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CSSF Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk

# What Works: Strengthening Delivery Capabilities of Women Non-Government Organisations and Civil Society Organisations in Jordan

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The Women Peace and Security Helpdesk, managed by Saferworld in partnership with Conciliation Resources, Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) UK, University of Durham and Women International Peace Centre (WIPC), was established in December 2021 to increase capability across the UK Government on WPS policy and programming in order to make its work on conflict and instability more effective. If you work for the UK Government and you would like to send a task request, please email us at [wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk). If you do not work for the UK Government but have an enquiry about the helpdesk or this report, please email us at [enquiries.wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk).

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# Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations .....	4
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Methodology .....	10
Context .....	11
Women, peace and security in Jordan .....	11
Civil society context in Jordan .....	13
Conclusion: windows of opportunity .....	19
<b>National Action Plan Implementation .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Global implementation of WPS action plans: desk review .....	20
JONAP I and II: reflections on process .....	26
<b>Capacity Assessment of Organisations in Jordan .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Financial and geographical reach .....	33
Strategic, thematic and programmatic capacities .....	34
Relationships, coordination and outreach .....	36
Technical and systemic capacities .....	37
Capacity for delivering a women, peace and security agenda .....	40
<b>Rapid SWOT Assessment of JONAP II Delivery .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Models of CSO Strengthening and Support .....</b>	<b>44</b>
Different methods of ‘capacity building’: a review .....	44
Funding modalities for WPS activities and CSO strengthening .....	54
Value for money and catalytic impact .....	62
<b>Key Recommendations .....</b>	<b>68</b>
Bibliography .....	73

## Acronyms and abbreviations

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ARDD	Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
BEA	British Embassy Amman
CBO	community-based organisation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPED	CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness
CSO	civil society organisation
CSF	Civil Society Fund
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
CVE	countering violent extremism
EU	European Union
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (of the UK Government)
FGD	focus group discussion
FPJD	Family Protection and Juvenile Department
GAPS	Gender Action for Peace and Security
GBV	gender-based violence
GNWP	Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
HIMAM	an umbrella coalition of 15 CSOs
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands)
IRC-KHF	Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation
IT	information technology
IP	implementing partner
JIF	Jordan INGO Forum
JNCW	Jordanian National Commission for Women
JONAF	Jordanian National NGO Forum
JONAP	Government of Jordan's National Action Plan
JWU	Jordanian Women's Union
KII	key informant interview
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MEL	monitoring, evaluation and learning
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAP	national action plan
PVE	preventing violent extremism
RSH	Resource and Support Hub

RNGO	royal non-governmental organisation
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council resolution
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WANA	West-Asia–North Africa (Institute)
WILPF	Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom
WPS	women, peace and security
WRO	women’s rights organisation
YPS	youth, peace and security

# Executive Summary

## Overview

This report examines the strengths and weaknesses of the Government of Jordan's National Action Plan's (JONAP) implementing partners, and their capacities/constraints to directly manage and report on the implementation of activities for which they receive funds. Using a combination of desk-based research, a survey filled by local civil society organisations (CSOs) working on women, peace and security, and field interviews, the report looks at different funding and civil society capacity strengthening models that could be developed by the British Embassy in Amman to support JONAP implementing partners, particularly women's rights organisations (WROs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) at the national and local levels.

## Operational environment: opportunities and threats

Women in Jordan face a number of security threats and barriers to their full participation in public life. Some of the important issues around women's security in Jordan include: sexual and gender-based violence; security-based challenges that impede women's participation in public life; underlying conservative gender norms; and to a lesser degree, environmental challenges. Additionally, poverty and economic insecurity was highlighted as an underlying structural issue that magnifies the above vulnerabilities. All these challenges are framed within the context of complex refugee crises: not just with the arrival of Syrian refugees since 2012 and the humanitarian and socio-economic challenges that came with it, but also the long-standing Palestine refugee crisis. While refugees are undoubtedly marginalised in this context, they are by no means the only ones. CSOs have been pushing for a more comprehensive and intersectional lens by which to examine vulnerability that moves beyond the refugee-host community binary and includes other intersections such as class, age and disability, among others.

Jordanian women's organisations and movements are politically and ideologically divided by class distinctions, political differences, and between liberal and more Islamist leanings. The drive for international donor funding has further entrenched these divisions, pitting organisations against each other for limited donor funds and – along with the shrinking civil society context – diverting time and resources away from political organising and towards more service delivery functions.

WROs and CSOs working on women, peace and security (WPS) face other challenges in their work. Chief among them are social norms that make it difficult for WROs to operate, while there is a pervasive belief among many in both the community and in government that gender-focused programming is 'foreign'. The biggest external threat mentioned by CSOs is the closing space for civil society to operate, which is primarily driven by three interlinked issues: the legislative context, the funding context and the operational context. CSOs are experiencing a shrinking of space to operate, including through restrictive laws, detailed audits of accounts and records, long and uncertain delays in project approvals, intensive monitoring of activities, and public defamation campaigns.

Additionally, most CSOs are reliant on international funding to operate, and many report great difficulties in accessing these funds. As a result, most CSOs are reliant on international partners to operate, which limits their agency and the amount of funds they receive. The shift to humanitarian funding following the Syrian refugee crisis in 2012 also sidelined long-term development programming in favour of short-term emergency relief activities, which makes it difficult for CSOs to invest in their long-term strategy. Because of this environment, staff retention is a major threat facing local CSOs, with the most qualified staff often moving to larger national and international NGOs.

## JONAP implementation

In global literature around civil society's role in national action plans, JONAP is often cited as a positive example of civil society involvement in the development of the NAP. However, in field interviews, some were more critical about the participatory nature of the selection of JONAP's priorities, suggesting that in their desire to secure governmental support, the views of Jordanian state and security agencies were prioritised by the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) – which led on JONAP with support from UN Women – over those of civil society.

JONAP funding is delivered through a multi-donor pool fund managed by UN Women. Under the pooled arrangements for the first iteration of JONAP, UN Women sub-contracted five relatively large national NGOs, some of which then distributed funds to smaller CSOs. In discussions with the direct NGO partners, as well sub-contracted CSOs, around their working relationship with UN Women, some interviewees pointed to specific individuals within UN Women who were helpful with any questions or concerns. Yet they were generally critical of UN Women's systems of communication, financial reporting (specifically around time lags and delays in responding to financial reports), and inflexibility when it came to delays in receiving governmental approvals for JONAP projects.

Additionally, while UN Women organised a series of training sessions for partners, some were seen as more useful than others. NGOs reported that UN Women provided valuable expertise and knowledge on thematic issues related to United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and WPS more broadly, as well as with specific needs such as data verification training and support. UN Women was less value, NGO partners reported, around the more technical issues specific to programme management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Some partners reported that the M&E training provided by UN Women was very basic and ultimately not helpful.

This is reflected in the various weaknesses around data on impact collected by JONAP I partners. One of these weaknesses was the absence of strong baseline data and a clear theory of change driven by a thorough context and problem analysis. The type of data captured emerged as another key concern for monitoring results and impact. Reporting was often delivery rather than results or outcome based, making it difficult to measure more strategic impact around meaningful change. UN Women acknowledge this, noting that while there were clear results achieved on the ground, it was a challenge to link this to broader changes. There are several factors that contribute to this, including the challenges of monitoring such a large and varied programme, concerns around measuring changes within limited timeframes, capacity and staffing issues, as well as the difficulties in transitioning from humanitarian to more development-focused monitoring and evaluation systems.

As it relates to NAPs specifically, the cross-cutting nature of some outcomes, and the multiplicity of civil, military and governmental groups working in the space, may require an added layer of coordination. More efforts should be made to bring these different groups together to reflect on outcomes. In this sense, there is an opportunity for JNCW, in its role as a semi-governmental body, to bring together the different partners to harvest the more qualitative changes that are not as easily captured by standardised progress reports.

Nonetheless, while JONAP implementing partners generally felt that there were some problems with UN Women's management of JONAP, many felt UN Women's main value was in bringing a certain legitimacy and neutrality to the JONAP process. Given the divisions and lack of trust between different women's organisations and associations in Jordan, having UN Women manage the process allowed for a certain level of neutrality and reduced the risk of the politicisation of the 1325 agenda.

## Civil society organisation capacities

In the survey conducted for this research, CSOs involved in women, peace and security activities were asked a number of self-assessment questions around their systems and capacities. The results more or less confirmed initial field research conducted around organisational capacities: many CSOs reported challenges with donor timeframes and the growing 'projectisation' of their organisations, where the search for funding hinders the strengthening of long-term organisational systems and goals. Lack of funding was listed as the top reason for their inability to reach certain target groups and expand into new areas of programming.

CSOs also expressed a desire for greater networking and relationship building, including with international and national coalitions and networks, national government, other CSOs, and local communities. This corroborates the field research, where strained government relations, and a lack of community outreach (perhaps partly driven by the sensitivity of working on gender issues) means that WROs often work in a vacuum, mainly targeting allies and ‘the usual suspects’ within their communities. Many larger organisations, including Mercy Corps, UN Women and the JNCW, reported that CBOs would benefit from support in outreach and communication skills, including building and expanding their base.

In terms of their training needs, digital security and access to funding emerged as the top priorities. Here staff prioritised cyber security and data protection, including technology and information technology (IT) systems training and development, followed by training on writing proposals and donor compliance and reporting. However, it is clear that organisations also need support in developing monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems, and in thinking of more complex ways to measure impact and change beyond implementation of activities. However, capacity building around monitoring and evaluation has often been hampered by staff retention and turnover. This means the value of training is lost when the trained staff member departs the organisation. Capacity building around M&E will therefore need to take a more systematic approach that strengthens internal systems and mechanisms, rather than one that only focuses on training staff.

There is a wide disparity between the systems and governance mechanisms within different CBOs and NGOs in Jordan. According to Jordan’s 2021 CSO Sustainability Index, some CSOs are run by families, with no institutional capacity and a lack of clear legal structures and governance standards. Even larger, higher capacity CSOs often lack up-to-date policies and codes of conduct. Others – such as national-level NGOs – have more complex systems and policies in place, including safeguarding systems. Yet, even with policies in place, there remains a difference between the presence of safeguarding policies and their practice and implementation.

Overall, the biggest need identified by WROs, both in interviews and in the desk review on global WROs, is the dire need for dedicated, long-term and flexible funding that would help them take forward their own priorities. This is a need clearly shared by the JONAP partners. Additionally, while individual WROs and CBOs working on WPS have a particular set of technical needs, they also need to be supported to sustain a vibrant and diverse women’s sector and the emergence of a more supportive ecosystem for women’s rights and equality more broadly. This is something that may not be in the immediate focus of individual organisations, particularly in a country where coalition and network building is complex, and civil society space is shrinking.

## Recommendations

There are several different and innovative models of CSO strengthening and support. Following the desk research, survey and interviews, a number of important recommendations are suggested for future support and funding options to strengthen WROs in Jordan and the implementation of JONAP II:

### 1. Enhancing JONAP II delivery:

- push for the pooled funds to be made more accessible and flexible
- support opportunities for participatory problem analysis early in JONAP II
- strengthen JONAP-partner capacity in dynamic M&E reporting
- develop a shadow reporting group composed of representatives from JONAP civil society partners and other women’s rights and feminist groups, and potentially even youth groups and activists
- fund ongoing support around safeguarding, risk management and data security

### 2. Strengthening relationships and coordination:

- build the capacity of the JNCW in fulfilling a ‘secretariat’ function to support coalition building around women, peace and security



- support CSOs working on women, peace and security issues with community outreach and engagement
- encourage cooperation between CSOs working on women, peace and security and people working in other sectors
- build relations between CSOs and government, including building the capacity and confidence of CSOs to engage in policy and advocacy on the women, peace and security agenda
- coordinate with existing donors operating in the capacity strengthening space in Jordan

### 3. Protecting civil society space:

- acknowledge the closing of civil society space, particularly for women's organisations; monitor the trends associated with this, and provide resources and support for civil society to continue working safely
- advocate with relevant ministries to protect and expand civil society space
- work to change government perceptions of civil society through awareness raising and evidence-based research

In addition to these recommendations, a number of options around funding and capacity strengthening were presented:

**Option 1: A model for providing core funds.** Create a fund that provides flexible, multi-year unrestricted funding which can be used by women's organisations against core business areas (staffing, office space, administrative costs), as well to support innovative women's programming areas that are hard to fund.

**Option 2: Participatory grant-making fund.** Working with Jordanian women-led and women's rights organisations, existing JONAP partners, and an international feminist funder (such as FRIDA), co-design and fund a participatory grant-making model.

**Option 3: Support the establishment of a civil society support facility with a focus on peer-to-peer learning.** Working with a small group of women-led and women's rights organisations, co-design a long-term civil society support facility that has a thematic focus on women, peace and security.

# Introduction

The British Embassy Amman (BEA) was the largest donor of the first Jordanian National Action Plan (JONAP I) on women, peace and security (2019–2022) – supporting a four-year pool fund implemented by UN Women and the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW). The UK contributed £4.27 million (50 per cent) over four years. As the second Government of Jordan’s National Action Plan (JONAP II) – in which the UK is once again a major donor – begins implementation, the BEA is keen to learn from and address some of the lessons and concerns that arose from the implementation of the first JONAP. Some of these are directly related to the capacities of various implementing partners, particularly when it comes to monitoring delivery and risks (including safeguarding), and to what degree the capacities of local implementing partners are strengthened to drive forward the WPS agenda, enhance localisation and to enable them to implement directly in the future.

This report therefore aims to capture the strength and weaknesses of JONAP implementing partners and their capacities/constraints to directly manage and report on the implementation of activities for which they receive funds through JONAP II. Findings would inform decisions around whether BE Amman should and could offer ‘systems strengthening’ support to UN Women, JNCW and JONAP implementing partners, particularly women’s rights organisations (WROs) and community based organisations (CBOs) at the national and local levels. This is situated within a broader desk review of global policies and practices around NAP implementation and monitoring, as well as a review of various capacity building and funding modalities that can inform and inspire future BEA programming.

As a policy framework, JONAP II is well aligned to the UK’s own national action plan on UNSCR 1325, while a wide range of UK government programmes contribute to its objectives, including some of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office’s (FCDO’s) education, humanitarian and social protection programmes, as well as Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) bilateral support to the security sector. This paper will also seek to draw out some of the value for money and catalytic impacts that can be achieved through this kind of capacity strengthening support.

## Methodology

The report was developed using three main forms of research: (i) a desk-based literature review and relevant papers, analysis and reports from around the world; (ii) a series of focus group discussions (in Amman, Jerash and Madaba) and key informant interviews with BEA staff, JONAP implementing partners, women’s rights organisations, research centres and other national and international NGOs operating in Jordan; and (iii) an online self-assessment survey for JONAP implementing partners (IPs) to measure capacities and needs. The survey was sent to all JONAP IPs, and 17 responses were received. While this number is not large enough to draw a definitive sense of areas of needs, it was corroborated by the in-country interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), as well as desk research on CSO and WRO capacities in Jordan and common CSO needs around WPS work streams worldwide.

All data from the survey, interviews and focus groups is presented anonymously, unless permission was received otherwise. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to validate the results of the survey and desk research with CSOs and WROs in Jordan. Nor was it possible to convene a workshop to validate the conclusion and recommendations with such organisations. Therefore, an important next step following this research would be to discuss the key findings and recommendations with relevant partners and CSOs in Jordan.

The list of interviews, FGDs, survey information and reading materials is presented in the annexes.

## Context

### Women, peace and security in Jordan

While by no means an in-depth analysis of the major women, peace and security (WPS) issues in Jordan, the following provides a brief overview of some of the concerns and issues raised by CBOs and WROs during the field research in Jordan, and some pertinent points around women's participation in peacebuilding. This is helpful to frame some of the operational challenges and opportunities facing these organisations in their response.

#### WOMEN'S SECURITY CONCERNS AND VULNERABILITIES

Some of the important issues around women's security in Jordan raised during the field research include: sexual and gender-based violence; security-based challenges that impede women's participation in public life; underlying conservative gender norms; and to a lesser degree, environmental challenges. Additionally, poverty and economic insecurity was highlighted as an underlying structural issue that magnifies the above vulnerabilities.

All these challenges must also be framed within the context of complex refugee crises: not just with the arrival of Syrian refugees since 2012 and the humanitarian and socio-economic challenges that came with it, but also the long-standing Palestine refugee crisis. In many of the challenges outlined below, women and girls within these refugee communities – both Palestinian and Syrian – were highlighted as being a particularly marginalised group. However, there is broad agreement among organisations of the need for an intersectional lens that expands understanding and approaches to 'vulnerability' in the WPS agenda beyond refugees. Some of the communities identified as being vulnerable also include the elderly, disabled, migrant workers and victims of trafficking.<sup>1</sup> This is in line with some of the changes made from the first phase of JONAP to the second, where JONAP II expands its focus of vulnerability beyond refugees.<sup>2</sup>

Sexual and gender-based violence was also reported as one of the biggest security issues facing women by nearly all CBOs interviewed during this assessment.<sup>3</sup> Though certain groups – such as refugees and migrants – are particularly vulnerable, the issue is pervasive across all communities. CBOs also highlighted that actual figures across all communities are likely much higher than reported, due to social norms and stigmas.<sup>4</sup> According to the 2021 Jordan Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) Midyear Report, January–June 2021,<sup>5</sup> only 19 per cent of women who were physically or sexually abused by their husbands sought help, and only 3 per cent filed an official complaint. CBOs and WROs with specific sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) programming reported that there is a need for more safe spaces and shelters for marginalised women, but that these are often seen as an afterthought in government-led programmes such as JONAP.<sup>6</sup>

Underlying these security challenges are a broader set of conservative cultural and social norms prevalent across Jordan. Patriarchal social norms present a challenge to the protection and participation of women in both the public and private spheres. Women continue to be seen as responsible for the family's honour, and face punishment if their behaviour is seen to bring dishonour to the family. For example, according to the IMAGES study on masculinities,<sup>7</sup> more than half of female respondents and over 80 per cent of male respondents agreed with the idea that a girl or woman deserved punishment to protect her honour.

<sup>1</sup> Focus Group Discussion (FGD), British Embassy Amman's (BEA) GESI Advisory Group, 26 January 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Key informant interview (KII), UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>3</sup> This has worsened in the pandemic, with the first half of 2021 seeing reported incidents rise by over 50 per cent compared to the previous year. Source: Reliefweb (2021), 'Jordan GBVIMS TF Midyear Report, January–June 2021' (<https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-gbvims-tf-midyear-report-january-june-2021>)

<sup>4</sup> FGD, Women's NGO, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Reliefweb (2021), 'Jordan GBVIMS TF Midyear Report, January–June 2021' (<https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-gbvims-tf-midyear-report-january-june-2021>)

<sup>6</sup> FGD, Women's NGO, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>7</sup> IMAGES (2022), 'Understanding Masculinities', International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), Jordan, November.

Social norms make it difficult for WROs to operate,<sup>8</sup> and there is a pervasive belief among many in the community and in government that gender-focused programming is ‘foreign’.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, many women are not aware of their rights, with CBOs highlighting the need for greater awareness raising among women about their rights and opportunities.<sup>10</sup> Some WROs highlighted the need to engage both youth and men in WPS issues, increasing community engagement on women, peace and security concerns beyond women. This is particularly important considering not just the need to take a wider gender lens – including the exploration of masculinities – but also due to the prevalence of misperceptions around policies and programmes that relate to gender equality, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).<sup>11</sup>

Finally, several CSOs mentioned environmental security as an emerging issue facing women, particularly droughts and agricultural and water security. Adapting and responding to environmental security is still in its early stages in Jordan, and some organisations highlighted the need to build local capacities to respond and adapt to this emerging threat.<sup>12</sup>

## WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN PEACEBUILDING

At a national level, a 2018 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report notes that slow progress is being made in Jordan in terms of women’s representation in elected decision-making bodies, which is primarily attributable to women’s quotas at the national and local level.<sup>13</sup> While some progress has been made in the numbers of women in decision-making bodies, it is hard to measure the quality of this participation. Research suggests that ‘appointments are made without any real conviction’, but rather due to pressure from quotas and international donors.<sup>14</sup> Women’s participation is also likely to be linked to class, with women in elite circles – or from elite families – perceived to be more able to access these decision-making bodies compared to those with less economic and political standing.<sup>15</sup>

There are clearly a number of barriers preventing more women from running for or being elected to national bodies. These include but are not limited to: lack of explicit reference to ‘gender’ equality in electoral laws, executive instructions for elections and the political parties law; women’s restricted access to and control over finances, meaning they struggle to finance their own electoral campaigns; restrictions on women’s freedom of movement (particularly in Southern and rural areas); and underlying conservative gender norms around women’s roles in the family that discourage women’s political participation.<sup>16</sup>

Women’s role in Jordan’s security sector also presents a mixed picture. For example, while the Jordanian armed forces ‘pride themselves on strong policies on gender equality’, including having benefits such as maternity leave, in her paper on the role of women in Jordan’s security sector, Laramie Shubber argues that the security sector is still perceived as overwhelmingly male and inaccessible to women.<sup>17</sup> There are also community-level barriers to

<sup>8</sup> In many interviews and FGDs conducted with WROs, CSOs noted that conservative social norms have made it difficult to pursue women’s rights programming. For example, misperceptions about ‘introducing foreign ideas’ are commonly levied at WROs pursuing awareness raising campaigns around women’s empowerment and women’s rights. Even international NGOs such as Mercy Corps reported restrictions on women’s movement have made it difficult to access women in more conservative parts of the country.

<sup>9</sup> FGD, women’s NGO, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Participants in FGD, British Embassy Amman’s (BEA) GESI Advisory Group, 26 January 2023, and with CBOs, Irbid, 23 January 2023.

<sup>11</sup> FGD, women’s NGO, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, JNCW, 25 January 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2018), ‘Women’s Political Participation in Jordan’ ([www.oecd.org/mena/governance/womens-political-participation-in-jordan.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/womens-political-participation-in-jordan.pdf))

<sup>14</sup> Hattab MS (2023), ‘Women’s political participation: is Jordan making tangible progress?’, *Jordan News*, 5 January ([www.jordannews.io/Section-36/Opinion/Women-s-political-participation-Is-jordan-making-tangible-progress-26253](http://www.jordannews.io/Section-36/Opinion/Women-s-political-participation-Is-jordan-making-tangible-progress-26253))

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> OECD (2018), ‘Women’s Political Participation in Jordan’, pp 23 (<https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/womens-political-participation-in-jordan.pdf>)

<sup>17</sup> Shubber L (2018), ‘Supporting the critical role of women in Jordan’s security sector’, ALIGN ([www.alignplatform.org/resources/supporting-critical-role-women-jordans-security-sector](http://www.alignplatform.org/resources/supporting-critical-role-women-jordans-security-sector))

participation, with social norms and family pressures continuing to prevent women from participating more fully in the security sector.<sup>18</sup>

Women's participation in public, political and economic life also remains hampered by security-based challenges. In addition to social norms and family pressure on women, women activists interviewed during the field trip reported facing harassment by colleagues and the wider community when engaging in public life, including those working in the media and local government.<sup>19</sup> Social media harassment was also cited as a security issue, including issues such as blackmail, public shaming and threats. An assessment by the Public Security Directorate (PSD) reveals that 90 per cent of cybercrime victims in Jordan are women.<sup>20</sup> According to recent research on women's organisations in Jordan, feminists and women's rights activists reported being routinely bullied and ridiculed on social media, including receiving death threats.<sup>21</sup>

Many local-level organisations noted that women have an important role to play in community peacebuilding and social cohesion, particularly in areas such as addressing drugs, trafficking, community conflict and radicalisation. In most cases, however, CSOs said that women often did not know the role they could play, and there was a need for more programming that targets women's role in preventing and addressing these issues.<sup>22</sup>

## Civil society context in Jordan

According to the 2021 Civil Society Organisation Sustainability Index, by the end of 2021 there were a total of 6,749 societies registered with the Ministry of Social Development under the Law on Societies 51 of 2008.<sup>23</sup> Some CSOs prefer to register as a non-profit company rather than an NGO or a society, in order to avoid some of the obstacles presented by Law 51. There are also approximately ten royal NGOs (RNGOs) operating in Jordan, established by royal decrees and parliamentary endorsement, and which do not require registration with any particular ministry.<sup>24</sup> In addition to this, unregistered groups, protest movements, and unions and associations all play an important role in shaping and channelling the voices and concerns of Jordanian citizens.

### Box1: Women's organisations and movements in Jordan

Jordan has a long-standing feminist movement, with many vocal women's rights activists participating in demonstrations, advocacy and social justice movement.<sup>25</sup> Much like existing divisions within the country, women's organisations and movements are also politically and ideologically divided by class distinctions, political differences, and between liberal and more Islamist leanings.

According to a 2016 US Agency for International Development (USAID) civil society assessment in Jordan,<sup>26</sup>

<sup>18</sup> BEA policing advisor, 24 January 2023.

<sup>19</sup> FGDs, CBOs, Irbid, 23 January 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Ghazal, M (2016), '90% of cybercrime victims in Jordan are women', *Jordan Times*, 31 October ([www.jordantimes.com/news/local/90-cybercrime-victims-jordan-are-women%E2%80%99](http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/90-cybercrime-victims-jordan-are-women%E2%80%99))

<sup>21</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna (2021), 'Impact of Shrinking Space on Women Organizations in Jordan' (<https://kvinna.tillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/IMPACT-OF-SHRINKING-CIVIC-SPACE-ON-FEMINISTS-ORGANISING-IN-JORDAN-1.pdf>)

<sup>22</sup> FGDs, CBOs, Irbid, 23 January 2023.

<sup>23</sup> USAID, FHI 360 (2022), '2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index', November ([www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-mena-2021-report.pdf](http://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-mena-2021-report.pdf)). The source goes on to say that the law 'continue[s] to be the primary law governing the operation of local and foreign organisations. The law and its implementation impose various restrictions on the work of most CSOs, including the need to register and seek approval to receive foreign funding; an unregistered CSO may work as a non-formal group, but it is difficult for them to receive funding.'

<sup>24</sup> CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPED) (2021), 'Report on Civic Space in Jordan Before and After COVID-19', (<http://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CPED-Report-on-Civic-Space-in-Jordan-Before-and-After-COVID-28-Jan-21.pdf>)

<sup>25</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna (2021), 'Impact of Shrinking Space on Women Organizations in Jordan' (<https://kvinna.tillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/IMPACT-OF-SHRINKING-CIVIC-SPACE-ON-FEMINISTS-ORGANISING-IN-JORDAN-1.pdf>)

<sup>26</sup> US Agency for International Development (USAID) (2016), 'Civil Society Assessment in Jordan'.

women's organisations face their own unique set of challenges. The internal governance of many women's organisations remains opaque and undemocratic, lacking accountability and driven by personalities. These organisations are hampered by political and ideological divisions. Another additional challenge is that many organisations do not have broad influence with their – usually more conservative – constituencies. The drive for international donor funding has further entrenched these divisions, pitting organisations against each other for limited donor funds. This – along with the shrinking civil society context – diverts time and resources away from political organising and towards more service delivery functions.<sup>27</sup>

Registered CSOs in Jordan face a number of challenges and are highly concerned about their ability to sustain their organisations and their work. The biggest external threat mentioned by CSOs is the closing space for civil society to operate. This is primarily driven by three interlinked issues: the legislative context, the funding context and the operational context. Each of these, along with potential windows of opportunity, are explored in greater detail below.

## LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT

An in-depth assessment of civil society in Jordan conducted by USAID in 2016 found that civil society organisations face restrictions, intimidation and harassment by the Jordanian Government and security services, including through restrictive laws, detailed audits of accounts and records, and public defamation campaigns.<sup>28</sup> Part of this, the assessment found, is driven by the 'pervasive distrust of civil society that prevails in many government circles', where civil society is seen as 'disloyal and bent on promoting foreign agendas'.<sup>29</sup>

Law 51, the primary law governing the operation of both local and foreign organisations, continues to impose several restrictions on the work of most CSOs. CSOs are required to register to receive approval for foreign funding;<sup>30</sup> this funding also requires prior notification and approval of the Council of Ministers, including CSOs having to complete and submit an extensive application form.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, CSOs are burdened by complex compliance requirements, such as the need to conduct due diligence on resources of funds and vendors.<sup>32</sup> The government's reasoning for these regulations is that they are necessary to combat terrorism and money laundering. This resonates with the adverse effects of counter-terrorism measures in other contexts. Our desk review found that globally, counter-terrorism measures are impeding CSOs' – especially WROs' – ability to work safely. In a study by Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, researchers found that 90 per cent of women's organisations surveyed across 61 countries reported counter-terrorism measures as impeding their ability to work for women's rights and gender equality, and 60 per cent feared prosecution or harassment under counter-terrorism financing (CTF) measures.<sup>33</sup>

Two other legal restrictions impact the ability of CSOs to advocate, spread information and pursue awareness-raising activities. The first relates to the criminal defamation law, which sanctions expressions that 'constitutes defamation or libel of government officials'.<sup>34</sup> This limits the ability of CSOs and activists to criticise government officials. The second

<sup>27</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna (2021), 'Impact of Shrinking Space on Women Organizations in Jordan' (<https://kvinna.tillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/IMPACT-OF-SHRINKING-CIVIC-SPACE-ON-FEMINISTS-ORGANISING-IN-JORDAN-1.pdf>)

<sup>28</sup> US Agency for International Development (USAID) (2016), 'Civil Society Assessment in Jordan'.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p 6.

<sup>30</sup> USAID, FHI 360 (2022), '2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index', November ([www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-mena-2021-report.pdf](http://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-mena-2021-report.pdf))

<sup>31</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna (2021), 'Impact of Shrinking Space on Women Organizations in Jordan' (<https://kvinna.tillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/IMPACT-OF-SHRINKING-CIVIC-SPACE-ON-FEMINISTS-ORGANISING-IN-JORDAN-1.pdf>)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> The Feminist Peace Organisation (CFD) (2019), 'Women, Peace and Security and the Prevention of Violence: Reflections from Civil Society in the Context of the Fourth Swiss National Action Plan 1325', Policy Brief ([www.swisspeace.ch/assets/publications/downloads/49d4c877e0/Policy\\_Brief\\_WP.pdf](http://www.swisspeace.ch/assets/publications/downloads/49d4c877e0/Policy_Brief_WP.pdf)); cited in Duke Law Research Paper available here: <https://law.duke.edu/sites/default/files/humanrights/tighteningpursestrings.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna (2021), 'Impact of Shrinking Space on Women Organizations in Jordan' (<https://kvinna.tillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/IMPACT-OF-SHRINKING-CIVIC-SPACE-ON-FEMINISTS-ORGANISING-IN-JORDAN-1.pdf>)

relates to prohibitions on engaging in political or religious activities. CSOs governed by Law 51 must not have any 'political goals' and are restricted from 'activities of political parties'.<sup>35</sup> The purposefully vague terminology – particularly around the definition of what is considered 'political activities', which is not defined in either the Law on Societies 51 or the 1992 Political Parties law – severely restricts the space CSOs have in which to operate. This allows for unrestricted discretionary authority that allows the government to determine who or what CSOs are able to operate.

According to Sara Ababneh, an academic and gender expert in Jordan, the women's rights movement and civil society more broadly have seen a gradual 'de-politicisation' as a result of these legislative restrictions, particularly the denial of CSOs' right to work and organise on political issues. This has meant that the women's rights agenda specifically has transitioned from a national political agenda to a social development one.<sup>36</sup>

The 2021 Civil Society Organisation Sustainability Index provides an in-depth exploration of the legislative hurdles that restrict civil society space in Jordan. It notes that in 2021, there was some promise when the Ministry of Social Development consulted with more than 2,500 CSOs to review the Law on Societies. However, the government ended these consultations with no tangible results, citing a lack of consensus. CSOs are still able to submit suggestions through the Registry Council website, though it is unclear whether these suggestions are taken any further.<sup>37</sup>

### Box 2: Civil Society space in the aftermath of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in further restrictions on civil society space and public freedoms in Jordan. The government's activation of the Defense Law in March 2020 expanded state power 'beyond what can ordinarily be considered constitutional for an indeterminate amount of time', which contributed to 'the obstruction of CSO's ability to get funding and carry out activities, the imprisonment of journalists and other media figures, the dissolution of labour unions and imprisonment of union leaders, and the continued assault on freedom of speech and freedom of association'.<sup>38</sup> This included various orders limiting public gatherings (Defense Order No. 3) and suspending normal processes of litigation (Defense Order No. 5), which impacted legal services relating to child labour and juveniles.<sup>39</sup>

January 2020 saw the introduction of a new mechanism and Specialised Committee for approving foreign financing for CSOs.<sup>40</sup> This was intended to accelerate the process of approval, however CSOs reported various delays and obstructions, including the denial of funding without a *wasta*, lack of capacity of some members of the Specialised Committee to read project reports and budgets, and pressure on CSOs to reallocate some funds towards the government.<sup>41</sup>

This was confirmed and re-echoed in interviews conducted with CSOs in January 2023, which reported significant delays in project approvals ranging from three months to a year. One NGO reported a six month wait for approval on a JONAP-pooled funding programme.<sup>42</sup> According to monitoring report surveys on project approvals for international

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ababneh, S (2020), 'The Time to Question, Rethink and Popularize the Notion of "Women's Issues": Lessons from Jordan's Popular and Labor Movements from 2006 to now', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 21 (1), pp 271–288.

<sup>37</sup> USAID, FHI 360 (2022), '2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index', November ([www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-mena-2021-report.pdf](http://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-mena-2021-report.pdf))

<sup>38</sup> CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPED) (2021), 'Report on Civic Space in Jordan Before and After COVID-19', (<http://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CPED-Report-on-Civic-Space-in-Jordan-Before-and-After-COVID-28-Jan.21.pdf>)

<sup>39</sup> US Agency for International Development (USAID), FHI 360 (2022), '2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index', November ([www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-mena-2021-report.pdf](http://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-mena-2021-report.pdf))

<sup>40</sup> According to CPED (2021), 'The mechanism gives the committee 20 days to examine the funding request. After the request is submitted to the Council of Ministers for assessment, a decision should be taken within 10 days.'

<sup>41</sup> CPED (2021), 'Report on Civic Space in Jordan Before and After COVID-19', (<http://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CPED-Report-on-Civic-Space-in-Jordan-Before-and-After-COVID-28-Jan.21.pdf>)

<sup>42</sup> KII, local women's rights organisation, 26 January 2023.

NGOs (INGOs) since 2016, 2022 was considered the worst year for INGO approval, with an average of 146 days until approval. This compared to an average of 80 days between 2016 and 2021.<sup>43</sup>

While gender-based programming is one of the ‘sensitive’ programmes that receives extra government scrutiny, it is by no means the only one. There are certain words or themes (such as those related to refugee integration, social cohesion or human security) that are also flagged: “It is a whole language that needs to be learned, and some NGOs are better at speaking this language than others,” said one senior consultant at a local women’s empowerment organisation.<sup>44</sup>

Sometimes, CSOs do not receive a firm ‘no’ but are simply never given approval. This increases uncertainty, leads to problems with donors, and effectively prevents the operations of any CSO the government may disapprove of. One CSO reported that this has become very problematic for their operations, they nearly had to shut down essential shelter services for marginalised women.<sup>45</sup> Another reported that now, they only accepted funds from donors who understand and accommodate for these delays. Some others have even had to shut down.<sup>46</sup>

UN Women reported having raised these delays in approval in bilateral meetings with the government; however, it also noted that the JNCW has a role to play – given that it is a mediating link between government and CSOs.<sup>47</sup> Some CSOs reported a slight improvement in approval delays from the beginning of 2023, partly due to changes in the system and application requirements.<sup>48</sup>

### Box 3: Relevant laws for civil society in Jordan

Penal Code and Freedom of Expression (Articles 149 and 191) (1960)

Law on Protecting State Secrets and Documents (1971)

Labor Law No. 8 (1996), regulating trade unions

Companies Act No. 22 (1997), regulating not-for-profit companies (areas: education, health, capacity building, microfinance)

Press Association Law (1998)

Chamber of Commerce Law (2003)

Law on Public Gatherings (2004) (esp. Article 4), amended in 2012

Chambers of Industry Law (2005)

Anti-terrorism Law (2006), amended in 2014

Press and Publications Law (2007), amended in 2012 (esp. Articles 5 and 38b)

Law on the Protection of the Right to Access Information No. 47 (2007)

Law on Societies and Social Bodies No. 33 (1966), as amended to the Law on Societies/ Associations No. 51 (2008) and amended again in 2009

General Statistics Law (2012), Cybercrimes Law No. 27 (2015), Audiovisual Media Law No. 26 (2015)

Source: ARDD (2020), ‘Strengthening Localization in Jordan: Reinforce and support, do not replace or undermine’, October.

## FUNDING ENVIRONMENT

The only source of Jordanian Government funding for local societies and NGOs in Jordan is the Ministry of Social Development’s Society Fund, which is managed by the Registrar of Societies.<sup>49</sup> However, the fund ‘lacks stable, predictable and transparent rules’<sup>50</sup> and so excludes many organisations. Historically, RNGOs receive the largest

<sup>43</sup> KII, JIF coordinator, 13 February 2023.

<sup>44</sup> KII, Jordanian think tank 22 January 2023.

<sup>45</sup> FGD in WRO, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>46</sup> KII, Jordanian think tank, 22 January 2023.

<sup>47</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Various national and local NGOs interviewed on 25 and 26 January 2023, 02 February 2023.

<sup>49</sup> CPED (2021), ‘Report on Civic Space in Jordan Before and After COVID-19’, (<http://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CPED-Report-on-Civic-Space-in-Jordan-Before-and-After-COVID-28-Jan.21.pdf>)

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



portion of funding, and are given control over distributing funds to smaller CBOs.<sup>51</sup> This includes the JNCW, a semi-government body formed by royal decree and tasked to formulate the government strategy on women, including coordinating with CSOs to implement this strategy.<sup>52</sup>

Because of this, most CSOs rely on international funding to operate. However, CSOs reported difficulty in directly accessing these funds. Part of the problem relates to capacity issues around language and proposal writing; however, funding requirements also present a barrier. CSOs reported stringent due diligence requirements that are difficult for even larger Jordanian NGOs to fulfil.<sup>53</sup> Some CSOs interpret this as a 'lack of trust' on the part of the donors, who prefer to navigate fund distribution through larger, more trusted – and often international – NGOs.<sup>54</sup>

Funding timeframes was another challenge highlighted by local NGOs (LNGOs) and CSOs, and nearly all NGOs interviewed spoke about their desire for more long-term donor partnerships. UN Women and others have noted that two-year timeframes are not enough to achieve long-term impact and combined with reporting timeframes, this makes it near impossible to monitor and measure long-term change.<sup>55</sup> This also affects the CSO's ability to develop the necessary systems and processes. Many CSOs reported being unable to plan strategically or build necessary systems, which can only be done through long-term core funding. "We cannot compete with Mercy Corps and Oxfam when it comes to staff capacity building, because they have a much larger pool of core institutional funds they can draw from," one NGO said.<sup>56</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have also had a huge impact on access to international funding, according to CSOs interviewed. Research by the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) showed that 75 per cent of CSOs surveyed through the Jordan National NGO Forum (JONAF), one of the largest and most prominent civil society networks in Jordan, reported their funding had decreased in the aftermath of the pandemic.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, according to research conducted on the women's rights movement in Jordan, competition over international funding has distracted the movement from pursuing its own priorities in favour of 'time-dependent "projects"',<sup>58</sup> where the expected outputs and outcomes are often predetermined by the donor. This was echoed in some interviews, where NGOs noted that donor priorities were often not developed by a problem or situation analysis but their own strategic priorities.<sup>59</sup>

Another funding challenge is the shift to 'humanitarian' programming models following the Syrian refugee crisis. This has not only side-lined long-term development programming but also strengthened the hold of INGOs, who were better positioned to deliver emergency crisis response programming.<sup>60</sup> According to Dr Wafa AL Khadra, a gender expert and council member of the National Human Rights Commission in Jordan, the "international humanitarian discourse" also limited "the space for organising on women's issues".<sup>61</sup> Although there is a slow shift towards post-recovery and development programming by international actors, research indicates that the Jordanian Government continues to favour short-term humanitarian programming for both political and financial reasons.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna (2021), 'Impact of Shrinking Space on Women Organizations in Jordan' (<https://kvinнатillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/IMPACT-OF-SHRINKING-CIVIC-SPACE-ON-FEMINISTS-ORGANISING-IN-JORDAN-1.pdf>)

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> KII, national women's rights organisation, 26 January 2023.

<sup>54</sup> FGD, BEA GESI Advisory Group, 26 January 2023.

<sup>55</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>56</sup> KII, Jordanian think tank, 22 January 2023.

<sup>57</sup> CPED (2021), 'Report on Civic Space in Jordan Before and After COVID-19', (<http://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CPED-Report-on-Civic-Space-in-Jordan-Before-and-After-COVID-28-Jan.21.pdf>)

<sup>58</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna (2021), 'Impact of Shrinking Space on Women Organizations in Jordan' (<https://kvinнатillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/IMPACT-OF-SHRINKING-CIVIC-SPACE-ON-FEMINISTS-ORGANISING-IN-JORDAN-1.pdf>)

<sup>59</sup> KII, national NGO, 22 January 2023.

<sup>60</sup> KII, CSSF staff, 24 January 2023.

<sup>61</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna (2021), 'Impact of Shrinking Space on Women Organizations in Jordan' (<https://kvinнатillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/IMPACT-OF-SHRINKING-CIVIC-SPACE-ON-FEMINISTS-ORGANISING-IN-JORDAN-1.pdf>)

<sup>62</sup> CPED (2021), 'Report on Civic Space in Jordan Before and After COVID-19', (<http://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CPED-Report-on-Civic-Space-in-Jordan-Before-and-After-COVID-28-Jan.21.pdf>)

## OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Because of donor requirements, the operational model most often pursued by donors is to distribute funds through larger, often international, NGOs, which then bring on local CSOs as ‘implementing partners’.<sup>63</sup> In this model, the funding that ends up in the hands of local CSOs is often very little, a complaint heard across all the interviews conducted. According to ARDD, only 2–4 per cent of international funds goes to CSOs, with funding for women’s issues being a tiny fraction of that (2.7 per cent), which is much lower than for other sectors such as health or education.<sup>64</sup>

Said the head of one local NGO in Amman:

*International organisations dominate the market, creating their own consortiums, with little money trickling down to local NGOs... Oftentimes, the only thing local NGOs do is provide beneficiaries for the project, so there is no space in this kind of relationship for learning or capacity development.*<sup>65</sup>

Other CSOs outside Amman complained of feeling exploited, demanding that donors should do more to ensure greater financial accountability and equal distribution of funds. Most partnerships between international and local partners are for less than three years, with fewer than 5 per cent of partnerships lasting for more than five years.<sup>66</sup>

Because of this environment, staff retention is a major threat facing local CSOs. Partly for sustainability reasons, salaries for CSO staff remain low compared to those of INGOs. This means that once a staff member has been trained, they are often recruited by international NGOs. Some INGOs who work on capacity development for local CSOs try to mitigate the ‘brain drain’ by training more than one staff member and promoting ongoing – rather than one-off – training sessions.<sup>67</sup> However, it is not clear if this fundamentally addresses the structural issues underpinning staff retention problems.

Finally, the sensitivity of working on certain women’s issues was highlighted as an operational challenge facing CSOs. Patriarchal norms and customs that permeate legislation, government and society, hinder the work of many WROs. Some pointed to the difficulty of engaging women in conservative areas who are prevented from leaving their homes or attending trainings.<sup>68</sup> Others pointed to common misconceptions around certain international frameworks – such as CEDAW – as presenting a barrier to their work.<sup>69</sup> Others still noted that certain issues are politically sensitive from the government’s side – such as working with civil society on issues of human security and countering violent extremism (CVE).<sup>70</sup> One organisation noted that decision-makers need capacity building on certain key issues relating to women, peace and security, but that donors had been largely uninterested in funding such issues (and when they did, staff turnover meant that the impact of such training was often lost).<sup>71</sup>

CSOs also report government interference in types of activities, project budgets, and requirements around holding meetings or public gatherings. According to the Law on Public Gatherings, the government must be notified three weeks in advance of public meetings, gatherings or workshops, including providing the full names and nationalities of participants.<sup>72</sup> CSOs reported that government officials often interfered in the participants list, especially when the list included non-Jordanians, and government officials would also often attend and monitor these meetings.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>63</sup> According to OCHA (2021), the overwhelming majority of the US\$775 million of humanitarian funding is channelled through the UN. Of the \$56 million of humanitarian funding that comes to local NGOs, the overwhelming majority (83 per cent) goes indirectly through bilateral partnerships with UN agencies. Only about 12% of LNGO funding flows directly from donors to local NGOs. Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2021), ‘Humanitarian Partnerships and Capacity Exchange Analysis’.

<sup>64</sup> KII, national NGO, 23 January 2023.

<sup>65</sup> KII, local NGO, 22 January 2023.

<sup>66</sup> OCHA (2021), ‘Humanitarian Partnerships and Capacity Exchange Analysis’.

<sup>67</sup> KII, international NGO staff, 02 February 2023.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> FGD, women’s rights organisation, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>70</sup> KII, Jordanian think tank, 22 January 2023.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> FGD, BEA GESI Advisory Group, 26 January 2023.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

Despite these challenges, local CSOs play an important role in bridging the strategies and programmes created by donors, INGOs and even larger Amman-based local NGOs with local-level contexts that are sometimes very conservative and patriarchal. Here, local CSOs working on women, peace and security issues are best positioned to undertake the careful balancing act between different local and global strategies and forces, providing strong sensitivity to the political context, a deep understanding of community needs, and the desire to push forth a progressive agenda for change.<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusion: windows of opportunity

Despite this difficult environment, there currently exist key windows of opportunity that can be further opened to support local NGOs. The first is an opportunity to build or capitalise on a growing improvement of the working relationships between local NGOs and international organisations.<sup>75</sup> For example, there are increased efforts to ensure presence and representation of local NGOs in donor and UN coordination meetings, global refugee forums and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submissions<sup>76</sup> – exemplified by cooperation between the different INGO and NGO coalitions on joint statements about regulatory environments and NGO laws.<sup>77</sup> This is combined with a growing realisation by the Jordanian Government of the value local NGOs can have in refugee response, particularly in the context of high operational costs of INGOs and the overall environment of shrinking international funding.<sup>78</sup> These developments open up a space for local CSOs to play a larger and more powerful role at the governorate and national levels.

The second opportunity relates to a slight improvement in the legislative and regulatory environment for NGOs, which allows for cautious optimism. The appointment of a new minister in the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC), who believes in the value and role of civil society and local NGOs, presents local civil society with a potentially important ally in government.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, although the regulatory laws have not changed, national and international NGO coalitions have succeeded in pushing for the centralisation of registration processes under one unit within MOPIC, which will lessen the complications of project approvals.<sup>80</sup> The next challenge for this coalition will be to push for the removal of the governmental committee that approves projects – one of the major barriers and hindrances to NGO operations.<sup>81</sup>

In this context, it is critical to invest in developing the systems and capacities of local NGOs, to allow them to make use of these openings and be visible as strong and sustainable partners. This should be combined with discussions with the government about the positive impact of a strong civil society, backed up by evidence-based research demonstrating the added value that local NGOs have in their communities – a key concern for a government that often views these organisations as a security threat.

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<sup>74</sup> KII interview, JIF coordinator, 13 February 2023.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, Jordan NGOs Forum, '2023 Statement'; ([www.ardd-jo.org/News-Room/statement-by-jordan-ngos-forum-jonaf-himam-and-the-jordan](http://www.ardd-jo.org/News-Room/statement-by-jordan-ngos-forum-jonaf-himam-and-the-jordan))

<sup>78</sup> KII interview, JIF coordinator, 13 February 2023.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

# National Action Plan Implementation

## Global implementation of WPS action plans: desk review

### 1. Civil society participation in NAP implementation

The majority of the literature identified during the desk review focused on civil society's role in the *development* of global national action plans, rather than civil society's role in their implementation.<sup>82</sup> Within this body of literature, JONAP was cited on occasion as a positive example of civil society involvement in the development of the NAP – for example, with Inclusive Security noting its own role in helping convene the civil society and government coordination body.<sup>83</sup> However, in field interviews, some were more critical about the participatory nature of the selection of JONAP priorities, as outlined further in the section.

Implementation of national action plans, when mentioned, was generally referred to as weak globally, in terms of both government implementation of plans and civil society involvement.<sup>84</sup> Much of the literature that looks at the tangible impact that UNSCR 1325 has had since its adoption notes that women's participation remains minimal,<sup>85</sup> financial resources remain low<sup>86</sup> and many governments have failed to earmark funds for NAP implementation.<sup>87</sup> Despite evidence to suggest that where civil society is involved in the NAP process, the NAP itself is more likely to be specific and responsive to women's needs,<sup>88</sup> civil society is often only sporadically included in the life cycle of a NAP.

<sup>82</sup> IOB also highlights that few reports on implementation are available. See: Smits R, de Nooijer PD (2015), 'Gender, peace and security: Evaluation of the Netherlands and UN Security Council resolution 1325', IOB Evaluation ([www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf))

<sup>83</sup> Lippai Z, Young A (2017), 'Creating National Action Plans: A Guide to Implementing Resolution 1325', Inclusive Security ([www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/InclusiveSecurity\\_NAP-Guide\\_ME\\_2017.pdf](http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/InclusiveSecurity_NAP-Guide_ME_2017.pdf))

<sup>84</sup> See, for example: Fal A (2015), 'Civil Society Input to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security: Focus Group Discussion Report for the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Survey', Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and Cordaid (<https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015-CSO-FGDs-Report.pdf>)

<sup>85</sup> Shields Rodriguez T (2014), 'Leveraging UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans for Local Change', WILPF (<https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Leveraging-UNSCR-1325-National-Action-Plans-for-Local-Change.pdf>)

<sup>86</sup> See, for example: Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) (2022), 'CSO Annual Survey on Women Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action' ([https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022\\_FINAL.pdf](https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022_FINAL.pdf)); Lippai Z, Young A (2017), 'Creating National Action Plans: A Guide to Implementing Resolution 1325', Inclusive Security ([www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/InclusiveSecurity\\_NAP-Guide\\_ME\\_2017.pdf](http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/InclusiveSecurity_NAP-Guide_ME_2017.pdf)); West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) (2012), 'Development and Implementation of National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions: A Guideline' ([https://wanep.org/wanep/files/pub/1325\\_guideline/1325\\_guideline\\_en.pdf](https://wanep.org/wanep/files/pub/1325_guideline/1325_guideline_en.pdf)); iKNOW (2016), 'The implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Arab States: taking stock and moving forward', Consolidated reply to the e-Discussion ([https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/consolidated\\_reply\\_ikp\\_e-discussion\\_unscr\\_1325\\_arab\\_region\\_en.pdf](https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/consolidated_reply_ikp_e-discussion_unscr_1325_arab_region_en.pdf)); and Smits R, de Nooijer PD (2015), 'Gender, peace and security: Evaluation of the Netherlands and UN Security Council resolution 1325', IOB Evaluation ([www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf))

<sup>87</sup> For example, the IOB notes that most EU NAPs lack an earmarked fund, and GAPS notes the UK's lack of a dedicated NAP budget, as well as lack of tracking or reporting on spend on women, peace and security. See Smits R, de Nooijer PD (2015), 'Gender, peace and security: Evaluation of the Netherlands and UN Security Council resolution 1325', IOB Evaluation pp 60 ([www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf)); Hamilton C, Naam N, Shepherd LJ (2020), 'Twenty Years of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Analysis and Lessons Learned', University of Sydney, pp 13 ([www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans-Report-Final-Web.pdf](http://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans-Report-Final-Web.pdf)); Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) (2020), 'Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2019', p 4 (<https://gaps-uk.org/assessing-uk-government-action-on-women-peace-and-security-in-2020/>)

<sup>88</sup> Trojanowska B, Lee-Koo K, Johnson L (2018), 'National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security: Eight Countries in Focus', p 64 (<https://acmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-11/NAP%20Full%20Web%20Version.pdf>)

The 2017 Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security noted that of the adopted NAPs, many ‘*have gaps in [...] meaningful civil society inclusion*’.<sup>89</sup> The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) argues that for most countries, civil society engagement during implementation is typically one of the most difficult aspects of NAPs.<sup>90</sup>

In their 2018 report looking at eight different NAPs<sup>91</sup>, Trojanowska et al. (2018) note that civil society can be effective implementing partners, delivering programmes and services, advocating for women’s participation, and sharing their on-the-ground experience and knowledge. NAPs that mention civil society as formal implementing partners include those of the Netherlands, Nepal, Togo and Timor Leste. This partnering also appears to be as a result of strong engagement from civil society in the development of the NAP, particularly in countries where there appears to have been a strong involvement of civil society in the development of the NAP<sup>92</sup>. However, Trojanowska et al. note also that there is currently:

*no common agreement as to whether civil society should be a NAP implementing agency. That is, beyond receiving government funding for their on-ground work, experts’ opinions differ as to whether civil society organisations should have a formal outlined role in implementing NAPs or whether they should remain an independent party.*<sup>93</sup>

Either way, Hamilton et al. argue that ideally CSOs are seen ‘as an equal partner to its governmental counterparts in all stages’.<sup>94</sup>

