

BUILDING EVIDENCE FOR PEACEBUILDING INVESTMENTS: A SNAPSHOT OF YOUTH-LED AND YOUTH-SUPPORTING PEACEBUILDING PROGRAMS IN KENYA YIELDS FIVE TO TEN-FOLD SOCIAL RETURNS ON INVESTMENT (SROI)

THE YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY (YPS) AGENDA REQUIRES A CHANGE IN THE MINDSET OF HOW WE THINK OF IMPACT AND HOW WE QUANTIFY THAT IMPACT AS IT RELATES TO YOUTH-LED AND ADULT-SUPPORTED INTERVENTIONS THAT IMPACT THE LIVES OF PEOPLE IN YOUTHFUL MAJORITY COUNTRIES. THIS REPORT SUMMARIZES FINDINGS FROM A PROOF-OF-CONCEPT STUDY ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF INVESTMENTS IN PEACEBUILDING PROGRAMS IN KENYA USING THE SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI) METHODOLOGY.

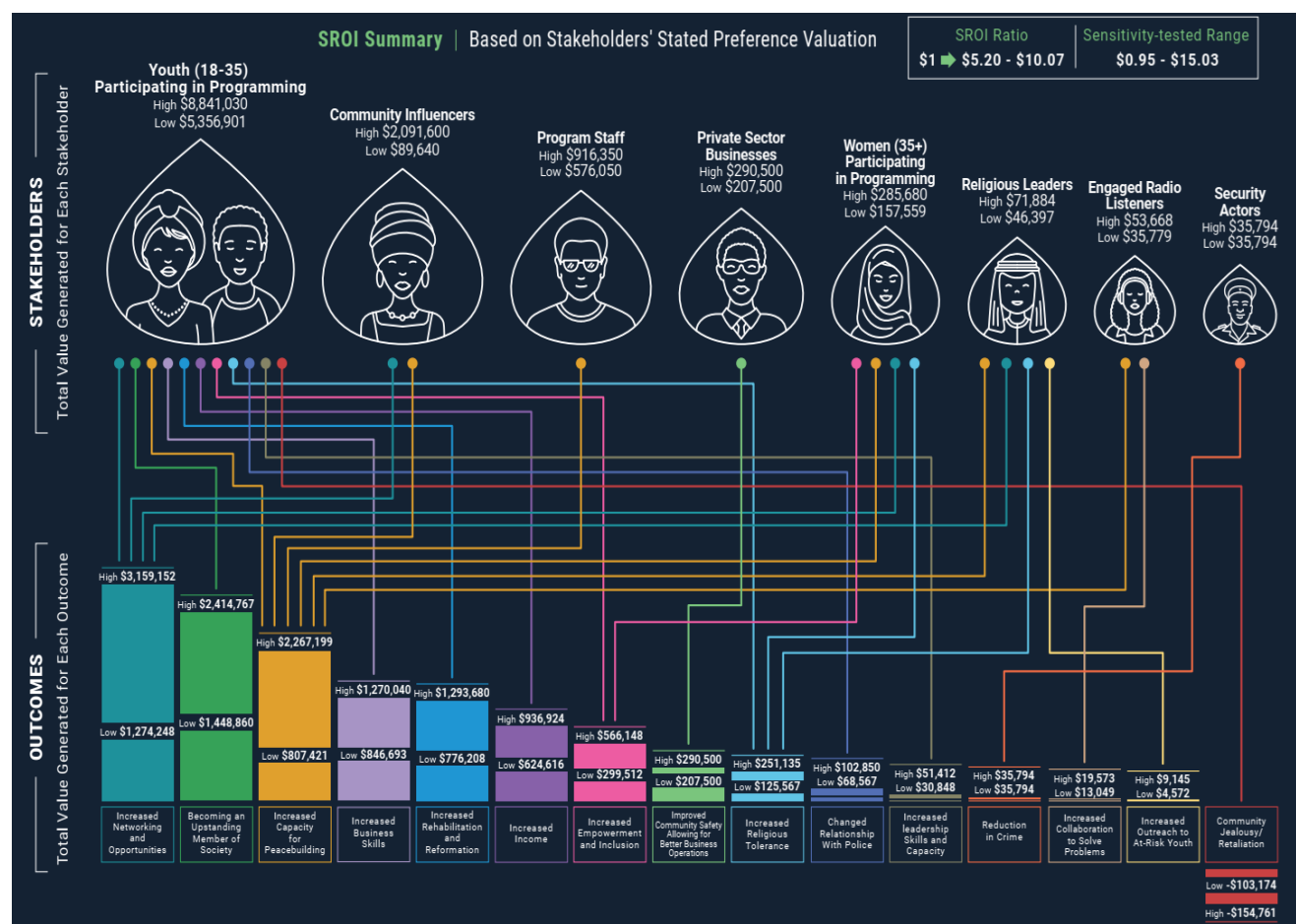
The youth, peace and security (YPS) agenda is gaining momentum across policy, funding and practice communities. To match this growing interest, the YPS agenda requires a change in the mindset of how we think of impact and how we quantify that impact as it relates to youth-led and adult-supported interventions that impact the lives of people in youthful majority countries. Measuring the right impacts changes the narrative and puts power where it matters – in the hands of young people locally, something critical in understanding the role of young people in preventing violence and sustaining peace. The international community critically needs a way to assess the impacts of youth-led and youth-supporting peacebuilding interventions to better support and sustain these efforts.

