

Who got the power? Civil Society interactions in Kenya between partnership and power imbalance.

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Abstract

It is quite common that local and global or international civil society organisations work together towards peace and development in constrained settings. How this “together” is defined varies with every interaction and with the actors involved. Further there is an identified need for a reflection of the power and knowledge-imbances and the promotion of a localization of civil society.

This paper focuses on the German Civil Peace Service (CPS), working worldwide in (post-)conflict countries with the aim to involve and work together with local actors in local peace processes. On a theoretical level, the paper outlines the basics of criticism on liberal peace and identifies new theories like hybrid-peace and the local turn that try to answer the question what type of partnerships are needed to empower local actors. Looking into the CPS the paper gives insides on 1) the self-understanding of global civil society organizations working with local approaches, 2) the dynamics of civil society actors in conflict affected societies, 3) on practical challenges and benefits occurring due to local-global interactions. The paper uses background information from organizations in Germany and Kenya. The data that is used for the analysis was gathered with the help of interviews, questionnaires and field observations.

By focusing on empirical data the paper provides examples how power- and knowledge-imbances can occur but also how they can be tackled and used in a positive way.

1. Introduction

The analysis of peace processes shows that they can only be successful if local actors are taken seriously. “A core value, and strategy, of peace programming is enabling and supporting people in building their own peace. Real solutions only grow from and are firmly anchored in the communities affected” (Anderson/Olson 2003: 33). The scientific debate on involving local actors in peacebuilding¹ and civil conflict transformation increasingly calls for a comprehensive approach to cooperate with local actors, and for concepts that do not impose western ideas on local actors but consider them as an active part of the whole process (Reich 2005: 475). Answers to these calls, especially in the area of peacebuilding that deals with international and internationally supported activities are given by the practice of civil conflict transformation which can be defined as “the management of conflicts without the use of direct violence with the aim of finding a settlement or solution that takes into account the interests of all parties to the conflict” (Schweitzer 2004: 512-513). Over the last years, the number of Civil Society Organizations (CSO)² working with this widely accepted method in the context of conflict prevention, peace-making and post-conflict work has increased (Fischer 2011: 288).

Civilian conflict transformation by German CSOs is mainly implemented by the Civil Peace Service (CPS)³. The CPS focuses on cooperation with local⁴ partners and promotes a “local people’s peace” (BMZ 2011: 11). The CPS has contributed to an enormous professionalization of civil conflict transformation with a clear focus on interactions with local partners, most recently with a comprehensive reform process between 2011 and 2013 (Gemeinschaftswerk ZFD 2014: 2). That is why it is particularly suitable as a research subject. The aim of this paper is to analyze the extent to which the German CPS takes the principles of local, participatory peacebuilding seriously and implements them in its work, and what tensions and problems arise in this process.

The discussion takes place under the perspective of critical approaches and has a special focus on the cooperative work of local and international peace workers. “More research is necessary to obtain more reliable and convincing results on the interaction of different actors and levels” (Fischer 2011: 306-307). Analyzing the micro-sociological level with an anthropological perspective and empirical examples from Germany and Kenya the paper takes a closer look at these relationships, power (im)balances and different types of connections between these actors. Looking into these connections and power relationships the paper speaks critically about the relationship and interactions between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

The paper will start with a critical, conceptual debate around local approaches to peacebuilding and conflict transformation and introduces the reflexive research method that was used for this paper. The fourth section introduces the Civil Peace Service. Starting with its structure, it gives an overview of the

¹ For this report a broad definition of peacebuilding is used: “We adopt a broad definition of peacebuilding as the range of efforts – engaging with a variety of actors – aimed at political, institutional, social and economic transformations in post-war societies for the purpose of a sustainable and positive peace” (Björkdahl et al. 2016: 3). With this broad definition the report focusses on peacebuilding activities in the categories of civil conflict transformation and international and internationally supported activities.

² I define CSOs as non-governmental or non-profit organizations that can work on different topics (Keane 2003: 3). Civil society can be defined as a heterogeneous group of actors, CSOs or people, acting along different lines of shared interests, determinations and values, and enjoying autonomy from the state (Adloff 2005: 66).

³ In German: Ziviler Friedensdienst (ZFD)

⁴ Local refers to all parties in the conflict region that are no external actors. Please see also chapter 2.

basic ideas of the CPS and identifies challenges for international peace workers. Case studies from Kenya are analyzed in section five gives provides empirical examples for the inclusion of local actors in conflict transformation. At the same time areas of weakness of the concept are identify and the empirical study confirms that the relationship between different actors is crucial. The conclusion gives recommendations for the work of the CPS that range from recommendations to expand the CPS network-character, to tighter feedback mechanism and guidance between different actors within the CPS. But also includes recommendations on more preparation for the local partners and expansion of evaluation and monitoring.

2. Local approaches to peacebuilding and conflict transformation

In recent years there have been many theoretical discussions on how to better integrate the local into peacebuilding and conflict transformation. This chapter will focus less on the academic debates per se, but will show which elements of these debates are important for practical work and which are important for locally anchored peacebuilding.

It is important to note, that the discussion that emerged in academia is built around the critic of liberal peace. One of the main criticisms is that the liberal peace assumes that people in post-conflict countries accept western, liberal values and, if necessary, merge them with local values and norms. In this regard it is assumed that local actors do not perceive actions of external actors as problematic. Thus, external actors assume they have the knowledge to create peace and restore a state under the rules of good governance.⁵ The critical debate looks into the inclusion of local actors into the processes. The *local turn* can be described as a more reflective approach to peacebuilding. It is assumed that local peace requires more than security and the absence of war. It assumes a continuous process that changes relationships, behaviors, attitudes and structures from negative to positive peace. The role of external actors is initially seen as supporting local actors in their actions (Paffenholz 2015: 858). With the consideration of post-structuralism and post-colonial theories the *local turn* assumes that the local actors should be the starting point for any peacebuilding measure (Mac Ginty/Richmond 2013: 772). Therefore in practice it is important to involve local actors directly from the start of an intervention or a program. Their ideas and viewpoints should be reflected in peacebuilding and local ownership should be granted to them. Still it is important to consider the relationships of the involved actor to each other. Something the concept of *hybrid peace* is doing. It seeks to highlight the scope of action of local actors and to present the resulting benefits to the whole process of peacebuilding. Still, hybridity must not be understood as two groups of actors merging into a third *hybrid* entity, but that they continue to exist in a *hybrid* form by themselves. This usually happens slowly in everyday negotiation processes (Mac Ginty 2011: 72), which are never completed but in constant change (Mac Ginty 2011: 8-9). In practice it is therefore important to focus on the actions and to evaluate every action according to questions like: Who was involved? Who's idea was it? Who is responsible for what? Where can we work together? What parts of a project are implemented individually? Looking at the concrete interactions the concept

