

HOLDING HOPE — & PROVING IT WORKS

When foreign aid collapsed.

When peacebuilding was tested like never before.

Search for Common Ground stepped up.

This is what worked — and how we're moving forward even stronger.



THE POWER OF PEACEBUILDING IN 2025

929

conflicts de-escalated or resolved

164M

people reached with trusted information

63,000

in-person engagements to strengthen communities

3,787

local-led solutions ignited and supported

€38M

invested in peace across 34 countries

IMPACT IN ACTION

In a world that's more polarised than ever, our work is more important than ever. The impact is evident. Across the globe, where our colleagues and partners are currently involved in projects, from Afghanistan to DR Congo, data shows:

ACTION IS RISING:

251.9% more people are influencing the issues they care about

AGENCY IS GROWING:

62% more people believe they can make a positive difference

TRUST IS STRENGTHENING:

Satisfaction with public services increased by 115.6%

A LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

2025 did not just challenge the peacebuilding sector — it fractured it.

Foreign aid funding was cut at historic levels. Longstanding programmes closed. Institutions designed to prevent violence weakened, even as conflict escalated across regions already under strain. Political violence remained at historically high levels and more than 240,000 lives were lost to conflict-related violence. Civilians bore the greatest cost.

These decisions in 2025 built on a trend that has been unfolding for several years: a growing number of violent conflicts worldwide. As conflicts have increased so too has the need for effective peacebuilding. Yet the field is facing a critical shortage of adequate, high-quality funding, significantly weakening the implementation of effective peacebuilding initiatives and policies. While investment in defence is important, it cannot, on its own, guarantee security. Yet the dominant policy response continues to prioritise increased defence spending, with limited attention to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

However, even in this context of rising violence and shrinking resources, 2025 revealed something else.

Violence did not escalate everywhere it could have. In parts of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, communities facing armed group activity and displacement found ways to prevent tensions from turning into bloodshed. Local chiefs and religious leaders convened dialogues between rival groups, choosing mediation over retaliation. Across the Sahel, despite chronic insecurity, community radio journalists worked to counter rumours that could inflame ethnic divisions while youth groups organised local peace initiatives. In Afghanistan, civil society organisations remain active and they organise a wide range of activities to strengthen cohesion within their community.

In response to this shifting landscape, we have also had to reinvent ourselves, resulting in our 2026–2030 Global Strategy. At its core is a simple belief: the future of peace depends in large part on changing how leadership itself is practised. Adversarial, zero-sum models have failed to prevent violence. What is needed instead is leadership that collaborates despite differences, shares responsibility and acts before crises become catastrophes.

Search for Common Ground remains focused on approaches that deliver real, measurable impact. Enclosed, you will see evidence of violence prevented, escalation interrupted and trust built — not under ideal conditions but because people and leaders chose collective action when division carried too high of a cost. You will also see how we measure what prevention makes possible and how, with the right partnerships and sustained commitments, our efforts can be scaled to reach even more people and communities. Even where the situation appears hopeless today, peacebuilding can make a difference in ensuring tomorrow is different.

Your support helps communities prevent violence, rebuild trust and move forward — help build a future shaped by cooperation, not conflict.



Hilde Deman,
Executive Director
Search for Common
Ground AISBL



Sandra Melone,
Chairwoman of the Board
of Directors for Search for
Common Ground AISBL

HOLDING THE LINE

In a year when overall conflict levels remained stubbornly high, preventing escalation became even more critical. Each dispute that did not spiral into mass violence meant fewer lives at risk and fewer families displaced. Containing tensions also stopped violence from spreading across borders and into adjacent communities, protecting fragile regions from cascading instability. Interventions prevented worse outcomes and avoided dangerous tipping points.



SUDAN DIGITAL PEACEBUILDING



By strategically deploying a six-month social media intervention across Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and X, Search for Common Ground reached over 896,000 people and successfully fortified the digital frontline against the drivers of communal violence in Sudan.

