



# Social Media – A New Ally for Peacebuilding

Research paper  
Middle East & Fundraising Team

25 June, 2021 – Hillena Thoms

### **About this hand-out**

This research paper is the product of a collaboration between the Middle East and the Fundraising Team at PAX. On their behalf, Hillena Thoms conducted the relevant research as part of her six-week internship at the Middle East Team.

#### Author

Hillena Thoms

#### Contributors

Thomas van Gool

Foteini Katzilaki

#### Cover photograph

<https://hackingconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/blog.jpg>

#### A publication by

PAX, the Netherlands

#### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank PeaceTech Lab for their outstanding support in helping us acquire relevant information as in the form of interviews.

For more information please contact [info@paxforpeace.nl](mailto:info@paxforpeace.nl).

## Over PAX

PAX means peace. PAX brings together people who have the courage to stand for peace. Together with people in conflict areas and concerned citizens worldwide, PAX works to build just and peaceful societies across the globe.

PAX brings together people who have the courage to stand for peace. We work together with people in conflict areas, meet with politicians and coordinate efforts with committed citizens.

Peace belongs to everyone. Everyone who believes in peace can contribute. PAX sets peace in motion. We call on committed citizens to take part. We firmly believe that all these steps, whether small or large, inevitably lead to the greater sum of peace.

# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction.....                                      | 5  |
| 1. Theory .....  | 7  |
| 1.1 Definitions & Key concepts.....                    | 7  |
| 1.2 Why is social media suited for peacebuilding?..... | 8  |
| 1.3 Three functions of peacetech.....                  | 9  |
| 2. Methodology .....                                   | 11 |
| 2.1 Research design.....                               | 11 |
| 2.2 Peacetech at PAX.....                              | 12 |
| 3. Findings.....                                       | 14 |
| 3.1 Data Management.....                               | 14 |
| 3.2 Strategic Communication.....                       | 16 |
| 3.3 Dialogue & Networking.....                         | 18 |
| 3.4 Hybrid program.....                                | 19 |
| 3.5 Prospective projects.....                          | 19 |
| 3.6 Platforms.....                                     | 20 |
| 4. Limitations .....                                   | 22 |
| 5. Recommendations .....                               | 23 |
| 5.1 Treat big data analysis with caution.....          | 23 |
| 5.2 Use small-scale digital analysis .....             | 23 |
| 5.3 Outbound strategies.....                           | 24 |
| 5.4 Focus on Twitter and WhatsApp .....                | 24 |
| 5.5 To-Do-List.....                                    | 24 |
| 5.6 Relevant Contacts.....                             | 25 |
| 5.7 Conclusion.....                                    | 26 |
| Bibliography.....                                      | 27 |

# Introduction

Over the past ten years, technology has become an indispensable tool for peacebuilding. As such, peacebuilders have developed open-source tools drawing on data from mobile phones, radios or online surveys to map conflict contexts, interact with the population living in conflict areas, and create early warning systems. One comparatively recent development within the field of peacetech – a concept that will be further explored in the next section – is the involvement of social media. In fact, the discussion around social media is more current than ever, as life and discussions have moved online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As information transcends geographical boundaries and people are exposed to new political and cultural ideas, opportunities are ever-present to both make positive appeals but also express disruptive views on social media platforms. Mediators, for example, can use different social media tools and applications to support conflict analysis, strengthen channels for engaging with opposing parties, foster greater inclusivity and improve public communications strategies. Simultaneously, however, social media use can undermine each of these if not understood and managed properly. Disinformation campaigns, including targeted adverts and messages to deliberately seed mistrust and division or propagation of hate speech, have been linked with conflict dynamics.

We have arrived at a crossroad where social media could become either the biggest enemy or the greatest ally of peace. Among other stakeholders like governments, tech giants and civilians, peace organizations carry a key responsibility in paving the way for a future in which social media can support rather than impede conflict resolution.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, on behalf of a collaboration between PAX's Middle East and Institutional Fundraising Team, I conducted research on the positive potential of social media in peacebuilding to map, resolve and prevent conflicts as part of my six-week internship at PAX. More specifically, this paper will answer the following research question: *How do peer peace organizations of PAX utilize social media for peacebuilding and which of those projects and platforms could be applicable to the work of PAX keeping in mind its programmatic focus and resource capacity?*

By gaining an overview of the status quo of innovative peacebuilding, I can extract useful take-aways for PAX's own application of social media as a tool for conflict resolution and provide them with input on how to integrate online platforms into PAX's local peacebuilding work. To answer my

---

<sup>1</sup> Recommendations for the individual stakeholders were summarized at the Stockholm Forum by PAX and International Alert: Hillena Thoms, "Repurposing Social Media - A New Chance for Peace Building," ed. Thomas van Gool and Foteini Katzilaki (PAX for Peace, 2021), pp. 1-4.

question, I will first embed my research into the theoretical framework of peacetech. Furthermore, I will explain our research design and methodological approaches. After compiling an overview of the relevant social media projects and platforms in our 'Results' section, I will extract important recommendations and conclude with how these findings could apply to the work of PAX. ♦

# 1. Theory

## 1.1 Definitions & Key concepts

In order to determine the scope of my research, it is important to define key concepts. In line with the Conciliation Resources definition, *peacebuilding* seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict, helping people to resolve their differences peacefully and lay the foundations to prevent future violence.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, peacebuilding is a long-term process of encouraging people to talk, repairing relationships, and reforming institutions. By involving all antagonistic groups, peacebuilders create an enabling environment for conflict actors to understand the dynamics that are fueling aggression on both sides and work towards ending these aggressions using pragmatic approaches that satisfy all parties to the conflict in the most equitable manner.

While digital peacebuilding is the broader nexus between the field of peacebuilding and digital technologies, *peacetech* refers to any specific technology that contributes to peacebuilding.<sup>3</sup> Prominent examples of peacetech are messaging tools, radios, websites, online news or social media. Following the Toda Peace Institute, digital peacebuilding involves three stages:

- ◆ First, most peacebuilding efforts use 'normal' technologies including email, websites, databases, and Skype or Zoom for communication and basic computation.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ Secondly, specific types of technology aim at analyzing conflict, protecting civilians, facilitating dialogue, or other goals related to peacebuilding.
- ◆ Thirdly, the field of peacebuilding can respond to new digital conflict drivers, including cyber warfare tactics such as disinformation aimed at undermining democracy or hate speech on social media leading to greater polarization (e.g. detecting fake news).

The following paper will exclusively focus on the latter two stages of digital peacebuilding as PAX is already integrating the traditional use of technology in its peace work.

As I am specifically focusing on social media as a subset of digital peacebuilding, I have defined and operationalized this comprehensive tool. Accordingly, social media are forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas,

---

<sup>2</sup> Kofi Annan, "What Is Peacebuilding?," Conciliation Resources, accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.c-r.org/who-we-are/why-peacebuilding/what-peacebuilding>.

<sup>3</sup> Lisa Schirch, "25 Spheres of Digital Peacebuilding and PeaceTech" (Today Peace Institute, Alliance for Peacebuilding, September 2020), [https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-93\\_lisa-schirch.pdf](https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-93_lisa-schirch.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

personal messages, and other content.<sup>5</sup> Generally, they can be used to share information with a wide audience, to stimulate interaction with and feedback from the audience, and to facilitate dialogue between individuals. Information shared via social media gains credibility by the trust embedded in social networks, which can have a positive or negative impact on peacebuilding.