While evaluations of peacebuilding programming are conducted regularly, little is known about the overall impact and return on investment of such programs. Traditional economic

evaluations often shed light on cost savings to the State but are hard to come by in the peacebuilding field. Furthermore, traditional approaches do not capture the value of interventions to all key stakeholders, including youth and communities, and what matters most to them. To fill this gap, a research team led by the Institute on Inequalities in Global Health at the University of Southern California in collaboration with Search for Common Ground and multiple partners, conducted a proof-of-concept study of the impact of peacebuilding interventions using social return on investment (SROI) methodology, a stakeholder-centered participatory approach to impact measurement and management, to evaluate youth-led and youth-supporting peacebuilding interventions in Kenya.¹ The SROI methodology is well-aligned with the [Peace Impact Framework](#) by using a combination of standard measures, perspectives of affected communities, and practitioners' expert insights.

¹ Of the four programs included in this study, three were evaluated using SROI analysis methodology and the fourth was evaluated using broader social value analysis methodology. Both methodologies are based on the same set of principles, however social value analysis asks stakeholders to describe outcomes they experienced and how important they are to them, without explicitly monetizing those outcomes as is done in SROI analysis. While the evaluations found distinct SROI results of the programs, this summary report focuses on overall results. It is worth noting that SROI ratios should not be compared across programs or organizations when there are differences in contexts, populations, and methodologies used, as is usually the case including in this study. A more useful comparison of SROI ratios examines a particular program or organization against itself over time to understand how value creation changes over time.

SOCIAL RETURN ON YPS INVESTMENTS IN KENYA



ONE OF THE FIRST STUDIES GLOBALLY TO VALUE THE IMPACTS OF PEACEBUILDING INTERVENTIONS FROM KEY STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

METHODOLOGY & FINDINGS

The proof-of-concept study focused on four youth-led and youth-supporting peacebuilding interventions in Kenya. These interventions were implemented in multiple counties of Kenya over a two to five-year period sometime between 2015 – 2021 depending on the intervention. The research team applied the internationally-recognized approach to SROI analysis to conduct evaluations of the interventions. A mixed-methods approach was employed and included review of program reports and peacebuilding literature, qualitative

data collection (via focus groups and key informant interviews) and quantitative data collection (via surveys) to generate evidence for each evaluation. **Central to the SROI analysis approach is understanding from key stakeholders how an intervention affects them, including both positive and any negative outcomes they may have experienced, and the relative value of these outcomes.** Across the evaluations, the following stakeholder groups were consulted: youth participants (age 18-35), their families, community influencers, women participants

over age 35, religious leaders, trainers, security actors, engaged listeners of radio programming, private sector businesses, and program staff. Stakeholders described having experienced a multitude of outcomes resulting from the programs, with the ones they found most important being **increased networking and opportunities, becoming an upstanding member of society, and increased capacity for peacebuilding.**

For the SROI evaluations, outcomes were monetized according to two different approaches to valuation: cost-based valuation (using financial proxies found in the literature), which is traditionally how most economic evaluations including SROI analyses are done, and stakeholders-stated preference valuation (derived directly from stakeholders via focus groups, interviews, and surveys). Comparing the value of outcomes with the investment yielded SROI ratios from each approach to valuation, followed by sensitivity analyses to understand how ratios would be affected with differences to key assumptions.

Results of the cost-based valuation found an overall social return on investment of \$1.54 for every dollar invested, indicating that the value exceeded investments in programming (with a sensitivity analysis range from \$0.31-\$2.30). However, given the dearth of literature in this context, including limited studies on value to the State, and the narrowness of the perspective on value applied, the utility of this set of results is limited. Results of the stakeholders-stated preference valuation, which allowed for a fuller picture of the outcomes including that which is most valuable to key stakeholders experiencing the programming, found an overall social return on investment between \$5.20 and \$10.07 for every dollar invested, also indicating that the value exceeded investments in programming (with a sensitivity analysis range from \$0.95-\$15.03). Additional results of stakeholder-stated preference

valuation found even higher social returns on investment in the context of the Kenyan national elections, indicating that stakeholders valued outcomes such as increased networking and opportunities and increased capacity for peacebuilding even more during tense periods such as elections.