Other NAPs that give CSOs a prominent – if not a formal – role include the Philippines, which acknowledges not just the importance of civil society and NGOs to the fulfilment of the NAP, but also highlights the role of indigenous groups.<sup>95</sup> An London School of Economics (LSE) report mentions the Chilean NAP as an example of a NAP designed to work closely with civil society at the local and national levels in its implementation.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile, WILPF highlights that Sierra Leone, Ireland and Estonia ‘provide good practice illustrations of how civil society can engage in both formal and informal ways to strengthen implementation and impact’.<sup>97</sup>

Key challenges that appear to be stymying civil society’s involvement in implementation of NAPs (whether as formal NAP partners or wider WPS organisations) include:

<sup>89</sup> Smits R, de Nooijer PD (2015), ‘Gender, peace and security: Evaluation of the Netherlands and UN Security Council resolution 1325’, IOB Evaluation, p 60 ([www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf))

<sup>90</sup> Shields Rodriguez T (2014), ‘Leveraging UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans for Local Change’, WILPF, p 12 (<https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Leveraging-UNSCR-1325-National-Action-Plans-for-Local-Change.pdf>)

<sup>91</sup> Trojanowska B, Lee-Koo K, Johnson L (2018), ‘National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security: Eight Countries in Focus’, p 61 (<https://acmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-11/NAP%20Full%20Web%20Version.pdf>)

<sup>92</sup> Ibid; Hamilton C, Naam N, Shepherd LJ (2020), ‘Twenty Years of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Analysis and Lessons Learned’, University of Sydney ([www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans-Report-Final-Web.pdf](http://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans-Report-Final-Web.pdf))

<sup>93</sup> Trojanowska B, Lee-Koo K, Johnson L (2018), ‘National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security: Eight Countries in Focus’, p 61 (<https://acmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-11/NAP%20Full%20Web%20Version.pdf>)

<sup>94</sup> Hamilton C, Naam N, Shepherd LJ (2020), ‘Twenty Years of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Analysis and Lessons Learned’, University of Sydney ([www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans-Report-Final-Web.pdf](http://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans-Report-Final-Web.pdf))

<sup>95</sup> Shields Rodriguez T (2014), ‘Leveraging UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans for Local Change’, WILPF, p 12 (<https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Leveraging-UNSCR-1325-National-Action-Plans-for-Local-Change.pdf>)

<sup>96</sup> London School of Economics (LSE) Pro Bono Matters (2015), ‘Making the Normative Case: Implementing Security Council Resolution 1325 as part of a Legal Framework on Women, Peace and Security’ ([www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2016/SC1325ProBono.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2016/SC1325ProBono.pdf))

<sup>97</sup> Shields Rodriguez T (2014), ‘Leveraging UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans for Local Change’, WILPF (<https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Leveraging-UNSCR-1325-National-Action-Plans-for-Local-Change.pdf>)

- a lack of political will or buy-in from national governments<sup>98</sup>
- insufficient funding of civil society activities and/or a failure to acknowledge that civil society cannot operate – including in terms of providing advice, M&E support, feedback etc. – without funds (Hamilton et al. highlight the NAPs of Burundi and Cameroon as coming closest to ‘best practice’ examples in their recognition of needing to fund civil society and the building and maintenance of strategic alliances and activities – such as courses and workshops, advocacy campaigns and gender-sensitive support programmes)<sup>99</sup>
- related divisions and competition among CSOs due to the lack of funds available (one Guatemalan FGD respondent in the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) Global Study on Women, Peace and Security<sup>100</sup> said that “due to lack of resources, there exist tensions between CSOs, which prevent them from building partnerships and coordinating activities”; this is something that appears to be echoed in multiple contexts, including during the January 2023 field research conducted for this report)
- difficulties coordinating and collaborating between multiple partners, lack of clear responsibilities and ownership over different layers of implementation, and a disconnect between the United Nations (UN), donors and small community-based organisations<sup>101</sup>
- donor-led agendas rather than community-driven agendas that reflect the realities on the ground<sup>102</sup>
- an ‘under-development of the institutional infrastructure for activism on the women, peace and security agenda within civil society, and in national and regional women’s movements more specifically’<sup>103</sup>

Further, as mentioned earlier in this report, the global shrinking of space for civil society organisations (especially women’s organisations) to operate also creates many barriers for civil society involvement in implementation. This is particularly the case if the WPS agenda focuses on CVE or security sector reform (SSR) programming, which can be particularly risky for local organisations.

In the literature reviewing NAPs, the civil society initiatives mentioned the most are the establishment of civil society networks, coalitions or dialogue platforms, either under the general umbrella of WPS, or on a specific WPS theme, such as women’s participation in peace processes. They are often established to carry out advocacy around the NAP itself and work at a national or international level. Quite often, the networks or training mentioned in the literature are supported by an INGO, such as CARE, Oxfam or Hivos (a Dutch INGO). This may be because most are internationally supported or because internationally supported programmes are more likely to be written about. For

<sup>98</sup> See, for example: Tumasang NNW (2020), ‘Assessment of Cameroon’s First National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2018–2020)’ (<https://alumni.ids.ac.uk/resources/download/775>)

<sup>99</sup> Hamilton C, Naam N, Shepherd LJ (2020), ‘Twenty Years of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Analysis and Lessons Learned’, University of Sydney, p 22 ([www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans-Report-Final-Web.pdf](http://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans-Report-Final-Web.pdf))

<sup>100</sup> Fal A (2015), ‘Civil Society Input to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security: Focus Group Discussion Report for the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Survey’, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and Cordaid, p 7 (<https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015-CSO-FGDs-Report.pdf>)

<sup>101</sup> This was particularly emphasised in WANEP (2012); Tumasang (2020); Hamilton et al (2020); Fal (2015).

<sup>102</sup> Fal A (2015), ‘Civil Society Input to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security: Focus Group Discussion Report for the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Survey’, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and Cordaid, p 3 (<https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015-CSO-FGDs-Report.pdf>)

<sup>103</sup> Mentioned specifically in reference to Asia in: Chandrakirana K (2013), ‘Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Asia: Towards a Context-responsive Approach from the Bottom Up’, Cordaid, p 17 (<https://apwaps.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/scoping-study-wps-in-asia.pdf>)

example, a review of NAPs in East and Southern Africa identifies that the establishment of networks on WPS and the identification of WPS Champions are important successes regionally.<sup>104</sup> Meanwhile, in Syria Hivos supported women's organisations to establish a platform for dialogue among themselves and with the UN,<sup>105</sup> while in Palestine, the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), in partnership with the Women's Coalition for UNSCR 1325 and the General Union of Palestinian Women, recently launched a second generation strategic lobbying and advocacy plan to promote the women peace and security agenda in Palestine.<sup>106</sup>

Looking thematically, the GNWP report on 'Civil Society Input to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security' found that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and women's participation in peacebuilding and political processes tended to attract the most international attention and funding. But that less attention is 'given to conflict prevention, comprehensive peacebuilding and conflict management at the community level, despite the fact that civil society organisations are often active in these areas'.<sup>107</sup> Local-level activities of this nature are often more training oriented; for example, CARE's 'Strengthening the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Myanmar' trained women across 44 communities in Kaya State on gender and human rights, gender-based violence, and legal awareness and education on CEDAW and SCR 1325, or delivery of humanitarian services. Little was captured on the latter in WPS reviews, as these tend to form part of an existing humanitarian response, despite them being such an important part of the role local WROs are playing.<sup>108</sup> In the IOB (Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) evaluation of the Dutch NAP, it is found that where gender has been 'mainstreamed' into existing humanitarian or stabilisation programmes, these have been some of the least effective methods of moving the WPS agenda forward. This is because mainstreaming often becomes about 'women only', and fails to be applied systematically.<sup>109</sup>

Protection is clearly an important area where WROs play a leading role, but this doesn't feature that often in literature about NAP implementation. In Yemen, the Peace Track Initiative has set up a programme that connects local protection services to international emergency protection and accountability mechanisms for women/LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual) human rights defenders and women peacebuilders. This resulted in 'an improved documentation of sexual and gender-based violence and consequently led to the inclusion of sexual and gender-based violence as a crime in the sanction list imposed on Yemeni perpetrators'.<sup>110</sup> Another area that the literature mentions on occasion is CSOs leading on the localisation of NAPs in countries such as the Philippines, Serbia and Uganda.<sup>111</sup> Here there is a focus on local ownership and inclusion of local voices and knowledge to further the implementation of the NAP.

<sup>104</sup> UN Women (2022), 'Involving women in peace and security – Good practices in the implementation of 1325 National Action Plans in East and Southern Africa' (<https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2022/11/involving-women-in-peace-and-security-good-practices-in-the-implementation-of-1325-national-action-plans-in-ESA>)

<sup>105</sup> Smits R, de Nooijer PD (2015), 'Gender, peace and security: Evaluation of the Netherlands and UN Security Council resolution 1325', IOB Evaluation, p 64 ([www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf))

<sup>106</sup> MIFTAH (2020), 'Launching of advocacy strategy for the Palestinian Women's Coalition for Implementing UNSCR 1325' (<http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=26663&CategoryId=36>)

<sup>107</sup> Fal A (2015), 'Civil Society Input to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security: Focus Group Discussion Report for the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Survey', Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and Cordaid ([https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015\\_CS0-FGDs-Report.pdf](https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015_CS0-FGDs-Report.pdf))

<sup>108</sup> Smits R, de Nooijer PD (2015), 'Gender, peace and security: Evaluation of the Netherlands and UN Security Council resolution 1325', IOB Evaluation, p 59 ([www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf))

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p 14.

<sup>110</sup> Habib LA, Khalik ZA (2021), 'Women, Peace and Security in the Arab Region', Arab States Civil Society Organisations and Feminist Networks, p 7 (<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/2021/07/WPS-Policy%20Paper-EN.pdf>)

<sup>111</sup> Fal A (2015), 'Civil Society Input to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security: Focus Group Discussion Report for the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Survey', Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and Cordaid, p 7 ([https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015\\_CS0-FGDs-Report.pdf](https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015_CS0-FGDs-Report.pdf))

## 2. MEL, impact and accountability for NAPs

Globally, the monitoring and evaluation of NAPs is also considered weak.<sup>112</sup> The majority of the literature looking at NAPs in both the Global South and Global North critiques existing monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) frameworks and plans as follows:

- They have a tendency towards quantitative rather than qualitative indicators, and numerical targets that measure ‘quantity rather than quality – many donors are only interested in ticking the number of programs accomplished rather than the quality and impact of the program’.<sup>113</sup> As such, these frameworks are failing to ‘measure what matters’,<sup>114</sup> or account for ‘meaningful change’, often looking more at process than impact.
- Frameworks also lack functioning, systematic data collection mechanisms, particularly at the local level and to measure civil society contributions to NAPs.<sup>115</sup> This is potentially due to overly complicated and inaccessible log frames and reporting templates that are burdensome for local organisations.
- They also lack of independent review and evaluation mechanisms and timelines.

From our desk review, we also found very little that suggests either governments or civil society groups are taking a theory of change approach to their work on NAPs. Nor are they regularly using participatory approaches to collect data with communities.<sup>116</sup> Trojanowska et al. do argue that for countries in their second or third NAP iterations, MEL frameworks are beginning to improve and mature. This is particularly in terms of them being more specific, clear and transparent about the features that guide NAP implementation, having indicators that are better designed, and improved baseline data.<sup>117</sup> They highlight the second Netherlands NAP as a good example, describing it as having ‘an alternative, innovative monitoring and evaluation system that seeks to measure both quantitative and qualitative elements of activities’.<sup>118</sup> Hamilton et al. also note a marked improvement in M&E frameworks over time.<sup>119</sup>

As a result of poor MEL and a lack of community-driven theory of change thinking, it is unclear which, if any, of the global NAPs are having ‘impact’. This is particularly at the level of them bringing meaningful change to the lives of women and girls affected by conflict. ‘Very little is known of the effects and impact for the populations in (post-) conflict countries or of what works and what does not’, argues IOB in its 2015 paper, ‘and the little information that is available indicates that there is a gap between objectives and results’.<sup>120</sup> This assessment appears to remain true eight years on, with GAPS criticising the UK Government’s annual report as remaining:

<sup>112</sup> Trojanowska B, Lee-Koo K, Johnson L (2018), ‘National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security: Eight Countries in Focus’, p 55 (<https://acmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-11/NAP%20Full%20Web%20Version.pdf>)

<sup>113</sup> FGD respondent in Nepal, Fal, A. (2015) Civil Society Input to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security: Focus Group Discussion Report for the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Survey. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders & Cordaid. pp7 [https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015\\_CS0-FGDs-Report.pdf](https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015_CS0-FGDs-Report.pdf)

<sup>114</sup> Lippai Z, Young A (2017), ‘Creating National Action Plans: A Guide to Implementing Resolution 1325’, Inclusive Security, p 41 ([www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/InclusiveSecurity\\_NAP-Guide\\_ME\\_2017.pdf](http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/InclusiveSecurity_NAP-Guide_ME_2017.pdf))

<sup>115</sup> Smits R, de Nooijer PD (2015), ‘Gender, peace and security: Evaluation of the Netherlands and UN Security Council resolution 1325’, IOB Evaluation, p 13 ([www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf))

<sup>116</sup> Saferworld’s approach to collecting and analysing evidence in peacebuilding and conflict prevention programming focuses on behaviour and relationship change, and is outlined in more detail in this learning paper: [www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1027-doing-things-differently-rethinking-monitoring-and-evaluation-to-understand-change](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1027-doing-things-differently-rethinking-monitoring-and-evaluation-to-understand-change)

<sup>117</sup> Trojanowska B, Lee-Koo K, Johnson L (2018), ‘National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security: Eight Countries in Focus’, p 58 (<https://acmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-11/NAP%20Full%20Web%20Version.pdf>)

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p 58.

<sup>119</sup> Hamilton C, Naam N, Shepherd LJ (2020), ‘Twenty Years of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Analysis and Lessons Learned’, University of Sydney, p 17 ([www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans\\_Report\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](http://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans_Report_Final_Web.pdf))

<sup>120</sup> Smits R, de Nooijer PD (2015), ‘Gender, peace and security: Evaluation of the Netherlands and UN Security Council resolution 1325’, IOB Evaluation, p 67 ([www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Gender-peace-security-Evaluation-Netherlands-UN-resolution.pdf))



*an activity narrative. There is little information on the impact of the activities, or how different activities and programmes cumulatively advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the NAP Strategic Outcomes. As a result, it is difficult to track year-on-year progress at impact level.<sup>121</sup>*

The literature we reviewed is very clear that civil society can and should be playing a central role in monitoring and evaluating NAPs in both the Global South and Global North. Civil society's role in this is seen as an essential way of both improving the quality of MEL as well as holding governments accountable to their commitments in their role as a watchdog.<sup>122</sup> iKNOW report that when civil society was engaged in the monitoring process in the Middle East/ North Africa (MENA) region, this 'led to greater transparency and effectiveness of the [WPS] agenda's implementation'.<sup>123</sup>

The knowledge and skills that local civil society groups can bring to MEL processes should not be undervalued. As Tumasang writes in her assessment of Cameroon's NAP, 'the expertise and experience of CSOs in M&E is an asset and they should be involved in planning and developing M&E templates'.<sup>124</sup> Trojanowska et al. agree, arguing that 'civil society is often well-placed to undertake qualitative, independent and grounded monitoring, evaluation and learning'.<sup>125</sup> It is also important that anything being measured and captured at the community level is useful to those working within their community, rather than data simply being fed 'up the line' to donor institutions. Hamilton et al. note that independent civil society involvement in M&E mechanisms is an activity that should be funded under the NAP.<sup>126</sup>

Countries in the Global South where civil society organisations are either leading on or are increasingly involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the country's NAP include: Nepal, where CSOs are working with UN Women through a 1325 civil society action group; Bangladesh, where UN Women has helped establish a consultative platform of civil society organisations as a mechanism to enable CSO participation in the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of NAP WPS implementation;<sup>127</sup> Kenya, where civil society organisations and sub-county technical working groups are responsible for community-level M&E;<sup>128</sup> and Nigeria, where the Joint Government CSO Technical Monitoring Task Force plays a formal role in monitoring the Nigerian NAP, using a participatory review and analysis process.<sup>129</sup> Inclusive Security has published a toolkit to develop MEL plans for NAPs in conjunction with civil society,<sup>130</sup> and places emphasis on both participatory approaches to MEL and measuring meaningful change.

#### **Box 4: Shadow reporting and policy monitoring**

In the UK, the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) Network has been producing shadow reports on an annual basis since 2011, similar to how many countries have a shadow reporting system on CEDAW. This is seen as a particularly good practice example of civil society accountability.<sup>131</sup> [The Women Peace and Security Network in](#)

<sup>121</sup> GAPS (2020) Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2019. pp15 <https://gaps-uk.org/assessing-uk-government-action-on-women-peace-and-security-in-2020/>

<sup>122</sup> See, for example: GAPS (2020) p 6; Smits and de Nooijer (2015) p 46; Trojanowska et al. (2018) p 66.

<sup>123</sup> iKNOW (2016), 'The implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Arab States: taking stock and moving forward', Consolidated reply to the e-Discussion, p 6 ([https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/consolidated\\_reply\\_ikp\\_e-discussion\\_unscr\\_1325\\_arab\\_region\\_en.pdf](https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/consolidated_reply_ikp_e-discussion_unscr_1325_arab_region_en.pdf))

<sup>124</sup> Tumasang NNW (2020), 'Assessment of Cameroon's First National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2018–2020)', p 30 (<https://alumni.ids.ac.uk/resources/download/775>)

<sup>125</sup> Trojanowska et al. (2018), p 61.

<sup>126</sup> Hamilton et al. (2020), p 19.

<sup>127</sup> UN Women (2021), 'Call for Proposals: Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities: PEACEBUILDING IN A PANDEMIC – Empowering Women to Promote Social Cohesion and Prevent Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Context of COVID-19' ([www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Calls%20for%20Proposals/2021/09/UNW-AP-BGD-WPS-CFP-2021-001-Peacebuilding%20in%20a%20pandemic.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Calls%20for%20Proposals/2021/09/UNW-AP-BGD-WPS-CFP-2021-001-Peacebuilding%20in%20a%20pandemic.pdf))

<sup>128</sup> Kenyan NAP.

<sup>129</sup> Nigerian NAP ([www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2019/NAP/Nigeria-NAP-1-2013.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2019/NAP/Nigeria-NAP-1-2013.pdf))

<sup>130</sup> See: [www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/NAP-Toolkit-Executive-Summary.pdf](http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/NAP-Toolkit-Executive-Summary.pdf)

<sup>131</sup> Trojanowska B, Lee-Koo K, Johnson L (2018), 'National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security: Eight Countries in Focus' (<https://acmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-11/NAP%20Full%20Web%20Version.pdf>)

[Canada](#) and the [Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security](#) have both been doing something similar on a regular basis. While it may be harder to set up such a system in countries without similar organisations to GAPS, it may be possible that GAPS, WILPF, GNWP or others could support national women’s organisations in Jordan and elsewhere to produce shadow reports (the [Peacetrack Initiative is currently exploring this with WILPF](#)). There has also been a recent [ACTED project](#), which built and trained a consortium of Jordanian civil society organisations to monitor public policies around environment and education. While not immediately applicable to NAP monitoring, there may be transferable skills and interest within the ACTED consortium, and lessons learned about civil society monitoring in Jordan.

## JONAP I and II: reflections on process

This report is not tasked with providing an evaluation of JONAP I. However, it is useful to provide brief reflections on the process from the perspective of various groups working on women, peace and security issues in Jordan, including those directly involved in JONAP and others that were not. An important point to consider – and one that was mentioned by all the organisations involved in the implementation of JONAP – was that the COVID-19 pandemic presented a major challenge to implementation. This had knock-on effects on all aspects of the project, including coordination, programme management, relationship building, monitoring and evaluation, and implementation.

### 1. Prioritisation and agenda setting

JONAP I (2019–2022) was developed by a National Coalition on UNSCR 1325, led by the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), which was supported by UN Women. It comprised of over 60 representatives from government ministries, security sector institutions, civil society organisations and international partners.<sup>132</sup> Funding was delivered through a donor pool, the main contributors to which were the UK, Canada, Norway, Spain and Finland. JONAP I focused on four pillars: 1) gender mainstreaming in the security sector; 2) women’s role in countering violent extremism; 3) gender-sensitive humanitarian services; and 4) promoting a gender-sensitive culture.

Following a process of reflection from JONAP I,<sup>133</sup> the strategic priorities of JONAP II were identified and agreed upon using a participatory approach of 15 national consultations reaching 440 representatives. UN Women and the JNCW developed an action plan for JONAP II to be implemented over four years, with funding from the Government of Jordan and a pooled fund for donors (which included the same contributors as those for the JONAP I pooled fund, including Cyprus).

JONAP II has four main outcomes:

1. Jordanian security, military, diplomatic and justice sectors are gender-responsive and women actively participate in them across all levels.
2. Women actively participate in decision-making frameworks for prevention and response to crises, climate change and emergencies (including natural disasters, pandemics and armed conflicts), and ensure the consideration of gender needs.
3. Women and girls in Jordan, especially from marginalised groups, can safely access gender-responsive social protection as well as basic and humanitarian services (including shelter services, medical, psychological legal services, and social protection).

<sup>132</sup> JONAP I.

<sup>133</sup> KII, JNCW, 25 January 2023.

4. Schools, media, religious and community leaders, as well as young men and women, promote gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence, discrimination and violent extremism.

While the development of JONAP I priorities were largely celebrated for their participatory and consultative nature,<sup>134</sup> a number of civil society and donor groups interviewed questioned the weight given to civil society perspectives compared to those of government stakeholders.<sup>135</sup> JNCW and UN Women initially did not have influence with key security institutions,<sup>136</sup> and in effort to get these organisations on board may have prioritised their needs over those of civil society and community-based groups.<sup>137</sup> Additionally, some civil society actors pointed to the absence of potentially useful partners such as the National Commission for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law,<sup>138</sup> which operates as the formal guarantor of any international humanitarian laws.<sup>139</sup>

Still, it is worth reiterating that a major finding in the Strategic Review of the FCDO's contribution to JONAP I<sup>140</sup> stated that the extensive consensus-building process undertaken by UN Women and the JNCW 'was instrumental in securing agreement and full financing of a nationally-owned and (part) funded JONAP I' (p. 27). This was an achievement considering that, globally, very few NAPs are fully funded.

Nonetheless, and perhaps partly a result of the need for consensus, a common perception among CSOs and WROs is that JONAP I focused almost entirely (if not solely) on institutional security and justice institutions.<sup>141</sup> While an important strategic focus of JONAP relates to the participation of women in security services (SO1), some community-led organisations were ambivalent about the impact that this would have on women's overall security.<sup>142</sup> Although the role of women in community policing was not explicitly brought up in most interviews, talking about security (and the security sector) is a sensitive topic in Jordan, which prevents most organisations from engaging on this issue. When directly asked, some CSOs and activists noted cases of harassment by security services, and the need for a baseline assessment on community perceptions of the police and security services more generally. This is particularly important in designated 'hot spot' areas such as Zarqa'a and Ma'an, where relationships between communities and security services are likely to be different – and possibly more contentious – compared to other parts of the country.<sup>143</sup> This also speaks to larger questions around the 'meaningful change' and 'impact' that such institutional-level activities have on the lives of women and girls more broadly. This is particularly in the context of a closing civil society space and whether more can be done to engage communities – particularly women and girls – on the demand-side of security provision, such as through community security and community policing programming.

Though highlighted as a concern by most, there was disagreement among organisations interviewed over the extent to which JONAP should include economic security. Poverty and economic insecurity was highlighted by nearly all CBOs as an underlying factor of insecurity and a prerequisite for women's meaningful participation in other avenues. "You cannot empower women to participate in decision-making if they are not economically empowered," the head of one large NGO explained. However, other NGOs felt there was a risk that including economic security within JONAP threatened to make the WPS agenda too broad, unwieldy and unfocused.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> CSSF, Evidence Case Study: An Inclusive Design Process: The Building of the JONAP I architecture

<sup>135</sup> KIIs, Jordanian think tank, 22 January 2023.

<sup>136</sup> CSSF, 'Evidence Case Study: An Inclusive Design Process: The Building of the JONAP I architecture'.

<sup>137</sup> KII, CSSF staff, 24 January 2023.

<sup>138</sup> The National Commission for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (NCIHL) (<https://ncihl.org.io/>)

<sup>139</sup> KII, Jordanian civil society organisation, 22 January 2023.

<sup>140</sup> JONAP Strategic Review.

<sup>141</sup> This emerged in many interviews and focus group discussions with CSOs, think tanks and NGOs across the country. Also in KIIs, 22 and 24 January 2023; and with the Irbid FGD, 23 January 2023.

<sup>142</sup> FGD, women's rights organisation, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>143</sup> KII, CSSF staff, 19 January 2023; FGD, GESI Advisory Group, 26 January 2023.

<sup>144</sup> FGDs, women's rights organisation, Madaba, and GESI Advisory Group, 25 and 26 January 2023.

## 2. Architecture, operational model and partner selection

The National Coalition that forms the governance body of JONAP II consists of more than 60 representatives from government ministries, civil society and international organisations.<sup>145</sup> There also exist a number of technical working groups, including groups responsible for developing monitoring and evaluation systems, data collection, and training partners and building their capacities on JONAP and UNSCR 1325 concepts.<sup>146</sup> However, several important participants, including representatives from JNCW, CSOs and UN Women, explained that there were too many levels of governance for JONAP I, particularly within the government. This added to the difficulties of accessing funds, bureaucratic red tape, and challenges with decision-making and reporting.<sup>147</sup>

Approximately 30 per cent of JONAP I pooled funds went to NGOs,<sup>148</sup> a large amount compared to other funding mechanisms, with this deemed a success by both UN Women and JNCW.<sup>149</sup> By contrast, the perception among NGOs interviewed during the field research was that – ultimately – the final amount of funds that trickled down to local NGOs was very little.<sup>150</sup> It is useful to understand this in the context of wider perceptions on the part of many civil society groups that they are being side-lined in favour of both international organisations and the Jordanian Government. There are also fears among some that the Jordanian Government is increasingly trying to channel greater amounts of international funds to state institutions as opposed to civil society organisations, as part of a larger problem of shrinking (and even closing) of civil society space.

