



HUMANITY  
UNITED



HUMANITY UNITED'S  
**PEACEBUILDING  
STRATEGY**

Resourcing Peace in a Landscape of Crisis

Published September 2023

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## TO OUR PARTNERS,

Humanity United's revised Peacebuilding Portfolio strategy contains an apparent paradox. On one hand, as before, the core themes of the strategy continue to revolve around the agency and power of proximate peacebuilding actors, and we continue to hold deep curiosity about the intersections of peacebuilding and collective action.

At the same time, our world, our partners, and we, ourselves, have been profoundly and irrevocably changed by the seismic shocks of the past three years. This refreshed strategy reflects some critical shifts, as we have come to recognize that the global system of peace and security is truly broken. Our partners have spoken with an increasing level of concern about the dangers they are facing from surveillance and markedly increased levels of violence, and the mismatch they feel between their own power and the power leveled against them by corrupt governments, the stress of climate change, and broad systemic ripple effects from the war in Ukraine. One of our partners told us, "We are fighting dragons with plastic swords."

In the current global landscape dominated by rising authoritarianism, shrinking civil society space, and a new Cold War mentality, networked spaces for healing, innovation, creativity, and peace promise new avenues for social transformation. The people who are creating and inhabiting these spaces view their engagement together as radical acts of politics and imagination. These spaces contain the seeds within them for deep transformation at a proximate and global scale, and also personal transformation through individual and collective healing. The relationships within and between these networks are not a "back door" or a second thought, but are actually the engines for powerful innovation, and political change. Proximate peacebuilding actors and social movement leaders best understand the contexts in which they live, and have the most profound insights into how to address intractable proximate and regional conflict dynamics.

Peacebuilding skeptics might ask whether this approach to political and social change is too "soft" during a period of increased violence, sharply rising militarization and Cold War style geopolitics. They might also ask how a \$6 million annual investment can possibly make a difference, when arrayed against such a wide range of challenges. We would argue that this is actually the most important work we could possibly be doing, with the power to unlock new conceptions of security, and to build imagination for what a future could look like once the tanks and military personnel have spent their force.

Our partners have called on Humanity United to play a very different role, as we all face this rapidly changing landscape. While we have traditionally leaned deeply into accompaniment and a spirit of humility (which will not change), we are increasingly being asked to show up in bolder ways. Our partners have repeatedly asked us to engage as co-equal members to share our own experiences, trauma, insights, and vulnerability. At the same time, we are being asked to use our voice more powerfully in the elite spaces and institutions of the global system. As one partner remarked, “HU has to be an honest broker within the system, to help it heal.”

HU’s Peacebuilding strategy projects our vision for change during a complex time in the world and was informed by deep consultation with a wide range of partners, all of whom shared their wisdom and insights with great generosity. These materials are living documents, which we will modify as our contexts inevitably change and our learning evolves.

Thank you for sharing this peacebuilding journey with us.

Warmly,

*Melanie Greenberg*



**MELANIE GREENBERG**

MANAGING DIRECTOR  
PEACEBUILDING



*Art by @setafuerte, located at the parochial cemetery,  
La America. Medellin, Colombia.*

## WHO WE ARE AS AN ORGANIZATION

The Peacebuilding Portfolio is guided by Humanity United's overall mission, and aligns with Humanity United's organizational strategy. Humanity United is dedicated to cultivating the conditions that transform human exploitation and violent conflict to enduring peace and freedom. Humanity United's work is anchored in five strategic pillars: building relationships and networks; practicing a philosophy of accompaniment; being learning-focused, systems-enabled and people-centered; being expansive in our efforts; and investing internally so we can grow together with our partners.



The Humanity United team at an All-Staff gathering in March 2023.


## AS A PORTFOLIO

The Peacebuilding Portfolio seeks to support the agency and power of proximate peacebuilders, as they determine what peace should look like in their own contexts. We invest in relationships that build the shared humanity necessary for transforming violent conflict into positive peace. We also aim to ensure that the broader peacebuilding ecosystem of governments, donors, multilateral institutions, and international NGOs commits to recognizing and following the agency and power of proximate peacebuilders. We are deeply aware of our role in inequitable systems of global power, and therefore we constantly seek to operate from a place of trust, transparency, and authenticity.

1 VOICES PROXIMATE to CONFLICT are HEARD and TRUSTED in the GLOBAL PEACE SYSTEM



2 NETWORKS FLOURISH and ENABLE COLLECTIVE ACTION and SOLIDARITY across PEACE ACTORS




3 PHILANTHROPY is DRASTICALLY RE-IMAGINED with a BASIS OF TRUST



4 CONFLICT IS MANAGED by NON-VIOLENT MEANS



5 LEADERS WHO USE VIOLENCE are HELD ACCOUNTABLE



6 PEACE ACTORS EXPERIENCE PHYSICAL and PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



7 UNIVERSAL RECOGNITION of our SHARED HUMANITY



8 PEACE with NATURE, as WELL as PEACE BETWEEN PEOPLE



# OUR VISION FOR THE GLOBAL PEACE SYSTEM

## OUR VISION FOR PEACEBUILDING

To determine where we can best engage we must re-imagine the world we are trying to seed.

