



# HOW TO REMAIN INFLUENTIAL?

ACTIONABLE TACTICS IN A CONTEXT OF  
CONFLICT AND SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE

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**OXFAM**

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## Executive summary

This report describes concrete and actionable tactics to remain influential in a context of conflict and shrinking civic space. These tactics were accumulated and documented by civil society organizations from 1 country in the horn of Africa<sup>1</sup> (country X) in an in-depth way with additions from Burundi, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Niger, Somalia/Somaliland and South Africa gathered through a 2 day workshop in February 2020<sup>2</sup> and documented more thoroughly in the paper “*Advocating for Inclusive Security in Restricted Civic Spaces in Africa*”<sup>3</sup>. The learning lab in country X took a deeper dive into some of the findings of that initial report. Taking a participatory action research approach we balanced experiential knowledge of civil society organisations with theoretical understanding on civic space to develop new knowledge. This resulted in actionable tactics that are relevant for civil society organisations (CSOs) aiming for durable peace and change in contexts of conflict and shrinking civic space. These tactics should support CSOs and activists to respond consciously to the challenges shrinking civic space poses.

The participants of the learning lab in Country X elicited four main interdependent groups of strategies that have proved helpful to remain influential: (1) use allies cleverly; (2) take resilience, mitigating risks, security and (digital) protection serious; (3) Leverage participation in the peace process and implementation; (4) regain legal ground.

Below these tactics are listed – the full report gives concrete examples of how these work in practice.

### **Use allies cleverly**

- *Diverse civil society coalitions and partnerships matter for meaningful engagement with governments and building trust in society.*
- *Leverage the influence of individuals in crucial positions and make use of the diversity of governmental institutions to help CSOs get their foot in the door and influence governments.*
- *Continue to engage and dialogue with authorities, including security agencies, to stay visibly engaged with authorities to clarify, influence and present citizens’ concerns and recommendations.*
- *Gain public support through alliances with media.*
- *Collaborate with academia for evidence-based arguments.*
- *Coordinate with faith based institutions to spread messages more widely through highly trusted channels.*
- *Partnerships with regional and international platforms, and INGO’s are key for amplifying and sustaining CSO’s influence.*
- *Engage with Diplomatic bodies including the UN to have CSO’s voices heard and acknowledged, and ensure meaningful participation in peace and security processes and decision-making spaces.*

### **Take resilience, mitigating risks, security and (digital) protection serious**

- *Invest in strengthening institutional systems, policies and procedures to mitigate risks.*
- *Develop shared positions within CSO coalitions to reduce individual risks.*
- *Limit donor visibility/go unbranded/home grown solutions help to avoid being branded as “foreign agents.”*
- *Share human and financial resources across organizations & apply for consortium funding to sustain engagements in long term peace processes over time.*
- *Convene meetings in safe and secured (digital or physical) spaces.*

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<sup>1</sup> Because of safety reasons we cannot reveal the name of the country. We will refer throughout this document to this country as country X. This report was made possible thanks to the contribution of civil society in this country.

<sup>2</sup>This was possible thanks to support from the Dutch Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law (Knowledge Management Fund).

<sup>3</sup> <https://views-voices.oxfam.org.uk/2020/07/security-is-everyones-business-learning-from-our-security-sector-reform-workshop/>

**Leverage participation in the peace process and implementation**

- *The technical expertise of CSOs matter in engaging in peace processes*
- *Be part of the process through engagement, mediation, and support in implementing peace mechanisms.*
- *Highlight the added value of civil society in peace processes, such as strong connections with communities, to support the flow of information between national, sub-national and community levels.*

**Regain legal ground**

- *Challenge current and new restrictive laws and regulations by analysing how they may affect the work of CSOs.*

## 1. Introduction

This report describes concrete and actionable tactics on remaining influential in context of conflict and shrinking civic space. These tactics were accumulated and documented by CSOs from Country X with additions from Burundi, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Niger, Somalia/Somaliland and South Africa and includes more than a decade of work experience.<sup>4</sup> This document aims to be a tool for CSOs around the globe that struggle to remain influential in a context of continued shrinking of civic space exacerbated by conflict.

