

The Pulse of Peacebuilding 2020

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform's key messages from Geneva Peace Week

The Pulse of Peacebuilding is a new publication series of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform that identifies key emerging themes for peacebuilding. It draws on the exchanges during Geneva Peace Week, which brings together the broader peacebuilding constituency every year in November to reflect collectively on the greatest opportunities for building peace in a turbulent world. Geneva Peace Week 2019 took place from 4-8 November 2019 and featured 80 events with over 300 speakers and 1,400 participants. *The Pulse of Peacebuilding* reinforces the unique identity of Geneva Peace Week as an inclusive space to advance reflections and good practices on peacebuilding across a broad geographical horizon and a diversity of sectors and disciplines.

The Pulse of Peacebuilding 2020 highlights six key messages from GPW19:

1. Focus peacebuilding practice on Europe and North America
2. Engage differently with the private sector to harness its 'pro-peace' potential
3. Adapt peacebuilding support to local realities
4. Make 'Do No Harm' matter again
5. Build the evidence base of peacebuilding programmes
6. Go back to basics: Build peace from the inside-out

Geneva Peace Week 2019 Opening Ceremony at the Maison de la Paix in Geneva



SAVE THE DATE

Geneva Peace Week, 2-6 November 2020

1. Focus more peacebuilding practice on Europe and North America

- To date, the peacebuilding sector has focused significant international attention 'over there' – in conflict-affected countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America – even while social and political tensions on the European continent and in North America are high and rising. These tensions express themselves across a broad continuum of everyday violence including hate speech, 'fake news', xenophobic and racist narratives of scapegoating, blame and fear.
- Peacebuilders can contribute to mitigating these tensions by challenging 'us' versus 'them' narratives whenever they arise, applying care in use of language on social media, actively countering misinformation, and supporting fact-based journalism.
- European and North American political leaders and policy experts need to open themselves to learning from peacebuilding experiences in Latin America, Africa and Asia and adapt these to their own contexts.

2. Engage differently with the private sector to harness its 'pro-peace' potential

- Private sector actors can be allies in mitigating risks and promoting opportunities, raising standards and leveraging profits in constructive ways, but the mobilization of their full potential for building peace is still lagging behind. A key task for peacebuilders in 2020 should be to craft new ways of engagement to better harness the pro-peace potential of business.
- Entrepreneurs, keen to protect their businesses from the instability brought on by violence, can be convincing peace brokers, while entrepreneurship can bring new income sources. Microenterprises often have a ripple effect in the community, contributing to supporting the dignity of individuals as they are empowered to meet livelihood needs.
- There are many powerful local, national and global commercial interests that profit during war and violence; responsible businesses thus need to enact pressure on their peers to prevent conflicts from escalating.

3. Adapt peacebuilding support to local realities

- Transforming conflict is a long-term process, requiring programmes that are sustainable and based on local needs. Peacebuilding initiatives that are locally led and grounded in deep knowledge of the conflict dynamics and contextual history will be more effective.
- Theories of change need to recognise the complexity of social systems and thus the non-linearity of effective peacebuilding processes. A shift is needed in programme and funding approaches, allowing for flexibility and responsiveness so that adjustments to project implementation respond to actual situations. Programme goals should be identified by and elaborated jointly with local actors themselves.
- Donors need to reduce and simplify reporting requirements so that local peacebuilding actors can stay focussed on the complex work at hand. The long-term and non-linear processes of peacebuilding further require extended timespans for meaningful transformation.
- Local peacebuilders and human rights defenders can jointly traverse the disciplinary, policy and practice divides on the local level that shape their two fields at the international level.

4. Make 'Do No Harm' matter again

- The 'Do No Harm' principle must matter again. Without such prioritization, peacebuilding might contribute to freezing or exacerbating conflict factors or distorting existing injustices, especially if it is externally directed. 'Do No Harm' is especially important in times of rising power politics and declining multilateralism when distrust in international normative frameworks is growing.
- Further contradictions along the broad spectrum of international interventions are locally evident—e.g. the same governments which produce the weapons used in conflicts are also supporting lifesaving humanitarian action on the frontlines. These issues should be transparently debated among citizens such that limited resources can be more coherently channelled towards peaceful ends.