**Our ultimate vision is a transformed global system in which international cooperation on peacebuilding is defined and driven by the agency and power of proximate peacebuilders.**

Structural, cultural, economic, and political factors have shaped the existing system of international cooperation and aid to prioritize white, North American and European voices and expertise while minimizing the role for people working proximately to build peace in their contexts, especially people located in the Global South, people of color, youth, women, and other marginalized groups.

Additionally we know that those closest to conflict are often those most marginalized in their own societies. Our vision for change is rooted in their wisdom and power.

To make progress toward that vision, **we support sustainable networks that contribute to an ecosystem where proximate actors can make meaningful change in their own contexts and begin to spark global change.** We are informed by the wisdom of those organizers and peacebuilders who came before us, who know that we might not realize this vision in our lifetime.

Centering our vision, also means moving away from models of Impact Philanthropy and committing to a practice of accompaniment and Trust Based Philanthropy. Philanthropy itself contains historic and ongoing inequities and imbalances. We recognize that as a funder, we hold the power to change our own ways of being and influence the broader field of philanthropy.

We believe analysis of these power systems is critical to how we engage in philanthropy and the international peace system. This self-reflection allows us to operate from a position of trust, authenticity, and humility.

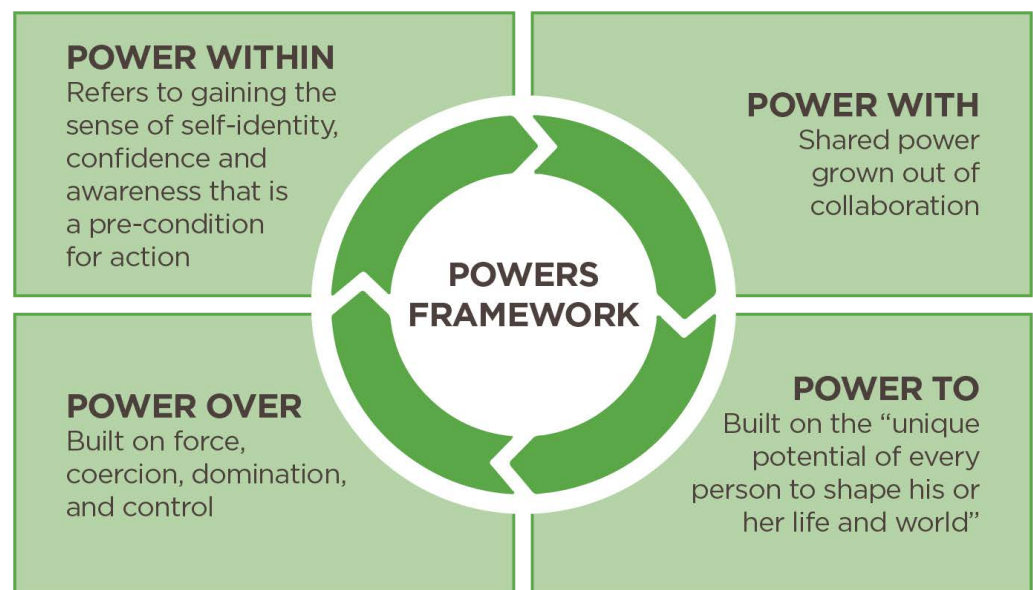
## THE LANGUAGE WE USE IN OUR WORK

### WHY DO WE USE ‘PROXIMATE PEACEBUILDER’?

In past strategies, the Peacebuilding Portfolio has used the term ‘local peacebuilders.’ Based on reflection and feedback from our partner network, we are transitioning to the term ‘proximate peacebuilders’ to refer to those who are closest and most impacted by conflict - extending beyond professional and institutional actors to the everyday individuals across industries, experiences, and context who take agency over conflicts in their own lives and communities. This change is based on that fact that the term ‘local’ 1) is often used to refer exclusively to grassroots or community actors, which erases people with lived experience of conflict working in different levels of the system; 2) is used in an increasingly pejorative manner to minimize the expertise of actors from the conflict regions and further reinforce divides between those who experience conflict and traditional power holders; 3) has been used to exclude migrants and displaced persons from critical conversations.

### HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND POWER?

Since power shifts lie at the heart of our model for systems change, we used the “Powers Framework” alongside Outcome Harvesting to help us understand how to reduce dynamics of power domination and measure different forms of individual and collective power. This learning process is the foundation of our refreshed strategy.





