Curbing Violence

Development, Application, and the Sustaining of National Capacities for Conflict Prevention

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A contribution to

UNITED NATIONS WORLD BANK

FLAGSHIP STUDY

2017

Contents

Introduction

1.1 Aims, context, purpose

As drivers of political and social change conflicts are inevitable. However, violence in conflict and the intentional use of force are man-made and therefore not inevitable. Violence in conflict most often results from economic imbalances or structural weaknesses, from social stress and political grievances, and from the conflict dynamics themselves, especially when conflicting actors are privileged or marginalized in comparison to the other.

So far, the bulk of international investment in the prevention of violent conflicts has focused on the capacity to analyze the root causes and dynamics of escalation, and to decide on external interventions to mitigate tensions or to prevent social and political conflicts from deteriorating into violence. However, what can be learned from ample efforts to prevent violent conflicts in the past is that national actors, including parties to a conflict, are able to develop their own understanding of conflict dynamics and prepare for joint action to either prevent violent conflict or to hinder violent conflict from escalating further by taking the initiative and acting self-responsibly.

From the perspective of the international community, national efforts to prevent violent conflict, particularly in developing countries, are usually considered complementary or subsequent to initial international efforts of containment and external support to statebuilding. Yet the ability of domestic actors to establish their own national institutions, mechanisms and processes, with differing degrees of external support, has been widely overlooked. International knowledge about the root causes and drivers of violent conflict is by far more comprehensive and sophisticated than the understanding of the domestic dynamics that have led, or may bring about, processes through which a nation-wide resilience against violence can sustainably thrive. Delving into a deeper understanding of the actors, structures, and processes behind these national dynamics, as well as their successes and failures, could help draw conclusions about how to best provide targeted external support in future that is not imposed, but rather needed and appropriate. Such a deeper understanding can also help to identify promising entry points for providing effective support which helps to better address the root causes of (potential) violent conflict. This will thus allow more of a focus on the challenges of the long-term resilience and responsiveness of national capacities in the face of existing (or returning) incentives to use force in dealing with political and social conflicts.

Contributing to the new World Bank's Flagship Study on "National Ownership: Development, Application, and the Sustaining of National Capacities for Conflict

Prevention", this research study sheds light on and draws lessons from cases wherein specific national and related sub-national capacities for the prevention of violent political and social conflict were developed and applied by key domestic actors in internally-led processes of conflict prevention. In doing so, the research has focused on countries where complementary external support was provided through NGOs or by governments primarily under the development assistance umbrella. Hence, insights and recommendations from this research may also feed back into the Joint UNDP-DPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, which was launched first in 2004 and has been further developed since then (Joint UNDP-DPA Programme 2015: 6)

The purpose of this research study is

≡ to learn from six selected cases about creative national capacities, strategies and approaches to prevent violent conflict, and

≡ to identify if and how non-intrusive external support, including development assistance, can contribute to building or strengthening national capacities that allow for the peaceful settlement of disputes, the successful reaching of consensus around contested policies, and the meaningful dialogue necessary for reform-oriented and inclusive political coalitions.

The research examines factors that have prompted domestic actors to develop national capacities, elaborates on the relative success of these capacities and/or lack of results, and highlights the advantages as well as drawbacks that actors and stakeholders have experienced during the respective design and implementation processes.

1.2 Terminology

The key terms used in this research are *conflict prevention* and *national capacities*. *Conflict prevention* aims at creating a social and political environment which allows the root causes of the conflict to be addressed and which enhances sustained and nonviolent alternatives to the use of force. A conflict can be understood as an incompatible interaction between at least two actors whereby one of the actors experiences damage, and the other actor causes this damage intentionally or ignores it (Mason/Rychard 2005: 1). For the purpose of this study conflict is understood as violent political or social conflict; conflict prevention aims at preventing violence in political and social conflicts.

Conflict prevention entails four pillars of short to medium-term activities (Berghof Glossary 2012: pp. 11, 17) aiming at

- identifying conflict situations that could result in violence,
- reducing manifest tensions between the conflicting actors,
- preventing existing tensions from escalating, and
- removing sources of danger before violence occurs.

According to the WHO and Geneva Declaration Secretariat, "political violence describes the use of force towards a political end that is perpetrated to advance the position of a person or group defined by the political position in society." Social violence "refers to a broader manifestation of grievances, criminal behaviours and interpersonal violence in society (cited in OECD 2016: 20).

The term *national capacities* implies a prerogative of national authorities in sovereign states to resolve any internal crises self-responsibly. For the purpose of this research on conflict prevention, national capacities are understood as state or non-state institutions and mechanisms that have been built, or initiatives that have been undertaken, by national actors related to constructive dialogue and mediation as well as to conflict transformation and conflict resolution (Joint UNDP-DPA Program 2015: 6)

According to the UNDP evaluation office, national capacities should be considered open, endogenous systems. Open systems are non-linear and somewhat unpredictable, and they are constantly adapting to an environment that is volatile and dynamic. Finally, changes in one area of a national capacity may have immediate effects on other dynamics within the capacity, in the short or in the long run, and are dependent on context conditions.[1] In general, it should be understood that national capacities are unique and contextual and cannot be considered as blueprints or templates that can easily be replicated in other settings.

1.3   Methodology

The study's core element are selected case studies of national capacities that were designed and established for conflict prevention by national stakeholders and initiated by governmental or civil society actors. In addition the research draws on findings and conclusions from a desk review of available literature and relevant sources, including a joint Berghof Foundation–Swiss Development Cooperation–UNDP research study on "National Infrastructures for Peace"[2] and a joint EU-UNDP analytical Guidance Note on working with insider mediators.[3]

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[1] Definition and explanation adapted from 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening National Capacities' (2010), New York: UNDP, https://www.oecd.org/derec/undp/47871371.pdf, p. 3 (Retrieved 16 March 2017).
[2] Hans J. Giessmann, Embedded Peace. Infrastructures for Peace: Approaches and Lessons Learned (2016), New York: UNDP, SADC, and Berghof Foundation, Online version at: http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/

The research is based on the comparative findings from the following six country cases: Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Nepal, Peru, and Tunisia. Each case study review will:

≡ comprise a brief conflict background analysis;

≡ identify key actors and stakeholders;

≡ elaborate concisely on selected institutions, mechanisms and processes of the national capacities, and

≡ reflect on the design, implementation and support experiences.

Lastly, a synthesis of findings from this research provides preliminary conclusions and policy recommendations.

The complexity of national capacities for conflict prevention, including what could be named 'national infrastructures for peace', cannot be fully covered by the cases studies for this research. While focusing on a small number of selected, but particularly relevant and/or well-known capacities, the authors are aware of the conceptual limitations and lack of comprehensiveness of such an approach. However, the diversity of the capacities and cases under scrutiny, and the lessons learned from this research, provide some insights into the challenges that capacities for conflict prevention are facing, in particular with reference to their effectiveness and sustainability.

1.4   Selection and assessment of cases

One commonality in all cases selected for this study is that national conflicts were neither subject to Chapter VII decisions taken by the UN Security Council, nor were they the focus of any regional peace missions. Therefore, the sensitive issue of sovereignty did not play any role in the development and processes for these national capacities. Another commonality has been the widespread existence and experience of acute violence that has motivated national actors to seek effective prevention capacities. Consequently, in all cases under scrutiny, curbing already existing violence or mitigating the immediate risks of escalation as a short-term need is (or has been) the priority of designing capacities, at least for the initial phases. Addressing the root causes of the political and social violence was a secondary objective, if at all. Finally, according to the recent Global Peace Index all cases, with the exception of Kyrgyzstan, are medium-ranked, i.e. comparably stable to the composite peace indicators applied by the authors (GPI 2016: 10-15[4]).

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home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/infrastructures-for-peace--approaches-and-lessons-learned.html (Retrieved 16 March 2017).

[3] Supporting Insider Mediation. Strengthening Resilience to Conflict and Turbulence (2014), New York and Brussels: UNDP, European Union. http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/crisis%20prevention/ Supporting-Insider-Mediation---Strengthening-Resilience-to-Conflict-and-Turbulence--EU%20Guidance%20Note.pdf (Retrieved 16 March 2017).

[4] Of all 6 cases, Ghana is top-ranked (44/6 on sub-regional level), Lesotho is ranked 63/11, Tunisia 64/6, Nepal 78/2, Peru 85/7, and Kyrgyzstan 124/9.

For *Ghana* the study looks into the fabric and processes of the formalized architecture of *national, regional and district peace councils* and it analyses efforts by domestic actors to reconcile state-based and indigenous solutions to both high-level political conflicts and local disputes.

The analysis of national capacities in *Kyrgyzstan* and *Lesotho* offers insights into the roles and effectiveness of *insider mediators*. In Lesotho, for the first time in the country's history, a government handed over power to the former opposition following democratic elections in 2012. Insider mediators played an important role during the transition process. In Kyrgyzstan, the establishment of insider peace messengers established a mutually reinforcing network of dialogue processes aiming at conciliation.

The outcome of the local peace committees in *Nepal* has been mixed in terms of success. (Giessmann 2016: 33) However, the *Nepal Peace Trust Fund* and the *Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation* have significantly contributed to a post-conflict settlement that by and large has remained nonviolent.

The *Office for Dialogue and Sustainability* within the Prime Minister's Office in *Peru* and other institutions, such as the *Ombudsman* (Defensoría del Pueblo), have helped to pave the way for addressing socio-environmental conflicts through dialogue.

Finally, *Tunisia'*s approach of a national dialogue was widely recognized during the so-called Arab Spring as a potential model for a nationally-owned capacity for conflict prevention based on multi-party democracy.

Insights from a number of key stakeholders in all six countries was gained through predominantly phone-based semi-structured qualitative interviews, guided by the following key questions:

- **Background analysis**: Why and for which purpose were national capacities for conflict prevention deemed necessary?

- **Key stakeholders**: How were institutions, mechanisms and processes related to national capacities for conflict prevention influenced by collective or individual actors and stakeholders? How did the national capacities affect the behaviour and relationships between conflict actors and society as a whole?

- **Institutions, mechanisms and processes**: How and to what extent have national capacities for conflict prevention proved to be workable and effective? How collaborative and inclusive have these capacities been?

- **Design, implementation and support**: How was the design process of national capacities for conflict prevention carried out? How (and why) has the design or implementation of capacities been adjusted or changed over time? How inclusive was the design and development process? Which internal and external support structures were established or used and how have they influenced the effectiveness of conflict prevention?

The list of interviewees includes a number of policy planners, practitioners and experts from relevant support organizations at the United Nations and the World Bank as well as country analysts, experienced academics, and civil society representatives. A full list of

interviewees is annexed to this study. The findings from the interviews have been assessed both by comparing the cases with one another and by applying appropriate process indicators for each national case.

Case Studies

2.1 Ghana

2.1.1 The Context: Causes, Drivers and Dynamics of Violent Conflict

The West African state of Ghana has been fêted in recent years as a model for other African states with regard to its vibrant democracy and it regular and relatively peaceful election processes. Indeed, after years of military rule ended in the 1990s the country has established a "contentious but relatively stable party system", and any electoral disputes have been resolved through peaceful and constitutional channels (Brechenmacher 2016). Nevertheless, the country does face a number of challenges to its peace, including inter-ethnic violence, particularly in the Northern Region, which has escalated on several occasions into significant communal armed violence, as well as small-scale localized violence that typically flares up during election seasons. The latter is often connected to the extensive system of patronage in place in the country, which spurs politicians to win elections at all costs, breeds contempt for the political system, and leads to mistrust in the communities which can easily escalate into violence (see Bombande 2007: 53-54 and Brechenmacher 2016).

The inter-ethnic violence in the Northern Region has manifested itself in episodes such as the devastating events of 1994 between the Konkombas and Narumbas which began as a simple dispute in a market and became an armed conflict involving several different ethnic groups and resulting in thousands killed and over 100,000 displaced. At the heart of this conflict was a longstanding dispute over land ownership between ethnic groups (Assefa 2001: 165-166). Another ongoing dispute in the region is that referred to as the 'Dagbon conflict' between the Andani and Abudu families concerning the rotation of chieftaincy power between the two families, which tends to break out each time the position of the chief becomes vacant and has become highly politicized over the years (see Albert 2008). Both of these conflicts are prominent examples of how practically no measures for dealing with the structural and/or root causes of conflict in Ghana have been undertaken and no path towards genuine reconciliation has been pursued. By using merely coercive and/or military strategies to ensure peace in the region, the leverage of successive governments has thus deteriorated, making it impossible to act as neutral intermediaries in communal violent conflict (Bombande 2007: 47).

