

# RESULTS OF 'CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACEBUILDING' PROJECT 2006-2010 BRIEFING PAPER

## BACKGROUND

Civil society is widely regarded as an important actor in peace processes and the international community has devoted substantial effort towards building and strengthening its role. Yet there has been little systematic evidence-based research undertaken to support this assumption empirically. Consequently, policy makers and practitioners have often lacked the knowledge about how, when, and under what circumstances civil society can fulfil a peace supporting role, if at all.

## THE RESEARCH

The "Civil Society and Peacebuilding" project (2006-2010), led by Dr Thania Paffenholz, analysed the performance of civil society with regard to seven peacebuilding functions (see box below) in four phases of conflict: war (above 1000 casualties), armed conflict (below 1000 casualties), windows of opportunity for peace, and post large-scale violence. A research framework examined the context, relevance, and impact of these functions. This was applied to twelve in-depth qualitative case studies (see list of case studies on the next page).

### 7 FUNCTIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN PEACEBUILDING

1. **Protection** of citizens against violence from all parties;
2. **Monitoring** of human rights violations, the implementation of peace agreements, etc.;
3. **Advocacy** for peace and human rights;
4. **Socialization** to values of peace and democracy as well as to develop the in-group identity of marginalized groups often via peace education;
5. **Inter-group social cohesion** by bringing people together from adversarial groups often in dialogue projects;
6. **Facilitation** of dialogue on the local and national level between all sorts of actors;
7. **Service delivery** to create entry points for peacebuilding, i.e. for the six functions listed above.

## MAIN RESULTS

- Civil society can play an important supportive role, though in most cases the impetus for peace comes from political actors, mostly the conflict parties themselves.
- The practical relevance of the seven civil society functions varies tremendously in the different phases of conflict. Protection, monitoring, facilitation and advocacy are found to be most relevant in war and armed conflict. Advocacy takes on an even greater relevance during windows of opportunity for peace. After large-scale violence, the relevance of protection decreases, while socialisation and social cohesion activities like dialogue or peace education projects come to the fore.
- The relevance of particular functions does not always correspond to the frequency with which these functions are actually performed and supported. The most striking examples are the functions of protection, monitoring, socialization, and social cohesion. While protection and monitoring are always highly relevant during armed conflict and war, they were performed far less frequently. On the other hand, functions that were found to be less relevant during violent phases of conflict were implemented widely, especially during a window of opportunity for reaching a peace agreement. Such was the case for social cohesion and socialization initiatives, including dialogue projects, conflict resolution workshops, exchange programmes and peace education projects.
- The impact of activities that performed also varied substantially. Overall, protection, monitoring, advocacy and facilitation had higher impact, whereas socialization and social cohesion-related activities had less impact across all cases. Again this finding stands in stark contrast to the actual frequency of implementation of these activities and their level of funding. This does not mean, however, that dialogue projects, for example, never had an impact: effectiveness depends on the phase of the process, the design of the particular initiative, and a number of context factors like the level of violence or social climate.

- The project found a number of key contextual factors that strengthen or undermine civil society's ability to perform a peace support role. These include the behaviour of the state, the level of violence, the role of the media, the composition of civil society, and the involvement of regional and international political actors and donors.

## POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

The results provide policy makers and practitioners with evidence-based guidance for supporting civil society in peacebuilding and on-going peace processes. Findings can thus serve as a planning or evaluation framework, analysing:

- What kind of civil society activities are most relevant in different conflict phases (war and armed conflict, negotiations, post-conflict reconstruction);
- Which civil society actors can make the most relevant contribution to peacebuilding in a particular phase;
- How best to link operational with political support;
- How to help civil society organisations enhance the impact of their work by influencing the supporting and hindering factors identified for each civil society functions in peacebuilding.

## IMPACT ON POLICY AND PRACTICE

The research was recognized by the International Studies Association's Peace Studies Section in 2010 as 'one of the most innovative research projects in peace research,' and the analytical framework and results are being used widely. Based on its findings, a number of organisations revised their civil society support strategies, with the United States Institute of Peace and the German Civil Peace Service being just two examples. The results have also been used to develop an evaluation methodology for civil society projects that have been recognised by the OECD/DAC for their peacebuilding evaluation guidance for donors. Furthermore, the project results were also used to

support civil society actors during the Arab Spring and helped, for example, groups in Tunisia and Egypt to strategize their inputs into the constitution making processes.

## IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS

Paffenholz, T. 2009. "Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Summary of Results of a Comprehensive Research Project", *CCDP Working Paper 4*, Geneva: Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. <http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/CCDP-Working-Paper-4-Civil-Society.pdf>

Paffenholz, T. (ed) 2010. *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

See also many book publications, the most recent being: Paffenholz, T. 2015. "Civil Society and Conflict Management". In: C. Crocker, F.O. Hampson and P. Aall (eds). *Managing conflict in a world adrift*. Washington DC: USIP Press Books.<sup>1</sup>

## LIST OF CASE STUDIES

1. Afghanistan
2. Bosnia-Herzegovina
3. Cyprus
4. Democratic Republic of Congo
5. Guatemala
6. Israel and Palestine
7. Nepal
8. Nigeria
9. Northern Ireland
10. Somalia
11. Sri Lanka
12. Turkey (Kurdish question)

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Contact: Dr Thania Paffenholz  
 thania.paffenholz@graduateinstitute.ch  
 Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding  
 Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies  
 Maison de la Paix  
 Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2  
 Case postale 136  
 CH-1211 Geneva 21

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<http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/briefingpaperbroader%20participation.pdf>

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