

THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE, CONFLICT, AND PEACE: AN EVALUATION

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MAY 2023

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Acronyms

CEOBS	Conflict and Environment Observatory
CoP	Community of Practice
COP	Conference of Parties
ECCP	Environment, Climate, Conflict and Peace
EnPax	Environmental Peacebuilding Association
FMNR	Farmer-managed Natural Regeneration
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-government Organization
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
QUNO	Quaker United Nations Office
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

Executive Summary

The Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace (ECCP) is a community of practice (CoP or community) that aims to strengthen networking and community building on environmental peacebuilding, climate security, and other related topics through collaboration, dialogue, and learning between institutions and individuals both in Geneva and around the globe.

The objectives of the ECCP CoP are:

1. To **foster inter-institutional collaboration** and dialogue on ECCP topics and projects.
2. To **promote learning and innovation**, recognizing that each actor has a unique angle to bring to the table.
3. To harness the joint reach of all participants to **mainstream ECCP into organizations and institutions**.

This community of practice comprises more than 500 individuals from around the world, most representing different non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations or United Nations (UN) agencies, and academic institutions and think tanks. Participants work in various fields related to peace, humanitarian response, the environment, conservation, the security sector, and more.

The ECCP is a constellation of convenings and connections. There are monthly, community-wide meetings meant to create a platform for networking and relationship building. Additionally, there are three tracks through which participants can connect with like-minded individuals and institutions: policy, practice, and evidence. There is no formal “membership” within the community or each track, and participants do not need to choose participation in one over the others. Rather, the tracks provide a framework for organizing information in a way that does not “re-silo” the community back into focus topics.

The community was created in early 2020 and is managed by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, as a part of its workstream on community management. Over the past three years, the community has grown from about 40 Geneva-based participants to over 500 participants around the world. Following the completion of its third year of work at the end of 2022, the ECCP CoP partnered with Universalialia from January to April 2023 to conduct a collaborative and utilization-focused evaluation of the community. The evaluation explored questions related to the community's relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Its methods included surveys, interviews, and document review.

The following key findings emerged from the evaluation:

- **ECCP is relevant and valuable to CoP participants because of its diversity and flexibility.** This includes a diversity of participants, flexible and varied modes of engagement, and the variety of topics covered.
- ECCP participants noted the CoP's relevance to their work and the various ways in which the community is **responsive to their needs, particularly as it relates to information sharing, in-depth learning, and the development of relationships and networks.** Those interviewed and surveyed for the evaluation described how their participation in the CoP has resulted in a great deal of learning, as well as how the community serves as a clearinghouse for informative material.
- **The ECCP has a specific and niche role to play in the environmental peacebuilding space.** This niche is related to its low barriers to entry and participation, the wide breadth of topics it covers, and its informal nature that participants find welcoming and engaging. The connections built through conversation in the CoP allow people to develop helpful maps of the space, plan for meetings together, have spinoff conversations, triangulate concepts and fine tune approaches, and develop concrete collaborations.
- ECCP relies on a modest monetary budget, which along with in-kind contributions and investments from other organizations and participants as well as the use of low-cost options for engagement, contributes to **an efficient use of resources to fulfill its objectives as a CoP.** However, **the modest amount of available resources does limit some aspects of the community,** including its ability to reach wider and more diverse audiences.
- To date, the **ECCP CoP has made significant progress toward its objectives** by crafting diverse, open, and supportive spaces for collaboration and dialogue; serving as a significant space for the sharing of knowledge and information; and by effectively supporting interested participants to mainstream environmental peacebuilding and related topics through international policy fora, large events, or directly into their programs or organizations. Nonetheless, **there are key challenges to effectiveness related to the CoP's modes of engagement and, consequently, who can participate in ECCP and how** that are worth further reflection.
- In making progress on its original objectives, **ECCP has contributed to several pathways of impact** for its participants and the environmental peacebuilding field. These include impacts on internal institutional dynamics, learning, and funding for ECCP topics, better cross-silo programming, policy, and project coordination, and the inclusion of peace and conflict-sensitivity language in international environmental policy fora. As one person interviewed described it, a recent positive policy outcome at Stockholm+50 demonstrates how pooled attempts have a much greater chance to impact change; knowing you have an ally in another room disseminating the same message is powerful.

Based on these finds and some of the challenges identified, this evaluation recommends:

- Given the current limited involvement of CoP participants outside of Europe, Central Asia, and North America, **ECCP should consider how it might engage participants from more diverse geographies**. This is particularly important given that many people either working directly on ECCP-related issues or those most affected by these issues are outside of Europe and North America. However, any move toward expanding the community should be contemplated alongside the potential need for additional resources
- Similarly, **ECCP should consider increasing its outreach to new and different kinds of organizations**, particularly in environment and conservation fields. This will increase the diversity of participants in the community.
- Additionally, **ECCP should continue to be open to collaboration with other, similar organizations, communities, and platforms in this space** to avoid duplicating efforts, all while continuing to maintain its niche role.
- In response to the various needs and availability of its participants, **ECCP should continue to offer flexible ways of engaging in the community**, from passive listener to active participant to project-based work with concrete goals. It should also continue provide **more avenues for participant leadership**, as the community has begun to introduce in 2023 through its three tracks.
- **ECCP should ensure that the information and knowledge it shares remains available** through a working library or archive. Similarly, it should provide a calendar to participants with relevant events, webinars, and dates.
- **ECCP should seek out additional financial resources** to support extending its reach to more diverse audiences through methods like translation and interpretation services, thus providing more inclusive methods of engagement and rooting conversations in lived experience.
- To ensure the long-term sustainability of ECCP, **the CoP should continue to provide opportunities for participants to express their evolving interests and needs over time**. This will help maintain the community's specific niche role in the space and its relevance to participants.

Introduction

The Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace (ECCP) community of practice (CoP or community) aims to strengthen networking and community building on environmental peacebuilding, climate security, and other related topics through collaboration, dialogue, and learning between institutions and individuals both in Geneva and around the globe. It is a project of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, part of its mandate on community management.

ECCP completed its third year of work at the end of 2022, at which point the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform's Community Management Lead Annika Erickson-Pearson partnered with Universalia Consultant Dr. Amanda Woomer to conduct a collaborative and utilization-focused evaluation of the CoP. The objectives of the evaluation included:

- Summarizing the full body of ECCP's work over the last three years.
- Compiling and assessing evidence of ECCP's contributions to the environmental peacebuilding, climate security, and other relevant spaces through its role as a convenor and facilitator.
- Document and understand the needs of ECCP participants going forward as well as the ways in which the CoP can support these needs.
- Produce a reflective summary of ECCP's work for its participants, prospective participants, funders, and potential funders.

The evaluation, which took place between January and April 2023, was informed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria, namely: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. It is utilization-focused, meaning that the evaluation is intended to serve as a useful and practical input for the ECCP in understanding its achievements and challenges to date as well as in determining its next steps and future focus. The evaluation was also a highly collaborative process, with Ms. Erickson-Pearson and Dr. Woomer working together at each step of the evaluation process, often soliciting feedback from ECCP participants. The authors extend their gratitude to all participating survey respondents and interviewees for their generosity of time and spirit to provide enriching feedback.

To answer key evaluation questions, the evaluation incorporated a mixed methods approach that included a document review of ECCP documents, interviews with ECCP participants, an online survey of ECCP participants (the "evaluation survey"), and data collected as part of a stock taking exercise on the *White Paper on the Future of*

Environmental Peacebuilding.¹ More information on each of the data collection methods is available in the table below.

Methodology	Sample Size	Sampling Strategy & Additional Information
Interviews	25	<p>Purposefully selected to encompass geographic, organizational, career stage, and thematic expertise diversity.</p> <p>Interviews were conducted by Ms. Erickson-Pearson between 17 February and 9 March 2023; each participant was provided with informed consent via email prior to their participation in the interview.</p>
Evaluation Survey	66	<p>The survey was sent to all ECCP participants by email on 23 January 2023, which outlined the evaluation process. Reminders to complete the survey were also sent as part of regular ECCP weekly emails on 24 January and 2 February 2023. The response rate for the survey was 11.5%.</p>
Stocktaking Survey	22	<p>Participants of the 28 February and 2 March 2023 <i>White Paper</i> stocktaking sessions were asked to interview one another and take notes via a Google Forms survey. The invitation to the stocktaking sessions was sent to all <i>White Paper</i> authors and reviewers, but the sessions were open to all ECCP participants.</p>

This evaluation report comprises three sections: **Part I** describes ECCP’s history and purpose; **Part II** contains the bulk of the evaluation findings based on key questions and criteria; and **Part III** looks forward at where the ECCP CoP is headed and provides recommendations for its future implementation and success.

¹ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61dc05c236d433322aa36f4/t/61f82d32f94646095e2cd9b4/1643654497051/The+Future+of+Environmental+Peacebuilding+-+A+White+Paper+%282022%29.pdf>

Part I: Structure, Participation, and Background of the ECCP CoP

Environmental peacebuilding and climate security are not new topics, though there are recent and clear trends demonstrating new actors and organizations building programs, policy, and research in the field. Indeed, environment, climate, conflict, and peace (ECCP) can serve as a meta framework through which we can better name the relationships between natural resources, climate change, biodiversity, security, armed conflict, and peace, as well as a set of tools to support strategies and activities for peacebuilding, environmental and climate adaptation, nature conservation, and community cohesion.