The conflict between the Konkombas and Narumbas was eventually resolved as a result of a successful, two-year dialogue process – the Kumasi process – initiated by a consortium of NGOs, which resulted in a signed accord between the various ethnic groups in the Northern Region (see Assefa 2001). When an outbreak of the Dagbon conflict occurred again in 2002, this Kumasi process informed a new approach to
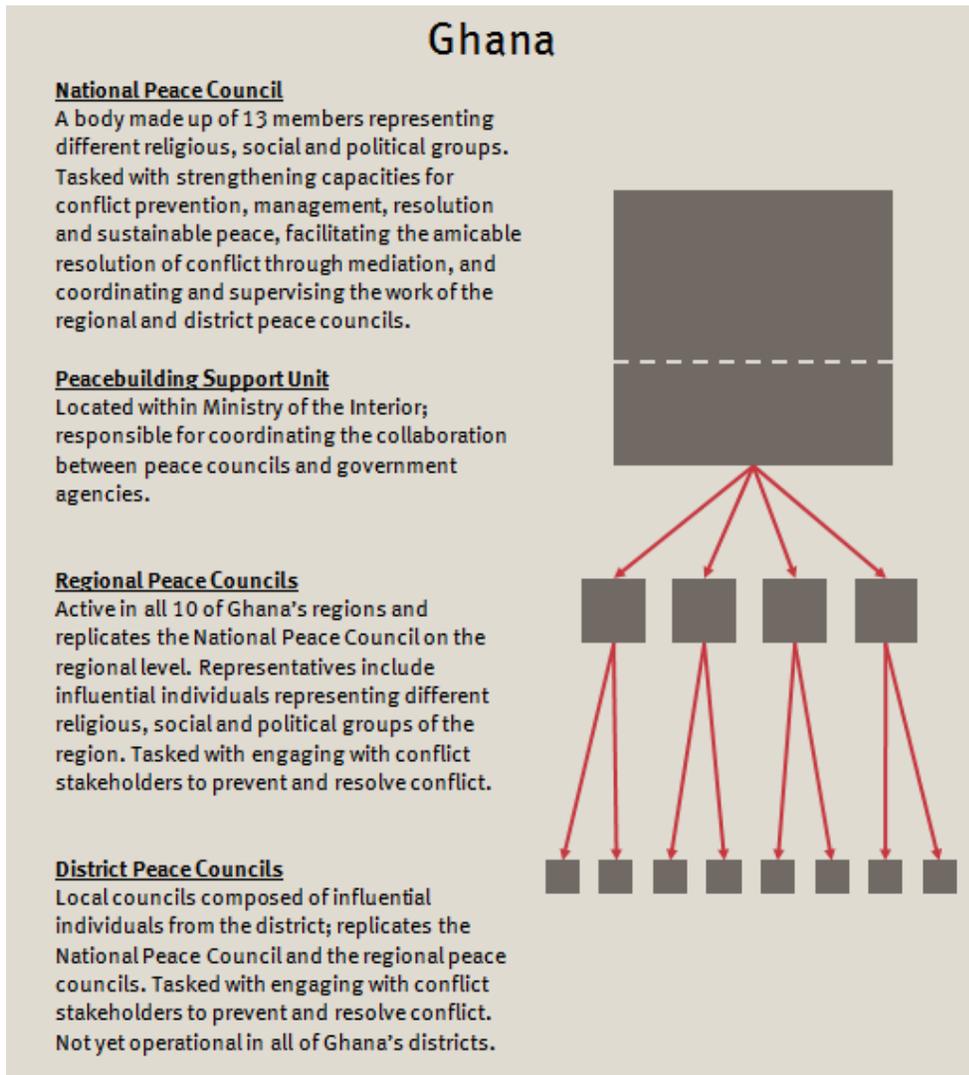
addressing the conflict, which involved significant support from civil society actors, including the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). These civil society actors in turn requested the UN to play an active role in the process to increase the leverage of the dialogue and to provide confidence about the transparency and professionalism of the process (Bombande 2007: 48). The difficult circumstances around the Dagbon conflict "created the conditions to rethink the responses to armed conflicts at community level in Ghana" (ibid.: 49) and prompted the actors involved to establish a national structure for preventing and mediating conflict.

2.1.2 Actors and Stakeholders of Conflict Prevention

The establishment in Ghana of a National Peace Council, and subsequent regional and district peace councils, as well as a Peacebuilding Support Unit within the Ministry of the Interior, has been praised for helping to contain tension and violence during national elections and has inspired other countries of the West African region to consider similar mechanisms (Hopp-Nishanka 2012: 6). The impetus for the establishment of these mechanisms came originally from civil society after the successful conflict resolution processes in the Northern Region, and many different civil society organizations championed the cause throughout its establishment. But it also had very significant support from Ghanaian citizens in general. The process by which it was established was based on substantial consultations with various stakeholder groups, including traditional leaders, woman and youth; the Minster of the Interior at the time traveled throughout the country with UNDP representatives and visited many of the conflict areas in the north (interview with Clever Nyathi). The councils themselves are composed of eminent and respected individuals – both on the national level and on regional and local levels – which gives them leverage within their communities to help mediate and resolve conflicts. Specifically, the initial national structure was led by a trusted cardinal of the Catholic Church, and the council has representatives from the different Muslim communities in Ghana. The participatory method of establishing these councils and the considerable level of inclusion gives the impression that the entire process was indeed designed and implemented by Ghanaians, which may speak to why the institution has been met with little opposition. Tellingly, both major political parties supported the establishment of the councils: the process was begun under the government of one party, but was completed under the government of the other party (interview with Clever Nyathi). This demonstrates the "support and buy-in from political leaders from both sides of the 'political divide'" (Giessmann 2016: 29). Furthermore, the contribution from government agencies cannot be understated, as they have played a crucial role in the councils' establishment as well as in their support and coordination (Hopp-Nishanka 2012: 1 & 12) and the strong partnership between the government, UNDP and civil society was essential for the implementation of the national capacities (Bombande 2007: 50).

2.1.3 National Capacities: Structures, Mechanisms, Processes

The National Peace Council (NPC) began in 2006 but was officially established by the National Peace Council Act of 2011. The Council's aims are, among other things, to strengthen capacities for conflict prevention, management, resolution and sustainable peace and to facilitate the amicable resolution of conflict through mediation. It is also tasked with coordinating and supervising the work of the regional and district peace councils throughout the country (Republic of Ghana 2011: 4). During volatile election seasons the activities of the NPC, such as releasing press statements promoting calm, have been praised for helping to prevent the country from slipping into violence (UNDP 2014: 37; interview with Beatrice Anowah Brew). A further component of Ghana's national capacities for conflict prevention is the Peacebuilding Support Unit, located under the umbrella of the Ministry of the Interior (MoI), which coordinates the collaboration between these peace councils and government agencies, as well as "peace promotion officers" appointed by the MoI to carry out communication between the national and local levels (Giessmann 2016: 28).

Ghana

National Peace Council
A body made up of 13 members representing different religious, social and political groups. Tasked with strengthening capacities for conflict prevention, management, resolution and sustainable peace, facilitating the amicable resolution of conflict through mediation, and coordinating and supervising the work of the regional and district peace councils.

Peacebuilding Support Unit
Located within Ministry of the Interior; responsible for coordinating the collaboration between peace councils and government agencies.

Regional Peace Councils
Active in all 10 of Ghana's regions and replicates the National Peace Council on the regional level. Representatives include influential individuals representing different religious, social and political groups of the region. Tasked with engaging with conflict stakeholders to prevent and resolve conflict.

District Peace Councils
Local councils composed of influential individuals from the district; replicates the National Peace Council and the regional peace councils. Tasked with engaging with conflict stakeholders to prevent and resolve conflict. Not yet operational in all of Ghana's districts.

The peace architecture in Ghana is well-designed and practical. The national level institutions are replicated at the regional and local levels, and all levels bring together key institutions and individuals who had already been active in preventing and mediating conflicts. The understanding behind the councils is that conflict ideally should be resolved at the lowest possible level, and disputes or conflicts that occur at the district level should be attended to by the district peace councils. The other levels of the structure should only get involved if the local level proves to be unable to defuse the situation. In this sense, the national level should be simply overseeing the other levels; yet is it essential that there is a strong linkage from the local through the regional to the national level. What makes the peace councils unique is the fact that the members of the councils understand both the dynamics of the individual conflict as well as the actors involved and can therefore encourage parties to the conflict to negotiate. When there is a threat or outbreak of conflict, there are most likely representatives on the relevant council from the community in which that conflict is occurring. These council members then engage the stakeholders and begin a dialogue with them to resolve the conflict. Cooperation within and among the councils has been exceptional in the sense that they are working well together without any severe challenges to interpersonal relationships. There are no open disputes, for instance, in the NPC – the members always present a unified front on issues (interview with Justice Agbezuge). Furthermore, there is respectful cooperation between state-based and traditional actors.

2.1.4 Design, Implementation and Support Structures

One of the essential elements to the design of Ghana's national capacities for conflict prevention is the local institutions that had already existed and in particular the traditional leadership structures. A significant amount of local capacity was already present for preventing conflict, but the infrastructure of the peace councils has made these local institutions more sustainable. One must understand the "peacebuilding ecosystem" within which national capacities are established in order to be able to use it effectively, and informal structures are essential to any conflict prevention process (interview with Clever Nyathi). Having the peace councils enshrined into legislation, as is the case in Ghana with the Act of 2011, is also essential in order to both formalize the structures and to ensure that the government will continue to officially support and finance the structures in the event of a change of government. Such legislation will safeguard the sustainability of the peace councils.

There are, of course, some challenges to the implementation and operationalizing of the peace councils, including a deficiency in qualified staff and materials, the lack of technical support and training for the members of the councils, and the fact that the numerous councils all together amount to an expensive system to keep running (interview with Lawrence Lachmansingh). Yet this is where external actors can ideally provide support and have a positive impact on the national capacities for preventing

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One must understand the "peacebuilding ecosystem" within which national capacities are established in order to be able to use it effectively, and informal structures are essential to any conflict prevention process.
Interview with Clever Nyathi

conflict. Providing funds for material or logistical support, or for the training of council members, can support the councils and allow them the means to carry out their work. Carrying out dialogue processes at the local level means having the logistics to bring people together, and it is often this support that is lacking on the ground. It is generally understood in Ghana that external actors had an important support role to play in the establishment of these structures, but this role wasn't overbearing. Yet "the borders between assisting, helping and supporting on the one hand, and implementing, shaping, taking ownership and imposing on the other, are very blurry" (Verzat 2014: 2). Thus any international support should be based on context-specific and realistic assessments; furthermore, any support should be reduced when national actors want to take on the responsibility for the structures on their own. Early external funding of the national capacities for conflict prevention, as in Ghana with funding from UNDP, can be crucial to help get the capacities off the ground, as the chances will then be higher that the government will support the structures at a later stage.

2.2   Kyrgyzstan

2.2.1   The Context: Causes, Drivers and Dynamics of Violent Conflict

Since 1990, when Kyrgyzstan became independent from the Soviet Union, political and social violence has been concomitant to Kyrgyz domestic politics. The intra-ethnic struggle between powerful Kyrgyz tribes, mainly the Northern and Southern family clans (Akiner 2016:30), appears to be a driver of the cyclical violence that Kyrgyzstan has often suffered during its short history as an independent state. Another driver is inter-ethnic strife. The first massive bloodshed between mainly Kyrgyz and Uzbeks occurred during the first year of the country's independence. In June 1990, violent clashes over land distribution broke out in the Fergana valley, primarily in the cities of Osh and Uzgen, but also elsewhere in Osh province. The situation escalated rapidly, and a state of emergency and a curfew were proclaimed. The border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan was closed, and Soviet troops moved into the country to stop the violence. The death toll estimates after the clashes ranged from 300 to more than 1,000.

Most inter-ethnic clashes have concentrated on the Southern Fergana valley, a multi-ethnic fertile region along the former Silk Road, stretching over parts of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, mostly involving ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. Uzbeks make up only 15% of Kyrgyzstan's overall population of some 5.5 million, but in the South the numbers of Uzbeks equal those of ethnic Kyrgyz. The ethno-nationalist conflict between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek groups has never been fully settled, and ethno-political tensions have also impacted relations with other ethnic groups living in the valley.

