key community leaders.

⁴⁰ The IWG on the LRA is co-chaired by the EU and the USA and attended by UN agencies, the African Union and representatives of the governments affected by the LRA conflict.

Lessons for EU support to Local Peace Committees

1. *Support to security capacity building must place as much importance on relational aspects as it does for logistical and material considerations*

Greater logistical and material support to national armed forces in the region would likely contribute to more robust and effective responses to LRA-generated insecurity. Yet the experience of the Local Peace Committees demonstrates that these security responses are only as successful as the relationships security actors develop with local communities, and the extent to which the former consider, and devise responses based on, the latter's security needs.

The AU RCI-LRA, which the EU has previously funded through its African Peace Fund (APF),⁴¹ offers a cautionary tale: by operationalising its military action (through the AU RTF-LRA), but not its civilian protection and regional recovery mandate, the RCI-LRA alienated local populations and at times *contributed* to insecurity by conducting military operations that resulted in LRA reprisals against local communities. If in the future the EU is to support third states' capabilities in response to the LRA conflict, it must make its support conditional upon the development of *inclusive* security strategies, based squarely on local analysis and priorities. In parallel, the EU's IcSP must continue to prioritise initiatives supporting civil society's ability to inform political and military responses to insecurity.

2. *The EU should use its convening power to promote greater coordination and engagement with local actors in response to the LRA conflict*

The EU has displayed leadership in response to the LRA conflict by co-chairing the IWG-LRA, which has helped to maintain international attention on the conflict and ensure a degree of coordination from relevant stakeholders. Meetings are, however, fairly irregular and there is no mechanism to ensure follow-up. The EU should revitalise the IWG-LRA, ensuring entry points for local civil society input, and use its leverage to encourage relevant national governments to establish similar coordination mechanisms at the national level.

At a minimum, the EU could champion the establishment of a donor working group in Kinshasa with a specific mandate for supporting local peace structures and building community resilience in north-east DRC. Key to this support would be to convene opportunities for dialogue between local organisations and FARDC and MONUSCO leadership, and to create funding streams that would offer small and long-term grants tailored to the capacity of local-level organisations. Engagement and funding opportunities for women's networks, such as the Forums des Femmes, should be prioritised.

⁴¹ See European Union (2014).

3. *Strengthen the capacity of EEAS Regional Teams*

The EU's External Action Service should take advantage of the development of its Regional Team in Nairobi to ensure the coordination of action from the EU delegations in Juba and Kinshasa in the DRC-South Sudan border regions.

Ongoing South Sudanese refugee streams into north-east DRC are exacerbating existing conflict dynamics.⁴² The use of north-east DRC by South Sudanese armed groups (notably the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition) as a base to recruit troops and pillage supplies has had a significant impact on the course of the civil war in South Sudan (Conciliation Resources, 2017). Yet coordination by EU delegations in South Sudan and DRC to jointly address these challenges is limited. In response, the Nairobi Regional Team should use its mandate to align relevant EU delegations and to highlight with them the analysis of the capabilities of local actors developing responses to the LRA conflict.

⁴² The additional challenges caused by the spillover of the South Sudanese crisis into north-east DRC are explored in Corneliussen et al., 2017; Leeper, 2017.

III. KEY LESSONS, CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES

This section will summarise the lessons and best practices identified from this report's case studies. It will then highlight the key challenges to supporting others in peacebuilding based on the findings of this report and those of recent research covering the EU's and EU Member States' support to national authorities in SSR and peace processes, in particular in the case of Northern Ireland, in order to refine its policy recommendations.

Lessons from EU support to peacebuilding in Northern Ireland are particularly relevant in this study for a number of reasons. The EU's PEACE Programme, the flagship peace support programme of the EU in Northern Ireland, is over 20 years old; its breadth and scope are wide and it adopted a bottom-up approach (European Parliament, 2018). It has modeled a positive and inclusive partnership between donor and local stakeholders, from decision-making to implementation (Bush and Houston, 2011). While contrasting this study's findings with lessons from Northern Ireland could help identify key strengths and weaknesses in EU support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, the authors of this report do not suggest that lessons discussed here are always transferable from one context to another.