Although there are numerous region-specific social media tools, for the purpose of this research I will only focus on the largest, global social media platforms. The tools most referred to in my research include the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter, and the instant messaging app WhatsApp. WhatsApp is considered a social media platform as it allows people in conflict areas to gather in huge, anonymous groups thus turning into their main communication channel.<sup>6</sup> This relatively narrow focus corresponds to the most frequently used social media tools in the projects and platforms I was able to identify. Prior to mapping the work of different organizations related to social media peacebuilding, it is crucial to understand the relevance of social media for digital peacebuilding. ♦

## 1.2 Why is social media suited for peacebuilding?

To begin with, Wolfgang Sützl's *Elicitive Conflict Transformation and New Media: In Search for a Common Ground* assesses the role of social media in communicative processes in light of Conflict Transformation Theory.<sup>7</sup> The author stresses the lack of media theory in conflict resolution theories and by establishing a common ground for both realms concludes that social media should play a central role in peacebuilding - this constitutes the motivation and starting point of my research.

Building onto this, there are several characteristics of social media that make it particularly suitable for peacebuilding. Social media offers a breadth of publicly available information that allows peacebuilders to gain the necessary data for near-real-time analysis of conflict contexts and monitoring and evaluation of peacebuilding activities.<sup>8</sup> Possible restrictions on data usage can be overcome through partnerships with the respective tech firms.

Furthermore, since the data collected comes in a digital format, it facilitates easy coding, reduces opportunities for human error and provides a variety of information about social media users including their location, IP and site history.<sup>9</sup> This allows peace mediators to broaden their sources

---

<sup>5</sup> Vanessa Corlazzoli, "ICTs for Monitoring & Evaluation of Peacebuilding Programmes" (Search for Common Ground, 2014), pp. 6-43.

<sup>6</sup> Antonin Lorenzini, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 23, 2021

<sup>7</sup> Vladimir Bratic, "Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media," *Media and Communication* 4, no. 1 (2016): pp. 1-3, <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v4i1.559>.

<sup>8</sup> Yifat Mor, Yiftach Ron, and Ifat Maoz, "'Likes' for Peace: Can Facebook Promote Dialogue in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?," *Media and Communication* 3, no. 4 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v3i4.298>.

<sup>9</sup> Vanessa Corlazzoli, "ICTs for Monitoring & Evaluation of Peacebuilding Programmes" (Search for Common Ground, 2014), pp. 6-43.



of information, rather than relying on the conflict parties – a valuable skill especially for hard-to-reach, occupied or otherwise inaccessible areas. In addition to the raw data that can be extracted from social media platforms, social media can also reflect and shape narratives. This form of qualitative information, including reports from ‘citizen journalists’ who bypass restrictions on conventional journalism, provide peace mediators with a real-time picture of the developing situation and narratives on the ground. ♦

### 1.3 Three functions of peacotech

In line with an assessment by Build Up, I was able to identify three main fields of application for social media in peacebuilding: data management, strategic communication and dialogue and network.<sup>10</sup> Not only will these functions form the theoretical framework of my paper but also serve as a structure for the findings section.

The first function, **data management**, involves accessing and analyzing new or different information, accelerating data collection, and making it accessible to more people. As such, by mapping conflict actors and contexts, peacebuilders can gain a better understanding of the conflict’s roots and dynamics, detect threat narratives and disinformation campaigns and understand the main topics of online discussions.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, social media analytics can provide information about the target population’s feelings and thoughts about an issue, person or country. The thereby acquired information can be used for countering recruitment for violence, digital election monitoring or early warning programs.

Secondly, social media can be used for **strategic communication** to enable information sharing, debunk false information, express opinions effectively and exert influence through political activism. Two key aspects of strategic communication on social media involve rumor management – addressing potential trigger points that could lead to an eruption of the conflict – and countering takedowns of posts of marginalized citizens.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, documenting and sharing the lived realities of conflict in a balanced way creates new perspectives, which positively shapes the overall conflict narrative, and can help to shape the government’s response. Especially to local

---

<sup>10</sup> Build Up, “Digital Peacebuilding 101,” Go to Build Up., accessed June 20, 2021, <https://howtobuildup.org/community-learning/lessons/start-here-introducing-technology-for-peacebuilding/>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Today Peace Institute, “Social Media Impacts on Conflict Dynamics”(Today Peace Institute, May 2020), [https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-73\\_lisa-schirch\\_san-diego-report-social-media-impacts-on-conflict-dynamics.pdf](https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-73_lisa-schirch_san-diego-report-social-media-impacts-on-conflict-dynamics.pdf).

marginalized groups, social media offers a unique opportunity to raise awareness or connect with others around personal experiences.<sup>13</sup>

A third role that social media can play within peacebuilding is creating new spaces for people to talk, connect and engage – also referred to as **dialogue and networking**.<sup>14</sup> Social media platforms facilitate intergroup digital dialogue between people in cyberspace who are not able to meet physically. Thus, social media can connect participants in peacebuilding activities such as supervising victims, exchanging perspectives, documenting experiences and even serving as a vehicle for collective coping. With its special potential in areas where personal meetings are logistically, legally and politically impossible, social media can help to maintain channels of communication, counteract dehumanization and thus support a mediation process.<sup>15</sup> More precisely, social media exchange can reduce stigma, promote the exchange of ideas between conflicting parties and eventually recruit participants into offline dialogue. ♦

---

<sup>13</sup> International Alert, British Council, and Peace Perception Poll. Rep. Realising the Potential of Social Media as a Tool for Building Peace. International Alert, 2020. [www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Social-Media-Peacebuilding-Tool-EN-2020.pdf](http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Social-Media-Peacebuilding-Tool-EN-2020.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Build Up, "Digital Peacebuilding 101," Go to Build Up., accessed June 20, 2021, <https://howtobuildup.org/community-learning/lessons/start-here-introducing-technology-for-peacebuilding/>.

<sup>15</sup> S. Himmelfarb, "Social Media and Conflict Prevention" (United States Institute of Peace (USIP), December 2012), <https://www.usip.org/publications/2012/12/social-media-and-conflict-prevention>.

# 2. Methodology

## 2.1 Research design

As part of my qualitative research model, I will predominantly use desk research to monitor already existing social media peace programs. To ensure that the findings will be applicable to PAX, the focus of my research lies on peer peace organizations, such as Build Up, International Alert, Search for Common Ground and PeaceTech Lab. Yet, to eliminate selection bias I also checked for initiatives outside of this 'Western Peace NGO bubble' such as the work of the Dutch radio broadcaster RNW media. The entire desk research was conducted in May and June 2021.