## CONTEXT

Less than two weeks following the approval of our 2020 peacebuilding strategy, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic and the world changed abruptly and profoundly. In the subsequent years, we have seen the emergence of the war in Ukraine; rising geopolitical tensions with the West, China, and Russia; protests in Iran; the rise of Taliban control in Afghanistan after US withdrawal; and deadly conflict in Ethiopia and Sudan. In the United States, we have experienced a racial reckoning in response to the murder of George Floyd and have come face-to-face with the erosion of democratic norms. These crises are set against a landscape of accelerating climate change, the ongoing effects of ongoing global pandemic, generative AI, and rising authoritarianism—all with ripple effects that have profoundly shifted the global landscape for peace and security.

Peace and security trends have continually worsened since 2020, as violence and fragility have sharply risen and nearly every indicator of democracy and positive peace has deteriorated significantly. These signals of democratic decline and closing civil society space are emerging from the majority of our contexts, and our partners are struggling to engage within these more repressive systems.



Koca Vehbi / Shutterstock.com

An increasingly securitized landscape has created a crisis in the broader field of peacebuilding. The conflict in Ukraine has precipitated a global shift back to a Cold War mentality, where military intervention is the default and very basic issues around civilian protection and harm mitigation are absent from public discourse, accelerating conditions for violence and oppression

The funding landscape for peace is fragile, even as the peacebuilding community faces increasing challenges. Resources for peacebuilding have fallen precipitously between 2019 and the present, with bilateral donors slashing budgets and private foundations leaving the peacebuilding field or significantly reducing funding.

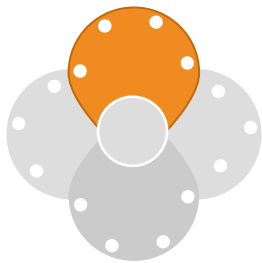
Yet despite these grim trends, peacebuilders are working with courage and creativity to respond to the challenges around them. We are inspired by the following bright spots reflected in our partnerships and the broader system:

- Growing movements of nonviolence are using collective action to expand the leverage and voice of marginalized actors. These movements are creating space and opening seats at the negotiation table, through inclusive dialogue and nonviolent social action.
- A steady increase in the understanding and importance of well-being, mental health, and the impact of trauma on peacebuilders and those affected by conflict creates space for communal healing, and breaking intergenerational cycles of trauma and violence.
- Transitional justice initiatives have embraced bottom-up, trauma sensitive approaches that give them far more credibility and resonance, promote healing, help stop cycles of violence, and hold powerholders accountable.
- There is an increased willingness to move from rhetoric to action in challenging colonial legacies.
- Even as total dollars shrink, peacebuilding donors are increasingly willing to fund new ideas and pathways that follow the agency and power of proximate peacebuilders.
- Learning in the peacebuilding space is now driven far more by the needs and perspectives of those closest to conflict.
- The COVID-19 Pandemic sped up momentum to shift funding to those most proximate to and impacted by conflict. Peacebuilders adopted digital technologies with the potential to mitigate and address conflict.

The peacebuilding strategy seeks to build on these bright spots, while building a global system that can mitigate against the trends of rising violence and repression.

## OUR FOCUS AREAS

In assessing the needs of the current context, our resources, expertise, and existing relationships, we have chosen to focus our grantmaking around four key themes and two geographic lenses.



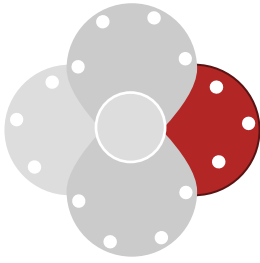
### **FOCUS AREA 1: INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESSES (FORMAL AND INFORMAL)**

Political transitions and peace processes are too often controlled by elite powerholders, who craft narrow processes that leave marginalized communities without voice or agency to build sustainable peace. In a healthy system, transition and peace processes would be collectively owned by a wide range of stakeholders. Collective action creates opportunities for marginalized communities to proactively build shared norms, values, and institutions that meet their needs and deliver sustainable peace. Peace actors would have access to the information and tools they need to mobilize, coordinate, and proactively plan together to shift inequities in the system.

Within this area, we seek to support partners who:

- Explore policy solutions to conflict that incorporate a variety of stakeholders.
- Bridge grassroots and elite actors for more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable outcomes.

- Support inclusive political transition and peace process design (pre-accord).
- Champion holistic interventions and implementations of negotiations and post-conflict transitions (post accord).
- Document, research, and investigate crimes related to conflict.
- Support tools and skills for leadership in conflict affected areas (international, national, and local).

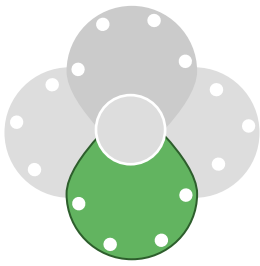


## **FOCUS AREA 2: AGENCY OF PEACEBUILDERS TO TAKE COLLECTIVE ACTION**

In deeply restrictive, violent, and authoritarian environments, peacebuilding and nonviolent social movements need to reach collectively across social cleavages to address systemic problems. In a healthy system, proximate peacebuilding and social movement actors would have the space, opportunity, and agency to build solidarity, negotiate with powerholders, and act in pursuit of shared goals. Robust learning and collaboration between peacebuilders, human rights defenders, social movements, and networks, would strengthen collective action for sustainable peace.