Key lessons for the EU's support to local actors

Firstly, the case studies demonstrate that analysis produced by peacebuilding organisations can be very detailed and in-depth to an extent that the EU could not produce on its own. Peacebuilding civil society organisations, including many INGOs, have widespread networks, and better access to marginalised groups than the EU enjoys, within conflict-affected areas. They bring attention to blind spots that external actors may or may not be aware of. Moreover, understanding conflict and investing in early warning can help the design of better EU programmes. When timed correctly, the findings of practitioner-led research have directly informed the EU's calls for proposals on peace and stability programming and its focus in subsequent years.

On the response level, civil society initiatives can be perceived with less suspicion than state-sponsored programmes, as seen in the Nigeria Plateau state study. A substantial proportion of participants of the initiatives described above reported feeling listened to. The focus on trust-building, providing non-violent alternatives to engage in society through dialogue, trainings and other forms of peacebuilding, contributes to improving perceptions of security, which in turn lowers the risk of violence further.⁴³ The case of Northern Ireland highlights that the EU understands the importance of investing in "peace entrepreneurs" at various stages of a peace process (Bush and Houston, 2011). Working with "locals", however, does not ensure that peacebuilding processes will be more legitimate, sustainable or effective. Working with the same selection of trusted or preferred local groups for an extended period while keeping others in the margins can fuel conflict dynamics and escalate violence.

⁴³ The external assessment of EULEX Kosovo in DL 5.1 illustrates this phenomenon (Peen Rodt et al., 2017).

This report’s case studies demonstrate that by comparison to other external actors the EU is, in many cases, well-placed to provide support to non-state local actors in peacebuilding processes. It seeks to have its peace and stability programming (IcSP) informed by in-depth conflict analysis involving diverse views of security and governance. Depending on the level of neutrality the EU is associated with in a given country, the EU is often found by local actors to be more trustworthy and, surprisingly, more flexible than other large donors supporting peacebuilding activities. In spite of the time-consuming reporting requirements that come with EU support, local actors have reported that EU funding (IcSP) and EU programme managers are understanding of the need to adapt to local dynamics and ways are found to make the necessary arrangements for that to happen.

Key challenges

In spite of its potential and demonstrated positive impact in some contexts, the previous case studies and recent research reviewed for this report point to a series of key internal and external challenges that are limiting the effectiveness of the EU support to peacebuilding.

Box 3: Key challenges to effective EU support to peacebuilding	
<i>Internal Challenges</i>	<i>External Challenges</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A lack of strategic and integrated vision to implement EU commitments. ● Different interpretations of objectives / Inconsistent use of peacebuilding-focused theories of change. ● Setting unrealistic expectations. ● Inconsistent connection between technical support to peacebuilding and political processes. ● Institutional frameworks and processes appear more a constraint than an enabler in peacebuilding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measuring the success and impact of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. ● Political blockages and resistance to change. ● A range of interpretations of the meanings “local ownership” and “peacebuilding”. ● The needs of beneficiaries change and must therefore be reassessed regularly.

False dichotomies (top-down vs. bottom-up, political vs. technical)

Some experts interviewed for this study reported that EU-supported initiatives in SSR tend to be technically focused to the extent that they are sometimes disjointed from political processes and realities.⁴⁴ Kasper Hoffmann and colleagues (2018) illustrated the limits of support to local-level, bottom-up security initiatives in DRC when power holders are ignored or not taken into account in the intervention from design to conclusion. The UK Stabilisation Unit’s Elite Bargains study,

⁴⁴ Interviews 4 and 5.

which covers a wide range of areas from peace process support to police reform, suggests that external support that does not aim directly or indirectly to support elite bargains is likely to fail (Stabilisation Unit, 2018).