As the use of social media is a relatively new addition to peacetechnology, only limited academic sources are available in this field. Combined with the fact that the goal of my research is practice-based, the majority of my sources include website entries, reports and videos. Although the lack of academic sources could be seen as a limitation to my work, the fact that my paper contributes to closing the research gap surrounding social media peacebuilding points to its academic relevance. As an extension of my desk research, I set up an email exchange with Dr Medinat Abdulazeez Malefakis, who works as a global researcher and policy expert in the field of international security and humanitarian displacement.<sup>16</sup>

On top of this, I conducted systematized expert interviews with key stakeholders in the field of peacetechnology to extend my knowledge of the projects beyond the information on websites and reports and hence gain a more in-depth understanding of the topic. Thanks to their responsiveness, I was able to conduct interviews with two employees at PeaceTech Lab. Originally established as the Center of Innovation at the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) in 2008, PTL has emerged as one of the leading peacetechnology organizations worldwide.<sup>17</sup> In close cooperation with UNDP and USIP they drive action-oriented solutions to conflicts based on modern technology by bringing a diversity of experts together.

My first interviewee, Twila LaMar, is Senior Manager at PTL and responsible for Development and Donor Relations.<sup>18</sup> As Twila has helped to build the movement around PTL she was able to provide

---

<sup>16</sup> Dr Medinat Abdulazeez Malefakis, Email exchange with author, June 11, 2021

<sup>17</sup> PeaceTech Lab, Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.peacetechnology.org/>.

<sup>18</sup> "Twila LaMar: PeaceTech Lab," PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.peacetechnology.org/twila-lamar>.

me with relevant in-depth information on PTL's origins, their project-based use of social media and upcoming initiatives within the next months.<sup>19</sup>

Tim Receuver is Director of Programs at PTL and has an extensive background in peacetech. Prior to joining the Lab, Tim spent 13 years as a Foreign Affairs Officer at the U.S. Department of State where he was nominated for the prestigious Service to America Medal in 2013 and received the U.S. Department of State's highest award for innovation from Secretary Hillary Clinton in November 2009.<sup>20</sup> Above all, Tim explained for which purposes the integration of social media is most useful for and in which cases it creates more work than benefits. Thus, I was able to extract key takeaways on how PAX could increase its social media use in peacebuilding.

Additionally, I got in touch with the Country Manager of GeoAnalytics Center, Antonin Lorenzini. After having previously worked in the field of peacebuilding and human rights as an international observer in Colombia and as a secondary teacher in Switzerland, Antonin is now Country Manager at GeoA.<sup>21</sup> Thanks to him I learned about projects at GeoA that were not yet published on their website.

As already mentioned, to gain an impression of the developments in social media peacetech outside of the relatively narrow Peace NGO bubble I interviewed Luke Gilder whose professional experience lies in digital development interventions and campaigns for social impact relying primarily on social media.<sup>22</sup> As part of his 5-year career at RNW Media he worked on projects all over the world ranging from SRHR and economic inclusion to freedom of expression. Currently, Luke is working for the European Space Agency where he focuses on increasing knowledge and awareness on digital media. By sharing some of his long-standing experience in peacetech, Luke helped me create a bigger picture of the different applications of social media and how PAX could fuse them into one cohesive peacebuilding project. ♦

## 2.2 Peacetech at PAX

To formulate useful recommendations for PAX, I will assess my findings against the backdrop of PAX's previous experience with social media peacebuilding. So far, PAX has been using peacetech to a limited extent only. The Protection of Civilians (PoC) program employs an SMS mechanism for the data collection of civilians' security situation in conflict-prone settings.<sup>23</sup> Based on the analysis

---

<sup>19</sup> Twila LaMar, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 16, 2021

<sup>20</sup> "Tim Receuver: PeaceTech Lab," PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.peacetechlab.org/tim-receuver>.

<sup>21</sup> "About Us: GeoA-Center," GeoA, accessed June 2021, <https://www.geoacenter.com/team>.

<sup>22</sup> Luke Gilder, Email exchange with author, June 21, 2021

<sup>23</sup> Early Warning / Early Action Pilot - Peace Organization PAX. Accessed June 11, 2021. <https://paxforpeace.nl/what-we-do/programmes/early-warning-early-action-pilot>.

thereof, the PoC team is able to accurately inform and advise peace and security actors, such as UN and NATO peacekeeping missions on how to best design and implement protection strategies in the field.

Furthermore, PAX's work on Conflict and Environment is employing real-time Twitter, Facebook and other open-source data to map environmental hazards caused by conflict. The team has the ambition to involve more and more concerned citizens (in Syria and Iraq) that are willing to document environmental threats through social media or customized applications and fit-for-purpose designed databases.

However, due to the limited time of my internship I was not able to conduct an extensive mapping of all projects at PAX that draw on technology-based solutions. Therefore, this status quo may be incomplete or overgeneralizing. This research could be complemented in a meaningful way by drawing up a more detailed picture of the already existing technological resources and skills at PAX that can be used for new social media projects. ♦

# 3. Findings

All projects and platforms discussed in this paper will be grouped into the three main fields of application outlined above: data management, strategic communication and dialogue and network. Naturally, this categorization might overgeneralize the application of social media, as some of the projects could be associated with more than one field.

## 3.1 Data Management

Commissioned by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Build Up conducted a comprehensive mapping and analysis of **Syrian refugee-host community** relations in Lebanon including narratives, sentiments and amount of traffic on Facebook and Twitter.<sup>24</sup> The final report covers findings from a desk review, qualitative interviews and analysis of over 2.6 million Tweets and 14,734 Facebook posts and comments. Generally, Build Up clustered the data into three categories – sentiment, issue type, and event – and developed sets of keywords and phrases for Twitter and Facebook datasets underlying each of them. Yet, since Build Up’s attempts to gain access to API’s from Facebook and Twitter which would have allowed a comprehensive data collection were rejected by both companies, they were not able to fully automate data collection on Facebook. Despite this setback, the social media mapping advanced their understanding of how the conversation between these two actors is happening and ultimately helped to draft Lebanese social cohesion strategy.

Ushahidi is a non-profit technology company and eponymous platform from Kenya using crowdsourcing to collect and publish eyewitness reports on civil disturbances ever since the presidential elections in 2017.<sup>25</sup> Their platform can be used for visualizing hotspots and flashpoints during political conflicts, natural disasters or other instances. One of their main projects, **Swift River**, works to improve the quality of the information in the first three hours of a crisis.<sup>26</sup> Swift River aggregates data from tools such as Twitter, Ushahidi, Flickr, YouTube, local mobile and web social networks, which can then be rated by anyone interested. This form of crowdsourcing helps to successfully filter a huge amount of information with regards to its veracity.

PeaceTech Lab has produced a series of **Hate Speech Lexicons** to identify and analyze online hate speech in countries affected by conflict while also providing alternative words and phrases that

---

<sup>24</sup> Jacob Lefton et al., “Analysing Refugee-Host Community Narratives on Social Media”(Build Up, February 2019), [https://howtobuildup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UNDPBU\\_SocialMediaAnalysis\\_Leb\\_FINAL\\_310519.pdf](https://howtobuildup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UNDPBU_SocialMediaAnalysis_Leb_FINAL_310519.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> “Ushahidi,” Ushahidi, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.ushahidi.com/>.