⁵ Read more about the debate: Curle 1994, Mac Ginty 2011, Mac Ginty/Richmond 2013; Paris 2010; Richmond 2006.

of *friction* can help to reflect upon these questions. The focus of the concept lies less on the outcome of peacebuilding measures than on the process itself. *Frictions* are understood as “the unexpected and unstable aspects of global interaction” (Tsing 2005: xi) and therefore as a process that arises through the interaction between global and local. So, the process should not be seen as inevitably negative as the concept adds complexity, uncertainty and indeterminacy to the analysis of peacebuilding. Therefore, in practice *friction* that occur should be considered as an analytical tool that allows an interpretation of the results of interaction in complex post-conflict societies (Björkdahl et. al. 2016: 1-2). To summarize, it is important, that the concept of peacebuilding needs to be redefined and should encompass “an interactive process between different actors” (Bernhard 2013: 10) based on their relations and negotiations.

In all the concepts one questions remains open: “Who are the locals?” And also for practitioners it is important to define this actor category. Very often “the local” is not perceived in its complexity (Paffenholz 2015: 862). Although it is now widely accepted that “the local” is complex, has its own dynamic and needs to be seen as heterogeneous, still local actors are romanticized or not taken fully into account. This can happen, for example, in a post-conflict situation in which a local actor initiates a certain peacebuilding measure constructed in the present but then being projected back into a certain past by external actors. In doing so the initiative functions as historical fiction, practices and. “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm 2013: 1). If this “invention of tradition” happens from the inside out, this can have quite positive effects such as the development of a collective identity, and a social legitimization of certain norms and structures against a current pressure of change. However, if this process derives from the outside, it must be evaluated negatively and defined as romanticizing. In order to take the local seriously a detachment from the romanticizing of tradition must take place. There is a “need to challenge the notion of the ‘local’ as static and victim of what is being done to it” (Kappler 2015: 876). Therefore in practice it is always important to question processes, actions and their invention. Further, it is important to give local actors the opportunity for self-identification and understand if they define themselves as local, hybrid or in any other way. This can also help to withdraw from romanticizing the local, as being precise about the term and using new (self-)definitions can open up the category in general.

Discourses about “the local” typically emphasize its importance in conceptual considerations without creating clarity about the actors themselves (Reich 2005: 474). For this paper “the local” is not spatially located in line with a geographical location, but it defines itself as the sum of everyday actions and practices of a plurality of actors (Reich 2006: 21) and can entail emancipatory processes. The local is “the realm in which everyday activities emerge and unfold” (Richmond/Mitchell 2012:11). The local is a heterogeneity of actors and forms of influence that can constitutively co-operate in a peace process “some of which are aimed at identifying and creating the necessary processes for peace, perhaps with or without international help, and framed in a way in which legitimacy in local and international terms converges” (Mac Ginty/Richmond 2013: 769). Another problem is that “the local” is often equated with tradition. It appears to exist only as a counter-category to terms such as “modern” “national” or “international”, thereby reinforcing global power-imbalances” (Mac Ginty/Richmond 2013: 770). One reason for this is the construction and weak conceptualization of the two actor categories “local” and “international” as binary oppositions. This construction asserts that both categories may not be

compatible or at least in conflict with each other and still have an implicit message, that transports power and dominance. Therefore it is important to reflect upon who the local actors in a certain peace process are, how are they constructed and by whom they are constructed and on the question of representation and inherent power relations. The term power refers to the potential to shape the behaviour of another actor that happens due to the direct relationship of control between actors (see Barnett/Duvall 2005). Power can be used on purpose, but it could also be used as an underlying or inherent power. It can be instrumentalized and also used without bad intention. Further power can be exercised in the forms of coercion (limiting choices), inducement (material or institutional incentives) or persuasion (a social process of interaction where one actor changes its behaviors without material inducement or coercion) (Howard 2019: 1-2; 35). Especially within the context of civil conflict transformation the concept persuasion power becomes relevant, as the empirical results will show.

Despite the positive assessment of local inclusion, the growing international acceptance and promotion of locally anchored peace processes must also be viewed critically. It is important that local actors are considered reflexively, both internally and externally. At the same time, the ambivalent character of local approaches must be reflected as not all locally initiated projects have to be “good” or “sustainable”. Local approaches to peacebuilding can also lead to power imbalances, exclusion, discrimination, or unfairness among local actors. A perception of the local as solely “good” and as a cure-all method for peace processes is a wrong romanticizing of the local in itself (Mac Ginty/Richmond 2013: 770). Even in locally led peace processes, a dissolution of power structures and hierarchies is not completely possible (Bräuchler 2015; Bräuchler/Naucke 2017: 432). They may persist or are re-negotiated at the local level as well. For example, top-level individuals often have more power than other local actors and represent their own interests and beliefs rather than those of the broader population. “Any universal peace system is therefore open to being hijacked by hegemonic actors” (Richmond 2006: 390). This indicates that there are two types of power relations. On the one hand, there are international power asymmetries/relations and on the other hand there are domestic or local power asymmetries/relations.

3. A reflexive research approach

First, in order to understand the background, structures and approaches of individual organizations implementing CPS projects I conducted seven expert interviews⁶ with the BMZ and with the program managers of six organizations carrying out CPS projects. In order to give the interviewees as much free space as possible for their answers, qualitative interviews with open guiding questions were conducted. To better understand the work in the CPS projects, it is important to understand the perspectives of the seconded personnel⁷ working in the projects on the ground. Therefore, in a second working phase I visited five seminars in which new CPS seconded personnel were trained. I participated in some parts of trainings, offered by the GIZ, a training at the Academy for Conflict Transformation/ Forum ZFD and two trainings at the AGIAMONDO.

⁶ Information about the techniques and use of expert interviews can be found in Bogner et al. (2002).

⁷ Some of the CPS organizations call the CPS-peace workers from Germany seconded personnel. This term will be used in this report.

