

Security and Rule of Law

Theory of Change

Contributing to peaceful, just and inclusive societies

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction | 3 |
| 2. Purpose and use of the ToC | 4 |
| 3. Context, problem statement & social contract | 4 |
| 4. Mission and vision | 8 |
| 5. Priorities and cross-cutting themes | 9 |
| 5.1 Priority areas..... | 9 |
| Priority Area 1: Security for people | 9 |
| Priority Area 2: Rule of law and people-centred justice..... | 14 |
| Priority Area 3: Peacebuilding and inclusive governance..... | 17 |
| 5.2 Cross-cutting themes | 21 |
| 6. Geographic focus and actors & stakeholders | 23 |
| 6.1 Priority countries and regions | 23 |
| 6.2 Actors and stakeholders | 24 |
| 7. Guiding principles and strategies | 25 |
| 7.1 Guiding principles for programming and policy | 25 |
| 7.2 Strategies: Programming and policy influencing | 27 |
| 8. Roles and responsibilities in implementation | 29 |

1. Introduction

The Netherlands has a longstanding tradition of supporting peace, security and the rule of law,¹ as captured in its Security and Rule of Law (SRoL) policy and programming. **This Theory of Change aims to help guide the work on Security and Rule of Law in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as shaped and put into practice by the Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH), and embassies in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS), especially in SRoL priority countries. It is meant for colleagues of the Dutch ministry working on Security and Rule of Law, as well as for partners with whom we work on these priorities.**

Our previous Theory of Change (ToC) dates from 2018. Since then much has changed and many lessons have been learnt; this ToC has been elaborated to recognise and reflect these developments and insights.

We recognise that SRoL is an extremely complicated policy and programming area as its political nature makes its success dependent on political willingness to engage in processes of change over a longer period of time. The long-term impact of SRoL policy and programming efforts is also inherently dependent on and linked to other policy and programming efforts. Examples are inclusive economic development, food security, water and resource management, and women's rights and gender equality. These realities directly affect possibilities for change, and as such have an impact on our span of control.

Furthermore, it is important to note that our work is not defined by the problem definition in this ToC alone. It is also determined by a number of key priorities, principles and themes which feature across our policy and programming agendas. It builds on a value-based mission that connects peace, justice and inclusion; it relates to current overarching Dutch policy frameworks such as Investing in Global Prospects, the Integrated Foreign and Security Strategy, and the Dutch Integrated Security Strategy; and it is guided by a number of relevant international policy agendas such as the UN's Our Common Agenda.² As such, **this ToC is shaped by the aim to be effective and have an impact, and choices are guided by available evidence as well as by normative considerations.**

This document starts by explaining the purpose and use of this ToC and providing an overview of the context. This is followed by a presentation of the core problem and the key objective **of contributing towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies, in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)16**. It then moves on to describe how we aim to contribute to addressing this core problem, and clarifies our choice of priority areas and cross-cutting themes. Subsequently, we elaborate on our geographic focus, our programming and policy approach, and roles and responsibilities in implementation. This document will be complemented by an updated results framework.

¹ Rule of Law: The UN defines the Rule of Law as, "a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards". ([S/2004/616](#))

² (2021). [Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary General. The United Nations](#)

2. Purpose and use of the ToC

This ToC aims to explain why we do what we do, what we find important, and how we aim to improve our efforts, taking into account lessons learned and identifying where choices will have to be made, and why. It provides insight into how our interventions intend to contribute to peaceful, just and inclusive societies by presenting our goals, explaining causal links, providing evidence, and making assumptions and risks explicit. It should provide practical and relevant guidance for developing, testing and improving Security and Rule of Law policy and programming and thus achieve better results. In order to properly reflect the local context and local dynamics, and put the needs, solutions and potential of local people and communities central, the ToC should be translated differently for each of our priority countries.³ Principles for doing so can be found in chapter 7.

This ToC guides our reflection on the difficulties and limitations of the potential impact of our efforts. As such, it provides a basis for better managing expectations and for providing a more realistic understanding of fundamental assumptions and ambitions. This in turn provides a basis for developing a common learning agenda. It is essential that our experiences and insights, including those of our colleagues in-country, are regularly fed back into updates of this ToC.

Our SRoL programming is part of a broader overarching global effort to promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies. In this ToC we make choices that reflect our priorities and specific Dutch added value, within the broader Dutch development policy framework. Therefore we have to recognize that our programming does not cover the complete SRoL field. We also recognize the resulting limitations of our span of control in achieving outcomes and impact. To mitigate both these caveats we strive to organize close, clear and proactive collaboration and coordination with our many partners, both within our Ministry and beyond.⁴ In addition, our programming should always be part of an integrated approach to programming in specific contexts, aiming to combine local, regional, Dutch and bi- and multilateral international efforts to maximize efficiency and impact. As such, this ToC should help explore opportunities for alignment and complementarity both between our own SRoL priorities and with other policy and programming areas.

3. Context, problem statement & social contract

Context

Dutch development aid is focused on the West African Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and North Africa,⁵ regions where some of the most fragile and conflict affected states are currently located. Although the number of conflict-related fatalities in the Middle East and North Africa has recently declined,⁶ the internationalised armed conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya remain hard to resolve. In Afghanistan, the Taliban has retaken control of the country and Western military has withdrawn, forcing a reconsideration of our efforts. Armed conflict in the Sahel region intensified and expanded, affecting an increasing number of regions and countries.⁷ The Horn of Africa includes some of the most fragile states in the world, with ongoing large-scale violence in Somalia and the armed conflict in Ethiopia leading to immense human suffering and regional instability. In Europe,

³ See 7.2 on priority countries.

⁴ For example the European Union and United Nations, see further 7.3 on actors and stakeholders.

⁵ (2018). *Investing in Global Prospects*

⁶ (2021). *SIPRI Yearbook, Summary. SIPRI. p.8.*

⁷ (2021). *SIPRI Yearbook, Summary. SIPRI. p.11*

the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine leads to human suffering on a scale not seen in Europe since the Balkan wars. In the Balkans, risks of armed conflict still exist.

Armed conflicts are often internationalised, making conflict resolution very challenging. Worldwide, military spending continues to increase.⁸ The international context has also become increasingly challenging, with both China and Russia expanding their security footprint in our focus countries.^{9,10} In a world of interdependencies, armed conflict in one country can have massive repercussions in other countries and regions around the world, for example on food security.¹¹

Our role needs to be placed within this context. We are a relative large development donor with sizeable diplomatic presence and we play an active role in the EU and in multilateral organisations. Through our open and globally connected economy and companies, the effects of our tax and corporate social responsibility legislation have an enormous impact on developing countries

We want to focus on two important global developments in particular, Covid-19 and climate change.¹²

Covid-19 pandemic

Since our previous ToC in 2018, the Covid-19 pandemic and the response to it has had significant destabilising impacts on the relationships between citizens and the state, on social cohesion between different groups, and on economies and inequality.^{13,14} We expect the (indirect) effects of the pandemic to be long lasting. The pandemic reinforced the need for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It reinforced the importance of applying a people-centred approach and localisation, as laid out in a 2021 letter to Parliament.¹⁵

Climate crisis

Since 2018, the impact of climate change has become increasingly visible, with droughts, locust plagues, heat waves and other extreme weather events around the world. Our focus countries are uniquely affected, both because of the specific climate effects they will endure (such as displacement, resources competition, failing harvests, dying cattle)¹⁶ and the inadequate capacity to adapt.¹⁷ Climate change can act as a ‘threat multiplier’ in fragile contexts and become one of the drivers of instability and conflict. Therefore, it is important to consider the impact of relevant climate change related factors on conflict drivers in order to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of programming in the face of this crisis. The impacts of climate change on conflict dynamics should be part of analysis and should subsequently inform our strategies.

⁸ (2021). SIPRI Yearbook (2021), Summary. p.12

⁹ Tanchum, M. (December, 2021), China’s new military base in Africa: What it means for Europe and America. [European Council on Foreign Relations](#)

¹⁰ Fasanotti, F.S. (February, 2022). Russia’s Wagner Group in Africa: Influence, commercial concessions, rights violations, and counterinsurgency failure. [Brookings](#)

¹¹ Harvey, F. (March, 2022). Ukraine war piles pressure on global food system already in crisis. [The Guardian](#)

¹² ActionAid (August, 2020). [Tax in Times of Corona](#).

