Walking the Line

Strengthening Nonviolent Social Movements as an Approach to Conflict Transformation

Research report on KURVE Wustrow's cooperation with nonviolent social movements in Sudan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Palestine and Israel as a means of conflict transformation and peacebuilding

KURVE Study Papers

A research report by Tilman Papesch and Véronique Dudouet, commissioned by KURVE Wustrow to Berghof Foundation.

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We don´t shy away from conflict.

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Foreword by Diana Francis

Lifelong British activist, international practitioner and writer—pioneering both fields of nonviolent action and peacebuilding, Great Britain

This is an important publication about truly pioneering, radical work for peace: work to support the courageous action of members of oppressed and marginalised people in countries where true peace is needed; peace which is both just and inclusive. 'Walking the Line' explains and analyses the work of KURVE Wustrow, a 'peace NGO' of an unusual kind. While most of them focus on the resolution of conflict within and between societies, KURVE Wustrow works to support local grassroots movements that are taking nonviolent action against violence and injustice and for human rights. Since there can be no genuine peace without the creation of just and inclusive societies, this is vital work. Remarkably, it is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), which is responsible for the country's alternative to military intervention, the Civil Peace Service (CPS).

As this report explains, before most internal conflicts can be resolved, all parties must have a voice. The oppressed never do. Until they have gained the strength to make themselves heard, and without addressing injustice and exclusion, no real peace can be built. Nonviolent action for change is the first, essential step in conflict transformation, preparing the ground for eventual resolution and peace-building, which can at last achieve positive peace.

Having given a clear and incisive account of the theory of conflict transformation, 'Walking the Line' gives a real insight into the work of the KURVE Wustrow's CPS workers, who have been linked with partners in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Palestine/Israel and Sudan, working with them as they 'walk the line' between nonviolence and peacebuilding, activism and professionalism. They partner with activist groups, joining them in their own community contexts, in action for justice and human rights. They have also worked with them on building their movements and making links with other communities and movements. Through this, they have come to recognise that they can contribute to peacebuilding in their own wider society, paving the way for peace at the political level.

As the report says, this work in otherwise marginalised communities, together with the documentation and advocacy which the CPS representatives provide, can raise the profile of grassroots actors as peacemakers in the more established peacebuilding world, so that the importance and power of social movements is increasingly recognised. They have also worked to build links between movements in different countries, so that the internationalisation of 'people power' can feel and build its own strength. At a time when optimism is in short supply, this is something that can give us all hope.

This report's rationale and cogency, its clarity and thoroughness, along with the forward thinking of its final recommendations are deeply impressive. We live more than ever in a time of crisis, and it is hard not to despair of global politics. This publication opens up new possibilities and shows how, through diligence, know-how and solidarity, radical change can yet be accomplished by the power of determined grassroots action and global solidarity.

Foreword by Stella Tamang

Determined advocate for the rights of women, children, religious minorities, and indigenous groups, Nepal

KURVE Wustrow's commitment to nonviolence as a lifestyle and a tool offers an inspiring and transformative alternative to violent conflict. Its journey of strengthening, spreading and supporting nonviolent social movements beyond borders and around the world, combining with nonviolent action and peacebuilding strategies, is contributing to address both the immediate consequences of conflict and the deeper structural inequalities that fuel it. KURVE Wustrow, a German based organisation, is situated near Gorleben, Wendland, in Germany amidst the strong legacy of nonviolent social resistance against the local nuclear waste dumping site. Nurtured by various nonviolent lifestyle, initiatives and practices of the local communities around Gorleben, KURVE Wustrow has evolved as the retreat centre for nonviolent activists and practitioners around the world.

I am happy that a research study on KURVE Wustrow's approach to nonviolent social movements in conflict zones is done. It has opened up for wider discussion and critical reflection for everyone to learn and unlearn from its journey. The research seems to be successful to chisel KURVE Wustrow's work and underline the significance of such an integrated approach in understanding the power of marginalised communities and shifting power dynamics. The study also highlights the role of nonviolent resistance as a crucial tool for reversing political and social systems with deep asymmetries of power. It accounts KURVE Wustrow's accumulated experience in supporting nonviolent social movements in conflict zones around the globe for nonviolent action to facilitate peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

The analysis of KURVE Wustrow's Civil Peace Service (CPS) programme offers insights into the practical aspects of supporting nonviolent movements. It reveals the need for organisations to balance the vision and mission, to put the philosophy and principles into practice. The relationship between donor-driven approaches and the flexible, activist-driven methods of grassroots organisations is redefined and designed. It also draws attention to the critical importance of gender, intersectionality and decolonial approaches in peacebuilding efforts.

Key findings from this research highlight KURVE Wustrow's successful partnership modality with the local actors of the grassroots movement, trying to dismantle the wall between the donor and the partners. Respecting the autonomy of the movement, building and strengthening human relationship, fostering trust and providing demand-driven support, KURVE Wustrow has helped to catalyse positive changes in conflict zones. Through capacity development, advocacy and international solidarity, the organisation has contributed to cognitive shifts towards greater awareness and understanding of conflict dynamics and power shifts towards justice and equity.

KURVE Wustrow therefore lays tremendous efforts on the organisations and 'movements' to be self-sustained. The report offers crucial insights into KURVE Wustrow's distinctive approach, practical applications and lessons learnt from its cooperation with grassroots social movements, with the intent to support their contributions towards the twin goals of peace and justice. Moreover, it depicts KURVE Wustrow's value of connecting and joining hands with the local actors and supporting them.

In conclusion, KURVE Wustrow's innovative approach and practical experience provides valuable lessons for the broader peacebuilding and development cooperation communities. The report concludes with a few recommendations to further manifest its crucial role in the field for supporting grassroots social movements striving for peace and justice, and advancing sustainable conflict transformation. This paper is not only a valuable case study of KURVE Wustrow's work, but also a resource for activists, scholars and organisations seeking to understand how nonviolent movements can effectively work in conflict zones.

Foreword by Nikki Singer

Executive Director of The Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies, Cambodia

I am honoured to contribute the foreword to KURVE Wustrow's impactful report, 'Walking the Line: Strengthening Nonviolent Social Movements as an Approach to Conflict Transformation'. This report illustrates KURVE Wustrow's pivotal role in accompanying nonviolent social movements, showcasing how their approaches foster creativity, build trust, and enhance adaptability in addressing the complexities of conflict transformation.

The Core of Conflict Transformation

KURVE Wustrow applies a transformative approach to conflict—one that sees conflicts not just as challenges, but as opportunities for creativity and growth. This perspective resonates deeply with me. Conflict, when understood and approached thoughtfully, can unlock new possibilities and inspire innovative solutions. KURVE emphasises that personal transformation, achieved through shifts in mindset and awareness, can lead to meaningful changes in the broader community. This is a powerful reminder of how our individual journeys can influence systemic change.

At the core of KURVE's approach are partnerships based on mutual trust and respect. Their commitment to peer-to-peer learning underscores the importance of valuing the lived experiences and expertise of local movements. By engaging in genuine, equal partnerships, KURVE Wustrow not only effectively supports its partners, but also enriches its own understanding of the complex dynamics present in conflict contexts.

Long-Term Commitment and Flexibility

One of the standout features of KURVE Wustrow's work is their long-term commitment to accompaniment. Recognising that conflict is a natural part of the human experience, KURVE Wustrow positions itself as a steadfast partner, ready to adapt and grow alongside the communities it supports. The report illustrates how KURVE Wustrow seeks to fill gaps in resources and institutional support, particularly in areas with limited access. This approach is not just a strategic choice; it reflects a deep moral commitment to those who need it most.

KURVE Wustrow's role as external accompaniers is significant. They leverage their convening power to create spaces for learning and exchange, fostering a sense of solidarity among diverse movements. The report highlights specific case studies demonstrating how KURVE Wustrow has successfully facilitated collaboration among social movements, enhancing their collective impact. This ability to connect various actors in the peacebuilding field is invaluable, facilitating crucial dialogues that can lead to real, transformative outcomes.

The Value of Continuous Reflection

We share KURVE Wustrow's belief in the necessity of continually reflecting on our conflict contexts and peacebuilding methods. Navigating the complexities of social movements requires us to remain adaptable and open to new ideas. KURVE Wustrow's commitment to examining its role in the relationship between peacebuilding and social movements is commendable. This ongoing reflection not only enhances their effectiveness, but also enriches broader discussions about conflict transformation.

Encouraging a Shared Vision

As we look to the future, I encourage KURVE Wustrow to continue leveraging its unique position as a bridge between diverse conflict contexts. By fostering cross-context learning and collaboration, KURVE can unlock even more creative possibilities in peacebuilding. This report serves as a strong foundation for how KURVE can amplify its impact, not only as a resource for partner organisations, but also as a catalyst for transformative change across communities.

In a rapidly changing landscape of conflicts across the globe, where many social movements face significant barriers and resource limitations, KURVE Wustrow's work is more crucial than ever. Their commitment to nurturing trust, respect and mutuality within and among social movements is a model for all of us engaged in this essential work.

The Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies (CPCS) shares KURVE Wustrow's approach to peacebuilding, united by shared values and a commitment to fostering sustainable change in conflict-affected communities. As we strive for sustainable solutions to violent conflicts, the findings in this report affirm our shared commitments to conflict transformation through learning, partnership and adaptability. I invite you, the reader, to engage deeply with the findings of this report and consider how these lessons can be applied in your own contexts. Together, we can forge a path toward a more just and peaceful world.

Executive Summary

The research report 'Walking the Line' provides an in-depth analysis of KURVE Wustrow's cooperation with nonviolent social movements as a means of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Commissioned by KURVE Wustrow and conducted by Berghof Foundation between March and July 2024, the study examines KURVE Wustrow's participation in various conflict contexts through the Civil Peace Service (CPS) programme, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The report offers crucial insights into KURVE Wustrow's distinctive approach, practical applications and lessons learnt from its cooperation with grassroots social movements, with the intent to support their contributions towards the twin goals of peace and justice.

Since 2012, KURVE Wustrow has been at the forefront of civil society support to nonviolent social movements, leveraging its own historical legacy as a nonviolent movement actor since 1980. Unlike other International Nongovernmental Organisations (INGOs) that focus primarily on social movements as champions for democracy and human rights, KURVE Wustrow emphasises their role in conflict transformation, offering a unique perspective on the interplay between nonviolent action and peacebuilding. Nonviolent social movements are seen to play a critical role in mobilising public awareness and shifting power towards more equitable and just societies, while countering patterns of polarisation and violent escalation. Aligned with this vision, KURVE Wustrow supports conflict transformation that addresses underlying social structures and promotes sustainable peace by 'spreading nonviolence'.

To do so, KURVE Wustrow partners with grassroots social movement groups which are typically characterised by their informal, decentralised nature, application of extra-institutional methods of nonviolent action and campaigns focused on elements of 'positive peace', such as democracy, freedom or justice and social equity. KURVE Wustrow's implementation of the CPS programme is guided by core principles such as eye-level partnership, local ownership, Do No Harm and flexibility. These principles are operationalised through the central role of International Peace Workers (IPWs) at the interface between KURVE Wustrow and social movement partners, combining capacity-development, process support, financial support, material support, protection, international advocacy and connecting roles.

Another crucial element of KURVE Wustrow's working modalities is its communication and decision-making framework which fosters collaboration and mutual respect among its own staff and with social movement partners, thanks to a strong needs-based orientation. This approach, however, needs to be balanced with the organisational need for centralised oversight and accountability. KURVE Wustrow also seeks to advance cross-cutting topics such as transnational and decolonial perspectives on international cooperation and critical considerations on gender and intersectionality. Moreover, this study finds KURVE Wustrow to have a strong commitment and ability to support social movement partners flexibly and resiliently throughout times of crises and escalating conflicts. Nonetheless, the cultural and administrative clash between grassroots activism and professionalised work of Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) becomes more pronounced in such circumstances.

The outcomes of KURVE Wustrow's engagement with social movement actors through the CPS programme are assessed along two dimensions of conflict transformation: *cognitive shifts*, referring to increased awareness and understanding of the need for change among both domestic actors and international audiences, and *power shifts*, indicating progress towards justice and peace. The report also finds that KURVE Wustrow's approach effectively integrates nonviolent action and peacebuilding

to address and transform conflicts at multiple levels. This dual approach ensures that the underlying causes and manifestations of violent conflicts are addressed through public awareness, inclusive social mobilisation, alliance-building, national and transnational advocacy, dialogue and policy change.

Several challenges and opportunities in KURVE Wustrow's approach are identified in this study. For instance, it highlights the challenge of navigating diverse conflict contexts, each with its unique socio-political dynamics, which requires CPS staff members to adapt their strategies continuously. Another challenge lies in ensuring security and data protection in a context of increased digital surveillance and cyber threats. Internal movement dynamics also pose a real challenge, as maintaining cohesion within diverse and decentralised movements can be complex. However, these challenges also present opportunities. Enhancing cooperation models allows KURVE Wustrow to innovate and refine its approaches continuously. Leveraging KURVE Wustrow's historical expertise provides a strong foundation for building credibility and trust with movement partners. Expanding support to a broader range of social movements can amplify KURVE Wustrow's impact, reaching more communities and addressing a wider array of issues.

In conclusion, KURVE Wustrow's innovative approach, grounded in its historical legacy as a nonviolent social movement as well as its practical experience, provides valuable lessons for the broader peacebuilding and development cooperation communities. This report ends with a few recommendations which can support KURVE Wustrow to further manifest its crucial role in this field, supporting grassroots social movements striving for peace and justice and advancing sustainable conflict transformation.

Acronyms

AGDF	Aktionsgemeinschaft Dienst für den Frieden
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
COR	Regional / Country Coordinator
CPS	Civil Peace Service
ED	Executive Director
EU	European Union
FINO	Financial Officer
GFFO	German Federal Foreign Office
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organisation
IWP	International Peace Worker
LPW	Local Peace Worker
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
PA	Project Advisor (BaZ)
PBI	Peace Brigades international
PBO	Peacebuilding Officer (REF)
PBU	Peacebuilding Unit of KURVE Wustrow (AFF)
PERO	Personnel Officer/Human Resources (PREF)
WFD	Weltfriedensdienst e.V.
UN	United Nations

Foto: KURVE Wustrow

Introduction

Section 1

Introduction

Social movements are prevalent in all societies and are increasingly recognised as potent drivers of social and political change. According to Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and its 'Protest Tracker', 147 countries have experienced significant anti-government protests worldwide since 2017. Many of these are waged by nonviolent social movements, driven by aspirations for democracy, justice, equality, human rights and/or peace. In recent years, there has been increasing interest among the donor community in identifying pathways to engage and support such movements, despite the multiple risks involved—for activists and external actors alike. One prominent initiative has been the launch in late 2023 of a USAID $45 million grant (called 'Powered by the People'), aimed at providing 'flexible and accessible support that strengthens the agency, resilience, and efficacy of [...] social movements'.[1] This initiative is being followed with great attention by development agencies in Europe who have been actively debating the question of how to use government funds to support grassroots, informal, unregistered and/or activism-based social movements as part of civil society empowerment (e.g. OECD-DAC 2021).