This campaign targeted hate speech and disinformation in high-tension regions. By grounding messages in the distinct cultural and linguistic contexts of Blue Nile and Kassala — states with diverse ethnic communities, histories of marginalisation, and heightened vulnerability to rumour and manipulation — we were able to strengthen the credibility and reach of local peacebuilders amid widespread misinformation. This digital shield did more than mitigate harm; it reclaimed the narrative for peace, transforming online spaces from vectors of division into platforms for locally-led peace initiatives and social cohesion.

The impact of this intervention resonates as a vital bridge between digital safety and physical security, ensuring that grassroots resilience remains the dominant narrative in the Sudanese social fabric. By anchoring the campaign in the specific cultural contexts of Blue Nile and Kassala, we successfully amplified the agency of local peacebuilders over the noise of misinformation. This data-driven digital peacebuilding approach provides a scalable model for protecting communities from the real-world consequences of digital polarisation.

WHEN THE SYSTEM BROKE, COMMUNITIES STILL LED

In January 2025, the United States formally declared that genocide was being committed in Sudan. By then, violence had torn through communities, institutions had fractured and millions had been displaced. The war that had begun in April 2023 did more than disrupt daily life — it dismantled the systems meant to hold society together.

And yet, people continued to lead.

More than 80 young men and women completed intensive training in business planning, management, peacebuilding and conflict transformation. This equipped them not only to earn a living but to lead responsibly in a fractured environment. The change was profound.

AN INVESTMENT IN A BRIGHTER FUTURE



In February 2025, amid insecurity and economic breakdown, women and young people in South Kordofan launched several small businesses: hospital-adjacent restaurants, crop storage facilities, crop marketing initiatives, and consumer goods centres serving local markets. Because survival required more than endurance. It demanded coordination, trust and choices that resisted collapse.

Inspired by the initiative, Hiba and her peers formed the White Hands Association, a women-led economic collective supporting other aspiring entrepreneurs. Their goal is simple and radical in today's Sudan: that every woman involved can stand on her own feet and shape her future with confidence.



This wasn't just about financial support — it was about transformation. We gained confidence, skills, and something even more powerful: the understanding that empowerment is strongest when it is shared.

HIBA FATHI
Programme Participant

At the launch, Sudan's Minister of Health and Social Development called the projects "an investment in self-reliance, peace and a brighter future," emphasising that women and youth were not beneficiaries, but leaders. In August 2025, Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission praised the organisation's work as a model of collaboration between civil society and authorities during the crisis.

EMPOWERING A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS

Across the country in Kassala State, peacebuilding took another form. Despite displacement and instability, women's leadership and inter-communal solidarity was strengthened through media, culture and public dialogue, empowering women to design and implement effective peacebuilding initiatives. Project participants are now translating their learning into sustainable community action.

One notable example is Nagat, a young woman from the Kadugli neighborhood in Kassala. After receiving training in conflict transformation and psychosocial support, she reported noticeable improvement in her mental well-being and an increased ability to support others experiencing psychosocial stress in her community. Motivated by these positive outcomes, she produced an awareness video on social peace and youth engagement and created a WhatsApp peer support group where

members can exchange ideas, address challenges and promote psychosocial well-being. Through her engagement, Nagat has emerged as a trusted community advocate.

At the same time, participatory theatre funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund transformed neighbourhoods into forums for dialogue: women- and youth-led conversations on girls' education, gender discrimination, political participation, child marriage and social cohesion. These were not passive performances. Community members debated, proposed solutions and shared recordings beyond the stage, extending dialogue across the city. The result was rare in such a fractured context: shared space, shared voice and shared responsibility. None of this ended Sudan's war, but in Kadugli and Kassala, peacebuilding took root in livelihoods, leadership, dialogue and trust, all sustained through partnership and carried forward when formal systems faltered. This is what it means to hold the line.

AFGHANISTAN

SHOWING UP AFTER THE GROUND GAVE WAY



In September 2025, eastern Afghanistan was already stretched to the breaking point. Then, the ground collapsed.