Under the pooled arrangements for JONAP I, UN Women sub-contracted five relatively large national NGOs for outputs related to Strategic Goals (SG) 2, 3 and 4: the Arab Women’s Legal Network (AWLN), the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD), the Jordanian Women’s Union (JWU), the Arab Women’s Organisation (AWO), and Madrasati.<sup>151</sup> Some of these NGOs then distributed funds to smaller CBOs, while others, such as JWU and Madrasati, directly implemented programming without local partners through their various branches across the country. One of UN Women’s key partners, ARDD, claimed that UN Women’s process for selecting local partners was driven both by geographical spread and thematic priorities and interests.<sup>152</sup>

In interviews with CBOs and NGOs who were not directly contracted by UN Women, a number complained that the UN Women call for proposals was in English. According to UN Women, this was a purposeful decision, given that this was a larger pool of funds and they were targeting larger NGOs.<sup>153</sup> Another complaint about the process revolved around lack of feedback by UN Women on proposals. “How can we improve in proposal writing if we don’t receive feedback as to why we were unsuccessful?” several NGOs commented during the field research.<sup>154</sup>

Additionally, some CBOs levied criticism against the JNCW’s communication and coordination role. A few CSOs felt that JNCW kept to their own networks of operation and failed to include CSOs or WROs that operate outside of this network.<sup>155</sup> Others felt that money spent on lavish ‘coordination’ events could have been given directly to CSOs to run projects.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>145</sup> JONAP II.

<sup>146</sup> JONAP II.

<sup>147</sup> KIIs, JONAP partners, UN Women and JNCW, 24 and 25 January 2023; and FGDs, 23 January 2023.

<sup>148</sup> KII, JNCW, 25 January 2023.

<sup>149</sup> For example, JNCW pointed out that only 2.5 per cent of humanitarian funding in Jordan goes to women’s rights organisations.

<sup>150</sup> FGDs, JONAP partner CSOs, Amman, 23 January 2023.

<sup>151</sup> Before it works with any organisation, UN Women conducts capacity building and orientation sessions – operationally, technically and financially. It also carries out a prior capacity assessment, which feeds into the selection process. KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>152</sup> FGD, JONAP partners, Amman, 23 January 2023.

<sup>153</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>154</sup> KII, national NGO, 22 January 2023; both FGDs in Amman and Irbid, 23 January 2023.

<sup>155</sup> KII, national NGO, 22 January 2023; FGD, Irbid, 23 January 2023.

<sup>156</sup> FGD, Irbid, 23 January 2023.

### 3. UN Women programme management and support

Following a launch event, UN Women worked with different NGOs on their work plans, including meeting with different CBOs for one-to-one support.<sup>157</sup> UN Women also conduct quarterly meetings with partners, where they receive briefings on main results, agree on next milestones, and discuss any issues or problems that may have risen.<sup>158</sup>

In discussions around their working relationship with UN Women, CSOs pointed to specific individuals within UN Women who were helpful with any questions or concerns, while generally being critical of the organisation as a whole in its management of JONAP.<sup>159</sup> Some CSOs sub-contracted by UN Women expressed frustrations with UN Women's systems of communication, financial reporting (specifically around time lags and delays in responding to financial reports), and inflexibility when it came to delays in receiving governmental approvals for JONAP projects.<sup>160</sup> When asked about systems for feedback and complaints, UN Women pointed to an office general email that CBOs could use for those purposes, in addition to directly contacting relevant personnel within the organisation if needed.<sup>161</sup>

While also managing the pooled funds, UN Women is responsible for sharing with donors details about partners' programme activities. This includes working to ensure there are no gaps or duplications in funding and projects around WPS programming. However, UN Women reported some difficulties in receiving project information from NGOs themselves, which UN Women felt could be partly driven by fears CBOs have that disclosing other programme funding may hinder their ability to access funds.<sup>162</sup>

In addition to providing two UK-supported safeguarding trainings for CSOs during JONAP I, UN Women also conducted regular 'spot checks' for partners for quality assurance purposes. These involved examining filing systems and methods of filling out progress and financial reports, and trying to arrange one-to-one meetings with partners for specific improvements.<sup>163</sup> UN Women partners such as ARDD also conducted capacity building with their NGO partners on safeguarding policies, accountability to beneficiaries, community mobilisation and conflict sensitivity. However, it also pointed to the difficulties of putting in place safeguarding and financial management systems in CBOs with small numbers of staff who may also experience regular turnover.<sup>164</sup>

JONAP implementing partners generally felt that while there were some problems with UN Women's management of JONAP, UN Women's main value was in bringing a certain legitimacy and neutrality to the JONAP process. Given the divisions and lack of trust between different women's organisations and associations in Jordan, having UN Women manage the process allowed for a degree of neutrality and reduced the risk of the politicisation of the 1325 agenda.<sup>165</sup> UN Women itself also felt it had added international value through its ability to link Jordanian women's organisations to international conferences and training opportunities. It also often aimed to prioritise smaller CBOs to participate in such meetings and events.<sup>166</sup>

Additionally, NGOs reported that UN Women provided valuable expertise and knowledge on thematic issues related to UNSCR 1325 and WPS more broadly, as well as with specific needs such as data verification training and support.<sup>167</sup> Where UN Women had less value, NGO partners reported, was around the more technical issues specific to

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<sup>157</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> KII, local women's rights organisation, 26 January 2023.

<sup>160</sup> KII, local women's rights organisation, 26 January 2023.

<sup>161</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>162</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>163</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>164</sup> KII, national NGO, 23 January 2023.

<sup>165</sup> KII, BEA staff, 24 January 2023; KII, national NGO, 26 January 2023; KII, national NGO, 23 January 2023.

<sup>166</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>167</sup> FGD, women's rights organisation, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

programme management and M&E. Some partners reporting that the M&E training provided by UN Women was very basic and ultimately not helpful to them.<sup>168</sup> This is explored in greater detail below.

#### 4. Monitoring and reporting JONAP

For JONAP I, an M&E framework was developed, identifying SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) indicators to measure achievement of the strategic goals, outcomes and outputs against a logical framework.<sup>169</sup> Given the magnitude of stakeholders and programmes, a standardised system was developed to ensure ease of processing. NGOs were also encouraged to ‘document and report on human stories’, which was supplemented by regular spot checks carried out by UN Women to pull out success stories to highlight on social media.<sup>170</sup>

However, in practice, the monitoring process ran into several issues. One of these was the absence of strong baseline data and a clear theory of change driven by a thorough context and problem analysis.<sup>171</sup> A baseline should collect data on five main elements: 1) the local context, including a conflict or problem analysis; 2) existing interventions in the women, peace and security (WPS) field; 3) the capacities of any NAP implementing agencies; 4) the level of stakeholder engagement on WPS issues; and 5) attitudes and practices of communities to WPS issues.<sup>172</sup> It would be even better if a baseline is developed in a participatory way, utilising the knowledge and expertise of local communities and CSOs.

Another issue, according to UN Women and JNCW, was staff turnover in both local CSOs and the security sector, particularly in M&E departments (NGOs reported similar staff turnovers within UN Women that made JONAP reporting difficult). This turnover led to loss of knowledge of data and reporting systems, contributing to low-quality reports.<sup>173</sup> According to interviews with NGOs who work on WPS issues, there are likely many results achieved that have not been captured or recorded by the monitoring database for JONAP.<sup>174</sup>

JNCW has highlighted several issues in the JONAP I M&E process related to both data collection processes as well as mechanisms for displaying and analysing this data.<sup>175</sup> As it relates to data collection processes, there have been issues related to identifying implementation progress by partners and others involved, as well as segregating the information of different partners working on the same indicators. Additionally, while the system is able to analyse quantitative data, it is not useful for the analysis of qualitative reporting data. This is a major factor for measuring progress on indicators, such as changes in perceptions and behaviours or how training has influenced or capacitated participants.

The *type of data* captured emerged as an important concern for monitoring results and impact. As outlined in the Strategic Review of JONAP I:

*reporting has been delivery- rather than results- or outcome-based – making it difficult to answer ‘so what changed and why’ questions. To some extent, this reflects the lack of a theory of change (ToC), absence of baseline data and the need to build CSO delivery partner M&E capacity. However, there also appears to be a*

<sup>168</sup> KII, national women’s rights organisation, 26 January 2023.

<sup>169</sup> JONAP I.

<sup>170</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>171</sup> Strategic Review of JONAP I.

<sup>172</sup> International Alert (2020), ‘Monitoring National Action Plans on Preventing Violent Extremism’, Briefing Paper ([www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Preventing-Violent-Extremism-Monitoring-National-Action-Plans-EN-2020.pdf](http://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Preventing-Violent-Extremism-Monitoring-National-Action-Plans-EN-2020.pdf))

<sup>173</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023; KII, JNCW, 25 January 2023.

<sup>174</sup> KII, national NGO, 22 January 2023.

<sup>175</sup> KII, JNCW, 25 January 2023.

*gap between what UN Women sees as results-based reporting (at activity or output level) and donor desire for more strategic intermediate outcome and outcome reporting.*<sup>176</sup>

UN Women acknowledged this, noting that while there were clear results achieved on the ground, it was a challenge to link this to broader changes.<sup>177</sup>

There are several factors that contribute to this, including the challenges of monitoring such a large and varied programme, and concerns around measuring changes within limited timeframes. There are also capacity and staffing issues, as well as the difficulties in transitioning from humanitarian to more development-focused monitoring and evaluation systems.

Regarding the last point, there was acknowledgement that aid programming in Jordan shifted to humanitarian delivery following the Syrian refugee crisis, and that UN Women in Jordan programming has previously been geared towards emergency humanitarian assistance.<sup>178</sup> As it relates to M&E, there are several challenges that arise when shifting from humanitarian to long-term development programming. These include the shift towards monitoring longer-term results and outcomes, the need for a stronger baseline, new approaches to data collection and analysis, and the lack of capacity to develop meaningful indicators to measure complex outcomes.

As it relates to NAPs specifically, the cross-cutting nature of some outcomes, and the multiplicity of civil, military and governmental organisations working in the space, may require an added layer of coordination. More efforts should also be made to bring these different groups together to reflect on outcomes. In this sense, there is an opportunity for JNCW, in its role as a semi-governmental body, to bring together these different groups to harvest the more qualitative changes that are not as easily captured by standardised progress reports. The Joint Government CSO Technical Monitoring Task Force in Nigeria may provide an example of formalised civil society leadership roles in monitoring processes.<sup>179</sup>

Another key challenge is that monitoring qualitative changes takes time. For instance, in one of the JONAP M&E reports, one result listed reads:

*Arab Women Organization (AWO), Working Women's Association (WWA), and Northern Foundation for Sustainable Development (NFSD) targeted 23,756 women and girls from different ages by providing them with training on the skills needed to detect early warning signs associated with violent extremism and how to treat them confidentially.*

This result only captures the number of women who received training. It does not capture the results of this training on women's behaviour and the wider community, or even the longer-term impact on the women and girls themselves. More follow-up, reflection and time is needed to measure the full impact of this training on the wider community. This is in line with common challenges reported by others monitoring NAP implementation globally. In a paper analysing mechanisms to monitor preventing violent extremism (PVE) programming in NAPs, International Alert noted that:

*a common problem identified in monitoring PVE NAPs is the 'projectisation' of results and lack of ability to assess the progress towards the NAP's goal in its totality.*<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Strategic Review JONAP I.

<sup>177</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>178</sup> KII, UN Women, 24 January 2023.

<sup>179</sup> International Alert (2020), 'Monitoring National Action Plans on Preventing Violent Extremism', Briefing Paper ([www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Preventing-Violent-Extremism-Monitoring-National-Action-Plans-EN-2020.pdf](http://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Preventing-Violent-Extremism-Monitoring-National-Action-Plans-EN-2020.pdf))

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

Utilising more change-based techniques for monitoring and evaluation of JONAP, including building the capacities of both UN Women, JNCW and their partners in this kind of reporting, would help provide stronger evidence of the impact of JONAP beyond immediate outputs. Techniques such as Saferworld's change model<sup>181</sup> and the Kirkpatrick model<sup>182</sup> (which uses four levels of criteria for assessing the effectiveness of training: reaction, learning, behaviour and result) could be useful approaches in this regard. The Institute for Development Studies (IDS) also recommends having periodic reviews of 'evolutionary theory of change' with project participants.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Saferworld's approach to collecting and analysing evidence in peacebuilding and conflict prevention programming focuses on behaviour and relationship change, and is outlined in more detail in this learning paper:

[www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1027-doing-things-differently-rethinking-monitoring-and-evaluation-to-understand-change](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1027-doing-things-differently-rethinking-monitoring-and-evaluation-to-understand-change)

<sup>182</sup> Ardent (2020), 'What Is The Kirkpatrick Model? Learn The 4 Levels of Evaluation' ([www.ardentlearning.com/blog/what-is-the-kirkpatrick-model](http://www.ardentlearning.com/blog/what-is-the-kirkpatrick-model)).

<sup>183</sup> Oswald K (2016), 'Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes: Literature Review', Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and SDC Network ([www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev\\_August%202016.pdf](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev_August%202016.pdf))



# Capacity Assessment of Organisations in Jordan

This section presents an assessment of the capability and constraints of some UN Women implementing partners, with a specific focus on their ability to deliver on women, peace and security issues. The assessment is informed by discussions with CBOs, NGOs, INGOs, and the British Embassy in Amman during a field research trip in January 2023; an online survey completed by 17 national organisations working in the women, peace and security field;<sup>184</sup> and a desk review.

## Financial and geographical reach

Most organisations registered in the country operate at a very small scale, something that was reflected in the JONAP partner CSOs we surveyed. For example, in the survey, more than 50 per cent of organisations reported that their annual budgets were below USD \$250,000, with 3 organisations reporting an annual budget of below \$1 million and only 2 reporting an annual budget of over \$1 million (these two organisations are also considered to be among the largest Jordanian NGOs).

The larger NGOs also have the widest geographical reach, working in multiple governorates across the country. Smaller CBOs – especially those outside Amman – tend to only serve their local communities. In focus group discussions with some of these smaller CBOs, some of the barriers for expanding into other geographical areas or communities included the organisation’s focus or mission, and their limited ability to access and manage funds.<sup>185</sup> However, there was also a willingness and openness to coordinate and cooperate with other CBOs that work in similar fields and share their challenges. At the same time, according to a research centre based in Amman, these smaller organisations are often able to access hard-to-reach communities better than national or international organisations.<sup>186</sup> In this case, ambitions to ‘scale-up’ and grow might not be entirely beneficial. There is value in focusing on system strengthening instead, while retaining this small community-focused approach.

The differences in financial and geographical reach are also reflected in the size of staff. In the survey, 47 per cent of organisations had more than 20 staff members, just over 10 per cent reported between 10 and 20 employees, while nearly a third reported having fewer than 5 employees. All organisations reported relying on a large number of volunteers.<sup>187</sup> This diversity in partnerships reflects positively on JONAP implementation, ensuring a healthy mix of small and large organisations that each bring different expertise, knowledge, strengths and approaches.

When asked how easy it was to recruit skilled staff and volunteers, the responses were evenly divided: about a third (6 of 17 organisations) reported it was difficult or very difficult, 5 of the 17 reported it was either easy or very easy, and 6 reported it was neither easy nor difficult. In interviews, the bigger challenge facing the smaller organisations revolved around staff retention. Losing skilled staff to larger national and international NGOs, and retaining staff

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<sup>184</sup> For more information about the survey, refer to Annex 1.

<sup>185</sup> FGDs, CBOs, Irbid, 23 January 2023.

<sup>186</sup> KII, Jordanian think tank, 22 January 2023.

<sup>187</sup> Of the 17 organisations who took part in the survey, 6 reported more than 20 volunteers, 4 reported between 10 and 20 volunteers, 2 reported having 5–10 volunteers, and 5 organisations reported between 0 and 5 volunteers.

because of the irregular and insecure funding environment, were mentioned as the biggest staffing challenges facing organisations. This problem existed – though to a smaller degree – among the larger national NGOs.

When asked about their sources of funding for the last year, the Jordanian Government and INGOs were listed by seven organisations as being 'a primary donor', followed by the UN (six organisations listed it as a 'primary donor'), then foreign governments and Jordanian NGOs (five listed these as 'primary donors'). This corresponds to the analysis that most CBOs rely on indirect funding through partnerships with international agencies.

## Strategic, thematic and programmatic capacities

### 1. STRATEGIC VISION AND PROGRAMMING

In interviews with NGOs and CBOs, many reported that short donor timeframes had contributed to a 'projectisation' of the organisation, where the search for short-term funding hinders the establishment of a long-term vision and strategy for the organisation.<sup>188</sup> In one case, a national NGO that regularly supports the capacity development of smaller organisations reported that there was a strong need to work with CBOs on their long-term strategy and theory of change.<sup>189</sup> Nonetheless, in the survey, all but four organisations reported having a business plan or programme strategy for at least the next two years.

All respondents but two described their organisations' missions to be under the umbrella of women's empowerment, equality, economic welfare, and social and political leadership. Only one organisation mentioned intersectionality as a core part of its mission to achieve gender equality within society. The remaining two organisations focused on food security, family economic and health welfare, and family safety; and on the activation and mainstreaming of education and knowledge to achieve positive change, respectively.

All but one organisation in the survey reported carrying out a needs assessment prior to developing or implementing a programme or project. However, in discussions with organisations on the ground, some felt that needs assessments were not done in a systematic way. There was often a reliance on "knowing what is needed" based on being part of the community.<sup>190</sup> A non-scientific approach to a needs assessment, and one that relies on assumptions of CBO staff (however knowledgeable they may be), risks excluding certain groups within the community – even if this may not be the intention of the CBO involved. There was also a sentiment among some organisations based outside Amman that programmes were often designed in Amman (or, in the case of INGOs, in headquarters in Europe and North America) rather than an assessment being carried out in the relevant governorate. This was noted as a problem because community needs and context differ greatly between Amman and other governorates.

When asked whether the organisation had internal manuals and guidelines around programme management, eight organisations reported having such guidelines, four reported that these guidelines existed but needed improvement, while four organisations reported they did not have any internal manuals and guidelines for programme management.

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<sup>188</sup> This is corroborated in other research on the issue, with a report by WANA institute noting that the lack of long-term funding for CSOs hampers their ability to work on long-term projects or pursue legislative reform goals. It also leads to weak continuity and sustainability of projects. Source: West-Asia–North Africa (WANA) Institute (2018), "The Role of Civil Society Organisations in Legislative Reform: Summary" ([http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/Publication\\_LegislativeReform\\_EnglishSummary\\_0.pdf](http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/Publication_LegislativeReform_EnglishSummary_0.pdf))

<sup>189</sup> KII, national NGO, 22 January 2023.

<sup>190</sup> KII, national NGO, 22 January 2023, who said: "It is not enough to be part of the community, you need a scientific approach to understand all the needs."

## 2. AREAS OF PROGRAMMING

Given the focus of the organisations targeted for the survey, it is not surprising that nearly all respondents listed ‘women’s participation’ (16 of 17 respondents) and ‘women’s economic empowerment and welfare’ (15 of 17 respondents) as the main focus of their programming. This was followed by gender-based violence (15), women’s rights (14), protection services (13), education (12) and psychosocial support (12).

When asked about target groups, all 17 organisations listed ‘women and girls’, followed by ‘local communities’ (14), ‘refugees or migrants’ (12), and ‘people with disabilities’ (10). Seven (7) of the 17 also reported targeting ‘children and families’, ‘unemployed people’, ‘men and boys’, and ‘national institutions and service providers’. Less common were ‘elderly people’ (6), ‘persons with drug or substance abuse problems’ (4), and ‘victims of conflict or natural disaster’ (3). Most of the organisations surveyed targeted mainly women (11 organisations) or only women (2), while 4 organisations reported targeting both men and women equally.

When asked whether they would like to expand their programming to reach other groups, some expressed an interest in working more with security and justice officials, national and local institutions and service providers, refugees, the wider community, victims of conflict or natural disaster, and people with disabilities. The top three barriers preventing their ability to reach new populations were: (1) lack of funding or donor interest; (2) lack of technical expertise within the organisation; and (3) lack of relationships with key organisations. This speaks to a potential opportunity to support the development and building of relationships between CBOs and partners, particularly when it comes to building better working relationships with local and national government, as well as security service providers.

Linked to this, the survey asked respondents whether they would like to expand their programming into new areas. The most common programming areas mentioned related to livelihoods and economic empowerment and, specifically, women’s economic empowerment. This result is unsurprising and was echoed in many of the more in-depth interviews, where organisations working on women, peace and security issues felt that economic empowerment and women’s financial independence were foundational for women’s participation in other areas. This includes some organisations interviewed who provided shelter and protection services for gender-based violence (GBV) survivors, who explained that they would like to build their programming to encompass employment placement (including building their networks with local businesses), as economic independence was a major protection factor facing GBV survivors.<sup>191</sup> Other than economic empowerment, a third of respondents in the survey also mentioned GBV as an area of interest, followed by youth empowerment, climate change (specifically droughts, climate adaptation and water conservation), and working with people with disabilities.<sup>192</sup>

When asked about the barriers preventing their expansion into these new areas of work, organisations listed the same top three barriers as above. However, other barriers mentioned were government bureaucracy/regulations and political or community sensitivities. These two factors also came up very strongly during the field visit. In addition to the challenges with government regulations highlighted earlier, many interviewees and focus group discussion participants described the cultural and social difficulties and the potential backlash they could face if they expanded their work with women and girls. This was because communities are thought to have misperceptions about CBOs’ work and their alignment with a more liberal agenda, which they believed was aimed at corrupting the order of their local communities.

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<sup>191</sup> FGD, WRO, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>192</sup> Additionally, protection services, health, women’s participation, mediation, peacebuilding and conflict prevention were mentioned by two organisations. Notably, issues such as community security and community policing, CVE and anti-narcotics received zero votes. This was a surprising finding, especially since participants in the Irbid focus group expressed concerns regarding those issues in their communities.

## Relationships, coordination and outreach

When asked about which stakeholders they regularly engaged with, and the number of times they engaged with them (selecting from ‘core partner in their work’, ‘often’, ‘sometimes’, or ‘never’), the top responses, ranked in order of regularity of interaction, were as follows:

- Other CSOs and CBOs (core: 10; often: 5; sometimes: 1; never: 1)
- National-level coalitions or umbrella organisations (core: 8; often: 4; sometimes: 5; never: 0)
- Donors (core: 8; often: 4; sometimes: 3; never: 1)
- Women’s organisations (core: 7; often: 4; sometimes: 4; never: 1)
- UN Women (core: 7; often: 3; sometimes: 4; never: 2)
- Regional or international coalitions or networks (core: 6; often: 3; sometimes: 5; never: 2)
- Local community groups (core: 5; often: 9; sometimes: 3; never: 0)
- Public bodies (JNCW, Family Protection and Juvenile Department (FPJD), etc.) (core: 5; often: 6; sometimes: 5; never: 1)
- Local government (core: 4; often: 8; sometimes: 3; never: 1)
- Central government (core: 4; often: 7; sometimes: 3; never: 2)
- International NGOs (core: 4; often: 6; sometimes: 5; never: 2)
- Police or security officials (core: 2; often: 10; sometimes: 3; never: 1)
- Youth organisations (core: 2; often: 4; sometimes: 7; never: 3)

From the above, it is noteworthy to highlight how little interaction exists between CBOs working on WPS issues and youth organisations, particularly given the many overlaps that exist between the WPS and youth, peace and security (YPS) agendas, and the need to carry out outreach with youth on WPS issues. Another point from the above data that is worth highlighting is that government bodies ranked at the lower end in terms of relationships, another indication of the strained relationships and mistrust that exists between government bodies and CSOs working on WPS. In response to a separate question, all but two of the organisations surveyed reported that they were an active member of a cluster or coordination mechanism.

When asked which groups they would *like* to build stronger relationships with in the future, the results clearly indicate a desire for many organisations – particularly smaller community-based ones – to build networks at the national, regional and international levels. For example, public bodies such as the JNCW and FPJD received the largest number of votes (11), followed by regional and international coalitions and networks (10), central government and international donors (9 each), other CSOs and CBOs (9), and international NGOs (8). This suggests an openness to networking and coalition-working among many of the organisations surveyed.

In interviews, many larger organisations, including Mercy Corps, UN Women and the JNCW, reported that CBOs would benefit from support in outreach and communication skills, including building and expanding their base.<sup>193</sup> NGOs also reported a desire to engage more on advocacy and legislative reform, including shadow reporting, criminal legislation, and international law and policy.<sup>194</sup> According to a West Asia-North Africa (WANA) Institute report on civil society engagement on legislation reform in Jordan, CSOs lack an understanding of the potential role they can play in legislative reform: ‘CSOs tend to focus exclusively on service-provision and neglect their advocacy and legislative reform roles.’<sup>195</sup> This is corroborated by the 2016 USAID Civil Society Assessment of Jordan, which found that – given the restrictive space – civil society organisations tend to focus on community development rather than advocacy. Those that do have an advocacy component to their work tend to be the larger, Amman-based NGOs and think

<sup>193</sup> KIIs, JNCW, Mercy Corps, UN Women, 24 and 25 January 2023 and 02 February 2023.

<sup>194</sup> KII, national NGO, 26 January 2023; FGD, WRO, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>195</sup> West-Asia-North Africa (WANA) Institute (2018), ‘The Role of Civil Society Organisations in Legislative Reform: Summary’ ([http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/Publication\\_LegislativeReform\\_EnglishSummary\\_0.pdf](http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/Publication_LegislativeReform_EnglishSummary_0.pdf))

tanks.<sup>196</sup> As it relates to JONAP, shadow reporting on the NAP could be a way for CSOs to learn about influencing public policy.

Empowering CBOs to engage on these issues has the potential to provide a real added value and knowledge, particularly since many demonstrated a strong and principled stance on certain issues.<sup>197</sup> However, capacity building of CSOs on advocacy and policy change will not be useful on its own. There is a need to build relationships between government and civil society, and to also work with government officials – particularly in the second and third tiers of government – to raise their awareness about the value that such engagement can have.

## Technical and systemic capacities

When asked about barriers preventing the organisation from achieving greater impact, ‘challenges receiving funds’ and ‘bureaucratic challenges’, which included approval delays and governmental regulations and restrictions, emerged as the main barriers facing the organisations responding to the survey. This was followed by internal organisational system’ capacities, then ‘staff knowledge and expertise’, and ‘relationships with stakeholders’.

### 1. TECHNICAL SKILLS AND CAPACITIES

The survey asked the organisations to self-assess and identify the training needs of their own organisation and staff. From the options listed, the top six training needs identified by the organisations were:

1. technology and IT systems training and development
2. digital security
3. proposal writing training<sup>198</sup>
4. English language courses
5. donor compliance and reporting training
6. MEL and accountability training

While this is not enough to fully understand the areas where CSOs require the most support, the top needs self-identified by the CSOs in the survey correspond to many of the concerns listed by CBOs during the field interviews.

For instance, from the needs above, cyber security and data protection (2) was highlighted as an important need by many CBOs, particularly those that worked on sensitive issues such as protection or SGBV.<sup>199</sup> This closely links to the need for stronger IT systems (1). Related, respondents were also asked what items of equipment the organisation most required. Cybersecurity protection tools topped the list, identified as the biggest priority for nearly half of the organisations surveyed. The top five also included vehicles and transportation equipment, cameras and voice recording equipment, phones and communication equipment, and finally computers and laptops.