Within this area, we seek to support partners who:

- Develop curricula, research, and resources for activists, movement actors, and their allies on both civil resistance and peacebuilding approaches.
- Create cross movement/geographic connections, solidarity, and action.
- Provide civil resistance and peacebuilding coaching for activists, movement organizers, and allies.
- Organize community level dialogue, negotiation, and mediation spaces.
- Weave together key networks for collective action.

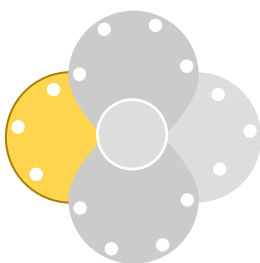


### **FOCUS AREA 3: PEACEBUILDING INNOVATION AND LEARNING**

In every part of society, creative solutions are needed to address intractable challenges. This is especially true as the nature of society’s challenges shifts. In a time where the nature of conflict is shifting—due to climate change, rising authoritarianism, closing civic space, polarized information ecosystems, and more—the status quo of peacebuilding infrastructures has proven ineffective at best and oppressive at worst. However, peacebuilders across contexts and levels are building new—and rediscovering ancient—ways of building peace that center the leadership of communities. By investing in spaces for creativity and innovation, providing risk-tolerant resources for peacebuilders piloting alternative practices, and nurturing channels to share learning and wisdom, we create opportunities for new systems to emerge that redistribute the power to create change.

Within this area, we seek to support partners who:

- Develop and advocate for new approaches to funding, accountability, governance, measurement, and learning.
- Facilitate spaces for imagination and action for emergent systems.



### **FOCUS AREA 4: WELL-BEING AND HEALING FOR PEACEBUILDERS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES**

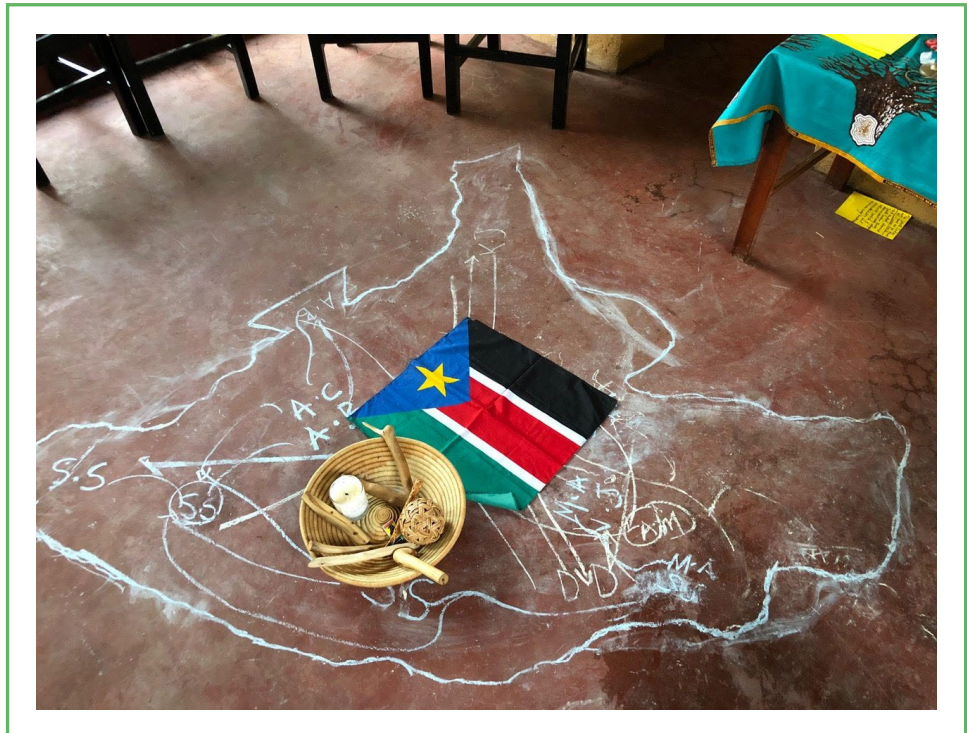
Individual and communal psychosocial well-being is critical for sustainable peace, enabling people to relate to one another in a healthy and whole way, and allowing communities to break the grip of intergenerational trauma. In a healthy system, multiple forms of psychosocial support would sustain peacebuilders through the long arc of social change. Peace actors would have a fuller sense of agency, as a result of access to a wide range of resources for strengthening well-being, and would have the spaces and processes necessary to prevent future trauma.

Within this area, we seek to support partners who:

- Work towards understanding the effects of trauma in conflict/post conflict settings.
- Explore modalities and implementation of reconciliation practices, specifically those that center grassroots approaches.
- Provide retreat, reflection, and healing spaces for proximate peace actors.
- Support narrative change, story-telling, and art as pathways for healing and transformation.

