

Geneva Peace Week 2021 Evaluation Report

1. Background

This Evaluation Report provides key data about GPW21, including highlights of programmatic successes and innovations, constructive feedback and learning from post-event surveys, and a debriefing process with organizers. It includes the perspectives of 290 attendees and organizers who completed post-event surveys, as well as feedback from the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform's Management Committee, the UN Office in Geneva, and the Swiss Confederation. This report is intended to contribute to the ongoing strategic planning for improving GPW in 2022 and beyond.

2. Successes and Innovations

GPW21 took place from 1-5 November 2021. The forum took place predominantly online, with the Opening and Closing Ceremony taking place in-person at the Graduate Institute, with a dynamic hybrid format. After transforming a traditionally in-person forum to a fully online forum in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the GPW organizing team made several adaptations to GPW21 with the goal of improving the quality of the forum.

In 2020, GPW featured a large number of events and digital series contributions (70 of each). In order to improve the substantive quality of the 2021 forum, the GPW Consortium of partner organizations decided to reduce the quantity of events, and to implement adaptations to the format of GPW. A more robust and clear application criteria was developed to ensure a fairer and more transparent selection process. The amount of thematic tracks were condensed to only four (compared to eight the previous year), and the tracks were selected intentionally prior to the application process. In 2021, the thematic tracks were framed and enriched by experienced thematic track leads, who contributed to the selection process, the public events and plenary sessions which focused on their tracks, and to the interviews and thematic track reports that were completed after GPW.

The online format of GPW21 continued to vastly expand the traditional reach of GPW, further establishing GPW as a global peacebuilding forum. The in-person, hybrid Ceremonies marked a gradual shift back towards physical meetings, and these events pushed the bounds of hybrid event formats by facilitating the same experience for in-person and online attendees/speakers. The user experience was also improved in 2021, with a new and improved virtual lobby, a simplified and efficient registration process, the first ever GPW branded mobile app, and an updated website. The user experience was designed in a way that attendees were able to engage with GPW in a way that was tailored to their participant category (e.g. attendee, speaker, organizer).

GPW21 in Numbers

- 96 session applications
- 4 thematic tracks
- 29 Online Workshops
 - 80 average attendees per live session
- 32 Digital Series productions
 - As of January 2021: 1,200 podcast listens and 4,932 video streams
- 2,800 attendees from 155 countries
- 110 organizers

3. Strengthened Programme

The 2021 Programme was the most substantively rich and focused yet, with 29 Online Workshops across the week and 32 podcast and video recordings produced for the Digital Series. Online Workshops replaced panel discussions from previous years, and these sessions in 2021 focused more on engaging participants and facilitating exchanges between professionals. Condensing the programme to approximately 30 workshops allowed for the selected workshops to be longer (90mins), and to therefore create a suitable balance between speaker interventions and participant engagement.

The programme was developed through an improved and strengthened selection process, beginning with the review of 96 applications received in June 2021. The thematic direction for GPW was developed through strategic discussions on the relevant peacebuilding themes that were relevant to *Geneva*. Four thematic tracks were selected and held together by an overall theme, “**From seeds to systems of peace: Weathering today’s challenges**”. The four specific thematic tracks for Geneva Peace Week were:

- **Confronting inequalities and advancing inclusion, peace, and SDG16:** This track included discussions on the linkages between confronting inequalities and peace. Sessions focused on the evidence, experiences, and stories that demonstrate advancing inclusion as a path to peace, and how both are integrated into current peacebuilding practice, and, whether they should be. SDG16 “seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. This track included discussions on whether striving to implement SDG16 is helping to build peace, how it can be done better, and what we are currently learning. *To read the thematic track report for this track, [click here](#).*
- **Moving beyond securitization: What risks (and new horizons) for peacebuilding:** This track considered how narratives on and approaches to today’s challenges are being presented as existential threats that are often followed by a so

called imperative to address them through military or emergency measures - justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure. Discussions on this track focused on where such approaches leave human rights, sustainability, or solidarity, and, what the risks of constructing discourses of fear are. Sessions in this track focused on what the role of peacebuilding is, and what the role of peacebuilders are, in turning the tide of securitization. *To read the thematic track report for this track, [click here](#).*

- **Creating a climate for collaboration: Ways forward for environment, climate change, and peace:** This track considered how in the face of global crisis, political will and resources are increasingly flowing into responses to climate change and environmental degradation. The discussions within this thematic track focused on key questions such as; How might we communicate across disciplines, sectors, silos, and language, and collaborate in face of this growing crisis? Where and how are actors from these different, but linked, fields creating synergies and working together? How can they continue to mutually reinforce one another's work while respecting their respective differences? *To read the thematic track report for this track, [click here](#).*
- **Harnessing the digital sphere for peace:** This track included discussions on the impact of artificial intelligence, cyber operations, and digital technology in the field of peace and security. The discussions within this thematic track focused on key questions such as; What new risks and new opportunities are there in working for peace digitally? Can peace be built online? Is the digital space bringing us closer; closer to peace, or simply closer to war? How are government, civil society, and private actors facing these challenges? How are humanitarian actors, development agencies, human rights activists, and peace builders managing (or not) to harness the digital sphere? *To read the thematic track report for this track, [click here](#).*

4. Global reach and participation

The 2,800 people who registered for GPW were from 155 different countries, which represents an impressive expanse, even if participation remained principally from Europe and US. 34.5% of attendees were from NGOs, 20.7% were from Academia, 18.4% from International Organizations, 13% from Government, 5% from Private Sector and 8.2% from 'Other' categories. 1723 attendees (62%) participated for the first time, and 827 attendees (30%) of attendees were based in Geneva. This has marked a shift in that the majority (70%) of attendees at GPW are from outside of Geneva, as opposed to in previous years where attendees were mainly based in Geneva.

5. Feedback Surveys

The success of GPW is attributable in very large part to the commitment of the organizers who contributed to a more streamlined, engaging, and substantively-focused forum in 2021. Those who completed the survey responded that their overall experience was ‘very good’ (56.5%) or ‘good’ (34.8%). The remaining 8.7% noted ‘fair’.

Constructive feedback will carefully feed into GPW22 planning, including:

- Increasing the spaces for networking during the week
- Integration of expert-level speakers to the programme, to provide higher-level perspectives on pressing global issues
- Improved communication between organizers and participants (reminder emails etc)
- Continue with a hybrid format for future GPW’s, with more sessions taking place in-person
- Better integrate the Digital Series, in order for it not to be overshadowed by the rest of the programme
- Balance the inclusion of broad audiences, with niche, smaller conversations with specific people working on selected topics

Geneva Peace Week is a flagship initiative of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform in collaboration with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID), 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 Security Sector Governance (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.

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