In addition, and perhaps most importantly in this case, **ECCP is also a community of practice**. “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”² The ECCP CoP aims to improve and expand the reach of both peacebuilding projects towards environmental and climate sensitivity, and also environmental and climate projects towards peacebuilding sensitivity. It does this by fostering inter-institutional collaboration and dialogue, promoting learning and innovation, and mainstreaming these topics.

In this case, there are three helpful ways to describe the ECCP community of practice: its background, what it does, and who participates in it.

ECCP’s Background

The ECCP community was created and is managed by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform. The Platform’s work is split into three pillars: convening and incubation, community management, and the Geneva Peace Week. As part of its mandate on community management, the Platform aims to strengthen networking and community building in different topics within the peacebuilding sector. Work in this pillar began, in earnest, in early 2020, when members of the Platform Advisory Board named ECCP as a potential nexus area for further exploration. Based on that feedback, the Platform decided to “pilot” a project on community management within the topic.

² Wenger-Trayner, E. and Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015) An introduction to communities of practice: a brief overview of the concept and its uses. Available from authors at <https://www.wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice>.

The ECCP community of practice officially launched in March 2020, originally named “The Geneva Dialogue on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace,” with three distinct goals:

1. To foster inter-institutional collaboration and dialogue on ECCP topics and projects.
2. To promote learning and innovation, recognizing that each actor has a unique angle to bring to the table.
3. To harness the joint reach of all participants to mainstream ECCP into organizations and institutions in Geneva.

The overarching objective of the community was, and remains, to improve and expand the reach of both peacebuilding projects towards environmental and climate sensitivity, and also environmental and climate projects towards peacebuilding sensitivity.

The CoP was originally named the “Geneva Dialogue on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace” to root the project in its host location. However, feedback from ECCP participants over time has indicated that this label created confusion about whether being physically located in Geneva was a requirement for participation. Its use was slowly phased out, and no major announcement was made to the community on the subject.

ECCP Structure and Function

Defining a community of practice is much like defining a community of proximity. It comprises a wide range of individuals with diverse identities, most of whom interact with one another, but usually in diverse ways. There may be a common community identity, and/or subgroup identities, and certainly many distinct individual identities.

The ECCP is a constellation of convenings and connections. There are monthly, community-wide meetings meant to create a platform for networking and relationship building. Additionally, there are three tracks through which participants can connect with like-minded individuals and institutions: policy, practice, and evidence. There is no formal “membership” within the community or each track, and participants do not need to choose participation in one over the others. Rather, the tracks provide a framework for organizing information in a way that does not “re-silo” the community back into focus topics.

The policy track creates space for connection and collaboration in myriad policy processes, largely on the multilateral scale. The CoP provides space for groups to meet online to coordinate events, share ideas, and present briefings. There is also intentional work to simply share information between participants about who

participates in which processes, as well as to educate the larger community about the various and ongoing policy-related processes. A detailed record of policy processes can be found below in the CoP timeline (Figure 1).

The practice track convenes practitioners from local communities as well as program designers, managers, and funders together to exchange on concrete methods and practices at the intersection of environmental degradation, climate change, conservation, conflict, peace, and security. Online and in-person workshops as well as briefings are designed to bring one method, project, or approach at a time to the larger community. For example, a local conservation organization has presented their principles for community-based conservation, or expert practitioners from Kenya present a tree-pruning methodology with peace dividends for communities. It is a space that allows for concrete exchanges and learning opportunities based on real world implementation and experience.

Finally, the track on developing the evidence base is perhaps the largest and most well-known, particularly for its production of a *White Paper on the Future of Environmental Peacebuilding*, a two-part knowledge product detailed below. This track connects CoP participants to the latest research on a monthly basis, and attempts to promote the importance of monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Finally, the community is animated by scores of bilateral connections. As much as neighborly relationships constitute any community, so do bilateral professional connections within ECCP. There is a constant engine driving bilateral connection and conversation within the community by email, online meeting, and in-person convenings in Geneva and elsewhere.

ECCP Participants

This community of practice comprises more than 500 individuals from around the world, most representing different non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations or United Nations (UN) agencies, and academic institutions and think tanks. Some individuals work for governments, while others are consultants or students.

The original conceptualization of the community aimed to connect Geneva professionals to one another; the very first invitation for participation was sent in March 2020 to 36 Geneva-based individuals. However, the community quickly grew to encompass participants outside of the Geneva ecosystem. Given the online-only nature of work during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became possible for anyone with a stable internet connection and corresponding time zone to participate in the community. As the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform's mandate calls

on the organization to “nurture the networking of peacebuilding resources in Geneva and worldwide,” the ECCP community has correspondingly expanded to a worldwide reach. At the time of this writing, more than 575 individuals received the most recent ECCP email communication.

Participation in the ECCP community is flexible and voluntary. Participants choose to engage on topics of interest to them and to the degree that they prefer, across all activities. There is no minimum activity requirement to participate, and participants do not officially represent their organizations. The ECCP has named and maintains a commitment to remaining an open and inclusive forum for discussion on environment, climate, conflict, and peace.

ECCP Activities

This section summarizes the community’s activities over the last three years. For more details, please see the **Appendix**.

Monthly meetings, briefings, and facilitated discussions

Between March 2020 and March 2023, 20 monthly meetings or general facilitated discussions were held, welcoming participants to introduce themselves and build relationships with one another. Most of these meetings were held online. A list of topics and speakers is available in the **Appendix** of this document.

The White Paper on the Future of Environmental Peacebuilding

The *White Paper* is a collaborative, multi-author project which outlines a vision for the future of environmental peacebuilding. The process was designed to act as a vehicle through which stakeholders could collaborate and build cross-cutting relationships in order to craft a common vision for the future. It also recognized the variety of perspectives and backgrounds present in the environment, climate, conservation, conflict, security, and peace fields.

The *White Paper* is the product of a multi-lingual, multi-stage, consultative process carried out over many months with 154 authors writing the 50 chapters in the Compendium and more than 150 people being involved in consultation and reviews of different iterations of the paper. Find the *White Paper and Compendium* online here: www.ecosystemforpeace.org.

Conferences

The ECCP community has collaborated towards certain conferences, including the Geneva Peace Week editions in 2020, 2021, and 2022. The Geneva Peace Week is hosted by ECCP’s coordinating institution, the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, and is a leading annual forum on the international calendar of peace conferences.

ECCP also coordinated closely with EnPax to support the Second International Conference on Environmental Peacebuilding. Originally intended to be held in a hybrid format from Geneva, it was held online-only from 1-4 February 2022. ECCP supported the design of the Road to Geneva, an online webinar series connecting researchers, practitioners, and policymakers on environmental peacebuilding topics, as well as built momentum for Geneva-based institutions to attend and co-host sessions at the overall conference.

Policy coordination

Coordination for policy fora largely consists of regular group meetings in advance of conferences or policy processes. An effort is made to connect interested participants to one another to partner for side events, coordinate on messaging and communications, and cross-pollinate ideas. Within the international environment, climate change, and biodiversity policy sphere, participants have coordinated action for three installments of the UNFCCC's Conference of the Parties (COP26, COP27, and COP28), the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15), the IUCN's 2021 Conservation Congress, as well as Stockholm+50 in May 2022, which marked 50 years after the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. On the peacebuilding side, participants provided feedback into the New Agenda for Peace, part of the UN Secretary General's Our Common Agenda. ECCP increasingly follows and corresponds on climate, peace, and security issues in the UN Security Council, as well as the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

Regular emails and online directory

In addition to online and in-person meetings, briefings, and workshops, as well as conference participation and policy coordination, the CoP is connected by regular emails that provide resources, links, reports, upcoming events and webinars, key dates on the annual policy calendar, and much more. To better foster connections, an online directory document has also been established. It contains the name, title, institution, short description, and contact information of those who wish to be included.³ There are currently 90 participants in the directory.

These activities constitute the formal engagements of the CoP. There are countless bilateral exchanges, report launches, funding searches, and research connections made over time that make up the connective fibers holding the group together (see Section on Impact below). The structure intentionally blends formal and informal approaches through its regular convening.

³ Given the inclusion of contact information, the directory is only shared with individuals who opt in to sharing their data.

TIMELINE

TRACING THE ECCP'S ACTIVITIES OVER TIME...



