

# SUPPORTING GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH SMALL GRANTS

**Models for Local  
Ownership and Innovation**



**GIJTR**

Global Initiative for Justice  
Truth & Reconciliation

# ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF SITES OF CONSCIENCE

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC or the Coalition) is a global network of museums, historic sites and grassroots initiatives dedicated to building a more just and peaceful future through engaging communities in remembering struggles for human rights and addressing their modern repercussions. Founded in 1999, the Coalition now includes more than 300 Sites of Conscience members in 65 countries. The Coalition supports these members through seven regional networks that encourage collaboration and international exchange of knowledge and best practices. The Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation is a flagship program of the Coalition.



International Coalition of  
**SITES of CONSCIENCE**

Learn more at [www.sitesofconscience.org](http://www.sitesofconscience.org)

**Cover photo:** Participants of the 2019 African Youth Transitional Justice Academy visit the Kigali Genocide Memorial

# ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Founded by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR) is a consortium of nine organizations around the globe dedicated to multidisciplinary, integrated and holistic approaches to transitional justice. Grounded in a spirit of collaboration, each GIJTR project is managed by a specific consortium member with support from other members. Central to GIJTR's work is building capacities and laying the groundwork for community-wide participation in both formal and community-based transitional justice processes. This publication highlights the work of local organizations and activists who have received small grants to design and implement community-based interventions. Sub-grants provide a vital means for local partners to put into practice skills and knowledge gained through GIJTR programming while also providing a foundation to develop longer-term projects related to truth telling, reconciliation, memorialization, forensics analysis and victims' advocacy.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

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Learn more about GIJTR at  
[www.gijtr.org](http://www.gijtr.org)

# ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR JUSTICE, TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION (GIJTR)

Around the world, an increasing call exists for justice, truth and reconciliation in countries where legacies of gross human rights violations cast a shadow on transitions from repressive regimes to participatory and democratic forms of governance.

To meet this need, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC or the Coalition) launched the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR) in August 2014. Supported by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the U.S. Department of State, GIJTR seeks to



A plaque at a killing site in Bangladesh sponsored by the Liberation War Museum.

address new challenges in countries in conflict or transition that are struggling with legacies of or ongoing gross human rights abuses. The Coalition leads the GIJTR, which includes eight other organizational partners: American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), United States; Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR), Indonesia; Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV), South Africa; Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), Cambodia; Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF), United States; Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (FAFG), Guatemala; Humanitarian Law Center (HLC), Serbia; and Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG), United States. In addition to leveraging the expertise of GIJTR members, the Coalition taps into the knowledge and longstanding community connections of its 300-plus members in 65 countries to strengthen and broaden the GIJTR's work.

GIJTR partners, along with members of the Coalition, develop and implement a range of rapid-response and high-impact program activities, using both restorative and retributive approaches to justice and accountability for gross human rights violations. The expertise of the organizations under the GIJTR includes:

- Truth telling, reconciliation, memorialization and other forms of historical memory;
- Documenting human rights abuses for transitional justice purposes;
- Forensic analysis and other efforts related to missing and disappeared persons;
- Victims' advocacy such as improving access to justice, psychosocial support and trauma mitigation activities;
- Providing technical assistance to and building the capacity of civil society activists and organizations to promote and engage in transitional justice processes;
- Reparative justice initiatives; and
- Ensuring gender justice in all these processes.

To date, the GIJTR has led civil society actors in multiple countries in the development and implementation of documentation and truth-telling projects; undertaken assessments of the memorialization, documentation and psychosocial support capacities of local organizations; and provided survivors in the Asia, Africa and the Middle East and North Africa region with training, support and opportunities to participate in the design and implementation of community-driven transitional justice approaches. Given the diversity of experience and skills among GIJTR partners and among Coalition network members, the program offers post-conflict countries and countries emerging from repressive regimes a unique opportunity to address transitional justice needs in a timely manner, while promoting local participation and building the capacity of community partners.



Participants of the 2019 African Youth Transitional Justice Academy visit the Kigali Genocide Memorial

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# SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 GIJTR'S APPROACH TO TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

At the core of transitional justice is the understanding that the legacies of violent conflict and systematic human rights violations are multilayered, with lasting impacts on people's lives and the functioning of a society. The belief that these legacies must be addressed is often acknowledged, but the how, when and where are persistent questions as scholarship and practice in the field continue to evolve. Beginning with the early development of formal transitional justice mechanisms, from the Nuremberg trials following World War II to the political transitions in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s, rule of law and state-sponsored mechanisms such as truth commissions, official apology and reparations have continued to feature in transitional justice processes.

Simultaneously, concepts of retributive and restorative justice have expanded to incorporate a range of social, economic and political dimensions. This has meant the broadening of transitional justice agendas to consider a wide range of human rights violations and the development of processes needed to holistically address harms. Mental health and psychosocial support, economic, social and cultural rights, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are just a few areas that have demanded greater recognition of the field. Within this broadening of the field, there is a growing recognition that large-scale transitional justice efforts solely located within state policies, mandated commissions, peace

treaties or judicial processes are limited in creating broader change and engaging entire communities of affected populations. In other cases, state-led transitional justice efforts are not possible because of censorship or denial of historical injustices and lack of political will by those in power. These conditions have highlighted that transitional justice needs to persist, despite the large-scale actions or inactions by states, and has resulted in a growing shift toward grassroots processes driven by communities.

For the consortium of organizations that make up the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR), transitional justice processes must be conceptualized as multidisciplinary and as integrated responses directed at the needs articulated by communities themselves. This commitment is guided by the GIJTR's theory of change, which centers on the belief that a civil society indigenous to the context holds the greatest potential to create positive and sustainable change:

**IF WE UTILIZE A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO BUILD THE CAPACITIES OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs) TO SUPPORT VICTIMS IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES, THEN MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL VOICES WILL ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN AND CONTRIBUTE TO ENVISIONING AND SHAPING COHESIVE AND INCLUSIVE CULTURES BASED ON THE RULE OF LAW, JUSTICE AND PEACE.**

Underpinning this theory of change are six key objectives grounded in furthering the capacity, communication and connection among local actors. Civil society actors and organizations are regarded as important to bolstering societies' capacity to address legacies of human rights abuses by mobilizing victims and survivors and holding governments accountable for actions or inactions related to transitional justice processes. This substantial role of CSOs requires going beyond unidirectional concepts of capacity building in which gaps are identified for knowledge and skills to be deposited. Rather, the GIJTR's multidisciplinary approach is responsive to context, sustainability and the existing capacities of local actors. Priority is placed on creating space for local practitioners and emerging actors to contribute insights and expertise of their context, while being exposed to restorative and retributive transitional justice tools that can assist in expanding their reach to marginalized communities.



“We are All Relatives” was an art and essay competition hosted by Sri Lankan local partner, Institute of Social Development (ISD).

## 1.2 THE SMALL GRANTS MODEL

Activists, CSOs, educators, youth and survivors of conflict have been at the center of GIJTR’s work since its inception in 2014. These actors are committed to addressing injustices and pursuing sustainable peace for their communities, even in the face of danger and silencing by those in power. The GIJTR therefore understands that the success and sustainability of any transitional justice process relies on local CSO actors having opportunities for meaningful participation and continued involvement in formal and grassroots interventions. By providing training and support, the GIJTR endeavors to equip activists, CSOs, educators, youth and survivors of conflict with the skills and resources needed to continue the critical work in their communities and countries at large.

While the GIJTR is not a grant-making entity, it is acutely aware of the enduring need to decentralize and reconfigure funding models for inclusion of grassroots CSOs. As a result, GIJTR focuses on developing strong working relationships with local partners on each country flagship project and providing small grants to CSOs. The small grants model has been implemented across GIJTR’s projects and is central to its methodology in promoting locally owned grassroots processes to transitional justice. Derived from GIJTR’s overarching theory of change, the small grants model is rooted in the following theory of change:

**IF WE PROVIDE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO GRASSROOTS ACTORS IN EMERGING CSO ENVIRONMENTS, THEN SUSTAINABLE AND CONTEXT-SPECIFIC APPROACHES WILL BE CULTIVATED BASED ON THEIR EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO MEET THE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE NEEDS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES.**

GIJTR understands that the promotion of community-driven processes to transitional justice is not isolated from state-led institutions and policies. Rather, there is recognition that conversations taking place in community town halls, between neighbors and on the sidelines of the soccer field are just as important



as the signing of peace treaties or parliamentary debates. However, community-driven processes are often not central to official transitional justice processes, excluding entire communities from engaging with truth telling, reconciliation and accountability.<sup>1</sup>

There are both inherent operational limitations

as well as political conditions, including limited mandates of commissions, a dearth of resources and personnel to reach communities, the privileging of some victim groups over other groups and lack of political will to implement recommendations related to reparations and accountability. In turn, not coming to terms with the past holds both immediate and longer-term impacts, with the potential for renewed cycles of violence and loss of lives. Moreover, transitional justice is a long-term process that cannot simply fit into donor cycles and rather requires multifaceted engagement through different mechanisms, including documentation of atrocities, trials for human rights violations and holistic victim support.<sup>2</sup>

Contexts with emerging transitional justice processes often face unsustainable support, characterized by an influx of international actors for short periods of time, donor-driven assistance solely for government interventions and a skewed focus toward urban issues or the political capital of the country.<sup>3</sup> In cases in which support is provided for local organizations, preference is largely given to a few established organizations with a focus on legal expertise. Overall, transitional justice processes can result in one-off and short-term outputs with little thought given to existing and emerging work of CSOs on the ground. As a result, little change is observed by victims and survivors, and community organizations at the grassroots level are further removed from the very processes meant to include their voices. Through the GIJTR's assessments in various contexts, including Colombia, Sri Lanka and Guinea, it has repeatedly been found that grassroots organizations are at the forefront of awareness

raising, mobilizing victims and advocating for reparations. This finding is further cemented by Arthur and Yakinthou (2015), who reflect on transitional justice processes at the impasse of funding strategies and political will:

**BECAUSE TJ PROCESSES ARE MULTIGENERATIONAL AND PROGRESS CAN SLOW OR FACE REVERSALS, “DONOR FATIGUE” FREQUENTLY SETS IN. THERE ARE CASES WHEN DONORS HAVE WITHDRAWN ALL TJ FUNDING — TO BOTH STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS — WHEN THE STATE SHOWS A LACK OF COMMITMENT. THIS, HOWEVER, IS PRECISELY THE MOMENT WHEN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTION IS OFTEN MOST CRITICAL TO KEEP PRESSURE ON THE STATE TO FULFILL ITS RESPONSIBILITIES.<sup>4</sup>**

Breaking with conventional patterns of one-off international or government-led processes, the GIJTR focuses on emerging and existing organizations at the community level who are central to ensuring that truth, justice and reconciliation efforts continue long after the commission closes its doors and international actors depart. Small grants to local organizations are critical to backing their ongoing work and providing them with opportunities to incorporate skills and lessons of GIJTR trainings and workshops. Small grants provide local partners with funding and technical support to design and implement pilot projects to address the transitional justice needs identified in their communities. Local partners are encouraged to draw on their own expertise and community ties while also incorporating and adapting the training received through GIJTR projects.

