

# The State of Cross-Border Peacebuilding Efforts

Needs Assessment on Israeli and  
Palestinian Civil Society Organizations

Research and Report by Amal-Tikva

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We are so appreciative to the many organizational leaders, volunteers, board members, lay leaders, philanthropists, foundation staff, researchers and experts who opened their doors and hearts to share their visions, hopes, dreams, and fears with us. We hope that this report will serve you all, the peacebuilding field, and will lead to a domino-effect of actions that will contribute to building capacity and funnelling resources into Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding.

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The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of our donors and partners.

**“Amal-Tikva’s timely needs assessment takes a field-wide, systemic analysis, and makes important recommendations that can aid greater effectiveness in the field and a more attractive return on investment for governments and philanthropic partners.”**

**-John Lyndon, ALLMEP**

**“Amal-Tikva did something no one ever did before, answering questions we always asked as funders but with a depth and width we couldn’t achieve as outsiders. Their systematic research is the place to start for activists, philanthropists, and governments who want to understand and support peacebuilding in Jerusalem.”**

**– Scott Rasmussen, former US diplomat**

**“The very act of assessing a field, if done in collaboration with the field’s leaders, can help to coalesce the organizations and agencies working towards a common goal in powerful ways.”**

**-The Strong Field Framework<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The James Irvine Foundation. (2009). The Strong Field Framework, Focus.

## **ABOUT AMAL-TIKVA**

Founded in September 2019, Amal-Tikva is an initiative where philanthropists, field experts, and organizations come together to support civil society peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians. Our goal is to create a more peaceful reality defined by a) less hatred, tension, and violence, b) increased quality of life, and c) improved systems for interaction. We seek to achieve this goal by:

- Mobilizing peacebuilding efforts by bringing stakeholders together to build a coordinated, strategic movement for change.
- Providing capacity building and funding opportunities, as well as guidance on best practices for scalability and measuring impact.
- Serving as a conduit for those looking to invest wisely in the field, providing an infrastructure for holding funding recipients accountable for program excellence, sound monitoring and evaluation, and financial integrity.

### **Purpose of this report:**

Founded by a team of organizational leaders directly from the field, we at Amal-Tikva decided that before tackling the goals mentioned above, it would be wise to engage the community in a needs assessment. Many philanthropic entities, governments, and potential partners asked us questions about the field that we felt would be presumptuous to answer ourselves. After checking if the answers existed in prior research, reports, or analyses, we decided we should pose the questions to the organizational and field leaders, and share that information with the field.

Amal-Tikva intends to continue mapping the field as it changes, especially in light of the effect that COVID-19 has had on the global and local economy, and on opportunities for people-to-people interactions. An ongoing mapping process will allow us to advise philanthropic entities on how to most effectively support peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians in real time. We also seek to use this mapping as the basis for an intensive capacity-building program that will begin in late summer 2020, and for encouraging peacebuilding organizations to work collaboratively, strategically, and in coordination with one another.

### **Amal-Tikva Team**

**Meredith Rothbart, Co-Founder and CEO**, brings over 10 years of experience in project management, development and strategic planning with NGOs. She recently stepped down as Director of Kids4Peace. Meredith holds a BA in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from the University of Pittsburgh Honors College and an MA from Hebrew University in Community Development. She currently lives in Jerusalem with her family.

**Basheer Abu Baker, Co-Founder and CFO**, is a CPA/MBA with over 10 years experience in the private sector, and 10 more years working with Israeli and Palestinian NGOs as a financial manager. As CFO of Hand-in-Hand, Basheer created the infrastructure for exponential growth, in partnership with government, private, and philanthropic partners. Basheer lives in Jerusalem with his family.

**Suma Qawasmi, Program Officer and Research Assistant**, has been involved with peacebuilding as a participant, counselor, and program coordinator in a variety of peacebuilding programs. An expert in the field, she was instrumental in the data collection process leading up to this report. Suma lives in Jerusalem with her family.

## DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

**ATCA:** The Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act of 2018 (ATCA, PL. 115-253), passed by the United States Congress and signed into law by President Trump on October 3, 2018, came into force in February 2019, and allows Americans to sue, in US courts, those receiving US foreign aid over alleged complicity in "acts of war." The implications of this law led the PA to decline all remaining assistance coming to it from USAID, in order to avoid such legal exposure.

**Anti-Normalization:** The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) defines 'normalization' as "the participation in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians and Israelis without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people."<sup>2</sup> The anti-normalization movement is known for actively disrupting peacebuilding efforts and also for publicly shaming and threatening participants and supporters of peacebuilding programs.

**BDS:** BDS stands for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions. According to the BDS website, "The BDS movement urges nonviolent pressure on Israel until it complies with international law by meeting three demands: 1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall; 2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; 3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194."<sup>3</sup> For the peacebuilding community, the BDS movement is seen as an approach that is both influential on and related to the push for anti-normalization that calls for an end to interaction between Israelis and Palestinians.

**Civil Society:** Term that refers to the overall sector of not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), activists, and institutions working to improve life for the general public.

**Contact hypothesis:** This theory "assumes that tension and hostility between conflicting groups will be reduced when these groups are brought into systematic contact with each other."<sup>4</sup>

**Cross-Border:** In the context of this report, "cross-border" refers to work that primarily engages Israelis with Palestinians from Jerusalem, the West Bank, and/or Gaza.

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<sup>2</sup> PACBI, "Israel's Exceptionalism: Normalizing the Abnormal", 31 Oct 2011, <http://pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1749>

<sup>3</sup> What is BDS? (2020, February 9). Retrieved April 5, 2020, from <https://bdsmovement.net/what-is-bds>

<sup>4</sup> Donnelly, Caitlin, and Joanne Hughes. "Contact, Culture and Context: Evidence from Mixed Faith Schools in Northern Ireland and Israel." *Comparative Education* 42.4 (2006): 493-516.

**Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM):** CMM grants are part of a US congressionally mandated effort to support people-to-people reconciliation activities that bring together individuals of different ethnic, religious or political backgrounds from areas of conflict to address the root causes of tension and instability. Since the program's inception in 2004, USAID West Bank and Gaza Mission and US Embassy Tel Aviv have supported 55 Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) grants for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>5</sup>

**COGAT:** The Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) is a branch office of the Israeli Ministry of Defense that implements the Israeli government's civilian policy within the West Bank (referred to by COGAT as the territories of Judea and Samaria) and towards the Gaza Strip. COGAT is responsible for coordination and liaison with the Palestinian Authority, Palestinian civilians, diplomats and international bodies acting in the West Bank and Gaza.

**NGO:** Non-governmental organizations, also referred to as non-profit organizations, not-for-profit organizations, civil society organizations and community organizations.

**Peacebuilding:** Amal-Tikva defines 'peacebuilding' as working to create a more peaceful reality for Palestinians and Israelis, defined by less hatred, tension, and violence, b) increased quality of life, and c) improved systems for interaction. Amal-Tikva does not define peacebuilding as preparing civil society for a future political peace agreement, but as taking concrete steps to make lives better now.

**Shared Society:** The term 'shared society' refers to activity to promote peacebuilding between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel and the investment in Israeli Arab citizens' educational, economic, and social wellbeing in the State of Israel.

**USAID:** USAID is the acronym for the United States Agency for International Development, a government office working throughout the world to "advance U.S. national security and economic prosperity; demonstrates American generosity; and promotes a path to recipient self-reliance and resilience. USAID works to help lift lives, build communities, and advance democracy."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "Conflict Management and Mitigation Program Fact Sheet." *U.S. Agency for International Development*, 13 June 2013, [www.usaid.gov/documents/1883/conflict-management-and-mitigation-program-fact-sheet-0](http://www.usaid.gov/documents/1883/conflict-management-and-mitigation-program-fact-sheet-0).

<sup>6</sup> "Who We Are." *U.S. Agency for International Development*, 4 Oct. 2019, [www.usaid.gov/who-we-are](http://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are).

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## **PREFACE**

**By John Lyndon, Executive Director of the Alliance for Middle East Peace**

Policymakers and philanthropists have historically worked together to confront and overturn some of the most thorny and difficult social and political problems.

When it comes to ethnic and territorial conflict, however, the uncomfortable truth is that we simply have far fewer proven tools at our disposal than is the case with other complex problems such as public health, literacy, or the environment. In conflict in general—and the Israeli-Palestinian one in particular—it is beholden on us all to treat the few effective tools at our disposal with the seriousness and rigor that they deserve. People-to-people peacebuilding is one such tool. We know it is effective in disrupting some of the most firmly embedded attitudes which conflict thrives upon. Repeated studies, by Professor Ned Lazarus, the United States Institute of Peace and more latterly by USAID demonstrate that these programs are effective, and that their results can be transformative and long-lasting. We see all around us the alumni of these programs being disproportionately represented in the movements and campaigns to end the conflict.

Yet too often, the policy and philanthropic community—as well as many practitioners in the field themselves—do not treat this work with the rigor and seriousness that its efficacy demands. If we know it transforms individuals and families, then we have a responsibility to work to ensure it can do the same with entire communities and societies. Resources are of course necessary in order to do this. But so is a much more systemic, clinical analysis, and the development of a professionalized culture as well as scalable field-wide models that reflect the seriousness of the problem, and the scarcity of alternative solutions. With so few effective interventions at our disposal, and a genuine crisis emerging in youth attitudes among and between young Israelis and Palestinians, it is beholden on everyone engaged in the peacebuilding field to approach it with the seriousness that such a situation demands. Especially if the financial support necessary to see it reach its inherent but unrealized potential is to be secured.

Amal-Tikva's timely needs assessment, which we at ALLMEP were proud to partner on, is a ground-breaking step in that direction. It takes a field-wide, systemic analysis, and makes important recommendations that can aid greater effectiveness in the field and a more attractive return on investment for governments and philanthropic partners.