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE, CONFLICT, AND PEACE

Figure 1: ECCP Timeline

Part II: Evaluating the ECCP CoP

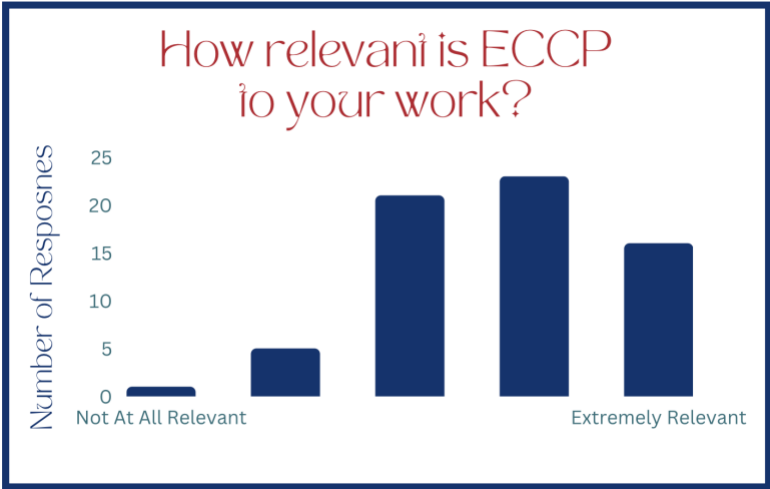
This section presents the findings of the evaluation organized by key questions, which in turn correspond with the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. The findings are based on the data collected from interviews, surveys, and document review. Key evaluation questions include:

- Why do people participate in the ECCP CoP? (*relevance*)
- How does the CoP fit within the broader environmental peacebuilding space? (*coherence*)
- How has the ECCP CoP used the resources at its disposal? What is working, and what could be improved? (*efficiency*)
- How effective has the ECCP CoP been in achieving its original objectives? What is working, and what could be improved? (*effectiveness*)
- What impact or influence has the CoP’s work had on individuals, organizations, and the broader field? (*impact*)

Note that questions related to sustainability are included in **Part III** of the evaluation.

Why do people participate in the ECCP CoP?

ECCP participants interviewed or surveyed for this evaluation conveyed a high level of relevance of the CoP to their work. This was based largely on the community’s responsiveness to their needs, particularly those related to information sharing, in-depth learning, and the development of relationships and networks. This perceived relevance extends across demographics and professional backgrounds. Additionally, ECCP is relevant and valuable because of its ability to cater to a variety of interests and to provide multiple modes of engagement.



For the ECCP CoP to be effective, impactful, and sustainable, it is essential that the community is and remains relevant to the needs of its participants. This requires a detailed awareness of who engages in the CoP, why, and to what degree ECCP has been responsive to and inclusive of their needs.

Figure 2: Relevance of ECCP

To develop a better understanding of who ECCP CoP participants are and the degree to which they feel the community is relevant to their work and needs, a survey was sent to all ECCP participants that included demographic questions as well as questions about their perceptions of the community's relevance and value.

When asked how relevant the ECCP CoP is to their work, 50% of evaluation survey respondents indicated that the community is very relevant (see Figure 2).⁴ One reason for this high level of relevance may be the community's coverage of a variety of thematic areas in which CoP participants are interested. Of those who responded to the evaluation survey, 97% work in fields related to ECCP (environment, conservation, climate, or conflict and peace; see Figure 3 for a breakdown), and 67% work in more than one area. There was not a significant difference in the perceived relevance of the CoP among respondents working in different areas,⁵ which suggests that the CoP is widely relevant across sectors.

The community's relevance extends to various geographies as well. Although the majority of participants are based in Europe and Central Asia (67% of evaluation survey respondents) or North America (12%), ECCP participants can be found globally. This includes participation from Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, and South Asia. When looking at participants outside of Europe, Central Asia, and North America, ECCP's relevance remains high.⁶

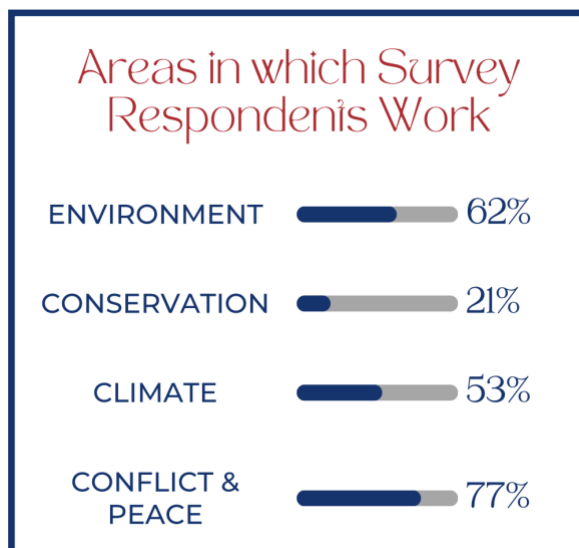


Figure 3: Respondent Areas of Work

Relevance of the community is also high across organization types. While the largest group of evaluation survey respondents work for NGOs, there is a fairly even spread among other organizations, including international organizations, government, and the private sector (see Figure 4).

ECCP has the ability to bring together people from different disciplines and fields, thematic areas, organizations, and backgrounds to discuss their various visions and experiences, emerging and innovative research, and relevant tools and resources. The

⁴ This corresponds to a 4 or 5 along a Likert-like scale, where 1 is "Not At All Relevant" and 5 is "Extremely Relevant."

⁵ The average relevance scores for each area of work differed by only .43 points. The average scores are as follows: Conservation - 4.23; Conflict & Peace - 3.84; Climate - 3.82; and Environment - 3.80.

⁶ The average relevance score for those evaluation survey respondents identifying as based outside of Europe, Central Asia, and North America is a 4 (along the same Likert-like scale mentioned above).

diversity of participants described here is one reason why the CoP is seen as relevant and valuable by participants. As one evaluation survey respondent noted,

“coming from other disciplines I found this community extremely helpful and mindchanging for 1) crossing research areas, 2) exchanging visions, [and] 3) sharing tools and results.”

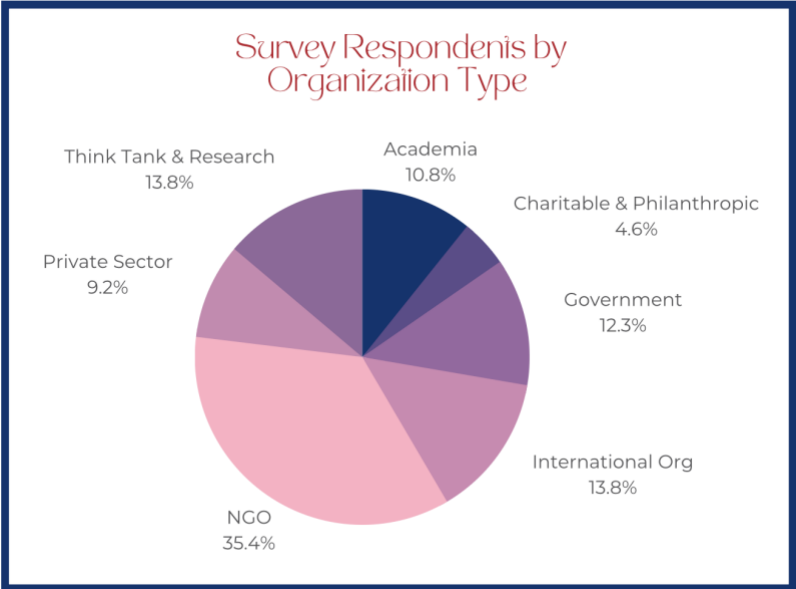


Figure 4: Survey Respondents by Organization Type

Other respondents agreed, noting that ECCP is open to participants from different professional areas and is indeed “silo breaking” in practice.

Specific and concrete ECCP activities are also essential to its relevance. Evaluation survey respondents were asked which ECCP CoP activities they found the most valuable,⁷ including:

- Monthly meetings and briefings
- the *White Paper*
- the Second International Conference on Environmental Peacebuilding
- Geneva Peace Week
- Stockholm +50 collaboration
- COP-related collaborations
- weekly update emails
- the database of participants

⁷ The scale used for this question was a Likert-like scale where 1 is “Not At All Valuable” and 5 is “Extremely Valuable.”

On average, ECCP activities were all considered valuable (with an average score of above 3.5). Weekly update emails were considered to be the most valuable (4.26 average), while monthly meetings and briefings were the least valuable (3.62 average). Indeed, many of those interviewed spoke of the utility of the emails in terms of being comprehensive, well structured, including lots of relevant information, and being easily shareable to colleagues and others. While monthly meetings and briefings were also valuable, many participants found it challenging to attend them all given other obligations.

The high degree of value of all ECCP activities reflects the diverse interests of its participants; while policy-related activities (Stockholm+50 and COP-related collaborations) appeals to some, others are more interested in staying up to date on the latest research. These scores align with the experiences shared by those interviewed for the evaluation, namely that participants do not always have time to attend meetings despite being enthusiastic to do so. The variety of formats that ECCP uses and the various options for engagement increase its relevance among those who may be too busy to participate in certain activities at particular times.

“The regular newsletters are incredibly useful, providing links to relevant events, developments, and articles. It’s also really useful to have access to the directory of ECCP members and to be able to draw on the diverse network of organizations, individuals, and experts part of the [CoP].”

- Evaluation Survey Respondent

The wide variety of topics addressed by ECCP also resonates with participants. Topics covered through events, resources shared, or meetings range from the just energy transition to farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR), carbon offset programs, and climate justice. And because ECCP also includes three “tracks” for participants to engage with—policy, practice, and evidence—participants can choose their own path, with the community functioning as a “big tent,” as one World Bank participant described it, that is open to and relevant to a growing number of people.

