



Support for civil society engagement in peace processes

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Question

What is the effectiveness of interventions to support civil society in relation to them effectively engaging in peace processes? Specifically:

- *What is the scope of these interventions?*
- *How effective have they been?*
- *What are the conditions under which they are effective?*

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1. Summary

There is widespread acknowledgement of the importance of civil society engagement in peace processes (Inclusive Security, 2013; Peace Direct, 2019). This is reflected in the wide range of interventions being carried out by various donors to support such engagement.

This review looks at the effectiveness of interventions specifically aimed at supporting civil society groups to participate in peace processes. Unfortunately, a number of major challenges were faced. One, donor support for civil society in peacebuilding situations can take many different forms (e.g. promoting social cohesion, reconciliation, community-level mediation, and so on) – this review found no interventions explicitly providing support for civil society groups to participate in peace processes. Two, interventions targeting civil society are often one/a few components in a far broader project or programme. Three, there is a dearth of evaluations of such interventions. These constraints make it very difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of these interventions and the factors driving success.

The review focused on three contexts: Nepal, Yemen and Libya. These were chosen because of the parallels between them and South Sudan: all have/are coming out of violent conflict; there is heavy international involvement and support for peace processes; and the challenge in all is to bring about sustained peace. Because no intervention was found explicitly referring to donor support for civil society participation in peace processes, the review takes a broader perspective and looks at donor interventions targeting civil society and aimed at peacebuilding in those contexts.

Key findings of the review in the three contexts are as follows:

Nepal - A number of donor countries have supported interventions targeting civil society in the context of the Nepal peace process. Interventions were largely found to have been effective in promoting an inclusive peace. A number of success factors could be identified across the evaluations reviewed: good ability to pick the right partners for on-ground implementation; a high degree of gender sensitivity; building relationships with local partners based on mutual trust and respect; allowing time for results to be seen; ensuring participatory, bottom-up planning; and taking a multi-pronged approach.

Yemen - A number of the interventions identified in Yemen are still ongoing, and no evaluations were found. The Enhancing Women's Roles in Peace and Security in Yemen project was carried out by Saferworld in partnership with Yemeni organizations. An evaluation report noted that women-led initiatives need institutional support and direct financial support.

Libya – A Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) country programme includes the promotion of women's economic empowerment through political participation and support for civil society. No evaluation report was found for the programme.

As noted above, given the constraints, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions. This review perhaps most clearly points to the need for more evaluations of donor interventions to support civil society, and specifically to support civil society participation in peace processes.

The review largely drew on programme documents from international development organizations and civil society groups. The literature included a large number of interventions geared at promoting women's participation in peace processes but this review found nothing on inclusion of persons with disabilities.

2. Nepal

United Nations Peace Fund for Nepal

The United Nations Peace Fund for Nepal (UNPFN) was set up in 2007, following signature of the November 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Nepal (CPA). Its goal was to finance projects to support the Nepal peace process and fill gaps in implementation of the CPA. Originally set up for one year, prolongation of the peace process led to extensions until June 2016. The Fund supported a wide range of projects, covering mediation, governance, security, reconciliation and elections, among others. An evaluation of UNPFN (Lattanzio & ERI, 2016: 8) found that cumulatively:

The effectiveness and impact of UNPFN can be deduced from the strong correlation of its assistance timed to key moments in the successful evolution of the peace process. This was the case in particular for the provision of assistance to the populations in cantonments in the early years after 2007, and then in the accompaniment of the mass demobilisation from 2011. Another important finding is the consistent manner in which all the projects supported the interests of marginalised groups, in particular women, children, and Dalit and Janagati/indigenous people.

As noted, UNPFN sponsored a range of projects with diverse actors. Some projects, however, did have a more specific focus on civil society engagement. The EPST project, for example, helped to improve trust and confidence between political, religious and civil society actors as well as between caste and ethnic groups by inculcating a culture of dialogue through training and the set up of mechanisms such as youth dialogue forums (Lattanzio & ERI, 2016: 56).

The evaluation report identified a number of good practices contributing to the overall effectiveness of UNPFN (performance at individual project level was more varied) (Lattanzio & ERI, 2016: 67-68):

- competitive project selection;
- a small executive style management;
- maintenance of good databases and strong data management;
- a high degree of gender sensitivity (well-defined, understood and implemented by staff in the field);
- knowledge generation (e.g. training modules) that can easily be used by others;
- good ability to pick the right partners for on ground implementation;
- deployment of projects in a very inclusive, consultative and participatory manner.