<sup>26</sup> Erik Hermann, “Explaining Swift River,” Ushahidi, April 2009, <https://www.ushahidi.com/blog/2009/04/09/explaining-swift-river>.

can be used to counter this speech.<sup>27</sup> The lexicon pairs social media analysis with in-depth qualitative research to help different stakeholders – from civil society activists to government officials – in their efforts to address the surging problem of hate speech. The qualitative research is conducted in online community forums where the local population can discuss the meaning, usage and impact of a pool of terms that PTL believes to be connected to violence. Their growing portfolio of hate speech lexicons helps guide monitoring software to better track who is using hate speech and how it spreads.

Moreover, PTL has launched a **COVID-19 Violence Tracker** to automate real-time media mapping.<sup>28</sup> By collecting volunteer data from 20 countries they track, categorize, and visualize the violence the world is experiencing as a result of the global pandemic. The tool enabling this big data analysis is MapBox – provider of custom online maps and a significant contributor to several open-source mapping libraries.<sup>29</sup> Over the past year they were able to bring in over 20 million reports of COVID-related violence.<sup>30</sup> However, most of the data behind the tracker stems from websites and online articles instead of social media posts. Hence, in case PAX would exclusively focus on social media, such a tracker could be too one-sided as trustworthy news sources might be underrepresented on social media platforms.

**RapidPro**, a mobile tech programming tool by UNICEF, collects data via SMS and other communication channels (e.g. social media channels, such as Facebook Messenger, Telegram, WhatsApp) to enable real-time data collection and mass-communication with target end-users, including beneficiaries and frontline workers.<sup>31</sup> RapidPro allows partners to gather accurate real-time information on vital areas such as health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, and child protection. Despite its successful application, it does not seem beneficial for PAX to set up its own big data analysis. Instead, PAX could draw on the already analyzed and visualized data of for instance UNICEF, Ushahidi or PeaceTech Lab for their prospective peacetech initiatives.

On behalf of the UK embassy, GeoA conducted the research project **Nigerian Election Engagement** in cooperation with Fondation Hirondelle on the social media activity in the past election in Nigeria.<sup>32</sup> The main social media platforms in Nigeria are WhatsApp and Facebook. With the permission of influencers, GeoA was able to enter these groups to extract data on the nature of

---

<sup>27</sup> “Our Hate Speech Lexicons: PeaceTech Lab,” PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.peacetechlab.org/toolbox-lexicons>.

<sup>28</sup> “Peacetech Lab COVID-19 Violence Tracker,” Peacetech Lab COVID-19 Violence Tracker, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.covid19violence.org/>.

<sup>29</sup> “Maps, Geocoding, and Navigation APIs & SDKs,” Mapbox, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.mapbox.com/>.

<sup>30</sup> Twila LaMar, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 16, 2021

<sup>31</sup> “Real Time Information - RapidPro,” UNICEF Office of Innovation, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/rapidpro>.

<sup>32</sup> Antonin Lorenzini, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 23, 2021

online debate in Niger and the behavior of social media users in a context of increasing political repression. As the project is not finished yet, little can be said about its success.

Together with three civil society organizations (The Alliance of Iraqi Minorities, The Kurdish Institute for Elections and the Brave Youth Organization), PTL set up an online platform for discussing the **Draft Constitution of Kurdistan** in 2015.<sup>33</sup> By using Facebook plugins on a purpose-built website as a crowdsourcing tool they gave Kurdish citizens a voice in legislative processes. Each of the three organizations had an individual website with specific topics to invite citizens to vote and comment on a set of articles of the draft constitution of 2009. The huge advantage of this project lies in its mutual small and large scale applicability. Even a few opinions from marginalized communities can already help to create a more inclusive constitution. ♦

## 3.2 Strategic Communication

International Alert Philippines has set up **Conflict Alert**, a subnational conflict monitoring system that tracks the incidence, causes, and human costs of violent conflict in the Philippines.<sup>34</sup> It aims to shape policy making, development strategies, and peacebuilding approaches by providing relevant, robust, and reliable conflict data. Instead of using social media for data acquisition, their tracker integrates social media into the dissemination strategy by using it for information feedback loops. Thus, information on incidents in Bangsamoro and Mindanao is democratized, reaching new audiences and returning information to communities, which, in turn, can help frame relationships with each other and the state. This project shows how social media analysis can help reduce the research 'footprint' on communities, while also empowering and serving these communities through creating information feedback loops, such as supporting an evidence base necessary to promote political change.<sup>35</sup>

Another more recent project of PTL, **The Road to Equal Justice**, works to empower U.S. communities with media, technology and data tools to accelerate and amplify the fight for racial and social justice.<sup>36</sup> They apply social media as a strategic communication tool for spreading the word and recruiting participants for their initiative. As Tim Receveur mentioned in our interview,

---

<sup>33</sup> Tarik, "Debating the Draft Kurdish Constitution," GovRight, June 2015, <http://govright.org/debating-the-draft-kurdish-constitution/>; Tim Receveur interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 15 2021

<sup>34</sup> Conflict Alert Info, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://conflictaalert.info/>.

<sup>35</sup> International Alert, British Council, and Peace Perception Poll. Rep. Realising the Potential of Social Media as a Tool for Building Peace. International Alert, 2020. [www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Social-Media-Peacebuilding-Tool-EN-2020.pdf](http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Social-Media-Peacebuilding-Tool-EN-2020.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> "The Road to Equal Justice," PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.peacetechnology.org/the-road-to-equal-justice>.



LinkedIn – although officially not considered a social media platform – has been extremely helpful in this effort to target people and thus raise awareness.<sup>37</sup>

Build Up and Myanmar ICT for Development Organization launched the Facebook chatbot **MIDO** to promote media literacy in Myanmar.<sup>38</sup> The chatbot provides users with three functions: a selection of five media literacy modules, a set of quizzes to match those modules and the option to submit a piece of news for fact-checking by the MIDO team. During a pilot from August until October 2019, the chatbot reached 768 unique users. The public launch took place in November 2019, and MIDO is continuing to promote and gather feedback on the chatbot, in order to iterate and scale the product in the coming year.

GeoA-Center develops locally tailored communications systems that collect citizens' feedback on quality, timeliness and adequacy of public service delivery, thus facilitating the lodging of citizen complaints and transparent tracking of government responses.<sup>39</sup> Among other projects, GeoA's **MIL training in the Sahel region** works to counter digital conflict drivers arising from the increasing social media use, where some groups are developing effective online media campaigns to spread hate speech and fake news. GeoA plans to provide youth leaders with critical thinking and media literacy (MIL) training and mentoring, and will also support them in creating their own novel counter-narratives.<sup>40</sup> As part of this, GeoA already produced a series of motion design videos to raise general awareness around the issue of Fake News as the Sahel continues to face a growing array of threats.<sup>41</sup> GeoA uses social media mainly for communication and promotion purposes.<sup>42</sup>

Build Up and their peace fellow SEED for Myanmar started a youth-led Facebook campaign in Myanmar, called **Common Imagination**, in which young people were able to create and share videos about the conflict realities in their community.<sup>43</sup> After SEED had trained 167 youth on video-making and positive messaging, young people submitted short videos documenting local challenges and their vision for their city. SEED also worked with 28 young people on Non-Violent Communications as a complement to the campaign. They used Facebook as a platform for these videos to be shared, and as a space to empower and connect young people and hence mobilize them around a common peaceful future. Furthermore, Common Imagination created a space for dialogue between youth and authorities, such as the government and other peace stakeholders. ♦

---

<sup>37</sup> Tim Receveur interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 15 2021

<sup>38</sup> "Myanmar Build Peace Fellows 2018," How to Build Up, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://howtobuildup.org/programs/peace-innovators/meet-the-fellows/myanmar-fellows-2018/>.