¹³ (April, 2021). [Kamerbrief inzake Impact COVID-19-pandemie op conflictisico’s \]](#)

¹⁴ Mercy Corps. (June, 2021). [A Clash of Contagions. \]](#)

¹⁵ (April, 2021). [Kamerbrief inzake Impact COVID-19-pandemie op conflictisico’s](#)

¹⁶ IPCC (2022). [Climate Change: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Summary for policy makers](#)

¹⁷ (October, 2021). [UN-backed report reveals rising climate change risk across Africa. UN News](#)

Problem statement

Violent conflicts, fragility and instability often have devastating and self-reinforcing consequences: deaths, human rights violations, destruction of infrastructure, displaced persons and refugees, and leads to the breakdown of social cohesion, trust and impoverishment of societies. Vulnerable groups, including women and young people, are often being hit the hardest. Data shows that **poverty is increasingly focused in fragile and conflict-affected states.**¹⁸ **Countries that have serious problems of fragility and instability lag far behind in achieving sustainable development, especially when instability degenerates into violent conflict.** In addition, violent conflict in one country affects neighbouring countries and regions, and has direct and indirect consequences for several European and Dutch interests, such as those related to migration, trade and security.

Fragility, violence and conflict are most often rooted in (a combination of) multiple, contextdependent causes. The UN and World Bank identify the key causes in their *Pathways for Peace* study: “Exclusion from access to power, opportunity, services, and security creates fertile ground for mobilising group grievances to violence, especially in areas with weak state capacity or legitimacy or in the context of human rights abuses.”²⁰

This leads to the following problem statement, which we aim to address:

People’s exclusion from access to political power, opportunity, services, justice, security and identity and a lack of accountable, effective and transparent institutions that act in service of people, create fertile ground for mobilising group grievances to violence.²¹ In addition, societies often lack effective and inclusive mechanisms to address such conflict once it arises.

The social contract as a tool for analysis

To better understand the context we work in and to identify what is possible in that context, we will work with the concept of the social contract. Throughout the centuries, the term social contract has been the subject of many different streams of thought, visions and interpretations. In our work with this concept, we also and explicitly include the concept of social inclusion.

We define the social contract as the process by which “...everyone in a political community, either explicitly or tacitly, consents to state authority, thereby limiting some of their freedoms, in exchange for the state’s protection of their universal human rights and security and for the adequate provision of public goods and services”.²²

We consider that a well-functioning social contract needs to be inclusive, accountable, and transparent; guaranteeing fundamental human rights and freedoms; and it should include a certain level of social cohesion, which refers to the “...reduction of disparities, inequalities, and social exclusion within or between societal groups, as well as the strengthening of social relations,

¹⁸ The World Bank. (February, 2020). [World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020-2025](#).

¹⁹ OECD (n.d.). [States of Fragility 2020. Executive summary OECD iLibrary](#)

²⁰ (n.d.). [UN-WB study Pathways for Peace p. xviii](#)

²¹ Based partly on [this report](#) by UNDP on *Preventing Violent Extremism* (2016), p.6.

²² UNDP. (April, 2016). [Engaged Societies, Responsive States: The Social Contract in Situations of Conflict and Fragility. UNDP Concept Note, introduction.](#)

interactions, and trust”.²³ Finally, it is important to note that this social contract is not a static given, but a “...dynamic agreement between state and society on their mutual roles and responsibilities”.^{24,25}

Fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) are often characterised by a frayed social contract between the state (at any level) and the population, and by a lack of social cohesion and trust between different people and groups within societies. A functioning social contract can deliver public goods, such as human security, poverty reduction, sustainable social and economic development, and proper management of public and natural resources.^{26 27}

We regard the social contract as a useful concept to identify sustainable exits from fragility²⁸ (preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of violent conflict), and to connect insecurity to a crisis of governance.²⁹ It is a concept that puts local context, preferences and solutions central to the analysis. It thus has the potential to help our localization agenda. At the same time it is important to realize that the relationship between peace, justice and inclusion in a social contract is not straightforward and is context dependent.³⁰

Strengthening a social contract is also not the golden bullet to prevent violent conflicts, as elements of a social contract (such as the trade-off between democratic decision making and strengthening of the state’s enforcement mechanisms) could also be drivers of (violent) conflict. We attempt to use the lens of the social contract to frame our efforts to address root causes of violent conflict, increase nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms as well as strengthen inclusive governance in order to contribute to peaceful, just and inclusive societies.³¹

²³ UNDP. (April, 2016) *Engaged Societies, Responsive States: The Social Contract in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*. UNDP Concept Note, p.11.

²⁴ OECD. (2008). *POLICY PAPER GB (oecd.org)* p.17

²⁵ The social contract concept spans a broader menu of themes (services) than SROL, including those (education, decent work, health, social protection, etc) that fall outside of the scope of DSH SRoL work. The SROL subset of social contract’s services/themes is part and parcel of this broader menu and, therefore, of a comprehensive, coordinated and coherent approach that involves other thematic Ministry of Foreign Affairs departments as well as stakeholders in sectors not directly connected to SROL.

²⁶ “Social contracts require effective leaders and impartial institutions” *OECD. States of Fragility 2018. p.43.*

²⁷ In ‘*Our Common Agenda*’, launched by UN Secretary-General Guterres on 10 September 2021 and based on a year of consultations with member states, civil society organisations, young people and academics, Guterres issued a strong warning that with regard to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development we are on the wrong track. In that regard, he specifically calls for restoring trust between citizens and government and citizens themselves through a renewed social contract anchored in human rights, and with a much greater emphasis on young people and future generations.

²⁸ *Castillejo, C. (2015). Political Parties and the Social Contract in Fragile States. NOREF.*

²⁹ *International Crisis Group. (2021). A course correction for the Sahel Stabilization Strategy. Report 299/Africa.*

³⁰ Molenaar, F.; CRU Policy Brief. p.11; *Price, M., & Van Veen, E. (2016). From entitlements to power structures: Improving analysis for community security programming. Clingendael Institute; Samadi, M. and Mirabbassi, S. (2016). Realization of human security in light of good governance. Journal of Politics and Law, 10:1, p.84; UNDP. (2016). Local Governance in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings Building.; UNICEF. (2019). Local Governance and Sustaining Peace.*

³¹ *ibidem*

4. Mission and vision

Mission (what you want to achieve): peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Vision (how you want to achieve it): We want to contribute to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies by empowering people and groups to work towards these goals.^{32,33} This is in line with SDG16.³⁴ We work throughout the entire conflict cycle – before, during and after violent conflict – and in situations of long-term fragility. Thus, the prevention of violent conflict is an important goal within this ToC.

To best understand the problems and our progress towards these goals, we consider the functioning of the social contract between state and the population, including the level of social cohesion and trust between different people and groups within societies. In our work, we put the perspectives and needs of people, as well as their empowerment and resilience, front and centre. This differs from an approach that is state-centric and focused on institutions.

Working throughout the conflict cycle

We work throughout the entire conflict cycle – before, during and after conflict – aiming to prevent the outbreak, continuation, escalation and recurrence of violent conflict. Various phases can be identified, but these are not to be understood in a linear fashion. In this section we aim to explain how these different terms relate to the priority areas of the SRoL ToC.

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Peacebuilding is a separate priority within this ToC. It is also used as an overarching policy framework to describe many different activities contributing to peace in situations before, during or after armed conflict. The UN also uses the concept ‘sustaining peace’ to assert that contributing to peace requires efforts throughout the conflict cycle aimed at preventing the outbreak, continuation, escalation and recurrence of violent conflict.

Conflict prevention

Conflict prevention refers to activities and strategies to lower the risks of violent conflict, consisting of longer-term structural prevention interventions addressing underlying conflict risks and direct prevention interventions addressing a possible short-term escalation of violent conflict. The broader development agenda of the ministry contributes to structural conflict prevention, considering the SDG agenda as the ‘ultimate prevention agenda’. Our efforts for peaceful, just and inclusive societies help prevent armed conflict by addressing some of the root causes of armed conflict, such as exclusive governance and repressive security actors. Through mediation, for example, we also support short-term conflict prevention. To be alert to country-specific risks of armed conflict, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has *Early Warning Early Action* capacity. Linked to conflict prevention, conflict

³² (2021). [Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary General. The United Nations](#)

³³ Investing in Global Prospects: “Peace can only last when the grievances of all parties have been heard and trust between the public and the state (the social contract) has been restored.” (2018, p.42)

³⁴ This is in line with SDG16. The entire SDG16 reads: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” The SDGs constitute a global aspiration which we ultimately aim to contribute to. We recognise that this aspiration includes a normative dimension, and that it may contain inherent tensions which we need to reflect on and address, such as the question of whether or not more inclusive societies are always more peaceful.

management is aimed at supporting societies in peacefully managing conflict to prevent escalation into violent conflict.

Stabilisation

Stabilisation is not always clearly defined, but here it is considered as taking place just after a situation of armed conflict, as an approach used by local, national and international actors to provide short-term security, stability, justice and development in an integrated fashion. Sometimes the broader environment, regional or national, will continue to experience armed conflict. Stabilisation is an inherently political, relatively risky endeavour that is used to lay the foundation for peacebuilding and sustainable development. Stabilisation efforts contribute to the overall goals of a peaceful society. Stabilisation efforts are assumed to be temporary, to be followed by a functioning state, possibly assisted by longer-term development and peacebuilding aid. In practice, the phases of stabilisation, including reconstruction efforts, and longer-term development efforts often overlap. Stabilisation efforts are often broader than the priorities of this ToC. When we contribute to stabilisation efforts, we focus on furthering the priorities presented in this ToC. When we talk about stability, we consider it important that this stability is seen as legitimate by the local population. This stands in contrast to 'stability' achieved by repression. An elaboration on our contribution to Stabilisation Multi-Donor Trust Funds can be found under 'strategies' (7.2).