<sup>196</sup> US Agency for International Development (USAID) (2016), ‘Civil Society Assessment in Jordan’.

<sup>197</sup> For example, in interviews, one organisation reported not working in refugee camps in Jordan because the organisation did not believe that refugees should be in camps. This is a position not often heard in the public sphere in Jordan, particularly at the governmental level.

<sup>198</sup> In another question, when asked whether their organisation had the technical and staff capacity to design projects and write proposals, more than half the respondents responded affirmatively. Three organisations reported having the capacity to design projects but not write proposals, while one organisation said they had the capacity to write proposals but not design projects. Two organisations said they lacked the capacity to do either. While this appears contradictory to the prioritisation of needs, it indicates that those who did not have the capacity to write proposals gave this as a very high priority compared to other needs.

<sup>199</sup> FGDs, CBOs, Irbid, 23 January 2023; a WRO, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

The CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPED) 2021 report on shrinking civic space in Jordan says that following the COVID-19 pandemic, most CSOs in Jordan switched to remote or online services.<sup>200</sup> This means that CSOs will now likely be open to a new set of risks that they are unprepared for; for example, the use of social networks to spread disinformation campaigns, cyber attacks, and new forms of government censorship. CND SI report:

*Some 82% of NGOs and associations are not ready to address data management issues and 70% do not even consider them a key concern, even though they often depend on technology to communicate.*<sup>201</sup>

Additionally, needs (3), (4) and (5) are closely linked to the concerns CSOs have with funding, access to international donors and financial sustainability. In interviews, many CBOs reported that lack of English language skills made it difficult to access different types of foreign funding. Many CBOs had to rely on foreign volunteers or expensive consultants to write proposals.<sup>202</sup> This creates a knock-on challenge, as often those who write the proposals are not responsible for delivering or reporting on them.

As it relates to monitoring and evaluation, in field interviews this was regularly highlighted by organisations as an area that required improvement, particularly as it related to the quality of information gathered. While part of this concerns the short timeframes around funding and donor requirements (which make it difficult to measure longer-term changes), part of this gap relates to the humanitarian environment in which many of these organisations were initially responding to during the Syrian refugee crisis. In this context, indicators used for monitoring were often short term, lacked a clear baseline, and did not capture more complex changes, particularly changes in relationships and behaviours.

As it relates to MEL, results from the survey were not very clear. When asked how they thought about ‘impact’ in their work,<sup>203</sup> seven organisations claimed to have developed their own theory of change model that they used to track outcomes. Meanwhile, eight reported monitoring changes in behaviours and attitudes of decision-makers and authorities at the national level. This latter response does not correspond to the focus of many of the organisations’ geographical sphere of operations, which are very community based.

A more accurate picture can be gleaned from another question in the survey, which asked whether the organisation had internal manuals and guidelines in relation to monitoring, reporting and evaluation. Six of the NGOs – including the larger organisations with an annual budget exceeding \$1 million – reported having comprehensive internal manuals and guidelines. By contrast, nine organisations admitted that their organisation had no internal manuals and guidelines in relation to M&E. Additionally, just over half of the organisations (9 out of 17) reported using their M&E to inform future programme management and design.

What is clear, however, is that capacity building around monitoring and evaluation has often been hampered by staff retention and turnover. This often means that the value of training is lost when the trained staff member leaves the

<sup>200</sup> Phoenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies (2021), ‘Shrinking Civic Space in Jordan: Concerning Developments Before and After COVID-19’ (<http://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CPED-Report-on-Civic-Space-in-Jordan-Before-and-After-COVID-28-Jan.21.pdf>)

<sup>201</sup> French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (CND SI) (2021), ‘Creating a supportive environment for civil society. Strategy Report’ ([www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/cndsi-societe-civile-ang\\_cle82e13d.pdf](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/cndsi-societe-civile-ang_cle82e13d.pdf))

<sup>202</sup> KII, a national NGO, 22 January 2023; an INGO, 02 February 2023; FGDs, CBOs, Irbid, 23 January 2023 and in Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>203</sup> The question was phrased as follows: ‘How does your organisation think about the “impact” of your work?’ Respondents were given choices and were free to select as many responses that described their approach. The options included: (a) We measure and record the activities and number of people involved in our activities; (b) We monitor and keep track of the positive changes in the lives of the people in the communities we work with; (c) We monitor changes in the behaviour and attitudes of decision-makers and authorities at the local level; (d) We monitor changes in the behaviour and attitudes of decision-makers and authorities at the national level; (e) We use the log frame and monitoring and reporting requirements provided by donors; and (f) We have our own developed theory of change model and we use this to track outcomes and impact.

organisation. Capacity building around M&E will therefore need to take a more systematic approach that strengthens internal systems and mechanisms, rather than one that focuses only on training staff.

## 2. SYSTEMS AND GOVERNANCE CAPACITIES

*We've received a lot of training. What we need are core funds to invest in the necessary infrastructure and systems. Key informant interview, 22 January 2023*

There is a wide disparity between the systems and governance mechanisms within different CBOs and NGOs in Jordan. According to the 2021 CSO Sustainability Index, some CSOs are run by families, with no institutional capacity and a lack of clear legal structures and governance standards. Even larger, higher-capacity CSOs often lack up-to-date policies and codes of conduct.<sup>204</sup>

This variation was echoed in responses to the survey. When asked whether their organisation had a structure of governance with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, 12 of the 17 reported having a formal structure in place. Similarly, 12 of the 17 reported having a code of conduct document. In interviews, one semi-large NGO with operations in multiple governorates reported having procurement and human resources (HR) policies, mainly thanks to the voluntary efforts of a senior consultant.<sup>205</sup> Thus, an important element of 'levelling up' CBOs should involve an in-depth assessment of governance structures and procedures to ensure that they are able to operate and handle larger amounts of funds. Once again, it is important to caveat this with the thought that scaling up smaller, more community-oriented organisations could reduce both their relations with the community and their more flexible and dynamic approaches.

In terms of financial systems, nearly all organisations in the survey reported having been externally audited in the past three years (15 of the 17). All 17 organisations reported producing budgets and recording expenditures against them; however, only 9 of the 17 had an anti-fraud and conflict of interest policy in place. Some NGOs reported being part of a three-year European Union (EU)-funded project around system strengthening.<sup>206</sup> Yet, more can be done to ensure that financial management systems are strengthened so that organisations are better able to absorb larger amounts of funding and feel comfortable that their systems meet their own needs.

When it comes to issues of safeguarding, 8 of the 17 respondents reported having safeguarding and risk management policies in place and trained staff to ensure compliance with procedures. Meanwhile, 4 organisations reported having the policies in place but not having trained staff, and 5 reported not having any safeguarding policies in place. In interviews, many NGOs were unable to identify safeguarding policies and procedures, often confusing these with data protection and privacy.<sup>207</sup> This is concerning, given that many of these organisations work with children and other vulnerable groups.

Even when these policies were in place, there remained a difference between policy and practice, and whether safeguarding procedures were followed in practice. This is demonstrated by the fact that INGOs – with extensive safeguarding policies – are often responsible for abuses of power.<sup>208</sup> This was demonstrated in the survey itself: even though 8 organisations reported having safeguarding and risk management policies in place, only 7 of the 17 survey respondents reported having a feedback and complaints mechanism. Ensuring proper safeguarding policies are

<sup>204</sup> US Agency for International Development (USAID), FHI 360 (2022), '2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index', November ([www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-mena-2021-report.pdf](http://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-mena-2021-report.pdf))

<sup>205</sup> KII, national NGO, 22 January 2023.

<sup>206</sup> FGD, women's rights organisation, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>207</sup> KII, national NGO, 22 January 2023; FGDs, women's rights organisation, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>208</sup> Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) (2012), 'Sexual exploitation and abuse by UN, NGO and INGO personnel: a self-assessment', 21 June (<https://odihpn.org/publication/sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-by-un-ngo-and-ingo-personnel-a-self-assessment/>)

followed is especially difficult for smaller CSOs, where there may not be enough staff in the organisation to follow the necessary procedures.<sup>209</sup>

## Capacity for delivering a WPS agenda

Overall, the biggest requirement identified by WROs around the world is the dire need for dedicated, long-term and flexible funding that helps them take forward their own priorities. This is a need clearly shared by the JONAP partners. More on this topic will follow in subsequent sections.

Thematic capacity needs identified through our survey and interviews also largely echo those of women's rights organisations and CSOs working on women, peace and security issues around the world, particularly in contexts where civic space is shrinking. However, additional areas of potential women, peace and security capacity needs that have emerged from civil society elsewhere in the world, which didn't come out as specifically through our survey or interviews with CSOs in Jordan, include:

1. training in civilian crisis management, community level conflict management and peace mediation<sup>210</sup>
2. capacity building for participatory action research<sup>211</sup>
3. taking rights-based approaches
4. creating a pool of experts and specialists working on the WPS agenda that CSOs can use<sup>212</sup>

It may be that these topics are not of immediate relevance to the JONAP partner organisations. Alternatively, it may be that these are newer areas of WPS or development work that they'd be interested in pursuing.

The desk review also identified that CSOs – and WROs in particular – operating in shrinking spaces will often have some common organisational needs, particularly around physical security, digital security, legal protections, mental health and well-being. This was reflected in our survey, where digital security was rated highly by our respondents. While our survey and interviews with Jordanian CSOs did not go into depth around security or well-being, it is likely that many women-led and women's rights organisations in Jordan are experiencing regular security threats, as is the trend worldwide, and both staff and community members are at high risk. In the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund's (WPHF) 2022 CSO Annual Survey, almost half of all organisations (44 per cent) reported that their organisation and staff had received threats as a result of their work in the previous 12 months.<sup>213</sup> In Tunisia and Egypt, CSOs have also benefited from collective bargaining skills provided by the Solidarity Center (part of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) umbrella that supports labour unions around the world) as a way of helping them during government repression.<sup>214</sup>

However, more broadly than organisational support, civil society attempting to operate in repressive or shrinking spaces also needs international donors to help create a more enabling environment. Donors should use their diplomatic powers to both engage with and challenge governments that are using their powers to criminalise or

<sup>209</sup> KII, national NGO, 23 January 2023.

<sup>210</sup> Tumasang NNW (2020), 'Assessment of Cameroon's First National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2018–2020)', p 40 (<https://alumni.ids.ac.uk/resources/download/775>)

<sup>211</sup> Chandrakirana K (2013), 'Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Asia: Towards a Context-responsive Approach from the Bottom Up', Cordaid, p 17 (<https://apwaps.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/scoping-study-wps-in-asia.pdf>)

<sup>212</sup> Tumasang (2020), p 40.

<sup>213</sup> WPHF (2022) 'CSO Annual Survey on Women Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action', p 1 ([https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022\\_FINAL.pdf](https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022_FINAL.pdf))

<sup>214</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), 'Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset', US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 9 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))



restrict civil society activity.<sup>215</sup> Our desk review found that while individual WROs and CBOs working on WPS had a particular set of technical needs, donors also need to give thought to how to support and sustain a vibrant and diverse women's sector and the emergence of a more supportive ecosystem for women's rights and equality more broadly. This is something that may not be in the immediate focus of individual organisations, particularly in a country where coalition and network building is complex. Literature on this topic suggests that it is important for donors to:

- help connect CSOs to local, national and regional networks of women leaders and WPS activists, and support the exchange of information 'from the ground up'<sup>216</sup>
- think about what can help organisations to build partnerships, alliances, relationships and networks, including supporting WROs to make connections to wider feminist and activist movements and community groups outside the more formal NGO space<sup>217</sup>
- think about ways to foster the survival and resilience of social movements and collective action, the links between different social justice movements, and the needs of these movements – such as skills around building broad-based coalitions, finding common ground, collaborative leadership and self-organising<sup>218</sup>
- support the sustainability and survival of WROs by using power as a donor to push back where possible on restrictive government legislation and attitudes that are curtailing civic space, and support the maintenance of infrastructure such as a reliable mobile network and internet access to support citizen action<sup>219</sup>
- enable safe channels for citizens and CSOs to engage with the state, and build relationships and communication channels with decision-makers and key government sectors, building trust where possible and creating direct communication links, built not just on a shared goal of security and stability, but also by the needs and demands of their communities

These kinds of issues are often missed when partner organisations expect to be asked about technical capacities rather than relational and 'soft' skills and changes that need to happen within the political environment.

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid, p 11.

<sup>216</sup> Chandrakirana K (2013), 'Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Asia: Towards a Context-responsive Approach from the Bottom Up', Cordaid, p 17 (<https://apwaps.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/scoping-study-wps-in-asia.pdf>)

<sup>217</sup> See: Fal (2015) p 11; iKNOW (2016) p 6.

<sup>218</sup> See Funders Initiative for Civil Society (2016), 'Challenging the Closing Space for Civil Society. A practical starting point for funders', p 13 ([www.ariadne-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ClosingSpaceReport\\_May2016\\_DigitalVersion.pdf](http://www.ariadne-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ClosingSpaceReport_May2016_DigitalVersion.pdf)); Stephan MJ (2017), 'Responding to the Global Threat of Closing Civic Space: Policy Options Testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission', Congressional Testimony ([www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options](http://www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options))

<sup>219</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), 'Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset', US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 11 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))

# Rapid SWOT Assessment of JONAP II

## Delivery

INTERNAL FACTORS	
STRENGTHS (+)	WEAKNESSES (-)
<p><b>Local CSOs are essential mediators between INGOs/donors/national NGOs and local communities</b>, often translating and adapting national and international programming approaches for their communities.</p> <p><b>WROs have a strong commitment and understanding of gender equality.</b></p> <p><b>UN Women is seen as a neutral and legitimate institutional body</b> to manage the JONAP fund among many IPs, which has prevented the NAP from being overly politicised.</p> <p><b>UN Women provides valuable expertise and knowledge on thematic issues</b> related to UNSCR 1325 and WPS more broadly, and on specific needs such as data verification training and support.</p> <p><b>Strong programme-driven research capacity</b> among Amman-based research institutes such as WANA and the Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (IRC-KHF).</p>	<p><b>Many layers of governance</b> within JONAP complicate the accessing of funds, bureaucracy, decision-making and reporting.</p> <p><b>Lack of core funds</b> prevents CBO institutional growth.</p> <p><b>Weak digital security and data privacy systems.</b></p> <p><b>Basic M&amp;E tools and processes of JONAP implementing partners</b>, which are activity focused, reliant on quantitative numbers, and based on humanitarian programming, are unable to capture the more strategic, qualitative, long-term impacts that NAPs often require.</p> <p>Despite policies in place, there are <b>difficulties in following safeguarding procedures</b> in CBOs with small numbers of staff.</p> <p><b>Smaller CBOs struggle with outreach and communication</b> within and beyond their own communities, including with youth groups, which risks operating in a silo.</p> <p><b>Weak financial systems of many CBOs</b> prevent them from taking on large funding, essentially preventing them from doing more than implementation for larger NGOs.</p> <p>CBOs require capacity strengthening to develop <b>long-term visions and strategic goals</b>.</p> <p>Lack of a scientific approach to <b>gathering baseline data and conducting needs assessments</b>.</p> <p>CBOs have <b>weak relationships with central government security and justice officials</b>, including avenues to influence legislation and policies.</p>
EXTERNAL FACTORS	
OPPORTUNITIES (+)	THREATS (-)

<p><b>Engaging men and boys in WPS programming</b> is a new and unexplored territory for many CBOs in Jordan.</p> <p><b>There is an opportunity to build networks between youth organisations and WROs</b>, which would advance and interlink the YPS and WPS agendas.</p> <p><b>National-level coalitions such as JONAF and HIMAM</b> can play an important role in channelling CBO voices.</p> <p>Building CSO capacity will demonstrate to the government that <b>a strong civil society is not a threat but a prerequisite for stability</b>.</p> <p><b>Slight openings in civil society space</b>, such as the appointment of a new minister in MOPIC, present an opportunity to further ease legislative and bureaucratic barriers to CSOs.</p> <p>Given the UK's role in supporting the security sector in Jordan, there is <b>an opportunity to provide avenues for CBOs, and particularly WROs, to engage in a dialogue with the security sector</b>.</p> <p><b>Building institutional and programmatic capacities of CSOs in traditionally neglected areas</b> such as Ma'an and Zarqa'a will build a sustainable link to marginalised communities.</p> <p>With the right support, <b>JNCW could play a stronger role in coordinating and building relations</b> between WROs and the government, including bringing these groups together to reflect on JONAP's impact and outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Patriarchal social and cultural norms</b>, combined with low levels of community awareness on WPS issues, restrict WPS programming and policy.</p> <p><b>Government legislative and political restrictions</b> are closing space for NGOs to develop and grow, access funds, and pursue meaningful programming.</p> <p><b>Type of funding</b> offered to local CSOs is often limited to direct project implementation costs, leaving little for core funding and systems building.</p> <p><b>Lack of trust</b> between local NGOs and international partners – both donors and INGOs.</p> <p><b>'Brain drain'</b> of experienced staff from local to national and international NGOs.</p> <p><b>Stringent donor guidelines and requirements</b> for accessing direct funding, often through complex proposals and application procedures.</p> <p><b>Calls for funding are often advertised only in English</b>.</p> <p><b>Short funding timeframes</b> contribute to unsustainability, difficulties in long-term strategy development and high staff turnover in local NGOs.</p> <p><b>Centralisation of decision-making</b> in Jordan makes it difficult for CBOs to influence government policy at the local level.</p>
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# Models of CSO Strengthening and Support

## Different methods of ‘capacity building’: a review

The desk review identified many models and mechanisms for ‘building the capacity’ of civil society organisations worldwide. The models are largely divisible between: (1) those that strengthen the collective capacity of civil society organisations to take action or create change on a certain thematic area (such as WPS, anti-corruption etc); and (2) those that aim to build more generic technical/organisational capacities around areas such as policy and advocacy, finance, or systems. Many are a combination of both. Traditional capacity building programmes range hugely in size and scope, from one-off technical training for a small selection of specific CSOs, to support for large regional coalitions. They can be designed and led by national or local NGOs, national or international private sector agencies, or donors themselves (often the UN).

Most INGOs who work in partnership with local CSOs/CBOs have their own methodologies for capacity development and support that have developed over the years and in response to their partners’ needs. Large institutional donors such as the EU and donor governments such as the Netherlands and USAID have for a long time had funds specifically designed for strengthening civil society capacity in complex contexts. These take the form of tenders that are usually won and administered by either a private sector agency or a medium-to-larger size INGO that may or may not have good connections and relationships in-country. Indeed, all these donors have at various points in the last five years provided such capacity building support to Jordanian CSOs.

Although we found little in the way of literature that evaluates specific models of capacity building or capacity strengthening, papers such as ‘Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes’ by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) does a good job of explaining common practices. For IDS, an important question they suggest at the outset of thinking about designing a capacity building programme is ‘capacities for what and who?’:<sup>220</sup>

*Is the issue one of enhancing civic engagement and vibrant civil society in general terms, or is it one of trying to support CSOs who are advocating for change on a specific issue, or is the issue one of improving the internal governance of specific civil society organisations (CSOs) to ensure better financial sustainability, or is it one of trying to improve coordination between CSOs in order to form alliances?<sup>221</sup>*

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<sup>220</sup> Oswald K (2016), ‘Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes: Literature Review’, Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and SDC Network, p 15 ([www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev\\_August%202016.pdf](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev_August%202016.pdf))

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, p 15.

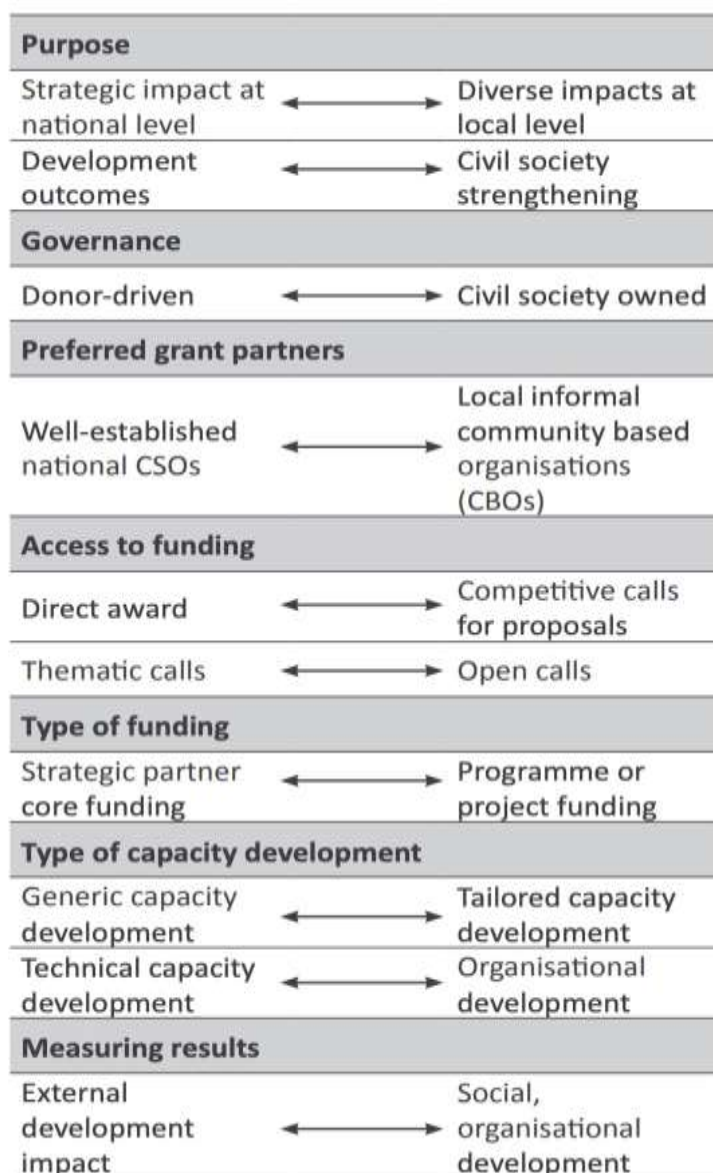


Figure 1: Designing a CSO capacity building programme<sup>222</sup>

Once the answer to this has been established, Coventry and Moberly suggest a useful way of thinking about different aspects of the design, including how funds are accessed and by whom, and who 'owns' the process (see figure 1).<sup>223</sup> A major recommendation from IDS is that whatever model is used, international groups should structure 'funding, programs and approaches to allow CSO partners the space and time to try new things, learn and adapt'.<sup>224</sup>

<sup>222</sup> Coventry, C. and Moberly, C. (2015) Multi-donor funds for civil society: choices and dilemmas. INTRAC. <https://www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/>

<sup>223</sup> Coventry C, Moberly C (2015), 'Multi-donor funds for civil society: choices and dilemmas', INTRAC ([www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/](http://www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/))

<sup>224</sup> Oswald K (2016), 'Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes: Literature Review', Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and SDC Network, p 15 ([www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev\\_August%202016.pdf](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev_August%202016.pdf))

The IDS paper also helpfully categorises some of the more common models or modalities for strengthening the capacity of civil society as follows: (i) peer/mutual learning; (ii) supporting the strengthening of context analysis/power analysis; (iii) supporting and creating issue-based coalitions/networks/platforms; (iv) grant making; (v) organisational learning; and (vi) supporting citizen mobilisation. While these categories are not mutually exclusive – for example, coalitions and platforms can form part of supporting citizen mobilisation or provide space for peer learning – they provide a helpful starting point for looking at different ways of meeting the needs of civil society groups. Given the prevalence of thematic or ‘subject based training’ programmes, particularly in the international WPS sector, we’ve added this to the list as a separate item. Looking at each of these modalities in turn<sup>225</sup>:

1. **Subject-based training given to cohorts of organisations and individuals.** Trainings are likely the immediate first port of call for any traditional capacity building programme, although they are often teamed with other mechanisms, such as small or microgrants or attempts to maintain (often without financial or human resources) loose networks of trainees or ‘fellows’. There are numerous organisations worldwide providing trainings on UNSCR 1325 itself,<sup>226</sup> on a variety of WPS topics and under the auspices of women’s empowerment. Topics are often decided according to the expertise of the training provider, though in more ideal situations learning needs would be identified collaboratively. Often these can be short-term, one-off programmes with limited follow-up. Here funders are often keener to see as many participants as possible rather than longer-term engagement with a small group (see, for example, the Beyond Borders 1325 Women in Conflict Fellowship programme,<sup>227</sup> which has regularly trained Jordanian women). Training and coaching the same group of people over a longer period is generally considered more valuable, as is incorporating collaborative analysis and action planning, as outlined in Section 2). As it relates to JONAP, this kind of subject-based or thematic training provided by UN Women to implementing partners was explicitly highlighted as being useful and of added value, compared to the more technical support provided (such as on M&E) – which was described as being “more basic”.<sup>228</sup>
2. **Peer/mutual learning** describes forms of capacity building in which local organisations are supported to share skills, resources, information and knowledge with one another, often using collective reflection as a way to identify and build on existing knowledge, experience and lessons. For example, in Nepal, the Local Initiatives Support Programme, supported by the US-based INGO Helvetas,<sup>229</sup> helps create networks where organisations work together on common issues and interests based on a ‘learn together’ principle.<sup>230</sup> Similarly, in Macedonia, Civica Mobilitas is a civil society support facility supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation that runs ‘action learning’ programmes in which national and local-level CSOs come together to share and develop practice around good governance and social change.<sup>231</sup> Exchange programmes that facilitate learning between activists and civil society groups across geographies and sectors are also a common peer learning practice.

These models centre around building on local and indigenous forms of knowledge, and can play an important role not just in ensuring ownership and relevance of the knowledge produced, but also in community building. Stephan et al. argue that capacity building that facilitates peer-to-peer learning and combines learning with doing (clinics) and mentoring tend to be far more useful than institutionally oriented or thematic training. They also observe that ‘peer-to-peer training involving activists from different

<sup>225</sup> Adapted from: Ibid, p 15.

<sup>226</sup> For example, for the last decade or so CARE Myanmar has been training cohorts of women in 44 different communities on of gender and human rights, gender-based violence, and legal awareness and education on CEDAW and SCR 1325.

<sup>227</sup> Beyond Borders Scotland ([www.beyondbordersscotland.com/projects/women-in-conflict/](http://www.beyondbordersscotland.com/projects/women-in-conflict/))

<sup>228</sup> KII, national NGO and UN Women partner, 26 January 2023; FGD, women’s rights organisation, Madaba, 25 January 2023.