This provides a great opportunity for the German NGO KURVE Wustrow e.V. to share best practices and lessons learnt in this area, where it has been pioneering innovative work since 2012, as part of the German Civil Peace Service programme funded by the BMZ.[2] In Palestine/Israel, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Sudan, KURVE Wustrow staff, and especially its seconded International Peace Workers (IPWs), cooperate closely with social movement actors as local partners. Due to its long-term engagement and own historical legacy as a nonviolent movement actor since 1980 in Germany,[3] KURVE Wustrow has gathered profound practical experience and understanding of the needs, added value and benefits of collaborating with grassroots movements in conflict environments, but also of the related sensitivities, risks and challenges.

Unlike many other international NGOs or solidarity groups which engage with social movements from a democracy support or human rights perspective, KURVE Wustrow is one of the few organisations which purposefully cooperates with movement activists with the aim of advancing peacebuilding and conflict transformation. This study was commissioned by KURVE Wustrow to the two authors in order to assess its unique approach to international cooperation with nonviolent social movements, thus enhancing its conceptual underpinnings while reflecting on its practical application and identifying lessons learnt for the future and a potentially upscaled engagement of the CPS programme. An equally important aim is to provide peacebuilding and development actors more broadly with a nuanced analysis of the challenges and opportunities of 'Walking the Line' between nonviolent action and peacebuilding, activism and professionalism, in order to advance the twin goals of justice and peace.

1 Press release of 16 October 2023, retrieved via www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/oct-16-2023-usaid-announces-45-million-support-efforts-advancing-human-rights-social-justice-democracy-and-inclusive-development.

2 KURVE Wustrow has been involved in CPS projects since 2002, but it started doing so with an explicit social movement orientation in 2012. Further information on the CPS can be accessed (in German) via this link: https://www.kurvewustrow.org/geschichte-des-zfd

3 KURVE Wustrow has been actively committed to peace and nonviolence for more than 40 years. Its history is closely connected with nonviolent resistance to the nuclear waste disposal site at Gorleben. KURVE Wustrow was founded in 1980 to strengthen the nascent anti-nuclear and peace movement. See www.kurvewustrow.org/sites/default/files/media/file/2020/kurve-wustrow-flyer-en.pdf

This methodology entailed an action research orientation, by engaging KURVE Wustrow staff and social movement partners in an iterative process of reflection and exchange, in order to address practical issues and generate new ideas on the CPS programme in support of nonviolent social movements. The data were primarily compiled in April-May 2024 through desk research, 13 virtual and physical interviews and three virtual focus group discussions. No fieldwork could be conducted in the four contexts under study (Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Palestine/Israel and Sudan) due to the acute crisis situations faced on the ground.

This report is structured along the following sections:

Section 2 contextualises and characterises the approach developed by KURVE Wustrow in its cooperation with nonviolent social movement actors. After some elements of definition and exploration of the conceptual nexus between nonviolent action, peacebuilding and conflict transformation, it delves into the characteristics of social movements and the criteria for partnership with actors of such movements in the framework of the CPS programme. It also spells out the core principles guiding KURVE Wustrow's approach to cooperation as well as the range of tools which are applied by CPS staff to provide external support to social movements in different contexts.

Section 3 analyses the various working modalities which drive the implementation of the CPS programme, from the overall working structures to the central role played by the IPWs deployed by KURVE Wustrow. It also reviews communication and decision-making procedures, including power dynamics and other cross-cutting issues and trends. Lastly, it describes how the programme and the organisation respond to crises and escalating situations, the response mechanisms which have been developed and the associated challenges.

Section 4 examines various outcomes which have been achieved through the CPS programme so far, both within conflict countries and on the international stage, by focusing on two dimensions of conflict transformation in asymmetric power relations, i.e. awareness-raising and power shifts through nonviolent action. It also interrogates the complementary roles of civil resistance and peacebuilding in contexts of active warfare.

Section 5 lists a number of challenges and opportunities which have been identified throughout the research and concludes this study by offering key recommendations to KURVE Wustrow, drawn from both research participants and the authors' own analysis.

Foto: KURVE Wustrow

Defining KURVE's Approach and its Added Value

Section 2

Defining KURVE's Approach and its Added Value

This section provides some contextualisation with regards to the purpose and scope of this study by clarifying key terms, concepts, principles and tools underpinning the 'KURVE Wustrow approach' to cooperation with social movements through the German Civil Peace Service. At the same time, this specific approach is being anchored within the broader conceptual literature and practitioner community on peacebuilding, conflict transformation, social movements and nonviolent action.

2.1 Rationale: Advancing conflict transformation through peacebuilding and nonviolent action

This study is rooted in the premise that conflicts are part of every society and are unavoidable social processes. In contexts of asymmetric power constellations between dominant and dominated groups in a society, conflicts can actually be a positive force for change towards peace and justice. However, for conflicts to be constructive and transformative, they must be waged through nonviolent means. According to this logic, nonviolent social movements contribute to conflict transformation from the 'bottom up' through methods of civil resistance, thus mobilising and raising public awareness on sources of conflicts, while preventing violent escalation by employing democratic and participatory social practices and shifting power towards more equitable, just and hence peaceful societies (Dudouet 2011, 2017).

This theoretical approach strongly echoes the work of Diana Francis (2002) who is cited by various core staff members at KURVE Wustrow as a major source of inspiration for their nonviolence-related work. Francis, a British Quaker scholar-practitioner, drew her own inspiration from the pioneering work of peace researchers Adam Curle (1971) and John Paul Lederach (1995). The visualisation below (Figure 1) is based on their efforts to conceptualise the cycle of conflict transformation in highly asymmetric power dynamics.

Definitions

In essence, ***conflict transformation*** involves a complex process of constructively changing relationships, attitudes, behaviours, interests and discourses in violence-prone conflict settings. It also implies the need to address and change the underlying structures, cultures and institutions that encourage and condition violent political and social conflicts over a long term.[4] In other words, conflict transformation aims to achieve sustainable and positive peace. In the contexts addressed in this study

4 Definition of Conflict Transformation, Berghof Foundation. Retrieved on https://berghof-foundation.org/themes/conflict-transformation.

(Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Palestine/Israel), positive peace could be variously translated as peaceful coexistence combined with fundamental rights for all, such as freedom from oppression or external occupation, democracy and political participation, equal access to resources and justice, minority rights and/or accountability for past human rights abuses.

In the absence of peace with justice, and especially in situations of acute structural asymmetries and abuse of power with or without an armed conflict, conflict transformation requires a combination of nonviolent action and peacebuilding strategies.

Nonviolent action encompasses extra-institutional methods to advance social, political and economic change, such as strikes, boycotts, marches, demonstrations, petitions, non-cooperation, self-organising and constructive resistance, without the threat or use of violence. Nonviolent action is also known as 'people power', 'civil resistance' or 'nonviolent resistance' as well as 'civil disobedience'. Not all nonviolent campaigns are necessarily articulating constructive progressive claims, but in this report, we are only referring to strategies grounded in a respect for universal human rights that aim to build more just and inclusive societies. In some circumstances, nonviolent action bears the risk of fuelling polarisation, antagonism and instability, partly due to the occasional use of confrontational tactics (when activists do not 'separate people from the problem' or are perceived as inciting violence) as well as the violent cycle of repression and conflict escalation which may be prompted by popular uprisings. In such cases, nonviolent action needs to be complemented by peacebuilding strategies.

Peacebuilding refers here to institutional methods aiming to reduce conflict and to improve relationships and infrastructures for peace at the community, regional or national level through processes of dialogue, negotiation, mediation, peace education, reconciliation etc. In some contexts, peacebuilding methods can be perceived as ineffective or even harmful, especially if they ignore structural asymmetries which preclude a 'dialogue of equals' between dominant and dominated groups. This may lead to increased frustration and animosity by marginalised voices and could even inadvertently help to preserve an unjust status quo by reproducing the broader power dynamics in which these methods are applied. Therefore, depending on the needs of the moment at a given conflict stage, different approaches may be necessary.

Conflict cycle

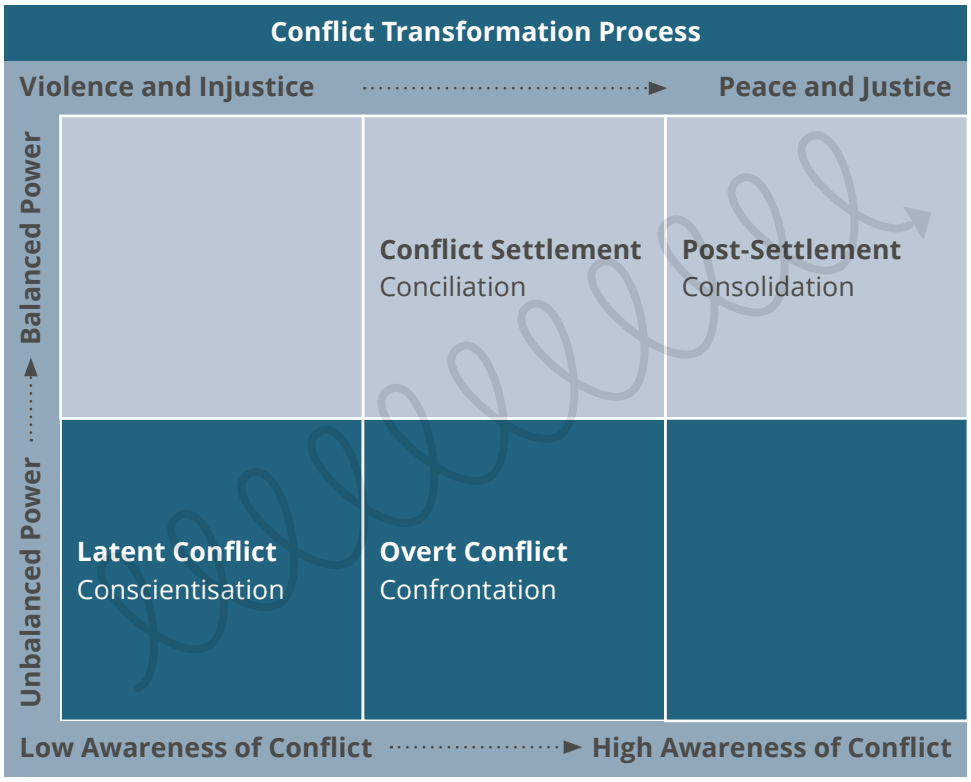


Figure 1: Conflict transformation process in asymmetric power relationships (adapted from Bloch and Schirch 2019, Dudouet 2017, Francis 2002 and Curle 1991)

Figure 1 visualises the four main stages which asymmetric conflicts need to pass through in order to be effectively transformed and achieve sustainable peace with justice. Transformation requires progressive change along two axes: (1) awareness of conflict and (2) power distribution. When there is a high imbalance of power combined with low social or political awareness of the need to redress inequality and injustice ('latent conflict'), nonviolent action methods can help communities to organise themselves, build diverse coalitions and bring their acute collective grievances into the public realm. These methods also enhance 'people power' by providing participants with a sense of empowerment. They can increase their leverage, while undermining the legitimacy, resources and repressive capacities of dominant groups, thereby attracting sympathy and solidarity among the support bases of 'the other side' as well as from external audiences and actors.

Nonviolent action does not only help to shift political power and legitimacy to the side of aggrieved groups. Thanks to its inclusive and participatory orientation, it can furthermore be a potent force for redressing other prevailing societal and cultural inequities, such as patriarchy, ageism, racism etc.—also within the constituencies of social movements. In Sudan for example, the set-up of KURVE Wustrow's social movement partner was partly rooted in the realisation that marginalised (e.g. non-Arab) women remained excluded in the wake of the revolutionary movement of 2019 which toppled the al-Bashir regime through nonviolent resistance.

Once awareness and power have shifted to the point that power-holders realise the status quo is no longer sustainable, the timing is ripe for peacebuilding approaches. In situations where the conflict has escalated to inter-group violence (or one-sided violence by the state), formal peace processes through elite-based or inclusive negotiations need to be accompanied by other peacebuilding meas-

ures to address the legacy of violence and build a culture of peace. Methods of nonviolent action remain necessary even after a conflict settlement, in order for societal groups to maintain pressure on power-holders to commit to agreed reforms and policies. In the four regions at stake in this study, many peace processes have occurred in the past, but they have failed to bring about successful agreements, and the respective areas are currently in a stage of active warfare (Myanmar, Palestine/Israel, Sudan) or 'negative peace' through military repression (Sri Lanka). Therefore, both nonviolent action and peacebuilding approaches are required in pursuit of conflict transformation towards sustainable peace with justice.

Mandate and objectives

The aims and ambitions of conflict transformation outlined above echo the objectives of the German Civil Peace Service as formulated in a document called CPS Compact (Chapter 1.1).[5] It defines its ultimate aim as *positive peace* which encompasses three complementary elements: human security (understood as 'the possibility of shaping one's own future without fear and distress'); social justice (including gender and distributive justice, the right to social and political participation, cultural development and human rights); and nonviolent conflict transformation (whereby conflicts are handled in a nonviolent way at an individual, collective and institutional level).

Within the CPS Consortium, KURVE Wustrow aims to fulfil a specific role and approach, aligned with its mission statement of 'spreading nonviolence'. A core element of its current strategy (2021–2026) is the strengthening of nonviolent social movements campaigning for peace, social justice, ecological sustainability and the elimination of discrimination, with the aim of achieving a nonviolent transformation of conflicts. This distinct focus is rooted in the organisation's own roots, history, identity and values as a German NGO which emerged out of a social movement. While initially focused on nonviolent activism 'at home', in Germany, KURVE Wustrow members developed a keen interest in making use of their expertise to foster nonviolence abroad. This was done by inviting foreign activists to its training programme in Germany, by sending personnel to work alongside nonviolent movements in countries affected by latent or overt conflict and by fostering exchange and learning between different social movement partners across the globe.

5 The CPS Compact can be accessed here in German: www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/sites/default/files/media/file/2022/zfd-ziviler-friedensdienst-zfd-kompakt-2264_23.pdf

2.2 Nonviolent social movement partners

Definition

While there is a clear consensus at KURVE Wustrow about the importance of working with social movements, there are different perspectives and interpretations among its staff and IPWs on what such movements are and what they are not. The distinctiveness of social movement partners vis-a-vis other types of cooperation partners for the CPS programme can be best described along three main elements:

- **Organisational features.** Social movements are first characterised by their informal nature, in contrast to formal organisations such as NGOs. Movements bring together large groups of individuals, linked by dense informal networks, who share common goals and a distinct collective identity (Della Porta and Diani 1999, 20). One salient feature of many social movements is their grassroots origin, in the sense that they include and seek to empower those directly affected by injustice. Through bottom-up self-organisation, grassroots movements encourage community members to take responsibility for their own emancipation and take action toward achieving these goals. Broader movements are organised as umbrella coalitions that bring together a wide range of distinct entities, from popular committees or advocacy NGOs to membership-based organisations, associations or loosely affiliated groups and initiatives. Other common features of social movements include their decentralised, horizontal, diffuse nature; they are often described as 'leaderless'. Unlike NGOs, they do not run 'projects', rarely have an office and tend to be self-funded. This has important implications for international cooperation modalities, as will be seen in the next section.

- **Means and ends.** While NGOs tend to use institutional methods to effect change, such as peacebuilding projects or development work, social movements tend to operate outside of conventional channels by using extra-institutional means of nonviolent action. They often engage in campaigns which typically entail a series of planned, durable, collective and coordinated actions focused on reaching a specific objective. Some campaigns focus on sectorial (issue-based or rights-based) demands, such as gender equality, minority rights, freedom of expression and assembly etc., while other campaigns pursue broader agendas such as democracy or freedom from occupation. In conflict contexts, peace movements also emerge to pressure for a peaceful solution or to protest against militarism. In essence, social movements are at the forefront of struggles for change to address both the root causes and consequences of conflict and violence.