Beyond the concrete activities undertaken by the ECCP CoP, participants found great value and relevance in less tangible outcomes from their engagement as well. According to the evaluation survey results, these largely fall into the categories of **1)** information sharing and **2)** collaboration and the ability to network. Regarding the former, those interviewed for the evaluation recounted how ECCP emails are great sources of substance and information not found elsewhere. Deep dives, focused conversations, and community updates during meetings as well as the notes that are shared afterward were also reported to be useful and highly relevant to working in this field.

“As an organization not based in Geneva, the updates on policy developments, including possible collaborations, avenues for engagement and input are particularly useful since they are difficult to identify from a distance. It is also incredibly useful to get an insight into 'hot topics' in the communities our organization is not connected to in our daily work otherwise.”

- Evaluation Survey Respondent

“At every meeting, I still learn something about this vast area of multiple issues.”

- Hesta Groenewald, PeaceNexus Foundation

As one person interviewed mentioned, the first step is to gather and share information; cooperation comes next. In addition to the valuable information provided, this evaluation finds that the CoP does a particularly good job at building a sense of community through developing connections. Indeed, many of those interviewed confirmed that one of the primary reasons they participate in ECCP is to develop relationships with others in this space. They referenced the quality and diversity of perspectives among ECCP participants, its utility for young professionals, the lack of a strict hierarchy among participants, and the “building [of] warm relationships.” These positive relationships were described as collaborative instead of competitive, with participants working toward the same goals in inclusive ways.

One of the most important factors to ECCP's relevance conveyed by those interviewed and surveyed is the excellent moderation of the Community Manager, which encompassed a responsive approach of meeting people where they are.

“Annika's help with making introductions and establishing connections has been incredible!”

- Evaluation Survey Respondent

Evaluation survey respondents and those interviewed to the evaluation survey also positively referenced the various options for engagement. One person interviewed noted that the process of working together toward a common goal in developing the *White Paper* contributed to deeper, more continued relationship building. Another noted that part of ECCP's value comes from the lack of expectation to participate in concrete projects. The combination of these two things—opportunities without expectation—strongly contribute to the feelings of community, connection, and inclusion as well as the responsiveness and flexibility of the community that make it highly relevant.

As the CoP continues to grow and evolve, there are a range of opportunities to improve its relevance. Although 38% of evaluation survey respondents noted that they would not change anything about ECCP, a number of suggestions emerged during the evaluation that could increase the relevance of the CoP, including:

- **Additional language accessibility.** While the CoP has recently provided more content in French (in addition to English), community participants expressed the desire to see content available in more languages.
- **Additional options for collaborative action beyond policy.** Some ECCP participants are not focused on policy in their work and feel the community would increase its relevance if other opportunities for collaboration were explored. One such new opportunity is the practice track, introduced in early 2023, which convenes practitioners every other month for methodological discussions.
- **Increased diversity.** While ECCP is moderately diverse already (see above), some of those surveyed and interviewed noted that they would like to see more diversity in the people and organizations participating in the community, including with more participants from environmental and conservation organizations, the security sector, and the Global South. Local organizations and practitioners were also highlighted as missing from the ECCP space. ECCP could explore different mechanisms for engaging these stakeholders, including offering low-bandwidth options.
- **Different activities.** Some evaluation survey respondents suggested that ECCP provide meetings in different formats and policy coordination on different topics. There is no consensus on what this should look like, and further exploration of options is necessary. However, multiple participants interviewed for this evaluation did note that the new tracks are important for exploring different types of engagements and increasing the relevance of the community.
- **Different outputs.** Numerous evaluation survey respondents suggested that ECCP could provide more briefs, short summaries of ongoing work, case studies and other examples of environmental peacebuilding work, or “how to” materials. It is worth noting that these outputs, while potentially useful for community participants, would go beyond the intended scope of ECCP and require additional resources.

Evaluation survey respondents were also asked what topics they would like to see the community of practice tackle in the next two years. A variety of topics—ranging from FMNR to digital youth work to land rights and critical mineral extraction—were mentioned. Ensuring that participants are given a space like this to express their evolving interests and needs is one way in which the CoP can maintain its relevance over time.

How does ECCP fit within the broader environmental peacebuilding space?

The ECCP has a specific and niche role to play in the environmental peacebuilding space. This is related to its low barriers to entry and participation, its wide breadth of topics covered, and its informal nature that participants find welcoming.

With the growing interest in environmental peacebuilding, there has been a slow but steady proliferation of organizations or interest groups that address the topic, either directly or peripherally. These groups include:

- **Environmental Peacebuilding Association:** Founded in 2018, EnPAX “is the premiere global association dedicated to bringing together researchers, practitioners, and decision makers working on issues of environment, conflict, and peace.”⁸ Like ECCP, EnPAX provides regular email updates with resources from its evolving library. It also organizes a bi-annual international conference on environmental peacebuilding and is home to a number of interest groups with their own ongoing activities. Although it has a free CoP,⁹ more substantive engagement happens through the Association, which has options for institutional and individual paid memberships. Institutional members at the time of writing include adelphi, Conservation International, the Wilson Center, International Alert, IUCN, IISD, and PeaceNexus, among others.
- Alliance for Peacebuilding’s **Environment, Climate Change, and Conflict Working Group:**¹⁰ The working group “aims to advance new and improve existing legal and policy frameworks, funding, and programming to address the intersection of conflict and climate change to more effectively promote peace and stability and mitigate the negative impacts of the climate crisis.”¹¹ Launched in 2022, it seeks to develop the evidence base, generate guidance and collate tools, and elevate the discourse on environmental peacebuilding. At the time of writing, the working group was still taking shape, and participation was open to all, including non-members of the Alliance for Peacebuilding.

There are numerous ways in which ECCP connects to these and other emerging groups in the environmental peacebuilding space. The Community Manager is in regular contact with leadership of EnPAX, exchanging and brainstorming on

⁸ <https://www.environmentalpeacebuilding.org/association/>

⁹ See <https://www.environmentalpeacebuilding.org/about/community-of-practice/>

¹⁰ Formerly the Environmental Peacebuilding Working Group.

¹¹ <https://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/environmental-peacebuilding#:~:text=The%20Environment%2C%20Climate%20Change%2C%20and,impacts%20of%20the%20climate%20crisis>

opportunities for the field. EnPAX also serves on the Steering Committee of any knowledge products created by the ECCP, and conversely, ECCP served on the Organizing Committee of EnPAX's second International Conference. These exchanges seek to grow the overall impact of the field and efforts by both communities. Additionally, many ECCP participants also participate in the groups listed as well as other groups, and each has a role to play. This ensures coordination and synergies, when relevant.

The specific value additions of ECCP in the environmental peacebuilding space as described by those interviewed for this evaluation include its role as an open and largely informal space for learning. Because many ECCP activities do not assert formal agendas or requirements for participation, participants have the opportunity for broad ranging discussions and use of the group as a sounding board or a way of framing their work within the broader space without any pressure. Participation is also open to those from very different organizations and at various career stages; as one person interviewed for the evaluation described it, ECCP is “like a whole buffet!”

“When it is peace, I know where to go.”

- Bernhard Zlanabitnig, European Environmental Bureau

Another value addition of ECCP is its limited barrier to entry; all participants are free to engage with the group as much or as little as they want without any requirement to sign up, enroll, or pay a fee. As described by one interviewee, ECCP is good at playing with others, being inclusive, and balancing agendas. Another person interviewed for this evaluation described the community as an open, genuine, and even “nerdy” space. The CoP was also described as a conference that keeps going over time, in that it is conversational and maintains momentum. Other adjectives used to describe ECCP included “fun” and a different way of operating.

All of this points to a specific role that ECCP plays in this space, one that is inclusive, allows for easy participation, and provides modes of engagement that cater to a wide variety of participants. However, as the environmental peacebuilding, conflict sensitivity, and climate security spaces grow, it will be essential for ECCP to continue to connect with new and existing platforms, organizations, and communities while remaining dedicated to the characteristics that support its niche role and value. This will help it avoid duplication of effort while also continuing to carve out its specific value add.

How has the ECCP CoP used the resources at its disposal?

ECCP relies on a modest monetary budget, which along with in-kind contributions and investments from other organizations and participants as well as the use of low-cost options for engagement, contributes to an efficient use of resources to fulfill its objectives as a CoP. However, the modest amount of available resources does limit some aspects of the community, including its ability to reach wider and diverse audiences.

The ECCP CoP relies on resources from a variety of sources. As an activity of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, it receives much of its core operational funding from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, including support for the Community Manager position and investment in her skills and capacities. In addition, the community has received activity-specific resources from the PeaceNexus Foundation, which funded labor for and creation of the *White Paper*. Much of the human and information resources for ECCP's work comes from its participants in-kind, all of whom volunteer their time and information to contribute to ECCP events and activities. This represents a type of investment from the organizations employing these participants and is essential to the continued functioning of ECCP.

Relying considerably on the capacity of the Community Manager and low-cost tools for engagement, ECCP provides regular opportunities for participants to meet both in-person in Geneva and virtually via Zoom. As noted by those interviewed, regular meetings provide a sense of continuity for the CoP. These meetings are open to the full ECCP community, there is no minimum commitment or prerequisite for attendance, and there is often little or no preparation necessary. This format limits the pressure around attendance and may actually contribute to sustained engagement with the CoP since participants do not feel delinquent when meetings are missed. Meetings and other collaborations also offer low-friction options for cooperation that allow for brainstorming and other types of joint effort without the need to form legal partnerships.

