

Constellating Peace from the Inside Out 2.0

STRENGTHENING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
2024-2025



Introduction

For more than two decades, Catalyst for Peace (CFP) has been **building peace from the inside out**. This approach is grounded in the conviction that people and communities closest to conditions of violence, poverty, and social harm are best positioned to lead their own healing and transformation—and that local community creativity and agency must be centered and supported at every level. **An inside-out paradigm and practice reorients power, agency, and accountability** toward communities themselves, allowing solutions to emerge from lived experience while engaging external institutions and resources in service of local leadership rather than in place of it.

CFP’s 18-year partnership with the **Sierra Leonean NGO Fambul Tok (FT)** offers a sustained, real-world example of what becomes possible when this framework is practiced with consistency and care over time. Fambul Tok began in 2007 as a national, post-war community healing process, rooted in indigenous concepts and practices of reconciliation. Over time, this work evolved and adapted in response to new challenges, including Ebola prevention and recovery during and after the 2014–15 epidemic. In that period, Fambul Tok facilitated inclusive community recovery, local governance, and development through the People’s Planning Process (PPP). This approach was ultimately embraced by the Government of Sierra Leone and integrated into national policy through the Wan Fambul National Framework.

Throughout these evolutions, **the CFP-FT partnership functioned as a living container** for learning, adaptation, and growth. This was made possible by long-term, flexible funding; a common commitment to mutuality and shared learning; an iterative practice of narrative-building and emergent design; and a shared foundational conviction that *the answers are there*. That is, the people and communities facing challenges hold the knowledge and resources needed to address them. In this paradigm, the role of external actors is to look for, activate, build on, and magnify those capacities rather than override them.

As CFP and FT deepened this work, it became increasingly clear that global conversations about decolonizing aid, localization, and shifting power to proximate leaders were gaining traction. Practitioners committed to working from an inside-out paradigm were often doing so piecemeal and in isolation, lacking access to a broader ecosystem of shared learning, practice, and support. Recognizing both the global relevance of an inside-out paradigm and the wisdom yet to be harnessed across contexts, CFP has been committed to not only sharing lessons from its experience, but also convening and cultivating a global community of practice.



Constellating Peace from the Inside Out



Community healing bonfire

CFP and Fambul Tok convened the first *Constellating Peace from the Inside Out* global learning event in Sierra Leone in 2019. That gathering brought peacebuilding and development leaders and program teams from diverse contexts together for a week of immersive, practice-based learning and exchange. It seeded relationships and collaborations that continued long after the event concluded.

Constellating Peace from the Inside Out 2.0 (CP2) built on this foundation. It retained the depth of experiential, relational, and context-rooted learning while expanding into a 15-month global learning and practice community. CP2 was designed to strengthen connection, shared inquiry, and sustained creative practice among people working to advance an inside-out paradigm and practice around the world.

“Inside-out” is not an add-on to the existing system; **it represents a fundamental reimagining of the aid and peacebuilding ecosystem** itself. It is practiced by living as if another system were already present and possible, while collectively building out the infrastructure of that system step by step.

When practitioners work in isolation, the assumptions of the dominant outside-in system often go unquestioned—not because they are agreed with, but because they are all that is known or assumed as givens.

By cultivating a community of practice and a shared learning ecosystem, **CP2 did the work of systems change in real time**—helping practitioners see beyond inherited constraints and grow the imaginative capacity required to build what does not yet fully exist.

Importantly, CP2 embodied an inside-out approach not only in its content, but also in its design and implementation. How the process was designed and held mattered as much as what we did.



Who Participated

Rather than relying on either a purely competitive or fully open selection process, the CP2 cohort was shaped through mutual discernment—attending both to who was well positioned to benefit from the process and to which teams could realistically commit the time, resources, and presence required for full engagement.

The resulting cohort included eight place-based or issue-focused teams, alongside a group of individual “global” participants who were not affiliated with a specific team. Teams were composed of leaders from across sectors—national and local government, civil society, funding institutions, international partners, and local communities—reflecting a commitment to having the whole system represented in the room. Some teams had long histories of collaboration, while others were intentionally forming or deepening cross-sector relationships through CP2.