We have seen that EU officials could more systematically include local CSO experts in high-level political meetings and programming design to help bridge this gap. Lessons from Northern Ireland's security sector reform warn us against conflating bridging the gap between different tracks of the security dimension of a peace process, and politicising the security sector. Security actors on the frontlines such as the police should keep their independence and should be perceived as autonomous, in particular for sensitive issues like policing or justice. Funders, governments and other political actors should not use local actors for political goals (Byrne, 2014). Visibility, on the other hand, can be positive or negative: the EU should aim first and foremost to do no harm and to avoid triggering or exacerbating unwanted attention or violence towards the local actors it supports (Byrne, 2014).

Material considerations often take precedence over building relationships

Funding and equipment is only one aspect of conflict prevention and capacity building. Relationships and adaptation to local developments are more crucial to peace development. Support to conflict prevention and security capacity building must place as much importance on relational aspects as it does on logistical and material considerations. The relational aspects imply clear communication between, and reliability and adaptability of all involved. How the EU is situated in the context of intervention, how it is perceived by local stakeholders and how it is willing to adapt to people and circumstances on the ground appear to be key criteria for local buy-in and likelihood of effectiveness. The case studies show that EU support to peacebuilding works best when 1) there is a clear and realistic understanding of what conflict actors and external actors' interests and added value are, and 2) the EU and partners act upon it. The recent UK Stabilisation Unit's Elite Bargains study, which was based on 21 case studies, came to a similar conclusion: evidence of effectiveness of external interventions seem to lie in the relationship between the context, the conflict stakeholders and the interventions (Stabilisation Unit 2018).

The fact that similar types of interventions in identical contexts produce different results illustrates that the game-changing factors do not lie entirely within the intervention itself. The Northern Ireland case has illustrated this dimension and calls for setting realistic expectations regarding EU support to local peacebuilders. The so-called "success" of the peace process and the PEACE programme should, in part, be understood in the specificities of the EU's relationship with the Republic of Ireland and the UK. The two countries were both members of the EU and shared to an extent a European liberal tradition of democracy, governance and human rights (Bush and Houston, 2011). Donors and local peacebuilders shared a set of ties which made the type of wide-ranging, structural and sustained support model possible.

Unrealistic expectations

All case studies and research reviewed for this report point to the oversized, unrealistic expectations placed upon the EU's support to SSR and peace process support. The EU tends to be "overly optimistic about the scope and pace of reform processes" it is involved in and routinely underestimates the time required for reform (Penksa et al., 2018). Nadine Ansorg and Toni Haastrup (2018) have found that the EU develops unrealistic expectations over its support to SSR, gender equality, and gender, peace and security, for various reasons. First, these expectations are not reflective of the EU's institutional and political capacity to achieve such absolutes as security, peace and gender equality, nor of the context's constraints. Second, the EU tends not to evaluate its capacity to influence a given context, or of how it is perceived within that given context. There is often no formal link between internal gender mainstreaming on the one hand (for example, gender equality for staff, and gender sensitivity in programming), and external expectations on partners regarding gender on the other.

Lessons from Northern Ireland are particularly relevant in this regard. Despite tremendous progress in desegregation and reconciliation efforts supported by the PEACE programme, some of the economic, cultural and political mechanisms that enable and encourage division are still in place in Northern Ireland (Thiessen et al., 2010). Stakeholders commented that European Commission officials and politicians at times hold inflated expectations of EU support, not appreciating that conflict and societal transformation is a slow, complex and unpredictable process. External support to peacebuilding and conflict prevention can only, at best, contribute to peace (Bush and Houston, 2011). Similarly, according to the UK Stabilisation Unit, there are no examples in recent case studies of post-war transition leading directly to developmental peace – a situation where elites facilitate a more stable and inclusive political settlement (Stabilisation Unit, 2018: 4). External actors' interventions aiming for large-scale transformation over a short timeframe are unrealistic.

EU support to peacebuilding lacks a coherent and integrated strategy

To achieve its commitments and objectives in terms of SSR and gender, peace and security, the EU's approach to programming and implementation is judged to be inconsistently strategic, coherent and integrated (Ansorg and Haastrup, 2018; Penksa et al., 2018). In particular, it has been imprecise in linking objectives with the most appropriate means of support, based on the rationale that the sum of all EU interventions in a given country cannot but have a positive impact in the long-term.

