IPIE
International Panel on the Information Environment

Artificial Intelligence and Peacebuilding

Promises and Pitfalls

Summary for Policymakers 2025.3

SYNOPSIS

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming part of the world's conflict landscapes. It is being used to monitor conflict risks, support humanitarian coordination, and foster peace dialogues—but also to expand repression, surveille civilians, and spread disinformation.

This Summary for Policymakers showcases the most promising applications of AI for peacebuilding, drawn from the largest-ever systematic review across peacebuilding, humanitarian response, AI ethics, and technology governance. Based on evidence from over 600 articles, it also outlines essential guardrails to prevent harm and ensure responsible implementation. Today, AI is being used to:

1. Strengthen early warning and forecasting systems
2. Enable inclusive digital dialogue and civic engagement
3. Support crisis mapping and humanitarian response
4. Promote pro-social interaction and mitigate online polarization

The successful use of AI in peacebuilding, however, depends on the responsible governance of AI in fragile conflict settings.

To harness AI's peacebuilding potential and mitigate dangers, policymakers must:

- Center fundamental human rights and "do no harm" principles in every stage of AI design and deployment.
- Fund evidence-based initiatives and make data on both successes and failures widely accessible.
- Support smaller, locally relevant language models that reflect diverse contexts.
- Promote transparency and accountability for dual-use AI tools.
- Build partnerships across peacebuilding, development, and technology sectors.

This report draws on *Technical Paper 2025.3, Artificial Intelligence and Peacebuilding: Opportunities and Challenges*, which synthesizes findings from a diverse corpus captured case studies from countries and conflict settings around the world, with a wide range of AI, machine learning, and related tools.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence is increasingly central to peacebuilding work. In the best cases, AI can offer early warnings about violence, enable inclusive public dialogue, and help peacekeepers protect civilians. Yet it can also deepen digital surveillance, distort the information environment, and accelerate military decision-making without human review. These dual-use tensions raise urgent questions for policymakers.

The findings summarized here reflect the work of researchers, practitioners, and advisors across five continents. This analysis is based upon a review of 600 peer-reviewed articles, technical papers, working papers, case studies, and field reports. The works included were from international peacebuilding organizations, scientists, technology developers, and local civil society leaders. This process ensured a wide range of perspectives and deepened our understanding of both the potential and pitfalls of AI in peacebuilding contexts.

Artificial intelligence is already playing diverse roles in the peacebuilding field. From crisis response to civic engagement, a range of applications are beginning to influence how practitioners prevent violence and build more resilient societies.

The five findings below highlight where AI is making the most impact—and where new challenges demand urgent policy attention.

For further evidence and regional examples, see *Technical Paper 2025.3*.

FINDING 1: FORECASTING WITH CAUTION

KEY FINDING

AI can enhance early warning systems—but overreliance on predictive models is risky.

AI tools are increasingly used to predict the likelihood of violent outbreaks. Systems such as Violence in Early Warning Systems (ViEWS) and the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project (ACLED) show that machine learning models can identify precursors to violence—such as hate speech trends, unusual troop movements, or spikes in economic distress—and forecast conflict with up to 95% in short-term accuracy. These tools can be especially useful in settings where real-time monitoring is otherwise limited [1], [2].

Yet predictive models remain prone to error and bias, especially in data-scarce environments. Humanitarian workers warn that false positives may prompt unnecessary interventions, while false negatives risk lives. AI also struggles with long-term forecasting and political nuance. Policymakers must view predictions as supplementary, not definitive. A hybrid approach—combining AI signals with local expertise and participatory analysis—offers the most promise for actionable, context-aware early warning systems.

FINDING 2: ENABLING DIGITAL DIALOGUE

KEY FINDING

Digital dialogue tools are scaling civic inclusion in conflict zones.

AI-enabled platforms are helping expand civic participation in conflict-affected regions by analysing public input and amplifying marginalized voices. Tools like Remesh and Talk to the City enable thousands of participants to share views, surface common ground, and contribute to policy design [3], [4], [5], [6]. In Libya, Syria, and Yemen, the UN and other peacebuilding organizations have used these platforms to host multilingual, inclusive consultations that reflect diverse social and political contexts.