- **Activism.** Another important dimension distinguishing social movements from other forms of social organisations is the fact that their members identify themselves as 'activists'. This term is usually employed in reference to individuals, engaged on a voluntary (unpaid) basis, who are often prepared to take higher personal risks for the cause they pursue and mobilise against the dominant social norms and expected patterns of behaviour in society. Some of the partner entities that cooperate with KURVE Wustrow through the CPS programme do not neatly fit the other two criteria—for example by being registered as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) –, but they see themselves, and often act, as peace/social activists and movement supporters/enablers.

Added value of the partnership

Based on interviews and focus groups conducted for this study, it appears quite clearly that KURVE Wustrow provides a distinct added value to the CPS scheme by partnering intentionally with social movement actors. This orientation which was made explicit in CPS programming documents from 2012 onwards, initially in the context of Palestine/Israel, came up for a variety of reasons.

- First, as outlined above, nonviolent social movements can bring a distinct contribution to conflict transformation. They are uniquely placed to advance emancipatory change and address collective grievances which tend to be neglected or ignored by other actors, or which cannot be effectively addressed through 'mainstream' peacebuilding approaches.

- Furthermore, KURVE Wustrow has a unique contribution to make to the CPS programme due to its own historical trajectory. Over the years, it has evolved from a grassroots, locally-rooted social movement actor, engaged in nonviolent action in Germany, to a professional peace NGO operating internationally. Therefore, its core members and long-term staff are well aware of the challenges associated with such trajectories and can provide practical and strategic peer-advice to other movements in their own processes of transformation—if and when they decide to go down that path.

- In addition, KURVE Wustrow seeks to support initiatives that receive little attention from development agencies and peacebuilding organisations. Due to their grassroots orientation, social movement actors are rooted in local communities and, through the CPS scheme, they can give German institutional actors direct access to marginalised communities which are usually hard to reach from the outside. The subsequent documentation and advocacy work, which is part of the CPS toolbox, helps to fill a gap in professional discussions about peacebuilding in Germany and Europe which often neglect the role of social movement actors as peace agents in their own rights.

In turn, social movement actors who decide to partner with KURVE Wustrow appreciate the unique added value, too, that this cooperation contributes to their rights-based struggles. They value the organisation's activism background and history, as it brings a peer-to-peer quality to their relationship. For many movement groups, this shared identity was a strong factor in their decision to opt for international funding through the CPS scheme (Bunte 2020).

Selection process for new partnerships

KURVE Wustrow currently engages in seven countries/regions through the CPS programme. In four of these (Palestine/Israel, Myanmar, Sudan and Sri Lanka), its country teams cooperate with altogether ten partners that are considered as social movement actors—or organisations that primarily focus on direct support to social movement activists. There does not seem to be a common pathway to establishing new partnerships with such actors, many of which are initiated through recommendations and contacts by existing networks and partners. Over the years, however, KURVE Wustrow´s head office has developed a formal list of criteria against which their country teams scope the field, identify 'candidates' for cooperation and confirm the added value of the partnership. These criteria include:

- **Coherence with the mission statement, strategy, vision and core values of KURVE Wustrow.** This implies that partners need to pursue progressive goals, commit to certain values (e.g. uphold human rights or refrain from exclusionary expressions of nationalism) and adhere to nonviolent tactics. When partners start questioning their full commitment to (principled or pragmatic) nonviolence, especially in contexts of acute repression and state violence, there needs to be a demonstrated readiness for reflection and dialogue on this issue; whereas calling directly for violence and using of violent tactics poses a 'red line' for cooperation.

- **Added value of cooperation and alignment with the CPS country strategy.** For instance, the prospective partner should be in a position of potential leverage, which could be increased through external support, to reach a meaningful contribution to transforming the prevailing conflict.

- **Organisational capacity.** Partner entities should be 'stable' enough to 'absorb' and handle the cooperation work, but they should not be too established to no longer benefit from the partnership.

- **Actors mapping.** Scope of pre-existing international presence by other INGOs in a given region, in order to avoid saturated areas and focus on marginalised areas where support has higher added value.

- **Mandate and/or interest by the potential partners in the cooperation,** as well as compatibility and trustful relationships with existing partners in the country, given the necessity to collaborate within the partnership (for example in joint strategy meetings or when sharing the same IPW).

- **Do No Harm** considerations to ensure that the partnership will not be detrimental to the effectiveness, legitimacy, security and safety of the partner entity or to the KURVE Wustrow IPW deployed to the respective areas.

- **Alignment** (or at least non-contradiction) of the proposed partner's work with German foreign and security policy ('außenpolitische Unbedenklichkeit').

These criteria were established for the purpose of scoping possible new partnerships for the CPS programme, but they do not always align well with the specificities of informal, unregistered social movement entities, as defined above. In some instances, special measures had to be found to overcome administrative boundaries or security risks, resulting in the movement groups' inability to manage funds. Over time, some social movement initiatives underwent a progressive process of professionalisation which, however, did not result in closing the partnership. The only organisational pathway precluding cooperation, besides an obligation to end partnerships due to political decisions (see section 3.2), would be the closeness or affiliation of movement partners with political parties or so-called 'Government-organised Nongovernmental Organisations' (GONGOs) or with violent actors (e.g. armed groups).

2.3 Approach to cooperation and partnership

Nonviolent social movements do not necessarily rely on external support to wage successful campaigns. However, such support can play a decisive role in strengthening their capacity to effect social change, while preventing escalation and violence. Gene Sharp (2005, 471) defines 'third party actors' as: 'Groups that are neither the nonviolent struggle group nor the opponent group. They may be part of the overall society within which the conflict is occurring, or may be groups from outside that society.' Others have conceptualised the role of external actors through metaphors such as the 'great chain of nonviolence' (Galtung 1989, 20) or the 'boomerang effect' (Keck and Sikkink 1998), stressing their ability to amplify the voices and leverage of local activists through external advocacy, solidarity and resources or by applying pressure against their adversaries.

Third-party external actors operating from outside the country where the conflict primarily takes place can be as varied as diaspora groups, transnational solidarity networks, international organisations, foreign governments, foundations, training centres, church figures or media organisations etc. Among the various INGOs who engage directly with human rights defenders and nonviolent movements, very few do so with an explicit focus on peacebuilding and conflict transformation. These include the United States Institute of Peace, PAX in the Netherlands and, indeed, KURVE Wustrow in Germany.

Cooperation principles

Across the four regional contexts mentioned above, KURVE Wustrow's cooperation with nonviolent social movement partners through the CPS programme seems to be driven by a common set of principles, aligned with its aspirations to stay true to its own identity and activist roots. Figure 2 below depicts four key principles and the specific features which could be described as the 'KURVE Approach'.

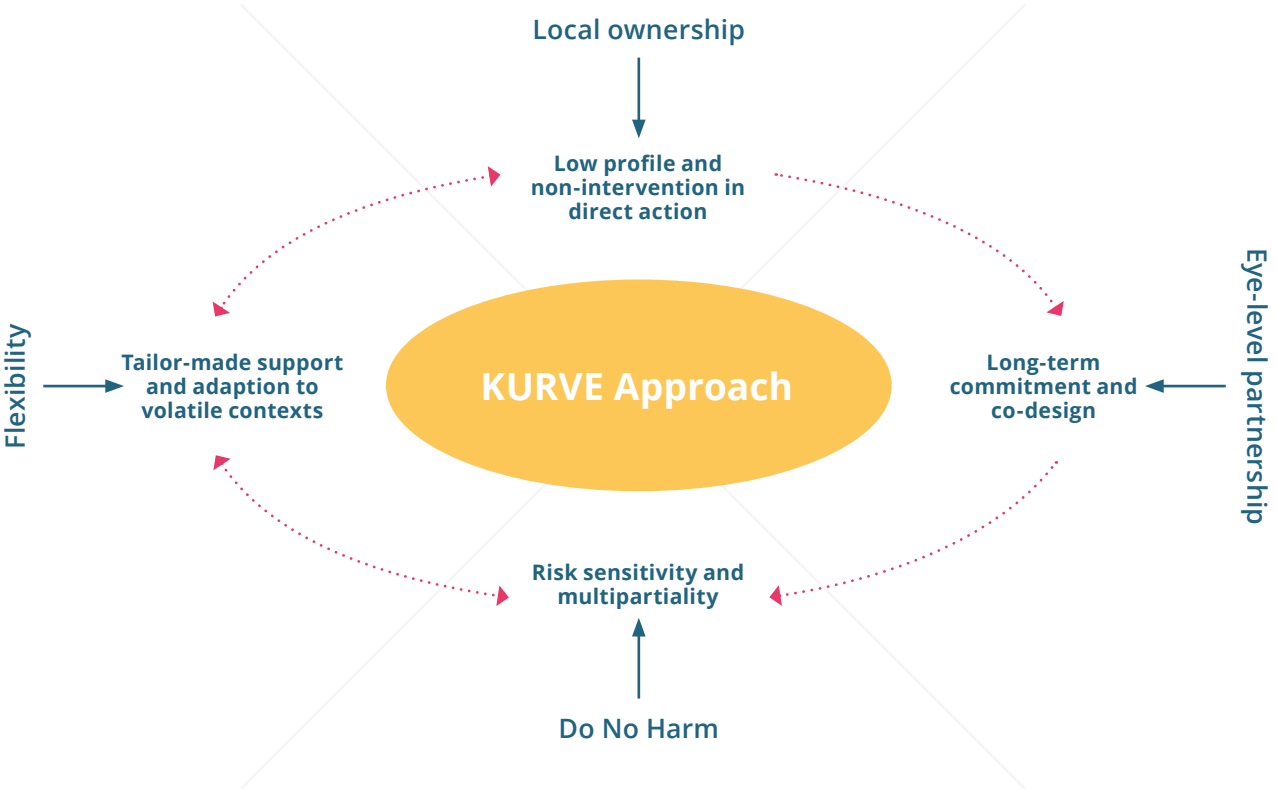


Figure 2: Principles driving KURVE Wustrow's approach to cooperation with nonviolent social movements

A: Eye-level partnership

All interlocutors consulted for this study characterised the nature of the partnership between KURVE Wustrow and social movements as based on mutual trust, respect and equality. As stated by one interviewee, 'there is a high degree of respect for all people, and everyone is seen on the same level'. Even though this principle might equally apply to other CPS programmes, the 'movement-to-movement partnership' which binds KURVE Wustrow and its partners strengthens the sense of power parity. This holds true despite the possibility that local activists who have little familiarity and interaction with the core team at head office, or little awareness of the history of KURVE Wustrow, are more likely to perceive it as a 'donor' than a peer social movement actor.

An eye-level, trust-based partnership does not grow naturally, but needs to be nurtured right from the start. This requires extensive and constant collaboration at all stages of design, implementation and evaluation. It also includes IPWs and movement members taking part together in KURVE Wustrow trainings to build a strong and cohesive team and conducting joint needs assessment, joint strategy planning etc. Another contributing factor is the long-term nature of the support as well as KURVE Wustrow's strong commitment to stay engaged in partner countries during times of crisis.

B: Local ownership

One condition for an equal partnership is the strong attention paid to respecting the ownership, autonomy and self-management of the social movement partners. This was framed by IPWs consulted for this study as 'the partners define the needs and the IPW supports with expertise'; 'they position us where they need us'; 'we respect partners without involving or imposing our own ideas'. All cooperation activities are not only co-designed but strictly demand-driven. This prioritisation of local capacity to act and of local autonomy also explains the decision in all partner countries to keep KURVE Wustrow's presence as discreet as possible, while focusing on giving visibility to the local partner movements. Where possible, i.e. when the partners are registered organisations with their own office, IPWs are, as in other CPS programmes, embedded and integrated into these local structures. Where this is not possible, they operate from an independent office, but do not display their name and logo visibly. Since they do not see themselves, nor wish to be perceived, as part of the respective movements, IPWs as well as country coordinators do not display the symbols of their partners either. As will be seen below, the discreet forms of support provided by KURVE Wustrow through the CPS programme are not framed as solidarity or accompaniment activities, and hence its staff members do not take a visible part in nonviolent actions led by their partners.

These measures are essential in preserving the autonomy and legitimacy of social movements. Even more than professional NGOs, which often rely on external funding and cooperation to pursue their aims effectively, social movement actors draw their internal and social legitimacy from their grassroots nature and community rootedness. Therefore, they need to be perceived as truly people-led, without interference from outside agents. This is crucial, given the risks associated with accusations of outside intrusion and foreign-driven agendas, raised by governments or other hostile forces, which can severely harm a movement's efficacy as well as its members' security.

C: Do No Harm

A related guiding principle which underscores all strategic and operational decisions is the endeavour to Do No Harm. This principle is applied throughout the CPS programme, but it takes a specific meaning in cooperation with social movement actors, given their political nature and the power dynamics at play. Do No Harm considerations were a starting point for KURVE Wustrow's decision taken in 2012 to work more intentionally with social movements in Palestine/Israel. This choice was prompted by the realisation that supporting more conventional peacebuilding tools, such as peace education or dialogue encounters, in a context of occupier/occupied asymmetry could actually result in a 'divider' effect, by becoming a potential source of polarisation or reproducing prevailing power asymmetries.

Some key principles of Do No Harm, such as fairness, take a particular undertone in asymmetric conflict contexts. KURVE Wustrow strives to be seen as multipartial while standing on the side of freedom and justice. This can be quite a difficult balancing act when cooperating with social movement actors. According to its self-described mandate (in line with internal training guidelines), KURVE Wustrow stresses: 'In our statements about the substance of the conflict, we are respectful towards all sides, reflecting our multipartial ethos.' At the same time, multipartiality does not preclude 'adopting a partisan approach to human rights protection'.

The Do No Harm principle is integral to KURVE Wustrow's operations. All employees who work abroad undergo Do No Harm trainings—either as part of the one-week practitioner training recommended to all KURVE Wustrow employees or through a specific Do No Harm Training of Trainers. Partners are also invited to participate in these workshops, and there is a budget dedicated to this purpose, although their participation is optional.

These efforts demonstrate the clear commitment to comply with the principle of Do No Harm by institutionalising it throughout the whole structure. Nonetheless, this does not necessarily guarantee its actual implementation in the respective contexts, especially when challenges such as time pressure, harsh repression or language barriers may preclude comprehensive efforts to pre-empt the potential negative consequences of a certain engagement.

D: Flexibility

The fourth principle that characterises cooperation with informal or activist-based movement groups operating in acute conflict contexts is the need for constant flexibility and adaptation. This is due both to the volatile environments in which they evolve and their prioritisation of what is needed and effective at the moment, rather than the execution of established projects or programmes. As stated in a KURVE Wustrow internal training document: 'Working in the context of social movements is highly dynamic and usually needs a lot of adaptation and re-strategising. … Being a third-party actor demands a very high degree of balancing flexibility and empathy on the one hand and self-care and self-reflection on the other hand by IPWs, so that they can sustainably contribute with an 'embedded external perspective.' This means that country strategies and CPS programming plans can become quickly outdated, and the toolbox of support options needs to be tailored to the evolving needs on the ground. This principle will be further detailed in the next section, especially when it comes to situations of conflict escalation and acute crisis.