In 2010, the inter-ethnic clashes flared up again. Some parallels between the June 1990 and June 2010 events were apparent. Both outbreaks of violence occurred at a time of harsh political confrontation, when young political leaders attempted to oust the corrupt elites from power and when the central government had been weakened by the political changes around it.[5] The riots in 2010 also escalated rapidly, resulting in the most serious violence that the country experienced since independence, again predominantly in the areas of Osh and Jalalabad, but also spreading into some of the Uzbekistan border districts. More than 470 people were killed and 2,000 wounded. Approximately 111,000 people fled to Uzbekistan and a further 300,000 were internally displaced (IICI 2011).

Whereas intra-ethnic violence is most often caused by power struggles between clans, the underlying cause of inter-ethnic violence is predominantly due to a high degree of real or perceived marginalisation of ethnic groups. On the Uzbek side, the unregulated language policy, the comparably low political representation in local administration and security services, and a prevalent socio-economic discrimination has fed into deeply-rooted grievances and political dissatisfaction. On the Kyrgyz side, suspicions have become widespread that wealthy Uzbek clan leaders are seeking to turn their economic clout into political influence based on militant nationalism and are aiming to destroy Kyrgyzstan integrity and unity with calls for linguistic and political autonomy for the Uzbek community (Laruelle 201: 45). According to ICG reporting, ethnic tensions continued to grow after 2010 due to state neglect and exclusionary politics[6], often informed by xenophobia. Observers noted that the nationalist biases in Kyrgyzstan are by far not a "fringe phenomenon", but are rather shared across the entire Kyrgyz middle class (ICG 2012). The protracted structural and social discrimination of ethnic groups is the most apparent root cause of repeated violence.

Apart from intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts, common political rivalry is another important conflict driver in Kyrgyzstan. All elected presidents since 1990 have sooner or later become autocratic leaders, responsible for human rights violations, the plundering of state funds and securing lucrative contracts for their families and friends. Successive Kyrgyz governments have failed to deal with growing corruption and organized crime. The collapsing infrastructure, institutional weakness and the breakdown of the rural economy, as well as widespread poverty, have contributed to deep mutual resentments, leading to political fragmentation and social fragility. Moreover, the trouble-spot of the Fergana valley has turned into a field of operations for Islamic charitable organizations and endowments under the influence of Turkish and Pakistani Jamaat al-Tabigli and Gulf-based Wahhabi doctrines, usually tolerated by local authorities who have neither control over the channels of funding, nor over the appointment of Imams or the content of curricula (Interview with Sanzharbek Alimzhanov). Parts of the valley have become a breeding and recruiting ground for radical Islamist movements and a haven for foreign fighters and returnees (Akiner 2016: 12-26, Inter-Agency RAN 2017: 7). Observers are concerned that oppressive measures against radical religious associations could trigger

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[5] https://www.insightonconflict.org/blog/2015/09/a-brief-history-of-conflict-in-kyrgyzstan/.
[6] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jun/14/kyrgyzstan-conflict-background

large waves of dissent and protest in the country since ISIS has been losing ground in Syria and Iraq (Inter-Agency RAN 2016: 8). Finally, the mutually intersecting and rival geopolitical and geo-economic interests of neighbouring powers to form alliances with domestic parties impact on the conflict dynamics.

2.2.2 Actors and Stakeholders of Conflict Prevention

Kyrgyzstan has been praised for its "vibrant civil society" (OSCE Academy 2013: 2; see also Giffen et. al.) in support of bottom-up peacebuilding and conflict transformation. In fact, in comparison to other countries in the region such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, where CSOs hardly exist, Kyrgyzstan's civil society is well organized. The main stakeholder groups are women and youth, but also the so-called *aksakals*, traditional male community leaders (Megoran 2014: 3, Kadyrova 2009). After 2010 the UN, the OSCE and other international actors such as the Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia helped to train mediators from all these stakeholder groups. Moreover, they helped to set up community youth councils around the city of Osh and a Women's Peace Network in Jalalabad and in three southern provinces (Megoran 2014: 3).

As important as these efforts may have been, it was widely criticized that the root causes of involvement in the clashes in 2010 – a youth bulge, the dramatic economic downturn, an increase of youth unemployment and religiously inspired radicalization – were hardly addressed by civil society even though ethno-political violence had originated to a large extent from within these demographic, economic and social changes. Moreover, civil society remained strangely silent during and shortly after the 2010 clashes (Akiner 2016: 75).

On the one hand, the lack of participation on the side of young stakeholders and religious associations in mediation work has impeded the political influence of civil society organizations. Particularly unemployed and marginalized men, often living outside the city of Osh in mono-ethnic rural areas, were hardly involved in the mediation trainings (Megoran 2014: 4). Those who are most active are local government representatives who become volunteers in their spare time (Interview with Sanzharbek Alimzhanov). On the other hand, recent developments have shown that common challenges such as environmental degradation, natural disasters, economic shocks or dysfunctional institutions can help to foster a commonality of interests that may help bridge ethno-political or other societal cleavages and lead to more cooperation.

In close collaboration with local civil society organizations such as the Rural Women's Association (Chui regional district) the OSCE center in Bishkek has helped to set up and then supported a project between 2010 and 2014/15 called *Yntymakzharchylary or Vestniki Mira – Peace Messengers*, through which 34 teams with a total of 748 peace messengers were formed. This large group of mediators consisted primarily of "insiders", i.e. local decision-makers, community elders, religious leaders, informal neighborhood leaders (*malhalla*), women's committees, head teachers, sub-district and so-called house committees (domkom) (Mir 2016: 50). It is this multi-facetted group of civil society actors and insider mediators that played a remarkable role

in the sense of being a national capacity for conflict prevention. However, although the networks have survived the timeline of the project, the sustainability of the capacity has not been achieved, due to the abrupt ending of funding without the messengers being firmly anchored into local structures (Interview with Kochkarov). The sustainability of civil society projects and organizations in Kyrgyzstan is nowadays to a large extent dependent on committed local or regional leadership structures and on strong NGOs. They succeed in liaising with other NGOs, including internal donor organizations, thereby forming influential networks based on common stakeholder interests, but their projects hardly survive after external funding has ended. Examples are the project *Posly Molodezhi* – Youth Ambassadors (which was supported by the US Embassy) and *Posly Tolerantnosti I Demokratii* – Ambassadors of Tolerance Democracy, an ongoing project, supported by the European Union (Interview with Erkin Kocharov).

2.2.3 National Capacities: Structures, Mechanisms, Processes

Building a resilient statehood, based on the narrative of a Kyrgyz national identity and prosperous economy, is the predominant thread that characterizes domestic political debates. The Parliament adopted a Guidance Document to construct a new "civic identity" in the aftermath of the clashes of 2010, based on respect for ethnic groups, bilingualism and guaranteed rights for the political representation of minorities. It was an effort to create a "point of structuration" to stabilize the Kyrgyz society; however, it was approved only in the face of resistance from the strongest faction in the Parliament, the Ata-Jurt (*Fatherland*) party, which supported the ousted former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev (Laruelle 2012: 46-47). New state agencies that have been established at the local governmental level, such as the *Gosudarstvennoe Agenstvo po delam mestnychorganov samoopravlenija i mezhetnicheskim otnosheniam* (State Agency for Issues of Local Self-Government and Inter-Ethnic Relations), focus on conflict prevention between different ethnic communities and enjoy increasing trust on the side of the population (Interview with Erkin Kocharov). However, the staff of the agency is almost completely composed of Kyrgyz, yet the main operational focus is on issues concerning the Uzbek community. Neither is the agency's set-up sufficiently inclusive, nor does it address the root causes of tensions between the two ethnicities. In other words, the existing capacities seem to be better prepared to address short-term challenges rather than the root causes of political and social conflict.

In spite of incremental recent progress at the governmental level, it is still civil society in Kyrgyzstan that has developed a remarkable potential for conflict prevention in two areas: traditional neighborhood communities and stakeholder-based collaboration. This potential has been demonstrated by the reports that have been shared about local Kyrgyz and Uzbek-Kyrgyz helping each other with food, shelter and protection, even at risk to themselves, as well as reports that elders of both communities tried to calm the situation after 2010 by talking to marauding gangs of youth, urging them to stop the violence (Akiner 2016: 76). While the need for bottom-up mechanisms such as the local crime prevention center in the city of Osh was emphasized (Interview

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It remains a challenge to reach out to the rural communities, to scale-up lessons learned from the project and from local levels, to the management and national levels and to improve the cooperation between state agencies and civil society organizations.

Interview with Aznurian

with Sanzharbek Alimzhanov), it remains a challenge to reach out to the rural communities, to scale-up lessons learned from the project and from local levels to the management and national levels, and to improve the cooperation between state agencies and civil society organizations (Interview with Aznurian). This being said, the nationalist biases also affect civil society actors. Structural ethno-political discrimination is rarely addressed publicly and positions on this matter seem to be divided even among aksakals and peace activists. When after the events of 2010 the proposal was discussed in the National Parliament to translate the Constitution into Uzbek, not only some political parties, but also some civil society actors and *Peace Messengers* were among the protesters.

2.2.4 Design, Implementation and Support Structures

Community-based dialogues among elders and traditional leaders of different ethnicities are most often informal. They take place when the elders or leaders meet in the same tea houses, eating and chatting together, while addressing issues of common concern. The rootedness in the same community and the long-lasting personal connectivity of respected individuals and elders from different ethnic groups creates a context of intimacy that helps to build (on) the trust that is necessary to tackle any contested issues between their respective constituencies.

The advantage of traditional neighborhood mediation over the newer "more 'progressive' civil society formations" (ibid) is threefold: First of all, local communities have grown and developed over a long time, and therefore have created their own "narratives", which are often different from the previous Soviet and current nationalist narratives. Secondly, the community elders and traditional leaders play pivotal, but also often similar, roles within their own constituencies, which allow them to represent their constituencies and at the same time to communicate on an eye-to-eye level with each other and to reach informal agreements. Thirdly, when they report back to their own communities, both their reputation and authority help them to make their opinion heard and to get the support that is needed to implement whatever has been agreed. Hence, "local notions of harmony (yntymak), arbitration (sot), reconciliation (dostoshuu), forgiveness and resolution (kechirimduu)" have contributed to fostering the impact of community mediation (Mir 2016: 51).

The OSCE support (*Peace Messengers* project) supported local mediators in their efforts to carry out educational work together with local authorities, to undertake conflict analysis, to conduct conflict prevention activities, to respond to emergency situations, to provide information and to mediate in order to decrease tensions. Prevention activities have addressed different types and levels of conflict, from family disputes to disputes over local and village borders, about water and waste management as well as about society-state relations (ibid: 51-52). The close proximity to the conflicting parties and localities has helped to keep the local disputes away from the national divisions, and to protect local mediation processes from external pressures.

Among stakeholder-based initiatives, active women's NGOs are of particular relevance in Kyrgyzstan. The project "Women Building Peace", supported by the EU and UN, offered targeted trainings to activists from 50 women's organizations and government agencies in the Chui regional district. Again, the focus of activities, coordinated by the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan[7], has concentrated mainly on local communities at high risk of conflict, as well as on engaging representatives of the local authorities and civil society, as well as youth. Under one component called "My Safe and Peaceful School", more than 2,000 secondary school students in 60 schools learned about how to conduct a conflict analysis and take action to address the causes of violence, working with law enforcement and local self-government institutions (UN-Women 2016). The focused support by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund helped to implement a number of projects on youth and women empowerment (e.g. protecting young at-risk women and men, increasing the participation of minorities and youth in conflict-prone territories, and strengthening local self-governance).[8]

2.3   Lesotho

2.3.1   The Context: Causes, Drivers and Dynamics of Violent Conflict

Lesotho, a small mountainous country with less than two million inhabitants, land-locked and surrounded by the Republic of South Africa, is one of the least developed countries in the world, ranking only 161 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI 2015).[9] The trajectory of violence related to political conflicts has been propelled since the end of military rule in 1993 by power struggles among the political elites over state rule and access to the meagre resources of the country. Moreover, the political conflicts have been influenced by the strong influence of individuals on the political and electoral processes (Matlosa 2006: 94). Consequently, violence has marred Lesotho time and again during the last 25 years, with recurring peaks around the national elections in 2007, 2012 and 2015. The strong involvement of the national military and police force in politics has added to the political strains and has contributed to escalating tensions after the elections, particularly in 2012 and 2015. When in 2012 the rule by Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili ended after 14 years, the responsibility for government was handed over for the first time to an opposition coalition government. This very fact was praised internationally and has been traced back to the mediating role of national interlocutors in cooperation with UN-DPA, UNDP and the South African Development Community (SADC). However, it seemed as if the newly governing parties had forgotten to strike a detailed procedural arrangement, as their coalition government suffered from the very beginning due to the rivalry of the two

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[7] http://forumofwomenngos.kg/ (Retrieved 23 March 2017).
[8] http://www.unpbf.org/countries/kyrgyzstan/. (Retrieved 23 March 2017).
[9] http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/LSO.pdf (Retrieved 16 March 2017).

leaders of the main parties, Prime Minister Tom Thabane of the All Basotho Convention (ABC) and his deputy Mothetjoa Metsing of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), and their respective followers. In order to avoid a no-confidence vote, Thabane first suspended the national parliament for nine months in 2014 until February 2015, and fled shortly afterwards under the protecting umbrella of South Africa. He announced that the Deputy PM was under investigation for corruption, which seemed to indicate an interest in getting rid of his partner in government. According to observers, the government "collapsed in slow motion" (Pigou and Prachkovski 2015), amidst a swamp of increasing manipulation, corruption and public violence. The 2015 elections resulted in a victory of former PM Mosisili who formed a coalition with the Lesotho Congress of Democrats, from which his party broke in 2012, in order to keep Thabane and his ABC party away from power. The elections did not bring about stability however. On the contrary: After the killing of the former Lesotho Defense Forces (LDF) commander Mohao by solidiers loyal to Lt. Gen. Tlali Kamoli, the latter became reinstated as LDF commander, despite the accusations against him of attempting to overthrow former PM Thabane.[10] Kamoli retired in December 2016 and Thabane returned from his exile in February 2017, but it remains unclear if the security apparatus in general and the military in particular will now exert less influence on Lesotho's politics.