Participating teams included:

- Leaders and partners of the **Natural Resource Conflict Transformation Center** (NRCTC) in Nepal
- Leaders and partners of the **Wan Fambul National Framework** in Sierra Leone
- Collaborators working on violence prevention and inclusive governance in Chicago
- Colleagues from **Fundación Ideas para la Paz** in Colombia
- Community Power Initiative leaders across the United States, organized by **Root Change**
- Peacebuilding and reconciliation leaders building a regional framework and support network in Kenya and East Africa
- Drivers of the **National Reconciliation Framework** in Somalia
- Organizers and youth fellows with **Global Citizens Circle**





Individual global participants brought experience from institutions such as the **United States Institute of Peace**, **INCORE at Ulster University**, **Women in Liberation and Leadership** (The Gambia), and the **International Civil Society Action Network**. They contributed as resource people while also helping to hold a broader global perspective.

A central role in the process was played by the **Vision and Design Team (VDT)**, composed of CFP and FT staff and partners from organizations including **Humanity United** and the **Shalom Center for Counselling and Development** in Kenya, **ReKinNectar** in Chicago, and **INCORE** in Northern Ireland. The VDT prioritized collaborative reflection and co-design from conceptualization to final session, ensuring that the planning process itself embodied inside-out values, including spaciousness, shared leadership, care, and relationship-building.



What and How



*The main gift [for me] was to have the opportunity to connect with people, but not in a networking and formal way. In Sierra Leone, I felt like we have the opportunity not to just talk about our work, but to connect with the reasons **why** we do that work. And that's a big difference because that allows you to think about your work in a different way that creates a lot of creativity. And I think that was why in our team, we had this big cloud of ideas around us all the time...*

-Irina Cuesta Astroz, FIP, Colombia

The CP2 learning journey began even before our first virtual convening, with the team formation process. Team anchors were invited to reflect on their aspirations, identify the learning questions most alive in their work, and consider team composition in light of those visions. For several teams, this process itself was catalytic, sparking new partnerships and opening broader imaginative possibilities.

Throughout CP2, intentional reflection, visioning, and planning were woven into the process. Regular, structured time for team reflection and sharing was critical to strengthening place-based practice and ensuring that learning translated into action.

The cohort journey unfolded across six monthly virtual convenings, followed by an immersive in-person week in Sierra Leone, and then eight additional months of virtual engagement. The initial virtual sessions focused on relationship-building within and among teams, in depth sharing from different contexts, and deepening understanding of inside-out practice and principles. These conversations fostered cross-context learning and collective agenda-setting, while preparing participants for the in-person gathering.



The Sierra Leone Convening



Dr. Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh, Hon. Vice President of Sierra Leone, opens the conference

From October 21-25, 2024, approximately 80 cohort participants gathered in Sierra Leone, joined on the opening day by more than 50 national leaders and international partners based in the country. Several government ministers participated throughout the week, demonstrating strong commitment to both the Wan Fambul Framework and global learning.

Fambul Tok and CFP shared in depth about the history, structure, and practice of the Wan Fambul National Framework, including the dynamics of their long-standing partnership, community processes, and collaboration with government leadership.

A highlight of the week was overnight community visits, during which participants witnessed Fambul Tok’s work firsthand. Many experienced a *fambul tok* reconciliation bonfire and visited villages demonstrating the full range of community processes that make up the Framework. These visits were widely cited as the most powerful aspect of the convening, deepening understanding, inspiring hope, and expanding participants’ sense of what is possible in their own contexts.

The thing that fueled me the most was how everything was communal. There is a sense of, I if I win, you win. If I succeed, you succeed. If I eat, you eat. How do we recreate that sense of belonging [in our work in the US]? I think at the end of the day, that's a lot of what people are yearning for, and a lot of why our social movements don't necessarily have longevity -- because they're not rooted in a sense of self and shared identity.

-Riisa Rawlins, part of Root Change’s Community Power Initiative, USA, pictured center here with Deputy Minister of Local Government Alfred Moi Jamiru, and MLG Gender Officer Josetta Orielle-Campbell





I want to celebrate that I got to see how rich we are in Africa. That we still have that sense of community. We really, really have to nurture that and to build our strengths, but also to share that joy with others. It was a celebration for me of our culture and our indigenous ways, and we are trying to put them into the structures that we are constructing today.