While each GIJTR project is unique in its thematic area, regional focus and pedagogical approach, the small grants model generally follows a standard process. The course of receiving a small grant begins with local organizations participating in a series of workshops and trainings led by GIJTR partners. Prior to the workshops, participants are asked to think about potential projects they believe are needed to address past injustices or emerging conflicts in their country or community. These ideas must be separate from current projects they are implementing but can complement the broader objectives of their work. Through collaboration and peer learning, participants share their respective ideas and receive feedback and support from GIJTR partners to refine and operationalize their projects. At the end of the training, local partners are asked to submit a basic project proposal outlining the aim and objectives and prospective activities that will be carried out. These proposals are assessed by GIJTR partners, and thereafter, small grants are distributed to local partners, who are given between four and six months to implement the projects they have



designed. At the end of the implementation period, organizations or individual recipients of the grants submit both financial and narrative reports detailing project activities and reflecting on the success and challenges of their projects.

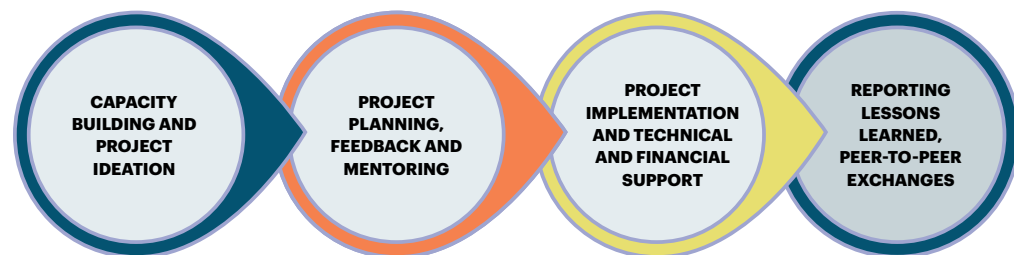


Figure 1. Small grant process and implementation

The amount of funding given to each local organization is standard and is distributed in two disbursements. The first disbursement is given at the start of implementation, and the remaining amount (usually 20% of the total grant) is given upon completion of the project outputs. Beyond the financial component of the grant, local partners are provided with the option to receive mentoring from GIJTR partners throughout the design, implementation and post-implementation process. As mentioned, small grants are built into the workshops and trainings of GIJTR programming. This allows for evaluation workshops in which local partners are also able to assess their projects and share lessons learned. Local partners are also encouraged to envision potential avenues to build on the pilot projects and ways of scaling their projects to engage with communities that have not been reached yet.

### 1.3 A GRASSROOTS MISSION FOR CHANGE

To date, over 150 small projects have been implemented through small grants, engaging grassroots communities in various contexts. Local organizations are provided with small grants that range between \$1,000 and \$4,000 USD, depending on the expected scope and time frame of small projects as well as the overall available budget of the thematic or regional program. Projects have used a wide range of methods, including intergenerational dialogues, human rights documentation for advocacy, building archiving skills, theater performances, oral history collection, website development and documentary making. GIJTR's approach to working with local actors prioritizes a vast array of actors and organizations that are specifically engaging with marginalized groups and diverse communities. As a result, small projects hold two important dimensions in terms of the methods and the extent of engagement. In terms of methods of engagement, local CSOs have adapted received trainings related to dialogue, body mapping, archiving and awareness raising to effectively mobilize communities and begin conversations around historical and ongoing issues. By working with a host of civil society actors, a diverse range of small projects are created, with each actor bringing their experiences, social networks and areas of focus to inform the kinds of projects they plan.

Secondly, small projects have taken place in remote geographic areas and with groups that are often overlooked in formal transitional justice processes. In holding the ability to work with remote and marginalized communities, local partners play a dual role of both communicating the national developments related to transitional justice and gauging the concerns and grievances that may be absent from legislated transitional justice plans. In addition, throughout many

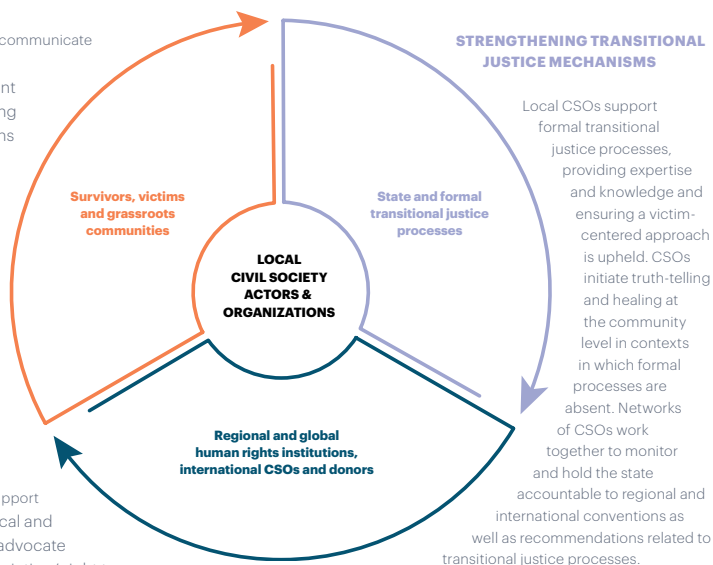
conflicts, the signing of a peace agreement has not necessarily been correlated with the end of violent conflict on the ground. By connecting these disparities and understanding the nature of ongoing disputes both related and specific to communities, local CSOs are best able to give voice to the complexities faced at the grassroots level. In considering the web of relationships between levels of government, state institutions, international actors and grassroots communities, local civil society holds a strategic position in connecting across groups and disseminating information and, most importantly, are able to grasp what it might begin to do in creating sustainable peace.

#### AMPLIFYING VOICES

Local CSOs respond to and communicate the needs of communities, advocating for government recognition and addressing of truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation. To continue effectively serving victims and survivors, local CSOs cultivate strong relationships with communities.

#### MOBILIZING SUPPORT

Local CSOs work to highlight the successes and challenges of working in their contexts, identifying regional and international support networks to further technical and financial capacity. CSOs advocate for greater recognition of victims' right to justice, truth-seeking, reparations and guarantees of nonrecurrence.



#### STRENGTHENING TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE MECHANISMS

Local CSOs support formal transitional justice processes, providing expertise and knowledge and ensuring a victim-centered approach is upheld. CSOs initiate truth-telling and healing at the community level in contexts in which formal processes are absent. Networks of CSOs work together to monitor and hold the state accountable to regional and international conventions as well as recommendations related to transitional justice processes.

Figure 2. Intervening role of local CSOs at different levels

With this understanding, GIJTR views small project grants as a means to support innovative and locally led projects within an emerging CSO context, where many of the participating organizations and actors are fledgling or expanding their mandates. As countries transition toward democracy, cultivating a fertile environment for local CSOs to grow is important for creating a strong and active civic culture that will contribute to the prevention of resurgences in violence and repression. Central to this cultivation is ensuring that local actors are given the opportunity to develop and test interventions for their contexts through small grants. Thus far the following outcomes for actors and organizations participating in the small grants model have been observed:

- Growth of internal organizational capacity to design and implement projects,
- Ability to independently access other grants by using small grants experience,
- Transformed or novel relations with communities and stakeholders,
- Timely interventions in latent community conflicts, and
- Creation of follow-up programming and new organizational priorities.

Previous and current local partners shared reflections on project-specific outcomes as well as wider outcomes of their engagement in GIJTR programming:

***“Our organization benefited from the small grant by developing our operations and our ability to carry out tasks and objectives of the projects we set out. As a good starting point for our projects, there is more to follow in terms of creating generations of memory projects for our community.”***

— Colombia Grassroots Organization

***“Through the small grant project, we developed a trusting relationship with communities and victims. We were therefore able to use the same methodology to consult victims on what forms of reparations and reconciliation mechanisms will work for them and get suggestions and recommendations on how to promote social cohesion and healing. This allowed us to conduct these follow-up projects and gather new information from communities adopting a community-led approach.”***

— Gambia Grassroots Organization

***“By working with GIJTR, we were able to enrich our local CSOs on transitional justice and the role of the CSOs. We were able to capacitate the community to become active citizens. The GIJTR also helped to share the experiences of CSO activists from conflict-ridden countries with our local partners. This helped our CSOs understand how to engage in our post-conflict situation to promote justice, democracy, governance accountability and equality.”***

— Sri Lanka Grassroots Organization

Small grants therefore offer a means to ensure that local actors are able to grow in their mandates and experiment with alternative methods of creating and sustaining positive societal and structural change. Simultaneously, emerging and new local CSOs are able to develop skills and gain greater experience in grant processes, with GIJTR's manageable and straightforward requirements for proposals and final reporting. Small grants recipients are provided with constructive feedback to refine projects ideas and expand on the successes and lessons learned during the final reporting process. More importantly, small grants prioritize the ability of local organizations to effectively respond to evolving dynamics on the ground, which external international actors often fail to understand.



Workshop on CSO documentation and archives in Bogota, Colombia

#### 1.4 OVERVIEW OF TOOLKIT

This toolkit is divided into four main case studies of small grants projects and a final section that outlines lessons learned and best practices for implementing a small grants model. Each case study also provides an overview of the main GIJTR program in which it was based and the workshops and trainings that complemented the participants' project ideas. The first case study explores the work of a community-run project in El Placer, Colombia, designed to reactivate an existing community museum as a site for memorialization and dialogue. The second case study highlights the work of a Côte d'Ivoire youth committed to working with fellow youth around atrocity prevention and acknowledging past human rights violations. Remaining on the African continent, Gambian CSO Women in Liberation and Leadership offers an innovative approach to engaging young men in discussions on SGBV. Finally, the fourth case study looks to the potential of cross-regional network building with Syrian families seeking truth telling and justice for their missing and disappeared relatives. Drawing on the insights and contributions made by these projects and the many other projects implemented, this toolkit assembles a list of best practices for implementing organizations, prospective participants and donors interested in supporting the use of small grants models.