### **GEOGRAPHIC LENSES: COLOMBIA & SOUTH SUDAN**

We will continue our long-term, ongoing relationships in Colombia and South Sudan, where the unique ecosystems and depth of relationships have taught us a great deal about what it means to walk alongside proximate partners in a spirit of accompaniment. We see positive shifts in these contexts as having global ramifications as proximate actors take a leading role in shaping all four focus areas. We believe that maintaining the commitment to relationships in these two contexts is essential to our legitimacy as a funder supporting and amplifying the voices of proximate peacebuilders.



Gathering of South Sudanese Peacebuilders, East Africa, 2019

Our geographic partners will now be more fully embedded into our thematic focuses—creating grounded opportunities for more fluid collaboration and learning across themes in the portfolio, and allowing us to experience together how the four core conditions play out in unique and intertwined ways.

We believe that these four focus themes are necessary but not sufficient for a healthy system that supports the agency and power of proximate peacebuilders. We recognize there are additional dynamics and cross-cutting themes that are critical to monitor and learn from, and many other efforts required to create transformative change. By honing our focus, we can operate from a more intentional and transformative place and most effectively leverage our staffing, resources, and expertise.



ECO Network Gathering. Bogota, Colombia, 2022..

## HOW OUR TEAM OPERATES

### TEAM STRUCTURE

The Peacebuilding Team embraces collaboration, emergence, and adaptation, which we strive to embody in our team structure and practices. Our team brings diverse experiences and expertise that allow us to channel our collective wisdom into strategy, learning, budgeting, decision-making, and collective consciousness raising.

The Peacebuilding Team is organized into the four focus areas described in this strategy. Each focus area consists of a small group of team members that hold grant making, budgeting, decision-making, learning, and thought partnership in that area of work.

Each grant in the Peacebuilding Portfolio is managed by two team members to ensure that every partner has multiple points of contact within the organization, and that team members have opportunities for internal collaboration and thought partnership in the arc of grant making. The structure also allows for deeper learning with and between partners; and increased responsiveness to partnership and systemic needs on both a short and long term basis.

Over the course of the strategy period, the team plans to continue revisiting and adjusting our structure as needed to hold the complexity of our work.



The Peacebuilding Team at a retreat. Washington D.C., 2023



## **OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND JUSTICE (DEIJ)**

The values of inclusion, dignity, equity, and justice lie at the heart of peacebuilding, and so all the work of our portfolio reflects our deepest values around DEIJ. At the same time, we recognize that we are working against the systems of racism, patriarchy, colonialism, ableism, and exploitative economic practices that we have been conditioned into. We recognize that even though principles of DEIJ are the DNA of peacebuilding, the professional field of peacebuilding has often prioritized the illusion of DEIJ over authentic progress, and has not always grappled with a racialized ideology of peacebuilding. We reject superficial approaches and have instead prioritized an intersectional and grounded lens to our DEIJ journey, identifying the actionable ways that we must individually and collectively evolve to uplift equity and liberation. We recognize the enormous power that we hold in a fundamentally oppressive system and are actively seeking to dismantle broken practices, while also challenging our peers to do the same.

Our approach to DEIJ is woven throughout our analysis, strategy, and decision-making. Below, please find some of the practices and actions underway within our team:

- We seek to create partner relationships of trust and accompaniment, where our partners feel comfortable challenging us when we make mistakes. We have seen greater honesty in our conversations over the last three years, and will continue to pursue this growth.
- When organizing convenings we consider every aspect of our partners' participation and how to create a space where they can show up fully and authentically. This means considering the religious and cultural backgrounds and needs of those in attendance, as well as their familiarity with travel and cross-cultural spaces. In practice, this may mean considering the visa accessibility of the convening location or ensuring a team member is available to meet a participant at the airport if they are unfamiliar with international travel.

- We push ourselves and our peers for greater representation of marginalized voices in grantmaking, conferences, panels, learning conversations, and published articles and multimedia content.
- The Peacebuilding Team holds bi-monthly “consciousness raising meetings,” during which we actively seek out new learning and conversational opportunities that challenge our biases and socialization.
- We are conscious of where and how we invest our resources in our community, including who we contract with, where we eat, and whose land we gather on.
- We prioritize accommodations for our teams and our partners, including physical accessibility needs, translation services, dietary restrictions and access, meeting structure, and childcare needs.

## **GRANTMAKING CYCLES & APPROACH**

Grantmaking is the primary way we pursue our goals, alongside strategic communications, targeted advocacy, and a limited number of specific contracts. We aim to build strong and impactful relationships with our grantee partners and to amplify their work when possible. We practice accompaniment—a commitment to walking alongside partners in a way that reinforces their own goals and leadership. This means we engage with our partners in varying levels of depth, based on what they need and request. In our role as accompaniers, we seek to trust and adapt rather than direct.