<sup>39</sup> "Services: Geoa-Center," GeoA, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.geoacenter.com/monitoring>.

<sup>40</sup> "Past Projects: Geoa-Center," GeoA, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.geoacenter.com/ongoing-activities>.

<sup>41</sup> "Signes Emotionels: Zarma," Signes Emotionels: Zarma, July 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eq6BtqCTZgs&list=PLpjThyUEZxlxwNNStrBRm0AOHyOQZ8ETb&index=4>.

<sup>42</sup> Antonin Lorenzini, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 23, 2021

<sup>43</sup> "Myanmar Build Peace Fellows 2018," How to Build Up, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://howtobuildup.org/programs/peace-innovators/meet-the-fellows/myanmar-fellows-2018/>.

### 3.3 Dialogue & Networking

The **Donbass Dialogue Platform** is an innovative virtual platform seeking to reconnect members of divided communities in the Donetsk region amid the ongoing conflict.<sup>44</sup> The initiative's methodology combines online dialogue with offline elements: Based on the dialogue in a regulated Facebook group, administrators can identify key issues of the conflict. These topics are then being addressed during a week-long offline dialogue marathon taking place twice a year, whose attendees are recruited through the same Facebook group. In addition, the use of an online video conferencing platform based on peer-to-peer technology allows participants to join the workshop anonymously. Thus, the initiative creates a safe space for all dialogue participants regardless of their physical location. Since 2015, Donbass Dialogue has been able to unite 400 members in their virtual community. All in all, social media is both used for outbound strategies as well as for facilitating exchange between different conflict actors.

Piloted in 2017, **The Commons** is Build Up's tested and successful intervention to address polarization in social media in the USA.<sup>45</sup> The Commons works to address societal divides in the United States on race and politics through social media through three routes: Firstly, they are hosting two Facebook groups for people to learn, share and collaborate around different engagements on social media. Secondly, they advance our understanding of how people can engage on social media by sharing strategies on messaging and technical tools. Thirdly, they launched a self-guided course around analyzing your social media, determining where the audience wants to engage and practicing engagement. Despite the fact that the project's focus centers on social media itself, The Commons uses social media platforms mostly for dialogue purposes.

USIP in collaboration with PTL set up **Sawa Shabab** in 2014 – a peacebuilding radio series aired by nearly 30 local stations across South Sudan.<sup>46</sup> Sawa Shabab follows the lives of young South Sudanese as they face unique challenges while learning how to build peace in their communities. Most relevant to our research is the aftermath of the project: it was able to spark an youth-led online community which has proven to positively influence the conflict narrative, bring about new friendships across the country and counter online hate speech and fake news.<sup>47</sup> The participating youth has formed a trust network, in which they not only support each other but also organize

---

<sup>44</sup> "Donbass Dialogue Platform," Peace Insight (Peace Direct), accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/resources/>.

<sup>45</sup> "The Commons Project," Go to Build Up. (Build Up), accessed May 2021, <https://howtobuildup.org/programs/digital-conflict/the-commons-project/>.

<sup>46</sup> "Sawa Shabab: PeaceTech Lab," PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace, accessed May 2021, <https://www.peacetechlab.org/sawa-shabab-radio>.

<sup>47</sup> Twila LaMar, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 16, 2021

themselves around constructive peacemaking efforts. Interestingly, participants from this network have prompted PTL to publish their first Hate Speech Lexicon.<sup>48</sup>

In collaboration with PTL, GeoA has set up **The TechHouse** which provides a space for NGOs to network, discuss ideas and familiarize themselves with technological solutions.<sup>49</sup> GeoA provides so-called 'burst training', intense two-hour workshops led by local trainers where participants develop highly useful and specific tech skills. Past and ongoing sessions cover a range of tools such as podcasting, Facebook analytics, digital security and empowering women to become online content creators. Although the theme of the sessions also covers elements of social media, they do not actively use social media apart from coordination and communication purposes.<sup>50</sup> ♦

### 3.4 Hybrid program

Interestingly, there is one program run by RNW Media, which truly combines elements of all three categories. **Citizens Voice** focuses on building inclusive digital communities for the youth in conflict and post-conflict societies.<sup>51</sup> Applying a user-centered approach and persuasive storytelling, RNW Media use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to offer safe spaces where young women and men from across political, ethnic, racial, regional or religious divides can come together in a way which is often impossible in the offline space. Hence, a large part of the program centers around dialogue and networking. Moreover, these platforms serve as a data management tool for RNW Media. With the help of text analysis and social listening tools (Crowd Tangle, Brandwatch) they can gather relevant information to inform their content strategy and targeted advertising.<sup>52</sup> Thirdly, as part of their digital marketing strategy, NRW Media adopted social media to assess their own approaches of moderation.<sup>53</sup> This so-called AB testing enables them to understand how changes in framing influence the conflict discourse and dialogue. ♦

### 3.5 Prospective projects

On top of the already existing programs, I learned about two prospective initiatives connected to peacetechnology which PAX could still choose to participate in or learn from. Firstly, at the Nobel Prize Summit 2021, PTL proposed to set up an **Intergovernmental Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE)**, to analyze our global information environment and provide governments with science-based

---

<sup>48</sup> Twila LaMar, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 16, 2021

<sup>49</sup> "Past Projects: GeoA-Center," GeoA, accessed June 2021, <https://www.geoacenter.com/ongoing-activities>.

<sup>50</sup> Antonin Lorenzini, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 23, 2021

<sup>51</sup> "Citizens' Voice," RNW Media, August 19, 2020, <https://www.rnw.org/what-we-do/citizens-voice/>.

<sup>52</sup> Luke Gilder, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 24, 2021

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

recommendations for achieving vital information integrity.<sup>54</sup> A body like the IPIE could be an important vehicle for understanding the complexity and severity of the disinformation problem, for creating interdisciplinary and international trust, and for providing leadership to shape internet-use norms.<sup>55</sup> If PAX planned to get more involved in social media peacebuilding, keeping in touch with this board would be useful to stay informed about the most recent developments.

Similarly, Medinat Malefakis is planning a **Peacetech Project** with the ETH Zurich and the Institute for Anthropology and Empirical Cultural Studies (ISEK) at the university of Zurich in 2022.<sup>56</sup> The goal is to create a practitioner, policy and academic fusion on the role of digital technologies in various aspects of peacebuilding, including counter-terrorism and humanitarian aid/development cooperation. Expected collaborators comprise the UNDP, NRC, Build-Up, Today Peace Institute, CSS, ECOWAS, and the Nigerian Military. Medinat expressed her interest in including PAX as an additional collaborator in this project. ♦

### 3.6 Platforms

The following list comprises the most important platforms and tools that can be used to analyze social media data or access already compiled and visualized data sets. As the efforts of setting up our own data analytics might outrun the benefits, PAX can greatly profit from the existing data sets.