These technologies can widen access and improve legitimacy, but they require careful implementation. Trust, digital literacy, and security are essential. Poorly managed processes may exclude vulnerable groups or create risks of data misuse. Dialogue initiatives must be supported by in-person facilitation and community partnerships. When done well, digital consultation helps scale peace dialogue in ways that traditional forums often cannot, making it a vital component of modern peacebuilding strategies. AI is creating exciting new opportunities for dialogue, but the global digital divide will remain.

FINDING 3: MAPPING WITH SAFEGUARDS

KEY FINDING

AI-powered mapping accelerates humanitarian response—but can be misused.

In humanitarian response, AI helps generate real-time maps of conflict zones, disaster damage, and population displacement. Tools like DISHA (Data Insights for Social & Humanitarian Action, a multi-partner initiative led by UN Global Pulse), and platforms used to combine drone footage, satellite imagery, and crowdsourced reports can produce detailed assessments faster and at greater scale [7]. In pilot studies, AI systems have reduced damage analysis times by a factor of six. If applied in real-world settings, such systems might help responders reach affected communities more efficiently.

However, mapping technologies can also pose severe risks if used without oversight. In some cases, geospatial data has been used to target civilians or suppress dissent. Algorithms may misclassify important social trends in the moment of crisis, especially in data-poor contexts. These tools must be governed by strong privacy safeguards, ethical protocols, and community engagement mechanisms. The goal is to increase situational awareness without compromising the safety or autonomy of people on the ground.

FINDING 4: DESIGNING FOR DIALOGUE

KEY FINDING

Peacebuilding benefits from pro-social design in tech platforms.

The primary business model of social media platforms—maximizing engagement—often rewards outrage and polarizing content [8]. But AI can also be used to foster more constructive online spaces. New iterations of Perspective API are helping shift this incentive, prioritizing thoughtful comments and personal narratives over sensationalism. Tools such as Phoenix allow peacemakers to carry out the social media listening that informs peacebuilding work [9], [10]. These changes support healthier information environments, which are essential in fragile settings where the slightest misunderstandings and inaccuracies result in tragedy.

Peacebuilders are beginning to collaborate with technology designers to embed values like empathy, mutual understanding, and trust-building into digital infrastructures. While these efforts are still emerging, early pilots suggest that pro-social algorithms can increase exposure to diverse perspectives and reduce harmful misinformation. This proactive, design-based approach to technology development could help rebuild social cohesion in deeply divided societies.

FINDING 5: GOVERNING AI RESPONSIBLY

KEY FINDING

Responsible AI governance is critical in fragile conflict settings.

Effective peacebuilding requires AI to be developed and deployed under strict ethical and legal oversight. Yet in many conflict zones, regulatory systems are weak or nonexistent. Without guardrails, AI tools can facilitate surveillance, predictive policing, and algorithmic discrimination. Generative models may also hallucinate or misrepresent facts, with real consequences for human lives [11].

To address these risks, AI governance must be rooted in human rights and participatory principles. This includes community consultation, open documentation, transparency in training data, and mechanisms for accountability. Donors and implementers should prioritize investments in small-scale, context-specific models and commit to open reporting on both success and failure. Responsible governance is not only a moral obligation, but also a strategic necessity to ensure AI supports peace rather than deepens instability.

CONCLUSION

Artificial intelligence will not replace diplomacy, reconciliation, or trust-building. But it can support these efforts—if designed ethically, deployed inclusively, and governed transparently. Peacebuilders should treat AI as an augmentation tool, not a substitute for human connection.

Even the most sophisticated AI tools may exacerbate rather than prevent conflict if deployed in unhealthy information environments. To build trust in AI systems, particularly in fragile and post-conflict settings, policymakers must ensure these technologies are embedded within frameworks that prioritize justice, equity, and inclusion. Technical sophistication alone is not sufficient. Meaningful participation by local communities in decision-making processes is essential to secure legitimacy and lasting peace. AI must be deployed in ways that uphold human dignity and empower frontline actors.

Multilateral organizations, civil society, and technology designers must work collaboratively to establish global norms and invest in long-term monitoring of AI's impact. Regular adaptation of policies, transparency in design and deployment, and attention to unintended consequences will help prevent harm and build institutional resilience. This proactive approach is necessary to prevent AI from becoming an increasing source of instability and remain a tool for peace.

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