5. Priorities and cross-cutting themes

This ToC identifies three priority areas for Dutch development efforts in the SRoL domain³⁵ that contribute to peaceful, just and inclusive societies. It presents the connections that bind interventions in these priority areas, and details pathways of change specific to each priority area. In implementing the ToC, contextual information on the country and local environment will guide the choice of which area(s) of intervention is/are most appropriate in that specific context.

In the following section, the ToC presents evidence, objectives, approaches, and assumptions for the three areas of focus. These priority areas all contribute to the mission of peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The Netherlands has a track record in each of these areas.

5.1 Priority areas

Priority Area 1: Security for people

We take a human security perspective as a starting point for our interventions. Human security is security as perceived by people.³⁶ It emphasises individual safety, protection from threats, and empowerment, in contrast to more state-oriented definitions that emphasise national security and sovereignty. People expect the state – at all levels – to provide human security, and as such it is part of a social contract. If the state is unable and /or unwilling to provide this, people will look for other ways to organise security, which can – but does not always - lead to fragmentation and instability.

³⁵ As reflected in the priority area Chapter 3.XX of the 2022 BHOS policy paper [PM]

³⁶ See for example [The Human Security Unit. United Nations Trust Fund For Human Security](#). See also [Gómez & Gasper, UNDP, \(2013\), Human Security: A Thematic Guidance Note for Regional and National Human Development Report Teams](#). See also [Kaldor, M. \(2007\), Human Security](#).

Our programming is organised around three overarching sub-themes. We focus on the interface between the supply and demand side of security, the space where the conversation around security interventions and accountability of actions takes place. First, we put the **security of civilians and communities** central in our interventions and invest in mechanisms to enhance protection of civilians and the safety of people within communities, and to strengthen the interface between communities and security actors. Second, we invest in improving the institutions that provide security through supporting **security sector reform and governance processes** in order to make institutions more service oriented, improve their ability to provide rights-based protection and assist them in performing their tasks more effectively, accountably and inclusively, with greater transparency and responsibility towards local security needs. Lastly, we invest in **Mine Action**, more specifically the removal of conflict-related physical and mental threats caused by the presence of mines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and explosive remnants of war to enable people to pick up their lives free of fear after conflict ends. These themes cannot be seen separately and we will explain how they are connected.

i. Security for persons and communities

What evidence and insights have been gained from the 2018 ToC?

The 2018 ToC was largely focused on institutional interventions aimed at the supply side of security (e.g. security sector reform). Since then increasing evidence suggests that a lack of people-centred security is a key driver of instability and insecurity,³⁷ and that, in general, increasing local resilience of people should be central to international cooperation.

This means that our work on security needs to go beyond institutional aspects to focus on individuals and communities themselves. This work is strongly connected to the fields of protection in the humanitarian realm, civilian harm reduction, community peacebuilding, community security and unarmed civilian protection approaches.³⁸

Objective

We see improved safety and security of people and their communities as a core objective of our work. To reach this objective we aim to work with people and communities that are experiencing insecurity caused by individual or organised state or non-state armed and non-armed actors, and to support them in applying non-violent approaches to conflict prevention and resolution. The goal is to contribute to empowering people and communities to break violent conflict cycles and thereby reduce the levels of violence and fear experienced.

Approach

We have not had structural engagements in this field of interventions and therefore this part of our ToC is tentative and subject to an adaptive approach. Through learning of interventions in this field, our understanding of the topic and which interventions work will increase. Interventions can range from organising physical protection for individual people, to strengthening personal and community conflict management behaviours and mechanisms (through, for example, unarmed civilian protection), and to community security programmes, including efforts to enhance the interface

³⁷ Pathways for peace rapport, DCAF People Centred Approach study (2022, forthcoming)

³⁸ See for example: [Human Security Tools – The Human Security Unit](#), United Nations; The Community Security Handbook, Saferworld (2014), <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/806-communitysecurity-handbook>; Protection of Civilians data and reports, PAX, <https://protectionofcivilians.org/publications/>; The Unarmed Civilian Protection Manual, Nonviolent Peaceforce (2021), <https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/ucp-manual/>.

between demand and supply of security. Within these interventions we aim to focus on gender-responsive and inclusive security mechanisms,³⁹ mental health and psychological support, and promotion of non-violent conflict resolution pathways and infrastructures.

Assumptions

We assume that:

- If people are empowered to find ways to break systemic cycles of violent conflict in nonviolent ways, and if local communities are empowered to voice their security needs and concerns effectively (demand side);
- If people and communities are willing and able to invest in non-violent conflict resolution behaviours and mechanisms, and invest in relations with security providers, and if the trust in these non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms and the responsiveness of security providers to their security needs increases;
- Then local resilience to violent conflict will increase, non-violent conflict resolution will increase, trust of people in the extent to which security providers guarantee security for all will increase, and the risk of violent escalation of (local, regional or national) conflict related to matters of security provision will lower, contributing to a more peaceful society.

ii. Governance and reform of the security sector

What evidence and insights have been gained from the 2018 ToC?

It is clear that investing in the reform and governance of security sectors is still very much needed. The need for an integrated approach of diplomacy and development, the importance of local, national and regional political buy-in to achieve sustainable change, the centrality of advocating for an approach where the needs and protection of people are central, and the continued need to view security sector governance and reform processes as long-term change trajectories remain evident.⁴⁰

Most international support for the security sector is targeted at institutions and comes in the form of training. The focus is less on long-term governance support and there is a disconnect with the local level. As a result, there is a perceived mismatch between the supply and demand of security, leading to (unintended) negative effects, such as an inability to respond effectively to security concerns of communities and consequently less trust in security services. Thus, the social contract is not functioning well.

It is important to address this by including the local level, communities, civil society, women and youth into more traditional institutional security sector governance and reform processes and invest in those places where supply and demand interact. In order to create more adaptive and sensitive programming, more flexibility and better coordination is needed. An integrated approach, where interventions are not solitary but part of a broader political and development strategy, is therefore crucial for sustainable results.

Objective

The aim is to ensure an effective and accountable security sector that is professional and transparent and which has full respect for human rights and the rule of law. This is fundamental for addressing

³⁹ [Research](#) shows that women's participation in the security sector leads to significantly lower rates of violence and the use of force (UN Women. (2015). *A Global Study*).

⁴⁰ [S/RES/2553 \(2020\)](#); UNSG report on security sector governance and reform (forthcoming, 2022).

instability and insecurity – and as such for sustainable peace and development.⁴¹ This objective is strongly linked with political processes (e.g. peace agreements at national level), as much as it is technical and related to wider root causes of conflict. It entails rebalancing the power relations between actors regarding the monopoly on the use of force – and is therefore politically sensitive.

Effectiveness and responsiveness refer to whether the provision of security is successfully achieved and responds to the needs of citizens, ultimately putting the principal protection of civilians central in policies and implementation. Accountability and transparency ensure that oversight, control and civilian participation mechanisms are in place to assess whether or not security actors adhere to the law, and that they are held accountable and effectively sanctioned if they do not. Inclusiveness refers to whether the security sector is representative of society and includes members of all social groups at all levels, in particular women and youth.⁴² The aim must be to ensure equal gender representation throughout the security sector and in its interface mechanisms with society, because only a security sector that effectively responds to the needs of women and girls, as well as men and boys, can be described as well-governed.⁴³

Approach

DSH works by means of an integrated approach, in cooperation with the MFA Security Policy Department, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Justice and Security. The instruments used can be financial support for specific programmes or support through deployment of (expert) personnel with third organisations, missions and operations. The current preferential areas of intervention are: the prevention of and accountability for gender-based violence contributing to the Women Peace and Security agenda;⁴⁴ support for the improvement of integrating (international human rights and humanitarian) legal standards into security providers' policies and operations; improving mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) mechanisms in security institutions; supporting people-centred/community-oriented protection policies and practice; strengthening the protection of civilians in policies and practice; and investing in civilian oversight, transparency and accountability mechanisms for the security sector.

Assumptions

We assume that:

- If security services are designed and used within a specific mandate and as service delivery mechanisms around the principle that they serve primarily to protect people based on (international) human rights and legal standards; whereby, for example, the military has different roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis the police (for which a broadly supported sectoral political and development strategy is important);⁴⁵
- If there is political space, willingness and capacity in host countries to engage with security actors and improve its governance (including to increase transparency and allow civilian

⁴¹ [S/RES/2553 \(2020\)](#); [S/RES/2151 \(2014\)](#); OECD DAC (2017). Ministerial Statement *key policy and operational comments from the implementation framework for security system reform*. [OECD DAC \(2007\) Handbook on Security System Reform](#).