Perhaps most importantly: it recognizes the step-change that has taken place in this field since its (inaccurately) perceived “high water mark” in the 1990s. Peacebuilding's role during an active peace process is very different to its role in one's absence. Counter-intuitively, it is all the more necessary in the current environment. First of all, building – as was the case in Northern Ireland – resilience against the dehumanization, racism and violence that fill the diplomatic vacuum, and then challenging and overturning the political realities that flow downstream from such attitudes, as well as the political incentives for leaders.

I would urge everyone who cares about the well-being of Israelis and Palestinians and wants to see the sort of attitudinal and societal change that can transform their intertwined fates, to read this report carefully. Systemic change in Israel/Palestine has tended to coincide with moments of great global tumult. The current volatility around

the COVID19 crisis will inevitably create challenges and opportunities in Israel/Palestine, and the sort of political churn that can often overturn long-held assumptions, for both better and worse. This timely report can help to guide our decisions as we navigate those waters, ensuring that the peacebuilding field emerges on the other side with the models, momentum and resources necessary to help shape the next chapter in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Overview**

Cross-border peacebuilding organizations seek to resolve one of, if not the, most complex and intractable conflict in the world. The external context becomes more challenging each year with violent extremism, heightened controls on movement, limited financial resources and most recently the global COVID-19 crisis. In January 2019 the field of cross-border peacebuilding lost nearly half of its funding as a result U.S. foreign assistance withdrawals, and organizations implementing cross-border programs had to cancel activities overnight. At the same time, potential participants for peacebuilding programs are more polarized than ever, with 47% of Jewish Israelis and 71% of Palestinians believing that the conflict is now a zero-sum game.<sup>7</sup> These challenges have sapped motivation, drawn some of the best and brightest emerging leaders into different fields, and in some cases contributed toward a culture of continuing the status quo rather than disrupting it. With their leaders scrambling to raise sufficient funds and manage complex bi-national logistical realities, peacebuilding organizations' rhetorical ambition is seldom matched to a sound theory of change and scalable model that can generate measurable societal impact.

The first of its kind, this report analyzes the state of these efforts from the organizations' perspectives. This report surveys and interprets the needs of 52 Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilding organizations in order to best advise the private philanthropic sector on how to invest in the field while suggesting to the organizations how to work collectively to maximize impact. Our key findings indicate that the organizations in this space, no matter how professional and impactful they may be independently, mostly operate alone, leading to a field that shows no holistic vision or strategic coordination. As one donor stated in an early interview, "if I were to design the least organized field to have the least amount of impact, I would design peacebuilding as it is today." This particular donor continues to invest in this space despite its disarray, knowing that the models for peacebuilding work and if operated at scale could demonstrate enormous impact.

Thanks to robust research performed by our colleagues at the United States Institute for Peace, ALLMEP, BICOM, and USAID, we know that Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilding program models today do actually work, and do deliver profound

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<sup>7</sup> Shikaki, K., & Scheindlin, D. (2018). *Role of Public Opinion in the Resilience/Resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (Final Report). Ramallah: The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), Tel Aviv: Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University.



impact on building a more peaceful reality. Unfortunately, these programs are not at scale, are not even all necessarily scalable, and are not yet sustainable. The good news is: the field as whole has the potential for serious growth in the immediate future and the organizations are eager for a stronger skill set to achieve this. Our key recommendation therefore encourages the organizations, donors and researchers to work together as a field, sharing the goal of creating a more peaceful reality and contributing toward the eventual peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Key Findings**

We collected data via 100 individual interviews with 52 Israeli and Palestinian organizations, 23 philanthropists, many field experts and conveners between November 2019 and February 2020. Key findings include:

- ***Cross-border peacebuilding has transformed*** from being based mainly on dialogue and facilitation programs, to language learning, tech partnerships, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement. We noticed significant trends in programmatic shifts relating to historical periods in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, starting in the Pre-Oslo period with youth dialogue and education, and concluding with organizations founded after the 2014 War in Gaza focusing on language, technology, entrepreneurship and civic engagement.
- ***Leadership needs support***: There is a common assumption in Israeli society that secular left-wing Jews from the center of the country are the only Israeli Jews involved in peacebuilding. Comparatively in Palestinian society, there is a common assumption that Palestinian citizens of Israel are the only Palestinians involved in peacebuilding, even when it comes to cross-border work. We found this assumption to be outdated, as in recent years the majority are from more traditional Jerusalem communities from both sides. At the same time however, most of the field is led by Israeli Jewish leadership, with minimal opportunities for mid level staff to grow.
- ***2014 marked a dramatic turning point in the field***, when peacebuilding evolved from using traditional methods of discussing the conflict and sharing stories via formal dialogue and facilitation to engaging in concrete skill-building that enables real, day-to-day shared life together. New populations such as Religious Zionists and Palestinians from areas more extremely affected by the conflict joined peacebuilding activities during this period, and also formed new organizations that better served their populations.
- ***Jerusalem plays a more significant role than ever*** in cross-border peacebuilding, with the city serving as the locus or city of origin for 73% of all program participants, 76% of activities, and 60% of registered organizations. At the same time however, there is the least funding available for programs in Jerusalem. The European Union, many European governments, the US government and Jewish philanthropic entities find most organizations operating in East Jerusalem ineligible for support due to funding restrictions across the 1967 borders.
- ***Peacebuilding programs are not at scale***. Peacebuilding organizations reported significant difficulty measuring numbers of program participants, and estimated an average reach of 6,428 participants per organization out of a

total of approximately 322,000 all together per year. Six of these organizations reach fewer than 100 people annually , and only five organizations reach more than 10,000 annually. While several programs only target small numbers of participants intentionally, their models are not being shared or replicated.

- **Many organizations are doing a lot more than they report**, but do not share these efforts because they do not fit into specifically funded programs. Some funders reported a lack of interest in funding dialogue programs and shared activities, yet organizations reported that funding only exists for these efforts. This leads to an ironic disparity where donors seek to support organizations doing behind-the-scenes concrete peacebuilding, yet without avenues or skills to report these efforts, the organizations who are doing this work instead report on the less-crucial dialogue and facilitation programs.
- **Peacebuilding organizations have very small budgets and minimal staff**, with 64% of organizations operating on budgets of less than \$500,000 annually and a staff of fewer than five.

### **Reported Challenges**

- **Funding** was the key challenge facing organizations, including issues related to limited resources, high dependency on individual donors, lack of operational support, and nearly no funding for programs in Jerusalem.
- **Staff** challenges included finding the right people and keeping employees committed to the field. Language and cultural barriers make the work more difficult, as does the emotional baggage of engaging daily with the other side of the conflict (especially in times of increased violence). Staff members who do stay involved long term are often organizational founders and/or have a background in the programmatic side of the work, with a commonly noted lack of managerial, financial and fundraising experience.
- **Infrastructure** issues due to the cross-border nature of the work pose significant challenges to peacebuilding. Legal entities registered in the Palestinian Authority cannot hire Israelis as employees, while Israeli entities face many legal, financial, and logistical challenges when choosing to hire Palestinians. Meeting spaces are also a major challenge, with restrictions on movement between the territories, as well as few spaces welcoming both sides.
- **Recruiting Israelis** was a commonly reported issue, due to the lack of interest or desire to engage with the conflict. As the quality of life is higher in Israeli society and more opportunities for extracurricular engagement exist, Israelis feel less affected by the conflict and less inclined to choose to engage.
- **Anti-Normalization**, defined above, has not posed a challenge to recruiting Palestinians but does inhibit Palestinians participants' ability to feel safe and comfortable. Palestinian participants reportedly feel a need to keep their involvement in peacebuilding secretive out of fear of being targeted due to normalization, making marketing nearly impossible for organizations.
- **Measuring Impact**: When asked if they measured impact in relation to a strategic plan or field wide goals, even the very few organizations who had undergone a strategic planning process admitted to never using it.

## **Key Recommendations**

We know that a strong civil society plays a meaningful role in readying societies for peace and sustaining momentum in the wake of a peace agreement. A strong constituency for peace within civil society will be built by peacebuilding organizations with the support of sound research and invested philanthropy. The first step to promoting more effective work in peacebuilding is to bring these stakeholders together as a field, share goals to create a more peaceful reality, and contribute toward the eventual peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The purpose of field building is not to force each organization or donor to follow the exact same strategy or approach; rather, to enable all parties to operate and collaborate more effectively.<sup>8</sup> While it is crucial for individual organizations and donors to have their own internal strategies including values, goals, objectives and evaluation, linking these individual strategies to a broader field-wide strategy will assure more effective operations across the board.

*Amal-Tikva recommends utilizing the techniques suggested in The Strong Field Framework as outlined below:*

- **Standards of Practice:** The field must come together to outline concrete, measurable goals relating back to a shared vision. The first step should include eliminating the zero-sum nature of the conflict: making it feel more resolvable, worth investing in, and worth participating in. The field must also invest in its human capital, creating more effective leadership and encouraging participants, volunteers, and staff to stay committed. Infrastructure must also be created to allow for smoother operations and increased program activity, such as the opening of more meeting spaces, shared offices, shared technology and equipment, and collaborative permit application support.
- **Knowledge Base:** A mechanism for translating key research into Arabic and Hebrew should be developed to make these works more accessible to civil society, and provide training and opportunities to practice key recommendations offered in the most up-to-date reports and analyses. This mechanism should also include a unified system and language for monitoring and evaluating peacebuilding programs in a way that not only responds to donors' needs, but concretely enables organizations to measure their success up to their own missions, visions, theories of change and core values.
- **Leadership and Grassroots:** Sharing models with other organizations is an excellent way to assure impactful work can be repeated at scale. When addressing challenges around recruiting program participants, it is crucial that organizations internalize, address, and relate to the power dynamics of the conflict. For Israelis, participation in peacebuilding comes at the opportunity cost of the many other types of activities they have available in society. In order to recruit Israelis to peacebuilding activities, the activity itself must be top notch simply because it is competing with so many others. When recruiting

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<sup>8</sup> The James Irvine Foundation. (2009). *The Strong Field Framework*, Focus.