The third and last phase of field work was shaped by a research-stay in CPS projects in Kenya in order to understand the work of the CPS in practice and to get in direct exchange with the different actors involved. African countries have been selected for the case studies as the work of the BMZ has a special focus on the African continent (BMZ 2017) and it is also the continent with the most CPS projects and workers (ZFD 2020). The selection was then narrowed down to Kenya, Sierra Leone and Liberia as these countries have three or more ongoing CPS projects, more than two CPS organizations are involved and because they have different project focusses like: advocacy for gender, management of natural resources, strengthening democratic participation or human rights awareness. This paper will only speak about Kenya.

The research in Kenya took place from September to the beginning of December 2019 and was conducted using the qualitative method of participatory observation. Participant observation is a planned perception of the behavior of people in their natural environment, an observation of the *everyday* by an observer who participates in the interactions and is considered by the other persons as part of their field. To understand that *everyday* better the research was supplemented by open interviews. For this purpose, I spoke to the CPS seconded personnel, employees of the local organizations and persons affected by the implemented programs. In addition to the observations, 50 interviews were conducted during the research in Kenya. The interviews have been done with the coordinators in the countries, seconded personnel and various staff members of the local organizations. There was no formal interview with the people participating in the CPS activities, but rather informal conversations during the observations and interactions. This study has not the aim to speak for various actors, but rather to summarize the observations and interviews and combine them with scientific and theoretical debates.

For the method of participant observation it is important to take a closer look at power relations. Especially in the context of north-south research this topic becomes especially important, as there is need for a reflection of general socially constructed power differentials and ethical and practical challenges. In general there are two power relationships that can be found in the field (Ackerly and Tru 2008: x), one between the researcher and the actors in the field and the other between the actors in the field itself. Especially the power relationship between me and the actors varies. In the expert interviews in Germany, I would describe the people I interviewed as more powerful, because they enable content and access. Still an asymmetry remains, because as a researcher I have the authority to interpret and make scientific decisions. I am also very aware of the asymmetrical distribution of power in the seminars and during the research in the three countries. I identified and defined the field, determined the methodological approaches and evaluated the data. Along with the reflection of power it is also important to reflect my own positionality, as it shapes the nature of the relationship with the actors in the field and the way I analyses the data (Kacen/ Chaiti 2006). As I am well aware of this fact, I see my responsibility as a scientist to consider and reflect on ethical approaches in research and to use the power structures in the field as analytical instruments for empirical research. However, I do not see myself in the role of breaking through power structures, showing strategies for action, strengthening cooperation between them, and waging a fight for certain actors. But rather, through my research, I point out certain topics and problems and initiate dialogues between the actors. This can also be transferred to the power

relationship between the actors in the field, which in the case of the CPS is also asymmetrical. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

4. Civil Peace Service

The term civil conflict transformation can be seen as a social change that aims at structural changes, but also examines attitudes and perspectives (Reich 2005: 485). Its discussion is divided into a theoretical peace debate, one about security policy and another one about development policy (Weller/Kirschner 2005: 13). Civil conflict transformation in Germany is characterized not only by the involvement of state actors, but also by numerous CSO, faith-based organizations and institutions (Auer-Frege 2010: 15). A special feature of civil conflict transformation since the 1990s is the CPS⁸, which was institutionalized by the BMZ in 1999 and thus created an instrument for civil conflict transformation⁹.

4.1 Who is who in the Civil Peace Service?

The idea for a Civil Peace Service originated in Germany in religious and civil society circles when the Yugoslavian war shook Europe in the 1990s. Starting in 1993, a discussion forum "Civil Peace Service" was established and worked on the concept of a professional peacebuilding similar to that of the development services (Erl 2010: 16). They began political advertising in 1995 and in 1997 numerous personalities from the world of politics and culture signed the "Berlin Declaration for a Civil Peace Service in Germany". At about the same time the qualification for peace workers was started and under the name "Consortium Civil Peace Service" a regular exchange of experience and ideas between the participating peace groups and the recognized development services took place. But it was not until the change of government in 1998 that concrete implementation began (Evers 2006: 2). A joint effort by German peace and development organizations and the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) was created (Bohnet 2004: 134). The consortium now went from being a forum for the exchange of ideas to an operational working platform between the supporting organizations. Today the CPS can be seen as a joint project of the state and non-governmental institutions that acts within the framework of a joint effort as a staff secondment program, that makes an effective contribution to civil conflict transformation and contributes to peace worldwide according to its self-conception (Gemeinschaftswerk ZFD 2014: 2). Their work goes along with the government's mission statement on conflict transformation that includes topics like Germany's responsibility for peace, freedom, development, the rule of law, and safety and emphasizes partnership work and inclusive peace processes (Bundesregierung 2017: 44-45). The content of the program is above all the support of local partner organizations in crisis regions by CPS seconded personnel. The task is to lay the foundations for sustainable peace. In general, goals of the CPS include first, the cooperation and dialogue platforms to create secure meeting places for the conflict parties. Second strengthening information and communication structures to support particularly vulnerable groups and to promote social integration of

⁸ Köhler (2005) provides examples for civil conflict transformation before the establishment of CPS.

⁹ There are also other actors in Germany that are involved in peacebuilding/ civil conflict transformation or that deal with the topic on a policy level. For example the Center for International Peace Operations, the Peacebuilding / FriEnt Group, the Zivik project of the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations or the Civil Conflict Transformation Platform.

particularly affected people. Third promoting methods and concepts of civil conflict transformation and advising and training peace pedagogy. Fourth strengthening legal security and promoting human rights (BMZ n.d.). In order to ensure professionalism, this work is undertaken on behalf of the BMZ by

Illustration 1 provides an overview of the structure of the CPS. The CPS is supported by peace and development organizations and financed by the BMZ and can therefore be seen as a joint project of state and non-governmental institutions. In order to ensure professionalism, the work is undertaken by state-recognized development services. Nine¹⁰ of these organizations have formed the Civil Peace Service Consortium, in which they discuss various topics, make recommendation and have a political forum. The illustration shows two examples of how the CPS can be implemented. All organizations work according to the program guidelines of the CPS, but also according to their own statutes and with differing approaches. Therefore, their work and cooperation with local partner organizations is organized in different ways in every country. The example from AGIAMONDO indicates the work and structure for integrated seconded personnel, who are directly working in local partner organization. The example from GIZ shows another CPS approach that does not work with integrated seconded personnel, but with regional offices collaborating with local partner organizations. According to situations on the ground, the structures differ and it happens that one organization is working with different approaches even within one country. The major difference is that some organizations work predominantly with integrated seconded personnel directly in a partner organization, while others have seconded personnel working in country offices and support different local partners.

