



Background Paper

# Financing for Young People in Peacebuilding

An Overview

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# Financing for Young People in Peacebuilding - An Overview

Young people and youth-led organizations can and do play a critical role in building and sustaining peace. The Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda, catalyzed by the United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 2250 (2015) and subsequent resolutions, aims to recognize and support young people in broader efforts to build peaceful and inclusive societies. Young people make up a significant proportion of the population in conflict-affected and fragile settings, yet despite growing commitments to the YPS agenda, their role and contributions are often not prioritized in peacebuilding and prevention approaches.

Ensuring adequate financing has been a central concern for the YPS agenda since its inception. Yet so far discussions on how to improve the quantity and quality of resources have been fairly limited.<sup>1</sup> The UN Secretary-General's first Report on Youth, Peace and Security in 2020 noted that despite some progress inadequate resourcing and data are still major challenges. This report – which echoes these findings - uses available quantitative and qualitative evidence from UN and civil society sources to delve deeper into recent trends, challenges and opportunities to better finance the role of young people in peacebuilding and prevention. Its goal is to aid policymakers and other stakeholders in identifying key areas where more action is needed to make concrete progress. The paper is divided into three main sections:

**Section 1** analyzes progress and examples of how Member States and the UN system have increasingly attempted to channel funding for youth-focused peacebuilding and the YPS agenda. **Section 2** looks at the key challenges and opportunities for making funding more accessible for youth-led civil society organizations. **Section 3** presents a series of key messages and recommendations as options for Member states and other actors for improving the quantity and quality of financing for youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding and the YPS agenda.

Historically, financing for youth programming in conflict-affected and fragile settings focused on addressing the risk posed by “youth bulges” of unemployed and vulnerable young people to peace and stability, with responses predominantly converging around a more limited set of priorities related to livelihoods and economic opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Since its adoption, the Youth, Peace and Security agenda has helped foster a shift – even if not yet universal or systematic – toward more holistic and principled inclusion and engagement of young people in peacebuilding and prevention efforts.

By investing in these types of approaches, societies can benefit from the positive contributions young people make to peace and can help dismantle the forms of political and socio-economic exclusion that often act as barriers to these contributions and that have deepened inter-generational mistrust and divides. As this report demonstrates, while there are good practices and examples, a significantly larger effort is needed to address the gaps and challenges to financing young people's role in peacebuilding.

This paper's outlines seven key priorities to support more and better-quality financing for young people in peacebuilding. These include: (1) More deliberately integrate young people and the youth, peace and security agenda into the core of regional, national and local peacebuilding and prevention strategies; (2) Scale up financing for youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding both domestically and internationally; (3) Close the large data gap in financing young people in peacebuilding; (4) Increase the accessibility funding for youth-led organizations, including by easing complex donor requirements and by working with intermediary organizations; (5) Increase young people's participation in setting financial priorities for peacebuilding; (6) Establish and adopt criteria principled, conflict sensitive and does no harm when financing young people in peacebuilding; and (7) Continue to explore alternative, non-traditional and innovative financing approaches.

## Section 1. UN and Member State financing for young people in peacebuilding and YPS agenda

In 2019 about **US\$51 billion** in Official Development Assistance (ODA) went to conflict-affected settings, with the majority of funding going to bilateral or multilateral cooperation on development and humanitarian assistance. 13 percent of this total - **US\$7.99 billion** - went to peacebuilding in these settings.<sup>3</sup> The lack of systematic data collection makes it difficult to directly assess how much of current financing for peacebuilding is supporting youth-focused or youth-led programming (see section on data gaps below). Yet, existing trends indicate that youth-focused peacebuilding makes up a relatively smaller fraction of ODA for peacebuilding overall.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Dedicated UN funds for young people in peacebuilding***

Within the UN system, a few key funds have played a significant role in channeling resources to youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding at country level:

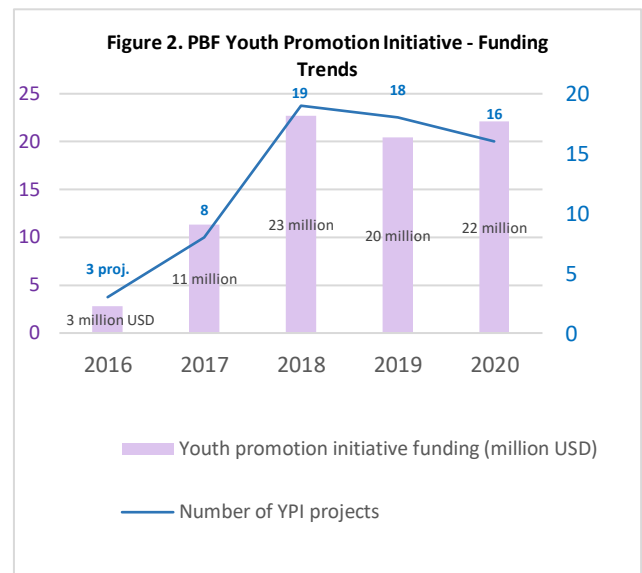
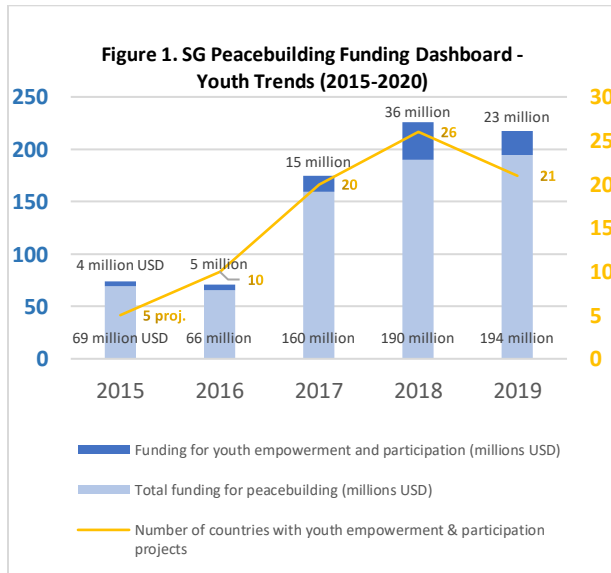
**The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).** The largest UN fund resourcing peacebuilding within the UN system, distributing a total of US\$174 million in 2020 – has also been the largest fund by volume supporting youth-focused peacebuilding. In 2016, the PBF set up a Youth Promotion Initiative funding window (as part of a broader Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative – GYPI). This initiative allowed the PBF to provide funding to civil society organizations as direct recipients or implementing partners (with UN entities). The Youth Promotion Initiative specifically funds youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding projects that have significant youth participation components and deliberately follows a YPS approach.<sup>5</sup> The YPI has now become the largest dedicated UN funding window supporting these types of projects. Since its establishment, the PBF has invested a total of **US\$105.2 million** in 83 YPI projects in 18 countries, steadily increasing its annual funding from **US\$2.7 million** in 2016 to **US\$25.7 million in 2021**. (See Figure 2 below).