Palestinian participants, supporting their struggle with anti-normalization is critical. On the one hand, providing a safe space to discuss mixed emotions is imperative. On the other hand, providing tools for discussing their choice to participate in a program that engages with Israelis is also crucial.

- ***Funding and Supporting Policy:*** Organizations and donors must demand from themselves and each other a healthy balance of private and government donations with self-generated income. We recommend that organizations constantly work off their own strategic plan, knowing what programs they wish to implement and seek funding for those. Donors should offer general support funding, or program funding for multiple years at a time, building on successes and taking risks to encourage innovation.

### **Moving forward in light of COVID-19**

Coinciding with a period of political dysfunction and immediate resource scarcity is the global crisis around the novel Coronavirus. The global economic effects have not spared the peacebuilding community, who have cut staff and programs significantly since the outbreak reached the region. Many organizations have pivoted their efforts, whether transitioning to virtual interactions, or providing emergency goods and services to populations in need. Immediate intervention in the field is critical, in order to create a highly networked and professionalized cohort to provide an important socio-political core within the cross-border community. A unique opportunity exists to strategize together as one movement and mitigate some of the dangers that will inevitably emerge in the coming months and years.

Amal-Tikva will continue to map and greater understand the long term effects of COVID-19 on the field of peacebuilding, addressing concerns around resource scarcity and program adaptations required to mitigate risk while continuing to deliver programs. We will continue to work intensively with our partners as this crisis unfolds and are committed to serving the field as well as possible.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Context

In January 2019, the field of cross-border peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians fell into crisis. Amidst rising tension and polarization in the region, a lack of political horizon for peace, and internal societal challenges such as anti-normalization, the United States government withdrew its Economic Support Funds for Palestinians, effectively ending support for cross-border peacebuilding initiatives. This funding had previously supported more than half of the field's efforts, mainly supporting organizational operations and infrastructure. Organizations implementing these US government grants had to cancel programs and cut operations overnight.

At the same time, the EU Peacebuilding Initiative as well as most other European governments and Jewish philanthropic entities focused on peacebuilding continue to deem organizations operating over the 1967 borders ineligible for support, creating a severe lack of funding for peacebuilding work that brings together Israelis and Palestinians. In the wake of this field-wide crisis, organizational leaders and private philanthropists came together to seek a new way of supporting, building, and investing in a more peaceful reality.

### B. Defining "Peacebuilding"

When a conflict is so deeply ingrained within the values, beliefs, attitudes, and patterns of behavior of two warring societies, it is important to challenge these elements to the very core. Peacebuilding is not a standalone solution to conflict or a device for the complete prevention of violence, but a context through which communities build and keep reservoirs of positive relations with each other in the face of an ongoing violent intractable conflict.<sup>9</sup>

Conflicts are considered intractable when they are long lasting, existential, violent, perceived as unsolvable, and of a zero-sum nature.<sup>10</sup> The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is unfortunately a flagship example. Peacebuilding initiatives in intractable conflicts must strive to disrupt prevailing attitudes within respective societies where each side tends to view the other side as an immediate threat to its existence. Eliminating the zero-sum nature would make the conflict feel more resolvable to donors, peacebuilders, religious and political leaders, and society at-large. This is where engagement within a peacebuilding framework comes into the picture.

We define 'peacebuilding' for the sake of this report as working to create a more peaceful reality for Palestinians and Israelis, defined by less hatred, tension, and violence, b) increased quality of life, and c) improved systems for interaction. Peacebuilding cannot merely be preparing civil society for a future political peace agreement, but rather it must include taking concrete steps to make lives better today.

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<sup>9</sup> Maoz, Ifat. "Peace Building in Violent Conflict: Israeli-Palestinian Post-Oslo People-to-People Activities." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 17.3 (2003): 563-74.

<sup>10</sup> Bar-Tal, Daniel, and Yigal Rosen. "Peace Education in Societies Involved in Intractable Conflicts: Direct and Indirect Models." *Review of Educational Research* 79.2 (2009): 557.

Peacebuilding cannot wait for an encouraging political horizon, but instead must focus on breaking the intractable nature of this conflict down into more manageable parts, and tackling each of those parts one by one.

According to a 2018 report by Dr. Khalil Shikaki of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, the public is not an obstacle to peace on either side, yet the Israeli and Palestinian publics are also not driving forces for peace, either. “The people are not taking the lead to demand progress from their leaders. Public opinion in both Palestine and Israel is therefore not an impediment to an agreement but it will not drive one forward without a significant change of circumstances.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, change is only possible through peacebuilding work at all levels of society. Nonetheless Shikaki’s most recent findings indicate that more than 80% of the public believe that latest American proposed peace plan (officially titled “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People, known commonly as President Trump’s “Deal of the Century”) has returned the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to its existential roots, furthering the intractable nature of the conflict.<sup>12</sup>

From another angle, Dr. Micah Goodman states that most Israelis and Palestinians he has encountered fall into two categories: Either they believe that the conflict can be solved with extraordinary risks and costs, or they believe that the conflict can be managed and the status quo sustained indefinitely. Goodman proposes a third option of gradually shrinking the conflict, with the hope that as the pieces of the conflict get solved gradually, the bigger picture elements will become more solvable.<sup>13</sup>

Taken individually, neither Shikaki nor Goodman’s perspectives offer particularly ambitious or groundbreaking insight on the possibility of peace in the near future. Taken together however, they determine that society could be convinced that peace is possible and that they are open to creative solutions. Peacebuilding initiatives therefore should focus on inspiring Palestinians and Israelis to believe that conflict resolution is possible and show them that peace is possible by eliminating tangible elements of the conflict bit by bit. As peacebuilding initiatives succeed in this plan, peace will feel more achievable and therefore become more achievable. Civil society organizations in partnership with leading philanthropists have the power to make this happen, they just need the support and context within which to coordinate strategically as a field.

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<sup>11</sup>Shikaki, K., & Scheindlin, D. (2018). *Role of Public Opinion in the Resilience/Resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (Final Report). Ramallah: The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), Tel Aviv: Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University.

<sup>12</sup> Shikaki, K. (2020). *Public Opinion Poll* (No. 75). Ramallah: The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR).

<sup>13</sup> Goodman, M. (2019, April 1). Eight Steps to Shrink the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/04/eight-steps-shrink-israeli-palestinian-conflict/585964/>

## II. RESEARCH PROCESS

### A. Data Collection

The data examined in this report stems from a comprehensive mapping that included:

- Interviews with leaders of 52 Israeli and Palestinian NGOs
- Meetings with 23 philanthropic entities considering funding these NGOs
- Interviews with 4 convening/umbrella organizations
- 1 roundtable discussion with 23 philanthropic entities

Anecdotal testimonies were coded and reviewed by third-party experts, and cross-analyzed for the purpose of noting trends. Advisors then guided the research team in analyzing results and examining trends.

### B. Guiding Questions

Before setting a plan for data collection, overall questions and concepts that the needs assessment sought to explore were defined:

1. Participation and Recruitment
  - a. Who are the field's direct beneficiaries?
  - b. What methods are used for recruiting and marketing? What criteria are used to decide how and why participants are accepted or declined?
  - c. What are the retention rates? Why do participants join, stay and leave?
  - d. What training and development opportunities are offered? What social inclusion/discrepancies exist and how do organizations manage this?
  - e. Who leads peacebuilding and why?
2. Organizational Structures
  - a. How many organizations are doing cross-border peacebuilding now?
  - b. How long have organizations operated and how are they registered?
  - c. Are they registered in Israel, the Palestinian Authority, or abroad?
  - d. Where do they work, and who do they engage?
  - e. How are staffing structures and accountabilities managed cross-border?
  - f. Mapping of organizational sizes as they relate to: budgets, funding, programs, participants, staff, volunteers, alumni, scope, etc.
3. Funding
  - a. Who currently gives in this field? How much? Why? Who gives to programs and who gives to general support?
  - b. Who is considering giving and what would make the difference?
  - c. Who used to give in this field and stopped? Why?
4. Finances
  - a. Evaluation of financial structures, systems of internal controls.
  - b. How are cross-border aspects of the work addressed from HR, financial, and insurance perspectives?
  - c. Are the organizations financially sustainable? If not, what would it take to make them sustainable?

### C. Mapping Organizational Needs

The first step in mapping the cross-border organizations working with Israelis and Palestinians was to precisely define the types of groups to be included. In line with our definition of peacebuilding, the mapping includes NGOs who are currently working to create a more peaceful reality for Palestinians and Israelis, defined by a) less hatred, tension, and violence, b) increased quality of life, and c) improved systems for interaction.

This report includes organizations that focus on civic engagement, environmental and agricultural collaborative efforts, and track II diplomacy. This report does not include organizations no longer working on cross-border projects, organizations focused solely on advocacy or human rights, or organizations that are working solely within their own societies. The next step was to find all of the organizations who meet this established definition and to meet them. At each meeting, the interviewees were asked if they knew of NGOs missing from the list.