Guinea local partners and regional coordinators discussing upcoming and ongoing projects.

### 1.5 WHO SHOULD READ THIS TOOLKIT?

This toolkit aims to highlight the apparent and potential impacts of small grants and is written for organizations and practitioners who are hoping to rethink methods of capacity building and sub-grants within current and future programming. This toolkit is also written for grassroots organizations that would benefit from participating in sub-grants projects but require further guidance on the kinds of projects that could be designed. Lastly, this toolkit is also written for anyone interested in the practical shifts toward local ownership and capacity in transitional justice and related fields. The case studies provided should be read as innovative and contextual interventions rather than prescriptive and rigid. True to the objective of the sub-grants, the central idea behind each project case study is to highlight the inherent creativity and knowledge that local organizations use in responding to the needs of their communities.



"Testimonials of El Castillo Dolls," one of the eight projects developed in conjunction with local CSOs in Colombia.

# SECTION 2: CASE STUDIES



Truth-telling Project Development Workshop  
in Bogota, Colombia

Each selected case study represents ingenuity and creativity of local organizations that GIJTR is fortunate to learn from and work with in both thematic and country-based programming. GIJTR identified

over 150 small grants projects, with each representing various voices and areas of priority. While an in-depth overview of each completed small grants project cannot be provided, the selected case studies in this toolkit represent a snapshot of past and ongoing small grants. Each project has made important contributions to its immediate communities, with many projects resulting in the beginnings of longer-term community-driven programs and ongoing dialogues.

For each case study, a short overview is organized according to four evaluation questions, appropriate for projects of this nature:

## 1. PROJECT DESIGN

*How has this project effectively responded to needs identified by both the implementing organization/activist/community group and their targeted community?*

## 2. COMMUNITY VALUE

*How has this project drawn on the technical and financial support provided by the small grant to demonstrate key contributions to the targeted community?*

## 3. RESOURCEFULNESS

*What key decisions were made to efficiently implement activities within the parameters of time, finances and external conditions?*

## 4. SUSTAINABILITY

*What are the outcomes of this project and potential longer-term impacts or ongoing interventions beyond the support of the initial small grant?*

Noting the observation of Gürkaynak, Dayton and Paffenholz, the evaluation of initiatives related to peace building and conflict often fails to capture the nuances of conflict transformation work. Despite this shortcoming, evaluations remain a necessary exercise, central to an evolving field concerned with the protection and support of vulnerable and marginalized groups. The four evaluation criteria outlined for small grants aim to provide holistic insights into the work of local organizations, while also considering the broader contextual outcomes outside the project itself. There is an understanding that local organizations work in challenging conditions that include latent or active conflicts. With this recognition, quality and value of small grants projects may vary according to the environment, emerging conditions and support from relevant stakeholders. Through this approach, examination of the conception, implementation and outcomes of locally led projects allows for both summative and formative evaluations that remain cognizant of context and the people central to grassroots-driven interventions.

# CHAPTER 1:

## SUPPORTING TRUTH, JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION IN COLOMBIA

### Connecting grassroots organizations with national processes

Colombia’s armed conflict of over 60 years resulted in an estimated seven million victims, according to the United Nations. The armed struggle between the Government of Colombia and multiple guerrilla and paramilitary groups was driven by class and racial divisions, political exclusion and power struggles and resulted in a range of human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, kidnappings, SGBV, forced displacement, torture and killings.

In 2016, a peace settlement between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) established a transitional justice system with three mechanisms: a tribunal called the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz – JEP) for a period of 15 years and two non-judicial mechanisms, namely the Truth Commission (Comisión para el Escalrecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición – CEV), for a period of 3 years and the Unit for the Search of the Disappeared (Unidad de Búsqueda de Personas Dadas por Desaparecidas – UBPD, or “Search Unit”) for a period of 20 years.

From the beginning, GIJTR’s Colombia programming was attentive to supporting the participation of CSOs and community-based collectives as a cornerstone of national transitional justice process. Responding to this need, the work of GIJTR members was directed toward strengthening Colombian CSOs’ capacities to participate in transitional justice mechanisms, particularly the non-judicial

institutions — the Truth Commission and the Search Unit — while also building capacity for staff members of these transitional justice mechanisms. Identifying the necessity for greater awareness and outreach of the Truth Commission and the Search Unit, grassroots organizations were pivotal in linking the work and mandate of these two important institutions to Colombians in outlying areas. In 2019, as a practical response, local organizations were invited to a series of trainings and workshops, including the exchange of experiences and the development of culturally relevant methodologies for outreach and awareness.

These invaluable insights culminated in the development of guidelines that could then be drawn on by the participating organizations to implement timely interventions in their own communities related to the work of the Truth Commission and the Search Unit. A total of 15 rural communities, including farmers and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, received small grants for the implementation of truth-telling and outreach interventions. The outreach projects were intended to build trust with local communities and ensure their participation in, and ownership of, truth-seeking processes. Projects ranged from intergenerational dialogues to the filming of a documentary and storytelling.

### Museo de la Memoria Histórica Tras las Huellas de El Placer: Centering the Stories of a Community

#### Project Snapshot

<b>Organizers</b>	El Placer community members
<b>Location</b>	Municipality of Valle del Guamuez, Lower Putumayo sub-region, Colombia
<b>Implementation Period</b>	2018, 3 months, and 2019, 6 months
<b>Reach</b>	200 community members
<b>Grant Amounts</b>	\$1,000 and \$1,660

Facilitators of Museo de la Memoria Histórica Tras las Huellas de El Placer, situated in Colombia's Amazon region of Putumayo, were one of the 15 groups to receive technical support and small grants. While participating in the exchange workshop, El Placer community implementers identified the need for a space dedicated to capturing the experiences and memories of the larger community. Through two small grants administered by GIJTR, six community leaders of El Placer focused their efforts and resources on the reactivation and maintenance of El Placer's community museum. First under a community truth-telling grant and then a community outreach grant, El Placer residents of different generations were invited to participate in the collection of graphic materials, interviews and other activities related to the revival of the museum. These efforts contributed to the inclusive construction of shared space that represented the rich history of the Guamuez Valley and the community of El Placer.

The existing community museum had been inactive for over two years before the group began engaging villagers, local authorities and community leaders. Moreover, this space was envisioned to promote truth telling and memorialization for the community. The group's work was multipronged, with the first phase focusing on reactivating the community museum and the second on expanding the reach of the museum through further development

of exhibitions, for a community of approximately 200 people. In the early stages of the project, visual materials and popular songs telling of war stories from the surrounding region were collected and a timeline documenting the community's history was created.

A central outreach component of the project was the development of a

Victim's Wall as an acknowledgment of those harmed through violent conflict. In the creation of the Victim's Wall, community members who identified as victims, as well as families of victims, were interviewed. These interviews held a dual purpose: On one hand, narratives of victims could be captured and adequately represented through the wall; on the other, this process provided a symbolic space that was otherwise missing for the community to talk about the harms experienced and their efforts toward resisting violence. While these interviews were not meant to act as formal investigations, they began the critical task of uncovering violations that have occurred as a result of Colombia's long and violent conflict. A second component of community outreach was the creation of murals signifying the hope and dignity of the community. These murals also served a dual purpose of improving the museum's physical appearance and more vitally ensuring that community members saw themselves reflected in the very structure of a museum dedicated to their stories. In addition, the participatory nature of this project initiated a sense of ownership and pride toward a community space that will continue to serve as a symbol of shared memory and belonging.

The community museum of El Placer's municipality offers an important illustration of the potential role of community members coalescing to promote local practices related to memory and truth telling. By addressing local transitional justice needs, an important contribution was made to national Colombian processes. Moreover, the vision of the implementing group to mobilize their community around existing spaces was an innovative means of reimagining and memorializing their experiences and memories.

## EVALUATION SNAPSHOT

### PROJECT DESIGN

Community members of El Placer's municipality approached the design of this project by considering both the immediate needs at their local level and wider conditions of Colombia's national transitional justice process related to the work of truth telling and reconciliation. In designing a project that adapted a truth-telling process to narrate the story of their community's history, the community implementers effectively localized a truth-telling and documentation process that would otherwise be distant and abstract to the daily realities and lived memories of their family, friends and future generations.



Truth-telling mural produced by the Guacoche Community, Colombia, with the support of GIJTR.

## COMMUNITY VALUE

Through two separate small grants, a community truth-telling grant and a community outreach grant, important outcomes can be gleaned from the many important contributions of the project: the physical improvement of the community museum, interviews and collection of stories, awareness raising and outreach with community members on their role in truth telling and memorialization. These outcomes culminated in wider community acknowledgment of a collective history of members harmed through violent conflict.

## RESOURCEFULNESS

The work of El Placer's community implementers began by identifying the potential of an existing space of memory, the community museum. In first prioritizing the resources already present in the community, this project not only sought to make a positive impact but also aptly highlighted the importance of an asset-based approach. In connecting community members with an existing space, the project both addressed the immediate needs around truth telling and memorialization and more pointedly invited a sense of collective ownership of the museum itself.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Beyond the small grants process, this project effectively centered the stories of El Placer's community and laid the foundation for collective ownership of a shared site of memory. Realizing that the community's shared and individual experiences of conflict were worthy of both material and symbolic acknowledgment, the community museum houses a multitude of stories that have come to represent El Placer. These components of ownership and identification with the museum contribute to the ongoing work of the museum as a dynamic and living space reflective of El Placer's past, present and future.

