



## The peacebuilding and development is at a point of rupture. So, how do we navigate and where do we go?

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On 27th January Tuesday, SeeD and the Bahá'í International Community co-organised a hybrid event titled "A Pragmatic Necessity: Centering Communities and Prevention at the Heart of Peacebuilding" with the support of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations. A diverse group of civil society actors, UN officials, and Member State representatives came together for an honest reflective dialogue under Chatham Rules at the UN Plaza in New York.

Coming together on the 80th anniversary of the UN and the 40th anniversary of the 1986 International Year of Peace, with a shared observation that peacebuilding is entering a "moment of transition," or a "moment of rapture", two guiding questions anchored the conversation: how to deconstruct and reimagine power relations in the multilateral system, and how peacebuilding must be redefined for the realities of current and future generations.

Our core message was this: In a world where multilateral legitimacy is in rupture, communities are not just sites of intervention, they are sites of intelligence and wisdom.

Good data coupled with thoughtful participatory methods can become a diagnostic mirror that enhances agency on the community level. Too often, peacebuilding data "flows upward" for reporting, aggregated dashboards and for high level decision making. Data also needs to flow back to communities and local actors. When data garnered from the communities flows back in a meaningful way, it transforms individual experience to collective diagnosis and action. It becomes a dialogue tool that legitimises local voices and lived experiences, enhances agency, enables effective prioritisation, supports constructive negotiation between different stakeholders, and thus empowers collective solution-oriented action.

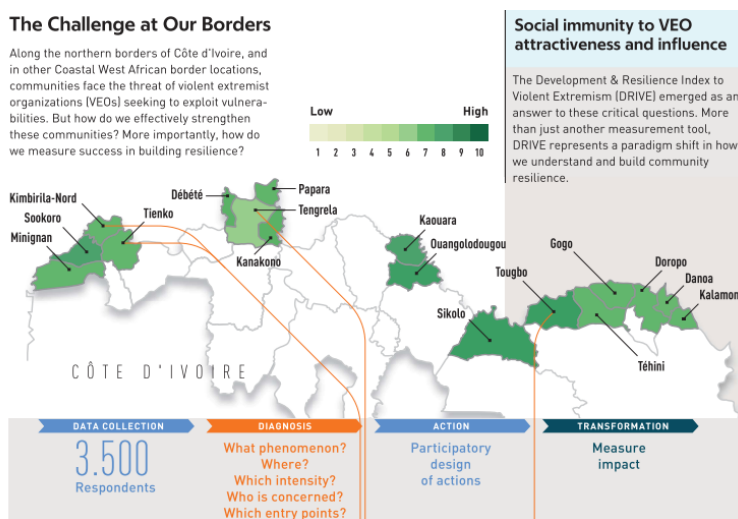
If data is seen as a tool for empowerment, not as a method of extraction, and if communities are genuine agents in society, then data must serve their agency.

When communities and local actors say "this is what we experience, this is the evidence and thus, this is what we prioritise," they are no longer beneficiaries or target groups, they become political and social interlocutors for change.

Good data coupled with thoughtful participatory methods matter for peace because conflicts are not only about weapons or institutions; they are about perceptions of injustice, of

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threat, of marginalization... Data, when it flows back to communities and local actors, help make these perceptions visible, measurable and therefore negotiable and actionable.



Three takeaways we're carrying forward from this event:

1. Peace is multi-systemic. Our current model often isolates levels: community projects here, governance reforms there, security elsewhere. Community agency matters, but it cannot become a convenient way to displace responsibility. There is a risk today of placing all responsibility on communities while systems around them fail. Lasting prevention and sustaining peace requires alignment between communities, civil society, local authorities, national institutions and international actors: an ecosystem approach, not a set of silos and disconnected specialisations. Reimagining power relations does not mean replacing the institutions with communities. It means reconnecting them. Peace will not come from heaving each system operating well in itself alone, but it also requires cohesive and quality relationships between systems.
2. Local public actors are pivotal bridges. Community evidence-driven collective action can help change practice on the ground, rebuilding trust through direct constructive civic engagement. When community-level data is shared with local authorities, it creates a common language: a way to prioritise together, to identify risks early, and to co-own solutions. We need to reposition local state actors not only as implementers of national policies, but as partners of communities. This is not about decentralisation as a slogan. It is about functional proximity, ensuring that institutions remain capable of fulfilling their mission in a fragmented global order where legitimacy is questioned and democracy is eroding.
3. We need to be weary about novelty bias and technocratic drift. Innovation should not fuel novelty bias, especially not at the expense of endogenous solutions and local agency. It should not drown out what already works on the community level with pilots

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without long-term commitment that never scale. We have a moral and ethical obligation as peacebuilders to support and sustain what works, not just test what is new. Innovation, especially in the times of AI, must reinforce human relationships, and must be used to improve learning and dialogue rather than diminishing or replacing them.

Kindly with Peace,

Dr. Bertrand Baldet & Dr. Ilke Dağlı-Hustings

Read other takeaways from the event here:

<https://www.bic.org/news/rupture-role-communities-bahais-host-latest-promise-world-peace-dialogue-un-member-states-and-civil-society>

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/bahaiinternationalcommunity\\_in-honor-of-the-40th-anniversary-of-the-1986-activity-7423003702959173632-6cWR?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rcm=ACoAAADSMYMBAlOs3ScRflvtpLcvj7P2rgWZv5g](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/bahaiinternationalcommunity_in-honor-of-the-40th-anniversary-of-the-1986-activity-7423003702959173632-6cWR?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAADSMYMBAlOs3ScRflvtpLcvj7P2rgWZv5g)

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/sdg16plus\\_ecosoc-nyucic-unreform-activity-7424105320920084480-PkNw?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rcm=ACoAAADSMYMBAlOs3ScRflvtpLcvj7P2rgWZv5g](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/sdg16plus_ecosoc-nyucic-unreform-activity-7424105320920084480-PkNw?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAADSMYMBAlOs3ScRflvtpLcvj7P2rgWZv5g)