In-depth feedback gathered during stakeholder consultations and validation sessions was used to develop recommendations to improve future programming. Four overall recommendations emerged from this study:

1) Programs should be designed in consultation with stakeholders. While this recommendation is not novel, this study was a good reminder of the importance of this recommendation. For example, stakeholders in this study voiced they would have liked if organizations could have provided psychosocial support, training on income-generating activities where this was not being done, and inclusion of other vulnerable groups in activities.

2) Focus on extending the duration of desired outcomes. Across all of the programs evaluated, many of the outcomes lasted a year or less after the program ended, presenting a key opportunity to explore how design can be improved in the future. In particular, there was a real interest from stakeholders for increased entrepreneurship opportunities, but those need to be self-sustaining to be most effective, otherwise it can leave people frustrated and almost back where they started.

3) Increase engagement with private sector stakeholders in programming. The private sector representatives consulted in the study had a real interest in being involved in programming, and both created and derived value from the programs, but seemed to be missing more broadly across programs.

4) Collect and respond to feedback from stakeholders, including any sub-groups, and any negative outcomes they may have experienced. As some stakeholders voiced, the purpose of evaluations should not be just to check a box, but rather to actually respond to what was found and use it to improve programming to improve future value.

CONCLUSIONS

This is one of the first studies globally to assess the impact of peacebuilding interventions using social return on investment methodology.

While it is easy to count the number of people who participate in programming, it is harder to comprehensively capture the outcomes they experience as a result, and how valuable those outcomes are to them. Findings from this study,

based on both valuation approaches used and across data collected both before and after national elections in Kenya took place, suggest that the value created by peacebuilding programming exceeds the investments. While youth participants benefitted the most from interventions, there was clear benefit to all key stakeholders. Results of the stakeholder-stated preference valuation found that, overall, for every \$1 invested in peacebuilding programs, between \$5.20 and \$10.07 of value is created, and that value increases even further in tense contexts such as election cycles.

Despite its limitations, using the SROI approach for evaluation can provide added value over traditional evaluation approaches used in YPS sector in the multiple ways.

Added Value of SROI Analysis in Evaluation of YPS Interventions

- 1) **SROI analysis prioritizes the voice of all key stakeholders and what matters most to them.** It does this by asking stakeholders what outcomes they experienced and their relative importance of them. Through this process, SROI allows for the measurement of ‘softer’ intangible outcomes as opposed to solely focusing on ‘hard’ tangible or economic outcomes. These ‘softer’ outcomes are often excluded from traditional program evaluation and economic analyses due to the difficulty of quantifying them. However, this analysis found that these intangible outcomes (i.e., increased empowerment and inclusion, and increased networking) were the most important to stakeholders.
- 2) **SROI analysis provides insights to avoid or mitigate harmful effects.** SROI engages key stakeholders in defining what changed for them and explicitly requires them to consider both any positive and negative consequences they might have experienced. These insights can be used to mitigate these harms from occurring in the future.
- 3) **SROI examines sustainability** by considering how long outcomes last and how they drop off over time, and factors those into the calculations of value.
- 4) **SROI elucidates value for money.** While most programming in this space has inherently been understood as valuable by program staff and donors, SROI makes that value explicit by assigning a dollar value to outcomes.
- 5) **SROI analysis encourages decision-making based on value, not outputs,** which do not reflect the whole picture. Outputs have often been the basis for many decisions in aid and development programming.

In general, as the goals of programming and evaluation are to improve the well-being of communities, understanding, measuring and valuing what matters most to all key stakeholders is key to proving and improving value. Thinking about applications of the methodology beyond YPS in Kenya, including broader **aims of local ownership and partnership, and, inclusive development in design, approach and impact**, this study shows that SROI provides measurement and valuation authority to those who are actually experiencing programming, compared to how traditional evaluations are done. This can enable local communities to be empowered to define

impact, and to have more ownership of these efforts, ultimately increasing their value and the returns on investments.

Access each of the full SROI reports using the following links: (1) [SROI Evaluation of the Program Contributing Towards Sustainable Peace in the Coast Region of Kenya: Mombasa, Lamu, Kilifi And Tana River Counties](#); (2) [Social Value Analysis of Young Women Leaders Mediation Project](#); (3) [SROI Evaluation Of Conflict Prevention, Peace, And Economic Opportunities For The Youth](#); and (4) [SROI Evaluation of Project Inuka](#)

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