



# Supporting Civil Society Engagement at times of contested spaces

**CSPPS Consolidated Narrative Report - Period 2015 – 2018**

Support to IDPS CSO Activities – Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding  
SDC Contribution 2015-2018 – Credit Proposal no. 7F-09305.01.01 / Contract n° 81034431





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### **CSPPS Consolidated Narrative Report** **As submitted to Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation** Period 2015 – 2018

#### **Introduction**

This narrative report is prepared as the final overall report following the implementation of the grant agreement<sup>1</sup> as concluded between the Swiss Confederation, represented by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, acting through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation South Asia and Conflict & Human Right Division and Stichting Cordaid, based in the Netherlands. The report focusses on the support provided to Stichting Cordaid for activities carried out by the Cordaid hosted and coordinated Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS).

The report reflects on the various learnings emanating during the entire grant agreement period and will next to this assess progress made towards the realization of the project and activities implemented thereunder. The focus in that regard will be predominantly on evaluating the overall impact and to appraise to what extent the agreed upon outcomes were attained.

The report will start with a brief introduction of the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, its mandate, goals and the core activities pursued by the Platform and its members. The second part of the report will provide a more in-depth analysis of the attainment of outcomes as agreed upon. The third section of the report will give a more holistic analysis of the impact of the contribution as provided by the Swiss government/SDC and will reflect on some more fundamental issues related to civic space, inclusion and need for support for the pivotal role of civil society in FCAS-contexts.

#### **Part 1: Introducing CSPPS**

The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) is the South-North nongovernmental coalition of peacebuilding organizations that coordinates and supports Civil Society participation in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS). The Platform gathers representatives from more than twenty-five countries. The mandate of CSPPS is strengthening the voice and capacity of society to effectively engage in, and influence, peacebuilding and statebuilding as a critical contribution to crisis prevention and sustainable peace and development for all.

The goals of CSPPS are to develop and strengthen the voice and agency of Civil Society at national and global levels to engage in the process of the International Dialogue – in agenda setting, policy negotiation, and in the roll-out and implementation of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

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CSPPS strategies are based on the following Theory of Change: “If we shape and influence global and national structures and processes to address sources of destructive conflict and to build resilience, then countries and their citizens will be less likely to resort to violent conflict because they will have means to manage their grievances and build the quality of their lives.”

Inspired from this the core strategies pursued by CSPPS are:

1. Shaping and infusing the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, Sustainable Development Goals and humanitarian processes with peacebuilding values;
2. Strengthening and broadening Civil Society engagement in peacebuilding, statebuilding and crisis prevention;
3. Influencing prevention, peacebuilding and statebuilding and development policies at all levels.

**Part 2: Analysis of achievements, challenges and lessons learned per outcome**

The 2015 concluded agreement between SDC and Cordaid focusses on providing support to CSPPS, the official IDPS CSO Secretariat, to support and solidify civil society engagement in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and processes related to the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. The grant implementation is guided by a project/activities document describing the objectives and planned achievements.

As mentioned in the introduction this part of the report will provide a more in-depth analysis of the attainment of outcomes as agreed upon in the consecutive grant agreements signed between the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, acting through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation South Asia and Conflict & Human Right Division and Stichting Cordaid, based in the Netherlands.

In the Annex 2 to the grant agreement an overview table is included presenting the Strategic Framework for CSSPS. The table is herewith included for ease of reference:

<b>CSPPS Objectives and planned achievements 2015-2018</b>		
<b>Impact:</b>		
<b>The Implementation of the New Deal is actively supported by civil society</b>		
<b>Outcome 1</b>	<b>Outcome 2</b>	<b>Outcome 3</b>
The IDPS processes are shaped and infused with peacebuilding values and civil society concerns	Civil society engagement in peacebuilding and statebuilding is broadened and strengthened	Policy around peacebuilding and statebuilding agenda is influenced at all levels
<b>Achieved by 2015</b> Civil society is engaged in all scheduled fragility assessments	<b>Achieved by 2015</b> Civil society is engaged in and achieves inclusion in all scheduled Compact discussions	<b>Achieved by 2015</b> Civil society is engaged in all Working- & Steering Group discussions.
<b>Achieved by 2016</b> Civil society is engaged in all remaining fragility assessments and closely monitors the respect of the 2015 results into new Compacts	<b>Achieved by 2016</b> Civil society is engaged and achieves inclusion in discussion of all remaining Compact processes	<b>Achieved by 2016</b> Civil society is engaged in all groups and discussions of the renewed IDPS structure and the monitoring of SDG peace targets.
<b>Achieved by 2017/18</b> Civil society pursues its engagement for monitoring and updating fragility assessments and translating results into Compacts and related policy and legislation.	<b>Achieved by 2017/18</b> Civil society closely monitors Compact related policy and legislation as a full peacebuilding and statebuilding partner.	<b>Achieved by 2017/18</b> Civil society pursues its engagement in the IDPS global discussion and in all arenas related to peacebuilding and statebuilding for a peace related SDG monitoring.

In the following section, each outcome will be reviewed in more details, in doing so we will look at the main achievements over the entire grant agreement period, analyse some of the obstacles encountered in implementing specific project activities and assess & review some of the lessons learned harvested during the implementation period.

### **Outcome 1 - Shaping and infusing the IDPS process with peacebuilding values**

#### **2030 Agenda**

The 2015 adoption of a new global development framework – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – has been cause for great celebration amongst International Dialogue constituencies. The CSPPS has worked with the wider global Civil Society movement, and with IDPS constituencies on myriad fronts in the years leading up to the agenda's adoption to ensure that peacebuilding and statebuilding concerns would be place at the heart and centre of the framework.

With success on this front, and growing demand for guidance by country offices and CSPPS country teams, the CSPPS championed efforts within the dialogue to formally reflect upon, and articulate, how the adoption and prioritization of the new Agenda would affect strategic thinking and action in the International Dialogue, and on the New Deal implementation. Under the co-chairing of CSPPS and the g7+, an ad hoc working group was set up, and a Dialogue document [*Realization of the SDGs in Countries Affected by Conflict and Fragility and the role of the New Deal*] was developed and agreed amongst constituencies.

The document has been instrumental in supporting targeted advocacy towards key stakeholders to apply a New Deal principled approach in operationalizing, localizing and realizing the SDGs in FCAS. Fostering inclusive dialogue and building ownership around means of effective implementation and monitoring have been key benchmarks for CSPPS in this process.

#### **Use of New Deal tools and instruments**

Since 2015 the CSPPS has ensured the active involvement of local civil society organisations from sixteen g7+ countries in processes related to New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and the country's involvement in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. In eight countries, local CSPPS Country Teams have been directly involved in national Fragility Assessments during this same period. Each process was unique and specific to the national dynamics, and the level of inclusivity of CSOs was contingent on a series of factors, e.g. the level of trust between State authority and CSOs, the time frame provided to each party to provide inputs, the participatory nature of the process embarked upon, and the level of maturity of CSOs etc. However, a few lessons learned and challenges for future reflection can be drawn from these three years of experience.

Where Fragility Assessments did not take place, similar consultative processes between the State and their society also happened, where the CSPPS as a network was as much concerned to ensure meaningful inclusivity. As a principle, the CSPPS does not see the sole value of a Fragility Assessment in the final document produced only, but rather in the process it sets in motion where different national stakeholders come together around the negotiating table and review the sources of fragility afflicting the country, dissect the root causes of conflict and instability, evaluate, analyse and plan for ways to address these causes while at the same time seek to consolidate and build on identified pockets of resilience to prevent conflict and sustain peace.

In 2016 CSPPS issued a policy paper in which it reflected on the practice of using fragility assessments as a key analytical tool. Next to analysing the process at it happened the note also provided a critical review of what elements of the process need strengthening or substantive revision. Emphasis was given how a revised fragility assessment guidance can make the assessments fit for purpose in supporting a New Deal principled or New Deal sensitive realization of the 2030 Agenda in fragile and conflict affected settings. CSPPS has repeatedly argued to also include the identification and harvesting

of sources of resilience as part of the assessment process (and next to analysing the root causes of conflict and instability). To date the revision of the FA guidance is still due despite our repeated call for updating this key guidance framework.