As was argued in the introduction to this report, external support tends to focus on the nation-state framework as the main space of intervention, with official representatives being the main, legitimate interlocutors of the EU. However, focusing on the state while ignoring the reality of conflict dynamics, which are increasingly transnational, localised and unconventional (involving non-state actors), diminishes the likelihood of positive impact, or worse, increases the possibility of harm.

Ignoring risk is not conflict sensitive

This challenge is linked to the imperative of situating oneself in conflict. As Beswick (2017) illustrated, there are no institutionalised ways for the EU to examine its position and the adequacy of its instruments before, during and after intervention. However, there are often negative consequences to any external action in a conflict setting: someone is likely to lose something or to be left out. External actors, including the EU, often find themselves pushed to do something (or be seen doing something) in a conflict-affected situation, under the assumption that doing *something* in conflict can only have positive effects. Evidence from the UK Stabilisation Unit demonstrates that there are often, if not always, trade-offs between the positive and negative consequences of intervention (Stabilisation Unit, 2018). The EU is not always realistic about its interests and does not have the systemic due diligence tools required to intervene with full awareness of the risks it will generate, including through the influence of its trade, development, migration and bilateral cooperation and that of its Member States (Beswick, 2017; Stabilisation Unit, 2018).

Best practices

Despite some of the challenges identified above, the case studies also provide evidence of key best practices that could improve the EU's support to others in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

- **Joint conflict analysis is an effective tool of conflict transformation and coordination**

At the local level, community-centred and community-led conflict analysis can be a transformative process in and of itself. A conflict analysis exercise within conflict-affected communities initiates the process whereby the given community begins to think about issues from the perspectives of others and can be used as a tool for encouraging dialogue and building relationships between divided groups. EU-supported joint learning exercises in the form of conflict analyses, roundtables and workshops have provided opportunities to continue to build trust while aiming to understand and address conflict dynamics in uncertain contexts (*Case studies Nigeria's Plateau State and Philippines*).

At the macro-level, conflict analysis can also be a tool for external expert agencies, EU Member States, other donors and occasionally INGOs to come together and build a shared understanding of the context they are intervening in. They get to know each other, and therefore build an understanding of their differences, and can also utilise the opportunity to communicate and coordinate with one another on specific actions. This is similarly true for bridging the fragmented parts of the EU, such as Delegations, ECHO offices, CSDP missions and Brussels Headquarters (*Case study Philippines*). While it is not realistic for the EU to be engaged in micro-level conflict analysis in all contexts, more can be done to ensure that the macro-level conflict analysis is informed by those who participate in local-level analyses. For example, in the DRC, the EU could become part of an international working group with institutionalised entry points for local civil society input (*Case study DRC/South Sudan*).

- **Small but steady accompaniment of local peacebuilders contributes to ensuring durable and effective responses**

Effective responses to conflict based on ongoing conflict analysis often require modest but tailored and sustained support from external actors. Settings where practitioners have benefited from a long-term accompaniment process have seen those practitioners developing their expertise and improving their networks and the effectiveness of their responses consistently, even if at a slow pace. The PEACE programme support in Northern Ireland has exemplified this partnership model: a quarter of the first phase of the PEACE programme's funding in border regions was provided in small grants (up to £3,000 GBP) to local communities and projects (Bush and Houston, 2011); the programme has been continuously renewed since its inception in 1995 and the EU has committed to continue it after Brexit (Campbell, 2018). An accompaniment process serves not only to reinforce skills learnt during formal training, but also to refine approaches in consultation with supporting partner organisations. EU-funded projects, in particular through IcSP, have enabled peacebuilding organisations to develop their thinking, to adapt to changing contexts and to provide accompaniment and capacity building to their partners over several years (*Case studies Nigeria's Plateau State and Philippines*).