<sup>229</sup> Helvetas USA ([www.helvetasusa.org/en/what-we-do/how-we-work/knowledge-learning](http://www.helvetasusa.org/en/what-we-do/how-we-work/knowledge-learning))

<sup>230</sup> Oswald K (2016), ‘Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes: Literature Review’, Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and SDC Network, p 11 ([www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLG/Docs/CSO%20CapacityLitRev\\_August%202016.pdf](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLG/Docs/CSO%20CapacityLitRev_August%202016.pdf))

<sup>231</sup> Ibid, p 9.

anti-corruption movements have proved especially helpful',<sup>232</sup> Similarly, in a 2021 report on peer learning to integrate gender into peacebuilding, Peace Nexus describes peer learning as:

*key to unlocking innovative and viable pathways to peace. When done with humility, it can help us mature as a field by providing a safe space to reflect, atone and change. And peer learning is particularly well suited to help practitioners and organisations more authentically embody the values of peacebuilding, a now urgent imperative.*<sup>233</sup>

However, despite peer learning approaches being described as 'an opportunity to do development differently',<sup>234</sup> it is interesting that the examples we found of these approaches were still often developed and convened primarily by international NGOs (though it is also likely that more local or nationally driven initiatives are not as widely captured in English).

3. **Supporting the strengthening of context analysis/power analysis** is closely linked to peer/mutual learning as an example of good practice in this area. This kind of support usually involves civil society organisations and individuals coming together to collaboratively undertake analysis and mapping, building on each other's knowledge of the local community and, in the case of WPS-focused groups, local gender norms and power and conflict dynamics. This process results in a shared problem or conflict analysis, which is then often the starting point for more long-term collaborative action planning to address issues that have been identified (such as through developing a theory of change for programming). Community security programming<sup>235</sup> is a good example of this style of working: it brings local groups together in various locations around the world (sometimes with an explicit WPS focus) to collaboratively identify and find solutions to local conflict and security issues. While not explicitly a capacity building model, at least in the traditional sense, group learning is a core element of why and how it works. Part of the strength it creates is the relationships that are built within and between civil society groups and wider organisations. There is also often a form of participatory action research, in which learning comes from the community and is then used by the community to affect positive change.

Inclusive Security use a similar model in their 'Equipping Women To Build More Sustainable Peace' programme,<sup>236</sup> which comprises an eight-step process: 1) build relationships; 2) joint analysis and planning; 3) build technical knowledge; 4) increase awareness; 5) create platform; 6) determine concrete agenda for change; 7) advocate; and 8) jointly reflect and learn. These models tend to involve longer-term, often (as is the case with Saferworld) multi-year engagements with the same group. Efforts are made in these models to support local groups to sustain their activities beyond the involvement of the outside organisation. Relationship building is also an important goal of this kind of support, and monitoring and evaluation processes therefore take an outcome-based approach to measure changes in relationships and behaviours.

4. **Supporting and creating issue-based coalitions/networks/platforms** 'recognises that civil society is broader than individual CSOs and can be strengthened through focusing on issues rather than organisations',<sup>237</sup> Coalitions, networks and platforms often combine a number of capacity building approaches (traditional

<sup>232</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), 'Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset', US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 9 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))

<sup>233</sup> Conciliation Resources (2021), 'Integrating gender in the DNA of peacebuilding: Learning with peers', p 3 ([https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Report\\_Gender\\_Integration\\_in\\_Peacebuilding\\_English%20.pdf](https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Report_Gender_Integration_in_Peacebuilding_English%20.pdf))

<sup>234</sup> Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) and National School of Government, International (NSGI) (2018), 'The Future of Peer-to-Peer Learning in the New Development Agenda', p 5 ([www.effectiveinstitutions.org/files/The\\_Future\\_of\\_Peer\\_to\\_Peer\\_Partnerships\\_in\\_the\\_New\\_Development\\_Agenda.PDF](http://www.effectiveinstitutions.org/files/The_Future_of_Peer_to_Peer_Partnerships_in_the_New_Development_Agenda.PDF))

<sup>235</sup> Saferworld, 'Community security' ([www.saferworld.org.uk/peoples-security-and-justice/community-security](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/peoples-security-and-justice/community-security))

<sup>236</sup> Inclusive Security, 'Training Approach' ([www.inclusivesecurity.org/training-approach/](http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/training-approach/))

<sup>237</sup> Oswald K (2016), 'Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes: Literature Review', Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and SDC Network, p 10 ([www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLG/ Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev\\_August%202016.pdf](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLG/ Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev_August%202016.pdf))

training on thematic issues, peer learning, exchange programmes and small grants, among others) with an advocacy or campaign agenda. Here the group of people together or in sub-groups take forward influencing decision-makers across a number of agreed areas. This is a common way for feminists to organise globally, with feminist coalitions often taking forward the WPS agenda in countries affected by conflict, such as the Women's Solidarity Network in Yemen<sup>238</sup> and the The Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz (Alianza IMP) in Colombia.

Traditionally, coalitions and networks would meet face to face, with online communications in between meetings; however, post-pandemic, some coalitions have been formed entirely online. There are different ways of organising coalitions and networks, and often the organisations are quite loose but held together by good communications. More formalised coalitions might have an elected or nominated 'secretariat' and use various forms of participatory decision-making (such as consensus or voting) to agree strategic direction and activities. Several coalitions use 'e-platforms', though it is notoriously difficult to keep these up to date and encourage coalition members to use them regularly.<sup>239</sup> Although a number of INGOs and other international organisations try to build coalitions as part of their advocacy programming, anecdotal evidence suggests that coalitions and networks are more likely to hold together if they emerge organically from national or local civil society, and are then supported financially to continue and grow.

5. **Grant making.** Often combined with other methodologies, such as longer-term training or learning programmes, a popular tool for capacity building is the provision of small or microgrants to civil society organisations, informal groups or even individuals. These are usually short-term 'grants', which recipients can use to test out an idea, pilot a project, or put some of their learning into practice. These are usually less than \$10,000 in total, and often very small, in the realm of \$100 to \$500 per grant (the next section provides more information on larger-scale participatory grant-making models). Small grants may be useful for activists or small initiatives to focus on issue-based campaigns or small-scale programming. However, they are less useful in building organisational systems and 'levelling-up' organisations, unless the grant is larger and for a more sustained period. For example, ARDD (2020)'s research on strengthening localisation in Jordan highlighted the Danish Refugee Council's 'Tadneem' programme (2015–2016), which sought to support the participation of women in local social, economic and civil life. The programme had formalised partnerships with six local CSOs in Karak, Ma'an, and Tafleeh, three of whom received capacity building sub-grants. Some of the feedback from participants was that the grants were too small to impact their capacity to operate. Additionally, staff and volunteer turnover also meant that training did not stay with the CSOs for long.<sup>240</sup> The literature we reviewed suggested that these grant schemes are generally highly valued, particularly by activists who are working on issues on a voluntary basis, and as a way of catalysing practical collaboration between different stakeholders in a community.<sup>241</sup>

However, several the documents we reviewed also suggested that administering small grants to non-traditional groups is time consuming and 'demands deep familiarity with local actors and networks';<sup>242</sup> therefore, is best placed to be run by a local CSO or NGO. In an anti-corruption-oriented capacity building programme in Africa, which involved both a training component (on the UN Convention Against Corruption)

<sup>238</sup> Peace Women, 'Women's Solidarity Network's Five-Point Initiative To Protect Civilians In Hodeidah' ([www.peacewomen.org/resource/womens-solidarity-networks-five-point-initiative-protect-civilians-hodeidah](http://www.peacewomen.org/resource/womens-solidarity-networks-five-point-initiative-protect-civilians-hodeidah))

<sup>239</sup> In fact, many of the e-platforms references in the literature are now defunct.

<sup>240</sup> Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) (2020), 'Strengthening Localisation in Jordan'.

<sup>241</sup> The overall budget for the project was 1,176,507 euros, with 51 per cent contributed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and 49 per cent covered by a UNODC in-kind contribution. Pring C, Mulcahy S (2021), 'Civil Society in Africa Contributes to UNAC and its Review Mechanism to Effectively Fight Corruption and Support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)', Final Independent Project Evaluation, The Independent Evaluation Section (IES) of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), p vii ([www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/Independent\\_Project\\_Evaluations/2021/Final\\_Evaluation\\_Report\\_GLOU68.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/Independent_Project_Evaluations/2021/Final_Evaluation_Report_GLOU68.pdf))

<sup>242</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), 'Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset', US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 9 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))



and a small grants component, the small grants scheme was for CSOs to work in partnership with the private sector on anti-corruption initiatives, with \$5,000 allocated per grant. An independent evaluation of the programme suggested the small grants scheme needed to be reassessed, and grant size increased and reclassified as ‘seed funding’. This was because the bureaucracy attached to the grant scheme for both the team and the grantees outweighed the benefit of the grant, while the lack of follow-on funding meant that the prospects of any change was low. Some grantees even reported that ‘the application process for mini grants exceeded the actual implementation timeframe’.<sup>243</sup>

6. **Organisational learning** tends most commonly to look like technical or skills-based training around core organisational functions such as policy and advocacy, finance and project management, MEL and governance, and organisational policy development around areas such as safeguarding,<sup>244</sup> anti-fraud etc. These are often the kinds of areas that are particularly familiar to institutional donors, or areas that help CSOs with funding compliance/make it easier for donor agencies to partner with them,<sup>245</sup> and tend to be standardised rather than tailored to the needs of an organisation. However, ‘softer’ more relational skills building also occurs, such as around outreach, community engagement, shared values, staff well-being, workplace culture and non-violent communications, as do trainings on more political topics such as collective bargaining.<sup>246</sup> Other models outside of short-term training also exist to support organisations, such as Mama Cash’s accompaniment model (see Box 8) and peer mentorship programmes (including peer mentorship programmes).

For example, in Angola the UNDP funded Support to Civic Education programme<sup>247</sup> took a ‘reflective partnership’ approach to the capacity development of civil society, which ‘enables learners not only to grasp concepts and skills, but also to apply them in new job settings, and to transfer knowledge to third party learners’. The project funded several ‘mentors’ in management, M&E, gender and finance, and facilitated spaces for reflective learning throughout the project cycle, including the use of journaling.<sup>248</sup> Some of the difficulties inherent in concentrating capacity building within certain organisations include that it can reinforce existing power dynamics within civil society. In addition, capacity can be lost when the individuals trained move organisations, particularly if they move from a local CSO into a role with an INGO or the UN. This was a common problem highlighted in our interviews with local organisations in Jordan.

7. **Supporting citizen mobilisation/collective citizen action** involves a broader approach to strengthening civil society, taking into account the important role that unregistered groups and community (and feminist) organising and social movements play as key drivers of social and political development, particularly on women’s rights, the environment and anti-corruption.<sup>249</sup> Support can look like the majority of the models mentioned above (with the possible exceptions of organisational learning), with the main difference that they are aimed at individuals and groups that exist outside of the formal, institutionalised NGO space and

<sup>243</sup> Pring C, Mulcahy S (2021), ‘Civil Society in Africa Contributes to UNAC and its Review Mechanism to Effectively Fight Corruption and Support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)’, Final Independent Project Evaluation, The Independent Evaluation Section (IES) of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), p 22 ([www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/Independent\\_Project\\_Evaluations/2021/Final\\_Evaluation\\_Report\\_GLOU68.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/Independent_Project_Evaluations/2021/Final_Evaluation_Report_GLOU68.pdf))

<sup>244</sup> See Annex for more information on the RHS MENA Resource Hub who support organisations in the humanitarian and development sector to strengthen their safeguarding policy and practice against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH) <https://mena.safeguardingsupporthub.org/>

<sup>245</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Navivwala N (2015), ‘Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset’, US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 3 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))

<sup>246</sup> Solidarity Center ([www.solidaritycenter.org/](http://www.solidaritycenter.org/))

<sup>247</sup> UNDP (2008), ‘Support Civic Education’ (<https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/3322?tab=documents>)

<sup>248</sup> Oswald K (2016), ‘Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes: Literature Review’, Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and SDC Network, p 12 ([www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev\\_August%202016.pdf](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev_August%202016.pdf))

<sup>249</sup> See: Stephan MJ (2017), ‘Responding to the Global Threat of Closing Civic Space: Policy Options Testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission’, Congressional Testimony ([www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options](http://www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options)); and Stephan et al. (2015).

often receive ‘inadequate attention and support from development actors’.<sup>250</sup> Maria J Stephan, testifying to US Congress in 2017 on the global threat of closing civic space, mentions particular ‘soft’ skills that are useful for this kind of citizen action, such as the skills of finding common ground and self-organising. This is an important model to consider, as many influential activists and community mobilisers operate outside of the traditional ‘NGO/CSO’ sphere in Jordan, and their work may not be as well captured by JONAP monitoring systems. Providing opportunities to engage and support such activists and individuals within the formal WPS agenda is an important factor to consider when it comes to efforts to build coalitions and strengthen relationships between WPS partners in Jordan.

However, it is also worth noting that the very concept of ‘capacity building’ is increasingly contested, particularly in gender justice, racial justice and women’s rights circles, with a major critique being that international donors and INGOs are often assuming – due to embedded racialised and gendered prejudices – a lack of capacity among local organisations, especially women-led organisations. This is echoed in the ARDD (2020) report on localisation in Jordan, which notes:

*The notion of ‘capacity building’ in the international humanitarian sector can also be used to establish and maintain a power asymmetry between those who define which capacities are critical and which are not, and those who have them and who reportedly do not. Generally, the capacity to meet donor requirements nowadays tends to be rated higher than that of working effectively and structurally in a particular context. Globally, increasing discomfort is being expressed by local/national actors (and some internationals) about the use of the one-sided ‘capacity-building’ discourse (e.g., Stephen, 2017). Proposed alternatives are ‘capacity convergence’ and ‘capacity sharing’. These start from the assumption that each brings to the collaboration some capacities relevant to the real objective, which is alleviating suffering in a particular context (see also Barbelet et al. 2019).<sup>251</sup>*

In a US Institute of Peace (USIP) report on taking a ‘movement mindset’ to aid, the term ‘capacity building’ is cited as an example of ‘language used in the aid system [that reinforces] discriminatory and racist perceptions of non-White populations’ and suggests that ‘local communities and organisations lack skills, while other terms, such as “field expert” perpetuate images of the Global South as “uncivilised”’.<sup>252</sup> Similarly, in Peace Direct’s report on decolonising aid, donor and INGO assumptions that local communities lack capacity and skills and require external training provides an important illustration of how structural racism shows up in the sector.<sup>253</sup>

This has led to greater thinking around how donors might support the more peer-to-peer approaches that acknowledge, value and prioritise the knowledge and experience of local organisations and communities, rather than models that bring in ‘expertise’ from the Global North. In the Peace Direct report, Catherine Martha Agwand talks about how INGOs and donors can ‘be a bridge, not an expert’: ‘the task, therefore, is not to assume the lack of expertise, but to connect colleagues to the resources and power they need to implement successful projects – transforming capacity building, into capacity bridging’.<sup>254</sup> These approaches can be incorporated into most of the capacity building models outlined above, although some, such as supporting peer exchanges and citizen mobilisation, are perhaps a more natural fit than others, such as technical training around compliance.

<sup>250</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), ‘Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset’, US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 1 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))

<sup>251</sup> Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) (2020), ‘Strengthening Localisation in Jordan’.

<sup>252</sup> Peace Direct (2020), ‘Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation – Full Report’ ([www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf](http://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf))

<sup>253</sup> Ibid, p 32.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, p 28.

In line with the approach, the IDS paper suggests several questions that potential donors or project designers can ask themselves when thinking about models for capacity strengthening:<sup>255</sup>

- How are you going to ensure ownership by CSOs of the capacity strengthening process (to ensure sustainability)?
- How can you support endogenous capacity (building on and strengthening existing capacities rather than concentrating on capacity gaps)?
- What can be done beyond training?
- How can you support the capacity of groups outside formal CSOs or non-organised civil society?  
How can you support Southern capacity development providers in the process?

This kind of thinking also overlaps significantly with taking alternative approaches to providing funding. This is explored more in the next section.

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<sup>255</sup> Oswald K (2016), 'Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes: Literature Review', Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and SDC Network ([www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLG/ Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev\\_August%202016.pdf](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLG/ Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev_August%202016.pdf))

**Box 5: The State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI): collective capacity strengthening<sup>256</sup>**

The State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI) was originally established as a six-year, GBP £21 million, Department for International Development (DFID)-funded civil society support programme in Nigeria. It had project offices in ten states across Nigeria and in Abuja.

The main aim of the initiative was to increase the ability of citizens to claim rights and hold state governments accountable, to be achieved by focusing on the following three core areas: (1) the design and facilitation of advocacy projects to be implemented by civil society organisations; (2) support to independent monitoring, research and policy analysis, in areas such as civil society monitoring and state budgets; and (3) strengthening the functions of State Houses of Assembly. It provided support to State Houses of Assembly, mass media organisations and CSOs.

Interestingly, SAVI chose not to use small grants or technical assistance as ways of supporting CSOs. Instead, as IDS calls attention to, it **focused on supporting the strengthening of relationships between organisations, rather than on capacities within standalone organisations**, and on an issue-based approach to change:<sup>257</sup> 'Rather than focusing on the individual organisations, the interventions focus on specific outcomes (related to institutional change) and then engage with a range of stakeholders to support a change process.' Similar to the approaches outlined above, SAVI facilitated discussions with groups involved to identify not only the issues combining local salience and tractability, but also the organisations who might contribute to viable advocacy partnerships.<sup>258</sup>

ITAD, a global consultancy firm specialising in MEL, was a consortium partner in SAVI. It noted the particular value added of SAVI's approach was building confidence and capacity among these groups and building connections between them, in order to then influence the design and delivery of public policy and programmes in Nigeria.<sup>259</sup>

In a paper by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI),<sup>260</sup> a key takeaway about SAVI is that it provides an example of development programming that is truly responsive to country realities: 'politically smart, problem-driven and locally led'. However, it argues that the devolution of the initiative to state level, separately managed programmes has had a negative effect on impact. ODI says that the main enabling conditions for this initiative included DFID providing space for an experience-based design process and permitted tangible results to be judged retrospectively, not pre-programmed. The model is also praised for being non-prescriptive, with 'the ability to respond to unanticipated opportunities and setbacks as the process unfolds'.<sup>261</sup>

**Box 6: The Civil Society Fund: long-term engagement<sup>262</sup>**

The Civil Society Fund (CSF) is a multi-donor fund designed to support South Sudanese civil society. It aims at 'addressing organisational and structural weakness' of civil society, in order to ultimately generate more inclusive and responsive decision-making, leading to positive changes in the well-being of South Sudanese communities. It initially had a Joint Donor Team of the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Netherlands,

<sup>256</sup> Booth D, Chambers V (2014), 'The SAVI programme in Nigeria: Towards politically smart, locally led development', ODI (<https://odi.org/en/publications/the-savi-programme-in-nigeria-towards-politically-smart-locally-led-development/>)

<sup>257</sup> Oswald (2016), p 15.

<sup>258</sup> Booth D, Chambers V (2014), 'The SAVI programme in Nigeria: Towards politically smart, locally led development', Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (<https://odi.org/en/publications/the-savi-programme-in-nigeria-towards-politically-smart-locally-led-development/>)

<sup>259</sup> ITAD (2007), 'State Accountability and Voice Initiative' ([www.itad.com/project/state-accountability-and-voice-initiative/](http://www.itad.com/project/state-accountability-and-voice-initiative/))

<sup>260</sup> Booth D, Chambers V (2014), 'The SAVI programme in Nigeria: Towards politically smart, locally led development', ODI (<https://odi.org/en/publications/the-savi-programme-in-nigeria-towards-politically-smart-locally-led-development/>)

<sup>261</sup> Oswald (2016).

<sup>262</sup> CSF South Sudan (<https://csf-southsudan.org/>)

Norway, Sweden and the UK, though is potentially now solely funded by the Dutch. The fund seeks to develop the capacities and strengths of South Sudanese civil society to play a more independent role in humanitarian and development action and to support communities and groups to engage constructively with authorities'/decision makers on their needs and priorities.

The CSF invests in strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) to:

- build relationships with their constituencies
- improve their management and cooperation
- engage in constructive dialogue with the government over potential changes in policy, service or value

To date, CSF has assisted 69 CSOs and 4 INGOs. It provides:

- grants to civil society organisations
- technical assistance and support to enhance capacities of local CSOs (from the fund manager)
- learning and knowledge management

It uses a participatory organisational capacity assessment (OCA) process to determine the individual capacity development needs of each CSO. According to Integrity, the underlying rationale for the programme is that 'a stronger civil society can contribute to restoring social trust and facilitating the interactions between citizens and the state for lasting peace and strengthened democratic governance'.<sup>263</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting element of CSF is the timeframe: the programme has an expected lifetime of 20 years, with the idea that '*the CSF intends to work completely through South Sudanese organisations, i.e. South Sudanese intermediaries gradually taking over from International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) in delivering capacity building support to smaller organisations*'.<sup>264</sup> However, the current website suggests that the remit or scope of the Fund may have been reduced since its initial design. There is little indication that South Sudanese CSOs are involved in decision-making or design of the fund, though this may be because the website is written from the perspective of the technical fund manager.

In a passing reference to CSF in a report evaluating a different programme, ECORYS, an international provider of research, consulting, programme management and communications services, mentioned that although 'the specific contract did not deliver the expected results', the third-party monitoring system / M&E system set up for the fund is something that could be learned from.<sup>265</sup>

Several private sector global consultancies are or have been involved in the running of the programme. Integrity<sup>266</sup> was involved in early scoping, baseline development and helping to finalise the design of the programme. ECORYS was selected to establish the CSF and to provide fund management services during the first phase. Mott MacDonald is now the fund manager for the second phase.

<sup>263</sup> Integrity (no date), 'Formulation and Design of the Civil Society Fund in South Sudan' ([www.integrityglobal.com/our-work/projects/design-advice-tender-civil-society-fund-csf-south-sudan/](http://www.integrityglobal.com/our-work/projects/design-advice-tender-civil-society-fund-csf-south-sudan/))

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> ECORYS (2020), 'Addressing Root Causes ARC Programme: Mid-Term Review' ([www.government.nl/binaries/government/documenten/reports/2020/07/09/mid-term-review-of-the-addressing-root-causes-arc-programme-2016-till-2021/Addressing+Root+Causes+%28ARC%29+Final+Report1.pdf](http://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documenten/reports/2020/07/09/mid-term-review-of-the-addressing-root-causes-arc-programme-2016-till-2021/Addressing+Root+Causes+%28ARC%29+Final+Report1.pdf))

<sup>266</sup> Integrity (no date), 'Formulation and Design of the Civil Society Fund in South Sudan' ([www.integrityglobal.com/our-work/projects/design-advice-tender-civil-society-fund-csf-south-sudan/](http://www.integrityglobal.com/our-work/projects/design-advice-tender-civil-society-fund-csf-south-sudan/))

**Box 7: The Civil Society Innovation Initiative (CSII):<sup>267</sup> a global convening model**

In 2014, USAID and Sida launched the Civil Society Innovation Initiative (CSII), to support new and established approaches to promote, strengthen and connect a vibrant, pluralistic and rights-based civil society. It supports capacity building through information exchange, peer learning and the 'bridging of closed and open spaces' [in reference to closing civic space].<sup>268</sup>

Activities have included:

- convening donors, implementers and more than 250 civil society groups to co-create one global and multiple regional civil society hubs in Africa, Central Asia, East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, the Pacific, and South Asia

- An interactive learning platform documenting a new model for regional and network initiatives for USAID

It works on a variety of issues including human rights, transparency, digital security, CSO sustainability and digital currencies.

The project is funded by multiple donors and implemented by several organisations working in partnership. Tides,<sup>269</sup> a philanthropic partner and non-profit accelerator, serves as the project's fiscal agent and is responsible for administering grants to CSOs.