2.3.2 Actors and Stakeholders of Conflict Prevention

Political leaders and parties, in close alliance with the security apparatus, have been the main conflict stakeholders in Lesotho since 1998, with the involvement of their followers and constituencies. The engagement of non-state national intermediaries, particularly the Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL) is the main reason why Lesotho has not drifted into chaos and anarchy. CCL was supported by international organizations like UNDP and SADC as well as eminent personalities such as former Archbishop Desmond Tutu and South Africa's Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The CCL, founded in 1965, has been the most important driver of conflict prevention in Lesotho during the last decades. Since 2007 the Council has increasingly adopted the role of essential mediator and interlocutor between key conflicting political actors. Its exclusive role was formally accepted by both Lesotho's state authorities and the electoral commission in 2009 and became subsequently supported by other influential national actors like the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations as well as international actors, particularly the SADC and UNDP.

Over time, CCL was able to establish itself in this role because of its high public recognition and the influence that this faith-based umbrella organization has in the country where 80 percent are Christian, many of them adhering to conservative Christian beliefs. The Council represents the Lesotho Evangelical Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church as well as a

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[10] HIS Jane's Daily Country Risk Report: http://www.janes.com/article/65801/lesotho-army-chief-s-removal-marks-progress-with-reform-roadmap-but-party-factionalism-risks-ruling-coalition-breakdown (Retrieved 17 March 2017).

number of smaller faith communities of Lesotho. According to its mission statement the Council exists for the "renewal and empowerment of the local church as an agent of reconciliation within the church and society (…) as the voice of the voiceless, the poor and the marginalized". The CCL is currently organized into eight regional committees: Mokhotlong, Butha-Buthe, Leribe, Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Quthing, Qacha's Nek, and Thaba-Tseka Regional Committee.

2.3.3 National Capacities: Structures, Mechanisms, and Processes

The Christian Council of Lesotho has been engaged in mediation during all election processes since the end of military rule in 1993.

After 1998 it helped to negotiate the mixed member proportional electoral system (MMP), which was first introduced in 2002 and helped pave the way for an *elections pledge* that was signed publicly by all political parties a week before Election Day during a National Prayer at the National Stadium. According to the UN this was an "important achievement given the fragile political environment and arguably a very important milestone that ensured the peaceful conduct of the elections and the subsequent acceptance of the results by all political parties" (UN Lesotho 2016:35, see also Kapa 2013: 7, 14).

The CCL helped to make possible the nonviolent transition of power in 2012. The mediation by CCL created sufficient confidence among the parties in the conduct of the polls. As a result of the elections, no party achieved a majority of seats in parliament, a situation that led to the transition from one-party rule to the first ever coalition government.[11] The CCL provided a safe space for dialogue among the parties, served as a facilitator, and brought in technical experts in a timely manner who advised the parties on the best approaches and clarified specific matters as they emerged.

Prior to the snap elections in 2015 the CCL embarked on a capacity-building program of mediation and conflict resolution in a bid to ensure that the country did not slide into anarchy. The pre-elections activities by the CCL in 2011 and 2014, supported by UNDP, included monthly talks with the relevant political stakeholders to discuss electoral issues, to respond to concerns, and to reflect on suggestions related to the technicalities of a peaceful, free and fair election process (Interview with C. Kumar I). For the 2012 general elections UNDP teamed up with CCL mediators in August 2011 to make sure that the preparatory work of the Independent Elections Commission (IEC) would run smoothly.[12] In January 2012 a series of meetings with political leaders was started to discuss questions and complaints on any issues related to the election process.

An important leap forward is posed by the National Strategic Plan with the help of which the Government has developed for the first time a whole-of-government approach that includes clear objectives to foster democracy, human rights and capacities to mitigate tensions from social conflicts (Government of Lesotho 2012). It has brought

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The determined and ecumenical approach of the CCL initiative carried a convincing message: compromise and conciliation are possible even in spite of existing political differences.

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[11] https://oldsite.issafrica.org/events/iss-seminar-report-the-significance-of-lesothos-2012-political-transition-and-the-outlook-for-the-new-administration (Retrieved 18 March 2017).
[12] For details: http://iec.org.ls/ (Retrieved 17 March 2017).

together elements of conflict prevention and inclusive approaches to state-building and development. It has thus built a bridge between the short-term and long-term prevention of violent conflict. Unfortunately, the snap elections of 2015 had a disruptive effect on the efforts of the CCL to continue their mediation activities independent of the election process.

2.3.4 Design, Implementation and Support Structures

The leaders of the two Protestant and Catholic church communities played a pivotal role in establishing a credible, operational role for the CCL as a bridge-builder and mediator in Lesotho. Their credibility was built in the first instance on a strong faith-based ethical justification for adopting this responsibility, which was on the one hand straightforward and determined, and on the other hand ecumenical in its character. While faith has always been the base of different identities in Lesotho, the faith-based communities in Lesotho have historically lived peacefully with each other. Against this backdrop the determined and ecumenical approach of the CCL initiative carried a convincing message: compromise and conciliation are possible even in spite of existing political differences. Moreover, even autocratic rulers cannot ignore the tremendous influence of faith-based communities in a society, especially against the background of the fragile and fractious political system in Lesotho, with strong, but rival leaders. In applying an ecumenical approach – the CCL has established itself as an insider-mediator between the various Christian political actors.

Successful mediation doesn't provide guarantees of sustainability. The election-related mediation after 2007 was concluded after two years, and it brought about a substantial overhaul of Lesotho's electoral legislation. The Maseru Parliament adopted a revised Electoral Act, allowing for more fairness in terms of proportional representation and strengthening the independent role of the Electoral Commission. Lesotho's Constitution was amended accordingly. Both the UN and SADC emphasized the positive role of the mediation process for overcoming the political and constitutional crisis and the role that the CCL has played therein. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hailed the process, saying that "through dialogue, the Basotho stakeholders have resolved (their) grievances and agreed on the reforms needed to pave the way for the holding of peaceful and credible elections in 2012"[13]. It could be argued that the mediators prevented conflict from escalating during electoral periods by providing a platform for continued dialogue between conflicting parties (and by shifting) the dialogue focus from seat allocation to the reform of electoral laws for future elections. The mediation process was an internally-driven and wholly home-grown process.

The direct involvement of UNDP and SADC in the mediation under the auspices of the CCL focused primarily on technical and financial support for a "peaceful resolution of national politics without manipulating outcomes or displacing local initiatives" (Batmanglich 2014: 8, FN 19) in the following areas (UN Lesotho 2016: 36):

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[13] https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2011-05-04/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-lesotho (Retrieved 25 March 2017).

- Strategic preparatory planning sessions amongst church leaders and UNDP.
- Dialogue with political parties through prayer sessions with party leaderships.
- Technical capacity building, strategic planning and feedback sessions for the CCL.
- Special Elections Prayer Sessions with political parties prior to the elections.
- Post Elections Reflections Session with political parties.
- Mediation/dialogue facilitation between the exiled leadership of the opposition and the representatives of the government.
- Retreat for the church leaders on capacity building skills on dialogue and mediation.

Although civil society mediation and the role of the heads of churches proved pivotal in mediating the post-2007 electoral dispute, this was regrettably overlooked by SADC and its mediator, Cyril Ramaphosa, who, in addressing the resurgent post-2012 electoral and political problems in Lesotho, only paid "scant attention to these lessons learned from civil society's mediation efforts". Instead of providing renewed space for dialogue and mediation in order to deal with the underlying causes of the political conflict, the SADC process rushed Lesotho into holding snap elections in 2015: "Consequently, the country's gains since 2007 have been replaced after 2015 by more instability, strained interparty relations and deteriorating civil-military relations" (Shale and Gerenge 2017). In short: The political intervention of SADC rendered the role of the church leaders untenable, although it was their role that helped to mitigate tensions and prevent conflict in the context of previous elections (UN Lesotho 2016: 36-7).

According to the UN, a fresh impetus into the mediation process started in 2016 (Interview with Clever Nyathi II). UNDP and DPA have entered into new consultations with religious leaders on national dialogue and capacities for peace, have engaged with high-level governmental officials on the potential roll-out of a National Peace Architecture following the Ghana model, and have reached out to civil society actors at the national and local levels in order to strengthen inclusiveness and participation in the peace process (Interview with Clever Nayathi, with Chetan Kumar). Experts have emphasized that the need for mediation in managing election-related disputes is obvious, but without necessarily disbanding the existing legal channels (Matlosa 2006: 109).

2.4 Nepal

2.4.1 The Context: Root Causes, Drivers and Dynamics of Violent Conflict

The root causes of the conflict in Nepal included feudalism, the exclusion of minorities, weak governance and governmental neglect, with the result that most districts and villages in the country have experienced some sort of tension (GPPAC, Peace Portal/Nepal). Discrimination of ethnic and religious minorities and authoritarian rule

characterized the political system of Nepal from the inception of the Rana rule in 1846 to the breakdown of the self-declared Hindu Kingdom and the *panchayat* system in 1990 (Gellner 2007, Hachhetu 2007). Jana Andolan I, the first People's movement in 1996, paved the way to democracy but the traditional high-caste male dominance from the hills of Nepal executed de-facto control over the emerging party system (Riaz/Basu 2007: 123-142).

Beginning in 1996 a grass-roots Maoist movement mobilized massive resistance, starting in the Midwestern hill districts, eventually stretching into the Terai lowlands in the South along the Indian border, and fighting against the ruling elites in the valley (Lawoti 2010). While the Maoists claimed to follow a socio-revolutionary mission, they also appealed to the minority Madhesis and Tharus who suffered more than any other social group during the unequal political system of the Hindu reign. However, the Maoists were split about how to build a new federal state, and the violence they used against opponents dismayed a number of ethnic followers within their own ranks (Ogury 2008, Hatlebakk 2009). Only the royal coup of 2005 led to the formation of a unity resistance movement composed of the Maoists, the political parties and civil society, Jana Andolan II, which eventually made possible the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2006, bringing an end to the decade-long civil war (Strasheim 2017: 9-10).

The post-war state-building process has remained fragile, and between 2008 and 2016 a series of violent clashes occurred between ethnic groups, particularly in the Western districts between political rivals in the valley but also between privileged and marginalized social groups across the whole country. Although the country suffered until 2015 from a decade-long constitutional crisis, Nepal has not fallen back into open civil war. National capacities for conflict prevention have helped to mitigate frequently flaring tensions and have contributed to curb temptations by the conflict stakeholders to withdraw from the political process.[14] But experts warn that even after the four largest political parties represented in the Constituent Assembly (CA) had signed a 16-point agreement in April 2015 that provides for a federation of eight provinces, and the contested constitutional consensus was promulgated in September 2015 without a preceding general referendum, further unrest or ethnic war may still be possible (Bell/Zulueta-Fülscher 2016: 26-27; ICG 2016).