Two powerful earthquakes struck the area, flattening homes and burying families beneath rubble. Nearly 2,000 people were confirmed dead and the number continued to rise. Entire neighbourhoods were left without shelter, warmth or medical care. For those who survived the initial tremors, the crisis did not end when the shaking stopped.

Within hours, local teams and trusted community networks mobilised to deliver 350 empathy kits to those in need. These kits were not symbolic — they were lifesaving. Each kit included bedding and clothing to protect families sleeping outdoors or in damaged homes, and reusable sanitary supplies to promote health and preserve dignity for women and girls in crisis.

The kits provided essential care, but for communities stripped of control they also meant recognition, the knowledge that someone had not forgotten them. Beyond the kits, team members provided trauma and psychosocial care to help families process shock, grief and loss.

TRUST IS AN INVESTMENT

This rapid response was possible because our colleagues and partners had already invested in local communities, funding women-led businesses in the Central Highlands of Afghanistan to produce winterisation kits. The investment was twofold: it sustained livelihoods on the front end and saved lives on the back end.

In the aftermath of the earthquakes, it was not large systems that moved fastest. It was trusted, local networks. As international attention shifted and aftershocks continued, teams remained on the ground delivering support, coordinating care and responding to rapidly evolving needs.

AFTER THE HEADLINES FADED

In the days that followed, the search for survivors gave way to something quieter and harder: rebuilding life amid loss. Families faced nights without shelter. Children slept surrounded by fear and grief. The news cycle moved on, but Afghanistan did not.

This work did not undo the earthquakes. But in a moment defined by collapse, the empathy kits delivered essential care when the absence of such care could have been fatal.

In Afghanistan, peacebuilding after the disaster did not look like negotiations or long-term plans. It looked like showing up — immediately, locally and humanely — when the ground itself gave way.



THE FRONTLINE IS GLOBAL, AND LOCAL

Peacebuilding is global, but it's not foreign. Every conflict and peace effort impacts a local community, and the tools that prevent violence abroad are the same ones that hold societies together at home — wherever one's home may be.



ISRAEL & PALESTINE

In January 2025, after more than two years of devastating violence, a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was announced. For many, it brought a fragile sense of relief.

For others, it arrived too late, after tens of thousands had been killed, communities destroyed and trust shattered. The ceasefire was not an end to the conflict but a narrow opening: a chance to pause, to mourn and to decide whether the future would look different from the past.

Our colleagues and partners are ready to meet the moment.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

In the weeks following the announcement, leaders and partners focused not only on sustaining the ceasefire but on the harder question: what comes next?

At the Wilson Center in Washington D.C., Search Israel and Palestine country directors joined experts from the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, and the European Institute of Peace to examine why ceasefires so often fail to translate into lasting peace. The discussion was grounded in a sobering reality: women are largely left out of ceasefire negotiations. In Israel and Palestine, political violence against women persists and formal peace processes exclude the civic leaders closest to the ground.

Our Palestine country director spoke candidly about the risks women face when stepping into peacebuilding roles, from protection threats to economic precarity, and cautioned against treating inclusion as symbolic. Peace, she argued, cannot be built only by those who are already safe, visible and resourced. Our Israel country director highlighted a generational gap among women leaders and emphasised the need for physical spaces where women can convene, organise and build partnerships across divides. The message was clear: without broad-based inclusion, ceasefires won't endure.

In Paris, our Israel Director was invited to speak at a civil society gathering on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During the event, the Paris Peace Forum joined forces with civil society groups to present the Paris Call for the Two-State Solution to Jean-Noël Barrot, French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs. The declaration, drafted jointly by Israeli, Palestinian, regional, and international civil society leaders, was formally handed to the Minister during the conference's closing session and served as a key input to the UN High-Level Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Palestinian Question.

WHEN CIVIL SOCIETY REFUSED TO FRAGMENT

These principles came to life in Jerusalem in May 2025. As war continued to dominate political discourse, more than 60 Israeli peace organisations — many of whom had historically emphasised their differences — came together to form the It's Time peacebuilding coalition. Search joined the coalition's steering committee, helping to shape strategy and decision-making at every level. The coalition's message was explicit and unified: an immediate ceasefire, an end to occupation, and a peace agreement based on a two-state solution.