Beyond the regular meetings, ECCP also efficiently uses its resources to provide a variety of activity types and formats. Emails are simple and accessible forms of communication that provide a clearinghouse of information to ECCP participants. Additionally, comprehensive meeting notes are circulated after each meeting using Google Docs, which ECCP participants often read and find useful. These modes of communication ensure that those who are unable to attend the meetings can still stay in touch with the CoP. They also extend the reach of ECCP; as one person interviewed observed, the meetings notes and emails have a ripple effect that goes

beyond the attendees themselves as connections are made and information is shared.

Another essential aspect of the community's efficiency is its facilitation. All activities and events are facilitated or moderated by a single Community Manager, which means that relationships are built over time, meetings and communications flow smoothly, and participants know what to expect. Those interviewed as well as survey respondents consistently highlighted the excellent facilitation of the Community Manager, describing it as "encouraging," "refreshing," "intentional," "fantastic." It is essential to enabling their participation and a crucial reason for why people keep coming back to the CoP.

Because the ECCP relies on limited human, institutional, and financial resources—often depending on free or low-cost options for engagement such as emails, Zoom calls, participant volunteers, etc.—it seeks to operate in a highly efficient manner that also feels to participants like an open, informal, and inviting space. Nonetheless, these limited resources do present challenges such as limited language availability of communications and activities and finite options for in-person activities. Additional resources would respond to these limitations in ways that could increase collaboration and mainstreaming, such as by providing for additional translation or in-person activities. It is important to note that various CoP participants have different funding needs, most commonly for project development and travel to conferences to share their expertise. While the ECCP may not necessarily play the role of funder, these financial needs in the community should be clearly identified and communicated.

How effective has the ECCP been in achieving its original objectives?

The objectives of the ECCP CoP are:

- To foster inter-institutional collaboration and dialogue on ECCP topics and projects.
- To promote learning and innovation, recognizing that each actor has a unique angle to bring to the table.
- To harness the joint reach of all participants to mainstream ECCP into organizations and institutions.

To date, the ECCP CoP has made significant progress toward these objectives by crafting diverse, open, and supportive spaces for collaboration and dialogue; serving as a significant space for the sharing of knowledge and information; and by effectively supporting interested participants to mainstream environmental

peacebuilding and related topics through international policy fora, large events, or directly into their programs or organizations.

Objective 1: Fostering Collaboration and Dialogue

In its attempts to foster inter-institutional collaboration and dialogue, ECCP has been highly effective at engaging a variety of participants (see **above**) and fostering productive conversations. Of those who responded to the evaluation survey, 70% felt

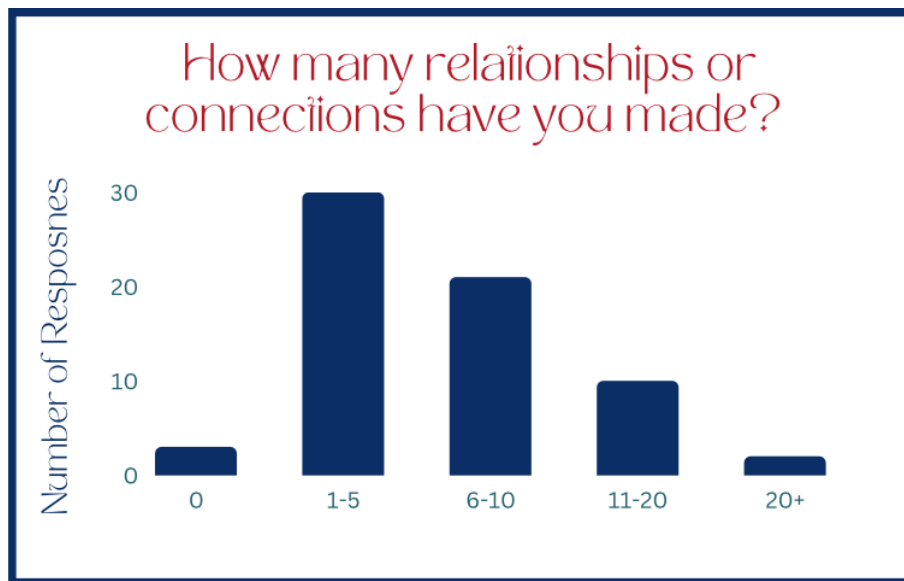


Figure 5: Relationships & Connections

that ECCP has made an important or critical contribution to more or new connections with colleagues. 53% felt that ECCP has made an important or critical contribution to increased collaboration and partnership building. Most respondents (77%) made between 1 and 10 connections as part of their participation in the community, with some even making more than 11 (see Figure 5). When asked to share examples of how ECCP has influenced or changed their work, survey respondents noted things like better strategic partnerships and building important networks.

In addition to making connections and fostering dialogue and collaboration generally, those interviewed and surveyed for the evaluation also described how the CoP has brought together *diverse* voices and broken-down silos through its activities, including the *White Paper*, Geneva Peace Week, Stockholm+50, and the various COPs. These and other collaborative projects have built relationships and partnerships that are essential to this and the other two ECCP objectives, including collaborating on conference presentations and engaging other organizations as moderators, facilitators, and connections for in-country staff.

“The quality of collaboration around [Stockholm+50] is something I’ve not seen in any other network. There was no jostling for position. We are genuinely collaborating instead of competing.”

- Evaluation Interview Respondent

Participants also referenced the ECCP directory as useful in drawing “on the diverse network of organizations, individuals, and experts part of the community of practice.” They described the emergence of increased engagement in environmental peacebuilding issues. As one person interviewed described it, unlike a conference that ends, ECCP provides an ongoing space for conversation and engagement with the broader community.

At an individual level, the Community Manager has also been essential in crafting the spaces for collaboration and dialogue, and many of those interviewed and surveyed commended her initiative in making bilateral connections and orienting new participants to the ECCP space. This further facilitates participation and the development of connections and collaborations.

As a result, the CoP has provided a supportive community for brainstorming and sharing of ideas, and the connections made between participants has resulted in feelings of “togetherness” and solidarity that one person described as “powerful.” One important contributor to this and the progress made on this objective has been the way in which ECCP engages its participants (referenced throughout this evaluation). As noted elsewhere in the evaluation, the community offers low-stress, informal, and conversational opportunities to participate.

“I highly appreciate the organic nature of exchanges, the lack of pressure to participate which actually leads to very high levels of engagement, participation, and energy! That atmosphere built from a community-building perspective has really opened a unique space for exchange based on trust, respect of others, and high value due to the quality, experience, and diversity of people participating.”

- Evaluation Survey Respondent

This approach to engagement has also been successful at engaging participants that might not otherwise participate in the environmental peacebuilding space, such as those interviewed or surveyed who noted that they previously did not know about the topic or did not see its connections to their work. As one survey respondent noted, ECCP “made me aware of people researching or working on similar topics whom I would never get to know had it not been for the ECCP community.” This

demonstrates how the community has contributed to connections and relationships between people and organizations that might not have formed otherwise.

The connections built through conversation allow people to develop helpful maps of the space, plan for meetings together, have spinoff conversations, triangulate concepts and fine tune approaches, and develop concrete collaborations. ECCP provides the contacts, as one person interviewed described, and it is the job of participants to build the partnerships. The community facilitates those relationships that can become something bigger without requiring them to do so.

As noted elsewhere, the collaborations that have formed from these connections are not always formal. Informal collaborations have developed around global events, for example. These collaborations have included balanced agendas, as one person interviewed described them, that include both logistical and administrative information as well as substantive concept development. Without the pressure to build partnerships, ECCP participants feel that they can freely have conversations.

One opportunity for additional collaboration and dialogue that emerged during the evaluation was the desire of some participants to work on different issues and areas. However, the track-based approach that ECCP has recently implemented responds to this need by diversifying the types of topics and issues on which participants can engage through more specialized activities. The tracks will also likely provide more focused moments for community participants to interact with others who have similar interests or priorities, while also continuing to provide flexibility for engagement without mandating formal partnerships.

Other challenges previously mentioned may also negatively impact the CoP's effectiveness, namely the limited language availability and the unavoidable difficulties associated with time zones. There are yet unresolved questions about the CoP's ability to foster collaboration and dialogue that are linked to larger conversations in the environmental peacebuilding and international development spaces on decolonization and localization. For example, what does it mean that many of its participants and its Community Manager are based in the Global North? How does the heavy reliance on English and information technology influence participation? These questions and others are worth further reflection as ECCP evolves.

Objective 2: Promoting Learning and Innovation

Deeply connected to the CoP's objective of fostering collaboration and dialogue is its objective to promote learning and innovation. One of the main value-adds of the ECCP CoP is its role in sharing information and raising awareness. This takes place through the sharing of resources via emails or meetings, by serving as a platform for others to share experiences or socialize their work, and by participating in key events

to raise the profile of the connections between the environment, climate change, conflict, and peace.