## LOCAL PARTNER REFLECTION

*“With these small projects, Museo Tras Las Huellas de El Placer was able to create a timeline and map the history of our territory. Museo Tras Las Huellas de El Placer began to make itself known to its community and its region on the advancement of historical memory and as a museum. The development and foundation provided by the GIJTR has been a great support for our development and growth for the future, for which we are grateful.”*

— Seider Herlinton Calderon Palacios, Museo Tras Las Huellas de El Placer

## GIJTR PARTNER REFLECTION

*“The GIJTR's community small grant process in Colombia has been implemented in coordination with the Truth Commission in outlying regions. Most of these projects are initially developed by a small group of members of the community and involve sharing experiences and testimonies that are then represented by some form of material outcome produced by participants, such as handcrafts, murals, posters, books of memories, dolls, quilts, etc. In some cases, the identity of participants needs to be protected through anonymization. The outcomes are then shared with the wider community. At this stage, it has been quite common that other members of the community become interested in sharing their own stories, not only with the project for future exhibition but also with the truth commission. This means of representation through community narratives disseminated to the public extends the reach of the truth commission.”*

— Dario Colmenares, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, United States



# CHAPTER 2:

## AFRICAN YOUTH TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE ACADEMY

### Supporting Africa's Rising Activists

The African Youth Transitional Justice Academy (AYTJA) was developed by GIJTR as a 10-month project to support a group of young activists and civil society actors around raising awareness and engaging in activities related to truth, justice and reconciliation in their home countries. The project was conceived in relation to the widely dubbed youth bulge, used to describe the African continent's largely young population. This demographic marker now takes on various meanings and is more broadly seen as a potential contributing factor to the emergence of civil conflict and the instigation of violence. Concurrently, there has been resistance to this negative outlook through programming and research that promote a growing awareness of the multifaceted role of youth in building sustainable peace.

This view has been echoed through GIJTR's work in conflict and post-conflict countries, which has consistently shown that youth must be a key component in advocating for truth, justice and lasting peace. GIJTR also recognized that youth are often unable to engage in transitional justice processes in a sustained way because of limited knowledge related to transitional justice. AYTJA represents a timely and responsive program focused on supporting youth in their development of skills and knowledge of truth telling, reconciliation and atrocity prevention. Capacity-building workshops and the provision of small grants were two central components of harnessing the potential of Africa's young activists to initiate and lead grassroots transitional justice processes.

AYTJA brought together a group of 10 activists from Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, South Africa, the Gambia, South Sudan and Rwanda. The academy

consisted of trainings of two broad learning areas: 1) foundational knowledge of transitional justice mechanisms and 2) participatory methods involving the arts, culture, education, community dialogue and media to address transitional justice needs. A third area of experiential learning took place through the provision of small grants for academy participants to apply the skills learned during the training and pilot new projects in their countries. Projects developed through the small grants included the creation of a documentary on Rwanda's history, community dialogues on crime and protection in South Africa and awareness raising on the inclusion of SGBV in transitional justice mechanisms in the Gambia. At the conclusion of AYTJA, 10 innovative projects were successfully implemented, and an invaluable regional network was initiated between the cohort of young activists.



African Youth Transitional Justice Academy participants and facilitators, Kigali, May 2019

### Youth for Peace: Looking to the Past for Atrocity Prevention in Côte d'Ivoire

#### Project Snapshot

<b>Organizers</b>	Armel Gonkapiou Gouandeu, Ivorian Observatory for Human Rights
<b>Location</b>	Agboville, Côte d'Ivoire
<b>Implementation Period</b>	2019, three to four months
<b>Reach</b>	26 youth
<b>Grant Amounts</b>	\$1,000

Building from the skills and insights gained during the AYTJA, Armel Gonkapiou Gouandeu focused on the legacy of human rights violations that occurred between 1990 and 2011 in Côte d'Ivoire. Armel's project also sought to address the current challenges of Côte d'Ivoire's peace process. This project was timely and needed, with a resurgence of social demands in the public realm, growing intercommunity conflicts and the country preparing for a presidential election in 2020.

Armel hoped to not only respond to the ensuing national tensions but also prevent the onset of election violence. This was achieved by engaging young people as the key actors in preventing violence and promoting social cohesion within their communities. With the help of local youth leaders, the project mobilized 26 participants to undergo a training on transitional justice to better understand their role in advocating for peace and cohesion. Many participants had been affected by previous periods of election violence or had experienced intercommunity violence.

Armel noted the significance of the project site, Agboville (situated outside the capital of Abidjan), explaining that the town was one of the areas strongly affected by the 2010-2011 post-election crisis. Despite this significance, few initiatives have been implemented on the part of government to help the community address the harms experienced. This context is particularly important to consider within the climate of distrust toward activities around the peace process, which has been regarded as largely political. Gaining the support of the community and interest from participants for the project therefore presented a challenge, as he explained: "People are therefore very resistant to these types of actions...(L)ong explanations of the merit of the activities were necessary in order to gain their support."

Despite the initial wariness regarding the project, there were expressions of interest from a large number of young people wanting to participate in the training. In accounting for the success of the project, Armel noted that by the end of implementation, "participants hailed the project as a glimmer of hope" for their communities. Armel's project was both forward-looking toward atrocity prevention while remaining cognizant of past atrocities and the need for targeted transitional mechanisms. This project sought to raise awareness and disrupt cycles of violence by following the spirit of the AYTJA and prioritizing the potential role of Côte d'Ivoire youth in securing a peaceful future for the country. Going forward, Armel anticipates requesting support from new sponsors to sustain the results of this project and expand implementation to other areas across the country.

## EVALUATION SNAPSHOT

### PROJECT DESIGN

In designing a project focused on atrocity prevention, Armel provided an important intervention that responded to not only ongoing tensions at the grassroots level but also a widespread history of human rights violations that have not been adequately addressed. With the foresight to link political grievances and emerging conditions around an upcoming election, this project prioritized youth vulnerable to being mobilized by political leaders seeking to further their own agendas. By specifically reaching out to his peers and raising awareness on their agency as peace builders, Armel pointedly interrupted cycles of violence that Agboville had previously experienced.

### COMMUNITY VALUE

With no previous truth and reconciliation initiatives taking place in Agboville, Armel observed that community members had no outlet to process and heal from previous experiences of political violence. This project had both a direct impact on participants examining their own perceptions and experiences of violence within a transitional justice framework and wider community impacts with youth creating peace messaging for their broader community. In providing a platform for dialogue, this project made the important contribution of having participants begin the critical process of rebuilding trust and community relations.

### RESOURCEFULNESS

Despite initial wariness from community members around participation, Armel successfully implemented the project's activities. By drawing on networks of community youth leaders, communication with prospective youth participants was kickstarted and wider community buy-in on the project was able to take place. Considering the parameters of time and emerging political conditions, this project was also redesigned to comprise fewer activities with more targeted groups. This awareness of needing to adapt accordingly proved to be vital in gaining the understanding and trust of the wider community and youth participants.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Through the implementation of this youth-driven project, Arnel designed innovative activities to disseminate the knowledge and skills he gained through the academy to other youth in Agboville, ensuring that awareness of transitional justice mechanisms and concepts is widely accessible. The project therefore had a cascade effect. By ensuring that Côte d'Ivoire youth are exposed to discussions on atrocity prevention and past violations, this project provided a critical starting point for ongoing discussions and actions toward social cohesion.

## LOCAL PARTNER REFLECTION

***“The modules that we were taught at the Transitional Justice Academy were a great support in implementing this project. In the opinion of the training participants, the majority of the young people in Agboville have little knowledge of transitional justice. But they were major actors in the 2010-2011 post-election crisis. Some of them were closely involved with the intercommunity violence in their area in May 2019. And so, we have shared with them what we learned at the Academy about transitional justice. We gave them the tools to participate in the process and the tools to self-manage their differences.”***

— Arnel Gonkapiou Gouandeu, AYTJA participant

## GIJTR PARTNER REFLECTION

***PILPG was thrilled to lend its legal expertise to the Academy, which showcased the capacity of youth leaders to transform conflict-affected states. Although youth comprise the largest demographic in Africa, domestic and international transitional justice efforts do not always provide youth with the skills or space to participate. The Academy has empowered participants to engage in these processes — participants dramatically improved their knowledge base in designing and implementing transitional justice projects. The Academy also facilitated the formation of long-lasting relationships among youth activists. These relationships will provide a basis for future collaboration and information sharing, which are essential ingredients for long-term peace and stability.***

— Christopher Kreutzner, Public International Law & Policy Group, United States



Participants of the 2019 African Youth Transitional Justice Academy

# CHAPTER 3:

## SUPPORTING TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESSES IN THE GAMBIA

### Cultivating the Gambia's civil society engagement in transitional justice

In 2017, the Gambia's two-decade-long history of human rights violations and repression under the Jammeh regime came to an end. The beginning of this new era brought to light vast transitional justice needs relating to an array of state-sponsored abuses including torture, enforced disappearances, SGBV, detention without trial and extrajudicial killings. With several individuals and communities silenced under the Jammeh regime, survivors and victims range from journalists, human rights defenders and student and religious leaders to political opposition members, judiciary officials and security force personnel. Gambian transitional justice processes have been undertaken by the state through various bodies, including the Truth Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC).

Following years of violence and intimidation, GIJTR found that the operations and networks of Gambian CSOs were negatively affected, with many activists and practitioners needing to flee for their safety. With the Gambia entering a new era, particularly shaped by transitional justice processes, GIJTR understood that existing and emerging CSOs needed to cultivate skills to effectively participate and represent the needs of all Gambians. GIJTR's driving objective in the Gambia has focused on ongoing capacity building and support for Gambian CSOs to ensure they are able to engage with the established transitional justice mechanisms, efficiently monitor the transitional justice process and launch themselves as independent from the state. Furthermore, GIJTR's work in the Gambia has prioritized bringing diverse groups together to strengthen CSO relations and build consensus on common

issues that can initiate trust building and healing for the many victims of the Jammeh regime.

During 2019, a mix of seven workshops, trainings and campaigns were implemented by GIJTR with the aim of capacity building around transitional justice, technical psychosocial support and awareness-raising methodologies. As a central component of a five-day awareness-raising methodologies training on truth telling and psychosocial support, representatives from 12 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) within and outside Banjul were invited to learn about facilitating accessible truth, justice and reconciliation processes. Methodologies from this workshop were further integrated into small multidisciplinary projects developed by the participating NGOs. Through sub-grants and technical support, projects were led and implemented across the Gambia, targeting a vast array of citizens. Projects included increasing awareness among incarcerated women and youth on transitional justice and reconciliation processes, dialogues on SGBV and the creation of a traveling exhibition to document the experiences of 22 victims and families of the Jammeh regime.