### **Challenges**

- Meaningful civil society inclusion, although a tenet of the New Deal, is not always guaranteed in Fragility Assessment processes. This resulted in few instances in CSPPS member organisations joining the consultations only towards the end of the process, or not being consulted at all and having to resort to the only possibility to provide feedback to the final documents issued.
- Civil Society inclusion often finds no real champion either in the host country government or lead donors.
- Civil society from g7+ countries is subject to many internal and external challenges that affect their daily work, i.e. lack of regular funding for core functioning activities, lack of communication and reporting tools, etc. which overall has a direct impact in their capacity to timely and meaningfully interact in any political process.
- The collaboration with other key New Deal stakeholders like UNDP in Fragility Assessments has sometimes proven to be difficult. Having a dedicated funding stream for New Deal Implementation support, UNDP holds the key (together with the host Governments) for initiating Fragility Assessments which often were announced at a too short notice for CSOs to be ready to step in – let alone being involved in the planning process from the start onwards. During the reporting period, successful efforts have been made to establish more regular consultation practice with relevant colleagues in UNDP Headquarters in New York – working in the ND support unit.

### **Lessons learned**

- Due to its multi-faceted, organic and heterogeneous nature, CSOs require more time than Governments and International agencies to be ready and prepared to meaningfully engage in a Fragility Assessment process. A sensitization process of CS on their role and engagement in a Fragility Assessment process has been offered to several g7+ countries embarking on this process. Experience shows that where FA processes have been rushed and overly driven by external pressures, CS engagement was restricted. The diversity of CSOs should not be seen as an obstacle, but rather as a strength to address the root causes of fragility and conflict and to identify innovative and creative solution for peacebuilding and prevention.
- Peer to Peer support provided by an experienced CSPPS organisation has proven to be one of the most effective strategies for training new CSPPS-members and for ensuring that unexperienced CSOs could meaningfully engage in Fragility Assessments from the outset of the process. This in turn has created a wealth of knowledge that trickles down across the platform.
- Fragility Assessments are highly political processes, the success of which depends on political willingness to consider its outcomes and needed translation into development planning processes. Ensuring civil society inclusion can be seen as a risky commitment by regimes averse to be openly discussing sensitive political issues and be scrutinised on choices made. However, civil society's strategy is and should always be one of critical though constructive engagement, considering different channels for having their voices heard (some recommendations are made in the final report of the CSPPS Core Group Meeting in The Hague, April 2018).
- CSPPS should find ways to counter other existing impediments for Civil Society inclusion; among issues to be addressed are: 1) lack of advocacy capacity on side of civil society to meaningfully engage, 2) competing agendas at country level and institutional silos, 3) existence of parallel networks of government-backed CSOs.
- Fragility Assessments can be an entry point for building and consolidating a longer-term partnership between the Government and other societal actors (including civil society) if departed from principles of constructive engagement, partnership, inclusion and transparency.

## **Outcome 2 - Strengthening civil society engagement in peacebuilding and statebuilding**

Following an inclusive Fragility Assessment process, where ideally civil society has been fully included from the outset of the planning of that same process, and where the final results are as much as possible a genuine picture of the major sources of fragility, as well as existing pockets of resilience of a specific country, stakeholders then engage in strategic discussion on the subsequent planning of develop activities to address the outcomes of the assessment – linked to a National Development Planning Process or the negotiations of a compact agreement. The latter is a strategy document, agreed by several national and international stakeholders, setting out the priorities to address per PSG for a specific time frame.

In practice, soon after the adoption of the new global development framework – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development direct negotiations around New Deal compacts as part of New Deal implementation trajectories became less prominent and ceased to exist. With the adoption of the Stockholm Declaration on Addressing Fragility and Building Peace in a Changing World the IDPS welcomed the explicit recognition of peace, the reduction of violence, and the need for inclusive societies in the Sustainable Development Goals.