¹⁰ These are: Aktionsgemeinschaft Dienst für den Frieden - Action Committee Service for Peace (AGDF), Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Entwicklungshilfe - Association for Development Cooperation) (AGIAMONDO former AGEH), Brot für die Welt – Bread for the World, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit - German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), EIRENE – Internationaler Christlicher Friedensdienst – International Christian Peacework, Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst - Forum Civil Peace Services (forumZFD), KURVE Wustrow, Peace Brigades International (pbi), Weltfriedensdienst – World Peace Service (wfd).

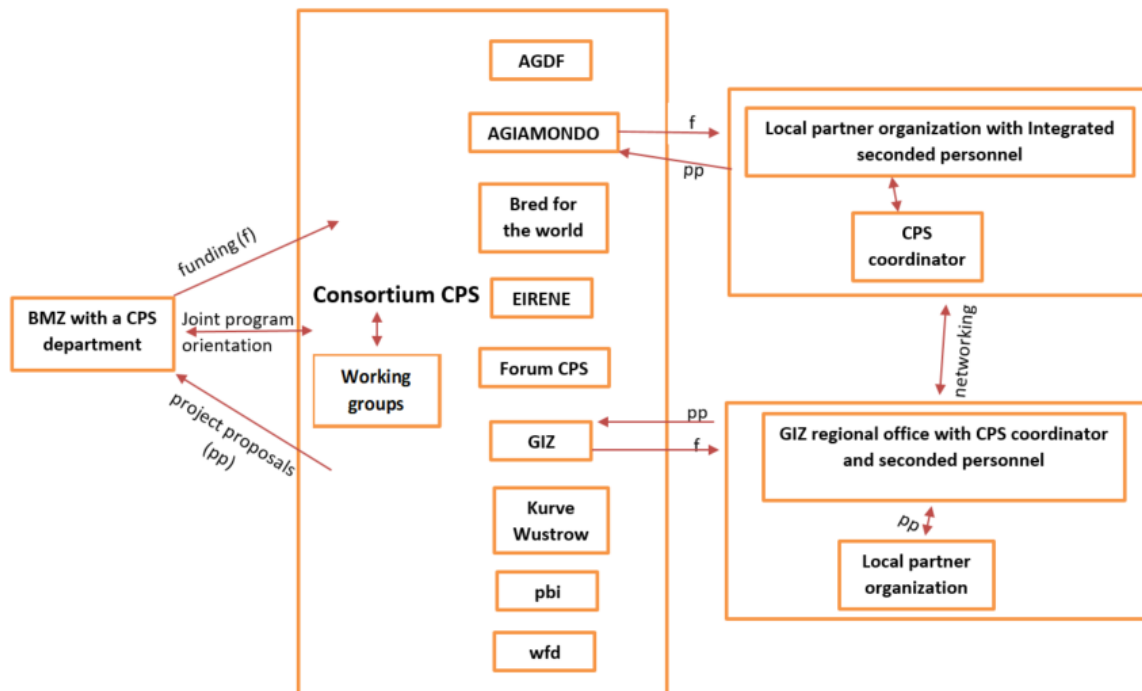


Illustration 1 – Structure of the CPS – author's illustration

The goal of the CPS is to prevent the outbreak of violence in advance (crisis prevention), to decrease violence in conflicts and to build structures and institutions after the end of violence to secure peace in the long term (Conflict Resolution and Peace Consolidation) (Konsortium ZFD 2010: 9). The CPS works with the concept of constructive conflict transformation, which was promoted by Adam Curle (1994), Johan Galtung (1996) and Jean Paul Lederach (1997). Constructive conflict transformation refers to an ongoing process of changing relationships, behavior, attitudes, and structures from negative to positive. To achieve this, cooperation with local partners is seen as an important part of the projects and the peace process. The work of the CPS is based on the principles of action of the BMZ for shaping cooperation for peace and security. According to the principles it is important that, first, engagement is contextual and tailored to local needs, second, conflicts about goals are known and dealt with openly, third, reliable goals are formulated for the cooperation to be able to acknowledge small successes, fourth, risks are known and handling them is steadily improved, fifth, the concept of do-no-harm is applied, sixth, the strategies are tailored to local structures, and seventh, rapid project success with long-term perspectives are possible (BMZ 2013: 16-17). These principles are used in different ways CPS' work depending on the organizations and projects. Thus, there is the possibility of working in conflict (minimum requirement of the CPS), working on conflict, the resolution of conflicts and/or the consolidation of peace processes (long-term CPS goal (BMZ 2011: 10), or working around conflict (CPS seconded personnel can provide impulses). To better classify the tasks of CPS, it is crucial to look at the outcome mapping of the CPS. Outcomes range from changes of a state of art, of structures, of behavior, to changes of attitudes (Gemeinschaftswerk ZFD 2014: 6) and are seen as changes of behavior (AGEH 2019: 7). A direct effect can only be achieved with specific resources, projects or activities. To fully understand the impacts of the practice on the ground, it is important to open up the

matrix and to have a look at different ways of impact. The effects can be illustrated in form of changes to either settings, values and perceptions of individuals (individual/personal level) or concerning political processes and economic, legal, and other institutions (socio/political level) (Anderson/Olson 2003: 49).

Impacts are understood as long-term changes. Often these are observable changes but they can refer to the maintenance of peacebuilding aspects, too. As illustration 2 shows, the CPS works with direct impacts to reach certain outcomes. Therefore, the various projects focus on changes on individual/personal level, on changes of structures that are directly worked with or changes regarding values or norms. These direct impacts can then lead to indirect impacts on structure-building, effects at the socio-political level, and thus sustainability. Within this categorization, impacts of the CPS can be planned or unplanned, positive or negative, short- or long-term, conflict-relevant or not (Quack 2009: 100-101). This outcome-mapping goes hand-in-hand with theoretical ideas of the *local turn* stating that the major objective of a positive, sustainable peace can only be reached by working on different levels of conflict, including different actors and working towards a process-oriented change. One example of an outcome-mapping, done within the CPS is the one by the organization *Association for Development Cooperation* (AGIAMONDO). The other organizations use different methods but basically follow the same idea.