- ♦ **Geofeedia** is a platform that allows you to conduct location-based social media monitoring and searches, and also has a sentiment analysis feature.<sup>57</sup>
- ♦ **HootSuite** is a social media management dashboard that allows you to manage and analyze various social media sources.<sup>58</sup>
- ♦ **GroundTruth** (by PTL) is a SaaS solution providing early warning of social and economic disruption. It combines real-time alerts and visibility into local conditions with expert commentary and trend analyses. The platform integrates sophisticated data science capabilities with connections to local networks to provide a valuable early warning and response mechanism for organizations worldwide.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Kelly Hoye, "Peacetech Lab Leads Tech and Human Rights Experts in Call for Bold Action to Counter Misinformation during Nobel Prize Summit" (PeaceTech Lab, May 17, 2021), <https://www.peacetechlab.org/news/2021/5/17/peacetech-lab-leads-tech-and-human-rights-experts-in-call-for-bold-action-to-counter-misinformation-during-nobel-prize-summit>.

<sup>55</sup> Graham Lawton, "We Need to Set up an International Body to Fight Fake News," *New Scientist*, June 2, 2021, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg25033370-100-we-need-to-set-up-an-international-body-to-fight-fake-news/>.

<sup>56</sup> Dr Medinat Abdulazeez Malefakis, Email exchange with author, June 11, 2021

<sup>57</sup> "Location-Based Analytics Platform," Geofeedia, accessed May 2021, <https://geofeedia.com/>.

<sup>58</sup> Hootsuite Inc., "Social Media Marketing & Management-Dashboard," Hootsuite, accessed June 2021, <https://www.hootsuite.com/de/>.

<sup>59</sup> "GroundTruth Global: PeaceTech Lab," PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace, accessed June 2021, <https://www.peacetechlab.org/groundtruth-global>.

- ◆ **Aggie** is an open-source software that can aggregate data from multiple platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, SMS and syndicated websites and support real-time analysis during critical events, such as national elections.<sup>60</sup>
- ◆ **TweetDeck** is a live monitoring tool that makes it easier to collect crucial information in real-time and sort through your searches, augmenting them to find more relevant content and removing the inevitable noise.<sup>61</sup> Anyone who possesses a Twitter account can use it. It also allows its user to filter Tweets by their precise location by using coordinates from for instance Google Maps.<sup>62</sup>
- ◆ **MapBox** is a live location platform which helps PTL to build algorithms concerning COVID violence.<sup>63</sup>
- ◆ **NodeXL** is an add-in for Microsoft Excel That supports social network and content analysis. More specifically, it can be used for network visualization, calculating network metrics, content and time series analysis, and provides social network APIs to Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Wikipedia. NodeXL Basic is available freely and openly to all.<sup>64</sup>
- ◆ **Brandwatch** is a digital consumer intelligence company selling multiple products for social media data analysis. In the context of peacebuilding, they can provide information and the means to track specific conflict groups, understand the general conflict narrative and filter for hate speech. Following the example of PTL, PAX should also consider the option to offer potential social media projects as case studies to Brandwatch and in return be able to use all of their services pro bono.<sup>65</sup>
- ◆ **Keshif** designed and developed a secure real-time media monitoring and analytics platform to track, diagnose, analyze, present, and respond to propaganda and misinformation content across influencers, themes, time, geography, toxicity, and sentiments in Yemen. Next to traditional media and perception surveys, Keshif uses social media to gather their conflict data.<sup>66</sup> ◆

---

<sup>60</sup> Technology and International Development Lab, "Aggie," Get Aggie, accessed June 2021, <https://www.getaggie.org/>.

<sup>61</sup> "TweetDeck," TweetDeck, accessed June 2021, <http://www.tweetdeck.com/>.

<sup>62</sup> "The Most Comprehensive TweetDeck Research Guide In Existence (Probably)," *bellingcat*, June 21, 2019, <https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/how-tos/2019/06/21/the-most-comprehensive-tweetdeck-research-guide-in-existence-probably/>.

<sup>63</sup> "Maps, Geocoding, and Navigation APIs & SDKs," Mapbox, accessed June 2021, <https://www.mapbox.com/>.

<sup>64</sup> "NodeXL: Your Social Network Analysis Tool for Social Media," Social Media Research Foundation, accessed June 2021, <https://www.smrfoundation.org/nodexl/>.

<sup>65</sup> "A New Kind of Intelligence," Brandwatch, accessed June 2021, <https://www.brandwatch.com/>.

<sup>66</sup> "Data Made Explorable," Keshif, accessed June 2021, <https://keshif.me/Solutions/Conflict>.

# 4. Limitations

Regardless of the potential and opportunities posed by the new media for peacebuilding, we also have to understand its limitations, of which I will only name a few. In addition to concerns about the authenticity of information circulated on social media and the potential misuse of personal information on social media sites, censorship is a significant concern.<sup>67</sup> The use of pseudonyms on social media by opposition parties facing harassment in authoritarian countries violates user agreements created by social media sites such as Facebook. There are also some inherently unethical elements to social media. Homogenous enclaves in the form of echo chambers can lead to the dehumanization of entire social groups.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, the question arises whether it is ethically acceptable to collaborate with or support tech giants like Facebook by using their services and analytic tools.

Above this, when conducting social media analysis we should be aware of potential issues of selection bias, the trustworthiness of information, and the security and privacy of users. This also involves limits to the information that social media analytics can assess. Many of the analytical tools available for social media are available only in English, making analysis of content in other languages difficult and ad hoc.<sup>69</sup>

Lastly, I would like to stress that many elements of peacebuilding are not well suited for digital formats. Currently, there are few digital methods or examples of restorative justice, trauma healing, arts-based approaches, security sector reform, demobilization of armed groups – to name only a few other forms of peacebuilding. ♦

---

<sup>67</sup> Lisa Schirch, “25 Spheres of Digital Peacebuilding and PeaceTech” (Today Peace Institute, Alliance for Peacebuilding, September 2020), [https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-93\\_lisa-schirch.pdf](https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-93_lisa-schirch.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> Build Up, “Digital Peacebuilding 101,” Go to Build Up., accessed June 20, 2021, <https://howtobuildup.org/community-learning/lessons/start-here-introducing-technology-for-peacebuilding/>.

<sup>69</sup> Antonin Lorenzini, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 23, 2021

# 5. Recommendations

Based on the above findings, I have formulated important recommendations for PAX's use of social media in prospective peace projects. I would like to stress that additional research is needed to make final decisions on project implementations. As I was not able to talk to all relevant stakeholders, due to the limited timespan of my research, a follow up project could for instance explore possible funding options for PAX. In any case, this research should merely be seen as a starting point to guide PAX through the many options on how to incorporate social media into their peacebuilding efforts.