It was felt this confirmed the premise of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States: that peacebuilding and statebuilding are integral to sustainable development and should remain at the core of our shared approach. Members of the Dialogue agreed to (inter alia) strengthen the International Dialogue’s commitment to peacebuilding, statebuilding and conflict prevention by addressing the root causes of violence, conflict, and fragility, and by improving our systems to ensure inclusion and accountability and to rebuild trust between state and citizens; and; to use the New Deal principles to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

The focus of CSPPS under this outcome has therefore also changes over time. From an initial focus on NDI-trajectories it has gradually changed perspective towards supporting civil society’s engagement in actualization and localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the international level focus has been given to strengthening and amplifying the voice of civil society in relevant peacebuilding and statebuilding fora – next to the Platform’s continued engagement in the IDPS Partnership. Policy briefs and position papers were issued to support optimal alignment between the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and the 2030 Agenda.

Over the period 2015-2018 CSPPS has provided support to civil society from multiple g7+ countries. This in-country support has been given for various purposes, the most important being sensitization, capacity building and strategic policy orientation for local civil society groups in g7+-countries. Next to this thematic research and advocacy oriented work streams have been implemented. The most important being the work done to exemplify the role of civil society in tackling the West-African Ebola crisis; and research done on the role of Young People in Preventing Violent Extremism in Lake Chad region [as a CSPPS-contribution to the UNSG commissioned YPS Progress Study].

In partnership with UNDP local CSPPS country teams have been involved and engaged in fragility assessment trajectories and in workshops centred around the application of the New Deal to SDG implementation in FCAS. Next to arranging participation in global workshops CSPPS in-country activities were planned, supported and implemented in Burundi, CAR, Chad, Comoros, Cote d’Ivoire, DRC, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Nepal, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome & Principe, Somalia and Timor-Leste.

### **Challenges**

- In some g7+ countries governments do not always see in civil society a natural partner to work with in political processes. In certain cases, governments have identified their own civil society they are willing to work with, and ensured that consultation or negotiations were exclusive to

them. This has required a lot of lobbying from CSPPS International members towards donors to ensure appropriate levels of inclusiveness in FA, compact and similar processes.

- Civil society inclusivity has tended to fluctuate throughout peacebuilding trajectories, increasing in some instances, but also decreasing – therefore not continuous and standardized. In cases this has led to exclusion from important processes that have moved ahead without consent and acquiescence of CSOs.

### **Lessons learned**

- Generally, level of inclusion encountered in Fragility Assessment processes is an indication of the willingness from the side of Government to open to and engage meaningfully with CSOs. Collective involvement in an assessment process and analysis of results can foster inclusive planning processes to become practice.
- The New Deal and its set of principles has influenced and shaped National Development Planning processes and plans (NDP) in several countries. This is best exemplified in the cases of Somalia and CAR, where respective compacts were infused into the NDPs. However, there remains a large implementation gap between on-paper agreements and policy practice.
- The term civil society still is a contentious one for some g7+ Governments. Determining who should be present and invited at the dialogue table from civil society isn't always as straight forward. Some Governments have a core of selected CSOs they will engage and speak to, and might undermine the legitimacy of the most outspoken ones – besides interfering with the independence of CS as constituency. The role of international CSOs should be to continue to provide support to local CS and support their call for independent, continuous and meaningful engagement group in processes related to peacebuilding and statebuilding, in context of the IDPS partnership and beyond. Specific attention here needs to be given to ensuring the inclusion and representation of women and youth.

### **Outcome 3 - Influencing policy around PB&SB agenda at all levels**

Honouring one of the principles of the New Deal, Steering Group meetings and Working Groups of the IDPS have always been inclusive towards participation and involvement of civil society, although to a lesser extent (smaller number) than with any of the two other constituencies. This has allowed for members of g7+ civil society and INGOs to contribute to shaping the strategy of engagement and implementation of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and the application of its principles in context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The presence of civil society members in IDPS Working Groups has also allowed for a tripartite approach in shaping policy documents, tool and instruments to support analysis of root causes of conflict and instability, to foster pockets of resilience and to devise appropriate strategies for conflict prevention and sustaining peace. The elevation of CSPPS to IWG Co-Chair level has been a key step in the governance of the tripartite IDPS-partnership. CSPPS in follow-up has been instrumental in shaping policy recommendations for alignment of the New Deal framework with the 2030 Agenda and related policy discourses.