The Fund has aimed to diversify partnerships to better connect UN entities and civil society organizations working on peacebuilding to local youth organizations. The Fund gives preference to UN-CSO projects, projects implemented by national CSOs and projects demonstrating a strong partnership with youth-led organizations or networks. 40% of the YPI funds, for example, have been allocated to national civil society partners, including youth-led organizations. The Fund has also been pivotal in enabling actors to engage in youth-focused peacebuilding in fast moving or high needs contexts and to pioneer emerging issues in peacebuilding such as environmental activism and climate change, protection of young activists and MHPSS.

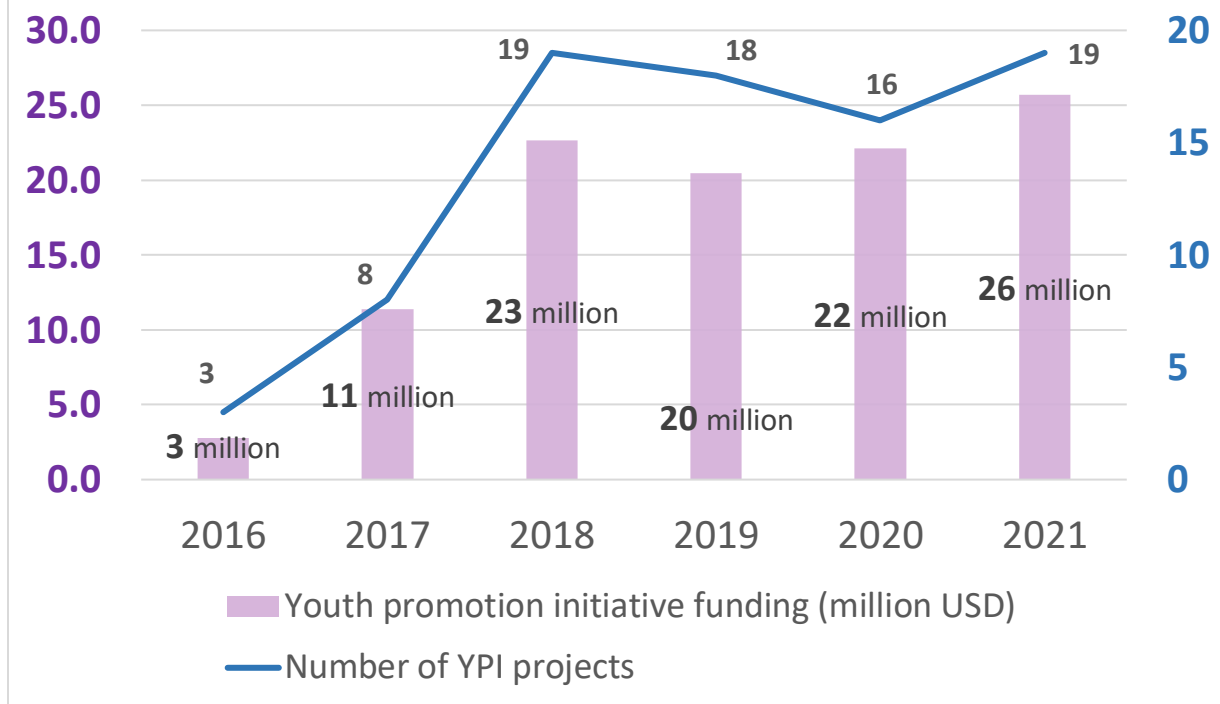
**UNAOC's Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF).** Established in 2008, the YSF has been a unique source of funding specifically for youth-led peacebuilding. While smaller than the PBF, what makes the YSF unique is that it has been dedicated to specifically funding a diversity of youth-led organizations directly. Since its inception, the YSF has funded 73 youth-led projects in over 42 countries, with a total investment of approximately **US\$2.49 million**. The Fund has supported youth-led organizations to engage young people from different socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds to implement their own projects designed that have goals to reduce polarization and promote social cohesion between diverse groups.

**The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).** While not solely focused on young people, the WPHF has also been a source of flexible and quality funding to both youth-focused and youth-led organizations, including non-registered organizations as co-implementers. In 2020-2021, for instance, the WPHF supported more than 27 youth-focused or youth-led civil society organizations, 30% of lead applicants are first time funding recipients within the UN system. Projects have focused on women and young women's participation in humanitarian and crisis, peacebuilding, and response to SGBV. This approach - like the PBF's GYPI - also showcases how intersectional WPS and YPS approaches can be used to finance both agendas. The WPHF has pioneered a model

by which CSOs are involved in the Fund’s governing board at the global level and in in-country steering committees, which allows greater participation and influence in defining financial priorities at different levels. Some options for global and in-country participation can be considered for other UN funds. As the examples above demonstrate, concrete progress has been made in increasing financing for youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding through dedicated UN funds. However, financing for youth-focused and especially direct financing for youth-led peacebuilding still represents a very limited share of total UN financing for peacebuilding through pooled funds.