#### Organizations Mapped (52)

0202 - Points of View from Jerusalem	Madrassa
50 50 Startups	MEET: Middle East Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow
A Land for All	Merkaz Ata
Abrahamic Reunion	Morashtenu
Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace	Mosaica
Arava Institute for Environmental Studies	Musalaha – Ministry of Reconciliation
Artsbridge Institute	Neve Shalom: Oasis of Peace - Wahat al-Salam
Climb4Change	NGO - (Name available upon request)
Combatants for Peace	Other Voice
Comet-ME	Palestinian Peace Coalition
Creativity for Peace	Palestinian Shippers Council
EcoPeace Middle East	Pathways Institute for Negotiation Education
El Hawakeer	PeacePlayers International
Encompass – Daniel Braden Reconciliation Trust	Peres Center for Peace and Innovation
Hands of Peace	Road to Recovery
Institute for Zionist Strategies	Roots/Judur/Shorashim
Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development	Runners Without Borders
Interfaith Encounter Association	Salamatkom



IPCRI: Center for Regional Initiatives	Seeds of Peace
Jerusalem American School	Siach Shalom
Jerusalem International YMCA	Tech2Peace
Jerusalem Youth Chorus	The Gaza Youth Committee
Kids4Peace	The Jerusalem Intercultural Center
Kulna Jerusalem	The Jerusalem Model
Life Pulse	The Parents Circle – Families Forum
Lissan	Willy Brandt Center Jerusalem

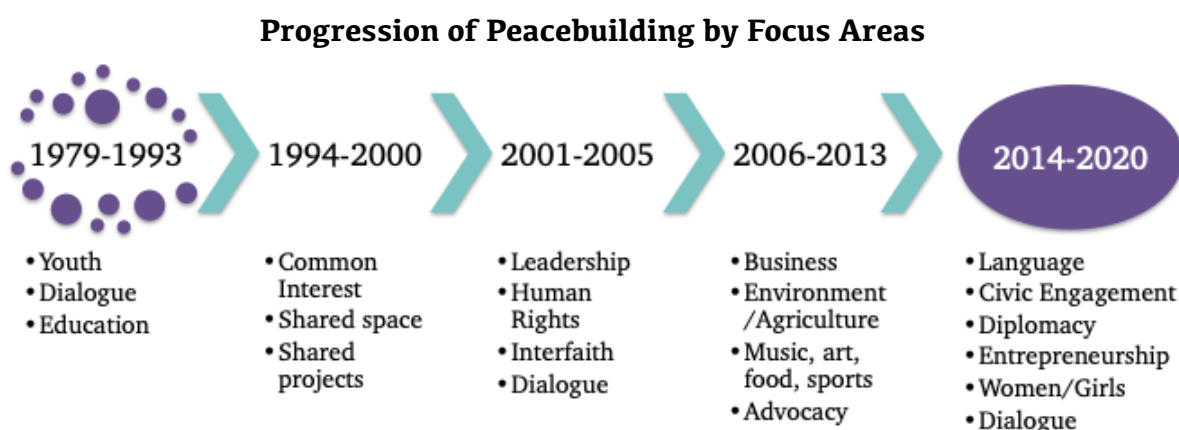
#### D. Limitations/Challenges

The data collected for this report is anecdotal, as the answers from each organization were given by the local directors with whom we met. Moreover, while the organizational list is both comprehensive and representative, it is possible that organizations exist that were not included in the mapping. Input and additions are welcome where warranted.<sup>14</sup>

### III. FINDINGS

#### A. Historical Trends

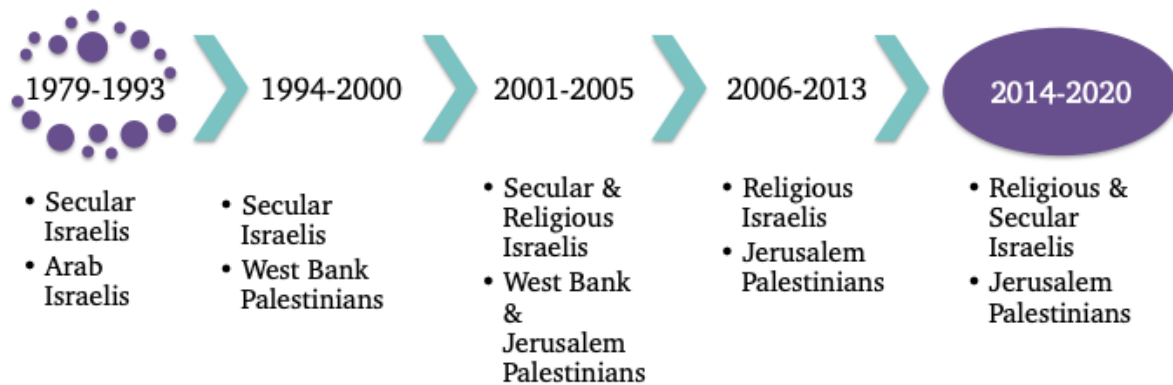
When looking at the years that the organizations surveyed were founded, significant trends correlating were discerned directly to historical periods within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This was reflected primarily with regard to program focus areas during each of these different periods, as well as to organizational leadership.



<sup>14</sup> Of the 72 organizations ultimately contacted:

- 2 declined the request to meet and participate in the process.
- 7 did not succeed in scheduling meetings.
- 4 were separated out as “conveners” or “umbrella organizations”.
- 3 informal projects shared their experiences but were not included in the mapping.
- 4 who recently closed shared their lessons learned but were not included in the mapping.
-

## Progression of Peacebuilding Leadership



### Pre-Oslo Accords, 1979-1993

The seven still-functioning cross-border organizations founded before the Oslo Accords focus primarily on the areas of youth development, intergroup dialogue, and education. They teach facilitation skills, develop models for facilitation, and facilitate dialogue groups. Organizations founded during this era are predominantly led by Palestinian citizens of Israel and secular Jewish Israelis. Many organizations founded after 1993 also utilize dialogue and facilitation as key elements of their work, but not as the main element. As one organizational leader stated, “Dialogue is how we meet and make the relationships initially, but the real trust comes in using those relationships to get concrete work done. Dialogue makes the introduction, and then the real trust-building is through action.”

### Between the Oslo Accords and the Second Intifada, 1994-2000

In the post-Oslo era with a feeling on all sides of an inevitable peace, peacebuilding programs focused on common interest areas such as joint projects and shared spaces. “It felt so clear that peace will be soon,” said another organisational leader. “I wanted to get involved in the details that were needed to get to that peace.”

Very few organizations founded during this period still exist today, with only five remaining and representing less than 10% of currently active organizations. Two of the largest remaining organizations focus on issues related to environmental peace. As opposed to other policy-related issues in the post-Oslo era, the environment continues to be a shared resource that requires close coordination from both sides. Nearly all organizations founded during this era are led by Israelis.

### Second Intifada, 2000-2005

When the Second Intifada broke out, peacebuilding work shifted dramatically in response. For the following five years, peacebuilding took on a more urgent energy, with a focus on human rights, training and empowering leaders, and backchannels of track II diplomacy. This era also witnessed an influx in interfaith programs, where religion could offer a language for shared interaction. Interfaith dialogue allows for interconnectedness during trying times, including trauma-processing and community building at the grassroots, youth, and clergy levels. While interfaith dialogue does not focus on individuals seeking political agreements, one director of an interfaith

organization explained in his interview that “interfaith work trains them to have relationships with people they totally disagree with, which sets the ground for lasting peaceful relations.”

Recruitment language for these organizations often focuses on urgency, mutual responsibility, and common values. Organizations founded during this era were and are largely led by a mix of Jerusalem Palestinians and Palestinians from the West Bank on the Palestinian side, and both religious and secular Jewish Israelis on the Israeli side. Organizations founded during this period account for 25% of currently active organizations, and many have grown to become leaders in the field today.

### **Post-Second Intifada, 2006-2013**

As violence from the Second Intifada subsided significantly, the following era saw engagement through mutually-beneficial projects. Organizations founded during this period account for 31% of currently active organizations, with a major focus on youth and student target groups. Many of these efforts are skill-building endeavors, agricultural partnerships, and youth programs focused on extra-curricular activities. Recruitment language for these organizations often focuses on peace, friendship, and reconciliation. The leadership, as demonstrated in the chart above, is varied.

### **2014: Critical turning point for peacebuilding (Post-Gaza War, 2014-2020)**

Peacebuilding as a field saw a dramatic shift in both Israeli and Palestinian societies in 2014 after the kidnapping and murder of the three Israeli Jewish boys Naftali Frenkel, Gilad Shaer, and Eyal Yifrah; the subsequent kidnapping and murder of the Palestinian Muslim boy Mohammed Abu Khdeir; and the 2014 War in Gaza (known in Israel as Operation Protective Edge). Existing programs faced an existential crisis, while new programs were formed more out of curiosity or pragmatism than optimism. With the failure of the Kerry peace talks just prior, an extremely violent war, and a depressed general public, members of Israeli and Palestinian societies who previously never saw peacebuilding as a credible alternative to violence suddenly started to consider engaging the enemy out of despair.

“If we realize that the Palestinians aren’t going anywhere, then we must build trust, decrease alienation, and learn to work together” stated an organizational CEO who defines herself as a “Religious Zionist”, and the NGO she leads as “right-wing”. While she has faced criticism from some peers and donors in the field, her work highlights a trend in of unlikely players joining peacebuilding work, albeit from different angles and with varied agendas. The organization she represents was founded as a right-wing think tank, but has evolved since 2014 to focus solely on issues around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

At first, the newly sparked interest in peacebuilding after the difficult summer of 2014 led to a growing engagement among new populations with the organizations that already existed. These organizations suddenly found themselves having to manage new challenges in welcoming previously untapped audiences, such as accommodating religious Jewish observances as more

Religious Zionists registered for peacebuilding programs, and increased challenges around movement and access as Palestinians from areas under Israeli military control sought to participate as well. It is important to note that this influx of historically conservative groups occurred on both sides, with religious Zionist Israelis and more traditional and religious Palestinians joining peacebuilding efforts for very different reasons than their less traditional, left-wing peers. The values, curiosity, and general reason for engagement has made some of the more old-school peacebuilding leadership uncomfortable. Some organizations from these earlier eras have adjusted their program content and application processes to welcome and accommodate these new populations, while others intentionally try to keep these populations away.