## 5.1 Treat big data analysis with caution

Based on the recommendations of PeaceTech Lab and PAX's resources, I would dissuade PAX from using social media predominantly for big data analysis. As Tim Receveur pointed out, compared to the accuracy provided by websites, radio, SMS and traditional news media, social media is insufficient in providing reliable data on conflict dynamics.<sup>70</sup> Producing a lot of noise with little significance, social media as a listening service is not only time consuming but also inaccurate. The arising implications for PAX's PoC program are straightforward: enriching their SMS mechanism for the data collection of civilians' security situation with social media analysis offers advantages only if it was checked and evaluated with the help of human agency. ♦

## 5.2 Use small-scale digital analysis

Following Luke Gilder's expert opinion, I would recommend PAX to utilize small scale social media analyses to inform their online interventions and projects.<sup>71</sup> This digital context analysis about your target audience can reveal the most used websites, key social media influencers within specific target groups, or main topics of discussion – all of which can contribute to more successful project implementation. PAX can make use of some relatively simple and affordable tools such as Brandwatch. Digital analysis can also function as a way to validate theories about conflict dynamics.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, a project similar to PTL's hate speech lexicon, which I categorized under data management, might be a feasible idea for any team at PAX that needs to understand conflict narratives. Similarly, the Kurdish constitution project run by PTL provides a useful blueprint for including civilians in important political decisions. By planting social media plug-ins on websites, PAX could use this strategy to collect feedback and tips from different conflict actors. ♦

---

<sup>70</sup> Tim Receveur interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 15 2021

<sup>71</sup> Luke Gilder interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 24 2021

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

### 5.3 Outbound strategies

Instead of focusing on data management, PAX should implement social media into their outbound strategies, like strategic communication, and network and dialogue. As in the case of The Road to Equal Justice, PAX could adopt social media as a strategic communication tool for spreading the word about and recruiting participants for specific initiatives. Additionally, if PAX received the necessary technological support from a partner organization, launching a chatbot similar to MIDO would be a highly innovative project in PAX's portfolio. Not only it allows PAX to get in touch with citizens in conflict areas, but also serves as a teaching tool for media literacy and awareness-raising.

Luke Gilder confirmed that it would be easiest for PAX to use social media for creating dialogue, forming online communities and amplifying marginalized voices.<sup>73</sup> The Donbass Dialogue Platform could be an interesting approach for PAX's work in Ukraine already because of their geographical overlap. What's more, an interactive social media community could support the Ukraine team in providing a participatory, locally-driven response to their reform efforts. Especially when working with Internally Displaced People (IDPs) who require basic services PAX needs to implement practical solutions that relate to their needs. ♦

### 5.4 Focus on Twitter and WhatsApp

Tim sees social media's biggest potential in accelerating support for peace initiatives, connecting people and sharing messages.<sup>74</sup> As Facebook pages require a lot of staffing, he would rather recommend using Instagram or Twitter to create and share online content effectively. Furthermore, PAX could utilize social media for creating group chats to set the stage for in-person meetings or workshops. Thus, the organizers can already start discussing sensitive topics and understand the most pressing conflict drivers prior to the workshop.<sup>75</sup> ♦

### 5.5 To-Do-List

To round this research off with clear guidelines, I have developed a set of questions one will want to ask before setting up a new project involving social media:

- ♦ What are the changes (objectives) that the program and activities are trying to produce?
- ♦ What is the information that needs to be collected to enrich the peacebuilding efforts of PAX?

---

<sup>73</sup> Luke Gilder interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 24 2021

<sup>74</sup> Tim Receveur interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 15 2021

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.



- ◆ What are the tools, methodologies, or mechanisms that will allow PAX to best capture this information?
- ◆ Will the time and resources needed to create or adapt the new technology and learn how to implement it outweigh other benefits?
- ◆ Are the necessary infrastructure systems in place in the implementation area to support the new technologies?
- ◆ Does the staff have the professional capacity or technological literacy to apply the new technology? If not, are additional resources required? Have these been included in the program budget?
- ◆ Which open-source social media analytics tools can PAX use? Would it be beneficial to set up partnerships with analytic tool providers to gain access to their restricted services?
- ◆ Will the new technology introduce bias? If so, how can bias be reduced or tested for?
- ◆ Will the new technology enable better sharing of results with all key stakeholders, including program participants? Will it enable quicker evidence-based decisions? ◆

## 5.6 Relevant Contacts

For the purpose of additional research, I compiled a list of organizations that PAX could contact for further information or collaborations. These organizations can also be approached if PAX wants to find out more about funding strategies.

- ◆ Build Up
- ◆ International Alert
- ◆ PeaceTech Lab
- ◆ GeoAnalytics
- ◆ U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP)
- ◆ United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
- ◆ RNW Media
- ◆ Toda Peace Institute
- ◆ Tech4Peace
- ◆ 7amleh
- ◆ ICT for Peace
- ◆ Search for Common Ground

In order to further escape the Western Peace NGO bubble, one could look into projects launched by SRHR organizations for instance in Mexico or India, who have incorporated social media in very innovative ways into their work.<sup>76</sup> ♦

## 5.7 Conclusion

All in all, my research highlights the great potential of social media for the work of peacebuilding organizations like PAX. Despite my critical assessment of the field of data management, I would highly recommend PAX pilot their own social media projects. If carefully planned according to my main recommendations and additional support from partner organizations, social media could allow PAX to get in touch with previously unknown conflict actors and empower oppressed parts of society. Especially for any initial project, it seems sensible to collaborate with an already more established organization in the field of peacetechnology thus receiving crucial guidance and perhaps access to analysis tools or new networks. Finally, social media offers wonderful opportunities to make peacebuilding not only more dynamic, engaging and innovative but possibly also more enjoyable for all participants. ♦

---

<sup>76</sup> Luke Gilder interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 24 2021.

# Bibliography

- ◆ A New Kind of Intelligence. Brandwatch. Accessed June 2021. <https://www.brandwatch.com/>.
- ◆ About Us: Geoa-Center. GeoA. Accessed June 2021. <https://www.geoacenter.com/team>.
- ◆ Annan, Kofi. "What Is Peacebuilding?" Conciliation Resources. Accessed June 24, 2021. <https://www.c-r.org/who-we-are/why-peacebuilding/what-peacebuilding>
- ◆ Antonin Lorenzini, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 23, 2021
- ◆ Bratic, Vladimir. "Peacebuilding in the Age of New Media." Media and Communication 4, no. 1 (2016): 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v4i1.559>.
- ◆ Build Up. "Digital Peacebuilding 101." Go to Build Up. Accessed June 20, 2021. <https://howtobuildup.org/community-learning/lessons/start-here-introducing-technology-for-peacebuilding/>.
- ◆ Citizens' Voice." RNW Media, August 19, 2020. <https://www.rnw.org/what-we-do/citizens-voice/>.
- ◆ Conflict Alert Info. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://conflicalert.info/>.
- ◆ Corlazzoli, Vanessa. Rep. ICTs for Monitoring & Evaluation of Peacebuilding Programmes. Search for Common Ground, 2014. <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CCVRI-SSP-ICT-and-ME-Final.pdf>
- ◆ Data Made Explorable. Keshif. Accessed June 2021. <https://keshif.me/Solutions/Conflict>.
- ◆ Donbass Dialogue Platform. Peace Insight. Peace Direct. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/resources/>.
- ◆ Dr Medinat Abdulazeez Malefakis, Email exchange with author, June 11, 2021
- ◆ Geoanalytics Center Sahel. Signes Emotionels: Zarma, July 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eq6BtqCTZgs&list=PLpjThyUEZxlwNNStrBRm0AOHyOQZ8ETb&index=4>.
- ◆ GroundTruth Global: PeaceTech Lab. PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace. Accessed June 2021. <https://www.peacetechlab.org/groundtruth-global>.
- ◆ Hermann, Erik. "Explaining Swift River." Ushahidi, April 2009. <https://www.ushahidi.com/blog/2009/04/09/explaining-swift-river>
- ◆ Himmelfarb, S. Publication. Social Media and Conflict Prevention. United States Institute of Peace (USIP), December 2012. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2012/12/social-media-and-conflict-prevention>.
- ◆ Hoye, Kelly. "Peacetech Lab Leads Tech and Human Rights Experts in Call for Bold Action to Counter Misinformation during Nobel Prize Summit." PeaceTech Lab, May 17, 2021. <https://www.peacetechlab.org/news/2021/5/17/peacetech-lab-leads-tech-and-human-rights-experts-in-call-for-bold-action-to-counter-misinformation-during-nobel-prize-summit>.
- ◆ Inc., Hootsuite. "Social Media Marketing & Management-Dashboard." Hootsuite. Accessed June 2021. <https://www.hootsuite.com/de/>.