5. Build the evidence base of peacebuilding programmes

- Many peacebuilding contexts are awash with data but this data is not necessarily integrated into how peacebuilding interventions are elaborated and evaluated. Increasing the integration of quality, disaggregated data – e.g. about violence, urban safety, migration, the role of women and religious leaders – can help to correct assumptions and thus more helpfully inform policy and practice.
- The evidence base is growing on how socio-economic programmes contribute to peace by reducing structural inequalities across multiple dimensions. More policy-relevant research is needed, e.g. on understanding how climate change – known to be a threat-multiplier of pre-existing inequalities and fragilities – affects people differently.
- Participative methods can help determine how usually marginalized groups may be more effectively engaged in programme design and implementation. When it comes to policy panics on certain issues, e.g. relating to migration and radicalization, peacebuilding programmes must be built on solid evidence rather than in response to over-securitized donor funding streams which can themselves contribute to fueling violence.
- Evidence is needed not only on programmes that work, but also those that do not, with transparent sharing of such findings so that learning can be of greater benefit. Admitting programming mistakes should not be penalized but rather encouraged, creating the space for critical engagement and honest reflection.

6. Go back to basics: Build peace from the inside-out

- The values that lie at the foundations of peace work – including respect, non-violence, empathy, care and trust – need to be cultivated and reinforced by all individuals engaged in peacebuilding.
- Reinforcing core skills needed to build peace, including active listening, finding common ground and mediation, and increasing programming focus on holistic early childhood development interventions would all help to reinforce peacebuilding efforts.

About The Pulse of Peacebuilding

The Pulse of Peacebuilding is a new publication series of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform that identifies key themes for peacebuilding in the year. The publication is an attempt to articulate key message from the vast amount of discussions during Geneva Peace Week. It builds on the inputs of the 42 event organizers who submitted their GPW event reports. These reports reflected on their event's contribution to building peace, new understandings and good practice, as well as relevant policy recommendations. The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform thanks all event partners for their excellent events during Geneva Peace Week 2019.

The Pulse of Peacebuilding 2020 was edited by Dr. Claudia Seymour, Focal Point for Geneva Peace Week, and Dr. Achim Wennmann, Founder of Geneva Peace Week. Both work at the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva.

All views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of the partnership supporting Geneva Peace Week noted below.



Geneva Peace Week emphasizes that each and every person, actor and institution has a role to play in building peace and resolving conflict. It recognizes that peacebuilding occurs in many different contexts and cuts across disciplines and sectors. In this sense, Geneva Peace Week breaks down professional silos in order to enable creative responses to violence, exclusion and insecurity. By synchronizing meetings and events on different

topics related to the promotion of peace during one week, Geneva Peace Week maximizes synergies between organizations in Geneva and their international partners, focusing on the cross-cutting nature of peace. Geneva Peace Week is a flagship initiative of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform in collaboration with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), and the Platform's five partners – the Graduate Institute's Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP); the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF); the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP); Interpeace; and the Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva (QUNO). Geneva Peace Week is also supported by Switzerland.



The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is a knowledge hub that connects the critical mass of peacebuilding actors, resources, and expertise in Geneva and worldwide. Founded in 2008, the Platform has a mandate to facilitate interaction on peacebuilding

between different institutions and sectors, and to advance new knowledge and understanding of issues and contexts related building peace. It also plays a creative role in building bridges between International Geneva, the United Nations peacebuilding architecture in New York, and peacebuilding activities in the field. The Platform's network comprises more than 4'000 peacebuilding professionals working on building peace directly or indirectly. The Platform provides policy-relevant advice and services, ensures the continuous exchange of information through seminars, consultations, and conferences, and facilitates outcome-oriented dialogues on peacebuilding practice.