## Funding modalities for WPS activities and CSO strengthening

There is a clear need for greater support and funding for local-level CSOs worldwide. In recent years, there has been 'a growing chorus of activists and organisations pushing for the "localisation" of development, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding efforts'.<sup>270</sup> This localisation agenda is driven by the understanding that local actors have a unique understanding of the challenges and opportunities in their communities, and are best positioned to lead effective and sustainable initiatives that address these issues.<sup>271</sup>

This is also particularly true for women, peace and security work, where local-level and community-based work is an absolutely essential component to achieving meaningful change for women and girls. Research suggests that, 'Local women's organisations are often best placed to foster transformative and sustainable change to achieve peace and gender equality in complex environments.'<sup>272</sup> Similarly, Hamilton et al. argue that, 'A NAP that focuses on local knowledge, contexts, and needs is more likely to be responsive and effective as opposed to wholesale policy transfers from the international context or emulation of other

<sup>267</sup> USAID Learning Lab, 'The Civil Society Innovation Initiative's Process Historian Approach to CLA'

(<https://usaidlearninglab.org/resources/civil-society-innovation-initiatives-process-historian-approach-cla>)

<sup>268</sup> Stephan MJ (2017), 'Responding to the Global Threat of Closing Civic Space: Policy Options Testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission', Congressional Testimony ([www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options](http://www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options))

<sup>269</sup> TIDES, 'The Tides Approach' ([www.tides.org/approach/](http://www.tides.org/approach/))

<sup>270</sup> Peace Direct (2020), 'Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation – Full Report', p 8 ([www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf](http://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf))

<sup>271</sup> Cabrera-Balleza M, Popovic N (2011), *Costing and financing 1325: examining the resources needed to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 at the national level as well as the gains, gaps and glitches on financing the women, peace and security agenda*, M Cabrera-Balleza, D Suralaga (eds.), Cordaid, the Hague, the Netherlands and GNWP, New York, USA, p 34 (<https://gnwp.org/costing-financing-1325/>)

<sup>272</sup> Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) (2022), 'CSO Annual Survey on Women Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action', p 1 ([https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022\\_FINAL.pdf](https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022_FINAL.pdf))

states' NAPs.<sup>273</sup> Despite this, the work of women's organisations is consistently underfunded, and the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) has estimated that globally only 1 per cent of gender equality funding is going to women's organisations.<sup>274</sup> In its 2021 CSO Annual Survey on Women, Peace and Security, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) found that 89 per cent of CSOs felt their organisation was at a moderate, high or very high risk for continuity due to the lack of programmatic or institutional funding for local women's organisations, an increase of 5 per cent from 2020.<sup>275</sup>

'Vibrant civil societies are widely considered to be both bedrocks of successful development and buffers against the kind of predatory governance that so often breeds violence', argue Stephan et al.<sup>276</sup> Grassroots and civil society campaigns tend to be the drivers of social and political development and democratic change, with collective citizen action in places such as Colombia, Liberia, Guatemala, Nigeria and Afghanistan playing a 'key role in challenging exclusionary, predatory governance and in advancing peace processes'.<sup>277</sup> However, civil society receives inadequate attention and support from development organisations<sup>278</sup> and little international cooperation funding is available directly to CSOs on the ground. Stephan et al. note that,

*There is an alarming lack of diversity in funding modalities for the majority of platforms and networks with many of them relying largely or exclusively on EU funding, particularly smaller national CSO platforms from the Global South.*<sup>279</sup>

Funders Initiative for Civil Society suggests that for areas where civil society is at risk, including the MENA region as a whole, 'just keeping civil society alive and functioning would be a success'.<sup>280</sup>

## POOLED FUNDING MODELS

Pooled funding is a common way for international donors to support CSOs to implement NAP/WPS activities and capacity strengthening programmes. It is also a common modality across a number of humanitarian and development areas. Multi-donor pooled funds (MDFs) are popular as a way for donors to meet their Grand Bargain / localisation commitments<sup>281</sup> and more easily channelling funds to smaller civil society without the administrative burden falling on the individual donor. On the surface at least, MDFs also allow multiple donors to coordinate and harmonise approaches, avoid duplication of work and reporting on the part of funding recipients, and ensure that a diverse range of CSOs are funded. They also potentially nurture younger and smaller organisations alongside larger ones. However, Coventry and Moberly<sup>282</sup> report that

<sup>273</sup> Hamilton C, Naam N, Shepherd LJ (2020), 'Twenty Years of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Analysis and Lessons Learned', University of Sydney, p 20 ([www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans\\_Report\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](http://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans_Report_Final_Web.pdf))

<sup>274</sup> GAPS (2020), 'Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2019', p 15 (<https://gaps-uk.org/assessing-uk-government-action-on-women-peace-and-security-in-2020/>)

<sup>275</sup> WPHF (2022), 'CSO Annual Survey on Women Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action', p 1 ([https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022\\_FINAL.pdf](https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022_FINAL.pdf))

<sup>276</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), 'Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset', US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 1 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))

<sup>277</sup> Stephan MJ (2017), 'Responding to the Global Threat of Closing Civic Space: Policy Options' Testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission', Congressional Testimony ([www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options](http://www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options))

<sup>278</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), 'Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset', US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 1 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))

<sup>279</sup> Haynes R, Ireland V, Duke J (2019), 'Funding Civil Society Organisations and Networks: Promising approaches to financing development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', Forus, p 3 ([www.forus-international.org/en/pdf-detail/75815-funding-civil-society-organisations-networks-promising-approaches-to-financing-development-in-the-21st-century-executive-summary](http://www.forus-international.org/en/pdf-detail/75815-funding-civil-society-organisations-networks-promising-approaches-to-financing-development-in-the-21st-century-executive-summary))

<sup>280</sup> Funders Initiative for Civil Society (2016), 'Challenging the Closing Space for Civil Society. A practical starting point for funders', p 13 ([www.ariadne-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ClosingSpaceReport\\_May2016\\_DigitalVersion.pdf](http://www.ariadne-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ClosingSpaceReport_May2016_DigitalVersion.pdf))

<sup>281</sup> The 'Grand Bargain' is an agreement between more than 50 of the biggest donors and aid providers worldwide. It aims to get more aid into the hands of people in need and the signatories are committed to 'making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary.' See: <https://glocalisation.ifrc.org/>

<sup>282</sup> Coventry C, Moberly C (2015), 'Multi-donor funds for civil society: choices and dilemmas', INTRAC ([www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/](http://www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/))

there remains 'little primary research on what the long-term effect of MDFs have been on civil society development in the countries where they have been operating'. The experiences reported vary considerably:

*In some countries, funds have clearly democratised funding, extending it out beyond capital cities and to a much wider group of CSOs than had access previously. In other cases, the high entry requirements of funds have benefited more established and elite CSOs and have narrowed funding opportunities.*<sup>283</sup>

For the most part, these funds work using a fairly traditional 'request for proposal (RFP)' grant-making model,<sup>284</sup> which can generate a number of difficulties for civil society organisations. For example, the literature we reviewed is clear that grant financing can be hugely burdensome on CSOs, especially smaller organisations, both in terms of proposal writing and submissions (for grants they may not win) and reporting and fund management (even if the grants awarded are quite small). "We cannot afford it any more", said one small NGO in Calcutta to Stephan et al. (2015), "The bureaucratic systems of applying, reporting, and evaluation of projects turns such projects into too heavy a burden for us."<sup>285</sup>

In their review of costing and financing 1325, Cabrera-Balleza and Popovic<sup>286</sup> note that, 'Sometimes hiring expensive external staff from the donor country is the only way to fulfil the requirements for the intervention.'<sup>287</sup> As noted earlier, this expensive procedure to access funds was reported by organisations in Jordan, and creates an added burden in that those writing grant proposals are not the ones implementing the programme. Often activities and even results are predefined by the donor, reinforcing donor frameworks for change rather than being local civil society or community driven. This also creates a situation where accountability is to the donor rather than the community a given organisation is supporting.<sup>288</sup> Not only does this mean that the project is framed by state and institutional donors, but it also excludes local people. In Peace Direct's paper on decolonising aid, Bassim Assuqair gives the example of local groups 'feeling isolated or not up to the level to understand the imposed system, which creates a power of knowledge relation where local actors are in the position of being unaware or not capacitated'.<sup>289</sup>

Donor request for proposals (RFP) style financing also tends to benefit only a small segment of certain types of CSOs (the 'usual suspects') and often excludes 'grassroots organisations without the resources and know-how to seek out and appropriately respond to RFPs or similar processes'.<sup>290</sup> Coventry and Moberly write that there is a tendency within these funding types 'to look for and fund the parts of civil society that they recognise: professionalised development and advocacy CSOs'.<sup>291</sup> Meanwhile, Stephan et al. (2015) highlight that donors can often be more concerned about CSO 'efficiency than with legitimacy and their relationship with local communities'.<sup>292</sup> Peace Direct notes this as one of the ways in which structural racism shows up in the aid sector – through 'calls for proposals limited to western INGOs or NGOs of a certain size and

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), 'Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset', US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 28 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))

<sup>286</sup> Cabrera-Balleza M, Popovic N (2011), *Costing and financing 1325: examining the resources needed to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 at the national level as well as the gains, gaps and glitches on financing the women, peace and security agenda*, M Cabrera-Balleza, D Suralaga (eds.), Cordaid, the Hague, the Netherlands and GNWP, New York, USA, p 58 (<https://gnwp.org/costing-financing-1325/>)

<sup>287</sup> Ibid, p 58.

<sup>288</sup> Mentioned by CSOs in several different locations, including the Philippines and Guatemala in: Fal A (2015), 'Civil Society Input to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security: Focus Group Discussion Report for the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Survey', Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and Cordaid, p 7 ([https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015\\_CS0-FGDs-Report.pdf](https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015_CS0-FGDs-Report.pdf))

<sup>289</sup> Peace Direct (2020), 'Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation – Full Report', p 27 ([www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf](http://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf))

<sup>290</sup> Stephan et al. (2015), p 2.

<sup>291</sup> Coventry C, Moberly C (2015), 'Multi-donor funds for civil society: choices and dilemmas', INTRAC ([www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/](http://www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/))

<sup>292</sup> Stephan et al. (2015), p 5.



structure; due diligence requirements that exclude local organisations and lower risk threshold when dealing with local organisations'.<sup>293</sup> In the case of the JONAP pooled funding, UN Women's decision to release the call for proposals in English only is an example of this kind of purposeful selection.

This style of funding can also be harmful in terms of creating competition and division among CSOs. Talking about these divisions in the WPS field in Cameroon, Tumasang says:

*Some CSOs prefer to work in dispersed ranks because of their financial capacity and connections; and funders seem to foster this division instead of thriving to bring women together in their diversity and miscellany to galvanise their efforts, work in synergy.*<sup>294</sup>

Similarly, one of our interviewees mentioned a large civil society capacity programme in Afghanistan called Tawamandi,<sup>295</sup> where a major problem was that CSOs not selected for funding levied accusations of favouritism and corruption against those that were. In our own interviews with women's rights organisations in Jordan, many spoke of divisions and competitiveness between the various organisations, which hampered cooperation. While some of these divisions are natural political divisions that arise within any movement, there is no doubt that the scramble over scarce donor funds is a key driver of this unhealthy competitiveness. Funding models to support CSOs should therefore consider ways to foster cooperation and coalition building, encouraging organisations to work together and learn from each other, rather than compete for funds.

Related to this, while pooled funds come with a capacity building element attached, this is often focused on the technical skills needed to ensure 'compliance' with the various reporting and administrative requirements of the funding programme. This can appear to be needs-driven, as often CSOs struggling with donor reporting and proposal writing will ask for training in this area. Yet this kind of cycle risks creating donor-facing CSOs, rather than community-facing ones. A particular criticism levied against some women's organisations in Jordan is that they have increasingly become donor-oriented, chasing funds at the expense of community outreach and engagement. This coincides with community suspicion around NGOs in Jordan, and women organisations specifically, of them pushing a 'foreign' agenda.<sup>296</sup> Further, often funds and support targeted at more nascent civil society initiatives encourages them into 'a process of formalisation, and then supports them on a trajectory of becoming "an organisation" – rather than supporting important alternative forms of organising.<sup>297</sup>

Due to the size and nature of these pooled funds, they also usually require international agencies – the UN or often large private consultancies – to administer them. This means that decisions are often made on who or how to fund local organisations by groups that have a good understanding of the technical side of fund management, and likely a strong 'value-for-money' justification because of their size, but lack intimate knowledge of the context and communities where the work is taking place. The mechanisms often brought in by these fund managers also often mean that CSOs are required to be more accountable to the fund manager than beneficiary communities.<sup>298</sup> 'Many funds are now managed by private sector companies',

<sup>293</sup> Peace Direct (2020), p 32.

<sup>294</sup> Tumasang NNW (2020), 'Assessment of Cameroon's First National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2018–2020)', p 32 (<https://alumni.ids.ac.uk/resources/download/775>)

<sup>295</sup> Tawamandi was a UK Department for International Development (DFID)-managed multi-donor programme worth £31.68 million, aimed at strengthening Afghan civil society's engagement on human rights, justice, anti-corruption, peace building, violence against women and the media. It provided grants to local NGOs from between \$100,000 to \$ 1 million ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-work-in-afghanistan/the-uks-work-in-afghanistan](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-work-in-afghanistan/the-uks-work-in-afghanistan))

<sup>296</sup> USAID (2016), 'Civil Society Assessment in Jordan'.

<sup>297</sup> Coventry C, Moberly C (2015), 'Multi-donor funds for civil society: choices and dilemmas', INTRAC ([www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/](http://www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/))

<sup>298</sup> Peace Direct (2020), 'Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation – Full Report', p 31 ([www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf](http://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf))

write Coventry and Moberly, highlighting that ‘while there is no evidence that any particular type of managing agent is better than another, CSOs have a wealth of expertise to bring, and have the advantage of not seeking a profit’.<sup>299</sup> In their 2019 paper on unpacking localisation, the Humanitarian Leadership Academy highlights The Start Fund<sup>300</sup> as the first multi-donor pooled fund managed exclusively by NGOs:

*Projects are chosen by local committees, made up of staff from Start Network members and their partners, within 72 hours of an alert. This makes the Start Fund perhaps also the fastest responding pooled fund mechanism in the world.*<sup>301</sup>

## ALTERNATIVE FUNDING MODELS

As a result of the difficulties arising from more traditional models of funding and the rising discourse around feminist and decolonising approaches to aid, there is a growing #ShiftThePower movement towards alternative approaches. This is particularly when it comes to supporting women’s and human rights organisations and smaller civil society organisations. Looking across a selection of literature that explores various feminist, decolonising and localising approaches to funding suggests that there are several common elements to consider when thinking about designing or choosing a funding modality – as outlined below.

### 1. Being civil society/community led and accountable

Probably the core element of taking a #ShiftThePower approach is ensuring that design and decision-making is in the hands of communities and representatives of local civil society, while at the same time ensuring that any external funding does not stimulate new agendas, co-opt, reorient or ‘reframe local struggles’.<sup>302</sup> This is particularly important in the field of WPS, where there is a huge amount of local and indigenous organising taking place globally, but also a number of external international agendas, such as CVE,<sup>303</sup> affecting the funding landscape. As Stephan et al. argue, social and political goals that emerge organically from local realities are ‘far more likely to be met and sustained than those suggested by external actors’.<sup>304</sup> Degan Ali, in the Peace Direct report on decolonising aid, argues that we need to change the framing from aid to reparation. Then, ‘the funding that is currently withheld from locals as if they are “risky” and lacking capacity, is a RIGHT and not a favour being awarded to local organisations’.<sup>305</sup>

When applied to funding modalities, this can look like **co-creating the model of funding with the communities or civil society groups seeking support and ensuring that ongoing decisions are not just informed by, but made by, civil society and community stakeholders**. It is also about using participatory approaches with not just CSOs but also members of the community to design theories of change and MEL frameworks that are relevant and meaningful to the community themselves, and that allow for ‘change over time as the community learns and evolves’.<sup>306</sup> In a community-led model, accountability is about accountability to the community rather than the donor, and ‘accountability is defined in terms of impact on the community, as judged by the community’.<sup>307</sup> As Stephan et al. argue, ‘Locally supported entities need to demonstrate

<sup>299</sup> Coventry C, Moberly C (2015), ‘Multi-donor funds for civil society: choices and dilemmas’, INTRAC ([www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/](http://www.intrac.org/resources/multi-donor-funds-civil-society-choices-dilemmas/))

<sup>300</sup> Start Network (<https://startnetwork.org/funds/global-start-fund/start-fund-anticipation>)

<sup>301</sup> Humanitarian Leadership Academy (HLA) (2019), ‘Unpacking Localisation’, p 12 ([www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Whitepaper-Localisation-Online.pdf](http://www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Whitepaper-Localisation-Online.pdf))

<sup>302</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), ‘Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset’, US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 10 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))

<sup>303</sup> See: The Feminist Peace Organisation (CFD) (2019), ‘Women, Peace and Security and the Prevention of Violence: Reflections from Civil Society in the Context of the Fourth Swiss National Action Plan 1325’, Policy Brief ([www.swisspeace.ch/assets/publications/downloads/49d4c877e0/Policy\\_Brief\\_WP.pdf](http://www.swisspeace.ch/assets/publications/downloads/49d4c877e0/Policy_Brief_WP.pdf))

<sup>304</sup> Stephan et al. (2015), p 1.

<sup>305</sup> Peace Direct (2020), ‘Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation – Full Report’, p 35 ([www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf](http://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf))

<sup>306</sup> Ibid, p 36.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid, p 36.

effectiveness to foreign funders in the same ways they earn trust and credibility locally – through their work rather than paper trails'.<sup>308</sup>

While avenues for funding in this way are likely to be extremely context specific, one funding modality that comes up a lot in this category is **participatory grant-making**. Participatory grant-making is emerging as an important tool for feminist organisations and other community- and rights-oriented funders around the world. It was pioneered by international organisations such as FRIDA the Young Feminist Fund,<sup>309</sup> Mama Cash,<sup>310</sup> the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) and Canada's Equality Fund,<sup>311</sup> as well as being an increasingly common model for smaller, community-based progressive funders. At its heart, participatory grant-making is about shifting power away from those with historical global privilege and placing funding decisions in the hands of communities as a matter of both principle and efficacy.<sup>312</sup> The grants given can support specific projects and activities, but also are often core funding grants (see Box 8 on Mama Cash). UHAI the East Africa Sexual Health and Rights Initiative (UHAI EASHRI)<sup>313</sup> is a feminist, activist, participatory fund for and by sexual and gender minorities and sex worker communities, where funding decisions and governance are carried out exclusively by the communities intended to benefit. They say that 'by engaging local activists to determine our grant making, our approach to social change ensures that those living the struggles have agency to fund action'.<sup>314</sup>

## 2. Provision of flexible, long-term unrestricted funding

Provision of flexible, long-term unrestricted funding over and above short-term project funding is by far one of the clearest and most commonly asked for changes from civil society groups worldwide.<sup>315</sup> This usually looks like multi-year funding with no re-application process; funding that can be used against priorities identified by the recipient on a timeline set by the recipient, with much more tailored and straightforward reporting requirements; and funding that can be adjusted easily to meet changing needs in highly dynamic environments.

One funding modality that suits this area is the **provision of core funding**. This usually looks like multi-year funds to support the core running costs of an organisation, such as staffing, office rent, materials and equipment. But it can also be used to fund programming areas – including exploratory or innovative programming, and often comes as a package with some learning support or access to a community of practice. The main concept is that the organisation decides how the money is spent. AWID describes core funds as 'by far the most effective way to advance direct funding to movements' and civil society more

<sup>308</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), 'Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset', US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 13 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))

<sup>309</sup> FRIDA (<https://youngfeministfund.org/changing-the-game/>)

<sup>310</sup> Mama Cash ([www.mamacash.org/en/our-grantmaking](http://www.mamacash.org/en/our-grantmaking))

<sup>311</sup> Equality Fund (<https://equalityfund.ca/learn/shifting-power-to-catalyze-movements/>)

<sup>312</sup> See: AWID (2020), 'High hopes and high expectations for resourcing feminist movements: recommendations to the Equality Fund' ([www.awid.org/publications/high-hopes-and-high-expectations-resourcing-feminist-movements-recommendations](http://www.awid.org/publications/high-hopes-and-high-expectations-resourcing-feminist-movements-recommendations))

<sup>313</sup> UHAI EASHRI (<https://uhai-eashri.org/>)

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> See, for example: Garlick NM (2021), 'Impact of Shrinking Space on Women Organising in Jordan', Kvinna till Kvinna (<https://kvinna.tillkvinna.org/publications/impact-of-shrinking-space-on-women-organising-in-jordan/>); WPHF (2022), 'CSO Annual Survey on Women Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action' ([https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022\\_FINAL.pdf](https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022_FINAL.pdf)); Oswald K (2016), 'Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes: Literature Review', Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and SDC Network ([www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev\\_August%202016.pdf](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev_August%202016.pdf)); Kiai M (2017), 'From funding projects to funding struggles Reimagining the role of donors', openDemocracy ([www.opendemocracy.net/en/openglobalrights-openpage/from-funding-projects-to-funding-struggles-reimagining-role-of-donors/](http://www.opendemocracy.net/en/openglobalrights-openpage/from-funding-projects-to-funding-struggles-reimagining-role-of-donors/)); Haynes R, Ireland V, Duke J (2019), 'Funding Civil Society Organisations and Networks: Promising approaches to financing development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', Forus ([www.forus-international.org/en/pdf-detail/75815-funding-civil-society-organisations-networks-promising-approaches-to-financing-development-in-the-21st-century-executive-summary](http://www.forus-international.org/en/pdf-detail/75815-funding-civil-society-organisations-networks-promising-approaches-to-financing-development-in-the-21st-century-executive-summary)); Stephan MJ (2017), 'Responding to the Global Threat of Closing Civic Space: Policy Options Testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission', Congressional Testimony ([www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options](http://www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options))

broadly. Most women's funds, some foundations – such as the Ford Foundation's BUILD programme (see Box 9) and the Joseph Rowntree Trust in the UK – and a very small number of grants from the international development sector take this approach.

### 3. Supporting enabling spaces for diverse civil society groups to connect, learn and design collective action

As much as possible, funding needs to be structured in a way that does not create competitiveness, but rather fosters cooperation and coalition building, and builds momentum for collective action. This can look like supporting enabling spaces for: (1) CSO outreach and communication with their own communities; (2) CSOs to create relationships with one another and across sectors; and (3) CSO engagement with citizens and activists from outside formal NGO spaces and providing funds for initiatives that bring different civil society groups together. Such spaces can support sector-wide collaboration (for example, co-developing tools or doing joint analysis) at the local and national levels, and provide room for finding common values, creating a better understanding of each other's perspectives and developing common strategies. They can also create energy and momentum for change.<sup>316</sup> These spaces need to be safe for and inclusive of a diversity of women's groups and ideally centred around those with intersecting marginalised identities, such as refugee women, disabled women, and LGBT women.<sup>317</sup> Space should also be created to have conversations about power, and to 'unlearn the traditional methods of a pure NGO approach and build new tactics, tools, and resources that are sensible and efficient for the local context'.<sup>318</sup>

These three objectives are in many ways inter-connected and build on each other in catalytic ways. If CSOs are better at outreach and communication with their communities, and are able to build stronger coalitions and partnerships with their peer organisations, they will be better able to provide for the security needs of women and girls. They will also be able to better position themselves as valuable gatekeepers to their communities and constituencies, and through coalitions have a stronger voice, which in turn will make them a more valuable and influential partner to the government. Additionally, this would reorient CSOs towards their constituencies and each other, reduce their dependence on donors or international intermediaries, and empower them to pursue their own strategies. And it would enable them to learn from each other and reorient towards long-term change rather than short-term response.

A funding model that could suit this approach would involve financially supporting on a multi-year basis an umbrella organisation or an elected secretariat function that could act as a convenor for (an existing or new) **coalition**<sup>319</sup> of CSOs to work together on a particular set of self-identified issues. The umbrella organisation or secretariat would host and run collaborative in-person activities, as well as a potentially online space for dialogue and campaigning.<sup>320</sup> The broader coalition or network would be supported to reach out to citizens and activists who are not part of formal, organised civil society, identify shared priorities within the WPS agenda, and identify ways that each can contribute to learning exchanges based on their specific strengths, reach and expertise.<sup>321</sup> In the case of Jordan, there is scope for JNCW to help play

<sup>316</sup> Conciliation Resources (2021), 'Integrating gender in the DNA of peacebuilding: Learning with peers', p 11 ([https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Report\\_Gender\\_Integration\\_in\\_Peacebuilding\\_English%20.pdf](https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Report_Gender_Integration_in_Peacebuilding_English%20.pdf))

<sup>317</sup> Peace Direct (2020), 'Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation – Full Report', p 38 ([www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf](http://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf))

<sup>318</sup> Garlick NM (2021), 'Impact of Shrinking Space on Women Organising in Jordan', Kvinna till Kvinna, p 34 (<https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/publications/impact-of-shrinking-space-on-women-organising-in-jordan/>)

<sup>319</sup> Ideally, this would also include activists and community organisers outside the NGO sphere. However, governmental donors often find it difficult to fund social movements and activist groups directly. In this case, a coalition of local and national NGOs can be funded, particularly those with a social justice, women's empowerment or human rights remit.

<sup>320</sup> Oswald K (2016), 'Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes: Literature Review', Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and SDC Network, p 10 ([www.shareweb.ch/site/DDI.GN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev\\_August%202016.pdf](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDI.GN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev_August%202016.pdf))

<sup>321</sup> One key informant interview suggested that Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision (jordanvision.jo) may provide a good model for building a consortium or synergies that can be applied to WPS (FGD 26 January 2023).

this networking and linking role if given the capacity to do so – and if JNCW is able to act as a stronger voice representing women organisations to the government. However, JNCW’s role as a semi-public body raises potential conflict-sensitivity issues, given the government’s mistrust of civil society organisations and the various legislative restrictions it has in place for them.

#### 4. ‘Fund courageously and trust generously’

Finally, one of the main overarching aspects that unites feminist, decolonising and localising approaches is the request that funders ‘fund courageously and trust generously’.<sup>322</sup> This involves rethinking attitudes towards risk and failure, and relinquishing a degree of control over the form of the work supported. As Catherine Martha Agwang explains in the Peace Direct report on decolonising aid:

*When funders accept the possibility of programme failure, it opens the door to innovative and flexible funding approaches, such as funders taking on the brunt of the bureaucratic work or adopting context-specific measures of success.<sup>323</sup>*

Trust is also about willingness to not only see local partners and funding recipients as valuable, but as equal partners who are best placed to make decisions because of their knowledge, expertise and experience. However, care still needs to be taken over risks to people (rather than deliverables), making sure the burden of managing risks around safeguarding, staff security, and prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, is not passed on in full to small local organisations. The Humanitarian Leadership Academy, in its paper on ‘Unpacking Localisation’, says that while:

*direct funding to local and national NGOs remains an attractive proposition, there appears to continue to be a role for intermediary organisations that can provide risk-management services to donors, with their ability to absorb this risk as a specific value-added.<sup>324</sup>*

## FUNDING MODELS FOR A SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE

There’s also a large amount of recent literature that explores the role of donor funding in supporting civil society in an environment where civic space is closing, which applies in the context of Jordan. Many of the recommendations in this body of literature echo those of feminist, decolonising and localising approaches to funding. Here there is a particular emphasis on the need for fast and flexible funds to both organisations and individuals, the need to trust organisations to work out their own strategies, and the need for longer-term investments in security, digital security and legal protections for CSOs.<sup>325</sup>

In the Women, Peace and Security space, this also means a particular emphasis on protecting and strengthening the long-term security and resilience of women human rights defenders and women’s organisations,<sup>326</sup> as well as thinking through ways of providing ongoing and culturally appropriate forms of psychosocial and well-being support as an integral part of a support package. A number of international funds exist that speak to this, including the Lifeline Embattled Civil Society Organisations Assistance Fund<sup>327</sup> (see Box 11), which provides emergency financial assistance to civil society organisations (CSOs) under

<sup>322</sup> Peace Direct (2020), ‘Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation – Full Report’, p 38 ([www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf](http://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Report.pdf))

<sup>323</sup> Ibid, p 38.

<sup>324</sup> Humanitarian Leadership Academy (HLA) (2019), ‘Unpacking Localisation’, p 6 ([www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Whitepaper-Localisation-Online.pdf](http://www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Whitepaper-Localisation-Online.pdf))

<sup>325</sup> Stephan MJ (2017), ‘Responding to the Global Threat of Closing Civic Space: Policy Options Testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission’, Congressional Testimony ([www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options](http://www.usip.org/publications/2017/03/responding-global-threat-closing-civic-space-policy-options))

<sup>326</sup> WPHF (2022), ‘CSO Annual Survey on Women Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action’, p 1 ([https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022\\_FINAL.pdf](https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WPHF-CSO-Survey-on-WPSHA-Aug2022_FINAL.pdf))

<sup>327</sup> Lifeline ([www.csolifeline.org/](http://www.csolifeline.org/))

threat or attack and rapid response advocacy and resiliency grants to support CSOs in responding to broader threats against civic space. There is also the Urgent Action Fund, a global fund that provides rapid response grants to women's rights organisations and activists in order to support their work in times of crisis. However, it is likely that despite all the indications that civic space is shrinking in Jordan, particularly for women's organisations, Jordanian civil society and activists may not be high on the radar for this kind of support. Other countries, such as Romania (see Box 10), have initiated specific national civil society strengthening programmes in response to a closing of civic space (for Romania, this was about a context where funding for civil space was reducing rapidly and there was poor public support for NGOs). This may provide an example for Jordan if international funds become harder to access.