⁴² [DCAF-ISSAT \(2012\)](#). *SSR in a nutshell: Manual for introductory training on security sector reform*.

⁴³ [DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women \(2019\)](#), "A Security Sector Governance Approach to Women, Peace and Security", in *Gender and Security Toolkit*. Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women. See also the [DCAF-Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance \(2020\)](#). *Gender and Security toolkit*. See also [DCAF-Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, \(2020\)](#), *Bridging the distance – lessons learnt from a bottom-up approach to gender and security in rural Colombia*.

⁴⁴ (2020) National Action Plan 1325-IV Women, Peace and Security

⁴⁵ [DCAF \(2017\)](#). Tool 2 : Security Sector Reform Programming - International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT).

oversight mechanisms to scrutinise policies and actions of the security sector), as well as willingness to learn from critique and improve/change behaviour of security providers;^{46,47}

- If there is a willingness of the population and state security institutions to engage and communicate with each other based on the principle that security provision is a service which attends to the needs of the population;⁴⁸
- Then a people-centred security sector can strengthen the legitimacy of the state and its social contract with the population and can contribute to improved local perceptions of security, a reduction in violence (conflict prevention) and increased local resilience.

iii. Mine action

What evidence and insights have been gained from the 2018 ToC?

We have learned that Mine Action not only contributes to physical security but to many other aspects of human security, including the return of internally displaced people and refugees to their place of origin, land productivity, food security and economic security. Our holistic approach to Mine Action reflects the importance of those aspects that contribute to the resilience of communities and the responsiveness of governments to mine risks. In this approach we recognise the importance of economic, mental and psychosocial support for survivors.

Objective

We aim to prevent deaths and injuries linked to explosive devices, improve the quality of life of survivors of explosive devices, and contribute to more prosperous communities in demined areas.

Approach

Mines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war present a direct and daily threat to the security of people in affected areas years after the end of armed conflicts, negatively affecting people's physical and mental health and preventing them from rebuilding their communities. At the same time, mine action is a type of intervention that can only be provided after a conflict has ended and there is enough security and political space for mine personnel to deploy and operate safely. It is one of the first activities needed to enable people to return to their homes and rebuild their lives and communities. Our support enables civilians to return to mine affected areas by clearing contaminated residential areas, agricultural areas and roads. It contributes to the safety of civilians by providing risk education and supports survivors through economic, physical and psychosocial assistance. To achieve our objective, we cooperate with national and local authorities, specialised international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), multilateral institutions and bilateral donors, in a common effort to achieve a mine-free world by 2025, in line with the Ottawa Convention and based on the Oslo Action Plan.

⁴⁶ See for example: Berg, LA, *Governing Security After War: The Politics of Institutional Change in the Security Sector*, Oxford University Press (2022); *Elite Bargains and Political Deals*, FCDO (2018), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elite-bargains-and-political-deals>.

⁴⁷ See for example: *Public Oversight of the Security Sector, a handbook for Civil Society Organizations*, DCAF and UNDP (2008), <https://www.undp.org/publications/public-oversight-security-sector-handbook-civil-societyorganizations>.

⁴⁸ See for example: [Towards a better practice framework in security sector reform, International Alert, Saferworld & Clingendael \(2002\)](https://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Towards-Better-Practice-Framework-SSR-EN-2010.pdf); <https://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Towards-Better-Practice-Framework-SSR-EN-2010.pdf> and [the OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform](https://www.oecd.org/dac/handbook-on-security-system-reform/).

Assumptions

We assume that:

- If mine action is recognised in national strategic objectives and integrated into relevant stabilisation, humanitarian, development and peacebuilding plans, projects and financial investments, then mine action will be more effective and relevant than when international partners provide stand-alone mine projects;
- If mine action includes interventions to support the mental, physical and economic wellbeing of survivors, then survivors will have a better life and contribute positively to their communities and societies;
- If national and local mine authorities are in the lead and recognised as such by the public, not overshadowed by visibility of international actors, then the legitimacy of national and local authorities will increase;
- If mine action services and post-clearance benefits are, and are perceived to be, delivered equally to all marginalised groups, then mine action will contribute to more equal health and economic outcomes for marginalised communities.

Priority Area 2: Rule of law and people-centred justice

Our rule of law and justice assistance is based on the assumption that addressing people's justice needs is an essential element of the social contract and contributes to social cohesion, prevention of conflict and sustainable peace.⁴⁹ The overall objective is to contribute to SDG16.3 (promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all) and close the global justice gap by helping people resolve their justice problems and address grievances.

Our work focuses on the following three sub-components: access to justice with a focus on 'those furthest behind'; victim-centred transitional justice; and increased international (political and financial) support for SDG16.3, with a focus on 'those furthest behind'.

i. Access to justice with a focus on 'those furthest behind'

What evidence and insights have been gained from the 2018 ToC?

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, it was estimated that 1.5 billion people had a civil, administrative or criminal justice problem they were unable to resolve and 253 million lived in extreme conditions of injustice with no legal protection.⁵⁰ Since then, Covid has significantly increased this already large justice gap. A lack of equal access to justice for all can drive instability and insecurity – and as such hinders sustainable development.⁵¹

⁴⁹ In the World Justice Project's 2018 General Population Poll (GPP) of approximately 1,000 people in each of 101 countries, 43% of respondents who experienced justice problems said that their lives were adversely impacted. With regard to economic impacts, 23% lost their job or had to relocate as a result of the problem. [World Justice Project \(2019\). Global Insights on Access to Justice. World Justice Project. Washington, DC.](#)

⁵⁰ [Task Force on Justice \(2019\). Justice for All – Final Report. New York: Center on International Cooperation.](#)

⁵¹ In the World Justice Project's 2018 General Population Poll (GPP) of approximately 1,000 people in each of 101 countries, 43% of respondents who experienced justice problems said that their lives were adversely impacted. With regard to economic impacts, 23% lost their job or had to relocate as a result of the problem. [World Justice Project \(2019\). Global Insights on Access to Justice. World Justice Project. Washington, DC.](#)

Our focus is on ‘those left furthest behind’. This is based on insights into the lack of equality regarding access to justice.⁵² Disadvantaged communities often experience severe obstacles in accessing justice and are in need of increased legal empowerment.⁵³ It has, for example, been found that for women experiencing violence, legal empowerment and the set-up of specific justice services for them can significantly help to reduce violence and oppression.⁵⁴ Furthermore, refugees and internally displaced people face very specific justice challenges that are often not addressed; this can significantly reduce people’s trust in the justice sector.⁵⁵⁵⁶

Objective

Our objective is to increase the number of people with access to institutions and mechanisms to address and resolve justice problems. While it may differ per context, our focus is on improving access to justice for ‘those left furthest behind’, in particular women, detainees, internally displaced people and refugees, and those dealing with justice problems caused by climate change.

Approach

We work through a people-centred approach. This means that – whether addressing legal problems regarding land or family disputes or addressing gross human rights violations – people’s justice needs are the starting point. Based on what these needs are, support is provided to address and find solutions to justice problems. This can, for example, include assistance to improve institutional responses to people’s needs as well as legal aid and direct legal services. Assistance can also include support to strengthen widely used customary or informal justice mechanisms, as long as these are inclusive and accord with human rights.

Assumptions

We assume that:

- If people can voice their justice needs effectively (demand side), if justice policies reflect their needs, and if justice providers, both formal and informal mechanisms, are responsive to these needs (supply side), then this will lead to increased levels of trust and a reduction in conflict and violence;
- If we work through an evidence-based approach, which builds on collecting empirical data on justice needs in our focus countries, targeted and relevant assistance can be provided;
- If we, our implementing partners, and the country partners understand better people’s justice needs and contextual factors that influence these needs, then we will become better in delivering justice reform programmes, tailored to the needs of specific groups.

ii. Victim-centred transitional justice

What evidence and insights have been gained from the 2018 ToC?