2.4.2 Actors and Stakeholders of Conflict Prevention

Nepal's society has been affected by long-term (structural) violence in manifold ways, in almost all regions and districts, and with the involvement of many different actors. The spectrum of conflict actors and stakeholders as well as victims has been very broad, so that not only is the need for post-war healing comprehensive, but so is the network of

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[14] The important role that the 2015 earthquake had in forcing the rival political actors to agree on the constitution in order to allow for the urgent reconstruction of the country has been emphasised by a number of observers (Sharma and Baarry 2015). This has interesting parallels to the Aceh Peace Agreement of 2005 after the Tsunami catastrophe.

cooperation among political and social actors for conflict prevention. The constitutional consensus of 2015 came too late to mitigate the tensions that were already fueled by the political and nationalist rivalries in the country that had continued after 2006. The scope of conflict actors has splintered; nowadays many smaller interest groups struggle over influence in society and in the regions. Even the main political actors have been severely divided. The newly organized Maoist CPN led by former Maoist leader Netra Bikram Chand is progressing with alternative and unconstitutional governing bodies across the country, such as people's councils and youth groups. Terai-based activist Chandra Kant Raut has formed an independency movement representing the Madhesi minority that seeks autonomy from the Nepali state. A number of small armed groups close to the Indian border threaten municipality and village security, and the political conflicts within and between the ruling and opposition parties over the federal structure and government have not disappeared since the constitutional compromise was reached in 2015 (Interview with Ram Kumar Bhandari).

2.4.3 National Capacities: Structures, Mechanisms, and Processes

Following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed after eight-party negotiations including the Government of Nepal (GoN) and the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN-M) in 2006, a national peace infrastructure was designed and implemented that comprised national as well as local components. The first steps to establish peace and dialogue committees had already been undertaken in 2005, mainly to resolve immediate issues of community governance during the early transition, but most of these uncoordinated local efforts lost momentum already in their infancy (GPPAC, PeacePortal/Nepal).

After the signing of the CPA, a special Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR) was established in April 2007, building on the work of the previous Peace Secretariat in supporting the technical aspects of the peace process, and aiming at implementing the CPA.[15] Officially mandated through the CPA as an organ of the government, the Ministry has been assigned roles beyond this function, such as coordinating the infrastructure for peace in Nepal and being a policy-maker in the peace sector (Suurmond/Sharma 2013: 6). According to its vision and mission statements, the MoPR was mandated to provide effective assistance to foster "lasting and sustainable peace building" through the "catalytic role" of its "institutional, procedural and technical activities".[16] The Ministry established six operational divisions: administration and planning; legal and communication issues; conflict management; infrastructure reconstruction; relief and rehabilitation; and peace mechanism coordination.

A national body related to the Ministry is the Nepal National Peace Trust Fund (NPTF), which was jointly set up by the GoN (under the chairpersonship of the Minister of Peace and Reconstruction) in close cooperation with international donors such as the UN, UNDP and the EU as well as national donor organizations such as USAID, DFID,

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[15] Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Website: http://www.peace.gov.np/en. (Retrieved 19 March 2017)
[16] Ibid.

CIDA or DEZA. The Fund was established in order to finance critical support activities in the framework of implementing the CPA. 60 percent of the funds were allotted from Nepali national sources. The core mandate of the NPTF is to function as a coordinating body of peace-related initiatives, to act as a funding mechanism for the GoN and donor resources, and to monitor the peace process (NPTF 2015: 1-2). NPTF operations included, for example, the cantonment of former Maoist combatants, their later reintegration into society, the re-establishment of security in conflict-affected regions through mine-clearing, the formation of peace units and the financing of the CA, elections and the activities of Local Peace Committees. According to the joint strategy 2014-2017 of the GoN and the Donor Group, the Fund, after having gone through a phasing out period, will finally close in 2017 (NPTF, Joint Financial Arrangement 2015: 1).

Under the auspices of the MoPR, Local Peace Committees (LPC) were established in almost all 75 districts of Nepal. Their mission was to provide a link between the national peace processes and the communities and to establish platforms for consensus-building and inclusive local governance. Members of the LPC include(d) representatives of the political parties, of victim's family organizations, civil society and human rights organizations. The LPC were tasked with addressing issues of implementing the CPA at the local level, such as data collection on conflict-affected persons, identification of victims and former combatants, organizing conflict prevention programs and activities in the districts and communities, running small livelihood projects, and raising awareness with regard to curbing violence (Giessmann 2016: 33). Notwithstanding their operational deficits, all major political parties as well as previously marginalized stakeholder groups (women, Dalits, Madhesis, minority ethnicities and indigenous people) (Interview with Neupane), were included in all national mechanisms created to carry the peace process forward.

2.4.4 National Capacities: Structures, Mechanisms, and Processes

International support to the Nepal peace process was substantial and long-term. Development assistance was a substantial part of foreign aid. For example, UNDP launched a 5-year Conflict Prevention Programme (CPP) in 2010, focusing on conflict sensitive development (CS) and collaborative leadership and dialogue (CLD). However, the high amount of international support was for Nepal both boon and bane. On the one hand, the actors were in desperate need of support – not just material and financial – but also capacity, after many decades of bloody conflicts and due to the effect of a high degree of exclusionary politics, weak governance and wide-spread government neglect. From a UNDP perspective, CPP "has played an important role to enhancing the capacity of national and local leaders to address political, resource and identity (PRI)-based conflicts and to develop shared agendas on transitional and other issues", with "the creation of a standing informal forum of the political parties and a markedly improved relationship between the leaders associated with the two different ethnic groups of Tharus and Pahadis, as was the case in Kailali (Interview with Aryal).

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The massive and at times badly coordinated engagement by donors created incentives among local actors to look for institutional and individual subsistence from external funding – instead of mobilizing energy into sustainable self-responsibility and ownership.

On the other hand, the massive and at times badly coordinated engagement by donors created incentives among local actors to look for institutional and individual subsistence from external funding – instead of mobilizing energy into sustainable self-responsibility and ownership. Local structures for peacebuilding and reconstruction mushroomed in number, but there were also many community actors and NGOs that tried to raise funds in order to feed themselves rather than caring about the impact of their work. Due to a lack of sufficient transparency and owing to bureaucracy and corruption, the flow of resources was to a large extent uneven and imbalanced, and growing disparities became a source of more tension within society.

MoPR established Peace Focal Points that were located within other ministries to advise them on relevant peace and development issues and thus to strengthen an inclusive, participatory and comprehensive approach to peace-relevant ministerial policies. Their impact was inhibited because their role was unfortunately not clearly mandated and they also were not equipped with sufficient resources. More importantly, it has been argued that the MoPR's "credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness has been reduced by a lack of inclusivity (notably in the consultation processes that led to the creation of the ministry)" (Suurmond/Sharma 2013: 7). High-level political mechanisms, all-party peace committees and the Political Dialogue and Consensus-building Committee of the Constituent Assembly have been complementary, but their impact as capacities for conflict prevention evolved from their role as alternative channels for communication. This was particularly relevant in moments when unresolved technical issues were decided at a political level (Interview with Janak Raj Joshi).

The independency of the LPC was also questioned from the very outset, since the supervising MoPR was reluctant to accept multi-party control of the local peace structures. While successful collaboration was reported from a small number of districts, most Local Peace Committees remained only formalized structures or became dysfunctional (Odendaal 2010: 11, Giessmann 2016: 33). Their effectiveness was hampered by a number of factors, such as party dominance and related politicization, the MoPR's top-down approach as well as a lack of inclusivity and technical capacity (ibid; Grävingholt et. al. 2013: 40, 42). However, despite these deficiencies, some local initiatives created remarkable impact across the country, thus contributing to an emerging network of national capacities for conflict prevention. Notably the almost 4,000 Village Development Committees (VDC) that were not initiated by the GoN, but mostly involved local government officials, contributed to local conflict resolution (COMCAP/JICA 2013). They offer village mediation services and support conflict resolution according to acute local needs. UNDP provided support to the Local Development Training Academy (LDTQ), which helped to provide initial training for more than 300 VDC secretaries (Interview with Aryal).

Although some committees have been also criticized for being discriminatory and dominated by political parties, most reports have shown high satisfaction with the committees due to their free-of-cost services and for being fair, efficient, independent and neutral (Suurmond/Sharma 2012, 83). In addition to this, groups of senior civil society leaders were formed at the central, district and village development committee

levels. These mechanisms were helpful in breaking deadlocks and promoting dialogue in difficult times, thus paving the way for more collaboration (Interview with Khagendra Neupane).

Support activities, e.g. dialogue facilitation, capacity-building and mediation support by NGOs such as the Nepal Peace Initiative, the Civic Forum and the Civic Peace Commission are also worth mentioning because they have contributed to developing a large and lively civil society in Nepal. This NGO sector is important, all the more so since a widely shared caveat with regard to the official structures for post-war conflict prevention is that these structures have always been dominated by the narrowly defined interests of the signatories to the CPA. Official structures are not sufficiently inclusive and according to critics have never paid the tribute necessary to the many victims who suffered from the organized violence in the past (Interview with Prabina Bajacharya).

Moreover, many political actors had difficulties or were apparently not interested in bridging the gap between the different interest groups in the country, eventually becoming preoccupied with micro-management and ad-hoc "deal-making" (Interview with Chetan Kumar) while crucial problems were still in need of resolution such as army reintegration, the constitution-drafting process, the implementation of political agreements and development projects, or measures for including indigenous actors, the Dalits, victims and other marginalized groups.

The design of national capacities was not adjusted despite a hurting constitutional stalemate and increasing political instability. For example, the call by the CPA to implement a National Dialogue was in vain, while the MoPR lost influence and the LPC became increasingly passive and irrelevant (Interview with Ram Kumar Bhandari). A "cognitive dissonance" can be observed – national actors are aware of the concept of conflict prevention but fail to comply with it (Interview with Janak Raj Joshi).

It must be questioned if, under these circumstances, the phasing out of international support is really a viable option. Dissolving the Peace Fund and downsizing on-site UN staff by a factor of 10 to a residual level of 500 persons may cause a severe backlash to the decade-long efforts of external support. Given the fragile peace architecture and the prevalent tension in the country, even a breakdown of the peace process cannot be excluded. The decision about providing support should not be informed by the alternative of "yes or no", but rather by a sober analysis of whether the support that has been provided so far was effective, sufficiently tailor-made and sustainable.
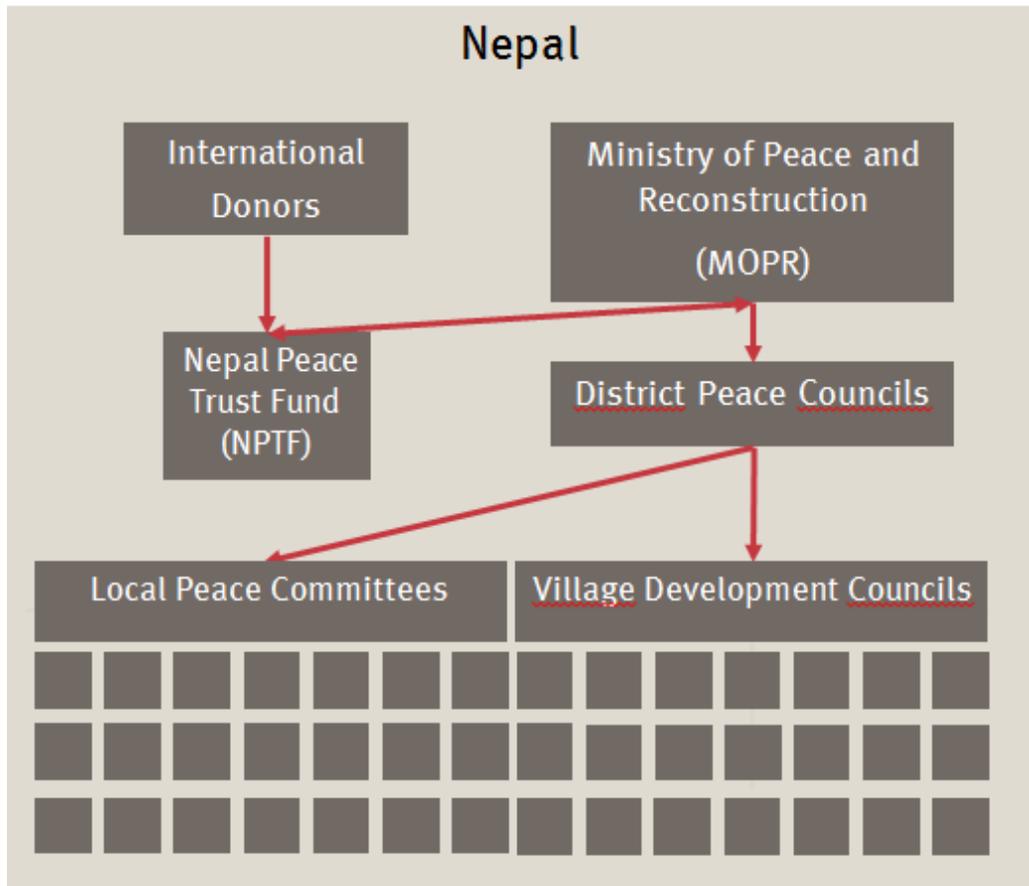
2.5 Peru

2.5.1 Context: Causes, Drivers and Dynamics of Violent Conflict

The forms and nature of violence in Peru has changed remarkably over the past decades. The conflict with the Maoist armed group Shining Path dominated the state's military response to political violence for twenty years after the first restoration of democracy in 1980 (ECP 2016, 119). While there are reports of small fractions of this group remaining active until today, social conflicts have increasingly taken center stage. The *Defensoría del Pueblo* (Ombudsman) defines *social conflict* as "a complex process in which sectors of society, the state and/or private companies perceive their positions, interests, objectives, values, beliefs or necessities as contradictory, leading to a situation that could escalate in violence" (cited in Puma Almanza 2015, 2).