Support tools

Moving from the principles of cooperation to the concrete toolbox of support modalities, we take inspiration from a report written by Thimna Bunte (2020), a former IPW in Palestine/Israel who is also active as a trainer for social movements and CPS programmes.[6] She identifies six main support roles performed by IPWs which, when combined, help to strengthen movements and enhance their leverage. Relating back to the two axes of the Curle matrix presented earlier, such activities aim to contribute to conflict transformation by increasing public awareness about situations of injustice, inequality and other forms of structural violence and by shifting power for the benefit of marginalised, aggrieved communities.

- **Capacity-development.** Through its IPWs, KURVE Wustrow provides training to movements actors, aimed at strengthening their skills in areas such as nonviolent action, human rights campaigning, media and communication, digital security, security management, legal issues, mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS), self-care, gender analysis, civic education, transitional justice, reproductive health and peaceful coexistence, documentation and research etc.

- **Process support.** In addition to skills-based training, IPWs also help to facilitate strategy and organisational development processes to support movements in becoming more resilient by e.g. diversifying their sources of funding or conducting systemic conflict analysis and evaluations. IPWs embedded within a partner organisation are helping to take care of the organisational burden, such as donor reporting and financial management, so that movement actors can focus on their activism. When IPWs are working from their own office, they take an accompanying and advising role, finding joint solutions on how to make the work possible within the framework of the CPS. They may also be called upon to facilitate, moderate or mediate internal conflicts within/between movement actors, or to act as peer-reviewers, providing an outside perspective on the work of partners.

- **Financial support.** CPS project budgets sometimes contribute to covering the salary costs of its partners' staff when implementing the CPS project (and when cooperating with registered Civil Society Organisations). Funds are then transferred to their accounts to conduct co-designed activities. This is a modest role in comparison to the financial support provided by other INGOs and foundations, but especially in times of crisis, when in-country presence is not possible (e.g. Myanmar since 2021, Sudan since 2023), the donor role—or donor perception—of KURVE Wustrow becomes more pronounced.

- **Material support.** The CPS funding also allows KURVE Wustrow to channel material resources to movement partners to help strengthen their organisational, mobilisation or resilience capacity in accordance with the joint project. This includes, for example, media equipment, office material or security equipment. However, CPS staff members are prohibited from providing direct funding and logistical support for nonviolent action, such as covering transport costs for participation in actions. They also cannot fund campaign material which contains demands or proposed solutions and/or displays national or party symbols (see below).

6 For other typologies of external support functions towards nonviolent movements, see Dudouet (2015), Chenoweth and Stephan (2021), Action Aid (2024).

- **Protection.** Although protective accompaniment or legal trial monitoring for human rights defenders is not a primary function of KURVE Wustrow peace workers, they are attentive to the security of their partners. They are able to provide indirect support to threatened activists, for example through the transfer of material and know-how so that movement actors can enhance their skills and knowledge on e.g. digital and data security. IPWs and country coordinators can also collaborate with head office staff in Germany to conduct advocacy or lobby activities on behalf of threatened activists, particularly in the context of nonviolent action.

- **International advocacy.** Bunte (2020) distinguishes three forms of intervention contributing to enhancing the leverage of movements: Firstly, public advocacy support by helping movements to speak up about their cause, facilitating speaking tours, study visits, public events etc. and by developing information material; secondly, lobbying support aiming to access and influence decision-makers through networking and lobby visits; and thirdly, public statements echoing movement calls. One limitation faced by KURVE Wustrow in this respect is that the CPS programme does not allow for advocacy campaigns in Germany on behalf of partners. However, CPS staff can provide advocacy support through other channels which contribute to enhancing movement actors' visibility, credibility and support in the international arena. These include: facilitation and co-design of advocacy strategies; joint preparation of lobby talks and media interventions by partners; co-design, production and promotion of joint publications documenting the situation on the ground and the work conducted by social movements; strategic networking to open new access for partners to international actors; organisation of speaking tours in Germany and Europe giving voices to movement actors; or support in drafting joint open letters or targeted letters to EU or UN bodies in cooperation with other organisations.

Although it is not explicitly listed in Bunte's framework, one more role is worth highlighting as it came up frequently during consultations for this research.

- **Connecting.** The connecting and convening powers of international actors play an important role in the repertoire of external support to nonviolent social movements. By providing spaces for peer-learning and exchange between various contexts, coalition-building or joint training, third-party actors help movements to strengthen their own confidence, knowledge, mobilising power, resilience and leverage. KURVE Wustrow, both through and beyond the CPS scheme, helps movements to connect on multiple levels: between various activists and initiatives in-country; between movements on both sides of the conflict divide (or between movements and their allies within the occupier/high-power group); and between movements across countries, through joint CSP trainings or through study visits. This line of work contributes to fostering a transnational movement, which KURVE Wustrow is also part of. But it is also part of the decolonial approach that many of its trainers aspire to, by breaking the North-South divide and encouraging movement actors in conflict countries to become themselves trainers and advisors for their peers across their contexts (this topic will be further addressed in the next section).

As seen from this list of support roles, as part of the CPS framework, KURVE Wustrow had to introduce some 'red lines' in its toolbox of cooperation methods which preclude its staff from conducting certain activities, such as providing direct funding for, or participating in, demonstrations and other forms of protest action. These regulations need to be applied flexibly, and for example IPWs sometimes attend protest marches organised by their partners in a discreet observatory role. This limitation is partly linked to the aforementioned principle of local ownership and autonomy, but also to the mandate and the government funding which the CPS support originates from. As a result of this mandate and as part of a government-civil-society programme and hence as the recipient of public funding, KURVE Wustrow is obliged to coordinate its CPS activities with German government bodies and ensure that its activities do not interfere negatively with German foreign politics. These constraints also influence the positions (or non-positions) taken by KURVE Wustrow vis-a-vis certain campaigns waged by their movement partners. When partners request support for activities which are beyond the organisation's mandate or scope of action, IPWs can provide organisational and strategic assistance so that their partners can identify and access other sources of funding, for instance for humanitarian activities. However, this does not mean that IPWs act as fundraisers, they rather provide partners with their expertise on how funding works.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that beyond the role of IPWs in the context of the CPS, the coordinating team of KURVE Wustrow in-country as well as the staff in Germany also contribute noticeably to the functions and tools described above. On-site support roles by IPWs mainly focus on moderation, facilitation, training and supporting partner advocacy, while head office staff provide complementary forms of support—when needed—through practitioner trainings, tailor-made workshops and coaching as well as human rights protection and emergency support. This brings us to the next section which will delve into the working modalities of the CPS infrastructure in the four contexts under study in this research.

Graffiti from the Occupied Palestinian Territories
Foto: Julia Kramer/KURVE Wustrow

Foto: Bana Group for Peace and Development, Sudan

Working Modalities

Section 3

Working Modalities

This section analyses the working modalities which drive the implementation of the CPS programme, from the overall infrastructure for cooperating with social movements to the central and challenging role of IPWs. It reviews communication and decision-making procedures within KURVE Wustrow and with their social movement partners, including power dynamics and other cross-cutting issues and trends. Lastly, it describes how the programme and the organisation respond to crises and escalating situations, analysing the response mechanisms which have been developed as well as the associated challenges.

3.1 Infrastructure for cooperation with social movements

The infrastructure of the CPS programme demonstrates the balancing act between professionalised structures, specifically on the donor's but also on KURVE Wustrow's side, and rather informal and activist modes of operation on the side of the social movement actors. The crucial role of IPWs, by bridging, translating and explaining between both sides, requires specific skills, such as relationship-building and administrative capacities, and is understood to be challenging, whilst at the same time allowing for flexibility and an independent way of working.

Working structure

The working structure of the CPS projects supporting social movements exhibits both similarities and differences compared to the 'regular' CPS projects. The overall structure of the CPS programme of KURVE Wustrow is relatively clear and standardised across different contexts (see Figure 3). In the regular CPS projects, IPWs typically form joint teams with local peace workers (LPWs), occupying well-defined positions within the partner organisations' organigrams. This formalised structure facilitates clear role definitions and reporting lines within the partner organisation.

In contrast, social movement initiatives often lack formalised organigrams or institutional structures. Consequently, IPWs act as additional resources to support their partners based on their needs rather than holding an institutionalised position. This allows for greater flexibility, but requires acting cautiously to ensure effective support without imposing the structured workstyle of KURVE Wustrow on the more flexible movement initiatives.

Reporting lines

In both regular CPS projects and those supporting social movements, IPWs report to the country coordinator. The country coordinator, in turn, reports to the desk officer at head office. Desk officers serve

KURVE Wustrow e.V. and the Civil Peace Service

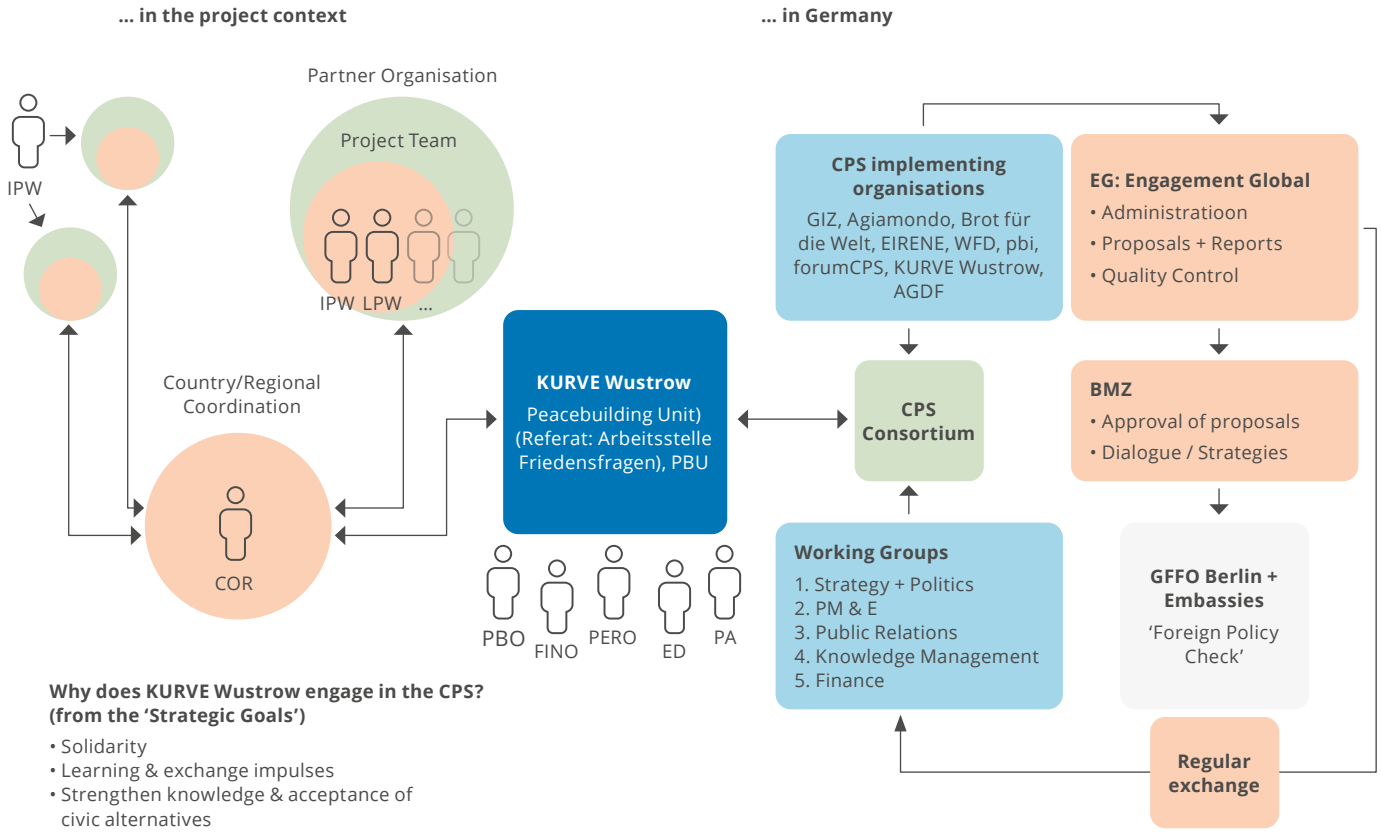


Figure 3: Internal document KURVE Wustrow

as crucial links, connecting in-country activities with various positions within the head office, such as trainers, advisors and administrative personnel. Ultimately, desk officers report to the Directors of KURVE Wustrow, ensuring a streamlined flow of information and coordination across different levels of the organisation.

The role of the IPW is primarily that of an implementer for the previously agreed workplan, with one or multiple social movement partners and with or without a specifically identified LPW from the social movement partner. Country coordinators, on the other hand, have a relatively limited role in the direct implementation work, but play a vital part in translating activities into standardised reporting templates, facilitating accountability and transparency.

Administrative arrangements

The administrative arrangements for IPWs vary significantly depending on the context and the nature of the social movement partners. The CPS model typically involves embedding or integrating IPWs within partner organisations. This approach is feasible in some country contexts, such as Israel and previously in Myanmar, where formal structures exist and IPWs can be embedded within an office setting.

However, in less structured environments or in active conflict, this embedded approach is often not practical or desirable. Social movement groups might lack formal offices and may resist being 'corrupted' by external funds and administrative requirements. For example in Sudan, coordination occurs from abroad due to the absence of local offices in the current context of active conflict. In some cooperation models in Palestine, a partnership-based approach is adopted where IPWs maintain their own separate offices and engage with partners through coordination meetings. The use of so-called non-integrated IPWs in a partnership-based approach exemplifies the balance between formalised and informal settings. This model allows IPWs to operate within a formal work setting without necessitating the social movement partners to develop an institutional structure to accommodate them.

Overall, the working structure of CPS projects supporting social movements reflects the process of its establishment, growing somewhat naturally according to the contextual requirements and the needs of the partners, rather than being pre-developed and implemented subsequently. By balancing formalised and informal approaches, the CPS projects can effectively support social movements while respecting their inherent characteristics and operational modes.

Role of IPWs

The role of IPWs is very complex and at the core of the functionality of the CPS programme in engaging with social movements. Their position as intermediaries requires them to bridge, translate and explain the differing needs and priorities of colleagues in Germany and partners abroad, potentially leading to clashes when these do not coincide.

Bridging and translating

IPWs play a critical role in mediating between the demands and programmatic agreements of KURVE Wustrow and the operational needs of the partner movements. They are responsible for translating and conveying the expectations and constraints of KURVE Wustrow to the partners, while simultaneously advocating for the partners' needs to the head office. This intermediary role can be a source of conflict, since IPWs often align more closely with the partners.

Country coordinators, on the other hand, perceive themselves more as outsiders and are primarily responsible for resolving issues and handling financial discussions with the head office. Coordinators sometimes find themselves caught between the demands of KURVE Wustrow and the perspectives of the IPWs, highlighting the fluid and often ambiguous nature of these roles.

In that context, IPWs operate without formalised decision-making power. This allows them to build confidential relationships with movement actors without being perceived as representatives of the donor, thus facilitating trust and collaboration.

Tasks and skills of IPWs

The core tasks of IPWs centre round relationship building and trust-based engagement with social movement partners. Effective communication and language skills are critical, as they enable IPWs to work independently and establish trustful relations with partners. Despite their importance, however, language skills are described to be frequently undervalued in the recruitment process.