Overall, it should be acknowledged that the IDPS tripartite partnership has created a genuine, open and frank dialogue among all three constituencies, albeit with intrinsic and inevitable challenges along the way. The partnership has been able to prove its relevance in a changing policy context and has also been able to re-calibrate its way of working following the Stockholm conference and the agreement on a new strategy.

During the reporting period the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding has on a regular basis issued policy brief and issue papers – often in the lead-up to meeting of the IDPS

partnership or in context of other key international events. The briefs and policy papers were issued on, among others the following issues: aligning the New Deal and the 2030 Agenda; Safeguarding Inclusivity and the Role of Civil Society in Conflict Affected States; Operationalizing the Stockholm Declaration; Peace and Migration: Realizing the links and Fragility Assessments: Where the Dialogue Needs to Go; The Role of Young People in Preventing Violent Extremism in the Lake Chad Basin; and; Tackling and Preventing Ebola while building peace and societal resilience – Lessons and Priorities for action from Civil Society in Ebola-affected New Deal countries.

### **Challenges**

- Whereas all INCAF and g7+ representatives at IDPS Steering Group meetings are fully employed government individuals, CSPPS members often represent civil society on a voluntary/designated basis. This has sometimes hampered and complicated the participation of CSO members from g7+ countries, who understandably, sometimes have had to prioritise other opportunities for engagement. This has skewed the balance towards a larger number of representatives from International NGOs instead. Next to this visa restrictions and lengthy, intricate and insolvable visa procedures have hampered g7+ civil society participation in international meetings.
- Ensuring sustainable core/institutional funding remains one of the key challenges for CSO engagement.

### **Lessons learned**

- The contributions from Civil Society in the context of the IDPS partnership were often complimentary to those made by the other two constituencies. Often Civil Society provided a reality check on implementation accounts as presented by Government representatives from the same countries. The IDPS Steering Group and Working Groups have provided an ideal platform for open and frank dialogue and discussion on the state of New Deal implementation at country level.
- Where g7+ representatives and donors spoke about New Deal success stories, civil society would have a much more nuanced version bringing to the fore shortcomings and challenges identified (e.g. Somalia and the inclusion of quotas for women in Parliament, which was a commitment initially signed and later dropped). Through these exchanges Steering Group Meetings provided an avenue for validation and review of New Deal implementation and impact.

## **Part 3: Reflections on the bigger picture and future outlook**

In this section of the report a more holistic analysis of the impact of the contribution as provided by the Swiss government/SDC and will reflect on some more fundamental issues related to civic space, inclusion and need for support for the pivotal role of civil society in FCAS-contexts.

### **Civic space and the role of civil society**

Sustaining and building peace is not possible without the principles of legitimacy, trust, participation, diversity and credibility. Exactly these principles are coming under threat in many countries due to the global trend of shrinking civic spaces. Activities carried out by CSPPS are continuously focused on both strengthening the capacity and voice of civil society in fragile and conflict affected situations (FCAS). Safeguarding civic space is and remains an urgent issue in this context where concerns over shrinking political space prevail.

In contexts where formalized political space is granted, being the case for CSPPS in context of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, the Platform has engaged in a constructive dialogue and engagement with duty bearers and other key stakeholders to flag the importance of this issue. Meetings of the IDPS are used to discuss trends around curtailing of civic space and restrictions imposed on planned activities by civil society organizations in member countries of the IDPS. The



continuous global trend of shrinking civic space is a key concern that CSPPS seeks to address. Members of the CSPPS Platform also report on adverse legislation that is being prepared and tabled in several countries where CSPPS members are active.

The Platform in turn has also addressed concerns over shrinking political space at various international fora, including the UN General Assembly, the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF), IDPS, EU Partnership Forum and the European Development Days (EDD). In these fora, CSPPS tabled issues around civic space, called for continued support of a wide range of international development actors and stressed the political will that is needed to create and safeguard an enabling environment for civil society. Key southern CSPPS partners (from CAR, South Sudan, Nigeria and Afghanistan) were capacitated to directly and successfully engage in these fora and to present compelling cases stories to underscore civic space concerns.