Civil society organizations have an important role in responding to humanitarian crises and providing sustainable support to communities affected by conflict and fragility. When increasing violence and instability forces the international community to leave conflict regions, CSOs, activists and human right defenders are often the most important and reliable sources to monitor human rights abuses, injustices and malpractices by governments or other (informal) groups using violence. Also in later stages, when instabilities and localized violence persist (in post-conflict settings) and when countries are faced with the challenge of uniting a country disrupted by civil war and hostilities, civil society is often very engaged in promoting peace-building processes at a community level and encouraging governments in their efforts to rebuild the country in an inclusive and sustainable way. Yet, we recognize the need to strengthen alliances between local and national governance. We have seen that local efforts of CSOs in inclusive peacebuilding remain undervalued and unseen by peacebuilding processes led by governments and political factions on a national level.

As conflict escalates and endures, it also rapidly closes in on the space for civil society actors to act. Civil society actors (Human Right Defenders, activists or CSOs) become targets of intimidation, violent attacks and administrative obstructions in their work. Weakened or corrupt government structures inhibit civil society to participate in governance processes and dialogue. Even in post-conflict settings, NGOs and CSOs are often restricted and suspended to do their work because of associations with extremism, terrorism or pro-opposition factions by the government. Likewise, at times, the international community fails to recognize the importance of local civil society organizations and disregards local capacities in addressing issues of conflict, peace and conflict resolution. Oxfam has developed an overarching civic space monitoring tool pointing out nine dimensions of civic space that may hamper the work of CSOs<sup>5</sup> To understand the complexity of shrinking civic space in different thematic areas, systematic documentation of knowledge is crucial. Therefore, Oxfam and partner CSOs convened in a learning lab with (online) meetings and longer workshops on civic space in conflict and post-conflict settings in 2020 to discuss and exchange their decades of experience.

This learning lab in particular focused on learning from local partners that have built the sensitivity to respond, navigate and adapt to conflict affected settings, and learn from their approaches that have worked to open civic space. After this phase of learning by documenting, we will look for opportunities to further test and experiment with these strategies in the years to come.

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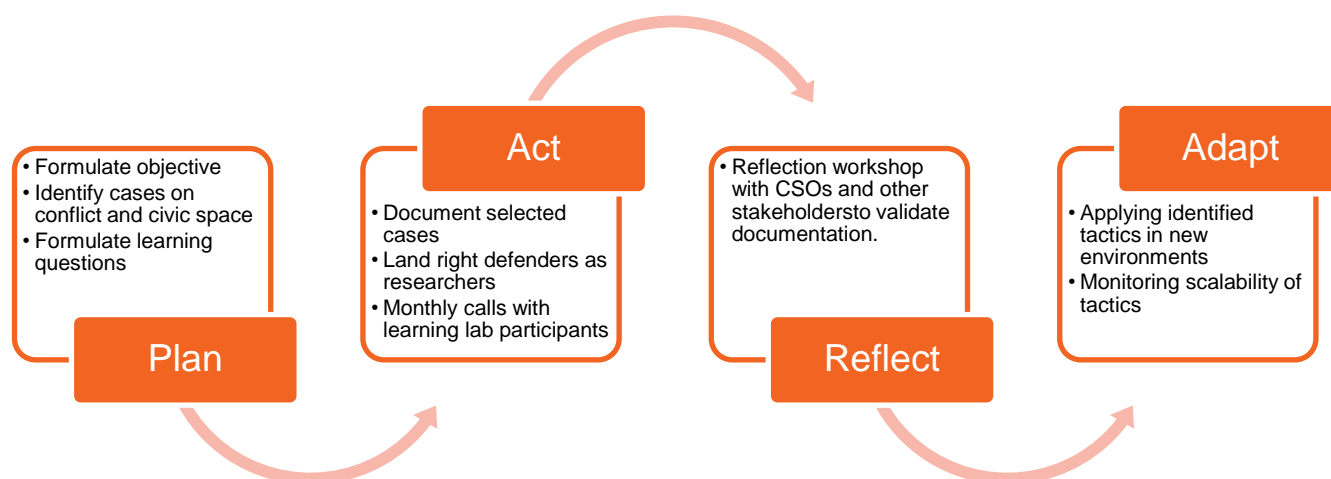
<sup>4</sup> The learning lab on civic space and conflict is part of the conflict and fragility programme. This programme is implementing one of the three theories of change under the Strategic Partnership programme called “Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network” of Oxfam Novib, SOMO, and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>5</sup> <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/civic-space-monitoring-tool-understanding-what-is-happening-in-civic-space-at-a-620874/>