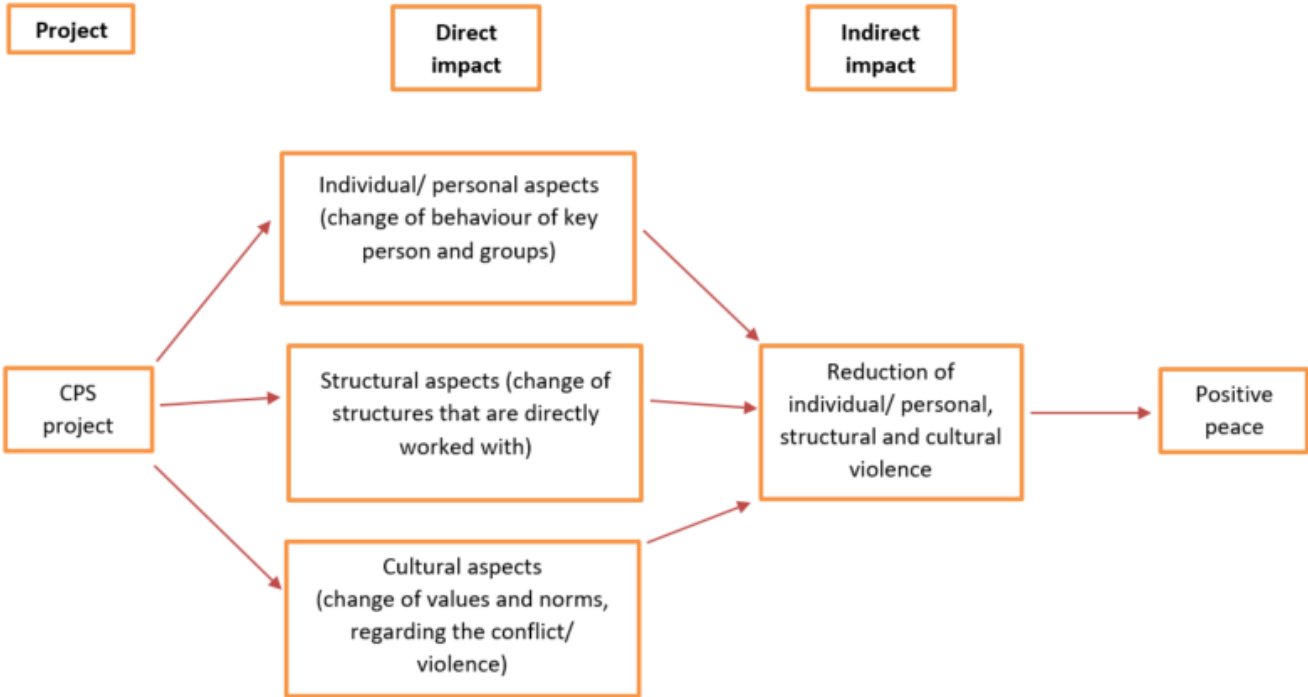


Illustration 2 – Outcome-mapping of the CPS – author’s illustration based on information gathered during a CPS seconded personnel preparation course facilitated by the AGIAMONDO (see AGEH 2019: 8 for comparison).

An evaluation of the CPS has shown that implemented projects, especially at the local level, can lead to a large number of positive changes. It can be stated that projects are more successful if they succeed in reaching more beneficiaries, extending their reach beyond the local context, focusing on key actors

for change, and implementing everyday non-violent approaches (BMZ 2011: 5). The study by Quack (2009) concludes that the impact of the CPS is clearly a positive one and enables key actors as well as people from different parts of society to work on different levels (but with different impacts) (Quack 2009). Generally speaking, involving local, civil society actors in peacebuilding, directly and indirectly, enhances the legitimacy of consolidation and can provide an open platform for exchange and interaction (Zanker 2018: 207-208).

However, this can only be achieved in a sustainable way if the needs of the local partners have effectively been taken into account and is linked to the capabilities and competences of the CPS. This sustainable engagement requires embedding activities in an overall concept of constructive conflict transformation in which local partners are recognized as trend-setting agents of social change (Reich 2005: 473). Therefore, the responsibility for implementing the programs of CPS is shared between different actors and uses its network-character. This network-character can link different actors across hierarchical levels of society (vertically) and across perceived conflict lines (horizontally) (Reich 2005: 477). It often turns out that the formation of these networks is very difficult, which is why it is assumed that a third party can be very helpful for initiation and support (Scotto 2002: 228).

The work of CSOs can be seen more critically. CSOs are not automatically and always completely independent, as seconded personnel, especially if they live in a country for a while have their personal viewpoints. In general it is questionable if such a thing as productive neutrality or strangeness even exists. Furthermore the requirements of donor markets don't always influence the work of the CSO in a good way; in many countries international CSOs with western background are dominant and tend to export and impose their concepts (Fischer 2011). This donor-problem is also important for the CPS. Even if the CPS does not define themselves as a donor but rather as a partner, some local partners identify them as a donor. This dependency plays an important role when it comes to work relations but also relations between the different actors involved in the CPS. Local organizations that are part of that donor-business are often quite experienced and know what international organizations want to hear and which current topics are relevant for successful funding applications. As local staff from an NGO in Kenya pointed out during an informal talk, they know how to dance the dance the international want to see¹¹. This raises the question of how independent and locally driven the whole process of local projects and applications really is. Moreover, there is a high dependency within the CPS as local organizations depend on the CPS structures and the second personnel depend on their work contracts and the CPS structures. Based on these rather conceptual considerations, a closer look at the role of CSOs and local partners in the CPS is taken in the following chapter.

4.2 Deepening the understanding of the CPS

Auer-Frege conducted a study in which more than 40 German organizations engaged in civil conflict transformation were interviewed. It turned out that all organizations working with projects in other countries only intend to accompany the actors in the countries. They understand themselves as neutral/independent, supportive institution, and want to intervene as little as possible in the peace processes.

¹¹ Interview and informal talks in Kenya were not recorded. Only indirect quotes are used in the following sections.