### Strengthening Women's Rights: Ataya Chats with Young Men About SGBV

#### Project Snapshot

Organizers	Women in Liberation and Leadership
Location	Banjul and surrounding areas, the Gambia
Implementation Period	November 2019 to February 2020
Reach	102 male youths
Grant Amounts	\$2,000

Women in Liberation and Leadership (WILL) was one of the 12 organizations that participated in the awareness-raising methodologies training on truth telling and psychosocial support. As an organization, WILL focuses on empowering, promoting and protecting the rights of Gambian women, girls and vulnerable



Participants at a GIJTR Methodologies workshop in Conakry, Guinea

groups; catalyzing and driving social change; building strong social, sustainable systems that improve and protect the lives of women and girls in the Gambia; and promoting the participation of women in politics, decision-making and leadership. WILL's small grant project was extensively shaped by their

organizational aims around transforming and protecting the lives and rights of Gambian women, girls and vulnerable groups.

Understanding the links between continued silencing on SGBV and the need for the Gambia's transitional justice processes to address SGBV, WILL developed a grassroots project focused on cultivating young men as allies for women's rights. Under the Jammeh regime, reports of systematic sexual abuse and rape in state institutions and the security apparatus have come to light. This reality continues to plague the Gambia, with SGBV prevalent across different levels of society. As with many contexts where SGBV is prevalent, it is also largely a subject marked by stigma and silence. To address the legacies of SGBV and its ongoing manifestations in Gambian society, WILL used their small grant to implement community-based dialogues to begin the vital process of disrupting the prevailing stigma and silence.

By tapping into an existing social tradition called ataya chats, wherein young men meet informally to talk about personal and social issues and drink ataya (green tea), WILL gathered 102 young men and boys between ages 18 and 35 from both rural and urban areas. Through a series of six ataya chats, WILL was able to raise awareness on the need for adequate advocacy and support for women's rights. Participants were also encouraged to understand the work of the TRRC and their role in supporting victims in their community. Overall, dialogues responded to the need for better education for young men on what constitutes SGBV and how they can understand their role in supporting

women's and girls' participation in the wider transitional justice process. With many of the participants having limited education and little exposure to conversations on the rights of women and girls and transitional justice, the project not only contributed to awareness raising of participants but also created a space for peer learning and normalizing of discussions that would otherwise be deemed off-limits.

Through baseline and end-line questionnaires, WILL was able to observe and track a clear shift in the perceptions of participants relating to SGBV. The discussions helped to dispel myths and misconceptions about SGBV and move participants from a place of victim blaming and lack of understanding to seeing SGBV as a shared societal issue that needed to be addressed. Beyond the dialogues, participants were encouraged to continue these conversations in their extended social groups, families and communities. By approaching young men as advocates against SGBV, WILL's project sought to challenge the pervasiveness of societal indifference and misunderstanding and advocate for sustainable positive action support for women and girls that is community driven.

## EVALUATION SNAPSHOT

### PROJECT DESIGN

Through the familiar social customs of ataya chats, this project effectively created a space to address community-level issues around SGBV while also linking these discussions to wider national transitional justice processes. The astute use of an existing practice around community conferencing was critical to gathering young men in an organic and approachable manner, despite the stigma and wider social norms that would usually prevent holistic discussions on the role of men in cycles of violence against women and girls.

### COMMUNITY VALUE

The ataya chat approach successfully emphasized the importance of gender sensitivity and women's rights in both national and grassroots transitional justice and reconciliation processes in the Gambia. An important contribution of this project was the concerted inclusion of the young men who attended the ataya chats, given that they are usually excluded from conversations regarding

national development and issues affecting their communities. By engaging male participants on their views of SGBV and the rights of women, participants were able to reconsider the nuances of their beliefs and past actions. The direct impact of these conversations is made distinct when tracking a visible shift in perceptions of participants of their responsibilities to victims and survivors and their role in educating family and friends on issues surrounding SGBV.

### RESOURCEFULNESS

This project highlights WILL's ability to implement activities with extensive reach across the entire country, within restricted time and resources. As noted by WILL, they were able to make this a reality by involving communities in the planning and implementation of this project. Communities themselves were responsible for selecting the person who facilitated the dialogues, identifying young men from each ward in the village to participate and laying the ground rules of the dialogue. By using the organizing and logistical skills of community members, the dialogue was locally owned while also aligning WILL's vision and operating framework for the dialogues as a whole.

### SUSTAINABILITY

This project successfully mobilized young male participants to consider their societal positioning and role in the Gambia's plight to combat SGBV. Since the conclusion of this small grant, WILL has been able to receive additional funding to continue to implement the ataya chats project in other communities to spread awareness of the Gambia's TRRC process and change perceptions of SGBV. These dialogues hold the potential to affect the rights and safety of women and girls, in addition to other projects that aim to transform and protect the lives of Gambian women, girls and vulnerable groups.

## LOCAL PARTNER REFLECTION

*The small grant project has been very beneficial, as it has expanded the capacity of our staff and encouraged us to develop project ideas into a reality. Through this project, we engage young men through community-led dialogues during ataya sessions, a very common tea session that brings young men together within a community. The ataya chats have helped WILL to utilize existing social gathering sessions within communities to hold dialogues with young men on the root causes and consequences of SGBV and challenge the frequent occurrence of SGBV in Gambian society. As a result of these sessions, we have now developed a community ambassador in the different communities that we have engaged as community watch dogs who continue the conversation with their communities and report any cases of SGBV to the police and make follow-ups and referrals. The change that this project has brought to communities is the engagement of young men in preventing SGBV, as in most instances, preventive work has focused on women only.*

— Fatou Baldeh, WILL

## GIJTR PARTNER REFLECTION

*The training in participatory awareness-raising methodologies and the small grants that followed represented the start of GIJTR's holistic and sustained intervention to accompany and support Gambian CSO engagement with the transitional justice process. All the organizations' small project ideas were innovative and creatively distilled the organizations' existing skills and community ties to a transitional justice purpose — in some cases for the first time. Strikingly, several of the groups affected by these small projects — including the young men in these ataya chats, as well as prisoners, certain rural communities and youth who work informally on Gambia's beaches — reflected that this was the first time anyone had engaged them in the country's truth, justice and reconciliation discourse, though the projects were all implemented almost a year after the TRRC began operations. As GIJTR's 2019 needs assessment in Gambia found that gender-based violations are not being adequately addressed by the established transitional justice mechanisms, WILL's project is exemplary not only for its inclusive, participatory approach and the way it harnesses an existing cultural practice to reach new groups, but also its original means of filling a gap left by state-led processes.*

— Sara Bradshaw, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, United States

# CHAPTER 4:

## MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE ACADEMY

### Bolstering the Expertise of CSO Actors in the MENA Region

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Transitional Justice Academy (TJ Academy) was born out of the insights and experiences of GIJTR partners working in the MENA region. With most existing programming subject to specific in-country trainings in individual MENA states and on specific aspects of transitional justice, GIJTR partners saw a gap in connecting civil society organizations in the region to work together to develop broader regional strategies to address some of their collective challenges and experiences. The TJ Academy was developed in response to limited transitional justice programming in the region and the need to bolster expertise in the region, with a particular focus on activists, practitioners

and academic actors from multiple high-risk environments.

For each academy, a call for applications is disseminated through a range of partner networks including the Coalition's network of over 200 member



Participants at a GIJTR Methodologies workshop in Conakry, Guinea

organizations, United Nations and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor networks and specific transitional justice networks, such as the TJ Network. Once applications are received, GIJTR partners short-list and select the final applicants through a standardized scoring system. The first academy took place in 2016, with more than 120 applications received; 19 participants were selected, representing a mix of practitioners, nontraditional actors and academics from the region. The second academy took place in 2019, with a cohort of 17 participants, and in 2020 the third academy welcomed 13 participants and was launched virtually to accommodate for COVID-19 restrictions. Participants thus far have represented countries including Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

At the core of each academy is the goal to support a cadre of activists, academics, practitioners and nontraditional actors in designing and implementing transitional justice programs in their countries and communities. For GIJTR this means prioritizing the inherent knowledge and skills participants have, especially pertaining to their local contexts, while curating a holistic curriculum that further elevates their pedagogical platform on transitional justice. Through a participatory methodology, the academy combines training on TJ and related facets of forensics, law, sociology, psychosocial support, memorialization and human rights with participants' insights into truth, accountability, reparations, institutional reform, documentation and gender mainstreaming.

Each academy follows a similar methodology that is slightly adapted to participants' needs. The academy convenes participants through a series of trainings to both gain further skills and accompany participants in the ideating and designing of phases for the eventual implementation of their own TJ interventions. Through technical and financial support, participants lead community needs assessments and community consultations, present proposed project ideas to their communities and thereafter begin implementation pending community buy-in. Local communities, including groups such as survivors of conflict, youth, women, scholars and activists, not only participate in these projects but also help to shape the objectives and eventual outcomes garnered. During this process, including the closeout of projects, GIJTR partners provide guidance and mentorship with frequent communication between trainings and the final reconvening of participants through an evaluation and lessons-learned workshop.

Through small project sub-grants, a total of 36 community-based truth, justice and reconciliation projects have been implemented in eight MENA countries.

Thirteen further projects are in the process of implementation under the ongoing third academy. Projects have ranged from documentation projects in Tunisia and Syria to reparation and community consultations in Iraq and a memory project in Morocco. Central to all these small projects is developing locally driven mechanisms to respond to the needs of communities previously excluded from, or underrepresented in, transitional justice processes.

## The Caesar Families Association: Strengthening Trust Among Members

### Project Snapshot

<b>Organizers</b>	Ahmad Altaieb and Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression
<b>Location</b>	European Union and Turkey
<b>Implementation Period</b>	2019, four months
<b>Reach</b>	11 core members
<b>Grant Amounts</b>	\$2,000

As a participant in the second TJ Academy, Ahmad Altaieb developed a small project with a focus on enhancing communication and trust among current members of a victim association. Working at the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), Ahmad combined the skills gained during the academy and his ongoing work at SCM to identify ways to better support truth seeking and justice for the relatives of Syrian victims. Ahmad focused these efforts on the Caesar Families Association (CFA), founded through SCM in 2018 by Syrian families. As a victims' association, CFA represents families who have recognized relatives in the Caesar photographs, taken in Syrian prisons and released to the public in 2014. The number of victims of enforced disappearance who appeared in the Caesar photos is an estimated 6,800, indicating the nascent reach of CFA in mobilizing a number of relatives of victims for truth-seeking and advocacy purposes.