**Figure 2. PBF Youth Promotion Initiative - Funding Trends**



Between **2015 to 2020**, total resources allocated to peacebuilding across a number of UN funds<sup>6</sup> amounted to **US\$876.8 million** – based on current data from the Secretary-General’s Dashboard pilot. Over this period, only **12 percent** of resources went to support projects with goals focused on youth empowerment and participation. Year-to-year funding for youth empowerment and participation across these funds (see Figure 1) has fluctuated considerably from **7 percent** in 2016 to **19 percent** in 2018 but by 2020 had fallen to **12 percent**.<sup>7</sup> Since 2015, funds focusing on youth empowerment and participation have been allocated to more countries – from just 5 countries in 2015 to 25 in 2020.

These funds – especially the PBF’s GYPI - have played an outsized role in channeling relatively scarce resources to youth-focused programming at country level. In many contexts the PBF and its GYPI have helped create a shift toward greater programming in these areas and has incentivized efforts to increase collaboration among UN and civil society partners, including youth organizations. But important challenges remain.

Even as youth-led organizations have slowly gained more access to UN funding, these funds are still out of reach for most of these organizations. The PBF’s 2020-2024 Strategy has committed to expand partnerships with civil society organizations and to explore new avenues to make funding available for community-based organizations, including youth-led groups. There is therefore a need to continue to explore ways for more local youth organizations and networks to be able to access and benefit from these resources. (Section 2 more fully explores these challenges). Similarly, even as more of resources from UN funds reach young people, it is key to enable young people themselves to participate – to the extent possible – in shaping global and country-level funding priorities set by these funds. There is a risk that not doing so can create incentives for youth-focused programming that are not aligned with the perspectives and needs of young people themselves. (see “Do No Harm” section below).

Yet, there is a need to complement financing for these funds with a diversity of longer-term investments. The relatively short-term and project-based character of programming supported funds such as these can leave a gap in support to larger, long-term and flexible financing for youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding. For example, when additional funds are not mobilized to complement the catalytic role of PBF projects, UNCT and partner programming can remain ad hoc, small scale and siloed from broader UNCT strategic programming priorities.<sup>8</sup> This also creates challenges for cultivating and sustaining longer-term partnerships between UN, CSO and youth-led organizations working within a time longer horizon for conflict transformation.

### ***Examples of other UN efforts to increase financial support to young people in peacebuilding***

Some UN entities have also made efforts to encourage more multi-year and flexible peacebuilding financing for youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding programming. In 2020 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for example, strengthened the youth component of its global Funding Window on Governance, Peacebuilding, Crisis and Resilience by introducing specific criteria to support projects on the positive role young people play in sustainable development and peace at the country level. As of October 2021, **US\$42 million** has been allocated to 53 projects with specific components supporting youth engagement or an enabling environment for their agency. Out of this amount, approximately **US\$6.7 million** supported 11 projects which were entirely dedicated to supporting young people.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, to bring a greater focus and resources to adolescent and young people's participation in building peace and strengthening social cohesion, UNICEF has increasingly integrated these as priorities in its Country Programmes in humanitarian and development programming in both conflict-affected and fragile settings. In 2020, for example, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) spent approximately **US\$43 million** in support of adolescent participation and civic engagement across humanitarian and development programming, with 42 of its Country Offices developing adolescent and youth-focused peacebuilding programmes. The organization's UPSHIFT approach, increasingly implemented and adapted in peacebuilding contexts, combines skills development and small-grants schemes to finance adolescent and youth-led social cohesion projects.<sup>10</sup>

### ***New opportunities for leveraging at scale investments for youth inclusion for prevention***

Moving from investments in responding to violent conflict towards preventing violent conflict is a cost-effective approach to addressing conflict and fragility, saving lives and protecting development gains.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the YPS agenda includes a shift towards preventive approaches and investing in resilience by building and sustaining peace through the transformative potential of young people and addressing the structural barriers that limit young people's participation.

A growing number of actors, including Member States and IFIs, such as the World Bank and the IMF, have sought to tailor their assistance portfolios to better support efforts to address inequalities and the root causes of conflict and fragility. This has included a focus on how investments in young people around equitable and inclusive social services and human capital can contribute toward these goals. The World Bank's Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV) Strategy, for example, has committed to significantly increase the volume and types of support it provides to countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence. Under the Strategy's guiding principle of inclusion, it has committed to scale up efforts to support young people as agents of change.<sup>12</sup>

There is an opportunity to increase collaboration and leverage significant resources to help countries transition out of conflict and overcome fragility by transforming the broader political, social and economic systems that are excluding young people and not addressing persistent inequalities. The COVID-19 crisis and the effects of climate change are increasing young people's needs in these settings. The envelopes in these portfolios are significant when compared to those dedicated to peacebuilding more narrowly construed. For example, in 2020

UNICEF spent approximately **US\$782.9 million** on adolescent and youth-focused basic services in conflict-affected and fragile settings including in the areas of education, health and social protection (about 32% of its total expenditures in these settings).<sup>13</sup> Major financing portfolios include World Bank's IDA 19 financial package, which amounted to **\$82 billion** in support to IDA countries between 2021-2023.

At the same time, there are challenges for reorienting investments in development programming and humanitarian assistance in a way that can better support youth inclusion while addressing conflicts and fragility. In general, it is not always the case that these investments are underpinned by a robust and inclusive conflict analysis. Even when this does take place, it is still not uncommon to find the analysis of young people conducted purely from a narrow risk and economic perspective and rarely do they solicit young people's perspectives and participation. A recent example of addressing this is a joint Regional Risk and Resilience Assessment exercise conducted by the World Bank, the United Kingdom and the United Nations in Central Asia (2020) to better align investments in the region. The assessment adopted a more holistic approach in analyzing the broader socio-economic situation of young people, including key social, economic, cultural and institutional challenges they faced in playing a greater role in supporting development and peace.

A greater push is needed to increase collaboration at the diagnostic and prioritization stage that guides investments to better address patterns of marginalization and exclusion faced by young people that are straining social contracts, heightening inter-generational mistrust and contributing to the grievances driving conflicts.