⁵² [Task Force on Justice \(2019\). *Justice for All – Final Report*. New York: Center on International Cooperation.](#)

⁵³ [Task Force on Justice \(2019\). *Justice for All – Final Report*. New York: Center on International Cooperation./](#)

⁵⁴ [Panday, P.K. and Rabbani, G. \(2017\). ‘Do legal empowerment activities of NGOs reduce gender-based violence in Bangladesh?’, *Int. J. Gender Studies in Developing Societies*, 2:1, p.1–18.](#)

⁵⁴ [Panday, P.K. and Rabbani, G. \(2017\). ‘Do legal empowerment activities of NGOs reduce gender-based violence in Bangladesh?’, *Int. J. Gender Studies in Developing Societies*, 2:1, p.1–18.](#)

⁵⁵ [Kavanaugh G et al \(2018\). *Women Officers, Gender Violence and Human Capital: Evidence from Women's Justice Centers in Peru*. PSE Working Papers. HAL.](#)

⁵⁶ [Leigh Grace B \(2018\). *Complex Vulnerability and Access to Justice for Former Refugee Populations: The Case of the Somali Zigula in Tanzania*. Justice Sector Training, Research and Coordination \(JUSTRAC\)* Research Report. University of South Carolina.](#)

Since 2018, several lessons have been learned on transitional justice. Transitional justice needs to be tailored to local contexts and approached in a politically sensitive way in order to be an instrument for transformative political and societal change. Transitional justice requires context-specific and locally led measures. Innovation is needed in the development of effective context-specific transitional justice measures, whereby meaningful victim participation is key and the root causes of conflict and violence are addressed.⁵⁷ Effective international support must go beyond technical approaches or ‘tick box’ exercises. More needs to be done in connecting experiences from the ground with research and policy development in the area of transitional justice to devise more effective measures.

Objective

Our main objective is for transitional justice mechanisms to more effectively address human rights violations and the root causes that give rise to instability and insecurity.

Approach

We work with partners and engage politically to contribute to transitional justice processes and to improve the way in which transitional justice mechanisms are supported. Our focus is on ensuring that transitional justice processes are driven by local priorities and needs of victims. As such, we provide assistance to transitional justice mechanisms as part of political and peace processes and support to civil society organisations, victim representatives and communities to strengthen their meaningful participation from the onset. Integration of mental health and psychosocial support for victims will be an area of focus.

Transitional justice also links to the accountability agenda of The Netherlands, which supports international courts, tribunals and commissions of inquiry, for instance the ICC and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM).

Assumptions

We assume that:

- If our interventions both restore the dignity of victims and address community grievances, further insecurity and instability can be prevented, improving trust in public institutions;⁵⁸
- If partners can and will work in complementary ways – connecting national-led transitional justice/peace processes to grassroots support and victim participation, then transitional justice interventions will become more effective.

iii. Expanded political (and financial) global support for people-centred A2J (SDG 16.3)

What evidence and insights have been gained from the 2018 ToC?

Political commitments do not necessarily lead to a shift of focus to people-centred justice at country level or to more coherence among international actors. More is needed to maximise improvements to people’s access to justice. Furthermore, while global data on the justice gap exists, updated evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the global justice gap in different countries around the world is still limited. More effort also needs to be made to generate data and evidence on what works and what is scalable at national level.

⁵⁷ ICTJ. (2019). *On Solid Ground. Building sustainable peace and development after massive human rights violations*

⁵⁸ [Impunity Watch \(2015\), Scoping Study: Transitional Justice Practice: Looking Back, Moving Forward, policy handbook 2015](#)

Objective

Our objective is to promote people-centred justice globally, ensuring more political and financial commitment to close the justice gap and to strengthen collaboration between countries and (international) justice actors.

Approach

Our approach is to work with countries and (international) justice partners to collectively advocate for the advancement of people-centred justice and SDG16.3. The Justice Action Coalition (JAC) – which we launched in 2021 jointly with Pathfinders, G7+ Secretariat and the Elders – is a key platform for this work⁵⁹. We build on the leadership role of The Netherlands in the field of justice to facilitate dialogue at global, regional and national levels to exchange on good practices and challenges. Working with other countries and partners we also aim to generate more knowledge and data, as well as evidence on how to maximise impact and make justice interventions scalable. Lastly, we aim to move towards a more operational platform where – based on specific country contexts – coherence of international assistance to advance people-centred justice is improved, with national actors, both governmental and non-governmental, in the driver seat.

Assumptions

We assume that:

- If there is enough commitment among Justice Action Coalition members to advance people-centred justice, further progress will be made on achieving SDG16.3 at country levels;
- If operational country-focused justice platform would exist, this would generate more coherence among international actors at country levels and maximise impact.

Priority Area 3: Peacebuilding and inclusive governance

Our work on this priority focuses on efforts to sustain peace and promote inclusive governance, fostering a renewed social contract with enhanced levels of interpersonal and institutional trust, inclusion and participation. Such a renewed social contract, characterised by greater legitimacy, accountability and inclusion as well as increased social cohesion and trust, is an important element in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As such, it should contribute to diminishing vulnerabilities to disruption and help to strengthen resilience for peace: empowering societies to address economic and social challenges that weaken their security and stability themselves – and to withstand and recover from shocks.

This translates into two sub-themes under this priority: 1) people-centred, inclusive governance, which includes efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, make political decision making more inclusive, and foster trust building; and 2) conflict prevention and peacebuilding, which includes efforts to enable formal and informal actors and institutions to help prevent, resolve and mitigate conflict, and strengthen resilience for peace in society.

i. People-centred and inclusive governance

What evidence and insights have been gained from the 2018 ToC?

⁵⁹ The guiding ambition of the JAC is to close the global justice gap and the goal is to achieve measurable progress in justice outcomes for people and communities by the second SDG Summit in 2023. Through the JAC, like-minded countries and organisations will raise the ambition on SDG16 and commit to transform justice systems by putting people at the centre.

Since the 2018 ToC there has been an increased recognition of the key roles and impact of a frayed or broken social contract and of exclusion as drivers of conflict; the cross-cutting importance of inclusive governance as a theme and a lens through which to understand other problems; and the essential role of inclusive institutions.^{60,61} What has become clearer is the importance of and the focus on local ownership and resilience. However, at the same time we see that there is limited chance of local initiatives having sustainable impact where there is an absence of central government support and ownership.⁶² Elites⁶³ and political parties⁶⁴ can make major contributions to either building a functioning social contract or perpetuating weak and exclusionary state-society relations that fuel conflict. This underlines the necessity for a comprehensive approach at local, regional and national levels. An additional lesson is that inclusive processes do not necessarily bring about inclusive outcomes⁶⁵ and may even cause violence.⁶⁶

Objective

We aim to enable stakeholders in the social contract to strengthen social cohesion and increase trust between all actors in societies. This includes helping them to create an enabling environment through strengthening democratic institutions and making political decision-making more inclusive, and also by strengthening the voice and ownership of the people in political decision-making processes.

Approach

We will contribute to this objective by supporting efforts to strengthen:

1. The inclusive and just nature of formal and informal (political) decision-making processes, based on the perspectives and ownership of the people, thereby increasing trust between actors.

⁶⁰ (ECDPM, p3): ...the SDGs (...) represent a “powerful framework for transformation that is grounded in a shared understanding of inclusive institutions as both intrinsically valuable and indispensable for tackling poverty, inequality and exclusion and for achieving peace and development”. OECD. (February, 2020). ‘What does “inclusive governance” mean? Clarifying core concepts and testing key links’. A Practice Note. OECD Development Papers No 27, p.11.

⁶¹ (ECDPM, p8-9): Social, ethnic or racial divisions hamper efforts to improve governance, put in place fair institutions and foster economic opportunity. This, in turn, tends to create a zero-sum competition for power and resources and a huge disconnect between elites and people (as recently illustrated by the coup in Mali). To prevent these vicious circles, it is argued that ‘inclusiveness’ should get a much higher profile among the international donor community. Kaplan, S. (2015). *Establishing inclusive societies in fragile states. Expert Analysis*. Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) (p.1-3)

⁶² ECDPM, p.7

⁶³ Molenaar, F. “...inclusiveness of underrepresented elites and groups in existing political settlements is a critical condition for improved stability”, p. 4. See, for example, de Juan, A. (2020). ‘Heterogeneous effects of development aid on violent unrest in postwar countries: Village-level evidence from Nepal.’ *International Studies Quarterly*, 64:1, p.168-182; Call, C. (2012). *Why Peace Fails: The causes and prevention of civil war recurrence*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

⁶⁴ NOREF. (2015). *Political parties and the social contract in fragile states*. p.1

⁶⁵ ECDPM “...the tendency to ‘go local’ as more results can be achieved at this level without addressing the structural constraints for improved governance at macro level” p.14

⁶⁶ Molenaar F., “A distinction therefore needs to be made between inclusiveness as a process and inclusiveness and stability as an outcome – with the former not necessarily resulting in the latter.” (p.4) Also: North, Wallis and Weingast (2009) *Violence and Social Order: A conceptual framework for interpreting recorded human history*, Cambridge University Press, New York; Rocha Menocal, A. (2020). *What does “inclusive governance” mean? Clarifying theory and practice*. OECD Development Policy Papers; Castillejo, C. (2014). *Promoting inclusion in political settlements: a priority for international actors?* The Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre

2. The responsive, accountable, transparent, representative and inclusive nature of institutions (political, government) at all levels, and help enable them to prevent conflict, address instability and insecurity.
3. The voice and ownership of local actors, including individuals and especially women and young people, in political decision-making processes.