And as a more practical manifestation of difficulties encountered CSPPS country team members and partners report increased difficulties in processes related to obtaining visa for official, work-related visits to the Schengen zone and the United States of America. This has at repeated instances prevented CSPPS-representatives to attend international meetings, which in turn impacted on the ability of the Platform to bring local voice to the fore in these contexts. CSPPS will continue its efforts to also counter this negative trend (both by compiling and discussing case repository and urging conference hosts to confirm conference and meeting dates earlier).

CSPPS will continue to call for the crucial role of civil society to be recognized as a central part of the fabric that builds societal resilience and sustains peace, and ensure that work of civil society, and the space that allows for it, must be upheld and supported.

### **On inclusion**

Preventing conflict, sustaining peace and mostly building lasting peace requires inclusivity and partnership. The principle of inclusivity is vital to delivering Agenda 2030 in societies affected by conflict and fragility. Where state-society relations are weak(er) or/or where state institutions lack capacity, the meaningful and ongoing involvement of civil society holds a pivotal key to ensuring whole-of-society ownership and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly where the building of peace, just and inclusive societies is centerfold. Yet while a consensus around the need for greater inclusivity in the design and implementation of policy has risen in recent years, there remain unique challenges in contexts affected by conflict and fragility.

CSPPS has put this topic at the forefront of its advocacy efforts both at international and national levels arguing that civil society inclusion is vital and that overlooking this important component of society could risk perpetuating grievance or generating new ones which thus would undermine efforts of peace. We have repeatedly argued that inclusion needs to be more than a tokenistic notion and that the quality of inclusion matters. Its recent contributions in context of the World Bank Fragility Forum and the PGA High Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace CSPPS perspectives on the importance of inclusion and multi-stakeholder partnerships have been shared. Functioning partnerships are not easily established. Trust, honesty, presence, the sharing of values and learning together are essential elements for inclusive partnerships. Partnerships must grow over time. And partnerships, based on international policy agendas, need to be sustainable: Only then can partnerships open-up new channels for dialogue and facilitate political, social or economic processes – however, changing agendas and priorities often tend to disrupt these processes. We witness a growing disconnect between the international recognition of “partnerships” as crucial for sustaining peace and a loss of space for engagement and dialogue of international actors with local partners due to changing aid policies and modalities.

Building and sustaining peace requires a focus on people, requires the inclusion of perspectives of local people affected by conflict and violence, and needs to ensure that existing local capacities for sustaining peace are the starting point for any engagement. Building and sustaining peace efforts therefore needs to be locally brewed, regionally anchored and internationally supported. In all this context-sensitivity is key and approaches embarked upon need to enhance and ensure effective inclusive local ownership.

CSPPS will continue its role in coordinating advocacy engagement at international level to help to both create and safeguard a conducive enabling environment for civil society to engage on peacebuilding, conflict prevention and sustaining peace at national level - in a dialogue with national governments and other stakeholders at country level. By ensuring linkages and connectivity between international and national level activities we hope to safeguard space for structured dialogue with duty bearers/government representatives at both levels.

Where possible and needed CSPPS has initiated targeted lobby activities aimed at securing the needed space for and recognition of the role of civil society in international policy processes. A key example where a call was made to seek support for an amplified voice of civil society was in context of the UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF) organized to report on progress made on actualization of the SDGs in specific countries. CSPPS has advocated for bigger role of civil society in VNR-process and in the way the country reports and individual SDGs are being reviewed and discussed during the HLPF (this next to continuous advocacy for inclusion of civil society in localization processes in FCAS).

#### **On collaboration between CSPPS and SDC**

The signing of the grant agreement between CSPPS/Cordaid and SDC has led to an intensification of the relationship between the two organizations. Regular meetings have taken place during the implementation of the grant agreement and the Coordinator of the CSPPS Secretariat also travelled to Bern for a brown bag lunch meeting and bilateral discussions with SDC Staff.