### ***The data gaps on financing young people in peacebuilding and the YPS agenda***

One of the major bottlenecks for advancing financing discussions around the YPS agenda and the role of young people in peacebuilding is that when it comes to the data, young people are virtually invisible. Both inside and outside the UN system, there is little collection, tracking and analysis on financing going to young people settings across development, humanitarian and peacebuilding portfolios.

The UN system has taken some steps to address these gaps, including by incorporating a "youth empowerment and participation" tag in the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Funding Dashboard. The Dashboard, still in its pilot phase, tracks expenditures on youth empowerment and participation across a number of major pooled funds, including the UN PBF (Peacebuilding Fund); UN-WB Partnership HDPP (Humanitarian Development Peace Partnership Facility); UNSCAR (Fund to Support Cooperation on Arms Regulation) and the WPHF (Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund).

Some UN entities currently have individual ways of tracking expenditures on young people. UNDP has a "youth" category within its Leaving No One Behind marker to track development projects focused on youth in its annual reporting. UNICEF has recently adopted an "adolescent tag" that enables the organization to track and analyze yearly expenditures going to improving adolescent and young people's access to quality basic social services and supporting their civic engagement and participation. UNDP, UNFPA and UNWomen have introduced a shared indicator in the integrated results and resources frameworks on the number of countries that have endorsed a youth, peace, and security framework. But different tracking methodologies create issues for data aggregation. There is currently a proposal to create a UN-system youth marker as part of the



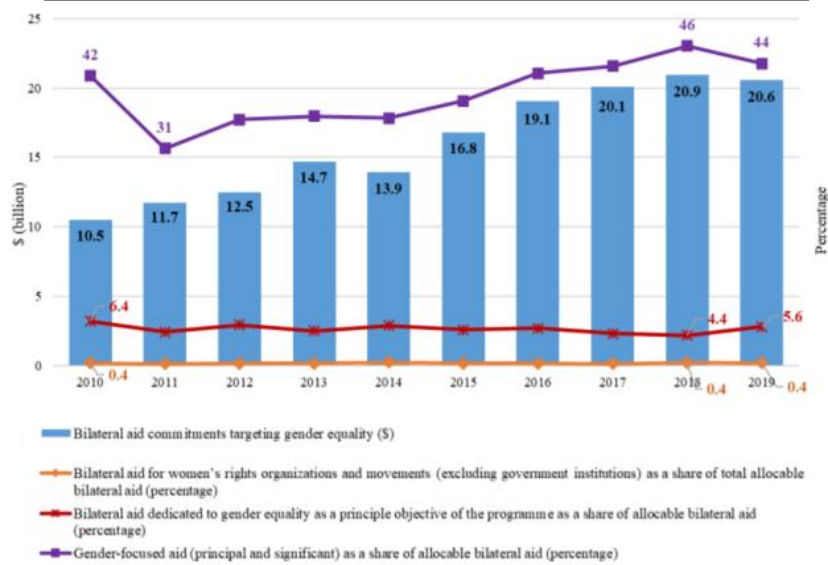
UN's Youth2030 Strategy that would enable the UN system to better track funding across development, humanitarian and peacebuilding programmes.

There are parallel data gaps on young people outside the UN-system, whether in the area of financing for peacebuilding in particular or across broader development and humanitarian assistance. For instance, unlike funding for gender equality and women's rights in contexts affected by conflict and fragility, the OECD-DAC does not currently track ODA financing aimed at supporting young people.

As a step forward, Member States and multilateral actors should consider

ways to develop data systems that can track investments in young people similar to those on gender equality and women's rights in (see Figure 3). This should include dual tracking of bilateral aid commitments targeting young people and bilateral aid for young people's organizations. Efforts can also be made to ensure that CSOs and INGOs can complement these data collection efforts by also contribute their own data on financing, especially at the local level.

**Figure 3. Bilateral aid in support of gender equality and women's rights in conflict-affected settings. 2010-2019**



Source: OECD, aid project targeting gender equality and women's movements, and Creditor Reporting System – cited in Secretary-General's Report on Women, Peace and Security (2021)

### **Member States institutionalizing financial commitments to YPS**

Member State support for the YPS agenda and recognition of the key role of young people for building peaceful and inclusive societies has been growing. A number of Member States are institutionalizing this commitment through specific policy commitments and dedicated National Action Plans (NAPs) on Youth, Peace and Security.<sup>14</sup> And a few have specifically prioritized as part of this process financing for youth-focused and/or youth-led peacebuilding. Finland, for example, has published a pioneering National Action Plan on YPS which includes a commitment to support and partner with youth-led peacebuilding organizations and NGOs contributing to YPS.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in August 2021, The United States introduced legislation to adopt the Youth Peace and Security Act of 2021, which includes provisions for the establishment of a dedicated Youth Peace and Security Fund.<sup>16</sup> The European Union's Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) has also been a unique vehicle for directing funds to young people in peacebuilding – supporting over 60 youth-focused peacebuilding, crisis management and violent conflict situations.<sup>17</sup>

As Member States continue to explore options for deepening their commitments to the YPS agenda, ensuring their impact requires that plans and policies are backed by adequate financing.<sup>18</sup> In addition to setting up specific funds and funding streams for youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding, Member States might also consider setting aside minimum allocations in their ODA supporting peacebuilding toward youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding. Ideally, these allocations would contribute to flexible and longer-term support for both these areas. Member States can also aim to support a growing number of national and regional YPS coalitions, often founded in partnerships between young people, youth organizations, and multilateral/UN, government and civil society actors.

Domestically, Member States should ensure that adequate budgeting accompanies their plans for national implementation of YPS priorities, including through work and activities carried out under different line ministries (education, social protection, health etc.). Involving young people in budgeting exercises for these national priorities and making information of budgets transparent and public can also increase trust in the plans and institutions carrying them out.<sup>19</sup>

While existing steps by some Member States to better institutionalize the YPS agenda is encouraging, it appears that more awareness is needed about the continuing challenges faced in support of youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding. In a recent survey conducted by the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, only 4 out of 29 Member States identified financing as being one of the main challenges to the implementation of the YPS agenda.<sup>20</sup> Improving financing donor and recipient Member States to increase international, regional and country-level requires greater advocacy and attempts to align global priorities in support for the YPS agenda and for young people in peacebuilding.