Organisational skills are essential for managing the diverse responsibilities of IPWs. As described in the previous section, they may have to combine administrative tasks, co-facilitation of trainings and workshops, advocacy work and more specific tasks, such as documentation of human rights violations. Beyond the support provided by IPWs, KURVE Wustrow staff can also offer targeted trainings to the partner organisation ('practitioner trainings' or tailor-made workshops and strategic coaching) as well as security and emergency support. IPWs working with social movement actors seem to spend a greater share of their time handling administrative tasks than those hired by other CPS programmes. Since their partners often do not have the capacity to process heavy administrative requirements via an NGO structure, the IPWs are required to fill in this gap. Many of these specific skills, such as direct project management in the CPS structure, are developed on the job, whereas previous experience determines how much the IPWs can contribute to the partners' work on a content-level. Up to now, IPWs have been typically young, white European professionals, often going abroad without families, and generally coming from academic backgrounds rather than being primarily activists themselves. Specific professional skills, such as legal expertise, are sometimes required. Movement partners usually have a say in the recruitment process to ensure that selected IPWs meet their needs, although this involvement is not always consistent, leading to occasional misunderstandings and mismatches in expectations. But overall, research respondents from the side of partners as well as KURVE Wustrow described the recruitment of IPWs as being based on skills that align with the needs of the social movement partners.

A balancing act

The role of IPWs is situated at the heart of what can be called a clash between activism and professionalised peace work. This presents unique challenges. Unlike activists who do not adhere to strict working hours, IPWs (and country coordinators) are expected to maintain professional schedules, creating a potential disconnection with their partners. Desk officers, often working part-time depending on the context, add another layer of complexity, as their limited availability can impact the support provided to IPWs.

Partners sometimes expect IPWs to 'think outside the box' and extend beyond their formal roles, adding extra pressure to their already demanding positions. Defining boundaries—knowing how much to get involved and when to step back—can be particularly challenging for IPWs. Further, they must navigate different social and cultural settings, on a personal and organisational level. This can be specifically demanding for them as foreigners in a project context, for example when it comes to a different understanding of gender roles and dynamics. Furthermore, staying motivated in the face of a long-lasting and draining conflict can also be daunting. To deal with these challenges, it is crucial for all 'three sides'—KURVE Wustrow, IPWs and the social movement partners—to clearly communicate and align their expectations.

During crises, these challenges intensify. IPWs interviewed for this study described situations when they found themselves shielding partners from the head office's requests, taking on these demands themselves to protect the partners' focus and well-being. This protective role underscores the difficult balance and likewise crucial importance of IPWs in supporting the partners effectively while managing the expectations of KURVE Wustrow or the donor side of the CPS programme.

In conclusion, the role of IPWs in the CPS programme is characterised by a delicate balancing act between KURVE Wustrow head office and the partner movements. Their responsibilities require a blend of relation-building, organisational and additional skills, and all this while operating in complex social and cultural landscapes. The challenges IPWs face highlight the need for clear communication, flexibility and a deep commitment to the mission of the Civil Peace Service.

3.2 Communication and decision making

As IPWs engage in complex conflict settings, clear and efficient communication within KURVE Wustrow's organisational structure is essential. Equally important is a decision-making framework that fosters collaboration and mutual respect among staff and social movement partners. Furthermore required is a system that balances centralised oversight and accountability with decentralised and needs-based programme implementation, ensuring that cooperation efforts are both effective and ethically sound.

Communication

Effective communication within KURVE Wustrow's organisational structure is crucial for the success of its mission to support nonviolent social movements and conflict transformation. However, some issues impede the flow of information and collaboration between IPWs, the head office and social movement partners. One of the primary challenges is the fact that IPWs are relatively disconnected from the head office. Communication primarily occurs through the country coordinator and desk officer, with financial communications added when necessary. Direct communication between IPWs and head office is perceived as minimal, mostly limited to occasional newsletters or partners meetings which usually take place every four years. This multi-layered communication structure may lead to delays and miscommunication.

Research participants highlighted that IPWs do not hold a hierarchical position over their social movement partners, nor are they necessarily formally integrated into their organisational structure. Instead, IPWs serve in an advisory role, with negotiation and approval processes channelled through the country coordinators rather than the IPWs. Therefore, the 'main point of contact' from the social movement partners' side varies for every partnership, depending on the specific set-up. Irregularly—for instance when a new IPW assumes the position, when a project cycle starts or when there are changes within the context—a planning workshop is held with partners, the country coordinator and the IPW, generally without head office staff. Desk officers are in constant exchange with the country coordinators and conduct annual project visits to address critical issues, emphasising their role in partnership oversight. However, the absence of regular meetings between social movement actors and KURVE Wustrow staff (beyond the IPWs), including administrative and financial personnel, is perceived as a hindrance to the development of a cohesive team identity. Information flows within the CPS can hence be described as predominantly linear along the reporting lines.

Other units within KURVE Wustrow, such as the training unit, are sometimes perceived as unresponsive to the needs from country contexts. This is perceived to be rooted in overwork at head office, highlighting a cultural gap between head office staff, working regular office hours, and the full-time activists within the social movements. This discrepancy in working cultures further complicates communication and mutual understanding between these different groups. Overall, this exacerbates the perception of 'us' and 'them', which was expressed by some of the research participants located in the country contexts. An increase of cross-linear communication might enhance the sense of engaging in a joint endeavour, potentially improving overall collaboration and mutual understanding.

Decision-making

The decision-making process within KURVE Wustrow is designed to foster an eye-to-eye relationship with social movement partners. Despite KURVE Wustrow having the final say in decisions regarding

BMZ funds, there is an acknowledged effort to take decisions collaboratively through consultation and joint planning. This approach aims to ensure that decisions are made with partners rather than above their heads.

The practical application of this principle varies across contexts. In some cases, decisions are perceived as rather top-down, while in others, there is a greater sense of collaboration. Generally, joint decision-making occurs during coordination meetings involving partners, IPWs and country coordinators, with annual training needs being defined together. Here, the social movement partners' preferences were described to guide the process of developing future programmes, requiring KURVE Wustrow to sometimes advocate on their behalf to the donor or to explain funding limitations to the partners.

The structure of social movement partners also influences the possibility for joint decision-making and strategy development. More structured organisations facilitate collaborative processes among members, IPWs and country coordinators. However, more decentralised social movement initiatives struggle at times to achieve consensus or broad consultation across their constituencies, complicating the joint approval of proposals.

Subsidiarity and roles

The principle of subsidiarity guides decision-making within KURVE Wustrow. Most programmatic decisions are made by country coordinators, followed by desk officers and the Director for critical issues. Head office approval is further required for publications in the international sphere or in Germany, whereas the country coordinators' approval is 'sufficient' for publications in the respective context, financed by the CPS and displaying the logo of KURVE Wustrow, CPS and BMZ. This serves the purpose of maintaining alignment with organisational principles.

IPWs do not formally make strategic decisions, but hold significant informal power by filtering information and being consulted in decision-making processes concerning partners. This soft power depends on individual IPWs' skills in navigating organisational and political dynamics, thereby affecting the perception of their role in joint decision-making with country coordinators. As pointed out previously, the lack of formal decision-making power, whilst holding responsibility for the implementation of KURVE Wustrow's programmes, allows for a closer relationship with the social movement partners who consider IPWs as colleagues and peers rather than a donor.

Budgetary considerations

Most restrictions on the use of funds come from donor requirements, primarily on administrative grounds due to the pertinent laws governing public funds expenditure. One limitation relates to direct financial support for the work of the partners, such as funding 'their' political goals, e.g. by buying banners for a demonstration (see also Section 2.3 on 'red lines' of engagement). Other limitations come from the fact that the CPS programme is eventually funded through tax-payers money. Hence, its spending needs to comply with the requirements of the Federal Budget Code ('Bundeshaushaltsordnung') which can pose limits, i.e. when it comes to the required traceability of all expenditure. KURVE Wustrow is generally seen as supportive within these constraints due to the close and trusted relationships it maintains with its partners. This trust enables KURVE Wustrow to take political and financial risks on behalf of its partners, especially compared to other CPS programmes, despite limitations being imposed by donor regulations.

KURVE Wustrow's programme in supporting social movement actors is appreciated for its flexibility in re-allocating budgets between activities and years, allowing it to respond effectively to partner needs. However, this flexibility has limits, resulting in 'private' initiatives to set up separate donation accounts in order to cater for humanitarian needs in cases when the project does not allow such activities. Long-term partnerships with KURVE Wustrow provide stability and resilience for partners, but also risk dependency and 'NGOisation' over time. Some research participants expressed their readiness to end the partnership with KURVE Wustrow if it drove their group towards professionalisation, whereas others saw it rather as an 'inevitable' progression over time, influenced by generational shifts among movement actors.

Although interviewed social movement representatives confirmed that their activism does not solely rely on KURVE Wustrow's support and that they would remain active even in its absence, it needs to be recognised that for many partners, KURVE Wustrow is indeed the main and sometimes only source of funding—as one or several of their staff members rely on the partnership for their income. As a result, when the partnership ends abruptly as has been the case in rare occasions, this poses a serious challenge for the sustainability of the partner entity, putting its main objectives at a high risk.

Political considerations

Receiving German Government funding entails navigating political challenges, including political clearance checks for assessing partner suitability ('außenpolitische Unbedenklichkeitsprüfung'). This vetting process, applied both before establishing a partnership and retrospectively, generates frustration among partners and KURVE Wustrow staff alike. It can highlight broad disagreements with the German Government's position on conflicts covered by the CPS programme. On the other hand, Germany's diplomatic influence can also positively impact the advocacy efforts conducted by social movement partners in shrinking or closing spaces, underscoring the double-edged nature of government funding. Notwithstanding these challenges, KURVE Wustrow's flexibility, long-term support and collaborative decision-making approach distinguish it from other funding sources, despite the inherent risks associated with international cooperation and foreign funding in volatile contexts.

Cross-cutting aspects

In KURVE Wustrow's programme, several cross-cutting principles and methodologies are applied to align cooperation modalities with critical approaches to conflict transformation, including transnational, decolonial, gender and intersectional perspectives.

Transnational and decolonial approaches

Several respondents interviewed for this study—both core staff and movement activists—expressed their strong interest in KURVE Wustrow advancing a transnational and decolonial approach to cooperations with social movements. However, these terms were partially used interchangeably, and there does not seem to be a consensual understanding of what they mean specifically or how they can realistically be implemented.

A ***transnational approach*** within KURVE Wustrow's programme is defined by the authors of this paper as a joint understanding among all stakeholders that both KURVE Wustrow and its social movement partners are part of a global social movement with shared objectives. This approach emphasises in-

ternational partnership and solidarity. However, the interviews revealed a lack of clarity or consensus on its practical implication for the CPS programme.

KURVE Wustrow aims at balancing interventions in conflict countries abroad with support for domestic social movements in Germany. Generally, many partners do see themselves and KURVE Wustrow as part of a broader movement. The transnational approach to movement support is reinforced by South-South cooperation initiatives. For example, many trainers come from (or live in) other conflict-affected countries—such as South Africa, Nepal, Bosnia or Sudan—and some workshops are conducted peer-to-peer, with partners offering themselves as resources. Recent initiatives for peer learning between Sri Lanka and Cambodia on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Dealing with the Past illustrate the benefits of exchanging experiences across contexts. Participants, however, also described that this transnational feeling can diminish quickly once they return home, due to the pressing demands of their local contexts. Nevertheless, connections made during such trainings can lead to solidarity during specific campaigns. But logistical challenges, such as obtaining visas, can limit participation in international trainings.

This transnational orientation is complemented by a ***decolonial approach,*** understood here as engaging in a critical analysis of existing structures, both globally and within KURVE Wustrow's programme, and actively taking counter-measures to avoid reproducing inequalities when supporting conflict transformation. KURVE Wustrow cannot negate the fact that it is located in a Western country, but is working through an instrument of international cooperation with partners based in 'Global South' countries, some of which were previously dominated by Western colonial powers. This calls for a necessary reflection on power dynamics at play and how to counter them through decolonial lenses. The interest for this topic varies greatly among different social movement partners.

One example of this approach is the South-North IPW, a pilot programme to counter-balance the traditional model of Europeans 'going south', which is applied so far by five IPWs throughout the whole CPS in Germany. In one instance, a founding member of what is now a social movement partner abroad was relocated to Germany, due to security reasons, and was subsequently tasked with conducting advocacy on behalf of this movement partner. KURVE Wustrow was able to employ this person as an IPW in Germany (seconded to a partner organisation within Germany) to work on the abovementioned task while taking on different roles at the same time. This programme is perceived as very beneficial, due to the social movement partner receiving clearly increased attention by policymakers, politicians and the public. At the same time, the German host organisation is being challenged to scrutinise its own practices and the structures it is working in. Nonetheless, it seems that the logic of 'reversing' the CPS model has not been fully applied: Whilst the peace worker is currently tasked with supporting a German NGO in its local work, the overall focus remains on advocacy support for the social movement partner abroad.

The South-South IPW model, applied in one case by deploying a peace worker from a conflict-affected country in the global south to a social movement partner in another global south conflict setting, has proven beneficial, too. Given that IPWs are not required to have a European passport, those who hold dual citizenship or have deep roots in the country of deployment can connect with partners at a deeper level. They can enhance trust and relationship-building because of a mutual chance for displaying empathy, thus gaining greater credibility. Whilst administrative burdens arise due to visa and residency challenges for non-European passport holders, which need to be addressed by the structure of the CPS programme, this model also forces Europeans to reflect on their own privileges.

Gender and intersectionality

Gender and intersectionality are critical considerations within the KURVE Wustrow programme, although their relevance is also perceived differently across contexts. Some partner movement groups are women-only and focus on gender issues, while others are described as rather male-dominated. This dynamic can present additional challenges for Western young female IPWs who may struggle to be taken seriously or to challenge gender norms within male-dominated partner movements.

In conclusion, KURVE Wustrow's communication and decision-making frameworks are designed to support effective collaboration and alignment with the mission to contribute to conflict transformation by supporting nonviolent social movements. While the communication structure presents challenges such as bottlenecks, efforts to enhance cross-linear communication could foster a stronger sense of joint endeavour and mutual understanding. Decision-making processes, guided by the principle of subsidiarity, aim to balance authority with collaborative input from social movement partners. Although varying across contexts, KURVE Wustrow is committed to flexibility, inclusivity and ethical considerations, ensuring that its engagements are ethical, inclusive and responsive to the complexities of global and local contexts. Continuously refining these processes, the efforts of KURVE Wustrow to maintain trusted and resilient partnerships contribute to achieving the desired impact on nonviolent conflict transformation.

3.3 Reaction to crisis

Building on KURVE Wustrow's established frameworks for communication and decision-making, this sub-section explores the organisation's response to crises. Crises pose significant challenges to the efficacy and adaptability of KURVE Wustrow's programming, but also vis-a-vis the responsiveness and care from the head office and the inherent culture clash between activism and professionalism.[7]

Adaptation and flexibility in programming

The ability to adapt and remain flexible in response to crises is an important pillar of KURVE Wustrow's programme supporting social movement actors, highlighting the importance of responsive and context-sensitive programming.