We find partners and meet partners through our networks and relationships. We recognize this is an imperfect approach, and therefore it is critical for us to stay aware of our own potential biases, and to keep an open aperture in our search for partners. We fund and collaborate with impactful organizations and individuals committed to systemic change. When we invite new partners, we consider some key principles:



### **STRATEGIC FIT**

We make grants to organizations and networks whose work is strongly aligned with our own mission, values, organizational strategy, and priorities under our current strategic plan. See the section on “Focus Areas” for our specific thematic priorities.



### **ELEVATE PROXIMATE SOLUTIONS**

We believe sustainable solutions for peace and prosperity are rooted in the knowledge, wisdom, and relationships held by those seeking justice and peace in their own contexts. We work with partners who center those closest to conflict at the heart of decision-making.



### **BUILD AND STRENGTHEN NETWORKS**

The root causes of violent conflict are interconnected and transnational in nature. So our responses must be interconnected and transnational as well. Convening, network weaving, and peer-to-peer learning are key facilitators of change and central to our peacebuilding approach.



### **FIELD BUILDING**

We and our partners seek to build peace in a complex, ever-shifting world. Therefore, we are interested in supporting organizations that are actively building the peacebuilding field, enabling adaptation, and shifting stale narratives. We also seek to leverage relationships with proximate peacebuilders to shift the behavior of key actors in the system. It is important that we stay alert to new trends, actors and thinking around our work.



### **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND JUSTICE (DEIJ)**

We deeply listen and stay aware of our biases. We are conscious of where and how we invest our resources in our community. We seek out partners who are most proximate to the issues we work on, and who represent a diversity of marginalized identities. We are committed to generative conflict and constant learning, recognizing that DEIJ is a continual process and not a destination.

We currently do not accept unsolicited requests for funds. This is to minimize time spent on proposals that will not be supported and reflects the fact that we do not have the staff to review a high volume of unsolicited proposals.

## OUR RESOURCES

We currently operate on an average annual grantmaking budget of \$6,000,000. As of September 2023, we have over 50 grant partners in our network and an average grant size of \$80,000. We believe that as responsible donors, we must be knowledgeable about our field, responsive to evolving trends, and willing to share our learnings deeply and broadly.



Our approach to our resources is informed by the experiences and challenges of our partners, who are: facing a projectized environment with short term funding; fighting to keep their organizations open; managing funding by risk-averse donors; and taking on significant financial, personal, and physical risks to serve their communities. In a rapidly changing and restrictive funding environment, facing enormous threats, we believe that how we fund is just as meaningful as what we fund.

## HUMANITY UNITED'S FUNDING APPROACH

We know that working toward peace requires significant resources, and we seek to amplify our relatively small amount of funding by being as flexible as possible in the tools we can bring to bear in our grantmaking.

As a US-based private foundation, we have tools to support a variety of organization types:

- US-based 501(c)(3) public charity organizations.
- Non-US charitable organizations. Where possible, we cover the costs of an Equivalency Determination process via our operational partner [NGOsource](#) for organizations that qualify to be certified, and thus treated, as equivalent to a 501(c)(3) public charity.

- For informal networks and organizations who do not qualify as 501(c)(3) public charities or foreign equivalents, we work with fiscal sponsors and intermediaries, and (in special cases) can make project-based “expenditure responsibility” grants.
- Specific charitable projects implemented by a for-profit organization, also made under “expenditure responsibility.”

Our 501(c)(4) sister organization, Humanity United Action, shares our strategic goals and supports them through lobbying-enabled activities and funding.

Depending on the type of organization, Humanity United is able to provide project-restricted grants and unrestricted general operating support grants. In all grant types, we prioritize flexibility, so our partners can achieve their goals while adapting to changing contexts. Our aim is to provide multi-year support in long term grant relationships and provide unrestricted core support wherever possible.

### **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT WE OFFER TO PARTNERS**

Across HU, we work closely with our Public Engagement, Legal, and Strategy, Learning, & Impact teams to support our grant partners in targeted ways, as time and budgets allow from year to year. We expect this to support to shift over time, as we proactively identify the needs and resources that best support our partners. Examples of past targeted support have included:

#### **LEGAL**

- Access to a Grantee Legal Support Fund, which provides free/independent legal counsel focused on tax-exempt issues.
- Consultation on innovative funding options and structures.

#### **STRATEGY, LEARNING, AND IMPACT**

- From time to time, our SLI team has made funds available to support grantee partners in their learning objectives.

#### **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

- Access to expertise and support around key partner campaigns, including social media amplification.
- Strategic advice regarding policy and advocacy in different international forums.
- Use of HU’s website and media platforms to post blogs, share updates, and uplift the work of our partner.

We work closely with like-minded peer funders to co-fund in multi-donor collaboratives, and when funding individual partners with another donor, we seek to streamline burdens on reporting and proposals wherever possible. Finally, we engage fully with HU's Language Justice Initiative, allowing grantees to use their native language whenever possible in the proposal and reporting process, and ensuring that partners can speak in HU-sponsored forums in their own languages rather than in English.