## 2. Methodology

This study adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach<sup>6</sup> (visualized in the diagram below), which combined research with reflections and participation through the use of qualitative, interactive and participatory research methodologies. This means balancing experiential knowledge of land right defenders with theoretical understanding on civic space to develop new knowledge. This enabled the respondents to share and analyse their unique experiences of working in conflict setting and how they remain influential. Furthermore, the research focused on actionable tactics making it possible to translate research into action. The many interactions, experience sharing and reflections throughout the documentation, provided an opportunity for CSOs to appreciate their own role and learn from each other.

In the **planning phase** of the learning lab, cases related to conflict and civic space have been identified and stakeholders have been selected to reflect on experiences, document the most successful strategies and present action-oriented solutions. Together, they have formulated learning questions for documentation. The documentation of the cases is **conducted** by land right defenders themselves as researchers (**act phase**), in order to further facilitate and ingrain learning within country X. These documentations included a mix of qualitative methods that were chosen by the land right defenders themselves. The methods were highly participatory to ensure a shared analysis of experiences among land rights defenders. A face-to-face event facilitated **reflection** among CSOs and other stakeholders was hosted by Oxfam in country X to make sense of documented tactics and formulate general lessons learned. During this reflection we ensured a balance between Oxfam and CSO partner staff. Furthermore, the set up was highly participatory with ample attention for every participant to speak out. To further facilitate an open discussion there was attention for trust building and clear rules on confidentiality. Then a new round is now starting after discussions with other countries in similar contexts to further specify the lessons learned in regular reflections (**adapt phase**).



Hence, this report is based on thorough documentation from country X, notes and learning report of the reflection sessions, and notes from numerous calls and meetings with the various country teams during the process of one year learning lab in action.

<sup>6</sup> Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (1982) *The Action Research Planner*. Deakin University Press, Victoria, Australia.  
Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (2008) (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. Sage, CA  
Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Paractice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Harvard Business School Press, Boston



### 3. Impact of conflict on civic space

In many conflict-affected countries civic space is restricted and although many of the manifestations of closing civic space are similar to non-conflict affected countries, there are also particular conflict affected causes. Below we have listed the main ones mentioned in the PAR. These challenges can be clustered into four groups of impacts: (1) limited governance, legislation and weak rule of law; (2) shifting aid agendas'; (3) societal polarization and mistrust; (4) and limited capacities, resources and infrastructure.