It is important to note here that we consider inclusive governance to be both a theme and a lens. As such, many of the characteristics of the efforts described here apply across all of our work, and are equally relevant for activities under our broader MFA programming and policy. Furthermore, we wish to underline that while many different actors are involved in formal and informal governance processes (government, political, traditional and community leaders at all levels, CSOs, the media and of course people themselves), we choose to focus our efforts primarily, but not exclusively, on a selection of these actors: democratic institutions and people.

Assumptions

We assume that:

- If the social contract is an effective mode to consider things, then using it as a concept to analyse societies and conflict will lead to more insightful, holistic, and effective international support for inclusive governance;
- If we provide support for governance at different levels - local and central; formal and informal, then we will reach better outcomes and more sustainable impact.
- If we help increase the responsiveness, accountability, transparency and representative and inclusive nature of institutions, they will be better equipped and enabled to prevent conflict, address instability and insecurity.
- If we base our programming on the perspectives and ownership of local people – especially women and young people – and if we strengthen their voice and ownership in political decision-making processes, then they will feel more included and the social contract, social inclusion and trust will be strengthened.
- If we invest in long-term involvement at national and local levels, based on a thorough understanding of local context and dynamics, political-economy analyses, flexibility and risk acceptance, then our effectiveness in strengthening inclusive governance will increase;
- If we work in contexts where informal governance mechanisms are legitimate and effective, then we should also support informal governance mechanisms to improve outcomes.

ii. Peacebuilding, including conflict prevention

Peace building

The concept of peacebuilding, or, as it has been described more recently, sustaining peace, from an international policy perspective is considered to be a comprehensive, coordinated and coherent approach to prevent the outbreak, continuation, escalation and recurrence of violent conflict.

What evidence and insights have been gained from the 2018 ToC?

The concept of peacebuilding has gained renewed traction over the last couple of years, driven mostly by the UN, through a new framework of 'sustaining peace' that moved the focus from postconflict peacebuilding and reconstruction to supporting peacebuilding before, during and after

conflict (across the peace continuum).⁶⁷ This underlined the necessity for a coherent approach that incorporates all three pillars of the UN system – human rights, peace and security, and development – to come to a more holistic, long-term, multi-dimensional approach for preventing armed conflict, mitigating its impact when it does occur, and supporting governments and their citizens in achieving lasting peace.⁶⁸ This includes efforts ranging from conflict resolution, peace dialogue and mediation to governance, transitional justice and security sector reform.

This concept was also recognised through and supported by insights from our own programming, such as the mid-term review of the Addressing Root Causes Fund (2020), which concluded that individual activities in fragile areas can only generate a solid impact if they are embedded in an integrated approach with mutually supportive activities and linked to local and national policies and frameworks. This underlines the need for a complementary approach at different levels of intervention, strengthening coherence between central and local efforts.

The need for adequate and predictable financing has led to a call for massive investment in prevention and peacebuilding, as well as to the proposal by UNSG Guterres in his “New Agenda for Peace”⁶⁹ for an enhanced role for the UN Peacebuilding Commission of which the Netherlands is currently member. Other topics that have gained traction as cross cutting issues in peacebuilding are climate change and health, including mental health and psychosocial support.

These insights pushed us to broaden our scope: whereas our former ToC focused mainly on peace processes and peace mechanisms, we now more explicitly include all efforts to prevent (violent) conflict, linking our peacebuilding efforts to other priority areas of this ToC where relevant. The Netherlands will continue to play a meaningful role in international discussions, making the connection to our country level programming where possible.

Objective

We aim to enable stakeholders to contribute to sustaining peace, so as to prevent the outbreak, continuation, escalation and recurrence of violent conflict.

Approach

We will contribute to this objective by supporting efforts:

1. focused on conflict transformation and resolution at different levels, including third-party mediation and local community dialogue and negotiation skills training;
2. that improve the social cohesion, trust and resilience of people and communities;
3. to enhance the quality, coherence, effectiveness and conflict sensitivity of international support to fragile and conflict-affected countries, in order to achieve sustainable peace.

We work with a host of different partners, ranging from NGOs to multilateral organisations in our focus countries, and also contribute to organisations providing worldwide support for sustaining peace needs. Overall, supporting peace efforts means to a large extent enabling stakeholders to respond to conflict prevention and peacebuilding opportunities as they arise across the

⁶⁷ This framework was first set out in the 2016 twin resolutions : Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly, on 27 April 2016 ([A/70/262](#)) and Resolution 2282 (2016) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7680th meeting, on 27 April 2016 ([S/RES/2282](#)). And subsequently confirmed by the 2020 twin resolutions: Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly, on 21 December 2020 ([A/RES/75/201](#)) and Resolution 2558 (2020) adopted by the Security Council on 21 December 2020 ([S/RES/2558](#)).

⁶⁸ [Metcalf-Hough, V., McKechnie, & S. Pantuliano \(2017\). Delivering the UN ‘sustaining peace’ agenda. ODI.](#)

⁶⁹ [\(2021\). Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary General. The United Nations](#)

humanitarian-development-peace nexus in a specific conflict setting. The topic of mental health and psychosocial support deserves special attention in our peacebuilding efforts considering the expertise of the Netherlands on this topic.

Assumptions

We assume that:

- If we invest in the agency of peacebuilders and communities (people centred approach) to engage in mediation and community dialogue, this will lead to more effective and sustainable conflict prevention and peacebuilding;
- If peacebuilding and decision-making processes are inclusive of all segments of society, including groups in situation of vulnerability, then the outcomes will become fairer and more sustainable;
- If peacebuilding efforts include mental health and psychosocial support, this increases the resilience and agency of people and communities;
- If international partners cooperate across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, then international support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding will be more coherent and effective.

5.2 Cross-cutting themes

We explicitly aim to connect the different levels of action – local, national, regional and international – to address the many different challenges that apply to these different levels of action, and to ensure sustainable impact. At all levels, we engage in and promote a people-led and people-centred approach, in which communities are in the driving seat in determining their needs and possible solutions. Equally, inclusiveness is a key component of our work across all our thematic areas. Conflict sensitivity is also central in all efforts, based on an inclusive conflict analysis which considers vulnerable groups such as women and youth. Remaining grievances as well as trauma can cause (re)lapse into violent conflict and should be properly addressed. In order to truly help enable people to sustainably build peace and resolve conflict, the mental and psychosocial wellbeing of individuals and communities will receive due attention in our analyses, programmatic support and policy influencing.

i. People-led, locally driven (localisation)

Our focus on strengthened **social cohesion and trust**; on **voice, ownership, inclusiveness, accountability and legitimacy** guides the shape and ambitions of our policy and programming. We translate this focus into an ambition to work according to the principle of equal partnerships and to promote local leadership in prioritizing our programming objectives and outputs. In line with Dutch commitments under the Grand Humanitarian Bargain, we aim to increase SRoL partnerships with local organisations. We believe that closer and direct cooperation with local individuals, communities and organisations improves the quality, impact and sustainability of our interventions.

We recognise many of these considerations through the **People Centred Approach** that has become part and parcel of our SRoL work over the years. We are convinced that where identifying and addressing root causes of conflict is key to promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies and create more inclusive and resilient societies, this can best be led by people and communities themselves.⁷⁰ The people centred approach puts needs, experiences and ideas for solution of

⁷⁰ The idea is not new and flows from people-centred development, as opposed to development measured on the basis of economic progress. Since the 1990s people-centred development has commonly been used by development organisations and donors.

problems of people central to programming. The perspective of the local population is the starting point of our programming.

Our **localisation agenda** attempts to go a step further to encourage a paradigm shift in the way we set our priorities; build relations of trust rather than control; address power imbalances; deal with risk, reporting and accountability; and share ownership. With the ultimate aim to put local actors in

the driver's seat. This ambition aligns with a broader societal movement that calls for a critical reassessment of the international aid system, including its inherent power imbalances.

The debate on how to put the ambitions of this localization agenda into practice is still ongoing globally, within our Ministry, with our partner organisations and with local actors themselves. We are faced with institutional challenges, such as funding models, risk management requirements and political prioritisation realities. At the same time the localisation agenda requires a different mindset of donors, partners and local people and communities. Applying the localisation agenda is relatively uncharted territory, which is currently dominated by discussions in the humanitarian field. Evidence for and critical assessment of localisation, including whether the localisation approach indeed leads to the envisaged change⁷¹ in the SRoL sector and whether it is indeed possible to adapt development distribution systems, will therefore be a central element in our SRoL learning agenda in strong connection with other development sectors and the humanitarian field.

ii. Inclusivity, gender and youth

Inclusive decision making and equitable access to power and resources is more just and – often – leads to better and more sustainable results. To understand the environment in which we work and develop effective policy and programming, we need to understand how perceived and constructed identities may be both empowering and oppressing. In fragile and conflict-affected situations, identity can be politicised to feed or resolve conflict. To see the big picture, we use intersectional analyses and approaches to policy making and programming. This means taking into account the way in which intersecting and overlapping identities affect people's life experiences and their access to power and resources.