For our work, how we exit partnerships is as critical as how we enter them. We believe in long-term trusting relationships of accompaniment. Exiting funding relationships brings up the complex and inequitable power dynamics of philanthropy. These are further amplified as the broader funding space shrinks and our partners experience increasing stress. Whenever possible, we commit to giving our partners a minimum of six months notice if a multi-year partnership will be reduced or exited entirely. (This precludes extenuating legal or ethical circumstances that require a more expedited closure of the partnership).

## **COLLABORATION ACROSS HUMANITY UNITED**

We collaborate closely across Humanity United to further advance our field-building, organizational, and portfolio level goals.

We work closely with the **Public Engagement Portfolio** on issues related to policy and government relations, strategic communications, as well as independent journalism, and media. We have specifically collaborated on the following issues:

- Institutional reform related to proximate peace and development
- Transitional justice
- Support to social movements
- Localization and decolonization
- Broad engagement with the US government and the African Union
- Elevating the voices and perspectives of proximate peacebuilders
- Telling a fuller story of HU's peacebuilding work and that of our partners

We work with the **Forced Labor and Human Trafficking Portfolio** on issues such as:

- Migration arising from violence, displacement, or labor exploitation
- The role of networks and social movements in creating space for deep transformation and political change.
- How trauma shows up in our work, and how individual and collective trauma healing can increase the agency and power of proximate actors
- How climate change creates the simultaneous conditions for violent conflict, and labor exploitation.

We work closely with the **Racial Justice and Equity program** on connecting US-based racial and social justice leaders with their counterparts in other countries, and we explore together the principles of proximate peacebuilding, justice, and wellbeing.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD**

As part of our systems change model, we believe in taking meaningful action to support the broader field of peacebuilding. The section below describes the types of resources, support, and action we take to move our field forward.



### **NETWORKS & GOVERNANCE**

Supporting networks has the power to weave together spaces for collective action, psychosocial support, structural change, and new models of peacebuilding. We will continue to learn from how local and translocal networks govern themselves, and the rituals and rules that allow them to grow, face challenges, and overcome internal division. Funding networks can pose challenges for many donors, but we remain committed to accompanying a wide range of networks and other forms of collective action.



### **THE POWER OF CIRCULATING**

Following John Paul Lederach's model of 'circulating', we use our position and our connections to convene and reconvene, connect and reconnect important conversations, support for spaces to gather, share, and learn and strengthen and link networks in the field.



## FIELD BUILDING

We will seek to play a leading role in the peacebuilding funding sector to adopt approaches that center those most proximate to conflict and peace. At the request of our partners, in our refreshed strategy, we have committed to greater boldness in the way that we help organize the peacebuilding sector around critical issues of the moment. In addition to grants within our particular focus areas, we make a limited number of grants on a field-wide level that support cross-field learning, and field strengthening.



## TRANSFORMING PHILANTHROPIC PRACTICES

Our partners have asked us to use our position of power to influence evolution in the field, elevating approaches like HU's expansive tools of multi-year support, duty of care, the practice of accompaniment, and more adaptable funding models that take advantage of HU's diverse range of funding tools.



## COLLABORATIVE FUNDING

The scale of the change we are seeking is larger than our resources, therefore we seek to leverage our funds by collaborating with bilateral and philanthropic donors.