#### *(1) Limited governance, legislation and weak rule of law*

- *Distrust from all parties leading to tightened control, administrative and legal hurdles.*  
In country X, over the space of four years, the government enacted nine (9) laws to monitor, control and close the civic space. Political and military elites of all sides of the conflict adopted tougher laws and measures under the pretext of the *"interest of the national security and the public good"*. The underlying reason is that in conflict settings, government officials – especially the security apparatus– perceives civil society organizations as public instigators, elements of regime change and foreign agents. While the opposition groups in the conflict, consider civil society groups – particularly those operating from government-controlled areas – to be pro-government agents. The struggles over the role of civil society is very much connected to issues around power, power-sharing and access to resources.
- *Sanctions* are often imposed by the United Nations, the United States of America or the European Union towards individual politicians and some military leaders for alleged human rights violations. However, in practice these sanctions often close civic space further on the ground. For example, media is pressured to limit any further documentation of human rights violations out of fear that exposure will lead to further sanctions.
- *Weak rule of law* results in a high prevalence of threats, intimidation and arbitrary arrests from government actors, and other conflict actors, which poses elevated risks and requires CSOs to take precautionary measures.
- *Non-state armed groups* may have control over civic space. For examples in South Sudan and Central African Republic civic space is largely determined by non-state armed groups that are in control over certain areas. Decisions about engagement or disengagement with such groups is a high-risk dilemma for civil society actors, particularly in contexts where power dynamics are rapidly changing. For example, in South-Central Somalia, although the influence of Al-Shabaab has been steadily decreasing over the last few years, areas under their control remain largely inaccessible to humanitarian actors. Hostility towards CSOs associated with international and UN organizations, is posing extreme risks.

#### *(2) Shifting aid agenda's*

- *Shifting donor priorities from long term development to humanitarian aid* with the eruption of conflicts is challenging. As resources shift away from human rights, and good governance programmes, the possibilities for civil society to keep governments accountable decline.
- *Work on specific conflict related topics close space.* Examples of these sensitive topics are work on issues of justice and accountability; initiatives aimed at prosecuting the perpetrators of conflict related Gender-based Violence including mass rape of women and girls. In country X governance became a sensitive issue after the opposition parties demanded a federal system of governance. Security and security sector review is often looked upon as a purely army related issue - *"Leave what belongs to the generals to the generals"* - not to be discussed by CSOs.

- *Conflict increases threats, intimidation and self-censoring* of CSOs. The increased need for protection requires time and resources, which cannot be used for programming and influencing work. High levels of violence and insecurity also contribute to the fragmentation of civil society. In South-Central Somalia a high level of fear effectively silences CSOs and prevents criticism of the government, security institutions or non-state groups like Al-Shabaab.

### *(3) Social polarization and mistrust*

- *Polarization and mistrust* are high because of real or perceived infiltration of civic space by politically affiliated groups. The widespread belief that some prominent civil society actors have switched from civil society to any of the parties in the conflict contributes to the monitoring and controlling of the civic space. In conflict and post-conflict contexts, societies are usually fragmented and polarized by divisions along the political lines of the conflict. This is often characterized by tension and disputes about who the legitimate representatives of citizens' interests are. Conflict dynamics play out within civil society as well. INGOs and other international actions can inadvertently stimulate such tensions by not using a conflict sensitive approach (for example, providing resources and platforms to national CSOs affiliated with one particular group).

*“The conflict situation in country X has created mistrust between the government and civil society organizations. The government officials perceive the civil society organizations and activists as spies of the foreign bodies against the government and so they turn to impose a lot of difficulties on civil society actors”* A statement from a respondent in country X.

- *Women rights organisations face extra hurdles* when trying to influence peace processes. For example, during a peace process in country X women delegates reported issues such as being side-lined in the talks, as well as sexual harassment and intimidation from conflict actors.
- It can be a particular challenge for historically marginalized social groups, including women, to access and engage in security spaces, which are highly masculinized. Internalized gender biases of both security actors and within civil society lead to the assumption that women and women's groups do not have the relevant expertise to engage on conflict and security issues.

### *(4) Limited capacities, resources and infrastructure*

- *Infrastructure* in conflict affected states is often damaged and distorted. Transport and communication infrastructure, including roads, telephone networks and radio, have been either closed, interrupted or destroyed during the conflict which makes it harder for civil society to connect and build alliances. Even after a peace agreement is signed, roads may remain dangerous due to the presence of armed groups and general insecurity. Regardless of conflict, many do not have (regular) access to the internet. This is even more the case for women.
- *Access to information is securitized* which constrains the ability of civil society organizations (CSOs) and media to monitor and hold authorities accountable and poses safety risks when criticizing governments or other security providers. Civil society organizations, including journalists, are often denied access to certain areas because of “security” reasons, arbitrarily arrested or even detained, harassed or killed.
- *Lack of knowledge and capacity* in civil society is challenging. Often it is a small amount of CSOs working on security sector reform and governance which results in a lack of relevant knowledge and capacity.