Those interviewed and surveyed for the evaluation described how their participation in the CoP or ECCP's participation in other events they have attended has resulted in a great deal of learning, as well as how the community serves as a clearinghouse for informative material. This is reflected in the responses to the evaluation survey. 73% of respondents noted that ECCP has made an important or critical contribution to an increase in their knowledge or understanding of ECCP-related topics, and 64% said that ECCP has made an important or critical contribution to the identification of new ideas, solutions, projects, etc. They describe how ECCP has provided them with information to explore new topics or areas of interest to their work, which has contributed to:

- Informing visions for work in this space, including mainstreaming ECCP topics within organizations that did not previously have them on their radar;
- Learning conceptual elements of the peace process;
- Raising awareness about working on policy about the importance of peacebuilding related to climate change; and
- Staying up to date on advancements in the field.

The ability to gain new knowledge or understanding of ECCP-related topics is particularly important for those who may not work directly or primarily in fields related to environment, climate change, conflict, or peace but are interested in staying on top of innovations and developments and/or expanding their activities. This includes those who work in either environmental or peace-related fields and have now been able to draw the linkages between them more clearly because of participating in the ECCP CoP.

ECCP's focus has evolved during the last three years to meet the learning and innovation needs of its participants. Early on, the community focused heavily on drafting and disseminating the *White Paper*. Over time, that focus has shifted to broad policy support, such as the integration of environmental peacebuilding concerns at COP, as well as providing more practice-related information to participants through subject-specific meetings. This evolution of focus is essential to ensure that ECCP remains at the forefront of developments in this space, and thus able to support the learning of its participants.

While some of those interviewed or surveyed for this evaluation described how there is such a high volume of information shared through the CoP that it is challenging to keep up and can even be overwhelming at times, it remains to be seen if this negatively influences the effectiveness of the community. In fact, the

complementarity between the emails and meetings means that participants receive abundant information via email while also having access to manageable and personal meetings.

Objective 3: Harnessing the Joint Reach of Participants to Mainstream ECCP

There is some evidence that the ECCP CoP has contributed to mainstreaming ECCP into organizations and institutions. This has taken place via two different routes: **1)** informally organized groups collaborating around specific events with a broad reach, including COP and Stockholm+50; and **2)** individual participants who use ECCP and the resources shared by the community as tools for mainstreaming environment, climate change, conflict, and peace into their programs or organizations.

Regarding the first route, ECCP's work at COP27 played a substantial role in ensuring that environmental peacebuilding issues were visible for the first time at a COP event. As one person interviewed for the evaluation noted, this was the result of ECCP's participation at COP as well as all the work done prior to COP in sharing information and building awareness.

Those interviewed also described how the ECCP community was able to align, ensure that ECCP-related topics were front and center, and affect change at Stockholm+50. Further elaborated on in the **impact section** below, the CoP's Stockholm+50 collaboration directly resulted in the adoption of language on peace and security in the formal outcome documents, in some cases directly quoting proposed language from ECCP participants. As one person interviewed described it, the Stockholm+50 outcome demonstrates how pooled attempts have a much greater chance to impact change; knowing you have an ally in another room disseminating the same message is powerful.

Regarding the second route, the *White Paper* has been an essential tool for participants looking to mainstream ECCP-related topics in their programs and organizations. A number of those interviewed or surveyed described how they have used ECCP outputs such as the *White Paper* to get their employers excited about engaging in this space. In another example, Swedwatch used the *White Paper* in conversations with a national government on how to incorporate natural resources into its ongoing peace process.

ECCP participants also noted the important role of the CoP's emails, which they often forward to partners and colleagues to deepen their awareness of ECCP topics. Other examples provided by those interviewed for the evaluation include the community's influence in an organization's decision to incorporate an environmental peacebuilding pillar; its role in affecting internal thinking and visions around how to move forward with environmental peacebuilding and climate finance; and how ECCP

has helped in bringing environmental peacebuilding to the grassroots level through local and regional events.

These anecdotal examples of the ECCP's role in mainstreaming environment, climate change, conflict, and peace are echoed by survey respondents. When asked where they have seen changes based on the work of the ECCP CoP, survey respondents did indicate that there have been changes in the peacebuilding or conflict sensitivity of environment and climate work (62%), in the environment and climate sensitivity of peacebuilding work (59%), and in policy development at the national and international level (33%). 11% of survey respondents were unsure.

One key element under this objective is the Community Manager's support in helping ECCP participants communicate with funders, add the lens of peace to their communications, and ensuring the socialization of new topics with different audiences, among other activities. The Community Manager provides the connections, logistical support, and concept development that is necessary for harnessing the reach of the CoP toward influencing mainstreaming and impact (see below). She holds a bird's eye view of the field, assessing and sharing opportunities, drawing connections, inviting collaborations, and developing work and messaging that cuts across silos. This kind of support, which relies on someone with a centralized position in the community, is likely essential to ensure that ECCP continues to play a role in influencing mainstreaming.

What impact or influence has the ECCP had on individuals, organizations, and the broader field?

In making progress on its original objectives, ECCP has contributed to several pathways of impact for its participants and the environmental peacebuilding field. These include impacts on internal institutional dynamics, learning, and funding for ECCP topics, better cross-silo programming, policy, and project coordination, and the inclusion of peace and conflict-sensitivity language in international environmental policy fora.

As the previous section explored, the objectives of the ECCP CoP are:

- To foster inter-institutional **collaboration** and dialogue on ECCP topics and projects.
- To promote **learning** and innovation, recognizing that each actor has a unique angle to bring to the table.
- To harness the joint reach of all participants to **mainstream** ECCP into organizations and institutions.

Work towards these objectives has resulted in several outcomes. In attempts to foster collaboration, the CoP has built connections among participations, increased collaboration for events, created spaces and platforms for participant voices, and expanded reach across silos to generate new expertise. The ECCP's work to promote learning has resulted in increased knowledge across silos, created new knowledge products, and created strong mental maps for participants of the wider field. And finally, the community's attempts to mainstream ECCP have increased coordination on project and policy ideas.

What are the results of these outcomes? What is the impact of the ECCP? This section explores three categories of impact: Individuals, Institutions, and the Field.

Individuals

While many ECCP participants officially represent institutions in their engagement with the community, they are still individual people attending meetings, sharing resources, and connecting with others.

Survey and interview respondents alike commonly cited deepened understanding and knowledge of ECCP topics across thematic silos because of their participation in briefings and discussions, as well as through participation in the *White Paper* project and conferences (**Objective 2**).

Similarly, relationship building and access to new individuals was a common theme for many participants (**Objective 1**). Fifty percent of survey respondents indicated that they made at least six or more new relationships or connections because of participating in the community of practice; one survey respondent said, "(ECCP) has widened the scope of actors I take into consideration in our activities."

Improving collaboration and learning seems to support individuals to:

- Create projects and launch new ideas on ECCP topics;
- Develop expertise and careers related to ECCP; and
- Build relationships with others across institutions and silos.

Multiple survey respondents cited new projects established based on information gathered through the CoP, including one on community-based mangrove development and another focused on legal developments around environmental crime. One interviewee described how building connections with a new organization in collaboration for a Geneva Peace Week event in 2020 led directly to the establishment of an entire new academic program on science in crisis, a program which convened researchers from around the world.

“By reading the weekly emails, I am able to represent this nexus of issues with authority as our organization's Subject Matter Expert who is tied into the Int'l Geneva community on these topics.”

- Evaluation Survey Respondent

Another respondent even cited the CoP, its connections, and the expertise she was able to build through participation as the reason she found her current professional position. Yet another described how presenting to the CoP allowed him to build professional legitimacy on the subject, so much so that his government reached out to his grassroots organization to collaborate.

CoP activities that required collaboration in order to participate, such as the *White Paper* or Geneva Peace Week, provided a structure to create new and deepen existing relationships across disciplinary or thematic silos. When asked to share examples of how the ECCP community of practice has influenced or changed work in the environment, climate, conflict, and peace space, one survey respondent described the “sharing of knowledge and information among the community of practice, where actors are connected and informed of the ongoing efforts.” Another noted that information sharing is a key tool to “more efficiency in who works on what, and learning from/building on each others’ work.”

Institutions

Individuals participating in a range of ECCP activities find ways to feed that information into their institutions. Both collective shared learning (**Objective 2**) and individual relationships (**Objective 1**) can be translated back into institutions.

Meetings, briefings, information-sharing, and collaborative participation in conferences or the *White Paper*, in many cases, have created space for institutions to increase their will to work on and prioritize ECCP topics as well as improve their internal working-models for ECCP projects and policy.

Some survey and interview respondents described their participation in the CoP as a way to raise awareness among their colleagues for ECCP topics and increase their prioritization internally. Many participating institutions operate in “one” of the topics: environment and climate change *or* peace and conflict. Attending briefings, co-organizing events, or even co-authoring entries for shared written outputs offer organizations “safer to fail” mechanisms for exploring new topics and give staff members cover to invest their time in development.

One survey respondent noted, “Members of our organization have now responded to issues of environment, conflict resolutions and peace with the intensity and rapidness than ever before.” It is often difficult for institutions to initiate entirely new

workstreams; the ECCP instead creates the structure and space for exploration. One interviewee explained that because her institution has multiple focus topics, participation in the ECCP helps her better leverage her work. Another interviewee said joining the meetings gives her energy, and a feeling of solidarity, reassurance, and grounding within a larger institution with many priorities.

Beyond the volume of work or prioritization of ECCP issues, the CoP seems to have an impact on the project and program *models* within institutions, too.