Danish support to Nepal civil society

An evaluation of Danish support to civil society in Nepal (Ljungman & Thapa, 2013) looked at the full spectrum of modalities – some ten in total – through which such support was provided. Most significant in terms of scope and scale was the Human Rights and Good Governance Programme (HRGGP) (accounting for around 70% of bilateral sector support to civil society) (Ljungman & Thapa, 2013: 20), while most relevant to this review was perhaps the Peace Support Programme (PSP). The overall objective of PSP was to ‘contribute to building a peaceful, democratic, socially just and prosperous Nepal through an inclusive peace process’. PSP actually funded a number of international non-government organizations (INGOs). Again,

most relevant for this review was funding of Search for Common Ground to engage communities to foster local peace-building, with a special focus on youth.

The evaluation notes that, because of the nature of PSP, strengthening of civil society was not as prominent a feature of the programme as it was in HRGGP; moreover, it was designed to complement and not overlap HRGGP's efforts. Nonetheless, the programme was effective in promoting capacity building of local CSOs and advocacy capacity, and in providing relevant support to fragile states. The evaluation found that, 'The INGOs have brought specific expertise and experience in peace-building to Nepalese civil society that cannot be found among Nepalese organisations' (Ljungman & Thapa, 2013: 6).

The evaluation found that overall, Danish support to CSOs in Nepal had significantly enhanced citizens' space for public debate and their participation in local governance; and had brought to the fore the voice of disadvantaged groups at the micro level, who had become more active in influencing decision-making processes affecting their lives (Ljungman & Thapa, 2013: 51). However, the evaluation was unable to discern which support modalities had contributed most to this. Key success factors in Danish support to Nepali civil society included the ability of Danish NGOs to engage in close partnership with local NGOs, based on a more equal footing, 'built on years of accumulated trust and mutual benefit' (Ljungman & Thapa, 2013: 7). Another critical success factor was the existence of DanidaHUGOU 'with its experienced and competent leadership combined with highly knowledgeable staff with strong analytical skills' (Ljungman & Thapa, 2013: 53).

Finland's contribution to building inclusive peace in Nepal

Finland had a portfolio of peacebuilding projects in Nepal to support an agenda of peace process, democracy development, good governance and promotion of human rights as well as gender and social inclusion of various groups (Viitanem & Gautam, 2012). Between 2006 and 2011 Finnish assistance for peace in Nepal totalled Euros 10.6 million (Viitanem & Gautam, 2012: 19). Most relevant to this review is the Alliance for Peace (AfP) Project supporting political youth groups and students. A 2012 evaluation (Viitanem & Gautam) of Finland's contribution towards a socially inclusive peace-building process in Nepal found that:

Projects were complementary, contributed to peace, increased security and inclusive democracy, strengthened the governing capacity of national institutions, and reached those affected by conflict. Affirmative action for women and vulnerable groups was endorsed by the elections and interim constitution, and major national action plans (including UNSCR 1325 and 1820) were established.

The report found that Finland's multi-pronged programme with various types of implementing agencies and approaches was highly relevant to inclusive peace-building.

German contribution to the peace process in Nepal

A review of German Development Cooperation in Nepal between 2003 and 2013 details a range of measures. These cover (among others): reintegration and rehabilitation of former combatants; improvement of livelihoods in rural areas; contributions and advisory services to the Nepal Peace Trust Fund; and – most relevant to this review – support to strengthen the peace process, and provision of peace experts to strengthen civil society organizations. The latter was carried out

through the Civil Peace Service (CPS).² The CPS sent international peace experts to Nepal; each worked with a local partner organization over a period of several years, mainly on non-violent conflict transformation. As of 2013, through its partners, the CPS had qualified over 1,000 mediators, mainly in villages and rural areas (GIZ, 2014: 31).

The key lessons highlighted in the review include (GIZ, 2014: 51-52):

- Peace building is mainly about establishing relationships – good relationships take time to develop and mature;
- Continuous presence proves an organization to be a reliable and predictable partner;
- The return to peace is a time-consuming process. Patience and perseverance is required in order to reap the benefits of this process.

Strengthening Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Nepal (SIWPSAN)

The SIWPSAN programme, running from June 2012 to May 2016, was executed by UN WOMEN and funded by the Government of Finland. It operated at local level in three districts in the Far Western Development Region of Nepal, and Kathmandu at national level. The overall goal was: 'Women lead and participate in peace, security and governance process at the local level in the Far West Region'. Specific objectives included enhancing the leadership and participation of women in key decision-making structures in project districts.

An evaluation report (Scott Wilson Nepal, 2015) highlighted the approach taken by the project. This involved participatory planning and a bottom-up approach (with a bottom-up understanding of peace – for Nepali women this entailed human security, encompassing economic, food, health, environmental, political, social and personal security, among others, rather than simply the absence of armed violence). It also entailed a multi-pronged approach through economic and social empowerment initiatives; promotion of women's leadership and participation in decision-making structures; and creating an enabling environment for women's participation by addressing their protection, prevention, relief and recovery rights and needs by enhancing the collective capabilities and capacities of local and national government agencies. Capacity development of both rights holders and duty bearers formed a key element of the project.