Observing the latent potential of CFA, Ahmad, working in SCM, implemented a project that would improve CFA's outreach and advocacy through increasing its presence and connecting with families of victims in EU and non-EU countries. This meant developing activities focused on providing institutional guidance to CFA members in achieving their goals as a fully functioning victims' association. The focus of the project was two-fold, concentrating first on the CFA's goals and communication between members, then on awareness raising around how other existing organizations and institutions could further the work of CFA. The association comprises Syrians from different backgrounds with co-founding members who reside in Germany and an expanded network of members in the EU and Turkey. Because of the members' geographical separation, communication among them has taken place largely online. This project therefore offered an important venue for transparency and communication among members with longer-term impact on the outreach and advocacy of the association.

For the purposes of internal organization building, a total of 10 founding members and one external expert attended a two-day meeting. During this activity, CFA developed an internal communication methodology to ensure effective and secure communication and agreed on the use of specific online platforms depending on the nature of communication. The meeting also allowed eight family members to provide information on their loved ones who were missing, disappeared or extrajudicially killed. Capturing their accounts contributed to the development of eight documentations of victims. The second activity brought together CFA members for awareness raising on the longer-term process of searching for missing persons. By providing members with information on these procedures, the CFA is better able to advocate for the search of their missing relatives and identify relevant actors who can assist in their search. Central to this process is also building partnerships with organizations engaged in the work of searching for the missing and disappeared. Members of the CFA were encouraged to think about ways of communicating and collaborating with potential actors and building partnerships.

Through the small grant, Ahmad and his colleagues of SCM were able to design a responsive and relevant intervention that recognized the immediate needs of CFA while also considering the diverse harms and violations faced by victims and their families. The protracted nature of the Syrian conflict and the impacts of forced displacement across the MENA and EU regions have presented challenges for gathering and mobilizing victims toward common goals of truth seeking, documentation and accountability. Despite these challenges, CFA



was able to involve victims and their families but faced the risk of establishing a stagnant agenda because of members' communication and geographical hindrances. Ahmad's project sought to create tangible and sustainable operations for the victims' association to continue building momentum around their outreach and advocacy efforts while also ensuring that CFA's membership grew to include the voices of more victims and their families.

Going forward, the project hopes to expand by including more families who have recognized relatives in the Caesar photos, through a specialized documentation mechanism. In addition, the need for mental health and psychological social support training for CFA members was identified. This training will assist CFA members on an individual level to seek further psychological support and, on an organizational level, will equip CFA to better carry out documentation while being aware of the psychological needs of families.

## EVALUATION SNAPSHOT

### PROJECT DESIGN

By designing a project that could effectively address emerging gaps in the growth of the victims' association, Ahmed was able to meet the explicit and implicit needs of CFA members. The focus on improving internal communication practices seamlessly connected to wider goals around external outreach and advocacy. In implementing activities focused on both the functioning of the association and relationships among members themselves, this project also responded to institutional capacity building.

### COMMUNITY VALUE

A key contribution of this project was convening the CFA members despite geographical barriers. In kickstarting communication and advocacy plans, the project activities facilitated learning and capacity-building outcomes of members and also refocused the objectives of the victims' association. Another key contribution was made in highlighting areas for continued growth regarding relevant stakeholders and organizations focused on enforced missing and disappeared persons. This provided CFA members with assurances that they are not isolated in their plight for truth and justice.

### RESOURCEFULNESS AND EFFICIENCY

For the implementation of this project, Ahmad was able to draw on assistance from his colleagues at the SCM. By tapping into the insights and organizing the skills of his colleagues, he placed a collective effort on convening members from diverse geographical locations. A logistical and administrative feat, Ahmad had the foresight to use his existing professional relations to put forward a project aligned to the wider goals of the work of his colleagues at the SCM.

### SUSTAINABILITY

By convening members and addressing the internal workings of the CFA, this project outlined an important step toward creating a functioning association that can begin reaching out to new potential members. Central to the future work of the CFA is searching for relatives and uncovering the truth surrounding the detainment and killing of Syrians in government prisons. In building a greater presence across regions and connecting with relatives of victims, the CFA will be able to build a movement driven by the collective belief in truth and justice for their lost family members.

## LOCAL PARTNER REFLECTION

***“The small grant supported the implementation of an important step in building trust among the families of the missing who are part of the Caesar Families Association. The project enhanced trust and supported their efforts in communicating with other victims and families' association to collaborate in future events.”***

— Ahmad Altaleb, MENA TJ Academy participant

## GIJTR PARTNER REFLECTION

***“The small grant model affords local organizations and practitioners with the opportunity to translate theory into practice, developing context-specific interventions to address the needs on the ground. It also facilitates exploration of cultural and traditional mechanisms and practices that***

*can support the goals of justice, accountability, peace and reconciliation. Because of instability in the MENA region with ongoing conflicts, many local organizations are not registered or are not seen as “dependable” beneficiaries/grantees that can access sustainable funding or donor support. Many donors also do not look beyond the capital cities to support civil society in rural/active conflict spaces. These grants are being implemented in areas/regions that are isolated from the more focused dominant areas, reaching communities that are either deliberately or by default being excluded from the broader transitional justice goals and processes. The outcomes and lessons learned from the small grants process can provide donor confidence by providing evidence through the implementation of the small grants where the proposed intervention has been tested.”*

— Sufiya Bray, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, South Africa



Participants at a GIJTR workshop in Conakry, Guinea learn about self-care while assisting survivors with trauma.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE FORENSICS ACADEMY

#### Building Capacity to Address the Rights of Families of Enforced Disappearances

The investigation of enforced disappearances, massacres and extrajudicial killings often lacks support and resources in many countries in MENA. As a key operational area of addressing the past harms and rebuilding post-conflict societies, the recovery, analysis and identification of the remains of victims are critical to immediate truth-telling processes and long-term reconciliation efforts. In instances in which investigations are active, the needs of the families of victims are not adequately considered, preventing families of victims from accessing truth and pursuing accountability of perpetrators.

The GIJTR’s Forensics Academy was developed with the objective of building the technical capacity of CSO and government representatives in forensics investigations while providing a holistic framework for supporting and meeting the specific needs of families of victims. Rooted in multidisciplinary learning, the academy is a platform for participants and partners to share experiences and best practices on using forensics, psychosocial support and community memorialization and truth-telling activities. The academy is framed by the need to support families in their search for disappeared loved ones as well as contribute to their remedy and redress. Drawing on lessons of forensics efforts in Guatemala, the academy’s curriculum was organized around country-specific cases studies and firsthand knowledge of the Guatemalan experience of how best to develop forensics programs that meet international best practices and are rooted in local experiences and needs.

The first Academy took place in 2019, with a total of 15 participants of the

academy comprising activists, academics and practitioners from South Sudan, Kenya, Guinea, Nigeria, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, India, Nepal and the Philippines. Considering the diverse local needs and the importance of providing context-specific training, focus was placed on bolstering knowledge sharing and building local capacity across regions, particularly for participants from countries in the global South. Through two intensive training sessions, academy participants were engaged on capacity-building forensics as well as sessions focused on psychosocial support for families of the disappeared and ways to memorialize disappearances and provide ongoing truth-telling and memorialization opportunities for families. Modules of the training included technical workings of documenting and registering victims of disappearances, antemortem information and interview techniques, forensic archeology, application in legal processes for accountability, accompaniment and psychosocial support for families of disappeared and memorialization and the role of truth-telling initiatives.

Following the first training, participants were provided with small project grants to undertake their own in-country projects over six to eight months. Participant-proposed projects could range from exhumations to mapping of mass graves to advocacy initiatives. Examples included the collection of testimonies of families of the disappeared in the Gambia and the creation of a documentary on their experiences, while another participant worked with their colleagues to develop recommendations to Lebanon’s national commission on how to include the families of the missing during the forensic process.

Outside capacity building training and small grants, the GIJTR also recognized the potential for academy participants to form part of a wider community-driven network of practitioners working on transitional justice activities as they relate to truth telling and forensics. As the Forensic Academy has expanded, a new cohort of practitioners were accepted into the second academy in 2020. Despite the curriculum needing to be moved online because of the COVID-19 pandemic, practitioners from the first academy have participated as mentors, providing peer guidance and support. Moving forward, it is envisioned that successive Forensic Academies will be implemented with alumni as a central component of the development and delivery of the trainings.

## Utilizing Multidisciplinary Forensics in Afghanistan: Uncovering and Protecting Mass Grave Sites

### Project Snapshot

<b>Organizers</b>	Zaman Mohamad, Afghanistan Forensic Science Organization
<b>Location</b>	Kabul and other provinces, Afghanistan
<b>Implementation Period</b>	June to November 2019
<b>Reach</b>	26 national and international organizations, 59 survivors and activists, 82 academics and university students
<b>Grant Amounts</b>	\$4,000

Zaman Mohamad, representing the Afghanistan Forensic Science Organization (AFSO), attended the GIJTR’s first Forensics Academy in 2019. With skills and insights gained during the academy, Zaman’s project sought to further the mission of AFSO as an independent nonprofit focused on education and advocacy related to a range of forensic issues. Within the context of Afghanistan’s conflict, summary executions and disappearances were prominent violations. However, the country’s reconstruction and peace processes have not adequately focused on transitional justice issues of accountability and truth telling for the missing and disappeared. Recognizing the importance of reckoning with these past injustices, Zaman and his colleagues have worked to identify, document and protect mass graves.

The financial and technical support of the small grant provided Zaman with a means to document and create a learning resource on the work of AFSO uncovering 17 mass grave sites in the provinces of Kabul, Herat, Balkh, Kunar, Bamyan and Badakhshan. Entitled “Mass Graves Evaluation in the Light of Forensic Science with a Specific View on Transitional Justice,” the resource outlined the role of forensic science in investigating, documenting and

exhuming mass graves for the families of victims. Following the development of the learning resource, through AFSO, Zaman organized two consultation meetings, with survivors, human rights activists, CSO representatives and law and political science academics and students.

