



## **CSPPS Statement:**

### **A Whole-of-Society, Conflict-Sensitive Response to COVID-19**

**While the global pandemic yet continues to wreak havoc around the world, CSPPS calls upon response actors at every level to approach COVID-19 in an inclusive, conflict-sensitive manner. We must leverage all expertise, nurture solidarity in times of shared struggle, avert the exacerbation of social discord, and steer clear from sacrificing prospects for peace by fixating solely on the short-term crisis.**

As people, endowed with empathy, our thoughts are with the hardest hit by this extraordinary crisis – the sick, the grieving families, the vulnerable and those left behind struggling to make ends meet at a time when economic activity has come to abrupt standstill. As CSPPS strives for peaceful, just and inclusive societies, our attention is drawn to how in certain settings **this pandemic exacerbates drivers of conflict**, fuels instability and widens social cleavages. **This is most acute in societies that were already fragile – where precarity and inequality are endemic, and where governance remains exclusive.**

Having surveyed our wide membership, including frontline responders in fragile states, we have felt worried by certain recurring themes: that the burdens of this situation could aggravate social tensions, that the already vulnerable – women and youth not least among them – suffer disproportionate impacts, and that mistrust may impede effective action. We are disconcerted by reports of repressive measures which restrict civic space, taken ostensibly for protection, as well as by reports of disruptions to flows of humanitarian assistance and to conflict-management mechanisms. Too many of our members, whose ground-level expertise and communal ties are vital in this struggle, report a lack of consultation by public authorities.

At the same time, we are heartened by reports of cooperation. **All around the world, partners within our network manifest solidarity, working to combat the pandemic and its nefarious effects.** In Afghanistan, one of our member organisations has been collecting and distributing donations to struggling families. In Liberia, in partnership with several women's organisations, our colleagues plan to distribute visual tools among illiterate people to raise awareness about spikes in domestic violence during home-confinement. And from Guinea-Bissau to Comoros, civil society organisations contribute to public sensitisation, while striving to hold governments to account for their approaches to brewing signs of conflict.

Building on the example of our members, we call upon response actors at every level **not to uncritically reprioritise funding and efforts away from peacebuilding, and to weave a conflict-sensitive perspective through their COVID-19 responses.** We must attentively navigate and transcend the conventional siloes between humanitarian action, peace and longer-term development, as all three are linked inextricably. Otherwise long-term peace may

be jeopardised for the sake of short-term redress. **We equally call for the inclusion of the widest possible array of actors** in response planning and activities, **to mobilise whole societies** in addressing a problem of such unprecedented magnitude.

These are times in which dithering cannot be afforded – decisive, visionary leadership and initiative, which **convenes widely and spurs common action**, is indispensable. CSPPS asks no less from the holders of public office, from decision-makers within the international aid community, and from our partners in multistakeholder dialogues. We must put differences aside and mount a common front against COVID-19. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has struck the right tone and met the needs of the moment in his call for a global ceasefire – let us all be so bold and forward-thinking.

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The [Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding](#) (CSPPS) is a global network of civil society organisations that supports peacebuilding in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Contact us at [info@cspps.org](mailto:info@cspps.org).