At the People's Peace Summit in Jerusalem, our colleagues

and partners facilitated central panels and highlighted concrete political initiatives, and Israelis and Palestinians came together to speak about loss, accountability and the long road ahead.

Because Palestinian partners were unable to travel freely, our colleagues and partners organised watch parties in the West Bank, ensuring participation across borders despite restrictions. At the same time, early work began to quietly and cautiously explore the formation of a parallel coalition in Palestine. For the first time in months, Israeli media began to cover these efforts.

POLITICAL COURAGE IN A FRAGILE MOMENT

As international recognition of Palestine gained momentum later in the year, Search and other members of the It's Time coalition travelled to Ramallah to meet with President Mahmoud Abbas against the backdrop of the fragile ceasefire. President Abbas amplified a message rarely heard in Israeli political discourse: that Palestinian statehood is not a threat but a pathway to security for both peoples. "Every Israeli who believes in peace is our brother," he said. The meeting underscored a central truth that political agreements cannot endure without civic legitimacy.

HOLDING THE LINE ON LEADERSHIP

By September 2025, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry concluded that Israel had committed acts of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, a finding that intensified global scrutiny and polarisation. In that environment, Search's role was not to simplify the conflict or claim to have resolutions. It was to hold political and civic space open for dialogue, for accountability and for leadership willing to take risks for peace rather than power.

Through global engagement with political leaders, sustained support for women's participation, and investment in coalitions that crossed ideological and national lines, our colleagues and partners are working to ensure that the ceasefire isn't the end, but the beginning. Such peacebuilding efforts are based not on agreement or certainty, but on persistence, courage and a refusal to let war close the door on a shared future.

WHEN COMMUNITIES REFUSED TO LET VIOLENCE DECIDE

When individuals and communities are empowered, peace becomes a choice, one that can be replicated through informed decision-making, listening, and empathy.



MALI

VIOLENCE MOVES QUICKLY. COMMUNICATION MUST BE QUICKER.

In parts of Mali, tensions shaped by competition over land, identity and security have too often escalated into violence before dialogue could begin.

In 2025, our colleagues and our partners placed empowerment at the centre of our approach, enabling vulnerable groups to become agents of change. Search worked with local leaders, elders, women and youth in several high-risk communities to facilitate reconciliation processes designed to interrupt cycles of blame and fear. These were not symbolic meetings. They were difficult conversations, held in places where recent violence had made trust fragile and silence safer than speaking.

Strengthening Agency and Reducing Polarisation

60

community initiatives funded

69

community peace initiatives implemented

240

youth influencers trained

Over

87,000

people directly reached nationwide

502

civil society members, including journalists, administrative authorities, artists, and digital platform administrators, strengthened to act

83%

of identified rumors neutralized, preventing violence before it started

Over

11.4 MILLION

people reached through traditional and digital media campaigns



Participants spoke openly about loss, anger and fear, but also about the cost of continued division. Through dialogue and joint problem-solving, communities identified shared priorities and agreed on practical steps to prevent future escalation, including mechanisms for early communication when tensions arose. What followed was not a dramatic transformation. It was something quieter — and more consequential.

Attitudes shifted. Participants reported greater willingness to engage with people from other communities and a reduced acceptance of violence as a legitimate way to resolve disputes. Local leaders

who had once avoided contact began coordinating responses to emerging tensions. Rumours that might previously have sparked retaliation were addressed before they spread. In a context where violence often accelerates rapidly, restraint became a collective choice.

These efforts did not eliminate conflict; they changed how conflict was handled. They replaced escalation with communication and turned isolation into shared responsibility. Importantly, peace wasn't brokered by a few — it was built through repeated decisions by many. Decisions to speak, to listen and to intervene before harm became inevitable.

The Peace Impact Framework in Action



Participants rejected violence in favor of dialogue and coordinated prevention as a means of resolving disputes.



Community members — including elders, women, and youth — facilitated dialogue, identifying shared priorities, and intervening early when tensions emerged.