As participation in peacebuilding became more prominent in these previously unengaged populations (especially in Jerusalem), new organizations sprang up reflecting a significant shift from traditional peacebuilding, notably that:

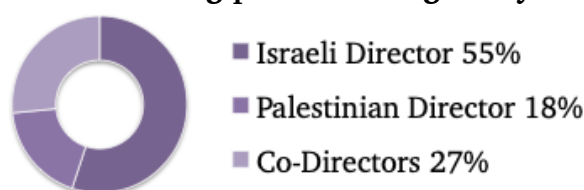
- 100% of Palestinian directors in this era are Jerusalemites.
- 91% of the NGOs are registered in and primarily operate in Jerusalem.
- 82% mainly or solely target young professionals.
- 63% focus on language, technology and entrepreneurship .
  - 36% focus on language via language lessons, exchange, or translation
  - 27% focus on technology and entrepreneurship

Programmatically, peacebuilding efforts have adapted over time as target populations have expanded, with a major focus on language, technology and entrepreneurship. This trend shows that peacebuilding has evolved from the traditional methods of discussing the conflict and sharing stories via formal dialogue and facilitation, to engaging in concrete skill building that enables real, day-to-day shared life together. Recruitment strategies for organizations have adapted accordingly during this time, from a language of peace, friendship and reconciliation to one of curiosity, learning, partnership, and engaging with reality.

### **B. Leadership**

Leadership in peacebuilding organizations today is overwhelmingly Israeli Jewish. While many organizations ultimately report to an international CEO or Executive Director who sits in the United States, Europe, or Australia, 55% of the managing directors are Israeli Jews. Though 45% of the organizations do have Palestinian leadership, only 18% of the Palestinian directors manage alone while 27% of the organizations report the use of a shared leadership model. This means that 82% of organizations have an Israeli director, whether alone or in a co-leadership model.

**Who is leading peacebuilding today?**



**Shared leadership models**, referred to as “co-directors,” account for about 27% of the organizations surveyed. The co-director concept can be used in various contexts:

- a. Binational co-directors: one Israeli director and one Palestinian director;
- b. Interfaith co-directors: one Jewish, one Christian, one Muslim director
- c. Multiple co-directors: one Israeli Jewish director, one Palestinian citizen of Israel, and one Palestinian director from the West Bank

**On the Israeli side** there is a common assumption that secular left-wing Israelis from the center of the country are the only Jews involved in peacebuilding. More than half of the Jewish Israeli leaders, however, are from Jerusalem, with 30% from the Tel-Aviv area and the rest scattered throughout the country. Moreover, 60% of the Jewish leadership self-identify as religious, 30% as secular, and 10% as traditional. Men comprise 60% of Israeli directors and women serve as 40% of directors.

**On the Palestinian side** there is a common assumption that Palestinian citizens of Israel are the only Palestinians involved in peacebuilding, with challenges such as movement between Israel and the West Bank, BDS, and normalization presenting obstacles to West Bank and Jerusalem Palestinian leadership. While Palestinian citizens of Israel lead many “shared society” organizations, which work on Jewish-Arab relations and Arab rights inside Israel, they are not leading cross-border work today. Of the organizational leadership surveyed, 50% of the Palestinian directors are Jerusalem residents, 42% are from throughout the West Bank (Ramallah - 4, Bethlehem - 2, Tul Karem - 2, Hebron - 1, Jericho - 1); 4% are from Gaza, and 4% are from inside Israel. The line between religious and secular Palestinians is less definable. The Palestinian directors are evenly split between males and females.

### **How is the staff divided?**

With significantly more Israelis in managerial roles, the gap for general staff is lower:

- 40% of organizations have mostly Israelis on staff
- 37% of organizations have mostly Palestinians on staff
- 23% of organizations have about an equally mixed staff

It is important to note, however, that many organizations are highly dependent on volunteers and/or part time and adhoc employees who were not surveyed.

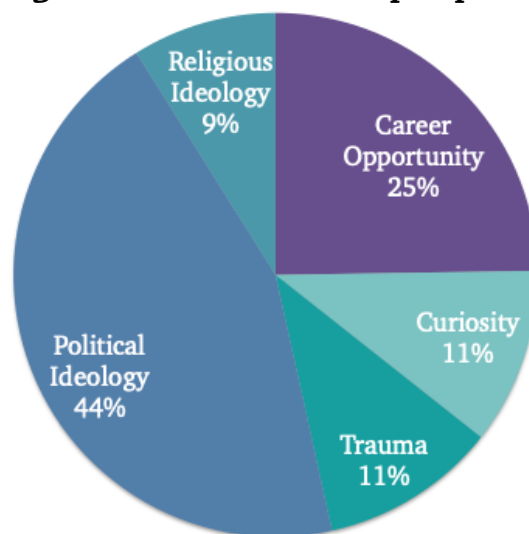
### **Why do the organizational leaders join peacebuilding?**

With a diverse breakdown in leadership as noted above, it is no wonder that the leadership also join peacebuilding work for very diverse reasons. As seen below, 44% of the peacebuilding leadership reported joining the field due to political ideology, whether right-wing or left wing. These leaders were generally interested in the conflict element of the work, often coming to the work as program staff and working their way up to organizational leadership roles. Among those individuals who joined the field for career opportunities, they usually studied or worked in a field related to the program model, whether it be technology-related, agriculture, education, music

or tourism. The conflict element of the work may have become important only later in their career.

About 11% of the organizational leaders report joining the field after a life-altering traumatic experience. Usually these leaders are former soldiers or combatants with violent experiences or individuals who suffered loss of family members due to the conflict. Those joining out of curiosity were also about 11%, including people who did so upon the suggestion of a friend. The smallest group, the 9%, are leaders who joined the field due to religious ideology, are religious Israeli Jews largely driven by the teachings of and personal contact with religious Jewish peace leaders such as Rabbi Menachem Froman.

### What brings the current leadership to peacebuilding?



### Board Involvement

When discussing decision-making, authority and responsibility, many organizations spoke about the role of their boards. Peacebuilding NGOs face the challenges of any NGO and broadly vary in terms of their board members' professionalism and experience with civil society, with some organizations run by founder/owner board members, while others throw together a few friends simply expected to sign the paperwork. Eighty-seven percent of the organizations gave answers to the role that their board plays in the organization, divided as follows:

- Purely fundraising board: 14%
- Fundraising and governing board: 35%
- Purely governing board: 20%
- Rubber stamp board: 21%

### C. Target Audiences

As mentioned above in the study by Khalil's Shikaki's report from the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, the Palestinian and Israeli publics may not be actively advocating for peace, but overwhelming majorities would favor it. In June 2018, only about 27% of Palestinians and 20% of Israelis report a preference for

violent measures as the preferred means of changing the status quo,<sup>15</sup> (The Palestinian public was polled again on this question in 2020 and the number jumped to 45%<sup>16</sup>.) These findings can serve to help encourage and guide peacebuilding organizations in their recruitment language and choice of target audience.

Nearly three quarters of the organizations surveyed consider students and/or young professionals, youth and/or children, as their target populations. Of the 26% of organizations who do not focus on those populations, the vast majority were founded between 2004 and 2016. Nearly all organizations whose primary target audience is high level religious or political leaders were founded between 2004 and 2012.

The following pertains to non-exclusive target audiences of the 52 organizations surveyed::

- 26 target students & young professionals
- 24 target youth and children
- 18 target grassroots/general public
- 13 target women and girls
- 10 target government agencies
- 10 target political leaders
- 8 target educators
- 7 target religious leaders
- 5 target farmers

### **How many organizations offer multiple levels of participant engagement?**

Of the 52 organizations surveyed, 31 organizations target more than one audience, and 16 organizations target three or more audiences. The most common areas of overlap are with organizations that have programs for students and young professionals as well as for youth and children. Another commonly paired target audience are government agencies and political leaders. There were no other common trends regarding multiple target audiences.

### **How many overall participants are being reached each year?**

When organizations were asked how many participants they reach annually, most responded that it is impossible to know or impossible to measure. Despite these challenges, we felt it important to gather their estimates. Based on the estimates, approximately 322,000 people participate in peacebuilding programs annually, at an average of 6,428 per organization. Of that number, approximately 234,000 of the participants are from Jerusalem, accounting for 73% of program participants.

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<sup>15</sup>Shikaki, K., & Scheindlin, D. (2018). *Role of Public Opinion in the Resilience/Resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (Final Report). Ramallah: The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR).

<sup>16</sup>Shikaki, K. (2020). *Public Opinion Poll* (No. 75). Ramallah: The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR).

### How many participants do the organizations reach annually?

# Annual Participants	# NGOs
Less than 100	6
100 - 999	20
1,000 - 10,000	21
More than 10,000	5

### Who are the Palestinian participants?

Thirty-eight organizations, accounting for 73% of cross-border organizations, target Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. Thirty-four organizations target Palestinians from the West Bank, while nine target Palestinians from Gaza. Most organizations have multiple target audiences throughout Palestinian society as demonstrated in the table below.