Specifically, on gender this means that with the help of a gender analysis (ideally part of an intersectional analysis) interventions can avoid exacerbating gender inequality and contribute to gender equality.

Furthermore, we aim to achieve specific policy and programming goals when it comes to inclusion. We will do this first and foremost through the full, effective and meaningful participation of women and youth in issues of peace and security. This ToC is therefore closely linked to the Ministry's efforts on women, peace and security.⁷²

The meaningful participation of youth is increasingly a priority within our development policy and within the work on SDG16, following UN resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535. While very much affected by instability and conflict, young people are the least involved in conflict resolution. Therefore, we aim to incorporate a youth-sensitive lens in our work by consulting and engaging them consistently and by removing barriers that might hinder their meaningful participation, as well as encouraging

⁷¹ IOB (2021). *Interrogating the evidence base on humanitarian localisation*.

⁷² This is laid down in the [National Action Plan](#) and Implementation Plan (to be finalised) and the [WPS subsidy framework](#) (programming).

intergenerational cooperation so that meaningful youth engagement will be encouraged by older generations as well.

iii. Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

Conflict negatively affects mental wellbeing, social cohesion, interpersonal trust and trust in leaders and institutions. This is why the Netherlands has since 2020 promoted the integration of MHPSS and peacebuilding in multilateral as well as bilateral programming and policy discussions. There is broad agreement that peace cannot be built on broken minds. Systematically applying a psychosocial lens and integrating MHPSS is expected to contribute to the effectiveness of our efforts towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies. It will also support a people-led approach, as MHPSS enables

people to gain agency over their lives and their role in society, and hence contributes to their capacity to enhance peace in society.

We will include mental health and psychosocial dynamics in our conflict analyses and peacebuilding project design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. Budgets and mandates need to be more inclusive of MHPSS at a structural level. Without this, implementing organisations cannot afford to integrate MHPSS into their activities, local demand for psychosocial support will not find a response, and the evidence base cannot be strengthened. The guiding principle for Dutch efforts for peaceful, just and inclusive societies is therefore structural application of a psychosocial lens to analyses and inclusion of MHPSS where possible and relevant in programming.

More evidence on the impact of including MHPSS in our work needs to be gathered, and we will engage in and promote learning in this regard.

6. Geographic focus and actors & stakeholders

6.1 Priority countries and regions

In the interest of less fragmentation and impact in the field of Security and Rule of Law, a number of focus countries for SRoL funding have been selected. Several evaluations, including the elaborate IOB evaluation ‘Less Pretention, More Realism,’⁷³ have shown that large numbers of geographically dispersed activities impede the realisation of sustainable results. In addition, more focus meets the need of more local and context-specific programming. The selection is based on identified needs, our added value, the contribution of existing programming to our ToC, and links with other policy goals. Other considerations are alignment with other donors and institutions.

The following list is not exhaustive because specific efforts or limited central funding in some other countries is still possible. This selection does not apply to the Stability Fund that DSH manages with the Security Policy Department (DVB). Furthermore, this focus does not pertain to local and global advocacy on SRoL themes.

⁷³ [IOB \(2019\). Evaluatie Wederopbouw- en SPCC-programma's en ARC-tenderproces – Less Pretension, More Realism.](#)

At the moment the focus countries are Iraq, Tunisia, Palestinian Territories, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, Uganda, South Sudan, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Burundi and the regional Great Lakes programme. This is subject to change. As described previously, for all these priority countries the ToC has to be contextualised. Of course, in many cases the contextualisation is not only national, but also regional and local. Lessons learned in these priority countries feedback into policy, programming and the SRoL ToC.

6.2 Actors and stakeholders

The SRoL agenda is carried and implemented by a number of diverse actors and stakeholders. The Netherlands is but one of the actors contributing to this agenda. Wherever possible, we seek to amplify our contribution through collaboration with a broad range of actors and stakeholders. It is through collaboration that we aim to reach our objectives, achieve impact, be more effective and efficient, learn, contribute to alignment and collaboration, and influence policy.

Within the MFA, the main actors responsible for implementing SRoL policy are DSH and SRoL colleagues at embassies. Of course, even though our work has a concrete thematic and geographic focus, it is also part of our broader foreign, development and security policy, and as such relates to the work of other colleagues within the Ministry, as well as within the broader Dutch government. When security, development and diplomatic actors are all present, we aim for an integrated approach, developing joint analyses and setting common goals⁷⁴.

In general, depending on the theme and where appropriate and opportune, we work closely with other directorates within our ministry, for example: with the Security Policy Department (DVB) on security sector governance and reform; with the Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG) on water and conflict as well as climate change and conflict; with the Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE) on the peace dividend; and with several directorates on the Humanitarian Development-Peace Nexus. Additionally, our objectives may be closely related to the work of other directorates, such as with the Social Development Department (DSO) or Multilateral Organisations and Human Rights Department (DMM). Finally, for specific areas of our work we might engage with other government ministries, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Justice and Security. And again, the nature and intensity of this collaboration and integration may be different between our programming and policy in The Hague and in-country.

In The Hague and at country level, we work closely with actors and stakeholders outside of the Dutch government on shaping, developing, implementing and coordinating programming and policy such as like-minded donors; international organisations such as the UN, World Bank, EU and the OECD; CSOs at international and national level; and, depending on context, formal and informal (groups of) stakeholders at different levels in-country. In the coming period, it is our ambition to step up our engagement with in-country actors and increase their voice and say in shaping our efforts, in our aim to strengthen local resilience.

The EU, UN and World Bank (WB) are key actors in international efforts on peaceful, just and inclusive societies, both from a standard-setting perspective as well as through their substantial (financial) contribution to development cooperation and peacebuilding in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The Netherlands influence multilateral organisations in different ways, for example through

⁷⁴ (2014). *Leidraad Geïntegreerde Benadering. De Nederlandse visie op een samenhangende inzet op veiligheid en stabiliteit in fragiele staten en conflictgebieden (bijlage bij 31787,nr.11).*

international fora such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission, the Pathfinders, the Justice Action Coalition, SDG16 initiative, and the WB Board of Governors, as well as through informal dialogue related to the programmes we fund. Relevant processes we support are, for example, the implementation of the UN Reform Agenda aimed at breaking the silos, the UN Common Agenda, the High-Level Political Forum for the SDGs, and the WB Fragility, Conflict and Violence Strategy.

Finally, we work closely with national and international think tanks and academic institutions to help shape and improve our efforts. Examples are the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) at Clingendael, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), and our Knowledge Platform for Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL).

7. Guiding principles and strategies

7.1 Guiding principles for programming and policy

A further challenge lies in the imperfection of our responses, for instance, the insufficient and in some cases absence of understanding of local perspectives and ownership; poor coordination, collaboration, credibility and trust; and lack of action at different levels in addressing these issues.

This means it is essential that our efforts on our priorities are supported by a better understanding of the issues, joint learning, and improved coordination and collaboration on all levels.

This basic set of guiding principles applies to our programmatic and policy interventions. They should be seen as a whole and should help in the development and assessment of policy and programmatic interventions.

i. **Integrated approach**⁷⁵

We and our partners actively aim for policy and operational coherence, in line with the OECD/DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus⁷⁶. This calls for close collaboration with international partners, both bilateral and multilateral on joint conflict analyses, joint programming and joint learning.

ii. **Evidence- and analysis-based approach**

Policy making is inherently political, and this influences the extent to which evidence can affect policy. Notwithstanding the political context, we take an evidence-based approach and actively improve the evidence base by putting learning at the core of our work. This means that policies and programming are based on analyses of evidence from (academic) research as well as from policy and programming, including progress reports, evaluations and documented outcomes of learning sessions. Furthermore, where possible, evidence developed by other stakeholders in the field of SRoL is used and taken on board.

By clearly articulating the underlying assumptions in our Theory of Change, we aim to actively test the assumptions, facilitate adaptation and systematically strengthen and increase the evidence base of our work. This will also support strategy development, regular review and reflection on progress

⁷⁵ The integrated approach which combines diplomatic, development and defence efforts is discussed above.

⁷⁶ [OECD. \(2022\). DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.](#)

and learning, decision making and ultimately the impact of our policies and programming. In addition, evidence can play a role in influencing policy.

We will require the same process of theory development and testing from the partners that will receive funding and mandates to implement this ToC.

Evidence-based working requires time, a strong MEL system geared towards gathering quality data at outcome level, staff capabilities to analyse and interpret information, and systems and processes that support capturing evidence, learning and related decision making.