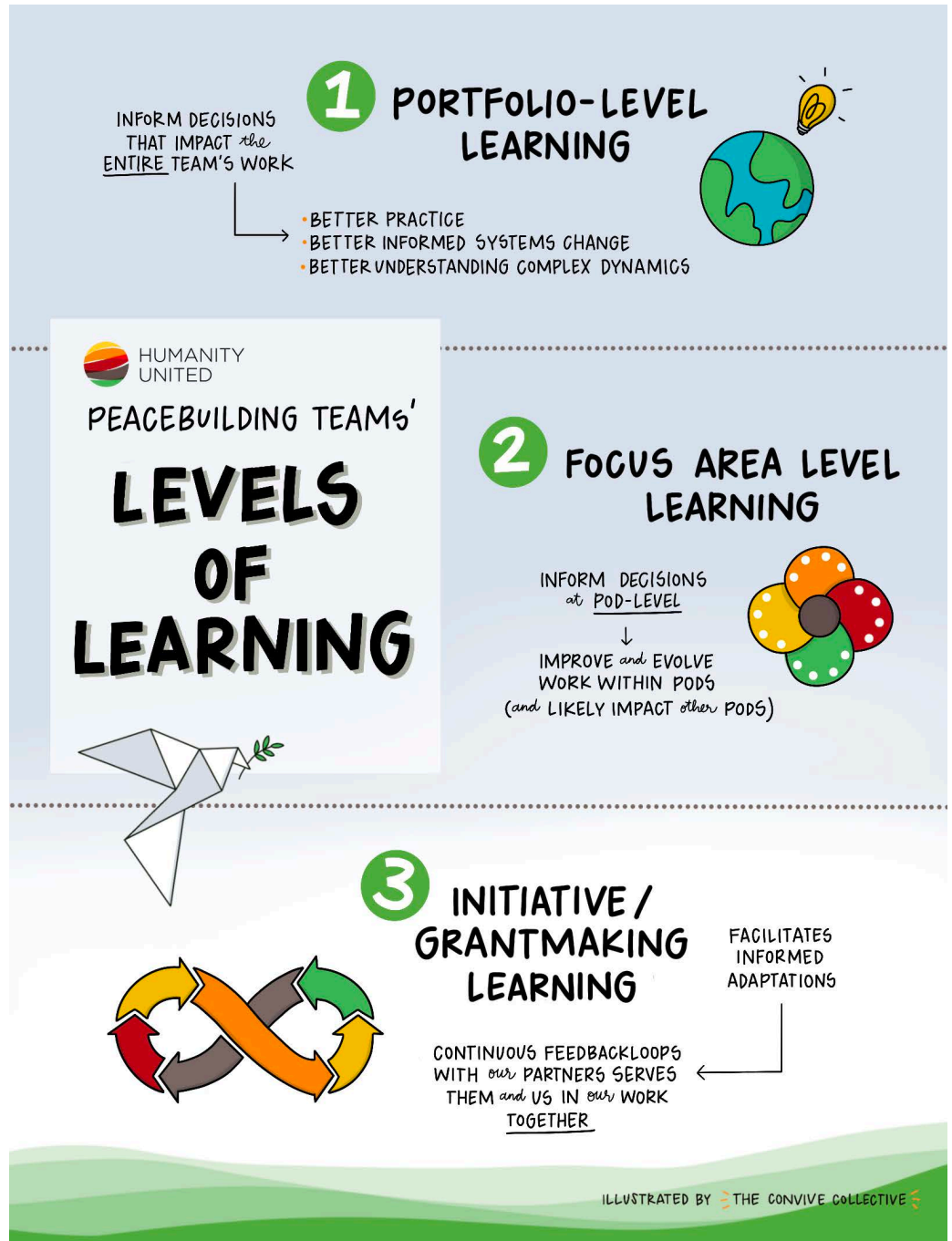


ECO Network Gathering. Bogota, Colombia, 2022.



## HOW WE LEARN

We have developed a framework to help us structure our learning under the new strategy, oriented around three levels of learning: Portfolio, Focus Area, and Initiative/Grant. In all our work, we seek to learn in a collaborative and mutually beneficial approach with our partners.





## PORTFOLIO LEVEL LEARNING

The purpose of this level of learning is to inform strategic and operational decisions at the portfolio level that impact the entire team’s work. In addition to informing our own decisions, we also aim to contribute to the knowledge of the peacebuilding field about better practice, more informed systems change, and in general have a better understanding of the complex dynamics of peacebuilding. This learning level zooms out to see the big picture of the entire collective of the Peacebuilding Portfolio’s work across focus areas, and specifically looks at the impact on near and long term vision, as well as the systems-level change the team is focused on.



## FOCUS AREA LEVEL LEARNING

Our team structure translates our four focus areas—along with the two main geographies of Colombia and South Sudan—into “pods” that help organize learning, prioritize budgets, and streamline grantmaking. The purpose of this level of learning is to inform technical decisions at the pod level that helps improve and evolve the work. Given the interconnectedness of the pods, learning within one will very likely impact work/thinking in others). This learning level zooms into the pods and looks specifically at how partners within a specific focus area are contributing towards the change each pod is focused on.



## INITIATIVE/GRANT LEVEL LEARNING

The purpose of this level of learning is to maintain continuous feedback loops with our partners, which serves them and us in our work together, and facilitates informed adaptations. Our partners have shared that they value the approach we take to learning (flexible, needs-based, partner leading, etc.). As such, we will work with partners to co-create a learning process that works best for them and their needs.

## CONCLUSION

In working toward a transformed global peace system, driven by the agency and power of proximate peace builders, we face complex challenges. Our approach to peacebuilding speaks to the realities of the world we inhabit today and our hopes for the future we know we can create. Entering this strategy, we are deeply committed to our vision, our relationships, and our partnerships, while recognizing the need for emergence in a rapidly changing global landscape.

Changes to this strategy will be grounded in the same foundations that created this approach - learning and evidence from our work, knowledge from our relationships and networks, and critical assessments of our resources and expertise.

We are guided by the wisdom of our own John Paul Lederach and draw inspiration from his conviction that “The north of peacebuilding is best articulated as finding our way toward becoming and being local and global human communities characterized by respect, dignity, fairness, cooperation, and the nonviolent resolution of conflict. To understand this north, to read such a compass, requires that we recognize and develop our moral imagination far more intentionally.”

We give our deep thanks to peacebuilders working around the world, and look forward to the journey ahead.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# HUMANITY UNITED

When all Humanity unites at a  
Pace Embodying Accompaniment  
Co-created Equitably, the System  
will have at its core the practice of PEACE  
- Akwasi Aidoo

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