- **Inviting local peacebuilders to participate in high-level, closed meetings helps bridge the gap between the political and grassroots levels**

The EU provides opportunities to experts and CSOs to network with international and national power holders when it convenes meetings, which opens doors for influence in political processes, as well as for further cooperation and relationship building. This has been highlighted as an effective way to link political dialogue, technical support and peacebuilding. However, this has been observed in the Philippines case study and not in the others.

CONCLUSION AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a growing recognition of the importance of the local in EU policy and an increasing awareness of the implications of externally-driven intervention. Academia and practitioners have researched and critically assessed support to local actors in the past two decades. Evidence demonstrates that external actors have provided assistance to a range of actors from conflict-affected states and communities without properly identifying local needs. However, these external actors cannot do without the analysis and networks of local peacebuilders and civil society organisations. The report has also argued that the line between “local” and “external” is blurry at best and that working with local actors does not guarantee local ownership or effectiveness in and of itself. This report has illustrated these dimensions of support through the findings of the case studies.

This report has found that, in practice, the EU does support a substantial number of initiatives where “others” (local actors) are leading peacebuilding initiatives. In the scope of this research, the EU is often best placed to provide support to non-state local actors. In some instances, it is perceived to be a fairer and more neutral actor compared to other donors. In spite of time-consuming reporting requirements that come with EU support, EU funding (IcSP) and EU programme managers are understanding of the need for projects to adapt to local dynamics. It is also one of the few international actors that maintain a rights-based approach in complex conflict-affected settings.

Nonetheless, the EU's practice is inconsistent from one country to another and is still failing overall to achieve its commitments in terms of local ownership and conflict sensitivity, primarily because its objectives are not clear or realistic. Expectations placed upon peacebuilding initiatives and supported local peacebuilders are often unrealistic, and this can create frustration and harm. As discussed in the literature, EU-supported initiatives tend to be technical and are sometimes disjointed from political processes and realities. The EU is not always realistic about its interests either and does not have the systemic due diligence tools required to be able to intervene with full awareness of the risks it will generate, including through the influence of its trade, development and migration policies and bilateral cooperation agreements (and that of its Member States).

This report has highlighted the added value of local peacebuilders in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and has identified best practices stemming from EU support, thus also demonstrating how they can continue to be supported. Supported local actors provide detailed analysis which the EU cannot conduct on its own. Conflict analysis is in and of itself a process of conflict transformation, and the EU should systematise this type of support and approach across its action in conflict-affected settings. With small but steady accompaniment, local peacebuilders contribute to ensuring durable and effective responses. The inclusion of civil society representatives in high-level meetings goes a long way in building relationships and bridging the political and grassroots levels. Support to security-focused capacity building is effective when it places as much importance on the relational aspects as it does on logistical and material considerations.

Key recommendations⁴⁵

The following recommendations are intended for EU officials and senior management in the EEAS (including in EU Delegations) and the European Commission involved in political engagement and the programming of EU support to civil society actors in conflict-affected countries. Based on the best practices identified, this report recommends that the EU:

1. Continues to provide civil society representatives and local peacebuilders with small but steady support that allows those on the frontlines the time and resources they need to build trust and meaningful relationships with conflict parties and stakeholders;
2. Ensures that conflict analysis is a continuous process across external action, by:
 - c) at the micro level, providing local actors with the space and the means required to carry it out themselves, and
 - d) at the macro level, making sure that external donors' analyses are informed by locally-led analysis and that opportunities for joint EU-local conflict analyses are regularly created;
3. Prioritises support for community-centred and -led conflict prevention initiatives;
4. Ensures that EU technical assistance and funding to peacebuilders supports and is supported by a political process and dialogue;
5. Ensures that it periodically re-examines its assumptions about a conflict and its support to SSR and peacebuilding through institutionalised, regular conflict analysis exercises (the EU could use theories of change more systematically to link realistic objectives, the capacity of local actors and tailored EU support);
6. Uses its convening power to promote greater coordination and engagement with local actors; and
7. Strengthens the capacity of EU Delegations to build relationships with and support local peacebuilders.