They want to create a constructive environment (environment for peace), strengthen positive elements (connectors) in the conflict, and at the same time limit negative factors (dividers/ spoilers). However, all organizations were aware that their projects could also have negative effects. Thus, it can be concluded that the contacts to the target group on site are necessary to work successfully and that there is need for a reflection on the extent the target group is or should be actively involved in processes (Auer-Frege 2010: 25). This assumption is also important for the work of the CPS and the its following factors can be identified as crucial: first, establishing a dialogue between local and external actors, second, creating structures that allow local society to contribute to planning, management, implementation, supervision, monitoring, and evaluation, third, expanding existing resources in society, such as informal knowledge, and, fourth, promoting community ownership (Erasmus 2001: 249-250), that can be defined as an ownership among the involved local actors.

To understand the work of the CPS in practice the paper will look at the interviews conducted in Germany first. The results of these interviews can be categorized around the organizations' self-understanding, the goals of CPS, and the perception of the cooperation with local partners and general challenges that occur in the work.

The topic self-understanding and the goals of *CPS and the perception of the cooperation with local partners* is very important for all organizations. The self-understanding basically goes along with the official understanding of CPS. CPS defines itself as a partner and not as a donor; a partner that is taking local approaches and local partners serious and a partner that supports local initiatives. The most important points mentioned are the close cooperation and partnership with local partners, the motivation to work with civil methods of conflict transformation, the ability to work on conflict, and the role of the seconded personal as an external, rather neutral, non-partisan actor. Especially the last point is also discussed critically among the CPS organizations and the people working for them. Some define themselves as neutral, non-partisan with an inherent productive strangeness, while others say that they can never be 100 percent neutral or non-partisan, as they take positions during work, have an opinion on the context they work in and as they decide about funding. As part of CPS the organizations have the freedom to tailor the projects according to the needs of their partners and in order to suit their own organization standards and topics. Therefore, the cooperation always looks different. In general every CPS organization has its own freedom to choose local partner organizations. Some partners are already long-standing partner organizations that cooperated in previous projects, while others are rather new actors, who got to know about the CPS due to personal interactions or network meetings. The interviewees identified a general problem when working with local partners: Project partners on site need a certain constitution, for example a church institution or the status of an NGO and have to bring along a certain infrastructure. Thus, for example, local authorities that do not have such a constitution are not suitable as project partners. However, my interview partner at *Action Committee Service for Peace* (AGDF) noted in this context that there might occur an overlap of groups of people. For example, people who work in an NGO may also play the role of a local authority in their community at the same time. So they could be trapped in an interest-conflict, between interest of a CSO, their personal interests and the other actors, like the local government of companies they deal with. If a local partner is identified there is a registration process with the German CPS partner that varies a bit for every organization. After

the registration is done the local organizations are part of the CPS network and can take part in activities and workshops. Further, they can be part of a project proposal and can receive a seconded personnel. The project proposal is written by the local organizations in cooperation with the CPS offices (the process itself depends with the organization structure).

As soon as the project implementation starts the idea of the CPS is, that this part is done by the local partners in cooperation with the seconded personnel. This brings ownership to the local partners and ideally helps to reduce external impact (as this paper will show in chapter 4 this depends highly on the people involved). In my interview with *Bread for the World* it became clear why that ownership is so important.

“It has always been clear to us that we ourselves have no ownership of the development or peace work on site – that is, about the work in the projects. Our work serves to strengthen or support partner organizations who are responsible for the development and peace work” (Interview with Bread for the World)¹².

Speaking about local partners, it is interesting that about half of the interviewees then mentioned the Lederach pyramid in their own explanations when they talked about local partners (Lederach 2001). In this pyramid actors can be divided into different levels, the top leadership, the middle-range leadership and the grassroots leadership. Most conflicts are not vertical but horizontal inside the pyramid (Lederach 2001: 49). This is because most leaders have contacts at different levels and are connected to “their people”. There are also connections that are usually identity-forming characteristics, such as religion or ethnicity, in which people from all levels find themselves. It became clear that the stated goal of all organizations is the strengthening and support of the base of the pyramid, the grassroots level, but also to include the other levels. The strategies to achieve the goal of the CPS are very different. Some organizations work at all levels, some only at particular ones.

“I would classify the primary target groups of pbi work in the Lederach pyramid at the bottom. But that is a basic idea of pbi, we try to build a bridge between grassroots activists, whose voice is often overruled by international NGOs, to the national authorities, meaning the track two level” (Interview with pbi).

¹² The interviews with the organizations in Germany were conducted in German. For this report all quotes have been translated into English by the author.

However, there are special projects that work at the top of the pyramid (Top Leadership). For example, projects of GIZ which cooperates with government representatives. According to CPS standards it is important that local partners are non-profit, civic actors, faith-based organizations, or public institutions, and the exact criteria are specific and defined by each individual organization (Gemeinschaftswerk ZFD 2014: 4). The pyramid from Lederach can be criticized as being too static. In addition, many projects of the CPS have shown that there needs to be a connection of the various levels to reach the intended inputs and outcomes. Therefore it is important to consider that due to everyday interactions the local actors themselves create identity categories in a fluid way. They are transversal, flexible, and movable and the actors can change between categories and can resituating themselves (Kappler 2015: 876).

“If I have only one focus, then I lose the other. Therefore, I have to work with the different multipliers and levels and align the work accordingly. Thus, the local turn is not really a new insight that is not already applied in practice. However, being limited as an actor, I am not constantly active at all levels“ (Interview with AGDF).

All interviews have shown how the CPS leadership in Germany appreciates and values the partners and how important they are for the CPS. They are aware that without local partner the CPS would not be possible and some of the interviews reflected on different roles and practices.

“Solutions can only come from the local context. Whether the demand for these solutions comes directly from the local context, or whether one stimulates them by making offers, that is another question. [...] At some point, however, the ideas need to be genuine, and sometimes that will only happen at a later point, sometimes such attempts can be misleading. You have to acknowledge that and cancel it. If an impulse comes from the outside, which initially leads to the fact that local demand arises and is articulated, I do not find that problematic. I find it problematic if one acts as if there is genuine local interest, but still does his own thing in practice“ (Interview with GIZ).

