

**Geneva Dialogue on Environment,
Climate, Conflict, and Peace:
Meeting 18**

11 May, Zoom

Participants: 24 participants from Geneva and external institutions, including some of the cohort from the Young Peacebuilders Academy

Introduction from Annika, group facilitator:

We have been coming together as a Dialogue now for more than one year. The goals of the Dialogue are to promote shared learning & innovation and to foster inter-institutional cooperation & collaboration. We are working concretely towards the first goal, particularly through briefings and presentations, as well as outputs towards the *White Paper on the Future of Environmental Peacebuilding* and the Second International Conference on Environmental Peacebuilding (Feb 2022).

Today, we'll speak about collaboration, cooperation, and coordination. The GPW21 call for applications launches *today* and it calls upon institutions to collaborate.

Discussion:

Do you regularly collaborate with other institutions? If yes, do you find you collaborate with the same group over time, or with different groups on different projects?

- Yes, there are few projects that we do alone
- We often collaborate concretely with a smaller circle of partners, but then reach out through concentric circles
- Different kinds of partners encourage different kinds of outputs - implementation partners vs. policy partners, for example
- We are a very small team (6 people) so collaboration is almost necessary to get things done
- COVID-19 and home office/online operations have yielded new collaborations that had not previously been thought possible
- We operate in coalition format
 - There's a benefit to an institutionalized exchange: One org steers the coalition, and the group of partners focuses on a common theme and more easily work together, exchange together, conduct research together, etc.

Why collaborate? What are the benefits?

- To not duplicate work
- To bolster outputs with expertise of people who belong to other organizations
 - Give outputs more authoritative grounding
 - Strength in numbers, strength in expertise
- To get the insight of others to help shape views before launching into it
- To build community, to provide space for people to get to know one another

- It depends on what the collaboration is - bringing knowledge to the table, vs. building a movement
 - In environmental peacebuilding field, it's important to focus on building movements
- From a scientific perspective, there need to be effective platforms for scientific co production
 - Scientific knowledge and policy knowledge are often produced in different realms
 - Some places are piloting hubs - for example, the German Foreign Ministry has 2 scientists advising on policy

Do you collaborate outside of your "field" or "discipline"? How?

- i.e., across environment, climate, conservation, peace, security, conflict, human rights, humanitarian, development, etc.
- In short, somewhat yes
 - Some actors are directly positioned at a border (for example, between research and policy, or between youth and policy-makers)
 - But most collaborations are within fields and disciplines

What makes a collaboration work? Is it informal? Formal?

- Some ingredients to successful collaborations
 - Complementarity - positioning
 - Clarity
 - Understand red lines between different organizations - staying true to own values and objectives
 - Listen carefully and agree on concepts and foundations
 - Making sure that all of the relevant partners are at the table
 - Are all of the right stakeholder groups involved?
- Informal collaborations sometimes work better
 - For example, a project with no MOUs *before* we have a proof of concept - let's start by working together and see if we can get something to show for it
 - This requires risking the time investment for something that may not pan out
 - But there are also risks to invest a long time on generating an MOU for the same result
- Formal collaborations
 - There should be some foundations - why are you working together with this particular group of people?
 - It's important to get clear on that while being aware that internal systems, processes, and administration might stymie the work

What are some challenges related to collaboration?

- Administrative burden
 - In one example, it took 6 months just to get an agreement/MOU in place
 - There's a huge amount of time, effort, transaction costs in development of MOUs, agreements
 - Because of this, sometimes collaborations are even just seen as an end in themselves

- Reporting challenges - who does the report, how to report, who to report to, etc.
- Consortium projects are great but can come at a cost
 - How do we align for donor needs? How do we coordinate among different interests?
There are administrative and strategic costs to align systems and coordinate the work
- It's so often about personalities / individuals (which can be a plus or minus)
 - For example, if the coordinator is really driven, has a big personality, and is able to carry something forward, when they move into a new role the momentum can be lost
 - Or sometimes different reputations can sour collaborations before they get off the ground
- Linguistic, cultural challenges
- Lack of accountability or transparency
- Sometimes it can be difficult to find practical ways to move beyond just a common interest
 - Always a lot of idea and interest to collaborate, but the actual "doing" of it doesn't come to fruition often
- Timing
 - Sometimes on certain topics, there's a will of people to come together and a lot of energy to collaborate. By the time money is raised to hire a coordinator to shape that space, the energy of the collaboration might be gone.