Partners' perceptions of programme response to crises

KURVE Wustrow's partners have diverse perceptions of how the programme reacts to crises. Some partners, such as those in Sudan and Myanmar, observe that while the core projects remain consistent, there is a significant shift in activities to address changing needs. These adjustments are typically the result of joint discussions, ensuring that the response is collaborative and context-specific. In contrast, partners in Israel note that while tools and approaches remain largely unchanged, there is a need for more adaptive strategies during crises.

Compared to other CPS programmes, KURVE Wustrow is perceived as having a high level of tolerance and flexibility in sustaining engagement during crises. This perception is not only based on the trust

7 In this report, professionalism is defined as working within a formal employment relationship, dedicated to a specific cause as part of one's profession. It does not suggest that professionalism and activism are mutually exclusive and that activism could not be pursued in a professional manner.

between KURVE Wustrow and its partners, enabling them to assume higher political and financial risks, but also on KURVE Wustrow's capacity to evaluate risks effectively, due to its proximity and deep involvement in the contexts it is operating in. This close relationship allows KURVE Wustrow to respond more accurately and promptly to the needs of its partners.

To ensure the safety and continued support of its staff, KURVE Wustrow has implemented security measures that allow IPWs and country coordinators to relocate to other countries, including Germany, for up to twelve months, while continuing to provide support to partners through virtual communication. Security relocation of social movement partners in an acute crisis is not a standard, which has been pointed out and strongly criticised, but IPWs and country coordinators were identified as providing support to partners in organising their own relocation themselves where necessary.

Scope and limits of adaptation

A major dilemma for KURVE Wustrow arises during periods of conflict escalation which are characterised by increased violence and repression. During such times, the scope for action narrows, and the ability to make a meaningful contribution to conflict transformation is constrained. Partners often need less training and more immediate support in the form of protection, emergency funding and solidarity/advocacy, which the CPS programme traditionally does not provide. As one partner aptly noted, 'you cannot talk about peace education when people are being bombed'. In response, KURVE Wustrow set up a donation account to support urgent needs that the programme could not cover, which proved to be highly effective in providing immediate relief.

In crisis contexts like Palestine/Israel, KURVE Wustrow has been supporting partners with organisational skills relevant for fundraising and meeting humanitarian needs, such as food and basic necessities. This support is crucial for the survival and resilience of social movements during periods of intense crisis. In situations where escalation affects the broader context, but not directly the partners of KURVE Wustrow, the CPS programme can serve to facilitate connections between partners and other organisations more severely impacted by the crisis. This bridge-building role enhances the collective resilience and support network of social movement actors.

Responsiveness and care by the head office

The responsiveness and care provided by KURVE Wustrow's head office are critical components in managing crises and supporting social movement actors effectively. This is carried out especially through the establishment of a Security Management System and backed by the overall responsiveness and support from the head office during crises.

Security Management System

KURVE Wustrow has established a comprehensive Security Management System aimed at mitigating the impact of security incidents, particularly in times of crisis and conflict escalation.

Central to this system is the crisis management team, composed of KURVE Wustrow staff from head office. The team coordinates directly with country coordinators and IPWs to implement crisis response measures and makes critical decisions on the way forward during crisis situations, balancing immediate safety concerns with longer-term programmatic goals.

While the crisis management team is crucial, research participants provided mixed feedback regarding its effectiveness. Decisions made by the crisis management team are partially perceived as restrictive by field staff members who feel that more flexible and context-sensitive approaches are needed. Additionally, there is a call for the crisis management team to remain engaged and responsive to local colleagues, even after evacuating KURVE Wustrow staff. After the initial evacuation in one context, although written feedback was provided and discussions occurred, there was a perceived lack of follow-up due to further ongoing crises in other contexts.

Overall however, KURVE Wustrow is committed to learning and improving its crisis response strategies. This reflective approach aims to enhance KURVE Wustrow's overall responsiveness and effectiveness in supporting social movement actors in escalating contexts.

Mitigation measures

Generally, KURVE Wustrow's head office is perceived as responsive and caring, particularly during times of war. Regular check-ins and calls to ensure partners' safety have been noted positively. However, this responsiveness comes with increased demands on IPWs during crises, leading to perceptions of disconnection from their partners.

During crises, KURVE Wustrow has offered additional support in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, although this was not universally desired by all partners due to cultural differences. In some instances, KURVE Wustrow has undertaken advocacy efforts, such as writing positioning papers, demonstrating a commitment to supporting partners beyond immediate financial and logistical needs. This willingness to take also political risks is underpinned by a relationship of trust and solidarity with its partners, distinguishing it from traditional donor-implementer dynamics.

Culture clash

The culture clash between activism and professionalism is a central theme in KURVE Wustrow's programme on supporting nonviolent social movements, becoming particularly pronounced during times of crisis and escalating conflict. This clash manifests itself in several ways, highlighting the inherent tensions and disconnections faced by IPWs, partners and the head office.

Tension between activism and professionalism

In crisis situations, the fundamental tension between activism and professionalism is exacerbated. IPWs, driven by their commitment to social movements and the immediate needs of their partners, often find themselves at odds with the structured and procedural approach of the head office. During war or intense conflict, IPWs feel responsible to be available for emergencies 'around the clock'. This demand clashes with the structured work hours and limited office time foreseen by KURVE Wustrow's professional guidelines. For instance, while IPWs might adapt personal and professional plans to remain on the ground and support their partners, KURVE Wustrow staff at the head office are perceived to be still working as usual, for instance by following part-time schedules or taking leave with their families as planned, thus creating at times a sense of disconnection and frustration. One respondent described this gap between KURVE Wustrow and the social movements as being rooted in a lack of capacities on 'cultural communication'.

Challenges for IPWs

IPWs often develop a closer relationship with their social movement partners than with the head office, thus fostering a strong sense of solidarity and mutual support. However, this closeness also underscores their outsider status, especially when they lose physical access to the country during crises, leaving their local colleagues to manage the situation alone. Partners, as well as IPWs, are often willing to take personal risks to continue their work despite a crisis. This willingness to accept personal risk stands in contrast to the crisis management team's primary objective, which is to minimise risks for KURVE Wustrow staff. This divergence in priorities can lead to conflicting interests and strategies.

This process highlights the cultural divide between the realities faced by activists and social movement partners on the ground, with the professionalised IPWs finding themselves 'in the middle', and the more detached, risk-averse stance of staff at head office. Therefore, IPWs described their role as a shield, acting as intermediaries between those clashing needs and priorities in times of crisis. They protect and support their partners by managing requests and demands from the head office, ensuring that the immediate needs and safety of their partners are prioritised.

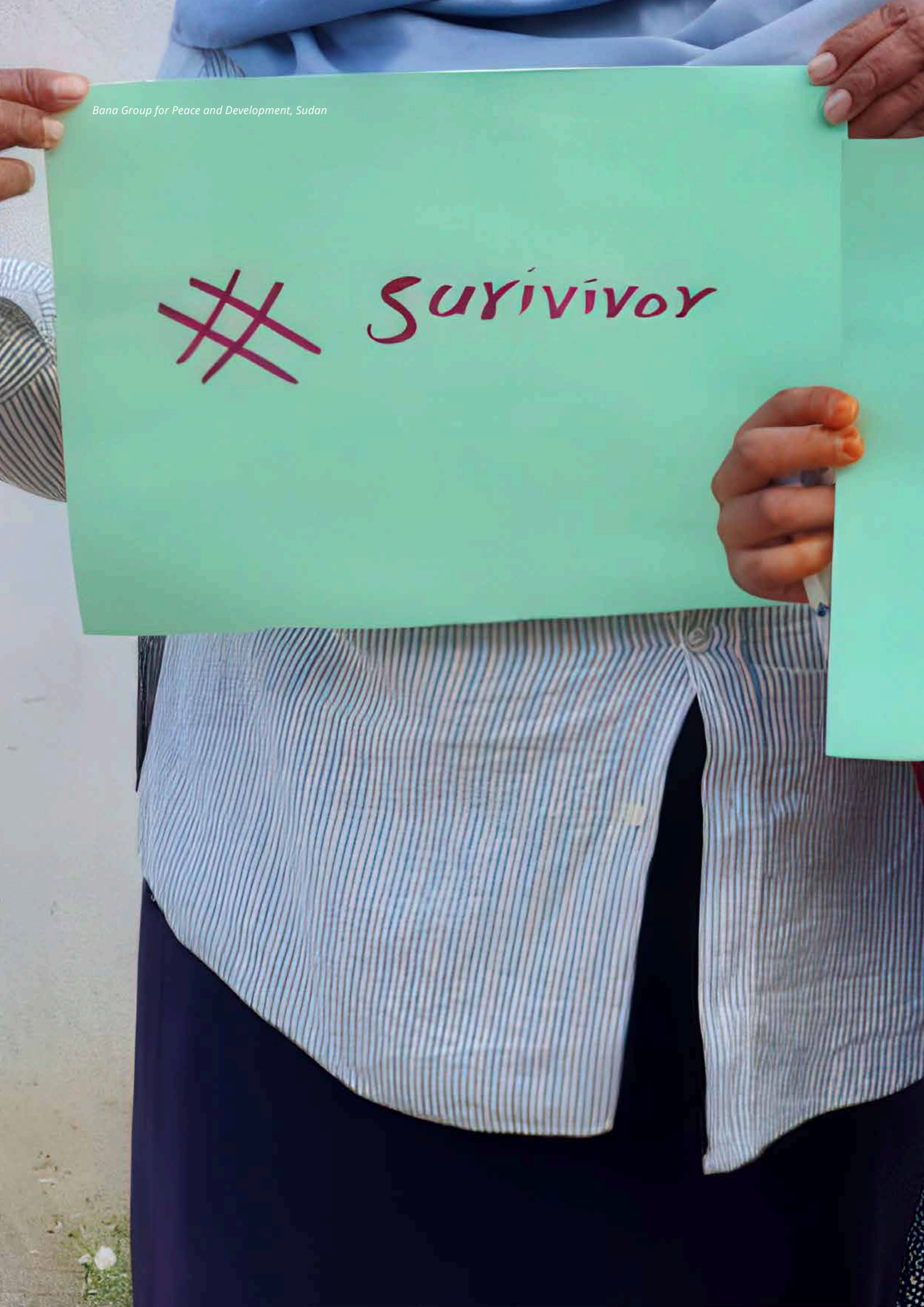
Powerlessness and professionalism

The evacuation of IPWs during crises further compounds the culture clash. Despite being physically removed from the conflict zone, IPWs continue to feel a deep sense of responsibility towards their partners. However, their inability to contribute meaningfully from outside of the country generates feelings of powerlessness and frustration. This sense of disconnection is intensified when the conflict is politically sensitive and evaluations and directives from external bodies, such as the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO), add another layer of bureaucracy and professionalism.

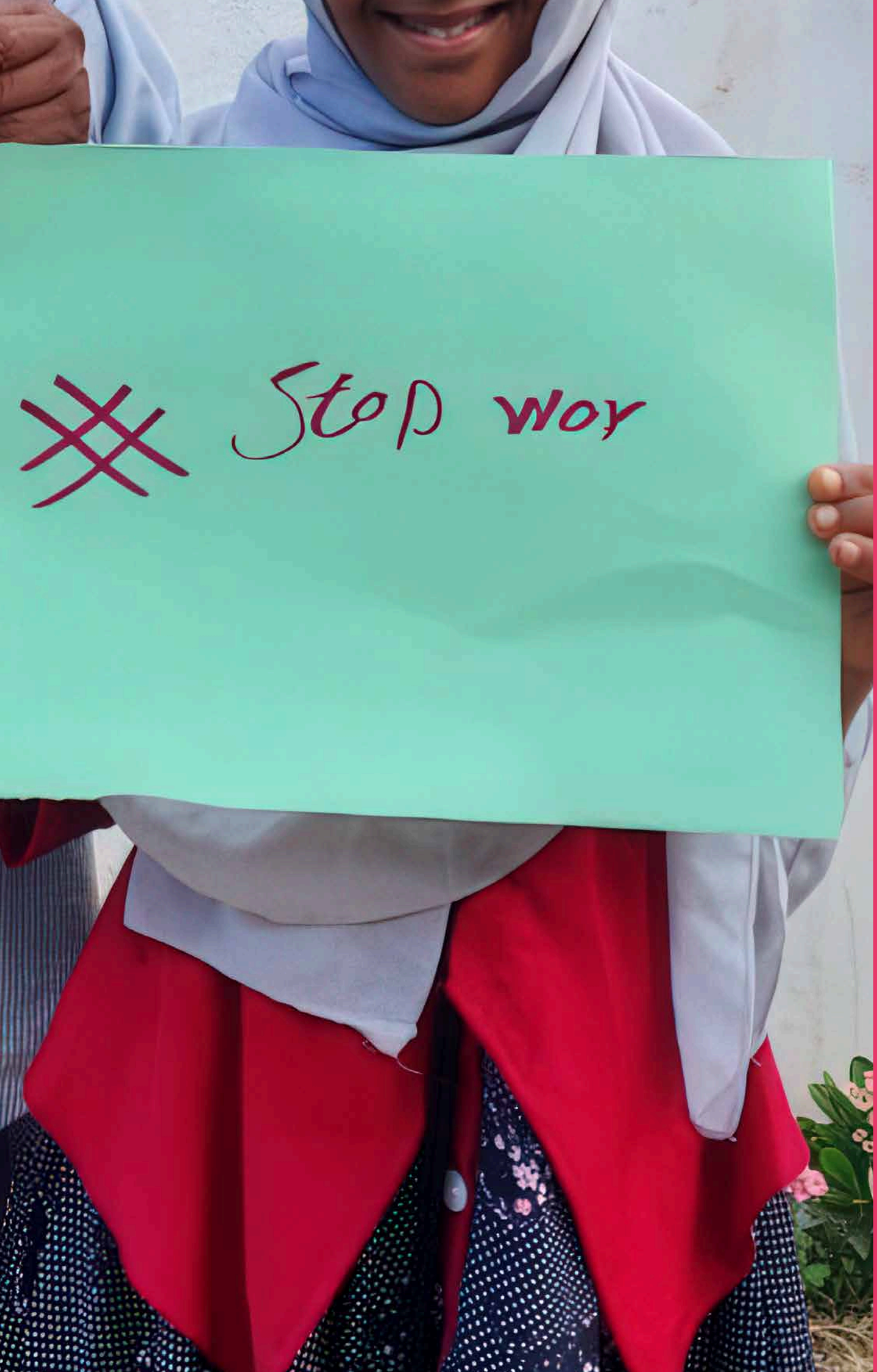
The dependency on evaluations and approvals, be it from bodies like the GFFO or the crisis management team, exemplifies the bureaucratic challenges that can be perceived as hindrances to swift, effective responses in crisis situations. Activists and partners, driven by urgent needs and the desire for rapid action, frequently find themselves constrained by the need to navigate these bureaucratic hurdles, leading to tension and discontent.

This underscores the broader culture clash between the agility and immediacy of activism and the procedural, often slow-moving nature of professional bureaucracies. In times of crisis, the dedication and willingness of IPWs and partners to take personal risks exemplify the spirit of activism, whilst the structured and more risk-averse approach of the head office and the associated bureaucratic processes reflect the professional nature of the CPS. Addressing this culture clash is essential for enhancing KURVE Wustrow's responsiveness, effectiveness and overall support for social movement actors in times of crisis.

