

Strengthening Work at the Nexus of the Arts and Peacebuilding Preliminary Report on Survey conducted October 25 - November 2, 2011

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Background

To gather input about priorities for strengthening work at the nexus of arts and peacebuilding, The Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts at Brandeis University conducted a survey. The online instrument was circulated to over 1500 individuals through our network, to the staff of Search for Common Ground, and was also posted on the Peace and Collaborative Development Network's website, potentially reaching over 22,000 people. Between October 25 and November 2, one hundred thirty-two (132) people completed the survey on-line. Brandeis masters student Marilana Rufo ran a basic report of responses and some cross-tabs of several questions; this preliminary report is drawn from her work.

Profile of Respondents

Primary professional field: Respondents indicated their primary professional field (arts/cultural work; peacebuilding or related field; or other); they were free to indicate more than one field. The pool of respondents are nearly equally divided between the two areas of work: 51.5% are artists and cultural workers; nearly 54% work in peacebuilding, and 25% indicated 'other,' identifying a number of related areas of work, including education, development, and youth advocacy.

Primary affiliation: Over half of the respondents are affiliated with educational institutions; nearly 40% work in community-based organizations; one-third work as freelancers and independent consultants. Smallest representation is from intergovernmental organizations (1.5%) and government agencies (5.4%). Among those who responded 'other' were a businessperson, advocates, a trade union member and several theatre artists.

Length of experience: Just over ten percent of the respondents had less than one year of experience working at the nexus of peacebuilding and the arts; including this group, over 50% had ten years of experience or less. Approximately 45% of the pool have worked in the arts/peacebuilding or related field, with nearly one-quarter basing their responses on over 20 years of experience.

Roles: We invited people to indicate all roles that apply to them. 70% are educators; nearly 2/3 are practitioners; over 50% described themselves as activists. Approximately 30% are students or interns, and another 20% are evaluators. The pool of respondents include 15 policymakers and 9 funders; 13 artists, writers, or managers of cultural institutions; 6 researchers.

Geographic region: We neglected to ask people about the geographic region where they live and work. It is probably fair to assume that most respondents reside in the US. However, write-in responses did reveal respondents from Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America.

Conceptualizing and prioritizing resources:

How do you conceptualize work at the nexus of arts, culture and conflict transformation? (check all that apply)

- As an emerging field: 57%
- As a field: 32%
- As a sub-field: 16% (including over ¼ of peacebuilders, but only 3% of artists)
- None of the above 10%
- Of those who wrote explanations, eleven see work at the nexus of arts, culture and conflict transformation or peacebuilding as a sub-field of peacebuilding or conflict transformation. There were two mentions of this work as a sub-field of the arts.
- A few respondents objected to referencing work at the nexus of peacebuilding and the arts as 'a field.'

When considering the allocation of peacebuilding resources, how should investing in initiatives that incorporate arts and culture be prioritized in relation to other approaches to conflict work (such as training in mediation, negotiation or conflict resolution skills, for instance)? Initiatives at the nexus of arts, culture and peacebuilding should be:

- Less important: 5%
- As important: 70%
- More important 25%

When considering the allocation of resources to support the arts and cultural work, how should investing in peace and justice initiatives be ranked in relation to other priorities (such as the stability of major cultural institutions, the cultivation of new works that might or might not address social issues, skill development and technical training, for instance)? Initiatives at the nexus of arts, culture and peacebuilding should be:

- Less important: 11.4%
- A important: 65.2%
- More impotent: 23.5%

Ranking of types of resources to strengthen the field:

On a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being the most important, and 1 being least important, which of the following resources do you think would most strengthen work at the nexus of peacebuilding, the arts, and cultural work?

Overall ranking, highest to lowest. These priorities were generally consistent across fields and length of experience working at the nexus of peacebuilding and the arts.

- 4.51 Funding
- 4.30 Technical assistance to strengthen organizations
- 4.28 Training opportunities in conflict regions
- 4.24 Opportunities for international exchange
- 4.19 Cultivation of leaders
- 4.16 Gatherings to facilitate exchange
- 3.92 More accessible documentation of peacebuilding/arts initiatives
- 3.91 Virtual resource centers
- 3.83 Internship programs
- 3.82 More thorough documentation and assessment
- 3.69 Articulation of shared ethical principles
- 3.66 Articulation of shared definitions of concepts
- 3.54 Assessment tools and protocols
- 3.42 MA programs or concentrations within them
- 3.25 Newsletters
- 3.21 PhD programs or concentrations within them
- 3.21 Certificate programs for practitioners
- 2.95 Refereed journals

Other resources mentioned as write-in responses (partial list)

- Outreach/Advocacy/Public Information to those skeptical or confused
- Lobbying initiatives disseminated as 'guidance' to local authorities
- Network of companies and organizations
- Exchange of scholars and practitioners
- Gender perspective
- Religious figures
- Training programs linking academic institutes in US, Australia and Europe with local people in a conflict region
- Hubs in various regions in the world
- Critical discussion on support for arts/culture workers for peace and oppressor/aggressor states
- Resources that are sustainable or lead to sustainability
- Consortium of organizations
- Opportunities for dialogue with other non-arts workers: NGO's, social workers, healthcare workers, educators, etc.
- Funding for 'cultural ambassadors' from emerging countries
- Professional global network of culture and conflict specialists able to advise IGO's, share resources, and collaborate on project design.
- Development of departments in foundations to support this work exclusively
- Networks and connections to popular media
- Communications strategy
- Technical support and resource material in local languages

- Useable website for interaction among global artist-activists and between them and teacher/mentors

Preliminary discussion:

It is interesting to note that over 130 people invested time in responding to the survey over a period of a week. Respondents were nearly equally divided between those who identify primarily as artists/cultural workers and those who identify primarily as peacebuilders – and interesting that there were not strong differences in the patterns of responses from people in these two large fields. It is also significant, I believe, that such large percentages of respondents, almost 90%, see work in this area as either a ‘field’ or an ‘emerging field.’ Also, people from both fields would prioritize resources for work in this area. (Of course this survey was not conducted through a random sample, so it is not surprising that those who chose to respond would also support committing resources to this field.)

The ranking of resources might prove useful as we move forward to strengthen work at the nexus of peacebuilding, arts and culture. A careful review of this ranking, disaggregating by professional field and years of experience, etc., might offer additional insights. It is interesting to note, however, that while among this group of respondents degree-granting academic programs were given much lower priority than efforts to strengthen work in the field, there is significant interest in the cultivation of leaders for the field.

If the survey is administered again, information about the geographic location of respondents’ work and home base should be elicited. We should proactively seek responses from conflict regions.

Much more analysis needs to be done to extract useful insights from this survey, especially from the written responses to questions. We are seeking partners to work on this analysis over the next 3 – 6 months.