With regard to impact, SIWPSAN led to direct, observable changes in target groups in terms of leadership enhancement and awareness-raising about NAP³. Project activities such as peace memorials, community festivals, community dialogues and peace circles were found to be effective in promoting social harmony and reconciliation.

² The Civil Peace Service (CPS) is a programme funded by the German government, aimed at preventing violence and promoting peace in crisis zones and conflict regions. It aims to build a world in which conflicts are resolved without resorting to violence. Nine German peace and development organizations run the CPS together with local partners. <https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/en>

³ National Action Plan – bringing together the country's plans for delivering on its Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments.

3. Yemen

German-EU Peace Process Support for Yemen⁴

Germany, along with the European Union, is funding a five-year project 'Peace Process Support for Yemen'. Running from 2016 until 2021, the aim of the project is to improve the conditions for non-violent conflict resolution in Yemen. This is to be achieved through five inter-linked sets of activities: a) strengthening local capacities for peace to promote peaceful coexistence; b) strengthening institutional and professional capacities of selected NGOs and academic institutions; c) conducting public relations campaigns; d) strengthening the participation of women in the peace process and post-conflict agenda; and e) promoting the use of conflict-sensitive communication methods. The third set of activities is perhaps most directly relevant to this review. In cooperation with the Yemen Women Union, a consultative paper on women's participation in the peace process and post-conflict agenda has been elaborated. This has led to networks that are used to create an exchange platform for women in Yemen. This review was unable to find any evaluation reports for the 'Peace Process Support for Yemen' project.

CSSF Peace-building in Yemen Project

The 'Peacebuilding in Yemen' project was implemented by Search for Common Ground, and funded through the Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) (Nabhani, 2017). The aim was to increase local level social cohesion in six Yemeni districts by: a) reducing the risk of inter-communal violence at the local level through dialogue processes; b) mitigating the risk of future conflicts by creating local conflict-management mechanisms. An evaluation of the project (Nabhani, 2017) found that it was effective in promoting social cohesion.

Enhancing women's roles in peace and security in Yemen

The Enhancing Women's Roles in Peace and Security in Yemen project was carried out by Saferworld in partnership with Yemeni organizations. The 30-month project started in 2016 and was implemented in Aden and Ibb governorates (Saferworld, n.d.). The aim was to empower women activists and civil society organizations to engage in local peace-building initiatives, raise awareness of women's peace and security concerns, and highlight the part women can play in addressing them.

The project helped to promote a more inclusive and sustainable peace process in Yemen by empowering women and raising awareness of their rights, enhancing their political agency, and highlighting the value of community activism. By building autonomous community groups in two governorates in Yemen, the project helped ensure that people could better respond to women's security concerns and advocate for peace locally. Saferworld's review of the project highlighted the inclusive approach it had taken, whereby women and men of all ages, backgrounds and social groups could participate (Saferworld, n.d.).

The review also noted that women-led initiatives need institutional support and direct financial support. But the latter is usually only small amounts; donors should design mechanisms that make funding available so that smaller groups can easily access them. Opportunities for

⁴ <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/54543.html>

women's participation in peacebuilding identified by participants included: campaigns against violence and arms; awareness-raising campaigns about community peace and education, particularly engaging youth; promoting the inclusion of women across all levels of decision-making, including in the security sector; psychosocial support within communities; and child protection work.

4. Libya

Libya CSSF Country Programme

The Libya CSSF Country Programme runs for four years from April 2017 to March 2021, and is worth just over £12 million (FCO, 2018). It comprises three pillars: political; security and stabilization; and economic. As well as building the capacity of the Government of National Accord (GNA) through technical advisory support, and promoting an impartial and healthy media, the political pillar aims to ensure women's empowerment through political participation and support to civil society. The security and stabilisation pillar includes activities to promote reconciliation and local community conflict mediation. The 2017/18 annual review of the programme found that it was performing well (FCO, 2018).

EU support for civil society capacity building in Libya

In Libya the EU supported a capacity building programme for civil society and new public service bodies (commonpurpose, 2011). The programme was implemented by Common Purpose (a European non-governmental organization) which worked closely with key stakeholders in the Libyan civil society and public service. The programme entailed the provision of experiential type courses for NGO leaders, volunteers and officials in the public service (commonpurpose, 2011). The training also encompassed women's organisations, media groups and other organizations that desire to develop specific technical skills. The courses were run in partnership with community organizations and universities in Benghazi and Tripoli. In addition, Young Leaders Courses were offered to people in the 20-35 age range who were active in civil society. The courses focused on dialogue as well as analyzing issues with the aim of managing diverse opinions constructively so that change could be handled in a positive way.

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