## 4. Actionable Tactics

Conflict, fragility and instability affect and restrict civic space in particular ways. However, in many cases local and national CSOs across the African continent have successfully developed approaches and mechanisms to navigate restrictions strategically to remain influential. Below we highlight four main interdependent groups of tactics that have proved helpful to CSOs working in a context of conflict and shrinking civic space: (1) use allies cleverly; (2) take resilience, mitigating risks, security and (digital) protection seriously; (3) Leverage participation in the peace process and implementation; (4) regain legal ground. These main strategies fit in Oxfams' global civic space influencing strategy<sup>7</sup>, hence this learning lab provides evidence as well as concrete details that can inform the assumptions and pathways of the Oxfam global civic space influencing strategy.

### (1) Use allies cleverly

- *Diverse civil society coalitions and partnerships matter* to present unified views on certain issues. Uniting in coalitions helps CSOs to meaningfully engage with the government and influence different processes. These coalitions are diverse (for example, across conflict lines, women, youth), loosely organized and structured through internal consensus, competence, willingness and contributions of members. Creating coalitions, developing joint recommendations, and having the ability to put forward representatives strengthens the legitimacy and accountability of civil society and also supports the building of trust towards the wider public.
- *Leveraging the influence of individuals at crucial positions and using the diversity of governmental institutions* helps CSOs to get their foot in the door and influence governments. CSOs cited collaboration with some influential individuals, diplomatic missions and governmental institutions such as the human rights commission, rule of law institutions, ministries of gender, child and social welfare, the Community security and arms control bureau and legislative committees as one of the strategies for maintaining their influence. These institutions continue to provide spaces for dialogue with civil society. For example CSOs in Niger strategically targeted important individual actors and institutions, such as the Human Rights Commission, the High Authority for Peace Consolidation (HACP) and the National Centre for Strategic and Security Studies (CNESS). Although some institutions were initially reluctant to engage with civil society, due to the perception of CSOs as being overly critical and politicized, civil society was able to prove its added value and create resilient relationships and trust between the authorities and the civil society sector. If this approach is chosen it is important to do it with caution and be aware of the risks as well in contexts with high levels of corruption and nepotism, to avoid stimulating and exacerbating practices that are counter to inclusive peace and security objectives.
- *Continued engagement and Dialogue with authorities, including security agencies* is important to stay visibly engaged with authorities to clarify, influence and present citizens' concerns and recommendations. Dialogue, consultation and trust-building between civil society and state actors, by employing non-confrontational approaches and transparency, is essential for building relationships and trust with authorities despite the difficult circumstances. In Niger a consortium of national CSOs established a Security Sector Governance Observatory in 2017, to facilitate interactions between civil society and security sector authorities. This has been important for bringing together networks of national and local organisations for information exchange, and enabling a platform through which to engage and develop working relationships with security actors.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/space-be-heard>