### Where are Palestinian participants from?

East Jerusalem (EJ)	West Bank	Gaza	EJ & West Bank	EJ & West Bank & Gaza	West Bank & Gaza
16	8	1	18	4	4

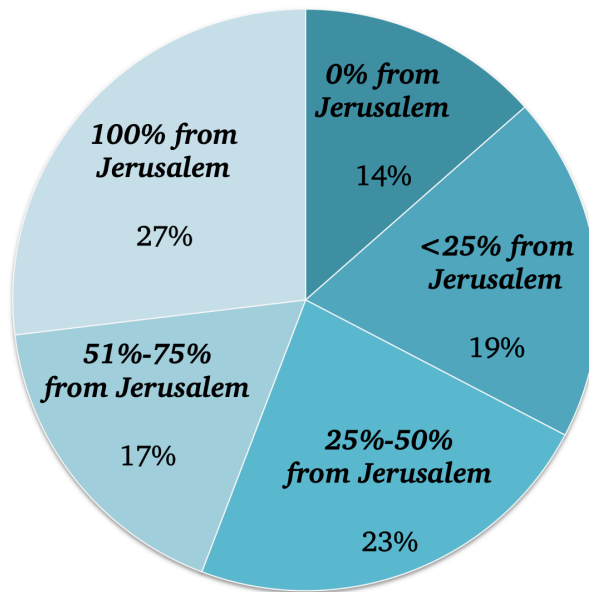
### Jerusalem's participant rate

While societally on a broad scale the 322,000 participants account for less than 4% of Israeli and Palestinian society, the Jerusalem percentage is actually reaching a critical mass. This makes sense with the findings mentioned above that the city serves as the locus or city of origin for 73% of all program participants, 76% of organizational activities, and 60% of registered organizations.

Jerusalem's total participation is estimated to be around 920,000 people, meaning that 25% of Jerusalem's population are in some way involved in a peacebuilding program. This percentage however does not account for individuals participating in more than one peace program, a statistic which would be crucial to identifying participation in peacebuilding as a percent of the overall population.



### Program Participants from Jerusalem

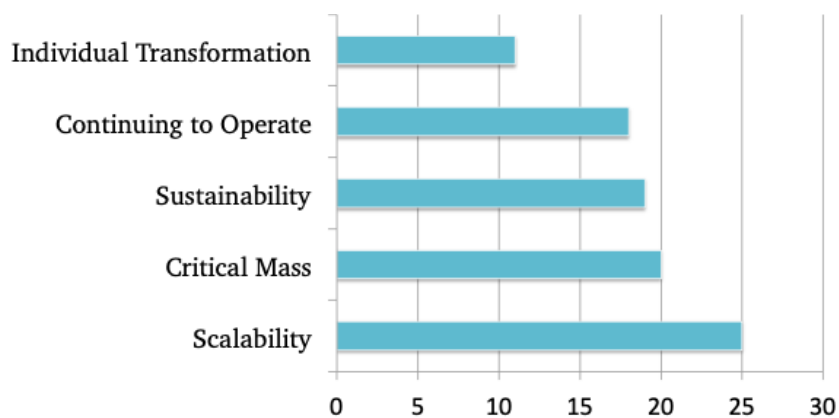


#### D. Models and theories of change

##### Defining Success

Peacebuilding work is commonly misunderstood to only represent programs that focus exclusively on dialogue, bringing people from conflicting sides together in an effort to broaden perspectives on the ‘other’. Known as contact hypothesis, this does frequently occur in programs but studies have shown that is not enough to change the reality. A key indicator of success for contact hypothesis is individual transformation, or attitudinal change. When the organizations were asked how they define success, only 11 organizations mentioned individual transformation as a main indicator. Alternatively, 25 organizations listed the ability to scale their programs as their main indicator of success, and another 20 chose reaching a critical mass (which would indicate that the project did scale).

#### How do the organizations define success?<sup>17</sup>



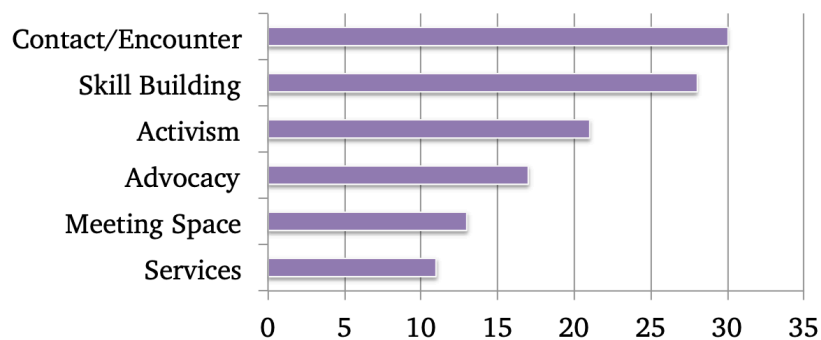
<sup>17</sup> “Sustainability” and “continuing to operate” were coded separately although they have similar goals. The organizations that had no intention of growing or scaling their work, but wanted to maintain the same level of activity were listed as “continuing to operate.” Those seeking to develop a model of financial and program sustainability as a base for growth and scale were counted within “sustainability”.

### Program models and activities

Contact/Encounter, the largest category as a main model of interaction, was listed as a key priority by 30 organizations. Of those 30 however, only 5 listed contact/encounter as the sole model of interaction while the remaining 25 were combined with a mix of the other models of interaction. Contact/Encounter theory has become less popular over time, as organizations have come to realize that facilitating dialogue among opposite sides of a conflict is not enough in and of itself. Skill building, the second largest category, refers to organizations focusing on teaching language, entrepreneurship, technology or other concrete skills in a cross-border context, many of which also provide opportunities for practice and the creation of new initiatives.

In terms of the other categories, activism refers to creating and jointly implementing initiatives such as educational programs, agricultural collaboration, emergency response projects, and others. Advocacy is a model where Israelis and Palestinians work together to further specific agendas, whether that be a particular political solution, human rights, institutional improvements or specific policies. Meeting spaces refer to physical spaces where organizations are enabling interactions that would not otherwise occur or would be negative. Lastly, services refer to organizations that are providing specific services around improving quality of life and improving systems of interaction. While some of these services have a human rights element to the work, this does not include distributing goods or engaging in legal battles with government authorities, rather assisting with actualizing rights due to cross-border related challenges and disseminating proper information.

**Models of interaction\***



*\*organizations selected more than one model of interaction*

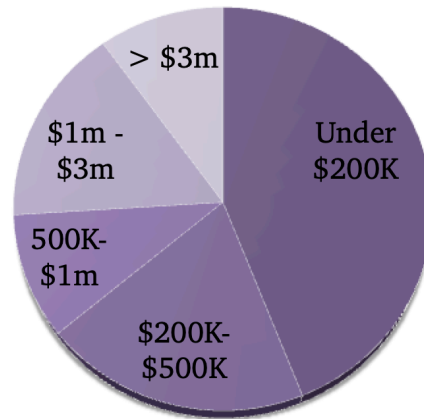
### **E. Organizational Size**

#### **Budget sizes:**

It is important to note that 64% of organizations in this field operate with budgets of less than \$500,000 annually. There is a direct correlation between how long an organization has existed and how large it is, with older organizations typically having significantly larger budgets than the newer organizations. Organizations with budgets between \$700,000 and \$1.5million report that they had been operating at this size for many years, having oscillated between the low and high end of these amounts, and find difficulty in moving to the next bracket. The organizations with the top three

highest budgets also have the highest percentages of income-generation within their own budgets.

### Average Organizational Budget Sizes

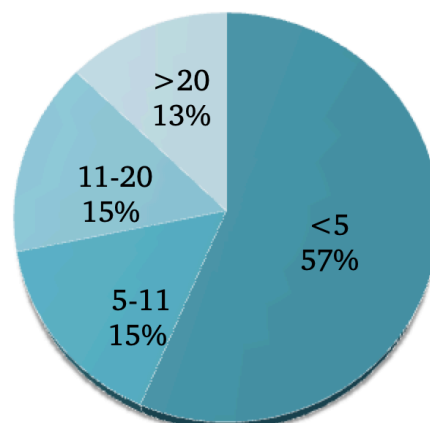


### Staff Sizes:

Before the effects of COVID-19 on the economy forced organizations to dramatically cut down their personnel, more than half of the organizations in the field already had fewer than five staff members. Now with a significant percentage of the organizations placing employees on unpaid leave, the organizations are operating with significantly fewer personnel.

The chart below shows that 13% of organizations have over 20 employees, 15% have 11-20 employees, 15% have 5-11 employees and 57% have fewer than 5 employees. What the chart does not show is the extremely high number of regular volunteers per organization, ranging on average from 15 to several hundred.

### Average Organizational Staff Sizes



### F. Challenges

Various needs assessments of this field, such as those mentioned above, lay out organizational challenges as perceived by the researchers. We felt it was important to

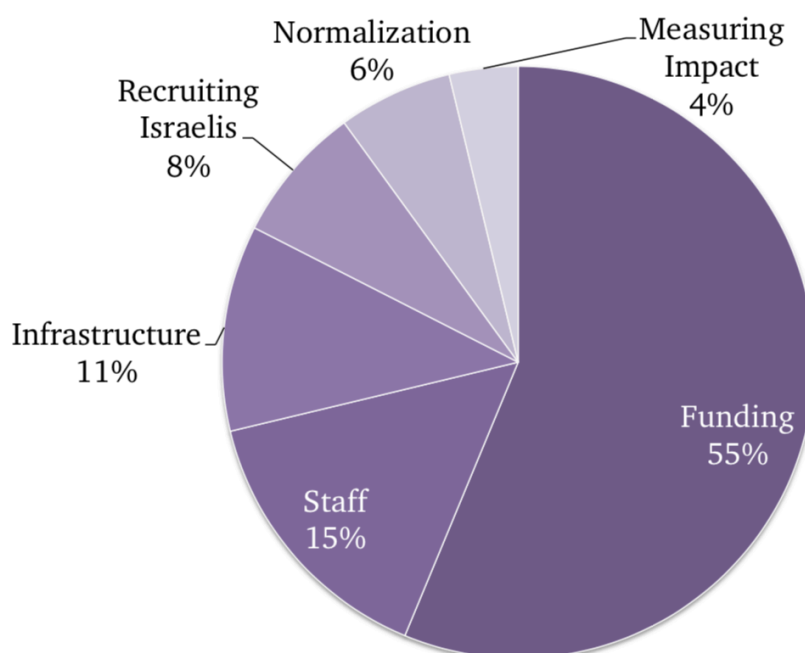
ask the organizations themselves to identify some of their largest organizational challenges. The percentages in the chart below reflect the percentages of the answers, not the percentages of organizations who chose these answers. The organizations listed many challenges and issues anecdotally, which we coded in the following categories:

### 1. Funding:

It is important to note that 47 of the 52 organizations surveyed listed funding concerns as a key issue. This accounts for 90% of the organizations surveyed, and 55% of the total answers they provided regarding their challenges. In January 2019 23 organizations lost USAID funding in the middle of a grant, which was covering an average of 40% of operation costs. While a few of the larger Israeli organizations (over \$2 million budget) were able to recover the funding from other sources, the new funding was restricted and did not permit activity with Palestinians. Seventy-eight % of organizations reported that one donor (most often a specific European government or large private foundation) provided very significant percentages of their budget (more than 20% at minimum, and as high as 85%). Dependency on foreign government funding requires constant measurements of success in alignment with foreign policy agendas rather than each organization’s own strategy. Additionally, this sort of donor-NGO relationship causes unhealthy dependency and puts organizations in financially dangerous positions when a donor decides to change direction.

