

# Global Online Consultation on the UN System-wide Community Engagement Guidelines in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (UNCEG) 5-7 August 2019

## Concept Note

### **Background**

Civil society actors, including women and youth, are often important peacebuilding agents, playing a key role in conflict-affected societies and in situations of transition. Community-based actors further play a crucial role in promoting confidence and trust, encouraging cooperation and creating incentives for collective actions that contribute to building and sustaining peace in broader society. For example, local community-based actors provide basic services, contribute to enhanced cohesion and stability at community level, enable communities to influence social norms and mediate relationships between the government and people by creating and maintaining space for dialogues and mechanisms for state accountability. Women and youth are frequently at the front and center of service delivery and community dialogue. As such, the engagement of local civil society and community-based actors is a critical component of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

To better promote meaningful inclusion through broader partnerships, the Secretary-General called in his report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707 and S/2018/43) for strengthened engagement with civil society and local communities at large. Reflecting on the UN's engagement with civil society, the report points to the range of forms this may take, including "building capacity, sharing good practices, producing practical tools, fostering a conducive environment for robust civil society, and active engagement in analysis, planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation." *Paragraph 59* refers to the urgent need for all country teams and peace operations to develop community-engagement strategies in order to continuously and systematically institutionalize and strengthen the participatory approaches that involve local communities. *Paragraph 61* further calls for the development of system-wide guidelines on the engagement with civil society for sustaining peace, underscoring the versatile interactions between UN and civil society organizations at country level.

In response to these recommendations (paras 59 and 61), in December 2018, the Peacebuilding Support Office/DPPA initiated a process to generate system-wide Community-Engagement Guidelines (CEG) by establishing and leading a joint UN-CSO Working Group of UN entities (including DPPA, DPO, OHCHR, UNDP, UN Women) in collaboration with civil society partners working in peacebuilding – Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), International Peace Institute (IPI) and Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) – to develop the UN System-wide Community-Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

The Guidelines have been developed through a three-stage consultation per below to ensure an inclusive process and comprehensive inputs from both the UN system and civil society organizations at all levels (including local peacebuilding groups/actors):

- **Stage 1 (February 2019):** Survey launch for both the UN system and civil society organizations
- **Stage 2 (March-June 2019):** VTC consultations with select focus countries (e.g., Cambodia, Ghana, Guatemala, Liberia, Mali and Somalia)
- **Stage 3 (5-7 August 2019):** 3-day global online platform open to all registered participations.

Based on the successful completion of *Stage 1-Surveys* on 28 February, with a total of near 300 survey responses, the UNCEG Working Group has actively conducted *Stage 2-VTC consultations* with the UN field presence, civil social partners and local peacebuilding actors to probe deeper into country-specific good practice examples and challenges of the working relationship and engagement between the UN and civil society/local actors in peacebuilding. Cambodia, Ghana, Guatemala, Liberia, Mali and Somalia have been selected with consideration to diversity of geographic location and type of UN settings at the country-level.

As the final stage of the consultation process, ***Stage 3-Three-day Global Online Platform*** will invite all UN entities and civil society actors active in peacebuilding, including those who had contributed to the surveys and VTC consultations, to (1) validate the key messages of the UN system-wide Community Engagement Guidelines in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace; (2) reflect on good practices and challenges; and (3) discuss next steps to effectively operationalize the guidelines in various conflict-affected situations.

The UN system-wide Community Engagement Guidelines in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace are expected to support various UN presence at the country-level in their efforts of engaging and cooperating with local civil society and community actors in the context of peacebuilding. UN field presence – both mission and non-mission settings – are encouraged to develop country-specific community engagement strategies to improve on building trust and capacity, reaching out to the rural and marginalized areas where needs are often overlooked, fostering a conducive environment for robust civil society in peacebuilding, sharing good practices and lessons learned through a strong community of practice and strengthened collaboration with civil society, including at the local level, in context analysis, planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation.

**Expected Date/Duration:** Three days in early/mid-August 2019 (e.g., 7-9 August)

**Participants:** 300-400 (Working Group will reach out to UN entities and civil society networks)

**Objective:** To validate *UN system-wide Community Engagement Guidelines in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace* with UN entities and civil society actors (at all level) in peacebuilding, reflect on some of the noted good practices and challenges and discuss possible and concrete next steps to operationalize the guidelines in various conflict-affected situations.

**Possible Format & Guiding Questions (subject to change)**

**Day 1: Review & Validation of the *UN system-wide Community Engagement Guidelines in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace***

- What is your understanding of peacebuilding and sustaining peace? What is needed to build and sustain peace in your context? What role do you see for civil society, and its engagement with the United Nations in relation to peacebuilding and sustaining peace?
- General thoughts and feedback on the key recommendations from the UNCEG.

**Day 2: Zooming in – Urgent needs and challenges in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace at the national and local level**

- Two major challenges noted in Stage 1-2:
  1. Lack of conflict-sensitive and flexible funding modalities to local peacebuilding actors.
  2. Limited community-based project implementation, M&E and follow-up.
- Other (participants can suggest during registration)

**Day 3: Next steps – Operationalization of the *UN system-wide Community Engagement Guidelines in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in the field***

- What are some proposed next steps? How would country or regional-context come into play – for example, in your own working location? What needs to happen?
- What more can the UN do to operationalize the UNCEG in the field?
- How can civil society networks/coalitions/actors, including women/youth-led CSOs, support?