“The ECCP community of practice has allowed the organization I work for to build new relationships, which have been of direct, practical use. We connected experts met via the ECCP group (e.g. in the field of water) to colleagues working on the ground.”

- Evaluation Survey Respondent

The CoP has been described by many respondents and interviewees as a place of shared learning and access to new ideas. These ideas in turn created “mental maps” of the field, which allowed for better-informed institutional sense-making of what role individuals and institutions might play across environment, climate, conflict, and peace. Many survey and interview respondents cited that the ECCP brought new topics onto their radar; some examples include monitoring and evaluating environmental projects for their “peace impacts,” transboundary water agreements, and FMNR.

Interviewees described how these mental maps and new ideas influenced internal thinking on their institutions’ contribution to the ECCP field. For example, one institution that traditionally focused exclusively on the environment has begun to expand its thinking to encompass social issues, too. After engaging with the *White Paper* (learning) and inviting a peace expert to join a large environmental panel at a UN environment event (connections), the institution is now able to review and improve its contribution to conflict sensitivity in environmental projects.

“I wouldn’t spend time in the ECCP meetings if they didn’t increase the quality of our work.”

- Tracy Hart, the World Bank

Multiple respondents described increased internal work to “fine-tune” their programmatic models. A survey respondent explained, “The community has influenced our work on the ground by interlinking our environment and climate change interventions to peacebuilding and security.” An interviewee shared an example of connecting with another “HQ-based” employee of a major international

institution that led to connecting their two institutions on the local community level in a way that improved programming.

Interviewees described how the connections they made through the ECCP led to informal reviews of one another's workstreams or project proposals. The transfer of knowledge transcends the formal activities of the CoP and appears to be present within bilateral relationships, too, in a way that positively impacts planning, policy, and programming.

While many respondents pointed to the positive influence participation in the CoP had on their own institutional prioritization of ECCP issues, there is not consensus about the extent of the CoP's impact on institutions, especially regarding funding across silos. On one hand, Héloïse Heyer of the PeaceNexus Foundation explains, "ECCP activities helped us as a foundation motivate our decision to launch a call for partners that targeted environmental organizations with conflict sensitivity / environmental peacebuilding support," increasing the visibility of the need to fund organizational change processes and projects towards integrated environment and peace work.

On the other hand, one survey respondent specified that despite a greatly increased awareness of the nexus among donors and policymakers, as well as increased recruiting by peacebuilding organizations for climate or environment advisors, "I haven't seen a shift into hiring more conflict and peace experts in environmental organizations... I have not noticed increased budgets for the issue within my own organization or set of donors." There appears to be a trend that peace or conflict-related organizations are working on environment or climate change issues more than the inverse.

The environment, climate change, conflict, and peace field

Individuals and institutions come together over time to constitute a wider "field," or the range of people and activities concretely working on environment, climate change, conservation, conflict, peace, and security issues. Whether or not participating individuals and institutions are working to integrate all subjects, or just focusing on one, CoP activities seek to expand or mainstream topics widely (**Objective 3**).

Evidence from this evaluation seems to suggest that over time, the ECCP community of practice has resulted in:

- Better integration of peace and conflict sensitivity principles into international environmental policy fora;
- Improved accessibility to interdisciplinary expertise for different types of actors (policymakers, researchers, practitioners, etc.); and

- Reduced duplication of efforts on ECCP issues.

The activities of the ECCP have grown over three years into a space for organic consensus-building, particularly regarding international environmental policy fora. Simply put by Diana Rizzolio of the Geneva Environment Network, the CoP is “creating a greater sense of cohesion in the field, internally and externally.”

One activity, the *White Paper* process, became a mechanism for impacting international environmental policy. The project was designed to offer a cogent narrative about environmental peacebuilding to the Stockholm+50 conference in June 2022, but in a way that built connections and relationships between all who participated in the process. Most concretely, the collaborative design of the *White Paper* process created space for a coordinated approach to landing the paper at Stockholm+50. A survey respondent described the project as a “real concrete example of collaboration between actors who would never have worked together in this way without the ECCP's existence and active community-building focus.”

The coordination process directly led to the inclusion of peace language into outcome documents from the Leadership Dialogues. In some cases, language incorporated in outcome documents directly quoted proposals made by CoP participants. This represents a key turning point in the global discussion on sustainable development and should be celebrated as such. For example, the Leadership Dialogues reference peace directly in their emerging recommendations and key messages:¹²

- Preamble: "Peace and stability is fundamental to achieving a healthy planet. Ongoing conflicts displace millions of citizens, undo development gains and have negative impacts on land degradation, biodiversity loss, climate change and human security. All Actors must respect international law and the protection it provides to civilians and the environment in armed conflict."
- LD3, Key Message 1 on finance, Point 9: "Private and public finance actors to ensure that accelerated financing for development and the environment fully integrates peacebuilding and conflict prevention perspectives. A just transition and prosperity for all is only realized through durable peace."

Efforts continue now to build similar relationships in advance of COP28, which will be held in December 2023 in Dubai. In addition to impacting actual policy outcomes, evaluation participants cited this shared work as positively impacting their understanding of different policy processes and their ability to coordinate and “speak louder” with “one voice.”

¹² Additional references and details on the process are available here: <https://www.ecosystemforpeace.org/stockholm50>.

More broadly than policy processes, there is an improved sense of connectivity and access to expertise across thematic silos. As participants come together to create new knowledge products, build connections and shared expertise, and coordinate on new ideas, ECCP topics are, indeed, mainstreamed. One survey respondent described how CoP participation has improved their ability to connect partners to relevant actors, especially for high-level meetings on environmental issues.

“Conversations between the climate and security/peacebuilding communities seem to me much better informed.”

- Evaluation Survey Respondent

Another survey respondent noted they are seeing increased efforts to engage the environmental community around conflict sensitivity (e.g., grants, technical guidance, etc.). Yet another said, “the ECCP community has helped to shape the framing around climate finance in conflict-affected areas.”

Finally, some respondents described how these connections, shared learning, and mainstreamed priorities have also reduced duplication of programming and prevented organizations from “reinventing the wheel” when they enter the field. For example, every month or so, an institution contacts the Community Manager for a bilateral meeting to provide an “introduction to,” or “overview of” the field of play in ECCP. They are invited to read the *White Paper*, follow the emails, and participate in online meetings together with the wider community. This approach allows organizations to understand quite concretely who is doing what, where, and how, which in turn leads to better programming design and reduced duplication overall.

The impact of the CoP is not always linear, often occurring because of several parallel pathways for participants. For example, in an interview with a UN member state, their representative described the ECCP as a clearinghouse of information, a convening space for thematic research-based discussions, a database of experts, and a sounding board for ideas and policy recommendations. These functions have directly led to the reframing of climate change from a “security-only” subject to include a peace lens, the convening of targeted policy consultations, and better evidence (and in some cases advice on specific language) for policy recommendations in international fora. These impacts build on one another and may eventually cascade into additional changes over time.

The impact of the CoP is an amalgamation of small anecdotes, like ripples of water after a stone is thrown into a pond. The community is full of researchers, program developers, practitioners in local communities, funders, UN representatives, students, policymakers, and more. The impact of the community is not only generated by their connections to one another, or their providing or processing new information, or their

participation in shared and collaborative projects. Instead, the impact is the complex and combined weight of every relationship, resource, and new discovery.

Part III: Moving Forward

When asked about the future trajectory of the ECCP CoP, interview respondents communicated a resounding desire for the community to continue. Julia Gorricho of the Blue Action Fund shared in an interview that she thinks “it definitely should continue. That’s for sure.” She sees the CoP reaching a certain momentum and level of recognition, noting that people are enthusiastic about getting together and moving things forward now more than ever.

Looking forward, structural elements of the community for long-term function should be considered alongside more qualitative aspects of the current user experience. This section details both.

Recommendations for the ECCP

- Given the current limited involvement of CoP participants outside of Europe, Central Asia, and North America, **ECCP should consider how it might engage participants from more diverse geographies**. This is particularly important given that many people either working directly on ECCP-related issues or those most affected by these issues are outside of Europe and North America. However, any move toward expanding the community should be contemplated alongside the potential need for additional resources
- Similarly, **ECCP should consider increasing its outreach to new and different kinds of organizations**, particularly in environment and conservation fields. This will increase the diversity of participants in the community.
- Additionally, **ECCP should continue to be open to collaboration with other, similar organizations, communities, and platforms in this space** to avoid duplicating efforts, all while continuing to maintain its niche role.
- In response to the various needs and availability of its participants, **ECCP should continue to offer flexible ways of engaging in the community**, from passive listener to active participant to project-based work with concrete goals. It should also continue provide **more avenues for participant leadership**, as the community has begun to introduce in 2023 through its three tracks.
- **ECCP should ensure that the information and knowledge it shares remains available** through a working library or archive. Similarly, it should provide a calendar to participants with relevant events, webinars, and dates.

- **ECCP should seek out additional financial resources** to support extending its reach to more diverse audiences through methods like translation and interpretation services, thus providing more inclusive methods of engagement and rooting conversations in lived experience.
- To ensure the long-term sustainability of ECCP, **the CoP should continue to provide opportunities for participants to express their evolving interests and needs over time**. This will help maintain the community's specific niche role in the space and its relevance to participants.