## **Section 2. Accessible and principled funding for youth-led peacebuilding**

Young people have been at the forefront of peacebuilding efforts and of social change movements. A core pillar of the YPS agenda has therefore been to better support the work of youth-led organizations and networks, including by making a greater share of financing available and accessible to them. Yet, peacebuilding funding remains out of reach for the majority of them.

### ***Making peacebuilding financing more accessible for youth-led organizations***

Young people, and youth-led organizations, have strong connections within their communities and their activities are often volunteer based, comprising up to about 97 percent of staff.<sup>21</sup> They are often based on organic leadership structures and highly informal networks. This can be an asset for peacebuilding efforts, by facilitating wider community impact and reach. Yet, most youth-led peacebuilding organizations operate with extremely limited funding. According to a recent survey, 49 percent of respondent organizations indicated operating with budgets of **US\$5,000** per annum.<sup>22</sup>

There is often a mismatch however between the size and types of funding favored by donors and those that are accessible to national and community-based youth-led organizations. While donors tend to prefer strict, time-bound, results-oriented grants, youth-led peacebuilding benefits from flexible, longer-term, impact-oriented types of grants. Similarly, donors prefer giving large grants that youth-led organizations often cannot absorb. By and large, existing financing modalities relying on stringent eligibility criteria, lengthy applications, reporting, and fiduciary requirements overburden their capacity.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time, youth organizations report being outcompeted by more professionalized organizations which can afford to compensate 'volunteers' to participate in their work. This negatively impacts the programmatic reach of these youth-led organizations and their capacity to solicit membership fees.<sup>24</sup> While reliance on volunteerism is an asset for these organizations, this way of operating can also exclude young people from marginalized backgrounds who cannot afford the time to volunteer.<sup>25</sup>

There have been a number of initiatives to help youth organizations overcome some of the largest barriers to accessing funding. These have included: combining small grants with access to capacity-building efforts<sup>26</sup>; involving young people in decision-making processes over criteria and priorities of funding envelopes, thereby increasing their accessibility<sup>27</sup>; and simplifying reporting procedures that decrease the burden for youth-led organizations.<sup>28</sup> For example, some small grants distributors have employed participatory grant-making, placing young peacebuilders on the boards that decide the priorities for the fund and its recipients, resulting in

increased youth ownership of the mechanism and sustainable impact.<sup>29</sup> In some instances, youth-led organizations have also attempted to diversify their access to resources beyond traditional donors through crowd-funding, membership fees, donations, earned income, and private-sector sponsorship.<sup>30</sup>

Some Member States have also engaged more directly with local youth-led organizations through their embassies in conflict-affected settings.<sup>31</sup> These direct relationships in some instances have helped increase access for youth organizations to existing funding opportunities and have opened up new opportunities with other donors and funders. For example, local youth organizations and embassies have worked jointly to co-create proposals for financing that have had a better chance at being noticed and funded. While not without possible liabilities for youth-led organizations working in more restrictive political environments, developing these kinds of trust-based relationships can assist in overcoming accessibility challenges.

Donors should therefore analyze and address the bottlenecks that exist within their own eligibility criteria, grant systems and outreach efforts to increase the ability of youth-led organizations to more directly access peacebuilding funding. Donors should explore ways to make resources available for these organizations both flexible and sustainable to enable youth-led organizations to define their own priorities and strategies and enable them to engage in longer-term planning for their programming.<sup>32</sup> Donors should also review and ease their eligibility, application and reporting criteria and requirements to better balance their own fiduciary requirements with the realities and capacities of young peacebuilders and reduce the time and resources necessary to meet those requirements.

### ***CSOs as financial intermediaries for youth-led organizations***

Civil society organizations with a youth priority or focus can play an important role as intermediary organizations that help youth-led organizations access funding and develop key capacities. They do this, for example, by absorbing risks and responding to the administrative requirements of donors, including assisting in fundraising for their youth partners and performing due diligence. These organizations can access and distribute funds from large donors that are generally not always easily or directly accessible to local youth-led organizations.<sup>33</sup> Youth-focused civil society organizations can also set up specific funds meant specifically to resource and support national and local youth-led organizations.

Many youth-focused CSOs have established strategic partnerships with youth-led organizations<sup>34</sup>, building on their comparative advantages. Essential principles that lay at the foundation of an effective collaboration include authentic partnership (meaning to prioritize youth ownership and addressing unequal power relations), and a holistic approach to the provision of support. This includes providing a package of financial, technical and networking support that can enhance youth peacebuilders' organizational capacities as well as providing access to key policy spaces without forcing them to operate as "adult" organizations.<sup>35</sup> For example, this can include setting up small grants schemes that do not only provide flexible and unrestricted funding to youth-led organizations but also support their access to peacebuilding policy actors and fora to amplify these experiences and provide space for multi-stakeholder learning, exchange and action. In this, CSOs acting as intermediaries can help negotiate and open up spaces for youth-led organizations to more directly participate in decision-making and prioritization of existing funding mechanisms.

Innovative funding models are also being explored by civil society organizations. For example, the YPS Fund being pioneered by Search for Common Ground in partnership with the United Network of Young Peacebuilders has aimed to develop a more collaborative model of financing youth leadership.<sup>36</sup> It is a community owned fund, where young people are investors (not just beneficiaries) and help shape fund's priorities by serving on its governance board. This participatory funding approach aims to ensure that youth-led peacebuilding organizations play a greater role in allocating funding and designing grants in ways that best suit their own

needs. It seeks an alternative to traditional competition-based financing models to encourage more collaboration and collective impact between youth organizations with sustained financing period of time.

While the financial intermediary model is beneficial to enable smaller youth-led organizations to develop the right capacities, a balance is required to ensure that these organizations can progress toward greater independence and can move toward self-sufficiency. As they increase their technical capacities on handling financing and to operate independently, efforts should be made to enable youth-led organizations to access funds directly and shift away from intermediary model. Donors should also explore incorporating specific criteria for principled collaboration and partnerships, as outlined above, working along the intermediary model for youth-led peacebuilding.