Communities coordinated responses and engaged local authorities more constructively, increasing trust.



Intercommunal violence was prevented, preserving lives, livelihoods, and social cohesion.



Negative attitudes and behaviors were directly reduced across ethnic and community divides, a core driver of violence in Mali.

The choices made in these communities reflected measurable prevention, where reduced polarisation, early intervention, and cooperation among local leadership combined to stop violence before it started.

STOPPING VIOLENCE BEFORE IT STARTS

Picking up the pieces is too often a necessary reality following acts of violence. Preventing violence from occurring is the first and most important line of defence, with ripple effects that go well beyond single incidents.



NIGERIA

THE DAY THAT VIOLENCE DIDN'T HAPPEN

The people in Kajuru, a town in southern Kaduna State, know how quickly a rumour can turn deadly. The area has a long history of religious and ethnic violence between farming and herding communities. When allegations surfaced that grazing land had been poisoned, killing several cows, anger spread fast. Some members of the Fulani community began preparing to retaliate, while others warned that if the situation wasn't addressed immediately violence would follow.

This was the moment Aliyu Abubakar stepped in. He is a 35-year-old local government worker, a member of the chieftom council and a participant in our strategic action programme. He recognised the warning signs immediately because he had been trained to see them.

So rather than taking sides or allowing rumours to escalate, Aliyu acted.

He brought the issue directly to the Sarki (traditional leader), who referred the case to the police for investigation. At the same time, Aliyu helped convene dialogue between Fulani and Adara leaders and he engaged local authorities and security agencies to slow the situation down before it spiralled out of control.

The investigation is ongoing. But something critical has already changed: retaliation was averted, tensions have eased and community representatives have continued to meet. People who were preparing for violence chose restraint instead.

In places like Kajuru, peace doesn't arrive with headlines. It arrives quietly, when someone recognises a moment of danger and has the skills, trust and backing to intervene. Investments in peacebuilding make these outcomes possible.



Without that training, things could have gotten out of hand very fast.



ALIYU



WHEN PREVENTION WAS INTERRUPTED

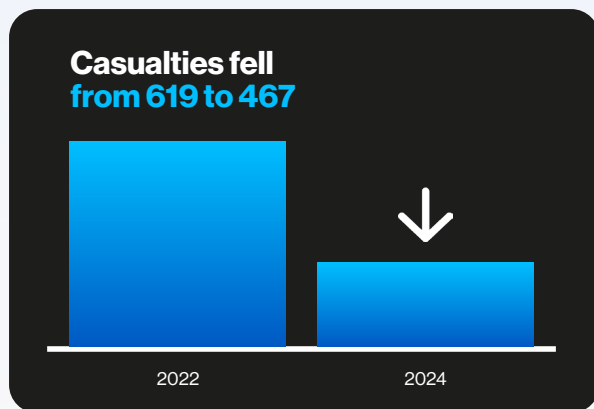
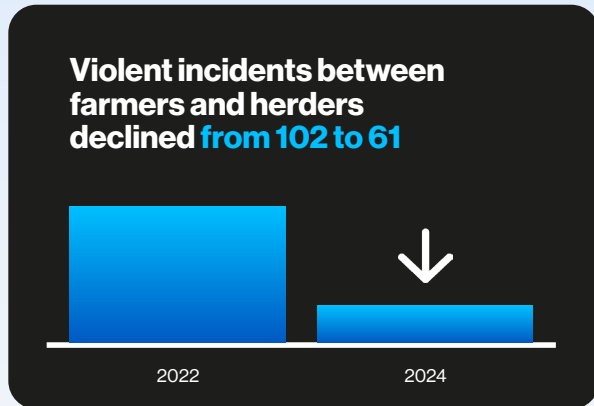
By the end of 2024, something rare was happening in Nigeria's Middle Belt.