Interviewees raised interesting questions about the evolving objectives and trajectory of the community, which should be considered in the coming years: What is the optimal size of the community? How do you balance growth and quality? Should the community focus more on collective action or diversity of action? Should the community engage and empower individuals to build long-term careers in this nexus field?

To ensure long-term sustainability, the CoP should carefully evaluate the role of the Community Manager. On one hand, the current Community Manager is a driving and animating force of community spirit and activity. Her role revolves around both holding, maintaining, and connecting relationships with and between individuals, as well as to serve as the “project manager” of the community's functions. Many evaluation respondents commented on how her personality and skills contribute positively to the success of the community. On the other hand, there are important considerations about the future function and survival of the CoP if the Community Manager were to move on from the role.

One core principle of successful CoPs is the investment from a Community Manager. Community management is a specialized skill that requires medium-to-long-term investment. The current manager has extensive experience and training in community organizing and facilitation. Similarly, the relationships (and trust) that sustain the community were built with the Community Manager over three years. It is important to acknowledge the skills and investment of time and in relationships that are essential to the long-term sustainability of a CoP as well as to ensuring that any future managers are given both the training and time they need to succeed.

Scenarios for ECCP's Future Structure

The CoP on ECCP currently sits within the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, and the Community Manager's time investment in the community has varied from year to year among a portfolio of other communities of practice operated by the manager. In 2020 and 2021, the community was managed by a 30% position (alongside three other CoPs). In 2022, the percentage increased to roughly 75% (alongside one other

CoP). In 2023, the percentage is once again decreasing to 30% as three additional CoPs are grown and developed. Thematic priorities for community management are set by Platform leadership and its management committee, and the internal priority level for investing in ECCP work may vary over time.

Since its inception, the possibility of the ECCP leaving the Platform and becoming a standalone structure or finding a new institutional home has been discussed as a potential option. The next phase of the CoP will likely either see a more permanent institutionalization of ECCP topics within the Platform, or an exploration to spin the ECCP off into a new form. Concrete next steps for the community can be foreseen through three different scenarios.

Scenario 1: Maintain institutional home, reduced working hours

The CoP continues as is, with its current Community Manager and its current host, the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform. Given evolving institutional priorities within the Platform, the manager invests up to 30% of her working time into the ECCP.

Scenario 2: New institutional home, maintain or increase working hours of current Community Manager

If the ECCP left the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform but retained its current manager, it could either be hosted (and funded) within another institution, funded by a consortium of ECCP participants and continually operated by its current manager in the form of an independent consultant, or developed into a completely new entity, foundation, or organization. Each option would require fundraising, as well as the establishment of decision-making structures for the ECCP at large. Changes to the host institution of ECCP may also have implications for how it is perceived among participants, which up until this point is largely as a neutral facilitator and convenor rather than a competitor with an agenda.

Scenario 3: New institutional home, new Community Manager

If the ECCP left the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and did not retain its current manager, scenario 2 could still apply. In addition, a handover and training period would be needed to pass off relationships to a new Community Manager.

There are currently no push or pull factors at play that would take the CoP off its current path in Scenario 1. Any future steps or decisions should be made by all parties, including host institutions, community managers, and perhaps especially, the community's participants.

Closing Thoughts

This evaluation exercise has helped to clarify the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the community of practice. ECCP will continue for the foreseeable future, building on the lessons learned and recommendations identified here.

The ECCP CoP started, largely, as a pilot project for the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform to test its methodology for managing communities of professionals. Over time, the community has grown to a quantitative and qualitative scale unimaginable in March 2020. It is now much more than a series of emails and online meetings, but rather a shared sense of identity among individuals with common interests, expertise, and goals.

We face enormous challenges as a society today, not the least of which are breakdowns in trust and cooperation as we navigate environmental and climate changes, the loss of biodiversity, geopolitical evolution, and violent conflict. The reality is that the people around the world most often impacted by these challenges are also furthest from the wealth and political power required to address them. Our current global structures continue to exclude, extract, and expel.

The community of practice can and should continue its work to build pathways of access, exchange, and rich human connection between those most affected by challenges and those with more power to address them. Mutual understanding, trust, and respect are built from one individual to another, nurtured in community.

Appendix: ECCP Activities

This section provides more details on the activities of the community of practice.

Monthly meetings, briefings, and facilitated discussions

Between March 2020 and March 2023, 20 monthly meetings or general facilitated discussions were held, welcoming participants to introduce themselves and build relationships with one another. The vast majority of these specific meetings were held online.

Since its start, the ECCP CoP has welcomed 28 guest speakers to present briefings on different topics. These speakers include (in chronological order):

- Roberto Forin, Mixed Migration Centre
- Beatrice Mosello, adelphi
- Tobias von Lossow, Clingendael Institute
- Doug Weir, the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS)
- Silja Halle, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Dina Ionesco and Alice Baillat, International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Ruth Miller, Native Movement
- Serge Stroobants, Institute for Economics and Peace
- Diego Osorio, CGIAR Climate Security
- Lina Hillert, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
- Erika Weinthal and McKenzie Johnson, Environmental Peacebuilding Association
- Wim Zwijnenburg, PAX for Peace
- Catherine-Lune Grayson, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Claire McAllister, SIPRI
- Lindsey Cook, Quaker United Nations Office (QUONO)
- Hassan Yasin, Somali Greenpeace Association
- Marie Schellens, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Raquel Munayer, adelphi
- Lukas Rüttinger, adelphi
- Champa Patel, International Crisis Group
- Irene Ojuok and Tony Rinaudo, World Vision
- Grazia Pacillo, CGIAR Climate Security

The White Paper on the Future of Environmental Peacebuilding

The White Paper is a collaborative, multi-author project which outlines a vision for the future of environmental peacebuilding. The process is designed to act as a vehicle through which stakeholders may collaborate and build cross-cutting relationships to

craft a common vision for the future. It also recognizes the variety of perspectives and backgrounds present in the environment, climate, conservation, conflict, security, and peace fields.

It is the product of a multi-lingual, multi-stage, consultative process carried out over many months with 154 authors writing the 50 chapters in the Compendium and more than 150 people being involved in consultation and reviews of different iterations of the paper.

The *White Paper on the Future of Environmental Peacebuilding* is a collaborative project guided by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, PeaceNexus Foundation, Environmental Peacebuilding Association, Environmental Law Institute, and International Union for Conservation of Nature. The *White Paper* was written by Oli Brown and Giuliana Nicolucci-Altman. The Compendium pieces were edited by Oli Brown, Paige McClanahan, and Giuliana Nicolucci-Altman. Art Direction was by Lynn Finnegan. Find the *White Paper and Compendium* online here: www.ecosystemforpeace.org.

Conferences

The community of practice has collaborated towards a few major conferences in civil society: Geneva Peace Week's 2020, 2021, and 2022, as well as the Second International Conference on Environmental Peacebuilding.

Within the structure of Geneva Peace Week, CoP participants have co-hosted more than ten sessions both online and in-person. The CoP's momentum on these topics has led to the establishment of ECCP as a thematic track all three years, and for the CoP manager to serve as the "lead" or "co-lead" for these tracks, overseeing the thematic development.

The ECCP CoP also coordinated closely with the Environmental Peacebuilding Association to support the Second International Conference on Environmental Peacebuilding. Originally intended to be held in a hybrid format from Geneva, it was held online only from 1-4 February 2022. ECCP supported the design of the Road to Geneva, an online webinar series connecting researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers on environmental peacebuilding topics, as well as built momentum for Geneva-based institutions to attend and co-host sessions at the overall conference. This collaboration better connected the growing expertise of Geneva-based actors to existing work around the world, reducing duplication and promoting shared innovation.

Policy coordination

Coordination for policy fora largely consists of regular group meetings in advance of conferences or policy processes. An effort is made to connect interested participants to one another in order to partner for side events, coordinate on messaging and communications, and cross-pollinate ideas. Within the international environment, climate change, and biodiversity policy sphere, participants have coordinated action for three installments of the UNFCCC's Conference of the Parties (COP26, COP27, and COP28), the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15), the IUCN's 2021 Conservation Congress, as well as Stockholm+50 in May 2022, which marked 50 years after the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. On the peacebuilding side, participants provided feedback into the New Agenda for Peace, part of the UN Secretary General's Our Common Agenda. They regularly follow and correspond on climate, peace, and security issues in the UN Security Council, as well as the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

Regular emails and online directory

In addition to online and in-person meetings, briefings, and workshops, as well as conference participation and policy coordination, the CoP is connected by regular emails which provide resources, links, reports, upcoming events and webinars, key dates on the annual policy calendar, and much more.

To date, 103 emails have been sent, usually on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Participants send key information to the Community Manager who collates and then distributes it across the community.

To better foster connections, an online directory document has also been established. It contains the name, title, institution, short description, and contact information of those who wish to participate in it. Given the inclusion of contact information, the directory is only shared with individuals who opt in to sharing their data. There are currently more than 90 participants in the directory.

These activities constitute the formal engagements of the CoP. There are countless bilateral exchanges, report launches, funding searches, and research connections made over time that make up the connective fibers holding the group together. The blending of formal and informal creates enough structure for regular convening with enough space for new ideas to take root.