-Stella Sabiiti, Uganda/East Africa Regional Team

The week also included time for more in depth cross-context sharing, small-group dialogue, embodied practices, individual and team reflection, and unscheduled space for rest and integration. Participants repeatedly noted the value of gathering across levels and sectors, with senior officials, local leaders, and community members participating as peers rather than through formal titles.

Sierra Leonean government leaders, including the Vice President and the Ministers or Deputy Ministers of Local Government, Planning and Economic Development, Gender, and Finance, as well as other key national officers, were there alongside district government leaders and community members from remote parts of the country who would otherwise never get to share that kind of space. In addition to those from Sierra Leone, senior government officials from Kenya, Somalia, Nepal and Chicago joined as full participants - like all the other participants, they didn't go by their official titles or honorifics during the week, but simply their name. This is one embodiment of CFP and Fambul Tok's values of mutuality and visibility in partnership, recognizing that everyone has valuable wisdom to contribute to the work, and that we need to enact spaces that enable us all to be present first and foremost as people.



After Sierra Leone

Following the in-person convening, the cohort reconvened virtually from November 2024 through June 2025. These sessions focused on integrating learning from Sierra Leone, sustaining collaborative momentum, and exploring how inside-out approaches can reshape partnerships among communities, civil society, and government.

Both the virtual and in-person components were intentionally structured to maximize relationship-building and emergent design. Participants engaged in team-based, sector-based, and mixed-group conversations, and many continued learning together outside of formal sessions. Teams were encouraged to meet regularly on their own to explore how CP2 was influencing their practice.



Deputy Finance Minister Kadiatu Allie greets the team from Chicago, where she used to live



The Fambul Tok team presents their work



Greeting Vice President Jalloh



Global Citizens Circle Team

Impact



Community meeting



Team from Chicago



Osman Moallim (Somalia)

CP2 demonstrated how place-based teams working across diverse contexts and challenges—land conflict in Nepal, youth violence in Chicago, transitional justice in Kenya, reconciliation in Somalia, and local governance in Sierra Leone—could find deep resonance and practical alignment through an inside-out approach. This cross-context engagement strengthened a growing global ecosystem of practice grounded in relationship, trust, and shared learning.

Across the cohort, participants reported tangible, forward-moving impacts on their work, partnerships, and institutional strategies. These impacts were not abstract or aspirational; they translated directly into redesigned frameworks, strengthened collaborations, and concrete shifts in how power, leadership, and care are practiced.

Chicago (United States): Coming together as a team through CP2 enabled Chicago-based participants—many of whom had previously worked in parallel with limited coordination—to build new collaborations and deepen solidarity across violence reduction, racial healing, economic empowerment, and community development efforts. The City of Chicago has launched a co-governance framework closely aligned with the values of the Wan Fambul Framework. The CP2 experience is informing this work in tangible ways, while the multi-level integration of community facilitation into municipal governance in turn inspired the whole CP2 cohort.

Somalia: Osman Moallim, a civil society leader involved in Somalia’s National Reconciliation Framework, described how witnessing Fambul Tok’s work firsthand clarified the importance of grounding reconciliation at the village level rather than stopping at the district level. Upon returning home, the Somali team immediately adapted their national framework to bring reconciliation processes directly into villages. They secured funding for this more fully localized approach and began piloting it in dozens of communities. Just as importantly, participating together in Sierra Leone helped heal a strained relationship between civil society and government counterparts, transforming skepticism into shared ownership and regional leadership.



Change can only come from within and it can only come from within if your thinking and mindset is based on inside out.

Mukhtar Ogle, Secretary, Strategic Initiatives, Executive Office of the President, Kenya

Kenya and East Africa: In addition to leading local healing circles in areas affected by electoral and political violence, Dr. Tecla Wanjala and her colleagues were working to build a national and regional peace framework across East Africa. The Sierra Leone convening accelerated this effort. Experiencing cross-sector, cross-country collaboration in practice helped crystallize a sense of regional network and shared purpose. Following CP2, Kenyan government leaders became vocal champions of inside-out, community-centered approaches, sharing lessons from Sierra Leone at national, regional, and African Union forums.

Colombia: Participants from Fundación Ideas para la Paz recognized strong parallels between the drivers of youth violence in Medellín and those surfaced by the Chicago team. As a result, they planned a cross-context comparative research initiative to explore these dynamics and identify shared insights that could inform policy and practice in both contexts.