- *Public support can be gained through alliances with media.* Civil society media engagements through radio shows and press statements, enables civil society to provide an alternative voice and narrative for the common good and rallied public support behind the civic actors. Several radio stations, which have nationwide and online coverage in Country X, have provided free slots for civil society to engage the public periodically. These deliberations provide an alternative narrative, to inform and shape public opinion. In Country X CSO and media have demonstrated solidarity in protecting each other from direct attacks from the authorities.
- *Collaboration with academia helps to build a strong evidence base.* Civil society in Country X is working collaboratively with academia and think tanks. In a coalition of civil society and academia they are working together to monitor the peace agreement. It facilitates objective analysis through periodic reports based on facts and evidences generated at the national and local level.
- *Coordination with faith-based institutions* helps CSOs to spread their messages more widely through highly trusted channels. Synergies between civil society organizations and religious institutions play a crucial role in influencing and safeguarding the civic space. While the former is known for its civic mobilization, technical capacity and advocacy efforts, the latter stand out as historical and well-structured institutions that have moral authority. In South Sudan a platform for coordination, shared analysis, strategy building and collaboration between CSOs and faith-based institutions is established. The religious institutions also provide affordable and secure facilities for some of the civil society organizations.
- *Partnerships with regional and international platforms* are key for amplifying and sustaining CSO influence. They play a crucial role in increasing attention to concerns, provide spaces for engagement, including technical and financial resources, solidarity and protection of human rights defenders. Examples are the East African Civil Society Forum, the East African Youths Parliament, the African Security Sector Network. They also amplify messages at the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights at regional level or the United Nations Human Rights Council and the United Nations Security Council at the International level.<sup>8</sup> Herein, partnership with International NGOs can leverage influence globally and provide the necessary technical and financial support.
- *Engagement with Diplomatic bodies including the UN* helps CSOs to have their voices heard and acknowledged. Conducting periodic formal and informal briefings to key diplomatic missions on the situation and recommendations from civil society appeared a key strategy to have civil society voices heard and taken account off. The international community plays an important role by often reinforcing national-level civil society calls for an inclusive process and agreement.

*“In 2019, civil society in country X requested UN peacekeeping mission to fund a security sector reform workshop that brought together MPs, police, army, community leaders (chiefs) and representatives of CSOs to discuss security sector reform within the framework of a peace agreement. If it was not for the help of [the peacekeeping mission] we could not have organized this workshop”* A comment from the respondents in Country X.

## **(2) take resilience, mitigating risks, security and (digital) protection serious**

- *Keep your own house in order* by strengthening institutional systems, policies and procedures helps CSOs mitigating risks. Many CSOs cite conformity to best management practices as a strategy to manage “de-legitimization” of civil society by authorities. This includes: sound management systems and meeting the statutory financial and labour requirements. Civil society continue to obtain the necessary legal documents and seek security clearance for civic

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/peacebuilder-resource-un-security-council-briefing-south-sudan-nyachanguoth-rambang-tai-09-2020/>

engagement in public spaces as well as rolling out of public campaigns among others in order to preserve the space that is left. *“It is better to tick their boxes and be visible in the space than to be caught offside”*

*“Submit and register according to the requirement and that will allow you to work objectively within. By doing so, you will be the different voice that will provide a different opinion that may change the situation to the better”*. A quote from a respondent in country X

- *Developing shared positions in coalitions reduces individual risks for activists.* A shared civil society position helps to mitigate risks for individuals and particular organizations, making them less likely to be targeted, intimidated, arrested or accused of taking sides.
- *Limiting donor visibility/going unbranded/using home grown solutions* are important to avoid being branded as “agents of a foreign agenda”. E.g. the production of the simplified version of the peace agreement in Country X, was published unbranded.
- *Sharing human and financial resources across organisations & applying for consortium funding* helps to sustain engagements in long term peace processes over time and more safely.
- Since external financing makes CSOs vulnerable, subjected to investigations by authorities or labeling as anti-government and collaborators with foreign agents of regime change, increasingly CSOs try to find alternatives. Civil society resort to utilizing resources, including finances, equipment, premises and expertise available among their coalition members to sustain their engagements. Similarly, civil society organizations adopt less costly and effective modes of operation such as sharing of office premises, online exchange and development of unified positions. Likeminded civic actors embrace joint programming and fundraising for their initiatives. Resource mobilization through consortia is widely seen by civic actors as a viable mechanism for strengthening coordination, capacity and accountability among the members.
- *Convene meetings in safe and secure physical or digital spaces* needs to be thought through carefully. Safe physical spaces can be boardrooms of member organizations or premises of religious institutions. Equally important is a careful selection of participants which are expected to maintain Chatham House Rules. Official communication is restricted to designated representatives. This enables members to build consensus on issues of common concern in an open and trustful way. Sometimes Civil society strategy meetings are held outside the country to secure the participation of civic actors based outside the country. Furthermore, CSOs increasingly create secure and controlled virtual spaces. Meetings and information sharing - including development of policy documents, strategies and press statements - are coordinated online. Various alliances have invested in training their members in digital security. To a larger extent, this strategy has ensured the safety and security of their information, the members and partners. It has also reduced the cost, time and the risks associated with COVID-19.