Overall, this study found KURVE Wustrow to have a strong ability to navigate crisis and escalating situations by supporting social movement actors through an emphasis on adaptation and flexibility. KURVE Wustrow demonstrates its commitment to meeting the evolving needs of its partners during crises. This adaptability is evident in the collaborative efforts to address immediate needs, such as protection, funding and advocacy. KURVE Wustrow's structure, exemplified by a robust Security Management System, ensures preparedness, prevention and swift response to crises, although there are areas for improvement in contextual understanding and follow-ups. However, a challenge lies in the culture clash between activism and professionalism, which becomes particularly pronounced during crises. By continually working on addressing these inherent tensions, KURVE Wustrow can further strengthen its role in supporting social movement partners during times of crisis.



Bana Group for Peace and Development, Sudan



Outcome Assessment

Section 4

Outcome Assessment

Assessing intervention outcomes—both intended and unintended ones—is always a difficult task, especially without a specific evaluation methodology. For this study, we rely mainly on the (subjective) assessment of interviewees and focus group participants to get insights into the specific contributions of the CPS programme towards achieving both the objectives of the project and the aspirations of social movement partners. In addition, project documents such as donor reports and past evaluations were used as data sources.

The current context of open warfare in Myanmar, Palestine/Israel and Sudan severely limits the scope for action and the tangible contributions which social movements can make towards the ultimate objective of transforming a conflict towards peace with justice. Unfortunately, this seems hardly achievable in the near or even more distant future. It makes sense, therefore, to focus on intermediary, achievable outcomes that are within the scope of action of KURVE Wustrow's movement partners. The intended outcomes of the CPS engagement in the four contexts (including Sri Lanka), as formulated in the country strategies and donor reports, are quite diverse and have evolved over time. In order to rely on common benchmarks across the four contexts, this section assesses the various contributions of the CPS projects involving social movement actors. The assessment is done along the two dimensions of the Curle diagram presented in Section 2, i.e.: 1) increased awareness on the realities of the conflict and the need for social change (cognitive dimension), and 2) shift in power dynamics from asymmetric to balanced/equitable relationship (power dimension).

4.1 Cognitive shifts towards greater awareness and understanding of conflict dynamics

As stated in Section 2, the theory of conflict transformation in asymmetric power relationships starts from the premise that nonviolent action helps to 'educate' (Curle 1971), 'awaken' (Francis 2002) or create 'political awareness' (Lederach 1995) among various groups in society on the realities of injustice, inequality, oppression or other forms of structural violence which lie at the root of the conflict. How does KURVE Wustrow's engagement with social movement actors in conflict-affected societies contribute to an enhanced knowledge and awareness, both domestically (within movements and the contexts in which they evolve) and on the international stage? We identified three main types of cognitive shifts that can be directly or indirectly attributed to the CPS programme.

Self-awareness of the need for nonviolent social change

For marginalised communities to mobilise against structural violence, they first need to be conscious and well informed about the social and political conditions which impede their rights and about the strategies to address them. Through the CPS programme, social movements supported by KURVE Wustrow have developed their own self-awareness in various ways.

In one context, the dissemination of substantive knowledge among social movement activists, both on human rights violations and ways to counter them, is seen as a core part of the CPS strategy, according to various project proposals and reports. A civil society forum supported by KURVE Wustrow's partner organisation in another context holds weekly meetings where volunteers and activists discuss and educate themselves about the various forms of violence (direct, structural, cultural) which are pervasive in their society and impede the attainment of positive peace. A third example comes from the cooperation with a grassroots women's group, which enabled women from the local community to self-reflect on the hardships of life under military occupation. They then realised that they could play a role in documenting this reality for themselves and the outside world as a way of displaying their capacity to act and contributing to awareness-raising.

The relevant trainings facilitated by IPWs and their process support roles do not only help social movement actors to reflect on the problems they face, but also to build their knowledge base on how to address them constructively through nonviolent action. One research respondent highlighted the added value of the cooperation with KURVE Wustrow for convincing pro-democracy activists to remain committed to nonviolence in the midst of armed conflict and despite the state's brutal repression, thanks to trainings on human rights and strategic discussions on how to break the cycle of violence. This achievement may also be attributed to the strong emphasis placed in the CPS country strategy on inclusive peace education for multipliers and marginalised groups. According to another activist, his group also benefited from the acquired knowledge and capacity to boost its self-confidence and assertiveness and to be more strategic in its planning and advocacy strategies.

Shifts in dominant narratives and social norms

Capacity-building support by KURVE Wustrow does not only enhance knowledge among movement actors and their communities on the main drivers of armed conflict, such as political oppression and external occupation. It also contributes to their increased awareness of other patterns of social and power inequality. According to respondents, some activists who took part in tailor-made and international trainings developed a new understanding around gender and identity. They realised, for example, the need to counter ethnic supremacy and to strengthen women within their own movements as well as in broader society—also among ethnic majority communities.

In conflicts over national liberation or minority rights, the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance by aggrieved and marginalised groups should not only be assessed through their own self-awakening, but also through the prism of public consciousness and challenged narratives by the 'other side', i.e. the dominant ethnic or social group. In Israel, KURVE Wustrow cooperates with several social movement initiatives (or movement-support organisations) whose main purpose is to counter dominant militaristic and racist narratives within the Jewish majority society and to raise awareness on Palestinian hardships and realities under occupation, human rights violations and discrimination. In Sri Lanka, one of the main strategic objectives of the cooperation with informal networks and initiatives within the Tamil community in the North-East is to raise awareness among power-holders on the need to come to terms with the 1983-2009 war through a transitional justice process. Although the rise of an authoritarian populist government after 2019 closed the space for constructive dialogue interaction on these issues, the combination of active protest, public advocacy and meetings with local government actors have contributed to raising the topic in public debates.

International sensitisation to conflict transformation needs

As highlighted earlier, one of the most significant functions of external support actors in nonviolent campaigns is to amplify the voices and grievances of activists on the international stage. Indeed, although IPWs are tasked not to conduct direct advocacy or solidarity work, they use various means to provide platforms for social movement partners in Germany or at EU level.

Across the four contexts, multiple channels have been used to help movement actors and their causes being seen and heard on the international stage. For example, network-building with embassies in Sri Lanka or European speaking tours for Palestinian women and youth activists had a positive impact on their visibility and, by consequence, on the credibility and influence of their movement back home. Policy-focused publications, media appearances and informational newsletters, facilitated by IPWs and head office staff, play a similar role. According to an evaluation of KURVE Wustrow's programming in Palestine/Israel, the most effective approach for movements to attract international sympathy and media interest for their cause is to showcase a combination of hard facts (e.g. on human rights violations) and personal stories. In doing so, KURVE Wustrow not only helps to give a voice to the voiceless, but also promotes its overall approach to social movement support within the general public as well as the peacebuilding and donor community.

4.2 Power shifts towards justice and equity

Awareness-raising is a potent force for change, but only if it leads to action. Hence, the outcomes of social movement mobilisation, with support from KURVE Wustrow, should also be assessed through the prism of power shifts which occur from within, across social sectors, among the high-power group and through international action.

Self-empowerment ('power within')

One of the most tangible markers of success of the cooperation with KURVE Wustrow, according to social movement partners, has been their strengthened capacity to organise, mobilise, stay active and feel safe and protected.

For some interlocutors, organisational development in the context of CPS projects is an important step towards sustainability, resilience and access to resources. Hence, they see the professionalisation of their movement and the development of effective working structures (e.g. to be able to handle donor reporting requirements) as an important outcome in itself, while recognising the risks of NGOisation as depicted in Section 3. Along the logic of movement building (MOVE 2023)[8], the CPS programme allows marginalised groups to become better organised while preserving their autonomous capacity to act. In Sri Lanka, thanks to the support and accompaniment provided by KURVE Wustrow and its partner organisation, families of the disappeared have been able to develop an independent structure for themselves and become self-organised. In addition, the support provided through knowledge-building on transitional justice has helped them to develop and formulate concrete demands towards the government.

8 MOVE (2023). Building a movement mindset: A guide for civil society organisations. MOVE: The Global Social Movement Center. Available at: https://issuu.com/globalplatforms/docs/building_a_movement_mindset_web_3?fr=xKAE9_zU1NQ

Another facet of self-empowerment is the capacity to mobilise and conduct mass-based campaigns. The research uncovered many examples of individual or collective activism made possible, or being at least encouraged, by the CPS programme. According to respondents, many former KURVE Wustrow trainees felt empowered to fight for their rights thanks to the trainings, which encouraged them to take visible roles in the nonviolent revolutions in Sudan and Myanmar or evolve 'from speaking little English to speaking at the UN'. Moreover, the support provided by the CPS scheme allowed movements to strengthen the base of support and to mobilise more inclusively, by diversifying tactics and enabling women or marginalised community members to participate actively.

The capacity to stay engaged and mobilised despite the outbreak of war or under heavy repression is also highlighted as a tangible outcome of the CPS cooperation. Strengthening the resilience and steadfastness, or '*sumud*' in Arabic, of nonviolent human-rights-based movements is one of the key objectives of the CPS engagement in Palestine/Israel. According to movement partners globally, they would certainly continue to mobilise without KURVE Wustrow, but thanks to its financial, technical and moral support, they have felt encouraged and empowered to stay active and continue enlarging and strengthening their movement even during the current crises.

Alliance-building ('power with')

For social movements to challenge an unequal status quo, they need to be able to reach out to various communities and build diverse and inclusive alliances across ethnic, religious, regional, gender or class differences. The strength of KURVE Wustrow partners in various instances is that they are connected with various local grassroots initiatives. IPWs can hence support movement building by playing a bridging and connecting role between them. In Palestine for instance, they facilitate regular exchange, encourage joint activism and foster cohesion between different groups which might not work together otherwise, given the infrastructural and administrative barriers of the occupation regime which divides and separates people across the West Bank. One specific example is a joint olive harvest action, carried out by a partner initiative with CPS funds during the Covid-19 pandemic (i.e. when international activists who usually take on this role could not enter the country), in order to protect villagers from settler attacks during the harvest season. It brought together various voluntary groups from all over the West Bank, thus illustrating the bonding role of movements, the added value of flexible funding schemes as well as the rich repertoire of nonviolent action which, in this example, plays a strong symbolic, constructive and protective role.

Challenging the status quo through co-resistance and protective allies ('power over')

One of the main strategies of civil resistance to change the status quo consists in weakening the power of the opponent (e.g. a repressive regime) by winning over its 'pillars' or support bases through defections within the ranks of the administration, security forces or economic and cultural elites. In times of active war, when polarisation is at its highest, the possibilities of influencing state institutions and other decision-making structures are highly limited. In Myanmar, an impressive number of civil servants joined the resistance against the coup by forming a civil disobedience movement, but this has not led to a significant behavioural shift on the part of the military junta. However, the coalescence of Bamar ethnic majority groups and resistance movements from secessionist regions, which occurred during the 2021 people power movement, has been unprecedented in Myanmar's history.

In Palestine/Israel, similar dynamics of solidarity and co-resistance between high and low power groups have emerged, which KURVE Wustrow seeks to encourage and strengthen by supporting joint nonviolent initiatives for equal rights and an end of the occupation, for the benefit of both societies. These initiatives might not necessarily succeed in challenging the status quo, but they build the basis for a paradigm shift, whereby both communities support and protect each other and jointly uphold their rights. Even in the midst of the current war, Israeli activists have sustained their protective work on behalf of Palestinians at risk, which demonstrates the resilience of the co-resistance bonds created or strengthened through the CPS partnership.

In Sri Lanka, the social crisis surrounding the state bankruptcy in 2022, which led to mass protests in the city of Colombo, presented a unique opportunity for co-mobilisation between activists from Tamil and Sinhala communities. The CPS project helped to facilitate discussions and networking between groups of protesters from the North, East and the capital, thus contributing to a better mutual understanding among them. One result of these discussions was a joint statement by various organisations, including KURVE Wustrow partners, on the economic and political crisis.[9]

International solidarity and leverage ('power through')

Finally, the outcomes of KURVE Wustrow's cooperation with nonviolent social movement actors on power dynamics in conflict-affected environments can also be assessed through the prism of transnational solidarity and international leverage. On the one hand, IPWs and country coordinators are themselves part of the ecosystem of peer-solidarity, and their sole presence on the ground can act as a source of moral support. This was highly appreciated by an interviewed activist who commends these peers for 'standing with [them] all the time'. As described earlier, they also help to create and sustain a transnational peer network. On the other hand, by accompanying partners in their international advocacy, IPWs can help building a network of diplomatic and protective support for activists at risk. Solidarity lawyers and human rights defence funds successfully took on court cases in Sri Lanka and Israel, thanks to international pressure. The demands and concerns of human rights defenders supported by the CPS project were also included in the 2022 Annual Report of the UN Human Rights Commission.

However ultimately, a real impact can only be achieved if international leverage and pressure applied on duty bearers result in behavioural or policy changes on the domestic level. Given the highly repressive and violent state practices currently at play in Myanmar, Sudan, Palestine/Israel and Sri Lanka, it is hard to imagine how a small Germany-based NGO such as KURVE Wustrow could influence such drastic changes on the ground. However, given the modest size and funding scope of CPS projects and the highly challenging conditions in which they operate, the sample of small but tangible successes highlighted in this section is nothing less than remarkable.

9 Joint Tamil Civil Society Statement: Sri Lanka's Political and Economic Crisis, from 14 July 2022, retrieved on 21 July 2024 via http://adayaalam.org/joint-tamil-civil-society-statement-sri-lankas-political-and-economic-crisis/.

4.3 From 'revolution' to 'resolution'?

As argued in Section 2, asymmetric conflicts can only be sustainably transformed through a combination of nonviolent action and peacebuilding strategies. Most examples highlighted so far illustrate social movements' ability to influence agendas, raise demands, build coalitions and apply pressure through the power of civil resistance and advocacy. However, it still needs to be assessed whether cooperation with nonviolent social movements in contexts of civil war can also contribute to building more peaceful societies. Some of the aforementioned dynamics go in this direction, for instance through strengthening commitment to nonviolent activism, which inhibits patterns of polarisation and escalation; or by facilitating alliance building across diverse societal groups, which paves the ground for future peaceful coexistence. Therefore, it can be argued that the partnerships between KURVE Wustrow and activist movements contribute to advancing both justice AND peace.

In the CPS country strategies for the four contexts under study, a number of intended outcomes are formulated with an explicit peacebuilding orientation, by referring to processes such as accountability and reconciliation or building trust and promoting inclusive narratives. In fact, interviews and evaluation studies brought up a few activities conducted by KURVE Wustrow with movement partners which can be linked to the aforementioned objectives. These include, for example, small-scale contributions to transitional justice and memorialisation by Tamil activists in Sri Lanka as well as contributions to building alternative narratives about a shared future (e.g. through 'future stories' workshops) in Palestine/Israel. Many activists also took part in trainings on nonviolent communication which they learnt to apply in their immediate surroundings. Furthermore, IPWs are sometimes called upon to mediate in conflicts within or between social movement groups. It is unclear, however, whether mediation and dialogue skills are also part of the trainings offered to activists themselves so that they can usefully apply them in their own society.

Going back to the conflict transformation cycle depicted in Figure 1, three out of the four contexts in which KURVE Wustrow's social movement partners operate can be characterised as an open violent conflict (stage 2). In such conditions, peace with justice can hardly be attained without a negotiated political settlement (stage 3). It remains to be seen whether, when formal peace processes will be on the horizon, these actors will be able to use their agency, acquired skillset and mobilisation power to influence their trajectories and outcomes, moving towards a positive peace.