### ***“Do No Harm” and conflict sensitivity issues in financing youth-led peacebuilding***

Efforts to restructure financing of youth-led peacebuilding should adhere to ‘Do No Harm’ and conflict sensitivity principles to mitigate potential harms and negative impacts on young people themselves in local contexts, particularly those that are conflict-affected or restrictive. In particular, a careful balance must be struck to ensure that financing for youth-led organizations supports their capacities to expand their peacebuilding reach and impact without disrupting what often gives them their unique character: the diversity of their initiatives, their creativity and connections to their local communities.

Young people have noted that predetermined donor priorities or inflexible funding opportunities homogenize the diversity of their work in order to fit narrowly defined portfolios.<sup>37</sup> For example, youth groups and organizations have reported being under pressure to apply for scarce peacebuilding resources to implementing activities in areas that do not always align with their principles, including those related to preventing or countering violent extremism (P/CVE). Not only does this create a rift between young people’s own assessment of their needs and what they are funded to work on, but it can also do damage by co-opting otherwise independent groups into larger state-security agendas. More research is still needed to understand how traditional financing modalities and intermediary models can best complement and support innovative, grassroots methods employed by youth without crowding out these informal networks and organizations by over-professionalizing the youth-led peacebuilding space.

Another major challenge for financing for youth-led peacebuilding is the difficulty in ensuring that funding reaches beyond capital-based “elite” youth organizations. Often these are the easiest youth organizations for many donors and intermediaries to work with. The result is that a financing environment can exclude a diverse set of marginalized youth populations— including young women and rural youth—who are less likely to have access to these funder networks.<sup>38</sup> This can impact both the effectiveness of peacebuilding aid and can replicate power disparities and inequalities creating conflict grievances in the first place. When working through an intermediary financing model, donors should seek out organizations that have strong local networks – especially in harder to reach areas and a solid track record of working with diverse youth constituencies and youth-led organizations.

Youth organizations working on peacebuilding in restrictive or highly polarized contexts can also face significant risks due to the nature of their work. Sometimes donors and organizations can inadvertently shift risks of engagement in these contexts onto youth-led organizations without considering adequate measures to ensure their protection and safety. For example, donors could consider ways of incorporating risk-mitigation measures for young people in these contexts as part of their financing, including by consulting them on what they see as their most important protection priorities. They can also ensure that funds are reserved and made available to young peacebuilders facing serious threats because of their work.

### Section 3. Key Messages and Recommendations

The following represents a set of key messages and recommendations distilled from the sections above for improving the quantity and quality of financing for youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding and the YPS agenda:

- ❖ **Place young people at the core of strategies for financing peacebuilding and prevention.** Young people represent key peacebuilding actors, making up a majority of many conflict-affected and fragile settings. Their prospects are closely tied to the ability of societies to build and sustain peace. Yet, evidence points to the fact that young people’s needs and priorities are not yet integrated into financial strategies and priorities for peacebuilding and prevention. Rather than being another “add on” and funding stream competing for scarce resources, youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding should be integrated and considered a smart investment in support of peacebuilding and prevention strategies. While they are separate agendas, exploring and investing in intersectional strategies and approaches, including between WPS and YPS can, help reduce competition for scarce resources and siloed financing and support more inclusive peacebuilding approaches.
- ❖ **Close the data gap.** Young people are currently invisible when it comes to data on financing for peacebuilding. Addressing the current data gaps in financing for young people is key to making progress. UN, Member States and multilateral actors should aim to create systems that can collect, track and analyze financing both for young people and youth-led organizations. A priority should be ensuring that not just quantity, but the quality of financing can be tracked, for instance for programmes aligned with the youth, peace and security approach. As an initial step, Member States, development partners and other stakeholders can produce retrospective analyses and publish data on level and quality of financing for youth-focused peacebuilding and prevention within their development, humanitarian and peacebuilding portfolios.
- ❖ **Increase flexible, long term and sustainable financing for youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding and prevention efforts.** Bilateral and multilateral donors should explore options to increase their effort to address the funding gap for young people in peacebuilding and prevention. Supporting funds that are incentivizing greater engagement and collaboration around youth-focused and youth-inclusive approaches to sustaining peace is one key avenue. But so is prioritizing more multi-year commitments to young people in peacebuilding as part of broader ODA and domestic agendas. One option is to consider institutionalizing financing commitments as part of YPS frameworks, policies and strategies. This type of financing is vital to support more sustainable, systematic and transformative youth peacebuilding work. Explore opportunities to leverage greater resources in support of youth inclusion for conflict prevention with investments by IFIs and other actors in fragile and conflict affected situations and through development programming and humanitarian assistance.
- ❖ **Make flexible and relevant financing more accessible to youth-led organizations.** Most resources for peacebuilding are still beyond the reach of local youth organizations. There is a current mismatch between the specific eligibility criteria for financing and the way that youth organizations are typically constituted and operated. To increase the proportion of financing available to youth-led peacebuilding actors – including going beyond elite organizations, donors should consider finding ways to ease eligibility criteria, application and reporting requirements. They should also consult with youth organizations to ensure funding priorities are relevant to their work. Young women’s organizations can face additional challenges, that should be analyzed and addressed. Considering financing intermediary models—rooted in collaborative relations between more established CSOs and youth-led organizations—is another important avenue for enabling youth-led organizations to access more funding. Preference should be given to intermediaries with strong connections to diverse local youth organizations (including young women’s organizations) and that aim to

gradually shift away from the intermediary model, as appropriate, by building the capacities of youth-organizations to access and receive funding directly.