Resulting from these different approaches it is obvious that, challenges can also differ. Challenges that organizations face in partner countries can depend on the topic the organization is working on, or on the role and status of the seconded personnel. Still, a few topics have been mentioned quite often. In areas where local partners live under difficult conditions, the CPS work may sometimes not be the main priority of the local partners. There can be other donor-driven projects they are involved in, or the local partners have another job to make a living. In addition, logistical and bureaucratic challenges have been

mentioned but the interviewees concluded that people working in countries and local partners can handle these questions more effectively. Another identified challenge that also counts for the CPS work in Germany is project monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). It was often mentioned that PM&E under the new CPS guidelines is quite new to some actors, and it can be difficult to implement them in a natural, bottom-up way. Also, it seems to be a challenge to include the PM&E results in further work processes. Furthermore, the interviewees stated that the coordination of the CPS work in the countries is working quite well, but the coordination of the CSOs in Germany could be improved. In general, the consortium CPS is supposed to be the ideal platform to discuss and coordinate activities. However, due to a lack of capacity and high workloads it cannot be implemented to the extent that most of the organizations wish to. In general, the high workload bureaucracies and the devolvement of new project ideas that need to be implemented with remaining human capacities in the organizations in Germany was identified as a serious dilemma.

The selection of the seconded personnel is done according to the standard of every organization but in line with the *German Development Assistance Act*. The local partners write the job offer together with the CPS office, so it can be designed according to their needs. In the direct application phase not all CPS organizations involve the local actors in the same way and there are even differences within the organizations. Some take part in the viewing of CVs, while others are just informed about the candidate.

After the CPS seconded personnel is selected, they take part in a training. Each organization pursues its own education and training strategy, which, however, takes place according to certain common understandings. The training covers a variety of topics and all organizations offer adapted courses according to the respective context preparations for the seconded personnel. They take place partly in-house, but sometimes also externally. The duration depends on the organization, on prior knowledge and experience of the seconded personnel and can last up to six months. It is not only important for the people in training to have good intercultural preparation but also crucial to understand the mechanisms of domination in the context of their work and the country they go to (Reich 2005: 482). That will help them to have an understanding of the broader social or economic context in which they will work (Fischer 2011: 297). It is more about a process of knowledge development (Reich 2005: 484), reflection and ambiguity tolerance than about teaching skills.

The trainings I participated in had a special focus dealing with cooperation with local partners, mediation and conflict. In general, the observation by Karl Ernst Nipkow (2013: 54-55) about training seminars is important for the CPS. He concludes that both practical skills such as conflict analysis, project monitoring or methods of mediation (instrumental knowledge) as well as a reflection e.g. concerning values and meanings the work is based on (orientation knowledge), are important. Through participatory observation and informal discussions with trainers, but also with participants, the following topics, which are relevant for this research, have been identified: Different understandings of local partners and the preparation to work with local partners.

First of all, in all trainings different understandings of local partners played a very important and central role. The self-understanding of the CPS and the respective organizations in relation to partners was discussed among the participants. The discussions showed that the perceptions about local partners

are very cooperative and solidary. However, it depends on the exact context and, in particular, the status of integration of the seconded personnel. The difference between these two categories is that integrated personnel work directly in the local organization. Accordingly, the responsibility for the personnel no longer lies with the German organization but with local partners. Non-integrated personnel in contrast are assigned to the local offices of the German organization and work together with the local organizations as partners.

“There are very good reasons for both approaches. On the one hand the position is that the partner must clearly have the lead. On the other hand, the position is that, if I am not part of an organization, that has a certain position, I can bring in my role as an outsider differently” (Interview with AGDF).

Second, this distinction can be clearly seen in the preparation to work with local partners. In two seminars, for instance, the seconded personnel have done an actor mapping for their project, where the most important actors in Germany and the project country as well as the most important actors for the project were presented. In addition, their personal contacts and possible new contacts were added. The contacts were not necessarily directly related to the project (according to the application), but nevertheless can play an important role. Further possible conflict lines have been added. Thus, the multiplicity of actors became clear and especially the different tasks and distributions of the work with and around local partners could be seen. This mapping is not only important to redefine individual actors and their own role but also serves as preparation for the work itself. How civil conflict transformation is defined and applied depends on the existing (social) structures, the subject of the conflict, the existing levels of escalation and the conflict parties (Weller/Kirschner 2005: 14).

Summarizing the interviews with BMZ and members of the CSOs as well as observations during the workshops it can be said that the local is taken seriously and plays an important role in the CPS. It became clear that the CPS is familiar with theoretical concepts like the actors' pyramid of Lederach and that it is implemented. Still interviewees are aware of the fact, that there are misunderstandings and challenges their work and room for improvement. It is interesting to note, that the debate of the *local turn* itself was addressed in the workshops on a theoretical level and discussed e.g. together with ownership. Even more, the *local turn* was implicitly present in a lot of discussion, without referring directly to the term itself. For example, it came up in order to understand local partners' roles and concepts, work preparations, and the very own positioning. It can be concluded that concepts and ideas of the *local turn* are used, but not the theoretical concept itself.

5. Roles, responsibilities and challenges – insights from Kenya

5.1 Civil Society in Kenya

The Kenyan CSOs scene is considered one of the most vocal, assertive and creative on the African continent and has long been a role model (Allison 2016). Nevertheless, it is facing some challenges. Kenya is experiencing a Shrinking Space (Amnesty International 2016: 217; Baldus et.al. 2019: 10; Njogu 2018: 15; Smidt 2018: 6). There are restrictions on access for CSOs. These are in the area of unjustified or insufficiently justified refusal of registration, which is accompanied by undefined deadlines for the mandatory verification of registration (USAID 2019: 104). There are also obstacles to the activities of CSOs, for example CSOs must consult with the NGO Coordination Board on their activities before they can start work. They also have to agree with the NGO Coordination Board on a number of key issues before they start their activities. The Registrar has a wide margin of discretion with regard to the investigation, arrest and search of a CSO and its staff (International Center for Human Rights 2020). These problems were and are accompanied by restrictions in the areas of freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of the press (Amnesty International 2016: 217; Reporters Without Borders 2020). CSOs in Kenya have faced various obstacles in recent years, including repeated attempts by the government to stop approving hundreds of organisations due to alleged financial violations (Freedom House 2020). 88 percent of the funds available to NGOs come from sources outside Kenya (NGO Board Kenya 2019: 15). This creates dependence on external donors* and threatens the sustainability of the work (NGO Board Kenya 2019: 16). The majority of project expenditures were made in the areas of health, HIV/AIDS, education and emergency aid/disaster management (NGO Board Kenya 2019: 15). The commitment of CSOs in the areas of peace work is very high, especially before and during important elections, but has so far not facilitated a sustainable engagement of civil society organisations in peacebuilding, as the organisations are usually left to their own devices between these periods (Ernstorfer 2018: 4). Thus the work of so-called "peace-preneurs" often leads to greater fragmentation of civil society (Njogu 2018: 15). At the sub-national level, CSOs focused on social issues such as education and health care and worked with local governments to improve service delivery through awareness-raising and capacity building (Orvis 2003: 247). This clearly shows that this work is easier in districts where government officials* appreciate the role of CSOs (USAID 2019: 107). Many CSOs are also working with communities to develop social accountability mechanisms and support disadvantaged areas (USAID 2019: 108). Most organisations implemented projects in areas with good infrastructure, such as Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru and other urban centres (NGO Board Kenya 2019: 15).