The funding itself is also often sporadic, or severely limited. Many organizations report that much of their funding is for short term grants that are strictly tied to very specific programs. Funders commonly restrict the amount of personnel and overhead funding that an organization may charge to these grants, forcing organizations to seek out enough programmatic grants that can cover 100% of personnel and overhead, without the capacity to implement all programs most effectively.

**What do organizations refer to as their “biggest challenges”?**



In two-thirds of the organizations, the directors or CEO are mainly responsible for fundraising, with 15% receiving help from their board members and 13% having support from a fundraising professional. In the other third of the organizations, fundraising responsibilities lie heavily among the board, development professionals, project managers, and/or on income-generating programs.

The location of Jerusalem presents a complex issue in terms of fundraising. The EU Peacebuilding Initiative as well as most other European governments and Jewish philanthropic entities focused on peacebuilding continue to often deem Israeli organizations operating in East Jerusalem ineligible for support because they do not fund across the 1967 borders. This leaves a dearth of support for peacebuilding bringing together Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem, where more than 76% of activities happen and over 60% of organizations are registered.

## **2. Staff Challenges:**

Fifteen percent of organizations list staffing as a key issue they struggle with as an NGO<sup>18</sup>, including:

### **Recruiting and retaining the right people:**

With all of the sensitive issues around cross-border work, finding dedicated staff members with the required qualifications poses a challenge to many organizations. This makes the cultivation of sustainable leadership even more difficult, with minimal opportunities for mid-level staff to grow into leadership positions. On the Israeli side, founder/owner directors often manage their organizations until retirement, at which point they often close down their non-profit organizations gradually. On the Palestinian side, young and eager professionals join the field during or immediately post-university, with a common drop-off point after five years of engagement. The dearth of professional development opportunities and continued lack of funding make it all the more difficult to keep young professionals engaged in the field long-term.

### **Language:**

Another key challenge with staffing is organizational communication amidst such diversity. Many organizations find it unrealistic to demand that all staff members speak Hebrew and Arabic fluently and so it is common to operate in English as a neutral language. Unfortunately this poses the additional challenge of many or all key staff members operating in their second, third or fourth language. Several cross-border organizations operating in Israel only work with Palestinians who speak Hebrew if their Israeli counterparts do not speak English well. In all of these cases, linguistic challenges highly limit the pool of potential employees to very specific sectors of society. One model employed is partner-organizations, where the cross-border work is done as a partnership of two separate entities or offices, one sitting in the West Bank and operating in Arabic, with the other sitting in Israel and operating

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<sup>18</sup> When digging deeper into the issue, we removed funding for staff from this category and moved those answers into the fundraising statistic in section 3.F.1.

in Hebrew. Yet the majority of organizations however, 60% are registered in Jerusalem, the home of cross-border work, specifically so that both sides can sit and work together. , and they regularly cope with limitations when there is not a shared language.

**Administrative support:**

Of the staff who do stay committed to the field over time, nearly all come from the programmatic side of the work with minimal experience in the administrative or managerial side of the organization. The complicated and sensitive issues around human resources, finances, insurance, and other administrative concerns in any NGO are exacerbated in cross-border work. The lack of expertise in this field drains energy, time, and resources from directors and board members who are forced to navigate these issues alone.

**Burnout:** While only 15% listed this as a key challenge in response to that direct question, it is important to note that the struggles of working in the field of peacebuilding where all local staff members are members of one side of the conflict came up in 100% of interviews with the organizations surveyed.

**3. Infrastructure and Security Restrictions:**

Cross-border meetings between Israelis and Palestinians require constant negotiation of issues relating to movement and access. Palestinians from the West Bank who hold a “green ID” or Palestinian national identity card, require special permission from COGAT, the Israeli Civil Administration in order to enter Israel. This process for applying for and receiving these permits is known to change regularly, is often inconsistent with its own policies, and usually undependable. There have been attempts in the past for organizations to work together to lobby for more permits for peacebuilding organizations, although with little success. This makes programs bringing Palestinians into Israel very unreliable.

Israelis are also technically restricted from entering certain areas within the Palestinian Authority without special permission and prior coordination with the IDF Homefront Command. While the process for applying for permits is more simple for Israelis, replies are sporadic, inconsistent, and last minute. This makes programs bringing Israelis into Palestinian areas very unreliable as well.

There are areas in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that are legally accessible to nearly all Israelis and Palestinians. Unfortunately there are very few meeting spaces that are comfortable and provide easy access to both Israelis and Palestinians even in these areas. Due to all of the challenging logistics around bringing Israelis and Palestinians together within Israel or the Palestinian Authority, many programs find it more manageable to run programs abroad and spend their efforts raising significant funds for flights. This however requires very time-consuming work around visas and travel logistics for the many types of participants, much higher participation costs, and much less frequent interaction.

### **Employing across the border:**

Another major infrastructural challenge to cross-border work is how legal entities registered in Israel or the Palestinian Authority can work in a cross-border capacity. Palestinian registered NGOs cannot hire Israeli employees, for example. Israeli organizations may employ Palestinians as workers, but they pay foreign employee fees, such as an income tax charge that is 20% higher than for Israelis. Even when an Israeli organization has the budget available to make that employment choice, sending payments between Israeli and Palestinian banks poses unique challenges on a month to month basis. Certain Israeli banks do not allow any transfers to Palestinian banks, while some Palestinian banks do not allow accounts to receive funds from Israel. The banks on both sides that do allow the transfers are often subject to extreme audits from the relevant authorities within each government, causing occasional bank account freezes, delays of funds, and bounced checks.

Another challenge to Israeli organizations hiring Palestinian employees is paying their pensions and insurance. Israeli employers are required by law to deduct for pensions to foreign employees (Palestinian employees included), but the insurance companies generally do not offer these policies to foreigners or Palestinians. Even the few companies that do offer policies often cannot find a legal way to pay out the accumulated savings to the Palestinians wishing to close their accounts when employment circumstances change.

### **Legal Registration**

Registering as a cross-border peacebuilding organization present legal challenges for organizations on both sides. Laws within each side's ministries that oversee non-profit organizations pose unique challenges to peacebuilding organizations such as additional audits, additional paperwork for financial transactions, and frequent freezing of assets during these audits. Opening an NGO with the Palestinian can take up to a year, with frequent rejections to an organization seen as normalizing with Israel or partnering with Israelis. For Palestinian NGOs that do succeed in registering, each and every financial transaction they make then needs to be pre-approved by the Palestinian Ministry of Finance in order for bank to allow it to go through. This sort of bureaucracy places a huge strain on daily operations.

Organizations operating in Gaza face even bigger challenges . Financial transfers to Gaza are monitored by Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. These organizations also have extreme difficulty achieving NGO status in the Palestinian Authority and receiving donations at all, let alone those that have Israeli or Jewish partnerships.

### **Operating in Gaza**

At the time of writing this report, seven activists from the Gaza Youth Committee, one of the surveyed NGOs in this report, are illegally jailed by Hamas for the "crime" of speaking to Israelis on a Zoom call. According to Human Rights Watch, Hamas publicly stated that they arrested the Gaza Youth Committee staff for holding a "normalization" activity. Hamas outlawed all social, cultural, political, economic,

sporting, or other activities with Israelis and routinely arbitrarily arrest and torture critics and opponents.

#### **4. Recruiting Israelis:**

As with staffing, language and culture within peacebuilding programs has a large effect on Israeli participation. Many organizations find it unrealistic to demand that participants speak Hebrew and Arabic fluently and so it is common to operate in English as a neutral language. Unfortunately this poses a challenge because Israeli youth (anecdotally) do not typically have as high English language proficiency in comparison to their Palestinian peers, and are often less comfortable being the linguistic minority.

While in Palestinian society there are (anecdotally) minimal opportunities for after-school programs and extracurricular activities, Israeli society has the opposite problem. Israeli youth and young professionals have a plethora of opportunities, and will likely only join a peacebuilding program if it is indeed the best-in class for its field. For example, the executive director of one organization explained that they realized that in order to recruit Israeli participants in their sports programs, they must not only offer high-level dialogue and peacebuilding curriculum but serve as the most competitive league as well. “Our success has won us accolades, increased visibility, and helped us earn the legitimacy from the community at large, even the skeptics. Everyone knows who we are and what we stand for, and they respect us because we are good.” she said.

Organizational leaders discussed at length an additional challenge of engaging Israelis due to the lack of interest or desire to engage with the conflict at all. As the quality of life is higher in Israeli society (at-large) and more opportunities for extracurricular engagement exist, Israelis feel less affected by the conflict and in general, less inclined to choose to engage with its complexity.