The first consultation meeting took place at Afghanistan Center for Memory and Dialogue (ACMD) and provided survivors and families of the disappeared with an overview on the importance of forensic evidence for transitional justice and truth-seeking processes. The second consultation meeting included the Transitional Justice Coordination Group (TJCG), a coalition of 26 national and international organizations advocating for the implementation of transitional justice in Afghanistan. Groups at both meetings provided suggestions and feedback for the finalization of the learning resource, and in November 2019, the booklet was designed, translated into Persian and English and printed for dissemination. As a final activity, Zaman's project concluded with the hosting of an awareness-raising session and scientific seminar at Gawharshad University with lecturers and students from the law and political sciences departments. The seminar also marked the official launch of the resource booklet and provided a platform for students to engage in the history of transitional justice and the failures and challenges of forensics in Afghanistan.

Through the small grant, Zaman and his AFSO colleagues were able to develop a multidisciplinary resource that provides information related to mass graves documentation for the survivors of wars and armed conflicts. Moreover, government officials and civil society activists are able to use the resource to gain a better understanding of forensic knowledge, methods, tools, capabilities and the importance of forensic science for transitional justice processes in Afghanistan. With the greater goal of developing a learning resource that was applicable and responsive to the Afghanistan context, Zaman and his colleagues at AFSO were able to go a step further and use the learning booklet to mobilize greater awareness among key stakeholders. In addition, Zaman has sustained his involvement as a mentor in the second Forensics Academy, where he has graciously shared his knowledge and practice of forensics in Afghanistan with fellow practitioners.

## EVALUATION SNAPSHOT

### PROJECT DESIGN

By designing a project that drew on the existing forensics work of AFSO, Zaman was able to bring greater attention to the skills and capacities of AFSO while also going further to highlight the application of forensics in transitional justice efforts in Afghanistan. The project was designed around three key outputs: the development of a learning resource in the form of a booklet, consultations for the finalization of the booklet and awareness raising through the launching of the booklet. The design of the project gave particular focus to the involvement of families of the missing and disappeared as well as CSOs and other stakeholders working toward transitional justice processes in Afghanistan. With the clear planning of outputs and the intended groups that needed to be connected, corresponding project activities were implemented successfully.

### COMMUNITY VALUE

The development of the booklet and further consultations and awareness raising on the role of forensics in truth seeking and accountability were critical to creating an output that was applicable to the context. In this sense, Zaman was able to effectively translate the work of AFSO into an accessible learning resource that can be understood and used by a range of groups. In addition, this project was able to promote a greater understanding of the role of forensics in truth seeking, identification of disappeared people and transitional justice by engaging with the families of the missing and disappeared.

### RESOURCEFULNESS

Within four months, Zaman and AFSO were able to efficiently develop and finalize a high-quality learning resource for fellow practitioners. In addition to this overarching outcome, a vast array of people were involved in the consultation process, the launching of the booklet and the hosting of the forensics seminar. This project was able to reach a relatively large number of survivors, families of victims, practitioners and activists by drawing on AFSO's institutional relationships with other CSOs that shared similar commitments to transitional justice in Afghanistan.

## SUSTAINABILITY

The development and publication of AFSO's booklet "Mass Graves Evaluation in the Light of Forensic Science with a Specific View on Transitional Justice" made available an invaluable resource to both practitioners and the families of the missing and disappeared. In the short to medium term, the booklet acts as a guide for the initiation of more forensics interventions in Afghanistan. In the long term, it has begun the foundational process of knowledge sharing and awareness raising for future transitional justice processes. At the close of the small grant, Zaman and AFSO indicated plans to build on the successes of the project with extensive distribution of the learning resource and outreach to victims, human rights activists and university students of law and political science across Afghanistan.

## LOCAL PARTNER REFLECTION

*Working on this project was a great opportunity. Although the amount was not a lot, it created an opportunity for us to take out the data about mass graves from the AFSO database and make it visible and achievable for the war survivors and human rights and peace activists in Afghanistan. The first booklet of its kind was created, which highlights mass graves documentation, registration and importance in the country. Despite serious challenges against documentation, memorialization and transitional justice in Afghanistan, this booklet was part of memorialization and confrontation against impunity, ignorance and miscarriage of justice. We hope that the young generation will have access to the booklet, read it and question those who hindered the start of transitional justice and supported the culture of impunity in Afghanistan. Furthermore, developing the booklet paved the way to continue working on mass graves sites and the way of dealing with the past in Afghanistan.*

— Zaman Mohamad, Forensics Academy I participant

## GIJTR PARTNER REFLECTION

*Many Forensic Academy I participants implemented projects to relay the knowledge and tools acquired during the workshops and in their exchange with peers to the CSOs, survivors and families of victims in their communities. Some of the projects included reports and documents with recommendations for their government or search commission; others organized trainings for families and survivors to learn about the basics of the use of forensics in the search for the disappeared with a victim-centered approach. Participants from the project benefit from the small grants and technical support and guidance from project partners during their project implementation, while sharing knowledge and experiences with their peers, particularly in their own regions, thus strengthening a network of activists and practitioners working on transitional justice and forensics.*

— Sofia Mazariegos, Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation, Guatemala

# SECTION 3: BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Persistent discussions on the dimensions and meaning of local ownership and sustainable interventions require that the operational realization of these concepts be made practical for all stakeholders. As identified by Arthur and Yakinthou, funding for transitional justice is largely directed to multilateral institutions and state actors, despite the central role of local CSOs in representing victim and survivor communities and continuing critical engagement with the state on the implementation of commissions and reparations. The challenge therefore remains with international organizations, consortiums and institutions, who are on the direct end of

donor funding, to begin actively rethinking practices of support and relationship building with local CSOs, activists and victim groups.



International Educators Exchange, June 2018.

This final section builds on the insights provided by each case study by outlining practical steps as well as questions for reflection for international organizations, with the goal of transforming practices of capacity building and providing grants. For local and grassroots CSOs, practical steps as well as questions for reflection are outlined with the goal of advancing local transitional justice initiatives centered on the needs of their communities. These lessons and recommendations are not exhaustive but represent a starting point for international actors and local CSOs to examine and remodel modes of funding and relationship building, with an eye toward long-term sustainability and local ownership.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING SMALL GRANTS

### RECOMMENDATION 1:

#### Design Constructive Grant Requirements

- **Streamline reporting requirements:** Reporting requirements often compete with immediate daily operations. Moreover, the staffing of local CSOs is often limited to a small group of people working across programs. As a result, local CSOs, especially in their startup phases, should have fewer reporting requirements while still maintaining conditions for financial reporting and narratives. Understand the existing capacities of local CSOs in terms of skills related to grant reporting and the wider administrative and programmatic demands. By asking local CSOs to report on a few key areas, reporting becomes less cumbersome and more aligned to the core activities of a grant period.
- **Plan for flexible and responsive implementation:** Local CSOs do not operate in a vacuum, with decisions of government and nonstate actors and the processes of transitional justice institutions all holding consequences for the work of CSOs. The changes in operating environments can occur on a global scale (as seen with the COVID-19 pandemic), on a national and political level or in the very community where an activity is planned. Flexibility in terms of timelines and the requirements of reporting and

activities will ensure that local CSOs are able to effectively implement their projects while also remaining attentive to changing conditions and emerging transitional justice needs.

- **Emphasize sustainability and long-term impacts:** The provision of small grants is by no means framed as a multiyear funding agreement but rather an opportunity to implement responsive interventions within a short time frame. Local CSOs should be guided to understand the limits and opportunities of small grants and design projects that can build on the work of their organization or lead to further programming. Local CSOs can also approach the small grant processes as pilots to later apply for further funding from donors.
- **Provide adequate funding:** Depending on context, larger donor requirements and the time allotted for the project, grant amounts can range from \$1,000 to \$4,000 USD. Local CSOs should be provided with an adequate amount to cover project costs and compensate the staff involved in the implementation. More importantly, the amount provided should be used as a guide for the kinds of output that can be intended within each funding band. For example, grants on the lower end would allow for fewer activities and one or two targeted meetings or consultations; grants on the higher end would allow for more activities and wider reach.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. *What are the key questions we need local organizations to address in their reporting, and how can we streamline requirements to better suit the time and capacity of the local organizations?*
2. *What are the ways we can ensure flexibility and adjust expectations around timelines and reporting requirements, while ensuring that local CSOs are able to implement their projects?*
3. *How can we develop a small grants process that enables local organizations to access further funding opportunities to advance their work?*
4. *What are the different “funding bands” we can provide, and what are the intended outputs that could be outlined under each band?*

## RECOMMENDATION 2:

### Examine Ideas and Operations of Local ownership

- **Awareness of wider CSO environment:** There is no “one” version of “the local” in any context. It is critical to continuously take stock of the multitude of actors and remain attuned to both emerging CSOs as well as CSOs that may not be directly related to the transitional justice field.
- **Recognize existing skills and knowledge:** Local organizations carry a wealth of grassroots experience and a visceral knowledge on the impacts of human rights abuses and violent conflict. It is critical to prioritize this knowledge and shape capacity building accordingly.
- **Operationalize local ownership:** Assess how existing communication and operational processes with local organizations align with your organization’s definition of local ownership and how these processes may promote or hinder local ownership.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. *Who are the organizations we are currently working with, and is there a need to expand our reach to other organizations?*
2. *What processes do we have in place to ensure we are aware of emerging organizations/actors and changes in the local CSO environment?*
3. *How does our organization define local ownership, and what are the practical steps that operationalize this definition?*



### RECOMMENDATION 3:

#### Encourage a Diverse Range of Participatory Methodologies

- **Incubate multiple approaches toward justice and reconciliation:** Local organizations should be given the space and support to experiment and test different approaches to safely engaging with communities on issues of truth telling, accountability and reconciliation.
- **Recognize homegrown practices of participation:** At the core of participatory methods is the need to center the experiences of victims and survivors with the goal influencing wider decisions and policies that affect them. Local organizations should be encouraged to draw on indigenous practices to enable participation, rather than solely imposing external strategies of participation.
- **Mainstream mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS):** Centralizing an MHPSS lens on trainings and grants is necessary when working in contexts of human rights violations, in which local organizations comprise staff that are also victims and survivors and have an intimate experience of the very issues they are working on.