### **(3) Leveraging participation in the peace process and implementation**

- *The technical expertise of CSOs matters* in engaging in peace processes and security sector reform. Civil society actors contribute technical expertise on security, thereby legitimizing their engagement, particularly for those sceptical about their role or participation. It is important for CSOs to stress that they refrain from a political position in the debate, but rather offer technical expertise and/or represent the voice of their constituency. Civil society actors in Niger have demonstrated their added value to authorities by stressing their technical expertise and thus avoiding their engagement being seen as overly politicized.
- *Be part of the process:* civil society representatives have secured direct participation and engagement with the conflicting parties, the mediation and the stakeholders at the table during

the negotiations. Secondly, they formed part of the peace implementation mechanisms. This has provided a solid ground for meaningful and sustained civil society engagement and enhanced their legitimacy. It enabled them to hold all parties accountable to their commitments through media engagements and dialogues. At community level civil society ensured local participation and monitoring through dissenting the peace agreement through media and community meetings.

#### **(4) regaining legal ground**

- *Challenge new restrictive laws and regulations.* In country X civil society actors analysed every new law and regulation affecting their work and ensured that their analysis became part of an ongoing legislative review process. Engaging with INGOs, who are likely also affected by changes in these laws, could also open opportunities for joined lobbying.

## **5. Conclusion**

Conflict, fragility and instability affect and restrict civic space in particular ways. However, in many cases local and national CSOs across the African continent have successfully developed approaches and mechanisms to navigate restrictions strategically and open civic space. This report explored the different actionable tactics that came out of exchange meetings between 7 countries and an in-depth documentation of one particular country in a learning lab on conflict and civic space in 2020, based on the principles of participatory action research. There are four main interdependent groups of tactics that have proved helpful to CSOs working in a context of conflict and shrinking civic space: (1) use allies cleverly; (2) take resilience, mitigating risks, security and (digital) protection serious; (3) Leverage participation in the peace process and implementation; (4) regain legal ground.

Allies of all kinds are key to reclaim civic space. Diversity matters as well as being able to leverage the influence of individuals at crucial positions. Public support can be harnessed through alliances with media. Collaboration with academia will give credibility to the message of CSOs and coordination with faith-based institutions will give CSOs the needed moral authority. Partnerships with regional and international platforms and INGO's can ensure amplification of civil society's message, while diplomatic bodies can play an important role by reinforcing national-level civil society calls. At the same time continued engagement and dialogue with authorities, including security agencies, by employing non-confrontational approaches and transparency, is essential for building relationships and trust with authorities despite the difficult circumstances.

At the same time civil society should invest in increasing its resilience and taking risk and mitigation measures, security and (digital) protection serious. This can be done by keeping your own house in order and investing in strengthening your own institutional systems, policies and procedures. Shared civil society positions have helped mitigate risks. Limit donor's visibility to avoid being branded as "agents of foreign agenda. Share resources, including finances, equipment, premises and expertise among CSOs to become less dependent on foreign funding. Convene meetings in safe and secure physical spaces and shift meetings to controlled virtual platforms. Invest in digital security.

Leverage as much as possible CSOs participation in peace processes and implementation through providing technical expertise which will improve CSOs legitimacy. Finally, keep challenging new restrictive laws and regulations for CSOs through advocacy or litigation.

This report has been produced by Oxfam Novib, with Saskia van Veen and Barbara Oosters as the main authors of this study, in close collaboration with Salima Ahmadou and Sarah Pelham and our colleagues in the countries in Africa – that wish to remain confidential. It would not have been possible without the comprehensive input of human rights defenders from civil society and local communities.

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