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IDD Policy Brief: Why Legitimacy Matters to NGO Peacebuilding

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Donor support for national NGOs engaged in peacebuilding can backfire: association with international 'interference' can damage NGOs' reputations and fuel political opposition. Drawing on findings from Sri Lanka, this brief by Oliver Walton suggests how donors could develop more politically aware, flexible relations with NGOs to help maintain NGO legitimacy and promote locally appropriate peacebuilding strategies.

Key messages

- NGOs can play an important role in implementing donor peacebuilding strategies – particularly in creating 'hybrid' approaches to peacebuilding by adapting international strategies to local contexts.
- In the process, however, NGOs often face opposition from political groups seeking to preserve the status quo. Such opposition can undermine NGOs' local legitimacy and reduce the impact of their work.
- International peacebuilders could enhance the effectiveness of their partnerships with NGOs by paying more attention to the ways in which NGOs gain domestic approval.
- Donors could give NGOs greater space and flexibility to develop hybrid approaches to peacebuilding that are more attuned to the concerns of critical political groups.

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Read the Policy Brief: Why Legitimacy Matters to NGO Peacebuilding (PDF 261KB) (/Documents/college-social-sciences/government-society/idd/policy-brief/05-2012-oliver-walton.pdf)

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