⁴⁵ Specific recommendations related to EU action in the countries in the case studies are listed in the relevant sections of this report.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ansorg, N. and T. Haastrup (2018), "Gender and the EU's Support for Security Sector Reform in Fragile Contexts", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56(5), 1127–1143.

Beswick, T. (2017), "Due Diligence in Contexts Affected by Conflict: EU Development Aid and Trade", *EU-CIVCAP Deliverable 3.3*, 30 November, available from: https://eucivcap.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/eu-civcap_deliverable_3-3.pdf.

Bojicic-Dzelilovic, V. (2016), "Owning the Peace in International Interventions: a Delusion or a Possibility?", *WOSCAP Deliverable 2.1*, 31 March, available from: <https://www.woscap.eu/documents/131298403/131553554/Scoping+Study+-+Local+Ownership.pdf/87ab53c9-a3c1-456a-8906-39a2c48d54eb>.

Bush, K. and K. Houston (2011), "The Story of Peace - Learning from EU PEACE Funding in NI and the Border Region", *INCORE*, July, available from: <https://dss.nics.gov.uk/sites/crc/files/media-files/The%20Story%20Of%20Peace%20learning%20from%20European%20peacebuilding%20in%20NI%20and%20the%20border%20region.pdf>.

Byrne, J. (2014), "Reflections on the Northern Ireland experience: The lessons underpinning the normalization of policing and security in a divided society", *Police Service of Northern Ireland, Intercomm and Saferworld*, June, available from: <http://uir.ulster.ac.uk/37801/1/reflections-on-the-northern-ireland-experience.pdf>.

Campbell, J. (2018), "EU proposes to continue NI peace funds", *BBC News*, 28 May, available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-44295917>.

Christie, R., G. Algar-Faria, A.E. Juncos, K. Đokić, M. Ignjatijević, N. Habbida, K. Abdi, S. Simons and E. Gillette (2018), "Report on best practices in EU local capacity building", *EU-CIVCAP Deliverable 6.3*, 24 September, available from: https://eucivcap.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/eu-civcap_deliverable_6-3.pdf.

Conciliation Resources (2012), "The Voice of Peace: Grassroots news and opinions on the LRA conflict", *Conciliation Resources*, October, available from: <http://www.c-r.org/resources/voice-peace-grassroots-news-and-opinions-lra-conflict-2012>.

Conciliation Resources (2017), "Underlying tensions: South Sudanese refugees and pathways to conflict prevention in the Democratic Republic of Congo", *Conciliation Resources Policy brief*, November, available from: <http://www.c-r.org/downloads/Underlying%20tensions%20South%20Sudanese%20refugees%20and%20pathways%20to%20conflict%20prevention%20in%20the%20Democratic%20Republic%20of%20Congo.pdf>.

Conciliation Resources (n.d.), "Capacities for Peace", *Conciliation Resources*, no date, available from: <http://www.c-r.org/where-we-work/global/capacities-peace>.

Corneliussen, H.I., G. Hagen and L. Rabele (2017), "Final review of the 'Civil society-led conciliation, LRA demobilization and peacebuilding' project 2011 - 15", *Norad Collected Reviews 01/2017*, January, available from:

<https://www.norad.no/globalassets/publikasjoner/publikasjoner-2015-/norad-collected-reviews/final-review-of-the-civil-society-led-conciliation-lra-demobilization-and-peacebuilding-project-2011---15.pdf>.

Council of the EU (2018), "Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises", 5413/18, Brussels, 22 January, available from:

https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/2018-01-cn1_conclusions_on_ia.pdf.

Daily Trust (2015) "Plateau hosting 325,000 IDPs", *Daily Trust*, 17 September, available from:

<https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/general/plateau-hosting-325-000-idps-nema/111197.html>.

Davis, L., N. Habbida and A. Penfrat (2017), "The EU's Capabilities for Conflict Prevention", *EU-CIVCAP Deliverable 3.2*, 30 January, available from:

https://eucivcap.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/eu-civcap_deliverable_3-2_updated.pdf.