The foreseen intensified collaboration between Swiss Cooperation Office and civil society actors in g7+ countries did not really take off. Efforts were made to establish working level connections at country level through connecting local level colleagues but this has often remained limited to initial courtesy calls and has not seen the wished-for follow-up collaboration nor intensification of information exchange.

At Headquarters the regular exchanges between CSPPS Secretariat and the SDC Office in Bern provided an opportunity for exchange of information on the state of New Deal implementation globally and with a focus on some of the SDC's key partner countries. The regular check-ins were used for open and frank discussions on the reality of IDPS and New Deal processes both in-country and at the global level. Discussion have also helped to establish linkages to other relevant policy contexts for CSPPS to link up to. The discussions have always taken place in a friendly and constructive manner. The only impediment being the regular change of contact person at the end of SDC requiring restarts of dialogue processes when this occurred - but conversations always proved to be soon back on track. It is hoped that the fruitful collaboration between SDC and CSPPS will continue in the context of the implementation of the new Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Strategy for SDC's work in fragile and conflict contexts.

#### **Continued support for the pivotal role of civil society in FCAS contexts**

As highlighted in the previous sections civil society plays a pivotal role in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Civil society are "eyes and ears" on the ground and perform a key role in identifying, recording and responding to first instances of conflicts flaring up. It was also argued that civil society faces diverse challenges curtailing their engagement. Continued partnerships with the donor community can support the reversal of the continuing trend of civil space restrictions. CSPPS will continue its strategic engagement in context of the IDPS partnership and will use the formalized

dialogue space to table and address this and other issues that concern the ongoing and meaningful participation of its members in policy processes at local, national, regional or international levels.

In context of continuing trend of contested and shrinking spaces for civil society engagement the support of partner constituencies in the International Dialogue is of key importance. The coordinating role of CSPPS in a changing political landscape surrounding the IDPS remains crucial. The Platform is well placed to both provide policy advice for the IDPS partnership to claim and proof its relevance in context of international policy discussions related to the 2030 Agenda, conflict prevention and sustaining peace while at the same time support local civil society networks and alliances in providing the strategic support needed for the successful actualization of these processes on the ground.

A process in which civil society is particularly well placed and equipped to make a significant contribution is working on (early) prevention. Structural (participatory and inclusive) involvement of civil society in the analysis of the root causes & drivers of conflict and identifying existing pockets of resilience is key. The outcome of this analysis process should help to guide the way in which local planning process around implementation of the SDGs and 2030 Agenda are organized.

CSPPS hopes to galvanize further support that will allow its member organization to continue strategic cooperation and structured dialogue with key stakeholders at country and international levels. Current negotiations with the European Union in this context will see the Platform partnering with the EU on the implementation of the EU country roadmaps for engagement with civil society. CSPPS will continue to emphasize support to local civil society organisation to effectively engage in dialogue to make their voices heard.

## Conclusions

The grant agreement through which support has been provided to Stichting Cordaid for activities carried out by the Cordaid hosted and coordinated Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) has been instrumental in sustaining Civil Society engagement and meaningful participation in various processes associated with the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. Next to this the multi-annual grant has provided CSPPS with time and means to provide substantial inputs into the IDPS process, made progress on strengthening and diversifying civil society engagement in peacebuilding and statebuilding both at national and international levels. CSPPS will continue to further empower and facilitate local civil society to participate as an actor in constructive state-society interactions and to have their voices heard in relevant policy dialogues both at the national and international levels.

The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding has evolved into a recognized partner whose policy inputs are well-regarded and appreciated at all level. With current negotiations with the European Union progressing it is expected that this role will be further solidified and expanded where possible. CSPPS is also looking forward to exploring ways for continuing its partnership with Switzerland on these issues, knowing that i.e. the shrinking civic spaces issue is a key issue of shared concern. CSPPS would of course welcome an opportunity to explore options for continued collaboration around this and other key issues.

On behalf of its entire membership the Secretariat of the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding would like to express its sincere gratitude to the Swiss Confederation, represented by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, acting through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation South Asia and Conflict & Human Right Division for the support provided and we look forward to continuing our collaboration into the future.