The banner with the slogan 'Up Against Dictator Shit' was splashed with red paint, symbolising blood, during a performance. A protest organised by Thai and Myanmar activists on the anniversary of the Myanmar military coup. Chiang Mai, Thailand. Foto: Anonym

Conclusion and Recommendations

Section 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

KURVE Wustrow's engagement with social movements in conflict transformation presents both challenges as well as significant opportunities. The integration of peacebuilding and nonviolent action is central to KURVE Wustrow's approach, addressing conflicts at multiple levels and promoting sustainable peace through justice and human rights.

A key strength of KURVE Wustrow's approach lies in its flexibility and adaptability. The organisation has established high levels of trust with its grassroots partners, enabling strong and sustainable collaborations. Its background as a social movement itself enhances its credibility and legitimacy with partners who value the shared ethos. This is reinforced by the flexibility of KURVE Wustrow's funding structures, allowing movements to allocate resources according to their immediate needs, which is crucial in volatile conflict settings. Additionally, the adaptable role of IPWs ensures support tailored to the evolving demands of social movement partners. KURVE Wustrow also contributes to conflict transformation by creating networks between local and transnational movements, facilitating knowledge exchange and joint advocacy efforts which strengthen collective capacity and amplify grassroots voices on the international stage.

However, significant challenges remain. One key concern is the risk of 'NGOisation', whereby grassroots movements may lose their flexibility and autonomy due to their reliance on institutional funding, thus facing the risk of becoming more bureaucratised and vulnerable to political criticism. Furthermore, KURVE Wustrow's administrative requirements, such as structured planning and reporting, often clash with the spontaneous, agile nature of grassroots movements, making it difficult for them to remain flexible. IPWs, who navigate between these contrasting needs, face a particular challenge in balancing the structured approach of KURVE Wustrow with the fluidity and dynamism of social movements. Security risks also pose a serious challenge, as local activists can face persecution when being associated with foreign entities. In addition, the high turnover of KURVE Wustrow staff can hamper the continuity of engagement and relationship-building, whilst the reliance on political approval from the GFFO can create additional challenges, particularly in sensitive areas like Palestine/Israel.

These lessons learnt from KURVE Wustrow's twelve years of experience provide a solid foundation for future strategies. Continuously reflecting on its role and methods, KURVE Wustrow can adapt to the unique dynamics of each conflict context, ensuring that its support remains relevant and impactful. Strengthening the infrastructure and knowledge management of the CPS programme will further enhance resilience and predictability, while also fostering networks and exchange to contribute to solidarity and mutual learning among social movement actors globally.

KURVE Wustrow's innovative approach, grounded in its historical legacy and practical experience, provides valuable lessons for the broader peacebuilding and development cooperation communities. Its experience serves as a powerful demonstration of the feasibility and value of peacebuilding engagement with social movement actors. Despite persisting challenges, the successes achieved through

these partnerships highlight the potential for social movements to contribute meaningfully to conflict transformation. This engagement provides an impressive example of how international support actors can contribute to positive change by helping grassroots initiatives to become more resilient and impactful, thus reinforcing the importance of supporting social movements in peacebuilding. It contributes to the ongoing discussion among agencies for development and international cooperation in Europe and beyond about using government funding to support social movements and conflict transformation complementarily. Providing examples and sharing lessons learnt from the past twelve years can yield a significant policy impact in this area.

By implementing the recommendations offered below, KURVE Wustrow can further strengthen its crucial role in conflict contexts, supporting grassroots social movements striving for peace and justice and advancing sustainable conflict transformation.

Recommendations relating to KURVE's approach and strategy

1 Continuously reflect on the social movement partners' autonomy and sustainability

Living up to the principle of local ownership, social movement partners need to be able to sustain themselves autonomously and end the cooperation with KURVE Wustrow at any time, if required. This is also the sign of a true eye-level partnership.

- Proactively support the diversification of funding sources of social movement partners as a priority of the cooperation in order to alleviate their dependency on the CPS scheme.
- Draft and re-evaluate exit strategies for KURVE Wustrow vis-a-vis both social movement partners and country engagements.
- Define indicators for when the 'greatest added value' has been achieved with the capacities and resources provided by KURVE Wustrow.
- Constantly reflect on processes of NGOisation together with the movement partners and work jointly on strategies how to counter such dynamics if they are not desired.
- Consider alternative forms or partnership and collaboration with long-term social movement partners, beyond the Civil Peace Service.

2 Expand the use of advocacy together with social movement partners

Increased advocacy towards the BMZ on funding requirements (e.g. increased or more flexible funding), was mentioned as a priority by the overwhelming majority of interviewees. This will be raised below (under Recommendation 9), while recognising that KURVE Wustrow has already achieved quite a unique level of funding flexibility and sustainability for its CPS projects as a result of previous and continued advocacy efforts conducted with other CPS agencies towards the donor. This work should be continued. For now, we rather emphasise more programmatic advocacy needs for KURVE Wustrow and its partners.

- Expand the supporting structures for advocacy work of the social movement partners to German and international stakeholders; clarify roles and responsibilities; define an advocacy strategy with each partner and/or jointly with all partners in a given context.
- Develop clear targets for the advocacy work and connect social movement partners more directly with German and other embassies in the countries they are working and/or residing in. This can both benefit partners' outreach and embassies' access to perspectives from grassroots movements with whom they might usually not be in direct contact.
- Use the network of KURVE Wustrow to connect social movement partners with other INGOs and CPS partners, as well as their networks.

- Coordinate, where appropriate, joint advocacy with other CPS projects, focused on specific countries or regions.

- Use success stories and outcomes from this programme to advocate for the importance and effectiveness of working with social movements in contributing to conflict transformation.

3 Bring peacebuilding tools and approaches into the picture

This recommendation is based on the authors' perspective and reflection on the delicate question of 'Walking the Line' between peacebuilding and social movement activism, which requires a thorough analysis in order to not impose any preconceived outside agenda. The interviews have shown that the 'peacebuilding toolkit' is rarely used or applied in cooperation with social movement partners, and those partners may not always be aware of it or able to access it.

- Reflect with current and incoming KURVE Wustrow staff on the potential of peacebuilding approaches and methodologies in the respective conflicts and, if deemed useful, integrate such tools (e.g. systemic conflict analysis, dialogue facilitation, mediation and negotiation skills, alliance building, reconciliation etc.) into the generic training programme for IPWs.

- Consider peacebuilding and related skills-trainings as part of the support tools offered to social movement actors. This can help preparing them for intra-movement dialogue and mediation with the aim of uniting demands and building coalitions, but also for the conduct of dialogue and negotiation with other conflict parties (armed groups, security forces, government actors etc.).[10]

- Coordinate and connect more closely with other actors applying peacebuilding approaches, including other CPS implementing agencies, and facilitate contacts on behalf of the social movement partners.

4 Continue to practice reflexivity on the challenges, dilemmas and opportunities of the approach

Reflexivity, i.e. critical self-reflection and readiness to be challenged and question one's assumptions, is understood as an important quality within KURVE Wustrow, to which the commissioning of this action research gives testimony. However, there are a number of strategic topics and questions that require further, and continuous, attention. These include:

- *KURVE Wustrow as a social movement:* Does KURVE Wustrow consider itself as a social movement actor or rather as a movements support actor?

- *Specificities of working with social movement actors:* Does the uniqueness of this work lie in the organisational features of partners (informal, unpaid activists) or their tactics (nonviolent action/confronting power)? Or does it rather imply a certain mind-set on behalf of KURVE Wustrow which might equally be applied when working with other types of partners, such as more established NGOs?

10 One resource which can be usefully applied for this is the USIP manual Synergising Nonviolent Action and Peacebuilding (Block and Schirch 2019).

- *Criteria for starting new partnerships:* What are the specific requirements to start a partnership with social movements and are the predefined 'red lines' still valid? What are the related benefits and risks of engagement for both sides?

- *Mandate and theory of change in violent conflict situations:* What can nonviolent action achieve in such contexts? Should the objectives be adapted, moving away from the ambitious goal of conflict transformation and focusing on more modest aims, such as shifting discourses on violence, enhancing resilience and survival of the most marginalised, or showing solidarity in a 'movement spirit'?

- *Gap between professionalism and activism, reflected by the remuneration of IPWs and country coordinators:* The current system of the CPS is not 'competitive' vis-a-vis other international organisations, especially considering the hardship of living and working conditions. Increasing the remuneration of IPWs might attract more experienced employees but, on the other hand, it would increase the power gap between KURVE Wustrow staff and social movement partners. Decreasing salaries (e.g. following the volunteering scheme of Peace Brigades International) might attract more 'activist minded' but also more junior staff members.

SUMUD garden activities of women in in Al-Walajah/Occupied Palestinian territories. Sumud means steadfastness.
Foto: Katja Volkenant/KURVE Wustrow

Recommendations relating to KURVE Wustrow's working modalities

5 Strengthen the 'infrastructure' and knowledge management of the CPS programme

A solid working structure for cooperation with social movement actors is the basis for resilient and predictable support given by an international NGO. It is crucial to ensure continuity and clarity in the approach and its presentation to staff and partners.

- Create regular opportunities for exchange across reporting lines, such as regular meetings with finance and administrative staff of KURVE Wustrow, IPWs and partner organisations (if this is wanted by all those involved). This can foster the feeling of working in one joint effort and counter a perception of head office versus 'field staff'.

- Consult more closely with social movement partners on new administrative guidelines (i.e. reporting formats).

- Strengthen staff retention and avoid high turnover rates, specifically at head office, in order to ensure desk officers have a 'historical memory' on the programme's legacy and lessons learnt.

- Key information on the running of CPS projects seems to be scattered across various documents and files, outlining their mandate, approach, support strategies, methodologies etc., without a clear structure in place and no visible clarity about when they were produced or adopted (i.e. no clear files dating system). Hence, the team should review all the existing documents and develop as well as continuously update a comprehensive storage system or guideline encompassing all relevant information.

- Where possible, due to the confidentiality of information, use agile programmes and software to facilitate joint work in digital spaces.

- Strengthen local support structures to facilitate the introductory training of IPWs, specifically for South-South IPWs.

- Consider re-introducing the position of an Advisor on Social Movements to work on these recommendations.

6 Make the specific role of IPWs in social movements a unique selling point

The flexibility of the role of IPWs is both a challenge and an opportunity for the development of a unique working model, connecting closely to grassroots social movements. To use this opportunity to the fullest, it is recommended that IPWs are provided organisational support and given the possibility to reflect on their own position and embrace the post they are going to fill.

- Communicate clearly the requirement for flexibility and the scope for creative engagement when advertising positions.

- Prioritise language skills as a criterion for selection to enable trust-building between the partners and the IPW.

- Offer specific preparation and reflection sessions for the IPWs' induction into the programme with social movement partners and develop a buddy-system with regular check-ins over the first four to six months between 'new' and 'old' IPWs.

- Facilitate trialogues (head office or country coordinator, movement partners and IPW) to manage expectations.

7 Foster networking and exchange across the contexts and social movement partners

Networking and exchange across several contexts require time and commitment on the side of the social movement partners and can appear overwhelming, especially in times of crisis. At the same time, such spaces for peer-exchange can be beneficial also in the midst of conflict escalation, as partners can articulate or receive expressions of international solidarity and feel less alone in their hardships.

- Establish solid networks (local, regional and/or international) which are accessible by various entities and individuals, rather than relying on a bottleneck of individual connections by single staff members.

- Facilitate more peer-exchange, peer-learning and study trips between social movement partners across the four contexts. Research respondents stressed the value of such interactions and the benefits of personal contact. Topics for such exchanges might include e.g. MHPSS, Dealing with the Past or gendered challenges of conflict and crisis.

- Develop training hubs in other locations than Wustrow to facilitate South-South learning and enhance accessibility by avoiding travel restrictions to Europe. Position KURVE Wustrow as a coordinator, not as the centre of a network.

- Link up with other German voluntary and activist structures, both in support to social movement partners as well as their outreach and advocacy needs. This will enable head office staff to reconnect with their own roots of activism and, hence, strengthen their motivation.

- Discuss and clarify the meaning and opportunities of developing the vision of a transnational movement, advancing common causes in Europe and in CPS receiving countries (e.g. mobilisation against far-right nationalism, climate activism etc.). This seems useful if it is wished for by staff members and partners alike, while being cautious not to impose certain wishes and topics on the social movement partners.

8 Focus on gender-responsive, intersectional and decolonial approaches

The crosscutting aspects of the CPS programme on working with social movements are relevant throughout the engagement, but not equally considered in all contexts. In order to counter structural discriminations, it is important to offer (but not impose) spaces and approaches that are questioning and transforming these issues.

- Advocate for more South-North and South-South IPWs.
- Continue to highlight in the preparation trainings that gender and intersectionality are critical considerations within the KURVE Wustrow programme, although their relevance might be perceived differently across various contexts.
- Increase trainings and workshops facilitated by KURVE Wustrow staff and social movement partners from conflict-affected contexts.
- Consider women-specific peer-exchanges across contexts (e.g. between women's movements in Sudan and Palestine). In crisis settings, explore support options for relocation of local staff and their families and continue to provide support by the crisis management unit as long as the crisis is ongoing.

9 Prepare for security incidents together with the partner organisation

Inclusivity and local ownership are crucial considerations throughout the whole CPS programme when working with social movement actors in order to ensure its effectiveness and avoid negative impacts. This applies also to the management of (human) security.

- Focus on mental health and psychosocial support throughout the programme, specifically in the trainings and preparation courses for IPWs; plan for specific times of rest and recreation when participants of trainings and workshops travel from conflict-affected contexts and facilitate encounters specifically dedicated to MHPSS.
- Continue advocating with the donor for flexibility in the use of funds during a crisis (i.e. for humanitarian purposes) and showcase to partners what advocacy has already been done within the structures of the programme.
- Conduct solid context and risk analyses jointly with the social movement partners and offer more security trainings within the context.
- Integrate local colleagues/experts (temporarily or permanently) in the crisis management team.
- Communicate transparently about possible support options for partners as well as their limitations before a crisis occurs, in order to avoid clashing expectations when they erupt.

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Walking the Line

Strengthening Nonviolent Social Movements as an Approach to Conflict Transformation

A research report by Tilman Papesch and Véronique Dudouet, commissioned by KURVE Wustrow to Berghof Foundation.

The research 'Walking the Line' provides an analysis of KURVE Wustrow's cooperation with nonviolent social movements in Sudan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Palestine and Israel as a means of conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

Commissioned by KURVE Wustrow and conducted by Berghof Foundation between March and July 2024, the study examines KURVE Wustrow's engagement in various conflict contexts through the CPS programme, funded by BMZ. The report offers crucial insights into KURVE Wustrow's distinctive approach, practical applications, and lessons learned from its cooperation with grassroots social movements, with the intent to support their contributions towards the twin goals of peace and justice.

KURVE Wustrow was founded in 1980 with the aim of turning concerns about violent conflict into conscious nonviolent action. They conduct trainings, workshops and events in the field of civil, nonviolent conflict transformation in Germany and abroad. They send International Peace Workers as part of the 'Civil Peace Service' to selected crisis regions. For this purpose, KURVE Wustrow is closely cooperating with partner organisations in Eastern Europe, in the Middle East and in South Asia and Africa.

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