#### **5. Anti-Normalization:**

As outlined above, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) defines normalization as “the participation in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians [...] and Israelis (people or institutions) without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people.”<sup>19</sup> This has led to the creation of the anti-normalization and BDS movement defined on page 2.

The anti-normalization movement does not seem to pose a barrier to recruitment, but the challenge is in helping Palestinian participants feel safe and comfortable participating without being challenged or attacked by friends or families involved with the anti-normalization movement. Additionally, Palestinian participants in

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<sup>19</sup> PACBI, “Israel’s Exceptionalism: Normalizing the Abnormal”, 31 Oct 2011, <http://pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1749>



peacebuilding activities often feel a need to keep their involvement in peacebuilding secretive among friends and family out of fear of being targeted as supporters of normalization.

Organizations typically must refrain from posting pictures of their program, locations and dates of programs, naming participants and staff, or sharing updates with donors. While this restriction on publicity allows participants to feel comfortable, it seriously harms awareness, advocacy, and fundraising efforts, placing yet another inhibiting factor on the desire to scale impact beyond the level of the individual.

## **6. Measuring Impact**

Organizations cited difficulty in measuring impact as the indicators of success for peacebuilding are often complex and somewhat contrived. In particular, difficulties were noted in tracking the impact on indirect beneficiaries, and in monitoring the effects of attitudinal changes over time. When asked if their work is linked to a strategic plan or pre-articulated field-wide goals and objectives, even the very few organizations who had undergone a strategic planning process admitted to never using it. The inability to measure impact in field building does not stem from the work's inherent immeasurability, but from a lack of clear strategic goals and objectives, both inside the organization and as a field, by which to measure impact.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE FIELD**

Based on the insights gained from the mapping process, we believe, at Amal-Tikva, that there are concrete steps that could be taken to advance peacebuilding efforts and enhance the potential for wider impact. The first step to promoting more effective work in peacebuilding is to actively decide to come together as a field. Donors and organizations should consciously define themselves as a field and take on shared goals to create a more peaceful reality for Palestinians and Israelis, and contribute toward the eventual peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Amal-Tikva strongly recommends utilizing the techniques suggested in *The Strong Field Framework*<sup>20</sup> as outlined in the chart below:

### **Applying the Strong Field Framework to Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding**

#### **1. Standards of Practice:**

Organizations must invest in their human capital to create more effective leadership in the field and encourage their participants, volunteers, and staff to stay committed to peacebuilding. One way to do this is by encouraging stakeholders at all levels to speak in their own languages and to do their best to learn the language of the other. Professionally this may include providing courses, work time, or stipends for language instruction. Programmatically this may include opening activities with language

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<sup>20</sup> The James Irvine Foundation. (2009). *The Strong Field Framework*, Focus.

**The Strong Field Framework**

Shared Identity Community aligned around a common purpose and a set of core values			
Standards of Practice	Knowledge Base	Leadership and Grassroots Support	Funding and Supporting Policy
Codification of standards of practice	Credible evidence that practice achieves desired outcomes	Influential leaders and exemplary organizations across key segments of the field (e.g., practitioners, researchers, business leaders, policymakers)	Enabling policy environment that supports and encourages model practices
Exemplary models and resources (e.g., how-to guides)	Community of researchers to study and advance practice	Broad base of support from major constituencies	Organized funding streams from public, philanthropic and corporate sources of support
Available resources to support implementation (e.g., technical assistance)	Vehicles to collect, analyze, debate and disseminate knowledge		
Respected credentialing/ ongoing professional development training for practitioners and leaders			

exchanges and mini lessons. Another key way to invest in human capital is to offer stipends for professional development, to encourage employees to participate in existing opportunities for professional growth, and to develop more of these opportunities for the field at large.

As many staff reported concerns of burnout and emotional stress due to work that is so deeply ingrained in the conflict, support groups and other types of emotional support should be required for participants, volunteers, staff and board members alike. Infrastructure must also be created to allow for smoother operations and increased program activity, such as the opening of more meeting spaces, shared offices, shared technology and equipment, and collaborative permit application support. The field would also benefit from a hotline or centralized support network offering legal advice, financial management and as well as human resource and employment guidance.

**2. Knowledge Base:**

While many academic studies on the conflict, peacebuilding, and civil society are performed regularly, they are rarely if ever shared with practitioners in the field. We recommend that the field develop a mechanism for translating key research findings into Arabic and Hebrew to make these works more accessible to civil society, and provide training and opportunities to practice key recommendations offered in the most up-to-date reports and analyses. This mechanism should also include a unified system and language for monitoring and evaluating peacebuilding programs in a way that not only appeases donors, but concretely enables organizations to measure their success up in alignment with their own missions, visions, theories of change and core values.

Another knowledge gap that needs to be bridged is that between donors and organizations about the work happening on the ground. While several donors who very minimally give or have yet to engage in the field seek organizations doing “real work, not dialogue” as their focus, many of the organizations who are known for their engagement through contact theory alone are actually discreetly spending much more time and resources on other initiatives. For example, one organization known for large one-off public events in Jerusalem has had significant success changing concrete policies improving the lives of their East Jerusalem constituents, which they keep secret in order to assure the confidentiality necessary for success.

### **3. Leadership and Grassroots Support:**

A key field-building element is reaching a critical mass in both Israeli and Palestinian societies, whether at the grassroots or leadership levels. When organizations design a program that is small and intimate, the ideal then is to create a model that can be replicated without losing authenticity. Sharing models with other organizations is an excellent way to assure impactful work can be repeated at scale. A mechanism that regularly brings the field together would allow working groups on focus areas to maximize coordination on sharing of resources, successful program implementation, and minimizing infrastructure distress.

When addressing challenges around recruiting program participants, it is crucial that organizations internalize, address, and relate to the dynamics of the conflict. Simply said, Israelis have more opportunities and less of a need to directly engage with Palestinians in the context of peacebuilding. Recruiting Israelis to participate in peacebuilding comes at the opportunity cost of the many other types of activities they have available in society. In order to recruit Israelis to peacebuilding activities, the activity itself must be top notch simply because it is competing with so many others.

When recruiting Palestinian participants, supporting their struggle with anti-normalization is critical. Programs must offer a safe space to discuss mixed emotions while providing tools for discussing their choice to participate in a program that engages with Israelis is also crucial. Just because a Palestinian joins a peacebuilding activity, NGO leaders should not assume that they feel comfortable with the decision, have a support network, or know how to discuss this difficult choice with their family and friends who may disagree. Providing these tools will help to allow for continued participation, involvement, and growth within the peacebuilding community. Long term engagement is key in supporting participants on this journey, as is providing opportunities for mentorship with others who have had similar challenges and experiences.

Another challenge around anti-normalization that organizations commonly mentioned is how it affects their public relations. Protecting participants from normalization threats and BDS does not mean that an organization cannot publicize activities at all. For example, organizations can advertise programs without listing event locations, or require passcodes for detailed information. Likewise, events can be

documented by taking pictures from the back of a group or quoting members with their first name only.

#### **4. Funding and Supporting Policy:**

Organizations and donors alike must work towards creating a healthy balance of donations with self-generated income, whether from program fees, offering of services, selling merchandise, or other ideas. Generating income not only provides organizations with more stability in terms of funding sources, but provides cash-in-hand, general support funding, and increases engagement within the community.

Funding for peacebuilding is commonly designated to short term projects, with very limited percentages of the funds supporting organizational management and operations. This pattern forces organizations to continually chase after programmatic grants to tally the overhead percentages up enough to cover their expenses. The cost of this effort is a compromising of their ability to strategize and think long term. We recommend that organizations rely on their strategic plans, articulating the programs they wish to implement and seeking funds to support these efforts. Organizations should not let the availability of funds or specific donor's interests determine their direction, and donors should not dangle funding opportunities over organizations that inevitably steer the work away from their stated mission.

Donors should offer general support funding, or program funding for multiple years at a time. Findings from a recent USIP evaluation show that a strong factor in strengthening impact over time is consistency in funding that can enable organizations to build on early successes and take risks to encourage innovation. "It is precisely because peacebuilding is a long-term proposition that some kind of scaled-up and sustained funding model could add value in the Israeli-Palestinian context," said Lucy Kurtzer-Ellenbogen, director of the Arab-Israeli conflict program at USIP.<sup>21</sup>

Donors need to be careful not to create dependency on them that could cause organizational trauma if they cease to continue funding, or that makes their values supersede the organizations own values. Organizations must also contribute to this healthy dynamic with donors by not requesting more than 20% of their budget from one donor. Another way to create healthy dynamics is to apply for funding in partnership with other organizations, sharing staff members, and administrative costs, while collaborating on program implementation and strategic thinking.

#### **Notes on COVID-19's effect on peacebuilding efforts**

In light of recent global developments regarding COVID-19, the field faces additional unprecedented challenges. At the time of writing, bringing people together across borders, or at all, is nearly impossible due to social distancing laws. With a global financial contraction, funding for peacebuilding projects will likely fall. It is also likely that both the economic and public health crises will create political volatility, adding

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<sup>21</sup>Strasser, F. (2017). *Grassroots Work in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/grassroots-work-israeli-palestinian-conflict>.

pressure to those already engaged or potential participants who may have sought to get involved. While it is premature to predict specific outcomes, the lack of capacity outlined in the analysis above will be even more stark. It is also possible that the inherently interconnected and co-dependent relationship between Israelis and Palestinians will be that much harder to deny, perhaps opening up avenues for this work, in a way that did not exist prior to this tragic public health crisis.

Amal-Tikva will continue to map and greater understand the long term effects on the field, addressing concerns around resource scarcity and program adaptations required to mitigate risk while continuing to deliver programs. We will continue to work intensively with our partners as this crisis unfolds and are committed to serving the field as well as possible.