Most of these conflicts erupted after the turn of the millennium around issues of (local) governance, labor laws, the signing of a free trade agreement with the United States, the use and distribution of government revenue on the local level, as well as citizens' demands for greater (financial) transparency and accountability of their elected

officials. However, starting in the 1990s, the neoliberal economic policies inspired by the Washington Consensus pursued by successive governments, aimed at attracting foreign investment and promoting the extractive industries, resulted in a shift of the main drivers of conflict towards the relation between the extractive industries and the local communities, particularly concerning the mining sector in the southern Andean region and hydrocarbons in the Amazon region.

As such, the nature of this development model is inherently prone to conflict as it increases the competition for local resources and transforms the way of life and work of communities that are in most cases already marginalized based on income and/or ethnicity. Due to the high rent created by mining activity, conflicts are also likely to emerge on the level of municipal governments concerning rent distribution and territorial demarcation (Flores Unzaga 2016: 11). As a result, Peru has experienced a remarkable increase of socio-environmental conflicts "related to the control, use and/or access to the environment and its resources, which could contain political, economic, social and cultural elements" (Puma Almanza 2015: 2) from the mid-2000s onwards.

In this situation, individual actions or events, such as a decision taken by a company or the lack of meaningful consultation, have the potential to escalate quickly. As of January 2017, the *Oficina del Diálogo y la Sostenibilidad* (Office for Dialogue and Sustainability, ONDS) registered 152 social conflicts across the national territory, out of which 45.6% were related to mining activities (ONDS 2017a, 2). Other types of conflicts concern agricultural use, territorial demarcation, energy, water, hydrocarbons and illegal mining.

Particularly with regard to conflicts related to the mining sector, the Peruvian NGO CooperAcción distinguishes two drivers of conflict: conflicts on the resistance to or rejection of mining activity, and conflicts related to living side-by-side with mining activity (Flores Unzaga 2016, 12). The difference lies in the seemingly irreconcilable claims between the community and private companies in the first case, often resulting in extreme polarization, failed dialogue processes and reactive state interventions, while conflicts of the latter category concern demands for ensuring the rights and protection of affected communities, for instance in relation to labor, social, or cultural rights as well as the protection of the environment and the health of the inhabitants.

2.5.2 Actors and Stakeholders of Conflict Prevention

The *Defensoría del Pueblo* (office of the Ombudsperson), a public body created in the framework of the 1993 constitution and tasked with the mandate of protecting the constitutional rights of individuals and communities and overseeing state administration and the provision of public services, is the national institution with the longest history of engagement with monitoring and preventing social conflict in Peru. Due to its mandate, it enjoys a high degree of legitimacy among the population (interview with Yenny Ccolque). It started working on social conflicts in Peru during the mid-90s inspired by the effect social conflicts were seen to have on human rights of the population, particularly the right to life (interview with Iván Ormachea). In 2004, the

Defensoría started publishing a monthly report on social conflicts in Peru, thereby becoming the first institution in the country to address, analyze and make the issue known to the public and political spheres in a systematic manner. With this, it fulfilled an important function in raising awareness about the reality and resulting human rights repercussions of social conflicts around the country. Currently, the *Defensoría* maintains 24 regional offices, which contribute to its ability to understand local conflict contexts as well as being contact points outside the capital.

From the side of the state's executive, the first institution with a mandate in conflict management was the *Comité de Conflictos* (Committee of Conflicts), informally created during the Toledo government following an initiative of the Ministry of Interior and tasked with coordinating government strategies, advising the Prime Minister's office (*Presidencia del Consejo de Ministros*, PCM) and bringing together relevant information (Huamaní Ober 2012, 76; Puma Almanza 2015, 4). Subsequently, different governments attempted to address conflicts through various institutional settings within the PCM. The frequent re-naming and re-assigning of mandates and strategies demonstrates that the institutionality for conflict prevention in Peru is still very much "maturing" (interview with Guiselle Padilla) and raises questions about the continuity of state strategies beyond changes of government.

The current state agency for conflict prevention, the *Oficina del Diálogo y la Sostenibilidad* (ONDS), was established in 2012. The executive's approach to – and infrastructure for – conflict prevention has evolved over time from an analytical focus aimed at understanding the dynamics of conflicts at the local and regional level to a more transformative approach based on dialogue. Since the early stages, there have also been efforts of capacity building for those governmental actors in positions that require direct engagement with social conflict. Furthermore, while 15 sub-offices focused on conflict within different ministries have been established to date, they focus on different aspects and strategies of conflict prevention and management (Flores Unzaga 2016, 17). However, repeated phases of repressive state behavior towards protestors and attempts at criminalizing social protests also illustrate that the strategy towards conflict management and prevention depends very much on the political will of those in office (interview with Yenny Ccolque; interview with Carmen del Rosario).

On the legislative level, the Peruvian Congress's adoption of the *Ley de Consulta Previa* (Law of Prior Consultation) in 2011, based on Convention 196 of the International Labour Organization, deserves mentioning as a mechanism for the participation of indigenous communities prior to realizing projects that could affect their collective rights. There have also been considerable efforts on the side of civil society to analyze the root causes of conflict and the strategies of conflict management employed by the government, as well as to develop methodologies and recommendations for effective dialogue processes.

2.5.3 National Capacities: Structures, Mechanisms, Processes

The methodology of the ONDS and its predecessor organizations has remained similar over time in focusing on mediation, facilitation and coordination between different conflict actors (interview with Javier Aroca). Among the various initiatives to create a national system for the prevention of conflict, the so-called *mesas de diálogo* ("dialogue tables") are the most prominent instrument for conflict prevention. These *mesas* can be invoked by different levels of government or by request of other conflict actors. The concrete methodology and composition depends on the individual conflict context; however, they always bring together representatives of the conflict parties, the regional government and delegates from the ministry thematically responsible for the main conflict issue, who are usually in charge of facilitating the process. The ONDS takes on a coordinating function, which contributes to establishing clear responsibilities for conflict prevention within the Peruvian state structure.

In order to enhance the Peruvian state's capacity for conflict prevention, the ONDS has also created a new instrument, the so-called *mesas de desarrollo* ("development tables"). These processes are modelled after the *mesas de diálogo* and aimed at intervening before an escalation or re-escalation of conflict occurs and addressing the structural causes of social conflicts (ONDS 2013, 14).

As a contact point for those citizens who perceive their rights to be violated, the institution of the *Defensoría* in itself can be regarded as a capacity for conflict prevention, given that its staff often succeeds in addressing individual or collective concerns before the issues escalate (interview with Gregor Maass). The *Adjuntía* can be credited with monitoring and raising awareness about social conflicts, as well as developing staff guidelines for strategies to approach social conflicts.

2.5.4 Design, Implementation and Support Structures

The *mesas de diálogo* constitute an important arena for bringing the conflict parties together and beginning a process of confidence-building, as well as addressing a long-standing weakness of the Peruvian state by bringing the state closer to its citizens in areas of traditionally weak state presence, thereby creating a perception of an effort to address the citizens' needs (interview with Javier Aroca). However, their overall contribution to conflict prevention can be questioned due to a number of limiting factors. On the one hand, the *mesas de diálogo* have often been reactive, only invoked after an escalation of conflict had already taken place. There is furthermore a lack of monitoring and implementation of the reached agreements, which in some cases has resulted in new escalations of conflict as well as in discrediting the instrument as such in the eyes of the public (interview with Yenny Ccolque; interview with Carmen del Rosario). This can partly be explained by a lack of resources allocated to the follow-up of the accords (interview with Iván Ormachea). *The mesas* also often conform more to the character of a negotiation than a dialogue, concentrating on concrete bargaining rather than creating empathy among the participants (interview with Carmen del Rosario).

There are furthermore challenges related to the coordination of government responses and strategy, both vertically and horizontally. And lastly, in some cases the state's involvement is lacking in perceived partiality, due to its double-interest in promoting investment as well as containing social conflict (interview with Yenny Ccolque).

Conceptually, the *mesas de desarrollo* have a great potential for conflict prevention, if implemented well. However, this instrument is still in the process of being developed and in need of further institutionalization (Flores Unzaga 2015, 21). Until this date, the *mesas de desarrollo* have often only addressed the most immediate and very concrete concerns, thereby resulting in a lack of foresight and potential for conflict prevention of the agreements reached (interview with Guiselle Padilla). Moreover, the failure to include representatives of civil society in some cases raises serious questions about the transparency, inclusivity and participatory character of the process as well as its potential to contribute to sustainable development. Both caveats raise questions about the ability of this capacity to address long-term needs and challenges.

While the *Defensoría* as an institution fulfills a meaningful role in conflict prevention, its regional offices often lack the capacity and resources to address more complex conflicts in a substantive way. Furthermore, within the institution performance is mainly measured by the number of cases handled, which implies somewhat of a disincentive for employees to engage with the complex structural causes of conflicts in a meaningful way (interview with Gregor Maass).

While the implementation of Peru's national capacities for conflict prevention can be improved with regard to inclusion, coordination, monitoring of agreements, foresight and addressing the structural causes of conflict, the institutions described have without doubt contributed towards building an infrastructure for conflict management and the reduction of violence throughout the country (interview with Noam López). Over the course of their existence, both the *Defensoría* and the ONDS have received considerable international support in terms of funding and capacity building, as well as in the framework of establishing a platform for the coordination between government institutions and civil society ("Alianzas para el Diálogo", 2012-2015, funded by UNDP; UNDP 2016) and for the development of methodologies for conflict prevention and dialogue (see also ONDS 2017b). At this stage, international contributions could be particularly helpful in strengthening the ONDS's presence outside Lima in order to enhance its knowledge about and ability to address structural issues in the regions, as well as building the *Defensoría*'s capacity to engage with more complex social conflicts.

2.6 Tunisia

2.6.1 Background (root causes, drivers and dynamics of violent conflict)

The self-immolation of Muhammad Bouazizi in December 2010 and the national uprising that took place in Tunisia in the weeks following the event would not only lead to the resignation of the repressive and excessively corrupt regime of President Zine Abidine Ben Ali, but would also inspire what would come to be known as the Arab Spring, a cascade of protests and revolts across Northern Africa and the Middle East in 2011. Bouazizi's death and the regime's callous response to it "opened up a space for the spontaneous, heartfelt protest" (Bishara 2012: 75) and nation-wide solidarity against corruption, the abuse of power and a lack of economic opportunities, in particular for youth. With hindsight and in comparison to other Arab countries which experienced upheaval during this period, Tunisia's revolution and resulting political transition have both been extraordinarily peaceful and remarkable in the sense of tangible achievements.

Nevertheless, the years following the Jasmine Revolution proved to be highly challenging and emotionally-charged, with periods of protest, government deadlock and the threat of more significant violence. Yet the "special aptitude for political compromise" among Tunisians seemed to make the country "more equipped than the other Arab countries" (M'rad 2015: 15) to handle such fragile political situations. Thus throughout the next two years in the face of various impasses and setbacks to the transition process, there were numerous attempts on the part of different actors – both political and from civil society – to defuse tense situations by calling for different forums to bring people together, for instance through national dialogue councils, national conferences, round tables or a 'council of the wise' (see ibid.: 21-40). Most of these attempts at dialogue ultimately failed due to different reasons, such as a lack of trust and the perception of a lack of inclusivity. Nonetheless, these attempts demonstrated the genuine interest of most political and civil society stakeholders to both engage in serious dialogue with each other and to advocate for doing so. They also set the stage for the National Dialogue which began in October 2013 and led to a significant political breakthrough.