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. *How can we support local organizations to experiment and test different approaches to safely engaging with communities on transitional justice issues?*
2. *How can we better prioritize indigenous and context-specific participatory methodologies while also expanding our own organizational knowledge of these methods?*
3. *What are the current MHPSS systems in place during our trainings (including referral pathways and debriefing support), and where can we improve these systems to holistically support local organizations and their staff?*

### RECOMMENDATION 4:

#### Interrogate Relationships and Power Dynamics

- **Identify and understand how power is operationalized:** No space is devoid of power dynamics. Instead of denying these conditions, it is critical to hold awareness of how power operates between stakeholders at all levels. This requires understanding the power that your organization holds as an entity providing trainings and small grants to other organizations, as well as the power dynamics between local CSOs and the communities they aim to serve.
- **Create collaborative funding strategies:** Local CSOs often face a dearth of funding and are required to compete with one another to receive donor recognition. As a result of these funding conditions, inequities between organizations are cemented. Funding strategies should rather enable and promote greater collaboration and support among a multitude of CSOs that bring different perspectives and approaches to transitional justice efforts.
- **Approach mentoring as a process of accompaniment:** As part of local ownership, recognizing the capacities of CSOs is the first step to creating equitable relationships based on mutual learning and accompaniment. Practically, this requires framing local CSOs as peers that can together advance a wider mission toward transitional justice processes. On the part of the organization providing training and grants, responsive mentorship is necessary, as is the explicit acknowledgment of the inherent knowledge and skills held by the local organizations.



Participants at a GIJTR workshop in Colombia where young participants learn about the process of truth-telling - remembering the missing and disappeared.



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. *How can we work to flatten the language and processes that create explicit and implicit hierarchies in our partnerships with local CSOs?*
2. *Are there working relationships between local CSOs that can build on collaborative funding agreements and harness constructive engagement between local CSOs for future funding?*
3. *How do our current approaches to grants and workshops prioritize the knowledge and skills of local CSO actors while ensuring we learn from their experiences?*

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVING SMALL GRANTS

## RECOMMENDATION 1:

### Design Community-Centered Projects

- **Conduct inclusive community consultations:** As with any project, community consultations are key to understanding the community's experiences, areas of conflict and contestation and legacies of human rights violations. By understanding the social dynamics and demographics of a community, we are better able to establish interest and support for further engagement. In cases in which an organization has developed relationships with a community over a period of time, consultations are still necessary to avoid assumptions of support and interest. In addition, while project activities may involve specific sections of a community, it is critical to ensure understanding across groups to avoid stigma or the perception of privileging one group.
- **Use an appreciative inquiry approach:** In designing a community-centered approach, it is vital to begin with the existing cultural customs, social relations and physical spaces available. This approach is called an appreciative inquiry, in which we begin with “what we have” and what is

already working within a community to further transitional justice efforts before thinking of “what we need” or what is missing. By recognizing the local capacities and the inherent strengths of a community, we are able to design projects that build on existing capacities that will support and expand transitional justice efforts.

- **Sustainability and long-term impacts:** Beyond the immediate community support expressed during consultations, sustainability and long-term impact require that the communities themselves see how an intervention is of value to them and connects to their past and contemporary issues. Understanding that technical and financial support of small grants can go only as far as the creativity and capacities observed in our communities, it is critical that communities are involved at all levels of a project with the intention of building capacities for awareness raising, advocacy and dialogue.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. *How can we improve the inclusive nature of our community consultations to ensure information sharing and wider community support for the groups we directly engage?*
2. *What are the existing cultural customs, social relations and physical spaces that can positively contribute to the objectives of the project?*
3. *How do we ensure sustainability within small grants projects, to subsequently ensure that communities remain engaged and aware of transitional justice issues?*

## RECOMMENDATION 2:

### Cross-Collaboration and Networking with Fellow CSO actors

- **Conduct a snapshot assessment of CSOs:** Prior to the start of any project, facilitate a few consultative meetings with CSOs to raise awareness about the project and identify opportunities for potential collaboration. Assessments can examine the skills and knowledge that other organizations hold and where there are areas of overlap and divergence between organizations. Not only does this ensure a better understanding of the wider

operating environment, but it also ensures that working in isolation and the duplication of activities can be avoided. In a training with fellow CSOs, a practical step would be to ask facilitators to allow for time for a snapshot assessment between training sessions.

- **Build collaborative relationships:** By focusing on building collaborative relationships with fellow CSOs, you will create opportunities for peer learning and support in areas outside your organization's skill set and mission. A practical step would be asking fellow CSOs for their feedback on your small grant project and on their own challenges in implementation. This kind of external feedback is fundamental to the growth of any project and can nurture a sense of comradery and healthy accountability instead of competition and criticism.
- **Observe and act on areas of complementarity:** Remain attuned to the ongoing work of new and existing organizations and consider ways that fellow CSOs can contribute to your organization's wider mission and vision. Recognize the capacities of CSOs and envision how the work of your organizations can complement each other with an eye toward broader transitional justice efforts. Understanding that transitional justice initiatives require multiple areas of skills and knowledge, cultivate effective working relationships that can lay the foundation for future collaboration across multiple levels.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. *What information would we want to gather from a snapshot assessment of CSOs, and how would we use this information?*
2. *What are our current and future projects or focus areas for which we would welcome collaboration with other organizations?*
3. *How are we working to build and maintain relationships with fellow CSOs, and how can we improve these efforts?*

## RECOMMENDATION 3:

### Develop Targeted and Adaptable Projects

- **Set realistic objectives and outputs:** Developing multipronged projects with many outputs may be tempting, but this can often be too ambitious within the parameters of a small grant. Consider the capacity of your colleagues, the demands of other operations and the related project costs, and compare these with the timeframe and monetary amount of the grant. In addition, the onset of unplanned events or unforeseen challenges can pose delays to any project. By designing and planning a project according to a few targeted outputs, the project is more likely to be completed, with the potential of scaling up if there are funds and time remaining before the closeout of a grant.
- **Approach small grants as project pilots:** By framing small grants as an opportunity to experiment and apply skills from trainings and workshops, there is greater room for creativity and innovation. Develop projects that involve methodologies or areas for which your organization would otherwise not be able to gain financial and technical support, including advocacy, outreach and capacity building. The experiences and insights garnered during design, planning and implementation will inform ongoing work and help refine the kind of projects your organization can pursue in the future.
- **Engage communities in remote areas:** Small grants may also offer an opportunity to expand outreach to populations who have previously not been included in transitional justice processes and related topics. With transitional justice efforts often skewed toward urban areas or the political capital of a country, large groups can be excluded and have little information on reparations, truth telling and accountability. Exclusion can also occur systematically, with certain victim and survivor groups or while communities are not engaged in formal processes. Small grants can therefore be used to facilitate outreach and awareness raising for marginalized communities or communities that are geographically remote.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. *What are the factors we should consider when designing and planning a small grant project, and what are the targeted outputs that align to these factors?*
2. *What are the issues and methodologies we are curious to address in our work and potentially expand to a pilot project?*
3. *Who are the communities, victim and survivor groups or geographical regions that we feel passionate about reaching and engaging?*

## FINAL REFLECTIONS

Founded on the belief that the success and sustainability of any transitional justice process is directly proportionate to local actors holding opportunities for meaningful participation and continued involvement in formal and grassroots interventions, the GIJTR has prioritized partnerships with local CSOs that are committed to the issues of victims and survivors. GIJTR has designed programming that aligns the knowledge and capacities of local CSOs with the objective of responding to a dearth of support for community-driven processes in the transitional justice field. Given the limits of previous transitional justice efforts, there is a necessary shift toward supporting emerging and existing organizations at the community level.

GIJTR programming has consistently found that grassroots actors remain central to ensuring that truth, justice and reconciliation efforts continue outside state and multilateral mechanisms. While important, formal and state-sanctioned processes hold specific mandates and timeframes, despite needing to address multigenerational traumas and a range of human rights violations. Understanding that the needs of survivors and victims cannot be confined to one commission hearing or a one-off cash payment, local CSOs are best placed to advocate on behalf of marginalized communities and raise awareness on the plight on survivors and victims.

This toolkit has sought to highlight the multitude of methods and issues at the heart of locally led efforts to realize peace and justice and amplify the voices of victims and survivors. Through the five case studies, we are able to gain

insights into both the innovation and creativity of local grassroots organizations as well as the kinds of support that should be provided to ensure they are able to reach their objectives. While the challenges faced by local CSOs cannot be underestimated, the resilience, commitment and foresight presented by grassroots CSOs should be emphasized.

In some cases, small grants result in the implementation of projects into formal transitional justice efforts, as in the case of WILL's ataya chats in the Gambia and the reactivation of a museum by community members in Colombia's Guamuez Valley. In other cases, small grants provide an opportunity for the implementation of projects that shed light on the issues to be addressed in nascent transitional justice process, highlighted by Armel's focus on atrocity prevention in Agboville and Zaman's work with his organization (AFSO) to bring attention to mass grave sites in Afghanistan. Still, small grants can also be used to mobilize the families of victims and survivors who have no immediate guarantees of justice but require support to advocate for accountability, as in the case of the Caesar Families Association.

These are just five cases across geographical locations and political contexts that affirm the technical and financial support critical to ensuring that local CSOs are able to continue engaging and serving those most vulnerable to the legacy's human rights violations and ongoing marginalization. With sustainable transitional justice interventions in focus, the kinds of financial and technical support provided to local CSOs require further discussion and actionable steps toward rethinking funding models. Funding support for local initiatives must be an intentional focus and tangible outcome for any international or national organizations that have frequent funding agreements and established relationships with donors.

Hesitancy toward providing robust support to grassroots organizations is explicit and implicit in the policies and operations of donors and formally recognized international organizations. This requires interrogation from all actors if the wider objective of transitional justice efforts is a long-term and sustainable impact across a society. As a noble but necessary objective, it cannot be realized without local CSOs at the front and center of donor support. Small grants provide a model for any organization to begin rethinking the sustainability of their objectives and the flows of donor support and funding.

While the GIJTR is not a grant-making entity, it is acutely aware of the enduring need to decentralize and reconfigure funding for grassroots CSOs working in

contexts of protracted conflict, authoritarian rule and political transition. The provision of small grants is just one avenue for shifting from conventional funding paradigms toward financial support that prioritizes the capacity and growth of organizations on the ground and most connected to the communities they serve.

Where some organizations may be directed by the real and perceived challenges of supporting local CSOs, the GIJTR is motivated to go beyond the traditional model of one-off trainings or consultative meetings with high-level government officials and instead create genuine partnerships with in-country CSOs. Building on the working relationships developed with local partners on each country flagship project and the process of providing small grants to CSOs, the GIJTR is committed to contributing to the capacity of local CSOs to independently access funding and sustainably continue transitional justice initiatives in their communities.

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