In communities long shaped by violent clashes between (mostly) Muslim herders and (mostly) Christian farmers, violence was declining. Trust between civilians and security forces, while fragile, was beginning to take hold. That's because Search, together with its partners, had been running a community-based early warning and response system across parts of Benue State, including Yelwata, for four years. Trained community observers monitored warning signs of escalation — rumours, movements and local threats — and reported them through a dedicated platform.

Staff worked with religious leaders, community representatives and security actors to interpret alerts and coordinate preventive responses, including mediation and targeted security engagement. These dialogues created channels for communication that had not existed before, allowing concerns to be addressed before tensions escalated. The approach was grounded in evidence and the data showed it was working.



Between 2022 and 2024:



By late 2024, Search and the Benue State government were preparing for the final phase of the programme: a structured handover of the early warning platform to state authorities. Prevention would not just be an external intervention but a locally owned public good. Then, in January 2025, the programme came to an abrupt halt.

Following the collapse of the U.S. Agency for International Development, thousands of peace and prevention initiatives worldwide were terminated. In Nigeria alone, nearly €150 million in U.S.-funded programmes were cancelled, including the violence prevention platform in Benue State.

The early warning system went offline, staff were laid off or reassigned, and the planned transition to state ownership stopped. Communities lost the mechanism that had helped them escalate risks and convene timely responses.

In June 2025, five months after the programme ended, Yelwata experienced a devastating attack. Armed assailants killed roughly 200 people, destroyed homes and market stalls, and displaced nearly 4,000 residents. By the time security forces arrived, it was too late.

Community members had reported warning signs in the days leading up to the violence. But without an operational platform or dedicated staff, those alerts were not escalated or acted upon in a coordinated way. According to Devex: “What happened in Yelwata was a tragedy, but not an isolated one. Months after USAID’s closure, communities once buoyed by U.S.-funded projects are still feeling the void — in rising tensions, dwindling services, and a growing sense of abandonment.”

Additional violence soon occurred in parts of Nigeria’s Middle Belt — including during the Christmas season — underscoring how quickly insecurity can return when preventive systems are absent.

This example doesn’t show that prevention failed. It shows that prevention was working — and then was interrupted. The early warning system did not eliminate violence. But it reduced incidents, saved lives and reached the point where the local government was prepared to assume responsibility. That handover didn’t happen.

As one community leader reflected, “if they don’t come back, our hope of being safe is not there.” Holding hope requires sustained peacebuilding efforts to deliver what matters most; the outcomes are measurable.

“We had an early warning system in place. But now, we’re operating blind.”

BRYAN WEINER
West Africa Regional Programme Manager

The Peace Impact Framework in Action



Data shows fewer incidents and casualties while prevention mechanisms were active.



Communities identified and reported warning signs even after formal support ended.



Dialogue and mediation reduced escalation between herder and farmer communities.



Trust between civilians and security institutions grew through consistent engagement — and eroded when it stopped.



Nigeria demonstrates the cost of discontinuity: when peace infrastructure disappears, risk rises.

WHEN BORDERS DIDN'T BECOME BATTLEFIELDS

Peacebuilding works when it is preventive, local, and continuous, even in geopolitically sensitive and historically violent border regions.

CENTRAL ASIA

AFTER 101 YEARS, PEACE PREVAILS AT THE BORDER

In March 2025, the presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed a landmark agreement ending a century-long dispute over their shared border. The conflict had fuelled decades of tension over land, water and movement rights, and it erupted into violence in 2021 and 2022.

The agreement followed more than two years of sustained negotiations and was a global win for diplomacy, proving that talking works better than fighting. But the breakthrough did not begin at the negotiating table.

While high-level talks unfolded, Search worked not only with political leaders but with local peacebuilders, journalists and activists on both sides to keep communication open and prevent renewed escalation. Community leaders, who addressed land and resource disputes prior to the violence, remained hopeful for the border dispute resolution, and expert groups helped government leaders understand the real human cost of war.

This deal brings peace to one of the most densely populated regions in the world. It fosters stronger relationships between neighbours with a future built on cooperation, not conflict. And with open borders, trade and business can thrive.