The events of the first half of 2013 brought the country to the most serious crisis since the revolution. Against the background of rising discontent with the Troika government (Ennahda, CPR, Ettakaol) and a violent attack on the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), the assassination in February 2013 of Chokri Belaid, the leader of an opposition party, led to the resignation of the government and the appointment of a new, albeit also contested, government. As many opposition leaders held the Islamist Ennahda party morally responsible for the assassination, the breach of trust between the opposition and the ruling majority grew (ibid.: 35-37). In spite of several dialogue initiatives attempted in the spring to resolve the crisis, the impasse remained until Mohamed Brahmi, elected member of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) was also

assassinated in July 2016, after which 40 members of the NCA declared their withdrawal and the work of the Assembly was suspended. It was at this moment of existential crisis that the critical need for a National Dialogue to resolve the political impasse and severe lack of trust was acknowledged by most stakeholders.

2.6.2 Actors and Stakeholders of conflict prevention

Arguably the most critical role played by actors throughout the transition and dialogue processes in Tunisia was that of the trade unions, the Tunisian General Trade Union (UGTT) and the employers' union (UTICA). Labor activism has a long history in the country, being at the forefront of the independence struggle (Gelvin 2012: 63) and developing a "sophisticated, highly networked, and democratically organized membership and leadership" structure (Bishara 2012: 101). Both UTICA and UGTT had a wealth of experience in regularly negotiating agreements with the government on issues such as new wage policies (M'rad 2015: 16). Thus the notion of compromise and dialogue, as well as the experienced capacity to organize and network, is deeply rooted also in the unions' traditions. Moreover, because the UGTT in particular is an uncontested power broker, with membership across the country, the unions had the ability to encourage dialogue among the various stakeholders in a way that other actors could not. Yet the trade unions were certainly not the only civil society actors active in seeking dialogue to defuse the political crisis. The Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH) and the Tunisian Bar Association joined with UGTT and UTICA to form the 'Quartet', which acted as a facilitator and mediator prior to and during the National Dialogue process in the latter half of 2013. This unique combination of civil society organizations was "seen as credible by a significant proportion of the Tunisian population" (Stigant and Murray 2015: 3). Furthermore, other civil society organizations made their voices heard due to an "explosion of activism" (Interview with Giordano Segneri and Hédi Abdelkefi) during that time, as new establishment rules led to many organizations being founded. These organizations held demonstrations during the National Dialogue in order to try to influence the process (Blunck et.al. 2017: 301).

The political parties in the country also played a critical role in the National Dialogue, as the majority of the parties decided that such a dialogue was indeed essential in order to successfully navigate the acute crisis. In particular, the Islamist party Ennahda, which had been recalcitrant in the past on joining such forums, made the crucial decision to take part. Having gained 40 percent of the votes for the NCA in 2011, its participation in the process was imperative in order to reach any decision that would lead the country out of the crisis. Faced with the prospect of government breakdown and keenly aware of the difficulties being faced at that time by the Islamists of the Egyptian Brotherhood, Ennahda accepted that a serious dialogue was necessary. Ultimately the only major party that didn't take part in the National Dialogue was the CPR, one of the parties to the Troika, yet this had little impact on the outcome of the National Dialogue. In retrospect, rather than feeling like they had been excluded from

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It was ultimately the perseverance of the Quartet, together with the acute crisis in the country, which led the stakeholders to agree to the dialogue in 2013 and to accept the 'road map' which was drafted by the Quartet after consultation with all parties and which outlined the way forward for the dialogue.

the dialogue, there was more of a sense that they had missed the opportunity to be a part of it (interview with Giordano Segneri and Hédi Abdelkefi).

2.6.3 Structures, mechanisms, processes of national capacities for conflict prevention

As mentioned above, the National Dialogue in Tunisia was a long time in the making, as efforts to bring stakeholders together at different points in the transition process to discuss controversial topics was advocated for by various actors. It was ultimately the perseverance of the Quartet, together with the acute crisis in the country, which led the stakeholders to agree to the dialogue in 2013 and to accept the 'road map' which was drafted by the Quartet after consultation with all parties and which outlined the way forward for the dialogue. The National Dialogue had several goals: to select a caretaker government to replace the Troika, to pave the way for the drafting of a new constitution to be submitted to the NCA, and to prepare for upcoming elections, by establishing an electoral management body and setting a timetable for said elections (Giessmann 2016: 30; Stigant and Murray 2015: 3). Although the road map's timeline wasn't adhered to exactly as planned, consensus was reached within the dialogue on all major issues: the NCA adopted the new Constitution in January 2014, a replacement technocratic government was appointed in the same month, and elections were prepared and scheduled for October 2014 (Blunck 2017: 302).

Essential to the success of the National Dialogue was the preparatory period that preceded it, before the official beginning of the dialogue. This period allowed the members of the Quartet to meet with and hear the views of all political parties and to gain consensus around the drafting of the road map. It was during this time that hesitant parties were convinced to come on board and the controversial conditions of certain parties to become involved were dropped (M'rad 2015: 39 and interview with Hédi Abdelkefi and Giordano Segneri). All in all, 23 parties signed the road map and took part in the National Dialogue. The Consensus Committee within the NCA also proved to have an important role to play in the sense that the mechanisms for reaching consensus on controversial issues that proved to be too tricky for the full NCA had already been established – based on the principle of equal representation, as was the case later in the National Dialogue. Deliberations within the 22-member Consensus Committee were facilitated by the NCA president, and this body helped the NCA come to a number of decisions surrounding constitutional issues (Giessmann 2016: 30). Nonetheless, once the work of the NCA was suspended in July 2013, the valuable work of the Consensus Committee was suspended as well.

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2.6.4 Design, implementation and support structures

In spite of previous attempts at inclusive dialogue, Tunisia's National Dialogue process in late 2013 was essentially an ad-hoc process, designed and implemented as a reaction to the acute political and social crises in the country at that time. The National Dialogue did not have an official mandate, as it was not part of any elected institution; thus it has been referred to as "the suspension of democracy" (interview with Hédi Abdelkefi and Giordano Segneri). Yet this suspension allowed the stakeholders to come together in order to diffuse tensions and to discuss contentious issues openly and constructively, ultimately enabling them to return to the operation of a functioning democracy. One of the major criticisms of the National Dialogue in Tunisia has been the elite make-up of the delegates and the lack of opportunity for public participation, which may have compromised its legitimacy to a certain extent (Blunck 2017: 301-302; Stigent and Murray 2015: 2). Indeed, the Tunisian public did initially have "difficulty in believing in the project" (M'rad 2015: 43). Yet as the process unfolded over the weeks and consensus was reached on the outstanding constitutional issues, the process was highly supported by Tunisian citizens.

External support and assistance for the dialogue process was multifaceted, yet not hugely overbearing. First and foremost there was open and continuous support from the UN, EU, individual states (such as USA, Algeria, France, UK and Germany) and international NGOs for the process of national dialogue and its potential to prevent violence (ibid.: 45-46). Furthermore, UNDP and other third-party actors offered assistance in building the capacity of (new) civil society organizations, facilitating and financing discussions between antagonistic parties, drafting constitutional articles concerning human rights or international regulations, and training political actors in consensus building and mediation (interview with Hédi Abdelkefi and Giordano Segneri, March 2017). This behind-the-scenes external support to national actors and stakeholders was valuable and well-received, yet allowed the stakeholders to demonstrate that the dialogue process of the country was a national undertaking and a national success.

	Ghana	Kyrgyzstan	Lesotho	Nepal	Peru	Tunisia
Type	Institution Mechanism	Mechanism Institution	Mechanism	Institution	Institution	Mechanism Institution
Format	Councils, Networks	Insider Mediation	Insider Mediation	Ministry Local Committees	Office Ombudsperson	Conference Dialogue Consensus Committee
Level	National Regional Local	Regional Partly National Local	National	National Local	National Regional	National
Key Actors	Governmental CSO Representatives Religious and Traditional Leaders/Networks	Government Bureau NGO representatives Civil Society	Civil Society Church Leaders	Government Actors CSO Representatives Party Delegates	Government Offices	NGO and Civil Society Platforms Bar Association Trade-Unionist forums
Target group	Religious, Social and Political Communities Conflict Stakeholders	Ethnic communities Political parties Civil Society	Government Parties Political leaders	Parties Ethnic, Caste and other Community Members	Conflict Parties Officials from National and Regional government	Political and Religious Parties Government Officials
Mandate	Formal Sometimes informal	Informal	Informal Sometimes formal	Formal	Formal	Formal Sometimes informal
Primary Functions	Mitigation of Tensions Coordination Preparation of Elections Mediation	Mitigation of Tensions Arbitration Reconciliation	Preperation of Elections Consensus-building Mitigation of Tensions	Local Problem Soving Legitimizing Local Governance	Coordination Participation Public Pressure	Preparatory Forum for a Constitutional Framework of Political Transition
Inclusivity	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Low/Medium	Medium
Effectiveness/ Sustainability	Very High	Medium/Low	Medium	Low/Medium	Medium	High

Conclusion

3.1 Effective Conflict Prevention

All nation states should provide capacities for conflict prevention. According to Max Weber, states are the "only legitimate *Gemeinschaft* [community] which lays claim to the monopoly on the legitimated use of (...) force. However, this monopoly is limited to a certain geographical area, and in fact limitation to a particular area is one of the things that defines a state" (Weber 2015:136). The exclusive right of states to the legitimate use of force, enshrined in modern public and international law, *sui generis* points to the significance of national actors for controlling force and preventing violence in conflict. If state authorities are not willing or have lost their ability to comply with this responsibility, the role of non-state national actors in preventing conflict may be even more important. Conflict prevention is only effective when enduring mutual trust has been built. Inclusive and participatory formats of conflict prevention at all levels of a nation or society can help conflict actors directly experience the benefits of dialogue and cooperation. A high level of trust that is built through such collaboration can heal broken relationships and establish sustainable incentives for further consensus-building and cooperation across societal and political divides. However, inclusivity is an ambiguous means to the end of conflict prevention and not a panacea (Fischer 2008: 16-17). Inclusive approaches that are unilaterally advantageous to former perpetrators in relation to victims of violence can deepen existing grievances and result in new tensions and more conflict. Compromises which are seemingly successful and effective can do harm to the long-term needs for building sustainable peace. A key lesson from this research is that national capacities for conflict prevention are only sufficiently responsive if they also address the root causes of violent conflict. Root causes of violence in national contexts are as complex as they are diverse.

Most cases under scrutiny for this research have revealed that political and social violence is inflamed by the impact of mutually-reinforcing drivers of conflict: the poor performance of state institutions, economic disparities and social injustice, human rights abuses, deficient rule of law and the oppression of minorities. The intentional mobilization of cleavages between ethnic, religious and/or identity groups based on distinct traditions and cultures has become a widespread catalyst for conflict escalation. According to the OECD States Fragility Report 2016 most violent conflicts are driven by domestic political instability (OECD 2016). In many countries the virulence of violent conflict is not primarily dependent on a particular level of economic development. Relatively poor communities in rural areas with a strong collective identity tend to be more peaceful at the local level than less poor communities with a lower sense of collective identity in urban areas. In many developing countries international economic

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National capacities for conflict prevention are only sufficiently responsive if they also address the root causes of violent conflict.

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support activities contributed to accelerated urbanization. However, labor-related migration flows from rural areas into fast-growing cities have also intensified what has been recently named unconventional or urban social violence – a widespread phenomenon in major cities, particularly in South America and Africa (Unger et. al. 2016).

Effective national capacities must be inclusive and integrated, but they must also be adaptive to social change and flexible with regard to participation. In any case they must be collaborative and sustained.

What this research has revealed is that knowing the drivers and triggers of acute violence is important in order to design and implement responsive institutions and mechanisms. However, if these institutions and mechanisms focus only on the triggers and drivers of violence, and if they don't address the underlying causes of political and social conflicts, actors will lose interest in using these institutions and mechanisms and sustainability will get lost.