Nepal: Inspired by the leadership of Fambul Tok’s Peace Mothers groups, the Nepal team began redesigning their work to create more intentional space for women’s leadership at the local level. They also adapted the idea of community “basket funds” observed in Sierra Leone, combining it with lessons about organizational care to establish a staff basket fund that supports team well-being while strengthening collective responsibility and solidarity.



This journey has taught me that small contributions from the community can lead to major societal change.

Deepak Raj Bhatt, NRCTC in Nepal

As we build toward peace, how do we reflect more deeply and be more self-aware of how we take up space—and whether we are unintentionally excluding voices that should be centered?

Javier Rios, Root Change, USA



Root Change/Community Power Initiative

Root Change and U.S.-based Community Power Initiatives:

Root Change and its partners were especially impacted by the community healing bonfires witnessed in Sierra Leone. They drew on these experiences to strengthen their own commitments to courageous dialogue and “frank talk,” resulting in stronger internal trust, deeper team bonds, and renewed commitment to sustaining their work beyond the current funding cycle.



Sharing lessons on funding

Sierra Leone: Government leaders engaged in the Wan Fambul National Framework described gaining a clearer understanding of the global significance of their work. Participation in CP2 reinforced Sierra Leone’s leadership role within a broader movement toward localization and inside-out governance. The team also identified new opportunities for cross-context learning, including integrating climate resilience into community-centered peacebuilding, informed by lessons from Nepal and other contexts.



CP2 has informed and inspired others in how they want to hold space with their partners and in their institutions. **Global Citizens Circle** for example is listening for how to shape similar models of cross-learning and sharing within their network.

Beyond individual teams, CP2 informed and inspired donors, international NGOs, and networks seeking more effective ways to support community-led peacebuilding and reconciliation. Partners including Humanity United, the McConnell Foundation, and CFP are collaborating to advance peer-led learning among funders on how to shift power, funding practices, and accountability toward communities.



Sharing lessons on national leadership

Interest in the Fambul Tok model and the CFP-FT partnership continues to grow, with increasing requests for cross-context learning and accompaniment. CP2 has helped lay the groundwork for these next phases by demonstrating what becomes possible when long-term partnership, flexible support, emergent design, and community leadership are taken seriously.

Being the System We Want to See



CP2 was an expression of the new system we want to see.

Jesse Eaves, Humanity United

CP2 was not just an event. It was a fifteen-month, living process that embodied inside-out peacebuilding in real time. Rather than transmitting predefined solutions, it cultivated conditions for shared learning, trust, and emergence—demonstrating what becomes possible when communities, civil society, governments, and funders relate to one another as partners in a larger ecosystem of change.

CP2 challenged dominant, top-down models of peacebuilding by modeling a learning community in which knowledge and leadership flowed across levels and sectors. Participants were invited to show up as whole people, not only as professionals, and systems and institutions were asked to bend toward community leadership rather than the reverse. This was not symbolic; it was practiced through how time was held, how decisions were made, whose voices and experiences were centered, and how care, accountability, and shared responsibility were woven throughout the process.

Of particular note, the inclusion of U.S.-based teams as learners, not just experts, helped recalibrate global power dynamics. Black American leaders were especially touched to be learning from African experience and described the trip as feeling like a journey home – poignantly so for those who traced their ancestry to Sierra Leone. The government leaders who welcomed them home felt special pride in doing so.



CP2 offered a rare and compelling case study in how community-rooted, inside-out approaches can inform national policy, international collaboration, and sustainable systems change. It did not just teach new frameworks—it modeled them in real time.

CP2 also demonstrated that systems change is not only structural, but relational and cultural. By creating space for joy, grief, reflection, vulnerability, and belonging, the process renewed participants' energy and commitment to work that is often demanding and isolating.

Together, the Constellating Peace community continues to grow a way of working in the world that honors local capacity, centers community wisdom, and builds healthy partnership across difference and power. CP2 reaffirmed the conviction that launched this journey and continues to guide it forward: **the answers are already there**—living in the wisdom, strength, and courage of people and communities, and in the relationships we choose to build together.

Welcome to the onward journey.

I have a global family now. I am not alone in this work. And that gives me new energy for my national and local work.

Tecla Wanjala, Kenya, East Africa team and VDT member



My inner sense toward humanity has deepened, and my love for all has overwhelmed me.

Joseph Kargbo, Fambul Tok, Sierra Leone



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