Dela Cruz, E. (2018), "Philippines decries European Parliament's 'interference'", *Reuters*, 20 April, available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-drugs-eu/philippines-decries-european-parliaments-interference-idUSKBN1HR05L>.

Ejdus, F. and A.E. Juncos (2018), "Reclaiming the local in EU peacebuilding: Effectiveness, ownership, and resistance", *Contemporary Security Policy*, 39(1), 4–27.

European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Commission and HR) (2016), "Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Elements for an EU-wide strategic framework to support security sector reform", *SWD(2016) 221 final*, Strasbourg, 5 July, available from:

https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/joint-communication-ssr-20160705-p1-854572_en.pdf.

European Parliament (2018), "Northern Ireland PEACE Programme", *Fact Sheets on the European Union - 2018*, available from: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_3.1.9.pdf.

European Union (2010), "EU confirms willingness to participate in International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao", *Press Release*, 18 May, available from:

http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/philippines/documents/press_corner/20100608_02_en.pdf.

European Union (2016), "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy", Brussels, June, available from:

https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf.

Ginifer, J. and O. Ismail (2005), "Armed violence and poverty in Nigeria: Mini case study for the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative", *Centre for International Cooperation and Security*, March, available from: https://bradscholars.brad.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10454/998/AVPI_Nigeria.pdf.

Heydarian, R.J. (2015), "The quest for peace: The Aquino administration's peace negotiations with the MILF and CPP-NPA-NDF", *NOREF Report*, March, available from: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/189990/6a4a521651243abd9d63bafa322d7da9.pdf>.

Hoffmann, K., K. Vlassenroot and K. Büscher (2018), "Competition, Patronage and Fragmentation: The Limits of Bottom-Up Approaches to Security Governance in Ituri", *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 7(1), 1–17.

Houvenaeghel, J. (2015), "The European contribution to the Mindanao Peace Process", *EIAS Briefing Paper 2015/01*, March, available from: http://www.eias.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/EIAS_Briefing_Paper_2015-1_Houvenaeghel_Mindanao.pdf.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) (n.d.), "Philippines", *IDMC*, no date, available from: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/philippines>.

International Alert (2017), "Guns, Drugs and Extremism, Bangsamoro's New Wars", *Conflict Alert 2017*, London: International Alert, available from: <http://conflicalert.info/download/8278/>.

International Crisis Group (2016a), "Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action", *Special Report N°2*, 22 June, Brussels: International Crisis Group, available from: https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/seizing-the-moment-from-early-warning-to-early-action_0.pdf.

International Crisis Group (2016b), "The Philippines: Renewing Prospects for Peace in Mindanao", *Asia Report N°281*, Brussels: International Crisis Group, 6 July, available from: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/281-the-philippines-renewing-prospects-for-peace-in-mindanao.pdf>.

Krause, J. (2011), "A Deadly Cycle: Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria", *Geneva Declaration Executive Summary – Working Paper*, June, available from: <http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/regional-publications/GD-ES-deadly-cycle-Jos.pdf>.

Lancaster, P. (2014), "A people dispossessed: the plight of civilians in areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo affected by the Lord's Resistance Army", *Conciliation Resources*, July, available from: http://www.c-r.org/downloads/People_dispossessed_report_2014.pdf.

Leeper, K. (2017), "Unable to stay in place: Women's participation in land tenure and security in the Democratic Republic of Congo", *Conciliation Resources*, November, available from: <http://www.c-r.org/downloads/Unable%20to%20stay%20in%20place,%20Women%E2%80%99s%20participation%20in%20land%20tenure%20and%20security%20in%20the%20Democratic%20Republic%20of%20Congo.pdf>.

Medeiros, E. (2014), "Back but not home: supporting the reintegration of former LRA abductees into civilian life in Congo and South Sudan", *Conciliation Resources*, August, available from: <http://www.c-r.org/downloads/Report%202%20-%20reintegration%20report%20-%20Web%20loires%2003.pdf>.