To be effective, short-term and long-term conflict prevention must go better hand in hand. Contributing to resilience against violence in developing countries is a long term challenge, due to the mutually reinforcing factors of structural economic weakness, state fragility and poor governance. Under such conditions the eruption of sporadic social and political violence remains a permanent, but often sudden, risk. Economic restructuring and modernization, as well as establishing the rule of law and functioning governance systems are potential factors of conflict prevention too, but all of this takes time, and prevention cannot be taken for granted if it is not designed and implemented in response to the existing grievances and divisions in society. Institutions that allow for voluntary inclusion, active participation and carrying out dialogue are of particular importance because they offer mechanisms for building trust and encouraging contributions in order to maintain nonviolent relations amongst political and social actors.

3.2   The Role of Actors

3.2.1   National capacities for conflict prevention ideally comprise both state and non-state actors.

Resilience to violence evolves from a viable and reliable social contract among all relevant national actors and stakeholders. Peace infrastructures can complement this contract by building a dynamic network of skills, capacities, resources, tools and institutions within a framework of constructive state-society relations (Giessmann 2016: 10, 16). Inclusive and reinforcing initiatives of governmental and non-governmental bodies and actors have proven particularly effective; however, many initiatives become inclusive only in their later stages. No party or stakeholder group should be stigmatized or excluded if they are interested and willing to participate in cooperative mechanisms. As the examples of the National Dialogue and the Consensus Committee in Tunisia

have proven, even Islamist parties such as Ennahda can become active and constructive stakeholders in conflict prevention mechanisms. The effectiveness of national capacities is stronger if the capacities are based on a broad national consensus about what to leave behind as well as a long-term vision for the nation. If political rifts prevail or derail efforts to build consensus, the national capacities cannot provide the effectiveness that is hoped for. Ghana and Tunisia are examples for more effectiveness, while Nepal and Kyrgyzstan are examples for less.

3.2.2 Governmental actors bear a particular responsibility for building and maintaining national capacities for conflict prevention.

Governments have the official mandate – ideally both formal *and* legitimate – to establish the structures and earmark the resources that are necessary to tackle the root causes of potential violent conflict in the best possible way. The effectiveness of their efforts is thereby dependent on a strict compliance with law, transparency, accountability and responsiveness. The case of Nepal has shown how the effectiveness of the Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction as a government capacity for conflict prevention was increasingly impeded over time by an ongoing constitutional impasse and the ineffective cooperation between the national and local structures in the form of Local Peace Committees. The situation was different in Ghana where the Peacebuilding Support Unit within the Ministry of the Interior and the peace promotion officers have supported inclusiveness through coordination, and – supported by UNDP and civil society – have helped to effectively contain tensions and violence, particularly during election seasons. Furthermore, the Peruvian experience demonstrates the importance of coordinating and allocating the resources necessary for the implementation of agreements reached on the local level across governmental agencies.

3.2.3 Capacities for conflict prevention should address and resolve conflicts at the lowest possible level.

The motivation for actors and stakeholders to actively engage in conflict prevention often depends on how affected they are by the conflict themselves. Moreover, conflict prevention will most likely succeed if affected people and communities are allowed to and are able to address the causes of conflicts with which they are directly confronted and if they can directly experience the benefits of resolving a problem cooperatively. Interventions from outside, be it in the form of state interventions at the local level, or international interventions at the national level – no matter how well-intended they may be – always run the risk of overruling local interests and reducing ownership. Of course, not all conflicts can be resolved at the local level, and often the root causes of a conflict may not be local, while their implications are. The idea of vertical

complementarity, as implemented effectively in Ghana and partly in Peru, but less effectively in Nepal, rests in the conviction that the context-specific causes, drivers and implications of any conflict should be dealt with at the level at which this can best be done, thus creating an interlocking collaboration of actors and institutions at different levels – an ecosystem or infrastructure of peace.

3.2.4 Community-based actors have a remarkable potential for conflict prevention.

The cases of Ghana, Kyrgyzstan and Lesotho demonstrate how community-based conflict prevention can have a great impact. In Ghana and Kyrgyzstan the rootedness of traditional elders and leaders in the tribes or clans enhanced their influence as interlocutors and mediators. In Lesotho, the ecumenical initiative of Protestant and Catholic church leaders was not only able to convey a message to their communities that the ethics of peace and nonviolence should be accepted as normative behavioral guidance, but it also facilitated a dialogue process at the end of which a pre-election agreement on the renunciation of force was signed by all relevant parties. The inclusion or exclusion of spoilers is a critical challenge in all national conflicts. Strengthening local communities can help to create incentives for potential spoilers to become constructively engaged. Internal cohesion can help communities to make self-conscious decisions on the level of inclusion of particular actors into national or local capacity-building. However, a broad-based social participation and commitment to the 'common good' is preferable, because it can help turn a short-term settlement into a long-term consolidation (Bell/Zulueta-Fülscher 2016:46)

3.2.5 Civil society actors are key to national capacities for conflict prevention.

Although less powerful than state actors and usually short of resources, civil society has proven itself indispensable in carrying out many roles, for instance directly, by acting as interlocutors, facilitators or mediators, but also indirectly, by adopting responsibilities for critical observation, public supervision, and bringing in the interests from – and reaching out to – all social strata. Their relevance is particularly high in countries with a high degree of political corruption, organized crime or dysfunctional state institutions. Civil society organizations are diverse and represent very different interests. Some are characterized by traditional values, others by ethnicity or a faith identity, while still other organizations are based on stakeholder interests, such as those of youth, women, victims, veterans, professionals, media, and lawyers, or they may represent single issues of concern, such as the protection of the environment or wildlife. The example of Kyrgyzstan has revealed, however, that biases may also affect civil society organizations, which risks turning CSO into empty shells if they are not inclusive and open.

One commonality among most civil society organizations is that their members and followers share similar values and interests and the organizations provide structures for bottom-up social or political engagement. This research has revealed in all cases a remarkable contribution to conflict prevention by civil society actors: the peace messengers in Kyrgyzstan, the trade unions in Tunisia, the church leaders in Lesotho, the village development committees in Nepal, or regional non-governmental organizations such as WANEP in Ghana.

3.2.6 National capacities can be formal or informal.

While the relevance of formal institutions is not disputed, the relevance of informal structures, such as traditional elders and community leaders, has been often neglected or is largely underestimated. Informal structures can be mechanisms related to low-profile community mediation, but also to the work of independent journalists and the media, to back-channel dialogues at Track 1.5 or 2 levels, etc. A vibrant civil society is not necessarily made up of merely established organizations, but can also be very much dependent on the courage of motivated individuals. This research has revealed that it is often individual change-makers who address issues of conflict prevention first, while established actors often react only once a conflict has already started and a crisis response is required. As Ghana and Lesotho have shown, a restorative leadership, , can help utilize a community-centered approach (based on the power and wisdom of the community, and embracing an ethic of community) and engage social networks – no matter if national or local – and sustain hopeful possibilities (Steffen 2012: 76; Velthuizen 2016).

3.2.7 The business sector is rarely systematically involved in conflict prevention.

Business actors have played at best only a minor role as stakeholders in national capacities for conflict prevention. The significant role that UTICA, the employers' union in Tunisia, played in the Tunisian Quartet is a good example of the impact that the engagement of business leaders can have in this regard (M'rad 2015: 42). This said, their potential contribution to stabilization should be taken more into account, since a lack of economic prosperity and job opportunities, especially for youth, as well as the fragility of social security and widespread poverty, continue to be potential drivers of conflict and violence. On the other hand, the case of Peru illustrates the importance of working with private companies in addressing the local side effects of major business developments in order to prevent conflicts over the access to resources or the protection of the rights of the affected communities. Business actors, if engaged in civil markets, usually have long-term interests in conflict prevention because of the need to protect investments, establish stable client relations and develop prosperous markets. In that they can be strong allies in all efforts to prevent

violent conflict. Yet if their activities are focused on short-term revenues, their role can also be counter-productive. In none of the cases under scrutiny have international donors and investors used their influence to encourage a more active role of national and local business actors in conflict prevention efforts.

3.3 Sustainability and Support Structures

3.3.1 The sustainability of national capacities for conflict prevention is questionable.

Support that is event-driven or primarily guided by the interests of the (external) supporters can do more harm than good. Event-driven initiatives that focus on the mitigation of existing tensions risk losing momentum once the event is over and the acute needs have seemingly faded away. External initiatives are mainly informed by the interests of their stakeholders, but these interests may or may not coincide with the interests of national actors. Such external initiatives are often less context-sensitive and more informed by experiences that external actors have had elsewhere. Moreover, external support runs the risk that national actors will be forced to rely on a continuous flow of external resources and other support without making the necessary efforts themselves to turn these investments into sustainable capacities. The reform process in Nepal, for example, will most likely suffer severe disturbances if the international community continues to withdraw its substantial capacity and funding as announced, without taking the fragility of the conflict dynamics sufficiently into account. The dilemma between the need for national ownership and the dependence on third parties' support cannot be ignored. Perpetuating support is as risky as a premature withdrawal . States and donors that engage in regular reflection on a country's national capacity for preventing violent conflict, including a mapping of existing and missing capacities (both structures as well as performance) are better able to define a strategy for targeted support according to needs. A consortia of donors who focus on a particular country or sub—region would be well-placed to endorse such a space for exchange. Moreover, an exchange on capacity development (including the sensitizing and training of decision-makers; organizational development in the organizations or systems; controlling of projects and funding lines) across different countries should be done in order to foster regional stabilization that is conducive to conflict prevention at the national level.

3.3.2 External support must take local needs and contexts into account.

Support – if context-specific, tailor-made, and based on careful analysis – can be useful and needed. As in the case of Ghana, external support can help get capacities off the ground, or, as in Nepal and Peru, to build the skills and provide the resources that are necessary to implement what has been agreed

upon. However, if external support is combined with aspirations to steer the national processes, it can obstruct the process of building viable national capacities, and can even derail it, as happened when snap elections were imposed in Lesotho while interlocutors were still trying to mediate between the conflict parties. National ownership is a prerequisite for sustained national capacities. If the dynamics of local conditions are taken into account, the emergence and recognition of ripe moments can make external support suddenly very effective, as was the case in both Aceh after the Tsunami disaster in 2001 as well as in Nepal after the 2015 earthquake where consensus-building between the conflict actors was accelerated by acute needs for collaboration. Threats to environmental livelihood provide strong incentives for collaboration between affected communities, as can be seen around the Issyk-Kul Lake in the Fergana valley. Successful conflict prevention, however, can also be seriously and sometimes abruptly impeded by deteriorating political framework conditions. Often the institutions or actors who are engaged in conflict prevention are particularly vulnerable due to changing conflict dynamics. The spread of extremism, terrorism and armed social violence are some examples of the challenges that must be taken into account in support programs.

Recommendations for International Support

National capacities for conflict prevention may apply different formats and approaches to reach their objectives. External supporters and donors should refrain from imposing their agendas on national actors. Only capacities for prevention that are responsive to national needs and that are firmly anchored into the social fabric of a nation will ultimately be sustained.

International support should:

- Distinguish (but also take into account) pressing needs for **short-term de-escalation** of acute violence in political and social conflicts and for **long-term requirements** to prevent violent conflicts through conditional support aiming to address underlying causes;

- respect and strengthen **the responsibility and ownership** of national actors for designing, developing and implementing capacities for conflict prevention;

- foster **trust-building** between conflict actors;

- provide **help for self-help**, encourage self-responsibility and accountability of governmental as well as non-governmental and civil society actors;

- combine **developmental assistance and regular strategic reflection** on achieved progress in order to assess the effectiveness of support and to adapt aid to the changing needs;

- pay attention to the needs of **minorities and other marginalized groups** in society;

- focus on inclusive and participatory approaches to conflict prevention;

- help national actors to address the **root causes** of conflict and violence;

- foster **ethnic and religious tolerance**, and resist privileging one ethnic, religious, social and cultural group to the disadvantage of others;

- help national actors to create effective **infrastructures for peace**;

- address and engage the **business sector** to foster conflict prevention;

- invest in general capacity development through strengthening of the **national education system**;

- upon request, offer **tailor-made coaching** for lead actors in key skills of mediation, negotiation and nonviolent crisis management;
- influence the **international and regional context** in order to create an environment that is conducive to conflict prevention at the national level;
- offer good services with regard to **deadlock-breaking mechanisms** to foster cooperation between conflict actors and stakeholders, if needed;
- focus on **process** rather than project results in order to foster the sustainability of national capacities;
- provide **sufficient resources** and envisage a phasing-out period for support funding according to a joint needs assessment;
- establish good **coordination of initiatives** among the donor community and close consultation with regional and international support actors;
- follow ethical principles of **due diligence and transparency**.

Annex

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