Ultimately, the agreement succeeded not through headlines or military intervention. This was peace built quietly and persistently. It relied on trust and on people willing to sustain dialogue when political tensions ran high. It was the culmination of years of holding the line — and holding hope.



WHEN POLARISATION BECOMES POLITICAL VIOLENCE

UNITED STATES

TRANSFORMING CRISIS INTO RESILIENCE

America feels more divided than ever. Partisan extremism flourishes on social media and influences politics, exaggerating differences and weakening the ability to face crises. Our Common Ground USA (CG-USA) colleagues and partners focus on the trickiest problems in the U.S. — from how to reconcile with the past, to how to build a violence-free politics in the future.

Working with peacebuilders who go by other names — faith leaders, university administrators, union organisers and business entrepreneurs, government public servants, cultural icons in sports, arts, music, and everyday leaders who hold their communities together — we interrupt cycles of political violence through deep prevention and an agile rapid-response.

In 2025, the CG-USA addressed incidents of high-profile political violence in the United States. Building on what we know works to bring people together and prevents harm: within hours of major events, the team mobilised to provide clear, values-driven guidance that helped communities move from fear toward constructive action.

Our colleagues and partners stepped in to advise local leaders, amplify bipartisan condemnations of violence, and equip networks with practical tools to process trauma and prevent escalation. These resources enabled communities across multiple states to respond without deepening division.

Crucially, our approach converts crisis response into sustained resilience-strengthening state-level networks, supporting bridge-building initiatives, and becoming a trusted national advisor on best practices for preventing political violence. This is vital in a large, diverse democracy where collaborative leadership matters more than ever.

The programme works. According to a national pulse survey based on the Peace Impact Framework, affective polarisation is worsening across the country. But people working with our teams are experiencing the opposite and report significant increases in building trusted and effective relationships across lines of difference and confidence in this leading to real outcomes.

CG-USA's work serves the dual purpose of interrupting violence and demonstrating how dealing constructively with differences can enable communities to not just survive but thrive together.

50
in-person activities, including mentorship and training

11 MILLION
people reached via digital campaigns

24
community-led initiatives

KEEPING PEACEBUILDING ON THE AGENDA IN EUROPE

We collaborate closely with key EU institutions and European governments, helping them recognise the importance of conflict prevention and encouraging them to actively support peacebuilding efforts. To achieve this, we share insights and real-life experiences from communities and people affected by conflict. Our European headquarters plays a central role in driving our policy work. From here, we engage with policymakers, businesses and development

stakeholders to promote durable peace and conflict-sensitive strategies, backed by solid evidence and research.

2025 marked one of the busiest and most impactful years for our Brussels HQ team, with a record number of external engagements, publications and online briefings. Despite a particularly challenging global context, we delivered a range of tangible results.

HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

- The European External Action Service (EEAS) agreed to co-chair the EU Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Coalition together with Search and to more proactively champion the YPS agenda. We worked in close partnership with the EEAS throughout the year, including on the organisation of the EU YPS Conference and Week at the end of 2025. This brought together over 200 young peacebuilders from more than 85 countries and culminated in a youth-led declaration.



- In Belgium, we actively engage in awareness-raising initiatives and collaborate with various Brussels-based development stakeholders, including NGOs, civil society organisations (CSOs), the Belgian development agency Enabel, and civil servants from the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2025, we organised three conflict sensitivity training sessions in Niger, Mali and Brussels.
- Search convened a high-level event with the European Think Tanks Group titled “(Dis)integrating Peace: EU Engagement in Conflict-Affected States.” The event featured speakers from the Sahel, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Afghanistan, and gathered 100 participants, including more than 30 representatives from EU institutions and Member States. The resulting outcome document was widely disseminated and well received.
- In collaboration with our Belgian partner IPIS, we organised an event on peace and security in Belgian foreign policy at the Belgian Federal Parliament, hosted by the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Forgotten Crises

One of our objectives is also to raise awareness among the broader public about the impact of conflict and the importance of peacebuilding. To support that goal, together with two other NGOs (Caritas and Justice & Paix) we organised the photo exhibition “Forgotten Crises” at Géopolis, a photo exhibition centre in Brussels. While global attention often focuses on major conflicts, many crises unfold with little visibility or political attention.