- ◆ International Alert, British Council, and Peace Perception Poll. Rep. Realising the Potential of Social Media as a Tool for Building Peace. International Alert, 2020. [www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Social-Media-Peacebuilding-Tool-EN-2020.pdf](http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Social-Media-Peacebuilding-Tool-EN-2020.pdf).
- ◆ Lab, Technology and International Development. "Aggie." Get Aggie. Accessed June 2021. <https://www.getaggie.org/>.
- ◆ Lawton, Graham. "We Need to Set up an International Body to Fight Fake News." New Scientist, June 2, 2021. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg25033370-100-we-need-to-set-up-an-international-body-to-fight-fake-news/>.
- ◆ Lefton, Jacob, Maude Morrisson, Mira El Mahla, and Helena Puig Larrauri. Publication. Analysing Refugee-Host Community Narratives on Social Media . Build Up, February 2019. [https://howtobuildup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UNDPBU\\_SocialMediaAnalysis\\_Leb\\_FINAL\\_310519.pdf](https://howtobuildup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UNDPBU_SocialMediaAnalysis_Leb_FINAL_310519.pdf).
- ◆ Location-Based Analytics Platform. Geofeedia. Accessed May 2021. <https://geofeedia.com/>.
- ◆ Maps, Geocoding, and Navigation APIs & SDKs. Mapbox. Accessed June 2021. <https://www.mapbox.com/>.
- ◆ Mor, Yifat, Yiftach Ron, and Ifat Maoz. "'Likes' for Peace: Can Facebook Promote Dialogue in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?" Media and Communication 3, no. 4 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v3i4.298>.
- ◆ Myanmar Build Peace Fellows 2018. How to Build Up. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://howtobuildup.org/programs/peace-innovators/meet-the-fellows/myanmar-fellows-2018/>.
- ◆ NodeXL: Your Social Network Analysis Tool for Social Media. Social Media Research Foundation. Accessed June 2021. <https://www.smrfoundation.org/nodexl/>.
- ◆ Our Hate Speech Lexicons: PeaceTech Lab. PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://www.peacetechnology.org/toolbox-lexicons>.
- ◆ Past Projects: GeoA-Center. GeoA. Accessed June 2021. <https://www.geoacenter.com/ongoing-activities>.
- ◆ Peacetechnology Lab COVID-19 Violence Tracker. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://www.covid19violence.org/>.
- ◆ Peacetechnology Lab Leads Tech and Human Rights Experts in Call for Bold Action to Counter Misinformation during Nobel Prize Summit. Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace. PeaceTech Lab , May 17, 2021. <https://www.peacetechnology.org/news/2021/5/17/peacetechnology-lab-leads-tech-and-human-rights-experts-in-call-for-bold-action-to-counter-misinformation-during-nobel-prize-summit>.
- ◆ PeaceTech Lab. "Our Hate Speech Lexicons: PeaceTech Lab." Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace. Accessed June 11, 2021. <https://www.peacetechnology.org/toolbox-lexicons>.
- ◆ PeaceTech Lab. Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://www.peacetechnology.org/>.
- ◆ Real Time Information - RapidPro. UNICEF Office of Innovation . Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/rapidpro>.

- ◆ Sawa Shabab: PeaceTech Lab. PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace. Accessed May 2021. <https://www.peacetechlab.org/sawa-shabab-radio>.
- ◆ Schirch, Lisa. Publication. 25 Spheres of Digital Peacebuilding and PeaceTech. Today Peace Institute, Alliance for Peacebuilding, September 2020. [https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-93\\_lisa-schirch.pdf](https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-93_lisa-schirch.pdf).
- ◆ Services: GeoA-Center. GeoA. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://www.geoacenter.com/monitoring>.
- ◆ Tarik. "Debating the Draft Kurdish Constitution." GovRight, June 2015. <http://govright.org/debating-the-draft-kurdish-constitution/>.
- ◆ The Commons Project. Go to Build Up. Build Up. Accessed May 2021. <https://howtobuildup.org/programs/digital-conflict/the-commons-project/>.
- ◆ The Most Comprehensive TweetDeck Research Guide In Existence (Probably). bellingcat, June 21, 2019. <https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/how-tos/2019/06/21/the-most-comprehensive-tweetdeck-research-guide-in-existence-probably/>.
- ◆ The Road to Equal Justice. PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://www.peacetechlab.org/the-road-to-equal-justice>.
- ◆ Thoms, Hillena. Issue brief. Edited by Thomas van Gool and Foteini Katzilaki. Repurposing Social Media - A New Chance for Peace Building. PAX for Peace, 2021. <https://paxforpeace.nl/what-we-do/publications/repurposing-social-media>
- ◆ Tim Receveur interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 18 2021
- ◆ Tim Receveur: PeaceTech Lab. PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://www.peacetechlab.org/tim-receveur>.
- ◆ Today Peace Institute. Publication. Social Media Impacts on Conflict Dynamics . Today Peace Institute, May 2020. [https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-73\\_lisa-schirch\\_san-diego-report-social-media-impacts-on-conflict-dynamics.pdf](https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-73_lisa-schirch_san-diego-report-social-media-impacts-on-conflict-dynamics.pdf).
- ◆ TweetDeck. Accessed June 2021. <http://www.tweetdeck.com/>.
- ◆ Twila LaMar, interviewed by Hillena Thoms, June 16, 2021
- ◆ Twila LaMar: PeaceTech Lab. PeaceTech Lab | Putting the Right Tools in the Right Hands to Build Peace. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://www.peacetechlab.org/twila-lamar>.
- ◆ Ushahidi. Accessed June 21, 2021. <https://www.usahidi.com/>.



[www.paxforpeace.nl](http://www.paxforpeace.nl)

Sint Jacobsstraat 12    [www.paxforpeace.nl](http://www.paxforpeace.nl)    P.O. Box 19318  
3511 BS Utrecht        [info@paxforpeace.nl](mailto:info@paxforpeace.nl)    3501 DH Utrecht  
The Netherlands      +31 (0)30 233 33 46    The Netherlands