We will also work to set a conducive learning culture in DSH and with SRoL colleagues in embassies, jointly with our implementing partners. This will be based on the recognition that decisions and actions are at times based on imperfect information and therefore mistakes are made. In hindsight, it is always easier to understand that alternative approaches would have been more suitable. For learning, however, it is not mistakes that should be punished but rather lack of transparency and honesty in learning from what did not work.

iii. Context-specific

Our work can only be effective if it starts from a good understanding of the context. This ToC presents flexible concepts, priorities and approaches that our programming partners and embassies will contextualise at the programming stage according to regional, national and local contexts. We will select our partners based on their understanding of the context and give them flexibility to adopt and adapt approaches based on a changing context. Whereas learning from other contexts is important and useful, replication without consideration of context leads to failures. One of the recurring lessons learned from international efforts on Security and Rule of Law is that the political, social, economic and cultural context has not always been sufficiently understood, and to the extent it was understood, not always appropriately translated into its interventions.

iv. Preventing violent extremism (PVE) and conflict-sensitive programming

Policy and programming in fragile and conflict-affected settings should be conflict-sensitive. We will base our activities on a thorough, inclusive and ongoing conflict analysis, making necessary adjustments based on contextual changes. The aim is to prevent interventions being unintentionally counterproductive or fuelling (hidden) tensions – in other words, ‘Do No Harm’ – while maximising the potential for peace. Where needed, we reach out to NGOs and knowledge partners to further operationalise the conflict-sensitive approach.

We hold our implementing partners to the same standards and aim to influence other organisations to adopt a conflict-sensitive approach in their work.

In addition to a conflict sensitivity lens, we also encourage the implementation of a preventing violent extremism (PVE) lens. A PVE lens is useful, as the key drivers of violent extremism overlap with the key drivers of instability and insecurity, such as exclusion from accessing basic services, repressive actions by authorities, and a lack of employment opportunities and education. Thus, development interventions on education, employment and good governance should also be considered as relevant instruments for removing the breeding ground for radicalisation towards violent extremism.

7.2 Strategies: Programming and policy influencing

i. Programming

The complex context of fragile and conflict-affected states in which SRoL programming is primarily developed asks for a mix of interventions and channels. On the one hand, SRoL programmes are characteristic in their support for processes that will only lead to change in the mid- to long term, with results that are not always immediately visible nor easily measurable. On the other hand, SRoL programmes are characterised by interventions that might lead to immediate very local context-specific stabilising effects, might deliver quick output results, and are politically relevant and potentially sensitive. SRoL programming therefore needs a balanced mix of:

- *Decentralised programming*: Because we recognise the importance of a deep and thorough knowledge of the local context, we endeavour to ensure that programming is context- and country-specific and that it is planned and implemented at the embassy level through the SRoL experts working in our SRoL focus countries. This enables better and more context-sensitive results to be achieved. We therefore aim to delegate at least two-thirds of the available SRoL budget to the SRoL focus country embassies for them to implement programming that leads to country-specific results under this ToC.
- *Centralised programming*: Central programmes are preferably multiannual, have a larger budget, and include outcomes with a strong regional and/or international policy-influencing component. Long-term programmes have time to realise impacts in the wider thematic field, with the opportunity for a strategy that is flexible, adaptive and aimed at achieving outcome and impact. They are, in principle, limited to focus countries, although exceptions can be made where including other countries is thematically relevant.
- *Localised and small-scale programming*: SRoL interventions can be flexible, small scale, shorter in time, innovative and output oriented, depending on the specific context. Evaluations have shown that within the SRoL field, smaller local partners with extensive knowledge of their own political context are often able to achieve more effective, locally and politically relevant and concrete output results with relatively smaller budgets. This is even more so if they are allowed to apply adaptive approaches. Within our localisation approach we explicitly want to underline that these types of selected interventions are instrumental for SRoL implementation.
- *Adaptive programming*: circumstances can change rapidly in the countries and regions we work in. During implementation, partners also find out what works effectively and what does not. Therefore, we ensure flexibility for adaptive programming, so that strategies and tactics are able to be changed while focus is maintained on set goals.
- *Coherence with regard to*: (1) central and decentralised programmes; (2) coverage of the various SRoL sub-themes and their results frameworks; (3) multiple relations with one (strategic) partner through coordinated relations management; (4) other related instruments like the Stability Fund; and (5) aid channels and modalities.
- *Risk tolerance*: The complex nature of the context of fragile and conflict-affected states requires a relative tolerance of risk. Development results take time and often involve steps back, before moving forward again over time. At the same time continuous engagement, in particular with affected communities, is required to ensure positive results. It is therefore important to have a thorough and realistic insight into the contextual, programmatic and organisational risks involved and make explicit those risks that can be mitigated and those which must be accepted.
- *Multilateral initiatives*: A substantial part of centralised programming will be contributed to multilateral initiatives. Multilateral channels, for example the UN or the World Bank, stimulate more effective delivery of development cooperation through broader scale results, increased donor coordination, better opportunities for collective policy influencing, better information

availability and a place at the table for the MFA and its embassies. Results of individual activities of multilateral channels, however, can be less easily attributed to Dutch contributions.

Therefore, DSH actively promotes harmonisation of indicators used by donors and multilateral institutions. DSH also actively promotes increased and qualitatively better-integrated cooperation within and between multilateral organisations and (I)NGOs, for example by contributing to the UN Peacebuilding Fund for which joint programming is a requirement

- *Multi-donor initiatives:* As SRoL issues are complex and involve many different stakeholders, the coordination of efforts between donors is essential. The Netherlands aims to increase cooperation with other like-minded donors by connecting with the bilateral or multilateral initiatives of others in order to increase collective and more integrated donor support. There is an important role for embassies in SRoL focus countries to identify opportunities in this field.
- *Stabilisation initiatives:* We support international stabilisation initiatives, often in the form of multi-donor trust funds. Although less common, working with local or national stabilisation initiatives is not excluded and priorities will be similar. These trust funds work on issues ranging from rehabilitation to physical reconstruction. They focus on many of our Security and Rule of Law priorities, such as security sector reform and governance, mine action, and access to justice. However, some efforts of stabilisation trust funds fall outside the direct realm of this ToC, such as helping authorities to provide basic services, rebuilding infrastructure and creating labour opportunities. Our approach to these international stabilisation initiatives is twofold. First, we aim to integrate our SRoL priorities into these initiatives. Second, we work to link and integrate stabilisation initiatives to other efforts on building a peaceful, just and inclusive society, such as humanitarian and development efforts. This should help to transition from stabilisation efforts towards broader development and peacebuilding efforts.

ii. Policy influencing

Through our policy-influencing efforts, we aim to support the implementation of this ToC. An effective strategy combines the different instruments available to the MFA – such as diplomacy and programmatic support – rather than approaching them as silos.

Policy influencing needs to be coordinated between the central (DSH and others) and decentralised (embassies) levels to effectively connect multilateral (such as UN, World Bank and EU) to bilateral (government, local multilateral representations) policy influencing. This helps to improve alignment, coordination and collaboration, as well as learning.

Policy influencing and programming can be effectively linked by furthering policy-influencing goals through programmatic support ('ensuring a seat at the table') as well as through developing policyinfluencing strategies based on the successes and lessons learned from programming. Our policyinfluencing efforts are based on evidence and a thorough understanding of the local context and dynamics.

In addition to direct policy influencing, DSH (in coordination with DVB) seconds civil experts with a view to contribute to Security and Rule of Law in support of multilateral civil stabilisation efforts in conflict contexts. Civilian Mission Pool experts are deployed in UN, NATO and EU missions. The specific missions, under whose mandates they work, are selected in line with the priorities of DSH and DVB.

8. Roles and responsibilities in implementation

General

Responsibility for implementing this ToC lies with all those working within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Security and Rule of Law, often in collaboration with other ministries such as the Ministry of Defence. The SRoL themes cannot be looked at separately from other priorities the MFA works on, spanning from security policy including military interventions, climate, gender equality, and civil society support, to human rights and trade policy. Within this section we will not go into all these specific links but will describe who is responsible for the biggest building blocks of our SRoL work.

The DSH teams Stability and Security and Rule of Law and Peacebuilding are responsible for broader policy development and for guiding policy and programming implementation. They work together with thematic departments, regional departments and embassies to translate this ToC into more specific policy and programming for different themes and countries.

For country-specific SRoL policy and programming, responsibility is shared between DSH and embassies. The division of tasks can differ by country. To enhance cooperation and learning, DSHSV/RV and those responsible for SRoL in embassies meet regularly in the Security and Rule of Law Community of Practice.

Policy

When it comes to influencing international policy with the UN, WB, EU and other multilaterals, DSH works together with DMM, DIE and Permanent Representations.

Programming

When it comes to programming, DSH manages central programming and delegates part of its funding to embassies. DSH is responsible for guiding the overall SRoL programming portfolio. For decentralised programming, DSH provides thematic expertise to help develop country-specific programming portfolios.

DSH as experts

On learning, feedback loop and knowledge institutions, DSH is the directorate that works most in fragile and conflict-affected settings. DSH advises other directorates and embassies on working effectively in those settings, primarily on conflict-sensitive working.