- ❖ **Increase coordination, collaboration and co-creation with young people on financing priorities.** Participation of young people in setting priorities for peacebuilding financing is still limited. Donors should consider ways to increase consultation and involvement of young people when deliberating on their peacebuilding priorities and ways to finance them. For instance, Member states should prioritize incorporating greater civil society and youth organization inputs into the development and implementation of their funding plans and strategies. Similarly, funds should consider ways to increase young people’s participation in the governance, advisory, funding and review boards and committees. This can better help ensure that financing modalities and priorities are informed by the needs and perspectives of young people themselves. Developing a set of common criteria around “good donorship” for supporting young people in peacebuilding could be an important step forward.<sup>39</sup>
- ❖ **Ensure principled, conflict sensitive and do no harm approach to financing.** Adhering to “do no harm” and conflict sensitive principles is particularly critical when engaging in financing for youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding. Even as resources for youth-led and youth-focused peacebuilding is needed, simply increasing the level financing in particular contexts can shift incentives and result in unintended negative impacts. The unique character of youth-led peacebuilding efforts requires ensuring that financing does not over-professionalize this work or crowd out its unique basis in volunteerism or pre-empt young people’s own assessments of local peacebuilding needs and priorities. Inflexible financing around a narrow set of donor priorities can homogenize youth peacebuilding work or worse co-opt their participation into securitized agendas that expose them to risk.
- ❖ **Exploring alternative, non-traditional, and innovative financing approaches.** While traditional financing through multilateral and bilateral cooperation (the focus of this paper) still represents the largest source of financing for peacebuilding, opportunities to infuse new funding for youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding also exist elsewhere. All actors should therefore collaborate on exploring opportunities and challenges that exist through financing from philanthropy, the private sector and innovative financial models, including blended finance, impact bonds and guarantees.<sup>40</sup>

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For example, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* (2018), for example, called for an ambitious allocation of US\$ 1.8 billion, representing an investment in supporting new resources for the agenda of US\$ 1 per young person, by 2025 for the 10th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015). United Nations Security Council Resolution 2535 (2020) on youth, peace and security has similarly encouraged Member States to increase funding for the implementation of the YPS agenda.

<sup>2</sup> Simpson, G. (2018) *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth and Peace and Security*. United Nations. Available at: <https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy>.

<sup>3</sup> UNPBSO *Financing for Peacebuilding: A Primer* (2021): "Peacebuilding includes a wide set of activities, which are arranged in 6 broad categories: Annex 2 for the categories included in peacebuilding, which cover (1) Political processes; (2) Safety and security; (3) Rule of law and human rights; (4) Core government functions; (5) Basic services, such as education and health care; and (6) Economic revitalization, which includes jobs and livelihoods. Only the first 4 categories are assumed to be designed to yield peacebuilding outcomes and therefore are always included in total peacebuilding investments. The last two categories (5) and (6) can contribute to peacebuilding outcomes, but only if designed with that purpose in mind.

<sup>4</sup> For example, if the patterns on allocations to youth-focused/youth-led peacebuilding work within the PBF hold for ODA more generally. Or, if similar patterns hold for financing for youth-led peacebuilding as for peacebuilding led by women's rights organizations in comparison to financing. For example, in 2019, the share of bilateral aid received by women's rights organizations and movements in fragile or conflict-affected contexts only amounted to 0.4 per cent (\$179 million), of which only \$18 million was received by local women's rights organizations based in fragile or conflict-affected contexts, and groups addressing intersecting forms of marginalization receive even lower funding.

<sup>5</sup> The PBF's Youth Promotion Initiative's criteria for projects includes: support innovative projects focused on youth empowerment and participation with the potential for catalytic effects and peacebuilding outcomes. Strengthen the participation of young women and men within existing prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. Enhance support to youth civil society organizations and facilitate their partnership with international CSOs, Governments and UN entities active in their country. Contribute to collective operational learning on youth-inclusive programming. Support the implementation of Security Council resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. For more on criteria see: <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/process-criteria>. For more on a YPS approach to peacebuilding programming see [Youth, Peace and Security: a programming handbook](#) (2021)

<sup>6</sup> Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Funding Dashboard (pilot), which currently includes data from the UN PBF (Peacebuilding Fund); UN-WB Partnership HDPP (Humanitarian Development Peace Partnership Facility); UNSCAR (Fund to Support Cooperation on Arms Regulation) and; WPHF (Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund). The dashboard is following a coding methodology whereby the budget of each project outcome is divided across several of 40 peacebuilding priorities.

<sup>7</sup> Important to note that the data available on projects focused on youth empowerment and participation within the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Funding Dashboard may be imprecise. Currently, the lack of clear criteria to differentiate youth-led, youth-focused or youth-relevant projects entails that individual receiving entities self-identify if their projects contribute to youth empowerment and participation. The relevance of a project to youth empowerment and participation can be understood differently among donors and recipient entities.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF *Formative Evaluation on Supporting Young People in Peacebuilding* (2020): <https://evaluationreports.unicef.org/GetDocument?fileID=13895>

<sup>9</sup> The UNDP Funding Windows are a pooled, flexible funding mechanism that channels allocations to country offices <https://www.undp.org/funding/funding-windows>

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/upshift>

<sup>11</sup> UN-World Bank. *Pathways for Peace* (2018).

<sup>12</sup> World Bank. *Fragility, Conflict and Violence Strategy* (2020), 18.

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/844591582815510521/pdf/World-Bank-Group-Strategy-for-Fragility-Conflict-and-Violence-2020-2025.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF Adolescent Development and Participation Tag – tracking funding for internal list of conflict-affected and fragile settings.

<sup>14</sup> At the time of writing Colombia, Finland, Gambia, Nigeria and the Philippines have adopted or are in the process of adopting National Action Plans on Youth, Peace and Security.

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, "Youth, Peace and Security: Finland's National Action Plan 2021–2024," 2021: [https://um.fi/publications/-/asset\\_publisher/TVOLgBmLyZvu/content/nuoret-rauha-ja-turvallisuus-toimintaohjelma](https://um.fi/publications/-/asset_publisher/TVOLgBmLyZvu/content/nuoret-rauha-ja-turvallisuus-toimintaohjelma)

<sup>16</sup> 117th Congress, "H.R.4838 - Youth, Peace, and Security Act of 2021," 2021: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4838/text?r=42&s=1>

<sup>17</sup> UNOY. *Mapping the progress of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in the EU* (2019): <http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/EU-support-to-YPS-report-WEB.pdf>

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<sup>18</sup> Peace Direct, “Youth and Peacebuilding: Key insights from a global consultation,” 2019, p. 4: <https://www.peacedirect.org/us/youth-and-peacebuilding/>

<sup>19</sup> UN Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth. *Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at country-level A guide for public officials* (forthcoming).