These 'alternative' ways of thinking about funding modalities are anything but new, and actually have been pushed by civil society organisations for decades. In its annual shadow report on the UK NAP, GAPS has consistently made succinct and powerful recommendations to the UK Government along these lines. For example, in the 2019 shadow report, it says the UK Government should 'provide dedicated, long-term, core, flexible funding for local women's rights organisations for their self-defined priorities' and take 'tangible action that actively shares power with women's rights organisations and WHRDs [women human rights defenders] as well as funding for individual projects'.<sup>328</sup>

## Value for money and catalytic impact

There is growing evidence to suggest that many of these alternative models for funding present a strong value-for-money argument in the long term. A funding model that can provide flexible, longer-term resources is considered hugely beneficial to the long-term sustainability of civil society and women's organisations. This is because such a model allows organisations to: follow their own priorities and be more responsive both to communities and changing needs on the ground (and is therefore strongly connected to the community-led principle above); plan more strategically for longer-term projects and activities and design work that seeks address underlying drivers of WPS issues; expand their outreach and prioritise relationship building that takes place over time; and recruit staff on a longer-term basis. As Haynes as Duke argue, 'There is evidence that long-term, flexible, and less restricted funding modalities are crucial to support advocacy, capacity building and a thriving civil society.'<sup>329</sup>

There is also evidence from Jordan about the catalytic impact of shifting to longer timeframes. ARDD's (2020) research on localisation in Jordan found several benefits to multi-year funding, including reduced administrative burdens through less time spent on fundraising, contract negotiations, and gaining approval from the government. It also found a positive effect on staff retention, investments in organisational systems, and stronger impacts due to longer inception periods and adaptive programming. Additionally, the paper notes that multi-year funding would allow for better measurement of long-term changes that are more difficult to capture in quarterly or yearly monitoring and reporting mechanisms.<sup>330</sup>

Much of the literature argues that funding with greater flexibility also increases the diversity of the kinds of civil society organisations that will gain access to funds.<sup>331</sup> In addition, some of the literature argues that

<sup>328</sup> GAPS (2020), 'Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2019', p 8 (<https://gaps-uk.org/assessing-uk-government-action-on-women-peace-and-security-in-2020/>)

<sup>329</sup> Haynes R, Ireland V, Duke J (2019), 'Funding Civil Society Organisations and Networks: Promising approaches to financing development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', Forus, p 5 ([www.forus-international.org/en/pdf-detail/75815-funding-civil-society-organisations-networks-promising-approaches-to-financing-development-in-the-21st-century-executive-summary](http://www.forus-international.org/en/pdf-detail/75815-funding-civil-society-organisations-networks-promising-approaches-to-financing-development-in-the-21st-century-executive-summary))

<sup>330</sup> Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) (2020), 'Strengthening Localisation in Jordan'.

<sup>331</sup> Humanitarian Leadership Academy (HLA) (2019), 'Unpacking Localisation', p 12 ([www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Whitepaper-Localisation-Online.pdf](http://www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Whitepaper-Localisation-Online.pdf))

**smaller levels of funds over a longer period of time is more beneficial for smaller organisations**, particularly if the reporting requirements are minimised (and dropped entirely when funding is below a certain level).<sup>332</sup>

Global evidence also exists that building long-term coalitions is one of the best guarantees to avoid and reverse the shrinking of civic space.<sup>333</sup> In terms of addressing underlying gender norms and transforming gender equality, Nevens et al.<sup>334</sup> also argue that the movement-building and feminist funding organisations have the clearest and strongest articulations of theories of change. As FRIDA the Young Feminist Fund told Nevens et al.:<sup>335</sup>

*When young feminist organisers are provided with the resources, leadership opportunities and capacities they need, radical shifts to movements' landscapes and social change trajectories occur.*

### **Box 8: Mama Cash: feminist funding through participatory grant-making<sup>336</sup>**

Mama Cash provides funding and accompaniment support to feminist activists and groups worldwide. It provides grants to groups and movements through a participatory model, with the aim to put resources in the hands of activists who are advancing their own rights and building their own movements for social change.

It prioritises groups led by people working together to address issues they experience directly, like domestic workers who are collectively organising for decent work or trans people who are building a movement to secure bodily autonomy.

*Mama Cash is committed to providing better funding. That means flexible, core and longer-term funding that enables groups to plan ahead, and respond to new challenges and opportunities. We believe in the wisdom of the groups we support. We respect their knowledge, understanding and assessment of their own situation. We give them the space to use their money as they see fit. We seek to accompany them as they evolve and learn.*

Mama Cash has five participatory grant-making funds:

1. The Resilience Fund, which provides core, flexible grants to self-led groups, collectives and organisations of women, girls, trans people and intersex people. Grants are made with the intention of renewing for multiple years, whenever possible. Additionally, accompaniment grants provide grantee partners with opportunities to strengthen their skills, knowledge and networks. The Community Committee (COM COM), Mama Cash's participatory grant-making decision-making body, is run for and by activists with experience in feminist movements. It makes the decisions about who receives funding from the Resilience Fund.
2. The Revolution Fund is a new fund that supports timely, one-off initiatives that respond to or create an opportunity for change, enable a reaction to an urgent need, or seed a new project or idea.

<sup>332</sup> Stephan MJ, Lakhani S, Naviwala N (2015), 'Aid to Civil Society A Movement Mindset', US Institute for Peace (USIP), p 9 ([www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/02/aid-civil-society-movement-mindset))

<sup>333</sup> Keutgen J, Dodsworth S (2020), 'Addressing the global emergency of shrinking civic space and how to reclaim it: a programming guide', Westminster Foundation for Democracy, p 34 ([www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Civic-space-v1-1%281%29.pdf](http://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Civic-space-v1-1%281%29.pdf))

<sup>334</sup> Nevens K, Yaqoob T, Hutchinson E (2021), "'We need this to do things differently": A framework for a new, inclusive and intersectional organisation to transform attitudes towards women and girls and promote gender equality in Scotland', Zero Tolerance and The Collective, p 72 ([www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/ZT-What-Works-2021-Report.pdf](http://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/ZT-What-Works-2021-Report.pdf))

<sup>335</sup> Ibid, p 65.

<sup>336</sup> Mama Cash ([www.mamacash.org/en/our-grantmaking](http://www.mamacash.org/en/our-grantmaking))

3. The Radical Love Fund is a new fund that will support individual feminist activists with grants for up to two years to carry out feminist activism by coordinating or catalysing projects.
4. The Solidarity Fund was built with, for and by peer women's funds to strengthen and support the feminist funding ecosystem. It does this by providing flexible funding to the global community of women's funds to build their institutional knowledge, skills and resources.
5. The Spark Fund provides grants to strengthen the bold work of communities of women, girls, and trans and intersex people working on contested issues in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean territories.
6. Mama Cash also seeks to support sister women's funds worldwide, as a peer partner and donor. This is an article about why the group believes women's funds are crucial to the fight for gender justice worldwide: [https://www.mamacash.org/media/publications/mama\\_cash-why\\_womens\\_funds\\_feb\\_2015\\_final.pdf](https://www.mamacash.org/media/publications/mama_cash-why_womens_funds_feb_2015_final.pdf)

Finally, in addition to grant-making Mama Cash also provides accompaniment. This work supports grantee-partners to obtain, improve and retain the skills, knowledge, tools, equipment and other resources needed to fulfil their missions. Accompaniment includes providing information about funding opportunities and introductions to donors and supporting activists in donor spaces; facilitating convening among grantee-partners to network and strategise; and coordinating issue-specific projects with cohorts of self-selected partners.

### **Box 9: 'BUILD' programme: building strong institutions for long-term change<sup>337</sup>**

The Ford Foundation's 'BUILD' programme, launched in 2016, is a global example of an innovative new way to support capacity strengthening for civil society organisations in a sustainable and empowering way. The \$1 billion global fund provides grantees with five years of support along five main lines:

1. Flexible funding: five years of substantial, flexible operating support, which allows organisations to plan long term.
2. Assessment tools: various tools for organisations to understand and prioritise their needs in key areas such as strategy, leadership, finances and systems.
3. Focused strengthening: each organisation receives additional targeted funding to help them develop and implement an institutional strengthening plan.
4. Peer learning: connecting organisations working on related issues around the world, providing opportunities to meet, learn and collaborate.
5. Rigorous evaluation: maximising learning through focused, time-bound initiatives to identify and track learning questions and evaluate 'on the go'.

The main innovation in the BUILD programme is around the provision of long-term, flexible funding or reserves, which allow organisations to innovate, learn and make their own decisions about their organisational strategy, vision and management systems. BUILD's commitment is to putting the 'grantee in

<sup>337</sup> Ford Foundation, 'Building Institutions and Networks' ([www.fordfoundation.org/work/our-grants/building-institutions-and-networks/](http://www.fordfoundation.org/work/our-grants/building-institutions-and-networks/))



the driver's seat', asserting that grantees, rather than funders, should determine how funds are utilised. This method is also a more collaborative and flexible approach to grant-making, which supports organisations and puts them in charge of how they spend funding.

An evaluation of the BUILD programme found that this approach produced stronger institutions and networks, which led to improved programming and impact. According to the evaluation, a key finding was that:

*institutional strengthening, organisational resilience and mission impact are highly interrelated and mutually reinforcing: when grantees are more resilient and impactful, they invest further in strengthening their organisations so they can seize opportunities and take on further challenges.*<sup>338</sup>

### **Box 10: The Romania Civil Society Strengthening programme: assistance during a time of reduced funding**

The Romania Civil Society Strengthening (RCSS) programme was implemented in Romania between September 2005 and December 2007 by World Learning for International Development (WLID), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Initially, USAID allocated \$6.3 million to be matched by a cost share of \$1.6 million from WLID to fund activities over a three-year period, though this ended up being cut short due to Romania's accession to the EU.

The programme aimed to strengthen civil society in a transition context, where funding was reducing rapidly.<sup>339</sup> An evaluation of the programme in 2008<sup>340</sup> says that at the time, the Romanian NGO community was challenged by an imperfect regulatory environment, inability to secure stable financial support, inadequate constituency building skills, lack of good organisational governance, and difficulty in forming mutually supportive, durable citizen advocacy and policy reform networks. The international donor landscape was also changing rapidly, with new donor preferences, philosophies and agendas, and with a notable lack of support for watchdog and public policy initiatives.

In response, this fund was set up to help strengthen internal governance and external outreach of the NGO sector, through grants, technical assistance and training.

Twelve (12) organisations, considered to be 'sector leaders' who already had 'clear and pronounced' public policy, advocacy and monitoring functions received grants from a funding pot of \$1.1 million. The organisations used the grants to help them develop professional boards, strategic and business plans, and local funding bases.

A further 10 to 15 organisations and networks were supported through small advocacy grants and technical assistance and training in advocacy and MEL. These included organisations outside of the capital city, and organisations focusing specifically on disability.

The RCSS also helped the NGOs to establish advocacy coalitions with experienced Bucharest NGOs and local advocacy organisations, and partnerships with the business sector, academia, the public sector and

<sup>338</sup> Ford Foundation (2022), 'Final Report: BUILD Developmental Evaluation' ([www.fordfoundation.org/media/7095/build-evaluation-final-report.pdf](http://www.fordfoundation.org/media/7095/build-evaluation-final-report.pdf))

<sup>339</sup> Oswald K (2016), 'Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to enhance democratisation, decentralisation and local governance processes: Literature Review', Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and SDC Network, p 9 ([www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev\\_August%202016.pdf](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/CSO%20CapacityLitRev_August%202016.pdf))

<sup>340</sup> Shroff-Mehta P (2008), 'Romania Civil Society Strengthening Program', USAID and World Learning ([https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pdac190.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdac190.pdf))

international organisations. Joint projects arising from these coalitions and partnership were then funded through the programme.

#### **Box 11: The Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund: providing support to civil society organisations under threat<sup>341</sup>**

The Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund provides emergency financial assistance to civil society organisations (CSOs) under threat or attack and rapid response advocacy and resiliency grants to support CSOs in responding to broader threats against civic space.

The resilience grants are highly flexible and support a range of activities, including:

- countering legal harassment through training on compliance with onerous legislation (such as associations laws, tax laws or audit requirements)
- navigating threats by providing protection training on digital and physical security, in addition to psychosocial support
- building peer-to-peer protection networks among CSOs, local leaders, the business community or legal professionals
- rehabilitating the reputation of civil society through creative communications
- establishing an offshore presence to get around restrictions by creating a shared workspace for CSOs in exile or registering in a new country to sustain operations
- sharing coping strategies across at-risk communities
- establishing mechanisms to transfer and receive funding in closed spaces

Examples of some specific work CSOs have used the grants for include the following:

- A CSO in Syria built a joint protection mechanism between local council members and CSOs in four localities in northwest Syria. Given constant displacement, human rights CSOs and local government councils have been pushed from their communities, creating a substantial lack of trust among groups at the exact moment they need mutual support in the face of threats from armed groups. The four cohorts built relationships and protection plans through a programme of digital and physical security training and networking.
- In Uganda, a CSO assisted peer organisations in developing legal literacy to comply with onerous NGO legislation that threatened the ability for CSOs to keep operating. Based on a needs assessment that evaluated knowledge and skills gaps, the CSO convened a capacity-building workshop to develop legal literacy skills to ensure effective compliance with this law, so enabling civil society to better withstand attacks from the government. The partner also created a coordination and rapid response legal aid mechanism to help CSOs facing government intimidation or harassment.

<sup>341</sup> Lifeline ([www.csolifeline.org/](http://www.csolifeline.org/))

The Lifeline Consortium's application guidelines for the resilience grants<sup>342</sup> suggest that applicants go through a two- or three-stage process. First, they submit a one-page concept note with budget. If approved at this stage, the applicant will then complete a full application and be expected to respond to comments and questions to help strengthen the proposal. This will then be put forward to the Lifeline Consortium for approval. Applications are considered on a rolling basis.

The Lifeline supports a variety of CSOs, many of whom conduct advocacy, promote and protect human rights, and/or act in a watchdog capacity. They define civil society organisation (CSO) as a group of two or more activists. While an applicant does not need to be officially registered, it does need to be able to document its history of activism, while for some grants they need to be able to demonstrate a commitment to promoting the right to associate.

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<sup>342</sup> Lifeline, 'Resiliency Grants for Embattled Civil Society Organizations' (<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54dbcb77e4b011d9d8fd69f1/t/5b476b7603ce644f5f35aefe/1531407222785/Lifeline+Resiliency+Grant+-+Guidelines.pdf>)

# Key Recommendations

## Enhancing JONAP II delivery

### Push for the pool funds to be made more accessible and flexible

There are a number of small ways for JONAP donors to enhance accessibility and flexibility. For example, one way to do this is for donors to encourage UN Women to provide feedback on unsuccessful proposals. While time-consuming, this small act goes some way to providing a feedback loop for CSOs to learn from unsuccessful applications. It can also save time and money in the long-run if it contributes to a reduced need for grant-writing workshops. Another is to publicise grant opportunities, and accept proposals, in Arabic. Beyond the improved accessibility that the Arabic language would provide, which will allow more smaller organisations to access funding, allowing CSOs to communicate their programmes and goals in their own language is an important step in localising programming and making it community focused, rather than donor focused. Linked to this, rather than invite CSOs to embassies – which can be intimidating and alienating for smaller CSOs – donors should travel to the governorates to meet these organisations in their own environment. To improve flexibility and CSO-oriented capacity building, encourage the diversion of a small pot under the pooled funds to provide multi-year funding with greater in-built flexibility, and prioritise funding for women-led organisations. It is important that such funding is flexible, to adjust to meet changing needs and to give CSOs time and space to try new things, and to learn and adapt.

### Support opportunities for participatory problem analysis early in JONAP II

Encourage UN Women and partners to work with their staff and constituents in conducting participatory problem analyses, clarify their theory of change and, from this, tailor and adapt their programming. Encourage the creation of spaces where this can also be done collaboratively between partner organisations, and between partner organisations and the communities they support. Supporting the strengthening of context analysis/power analysis is closely linked to peer/mutual learning as examples of good practice in this area. It brings civil society organisations and individuals together to collaboratively undertake analysis and mapping, and build on each other's knowledge of the local community and, in the case of WPS focused groups, local gender and conflict dynamics. Utilising workshop formats developed by organisations such as Saferworld and Conciliation Resources, such as its 'Gender-sensitive conflict analysis' three-day workshop approach,<sup>343</sup> or Oxfam's advocacy-focused feminist influencing workshop,<sup>344</sup> are useful starting points.

### Strengthen JONAP-partner capacity in dynamic M&E reporting

Conduct training for all partners – including UN Women and JNCW – on monitoring, recording and analysing more complex changes beyond implemented activities. Moving from measuring short-term humanitarian impact to more complex long-term change (that JONAP activities are already having on the communities) requires a new way of thinking about the intended and unintended impacts of programmes. This can include training in monitoring changes and behaviours and how to report changes against an evidence-based theory of change and log frame. Further, an elaborated theory of change, driven by a participatory problem analysis as outlined above, could help answer the 'so

<sup>343</sup> Conciliation Resources and Saferworld (2020), 'Gender-sensitive conflict-analysis: A facilitation guide', Training Materials/ Toolkits ([www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1284-gender-sensitive-conflict-analysis-a-facilitation-guide](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1284-gender-sensitive-conflict-analysis-a-facilitation-guide))

<sup>344</sup> Safier C, Wakefield S, Harvey R, Rewald R (2019), 'Oxfam's guide to feminist influencing', Oxfam International ([www.oxfam.org/en/research/oxfams-guide-feminist-influencing](http://www.oxfam.org/en/research/oxfams-guide-feminist-influencing))

what?’ question, and also improve indicators to measure more qualitative changes and impacts that are currently being overlooked by current reporting formats. The involvement of local partners – and even local communities – in this analysis will help embed knowledge at the community level.

### Develop a shadow reporting group composed of representatives from JONAP civil society partners and other women’s rights and feminist groups, and potentially even youth groups and activists

Support the establishment of a shadow reporting group that encompasses civil society members of JONAP, along with independent civil society actors, who meet regularly to have more strategic discussions about JONAP results. This would help build linkages between the different strategic outcomes under JONAP, strengthen relationships between actors who would otherwise not cross paths, and would form an important accountability and reporting function. Members of this group could meet quarterly or biannually, to examine some of the more qualitative outcomes recorded under JONAP that are harder to analyse in the current M&E system, and analyse inter-linkages and meaningful changes resulting from outcomes recorded. This would also provide the space to examine and reflect on JONAP progress and impact as a whole, offering an integrated view of impact rather than keeping them siloed as project-level results. This could be supported by an international organisation such as WILPF.

### Fund ongoing support around safeguarding, risk management and data security

Safeguarding and data security (including IT systems) are major priorities to ensure the safety and security of organisational staff and their local communities. The Jordan Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (RSH) for capacity building could be utilised on safeguarding for CBOs, with them included in future support.

## Strengthening relationships and coordination

### Build the capacity of the JNCW in fulfilling a ‘secretariat’ function to support coalition building around Women, Peace and Security

As identified in the Strategic Review of JONAP I, JNCW is a key institution with a vital role to play in national ownership over future NAPs. However, there is a need to strengthen JNCW capacity to do this. One option would be to support its ability in coalition building among various organisations and movements working towards women, peace and security in the country. This could start with convening more meetings between different women organisations and activists (including those working outside the traditional NGO sphere), alongside research centres working on WPS issues, such as the WANA Institute. Providing a small pot to fund joint initiatives could also spur greater cooperation. Over time, this could also work to bring in partners not directly tied to the WPS agenda, such as youth groups, trade unions and associations, and private businesses.

### Support CSOs working on women, peace and security issues with community outreach and engagement

WROs and CSOs operating on issues of women, peace and security face many community hurdles, including mistrust, harassment, and accusations of bringing in foreign ideas. However, it is imperative that these CSOs build broad issue-based constituencies and integrate themselves into their communities, including becoming more effective communicators with authorities. An important question when designing civil society activities or programming, or when monitoring their impact, should be: in what ways will this build relationships with the wider community, beyond the organisation’s usual allies? Partners should be encouraged to ask this question of themselves and their programmes.

## Encourage cooperation between CSOs working on women, peace and security and actors working in other sectors

CSOs working on women, peace and security have expressed an interest and a need to engage with stakeholders/sectors beyond their field, including with youth, men and boys, the economy and private sector, and in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. However, oftentimes WROs work on a limited range of activities. Efforts should be made to encourage programming that leads to coalition building and partnerships with other CSOs and community members who may not have much engagement on gender issues. This will have a mutual benefit, promoting mainstreaming of women's issues into other areas, and increasing the knowledge and expertise of women's organisations. This will also have a catalytic value for British Embassy Amman programming, as there is an opportunity for it to build programmatic linkages between the Embassy's WPS programming and other areas. These include community policing, the environment, youth, peace and security, governance, and economy and private sector programmes.

## Build relations between CSOs and government, including building the capacity and confidence of CSOs to engage in policy and advocacy on the women, peace and security agenda

There is a need to provide an enabling environment for CSOs to build their capacities in policy and advocacy, in conjunction with lobbying to pressure governments to allow space for such advocacy. Currently, both CSOs and governments are mistrustful of each other, and CSOs rarely engage in legislative advocacy or public policy. Building their capacity – through accompaniment, guidance and training from larger NGOs, and Amman-based think tanks – is one step towards such engagement. Another is to provide more opportunities – through JONAP programming and elsewhere – to involve CSOs in parliamentary committees to discuss draft laws or carry out field research to inform proposed legislations. Greater participation of CSOs – with prior guidance and training – in roundtable discussions with policymakers and government officials, as well as encouraging governmental official visits to field site locations outside Amman, are other useful ways to strengthen and build relationships between policymakers and CSOs.

## Coordinate with existing donors operating in the capacity strengthening space in Jordan

Many donors are involved in the capacity strengthening sphere in Jordan. Therefore, it is best to liaise and coordinate – and pool efforts, if possible – to avoid duplication and learn lessons. There is also an opportunity to work with other donors already involved in the capacity-strengthening space, including USAID, the EU and Dutch government, to develop a pooled fund that would coordinate and centralise efforts into a civil society-support facility.

# Protecting civil society space

## Acknowledge the closing of civil society space, particularly for women's organisations, monitor trends associated with this, and provide resources and support for civil society to continue working safely

There is a need to acknowledge the closing civil society space in Jordan and to make efforts to reverse it. Concurrently, it is important to provide support and resources to civil society groups operating in this space, particularly in more sensitive fields such as gender. One such option is a programme provided by the Solidarity Center, implemented in Tunisia and Egypt, where CSOs benefited from collective bargaining skills provided by the Solidarity Center as a way to help them during government repression. Similar support could be provided to empower Jordanian CSOs in this difficult environment.

## Advocate with relevant ministries to protect and expand civil society space

As a major donor to the Government of Jordan, the UK Government is well placed – and has a responsibility – to reverse the closing of civil society space. This includes lobbying and supporting NGO coalitions (such as JIF, HIMAM and JONAF) currently advocating for a more enabling legislative and regulatory environment and reducing the barriers and timeframe for approval and registration. Of particular concern is the need to revise or repeal the Law on Societies, which is one of the biggest obstacles to civil society organisations.

## Work to change government perceptions of civil society through awareness raising and evidence-based research

There is a lot of suspicion and mistrust of CSOs within the government – particularly among second and third tier government officials – and efforts should be made to change these perceptions. One way to change this – beyond awareness campaigns and civic education programming – is by developing a strong evidence base of the value of a strong civil society. This value is not just in terms of stability and security, which are of major concern to the government, but for civil society’s democratic values and principles. By demonstrating – with strong evidence – that civil society can be an important partner to the government, this may help change perceptions among those who hold such views in the government. Additionally, focusing on supporting civil society organisations that deliver basic services, rather than CSOs that work on human rights, can be extremely useful in a context of shrinking civic space. However, it is also important to avoid ‘depoliticising’ civil society, as this might inadvertently reinforce government narratives that civil society should focus on service delivery and ‘stay out of politics’.<sup>345</sup> Programming that seeks to depoliticise gender obfuscates the ways that gender and other identities contribute to power imbalances in a society.<sup>346</sup>

# Funding and capacity strengthening models

## Option 1: A model for providing core funds

Create a fund that provides flexible, multi-year **unrestricted** funding that can be used by women’s organisations against core business areas (staffing, office space, administrative costs), as well to support innovative women’s programming areas that are hard to fund. Reporting requirements would be minimised, and organisations would report against their own organisational priorities and theory of change model. Such funding provides an opportunity for CSOs to offer long-term job stability to staff to improve retention, and strengthen their organisational systems, vision and long-term strategic goals. It would also reduce the administrative and bureaucratic costs associated with reapplying for grants and government approval. The Ford Foundation’s BUILD programme (see Box 9) is an interesting model to examine in this regard. We would recommend involving some of the larger national NGOs in the design of the fund and in the development of such a grant-making model, bringing their expertise and understanding of what is needed to be a long-standing and larger organisation. We also recommend consulting with smaller CSOs on the best ways grants can be administered.

<sup>345</sup> Keutgen J, Dodsworth S (2020), ‘Addressing the global emergency of shrinking civic space and how to reclaim it: a programming guide’, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, p 27 ([www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Civic-space-v1-1%281%29.pdf](http://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Civic-space-v1-1%281%29.pdf))

<sup>346</sup> Conciliation Resources (2021), ‘Integrating gender in the DNA of peacebuilding: Learning with peers’, p 11 ([https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Report\\_Gender\\_Integration\\_in\\_Peacebuilding\\_English%20.pdf](https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Report_Gender_Integration_in_Peacebuilding_English%20.pdf))

### Option 2: Participatory grant-making fund

Working with Jordanian women-led and women's rights organisations, existing JONAP partners, and an international feminist funder (such as FRIDA), co-design and fund a participatory grant-making model. Collaboratively consider having different forms of grants available on a rolling basis, including project funds, core funds, emergency funds and innovation funds, and creating spaces where grantees and wider civil society groups can engage in joint work. This consortium would come together to discuss the best ways to allocate the funds to organisations and projects, where funding decisions and governance is carried out by a board composed of coalition partners and potentially existing grantees. One of the unintended consequences of the current funding model is that it discourages cooperation and creates unhealthy competition between CSOs; participatory grant-making with rolling opportunities provides one potential model of at least partially avoiding this. It also places women's organisations at the heart of the decision-making process.

### Option 3: Support the establishment of a civil society support facility with a focus on peer-to-peer learning

Working with a small group of women-led and women's rights organisations, co-design a long-term civil society support facility that has a thematic focus on women, peace and security. This should be done in coordination with JNCW, but also including a coalition of larger women's CSOs. Consider embedding peer-to-peer approaches that acknowledge, value and prioritise the knowledge and experience of local organisations and communities, rather than models that bring in 'expertise' from outside. While not suited to all forms of capacity strengthening, peer-to-peer learning models are useful not just in breaking the top-down approaches of traditional 'capacity building' models, but also in promoting innovation, context-specific learning, and cooperation and coalition building. USAID, among others involved in the capacity strengthening sphere in Jordan, has considered the option of a resource hub for capacity strengthening. Building this along the lines of a peer-to-peer learning model could have an added value. Such a facility could offer accompaniment and guidance in several areas including M&E, participatory research, policy and advocacy, governance and systems development, organisational development and strategy, and community engagement, alongside key thematic areas around WPS.



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