Peen Rodt, A., J. Tvilling, P.H. Zartsdahl, M. Ignatijevic, S. Gajic Stojanovic, S. Simons, K. Abdi, E. Gillette, N. Habbida, J. Berglund and V. Fernandez Arguedas (2017), "Report on EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the Horn of Africa and Western Balkans", *EU-CIVCAP Deliverable 5.1*, 30 October, available from: https://eucivcap.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/eu-civcap_deliverable_5-1.pdf.

Penksa, S.E., N. Ball, A. Matveeva and K. Puro (2018), "Evaluation of EU Support for Security Sector Reform in Enlargement and Neighbourhood Countries (2010-2016): Executive Summary of the Final Report", *Evaluation carried out on behalf of the European Commission*, available from: http://www.3dcftas.eu/system/tdf/SSR%20Evaluation_Executive%20Summary.pdf?file=1.

Rappler (2018), "EU political party official barred from entering PH", *Rappler.com*, 16 April, available from: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/200298-giacomo-filibeck-european-socialists-bureau-immigration-philippines>.

Saferworld and Conciliation Resources (2012), *From conflict analysis to peacebuilding impact: Lessons from the People's Peacemaking Perspectives project*, London: Conciliation Resources and Saferworld, March, available from: http://www.c-r.org/downloads/PPP_conflict_analysis_peacebuilding_impact.pdf.

Schomerus, M. and K. Tumutegereize (2009), "After Operation Lightning Thunder: Protecting communities and building peace", *Conciliation Resources*, April, available from: http://www.c-r.org/downloads/AfterOperationLightningThunder_200904_ENG.pdf.

Stabilisation Unit (2018), "Supporting Elite Bargains to Reduce Violent Conflict", *Stabilisation Unit*, available from: <http://www.sclr.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/publications/elite-bargains-and-political-deals/1602-briefing-paper/file>.

Strachan, A.L. (2015), "Conflict analysis of Muslim Mindanao", Birmingham: GSDRC, December, available from: <http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ConflictAnalysisARMM.pdf>.

Taiwo, S. (2017), "61.6% of Nigerian Youth are unemployed – NBS says", *Pulse.ng*, 8 June, available from: <https://www.pulse.ng/bi/politics/youth-unemployment-61-6-of-nigerian-youth-are-unemployed-nbs-says-id6790731.html>.

Thiessen, C., S. Byrne, O. Skarlato and P. Tennent (2010), "Civil Society Leaders and Northern Ireland's Peace Process: Hopes and Fears for the Future", *Humanity & Society*, 34(1), 39–63.

Tumutegereize, K. (2012), "What will it take to end the LRA conflict?", *Conciliation Resources*, March, available from: http://www.c-r.org/downloads/LRA_Kony201203_kennedytumutegereize.pdf.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

ID	Name / Position	Type of organisation	Location	Date	Interviewer
1	Member	Youth Peace Platform	Plateau State, Nigeria	24 May 2017	Conciliation Resources
2	Member	Youth Peace Platform	Plateau State, Nigeria	24 May 2017	Conciliation Resources
3	Member	Youth Peace Platform	Jos, Nigeria	25 May 2017	Conciliation Resources
4	Executive Director	Non-governmental organisation	Jos, Nigeria	5 October 2017	Conciliation Resources
5	National Coordinator	Non-governmental organisation	Haut-Uele, DRC	6 December 2017	Conciliation Resources
6	Director	Non-governmental organisation	Bunia, DRC	8 December 2017	Conciliation Resources
7	Staff member	Non-governmental organisation	Bunia, DRC	6 December 2017	Conciliation Resources
8	Peacebuilding project manager	Non-governmental organisation	Telephone	24 January 2018	EPLO
9	Head of the Peacebuilding programme	Non-governmental organisation	Telephone	13 June 2018	EPLO
10	Programme Manager	Non-governmental organisation	Telephone	22 June 2018	EPLO
11	Programme Manager	Non-governmental organisation	Telephone	22 & 26 June 2018	EPLO
12	Country Director Philippines	Non-governmental organisation	Manila, The Philippines	21 June 2018	EPLO