The exhibition highlighted four overlooked crises (Sudan, the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen and Haiti), aiming not only to inform but also to inspire engagement and demonstrate the vital role communities play as agents of peace.



KEY INSIGHTS AND TRENDS

01. War cannot deliver what it promises.

2025 once again underscored the futility of war in the modern world. War is not producing lasting safety. Not for those who wage it. Not for those caught inside it. Not for the world around it.

In a deeply interconnected and mutually vulnerable world, win-lose approaches do not hold. They fracture systems, prolong instability and create conditions for future conflict. A stable and enduring world can only be built through negotiated agreements, shared incentives and an unwavering commitment to non-violent approaches to conflict.

02. Power has changed and peacebuilding must change with it.

The distance between authority and influence is widening. Peace cannot be built through institutions alone. It must be built across the full ecosystem of influence.

That means fostering the politics and the culture of peace. Mobilising across generations. Using technology to improve our world without compromising human dignity. The future of peacebuilding is not top-down.

03. Hope is harder and more necessary than it has ever been.

For much of recent history, violence has been declining. That is no longer the case. Polarisation, dehumanisation and violence have accelerated. Reversing this terrible trajectory is daunting when faced with daily headlines of civilian death tolls and hostile rhetoric from leaders. If we are to hold onto our humanity, we must pause to acknowledge and grieve the human cost of these crises. Not abstract, but constant, visible and heavy.

And if we are to be true to our mission, we must pick ourselves up and redouble our efforts to create a more peaceful world. The greatest source of strength and solidarity — both in mourning and in mobilising — is our ever-growing global network of peers, partners and supporters, which together will one day turn the tide.

THE PATH FORWARD

The learnings from 2025 have shaped our **2026-2030 Global Strategy**. It's now clearer than ever: we must strengthen long-term partnerships in the world's most divided places and equip leaders to work across lines of identity and ideology. By doing this, we'll shift how societies respond to conflict and we'll set a new norm for how change is led.

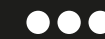
Search will accelerate the emergence of collaborative leaders who drive change across dividing lines. Over the next five years, we will:



Improve the dignity and safety of 200 million people across the world.



Mobilize one million leaders to embrace and promote a collaborative model of leadership.



Expand the power of 40 million people to influence the decisions that affect them and their communities.



In the process, we will accelerate the emergence of a new kind of leadership reflected in public sector decision makers and private sector executives, youth advocates and community organisers, teachers, faith leaders, and the families, neighbours and communities they serve — who will make peace a sustainable reality by grounding it in collaborative problem-solving and meaningful trust-building.

INVESTING IN PEACE

Peacebuilding impact is often measured by what *doesn't* happen — violence that doesn't escalate, harm that is avoided, futures that remain possible. Search for Common Ground's Impact Calculator makes prevention visible by five vital signs of societal health.



Agency

Gaining the necessary skills and confidence to lead peace efforts in one's own community.



Violence Reduction

Moving people away from seeing violence as an acceptable means to achieve their goals.



Polarisation

Developing more positive attitudes and behaviors toward people across divides.



Legitimacy

Improving engagement with institutions to strengthen trust and accountability.



Investments

Helping societies develop and manage the right resources to support peace.

Investment is critical for building durable local peace infrastructure, not just one-time interventions.

A €100 INVESTMENT IN PEACE RETURNS:

- 115 people who feel less dehumanised and more understood
- 44 young people taking action across divides to improve their lives
- 10 people identifying and responding to misinformation and hate speech
- 5 people becoming better represented by their leaders
- Training for local leaders and community mediators
- Ongoing conflict prevention activity in high-risk areas

A €1,000 INVESTMENT IN PEACE RETURNS:

- 430 young people and women who believe they can make a difference
- 108 people feeling safer in their daily lives
- 40 people gaining credible civic information
- 5 trained community mediators
- Multiple local leaders equipped to intervene before conflict starts

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