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# Arts and Peacebuilding: A Conceptual Overview

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses how arts can contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation particularly at a time when conventional methods of achieving them are being questioned for their rootedness in notions that reflect a top-down perspective. This is based on the idea that artists, given their relative autonomy and creativity, can generate new ideas to change the way conflicts are perceived and overcome the legacies of past wrong-doing through appropriate processes.*

**Key words:** Arts, peacebuilding, transformation, reconciliation, community

## Introduction

ART IS OFTEN seen as a “human experience of producing ...a symbolic representation as well as the experiential process which facilitates the production.” Art seeks to orchestrate “a holistic social experience that creates a deeply humanizing social space in which individuals and communities affected by conflict use their symbolic representations to gradually come to terms with their identities, histories, and future possibilities.”<sup>1</sup> Human beings have used the arts as a means of communication from time immemorial. Those who focus on peacebuilding often rely on the tools of conventional disciplines that have dealt with the question of war and peace such as political science. Now there is a growing realisation that initiatives for peacebuilding can come from below, from ideas people generate in their day-to-day life and also the manner in which such ideas are communicated. Art, it should be recognised, it is capable of expressing

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