5.2 The CPS in Kenya

German engagement in conflict-affected countries has a special focus on the African continent. The BMZ's strategy paper on the new Africa policy (2014) and the so called *Marshallplan with Africa* created key points for future work (BMZ 2014, 2017), encompassing the relevance of economy, peace and security, democracy and human rights as well as sustainability, education, poverty reduction, infrastructure development and the overall idea of a new partnership. These priorities are also evident in the CPS. Thus, most CPS seconded personnel are working in African countries, namely around 120 out of 350 (ZFD 2020: 1). Each project involves different partners and sub-projects. The local partners are CSOs as well as partly state or faith-based institutions. The work takes place in the context of the cross-agency CPS Country Strategy Papers. These were recommended in the evaluation of the CPS

(BMZ 2011: 7) and have already been prepared for some countries. The CPS organizations work with on-site coordinators, which can include either local people or seconded personnel. They have management and strategic functions, (BMZ 2011: 8) such as the further development of the program, on-site operational control, lobbying or offering training programs (Gemeinschaftswerk ZFD 2014: 4).

During the field research in Kenya the following main-topics were identified: (1) the own position in the CPS; (2) the role of the integrated seconded personnel in the local organizations; (3) the role of local partners; (4) different roles understandings; (5) the project work and financing of the CPS; and (6) the effects of the CPS. All these topics are reflected in regard to power-relations between the actors.

The empirical results are still missing in this paper. But first ideas will be presented at the workshop.

6. Conclusion

The paper analyzes the extent to which the German CPS takes the principles of local, participatory peacebuilding seriously and implements them in its work, and what tensions and problems arise in this process. This also leads to further conclusions and recommendations.

The empirical results show that there is a strong turn towards the local and local approaches are taken seriously in the work of the CPS. Still existing power structures and imbalances are present and play a crucial role in the implementation of the CPS, as these topics are discussed frequently by local partners but also seconded personnel. As one local partner in Liberia pointed out, the CPS remains a rather paternalistic system. Often these are underlying and inherent problems and only the tip of the iceberg is visible. These power asymmetries are projected by the design of the CPS itself and the fact that personal relationships and cooperation play a crucial role in the implementation of the CPS.

Due to the fact that they are cooperations between local organizations and organizations from Germany a special importance of power in the North-South divide. Even if the CPS has the claim to break up this power gap to a certain extent and this has happened in some cases especially in the integrated work, it is still woven into a larger power structure. Even if they try to work together, they are still apart in some points. In the case of the CPS the financial power lies with the German organizations and at the same time a discursive power. This lies not only in setting priorities and directions in the work, but also in influencing organizations in certain directions, and in potential debates and disagreements the votes of the donors carry more weight. The majority of the local organizations are financially at least partially dependent on the German organizations. Both the local and international staff is made up of well-educated people and/or people who, due to their many years of work experience, receive great respect in their respective fields of work.

On an empirical level most of the challenges, also in regard to power relations in CPS refer to role definitions, cooperation in everyday work, finance, and the impact of the projects. These are

issues that appear when *friction* occurs. A simple example for *friction* that occurs in the CPS projects is for example when local and international peace workers facilitate workshops and use different approaches, critically discuss them before implementing them together. It is not a matter of normal differences of opinion, which can generally exist in cooperation, but of ambivalent relationships between global and local actors (with inherent power asymmetries) that lead to unintended results of peacebuilding interventions. The importance of the concept is that the actors reflect upon these differences, where they come from and how they can be used in a productive way – not only for one case where they occur but also for their work in general. Consequently the way how different actors deal with *friction* remains a unique case in itself. “The quality of the relations and interactions between the different actors and stakeholders is central to the effectiveness and sustainability of the peacebuilding process” (Bernard 2013:10). Therefore, it is important that report- and feedback mechanisms are used and consequences are drawn from the experiences, feedbacks and conclusions of the experts. These consequences need to be crosschecked with the feedbacks from local partners, as they also need to be taken seriously in the whole process. The CPS is trying to be different, than classical donor agencies and take local actors more into account.

Of course, there are a lot of good examples for strong connections and cooperation in the CPS. Still more changes need to happen to challenge the existing power structures. These changes can only happen step by step, on a small scale and would require a change of the entire architecture of peacebuilding and development cooperation (Mannitz 2014). Despite the positive assessment of local inclusion, the growing international acceptance and promotion of locally anchored peace processes must also be viewed critically. It is important that the local actors are considered reflexively, both internally and externally. At the same time, the ambivalent character of local approaches must be reflected because not all locally initiated projects have to be “good” and “sustainable”. Local approaches to peacebuilding can also lead to power imbalances, exclusion, discrimination, or unfairness among local actors. A perception of the local as only “good” and as a cure-all method for peace processes is a wrong romanization of the local in itself (Mac Ginty/Richmond 2013: 770). Even in local peace processes a dissolution of power structures and hierarchies is not completely possible; they persist at the local level as well. For example, top-level individuals often have more power than other local actors and represent their own interests and beliefs rather than those of the entire population. “Any universal peace system is therefore open to being hijacked by hegemonic actors” (Richmond 2006: 390).

Abbreviations

AGDF: Action Committee Service for Peace

AGEH: Association for Development Cooperation

AGIAMONDO: Association for Development Cooperation

BMZ: Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

CSO: Civil Society Organizations

CPS: Civil Peace Service

GIZ: German Society for International Cooperation/ Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit

IR: International Relations

pbi: Peace Brigade International

PM&E: Project Monitoring and Evaluation

ZFD: Ziviler Friedensdienst

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