<sup>20</sup> Survey conducted by the Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth between April-June 2021 as part of the development of the *Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at country-level A guide for public officials* (forthcoming).

<sup>21</sup> UNOY and Search for Common Ground. Mapping a sector: bridging the evidence gap on youth-driven peacebuilding (2017): <https://www.youth4peace.info/node/254#:~:text=to%20this%20study.-,Mapping%20a%20Sector%3A%20Bridging%20the%20Evidence%20Gap%20on%20Youth%2DDriven,organizations%20as%20reported%20by%20them.>

<sup>22</sup> UNOY and Search for Common Ground. Mapping a sector: bridging the evidence gap on youth-driven peacebuilding (2017): <https://www.youth4peace.info/node/254#:~:text=to%20this%20study.-,Mapping%20a%20Sector%3A%20Bridging%20the%20Evidence%20Gap%20on%20Youth%2DDriven,organizations%20as%20reported%20by%20them.>

<sup>23</sup> Binita Karki (Youth Programme Officer UNDP Nepal & Co-Founder 2030 Youth Force), in discussion with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, July 2020; Malika Iyer (Program Officer Global Network of Women Peacebuilders), in discussion with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, August, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Ilias Alami (Executive Director ANGO), in discussion with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, September 2020.

Binita Karki (Youth Programme Officer UNDP Nepal & Co-Founder 2030 Youth Force), in discussion with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, July 2020.

<sup>26</sup> See for example: Cordaid, The Disability Rights Fund, The European Youth Foundation, The Frida Foundation, The Fund for Global Human Rights, The PeaceNexus Foundation, Search For Common Ground and UNOY-UNAOC Youth Solidarity Fund.

<sup>27</sup> See for example: The Disability Rights Fund, The European Youth Foundation, The Frida Foundation, The Fund for Global Human Rights, Search For Common Ground and UNOY.

<sup>28</sup> See for example: The Frifond distributed by the Norwegian government through the National Youth and Children Council and The Fund for Global Human Rights. For example, Peace Direct—funded by SIDA—co-created their granting program and distributed funding through youth-led hub organizations in five countries. In Pakistan this resulted in 15 of 19 grants being distributed to youth-led organizations who had never received traditional funding before. The fund accessed diverse group of applicants because the youth-led organizations used their networks to expand beyond traditional funder circles, the application and reporting procedures were simplified so that organizations without administrative capacities could manage them, the priorities were defined by grantees, and the hub organization helped sub-grantees register to meet the requirements for accessing funding. Funds that have utilized participatory grantmaking practices where youth have control of the distribution of resources have indicated that this has built trust in young people from within their communities, overcoming stigmas that young people are either part of the problem or ‘capacity-less’. These funders indicate that this has expanded the sustainability of impact by building long-term community buy-in to their work, including through partnerships which outlasted the granting period and through co-financing of youth-led efforts from community leaders. (Purposeful, The Global Fund for Human Rights, Hive Pakistan, Firelight Foundation).

<sup>29</sup> Riva Kantowitz, ‘Radical Flexibility: Strategic Funding for the Age of Local Activism’, available at <https://www.peaceinsight.org/reports/peacefund/>, Peace Direct, 2019.

<https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf>

<https://www.gppac.net/news/best-practices-financing-peacebuilding-funding-stream-youth-youth>

<sup>30</sup> Young peacebuilders utilize these funding options to avoid traditional funding which limits their ability to define their own priorities, or because they can’t access traditional funding sources. This funding is flexible and allows them to remain independent and to utilize their creative modes of operation and informal organizational structures. In many cases, it facilitates community buy-in to their work through financing from community members. However, like traditional funding sources, many of these modes of funding are limited in scale and predictability, limiting their capacity to build long-term strategy and scale their impact. Traditional funders should recognize that different organizational structures require different funding structures, and that in some cases complementing these approaches with small seed grants can be an important tool to support a diversity of youth-led peacebuilding organizational structures. Binita Karki (Youth Programme Officer UNDP Nepal & Co-Founder 2030 Youth Force), in discussion with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, July 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Some of these Member States have included Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland, and the UK.

<sup>32</sup> See for example: The Frida Fund, The Fund for Global Human Rights, Search for Common Ground and UNOY; GPPAC, Best Practices in Financing for Peacebuilding: A Funding Stream for Youth by Youth

<sup>33</sup> GPPAC, “Best Practices in Financing for Peacebuilding: Ensuring Local Ownership in Kyrgyzstan”, 2020:

<https://www.gppac.net/news/best-practices-financing-peacebuilding-ensuring-local-ownership-kyrgyzstan>

<sup>34</sup> UNOY Meaningful youth engagement checklist for non-youth actors <https://unoy.org/downloads/mye-checklist/>



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<sup>35</sup> See for example: GPPAC's Youth-by-Youth participatory grantmaking approach, and the Youth360 methodology developed by Search for Common Ground and UNOY. Asian #youth4peace programme Resourcing Grassroots Youth Groups with the Youth 360 Methodology for Sustainable Peace <https://unoy.org/project/asianyouth4peace/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.sfcg.org/the-youth-peace-and-security-fund/>

<sup>37</sup> Cynthia Wakuna (Programme Director Mother of Hope), in discussion with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, July 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Cynthia Wakuna (Programme Director Mother of Hope), in discussion with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, July 2020.

Ilias Alami (Executive Director ANGO), in discussion with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, September 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Good donorship for young people in peacebuilding could be rooted in the idea of establishing more collaborative relationships between youth organizations and their funders and in ensuring that financing adheres to principled and do no harm considerations.

<sup>40</sup> <https://cic.nyu.edu/publications/Innovative-Financing-for-Peacebuilding-Key-Resources>