



WORKING AREA GOVERNANCE AND PEACE

The relationship between the state and its citizens is crucial for development, where the state offers basic services and security to its citizens as clients and partners, and active citizens are able to claim their rights and influence policies in their interest. "Active citizens and effective states" can jointly make a difference for a just and peaceful society. The Governance and Peace strategy is based on more than six years of experience and lessons learned, and comprises five intervention areas:

- Local democratic governance
- Pro-poor policies
- Conflict transformation
- Culture as artistic expressions
- Migration and development

Downward accountability and conflict sensitivity are cross-cutting issues, which will be addressed by projects of all working areas.

CONTEXT: DEMOCRACY IS ON THE AGENDA AGAIN!

The steady increase of democracies after the cold war had stagnated and the conviction that elections lead to democratic states proved illusionary. Halted democracies, with weak state institutions, and lacking participation and accountability mechanisms, are now confronted with widespread corruption and frequently restricted civil society. Nevertheless, with the Arab Spring, a revival of the idea of democracy is taking place and may offer new opportunities.

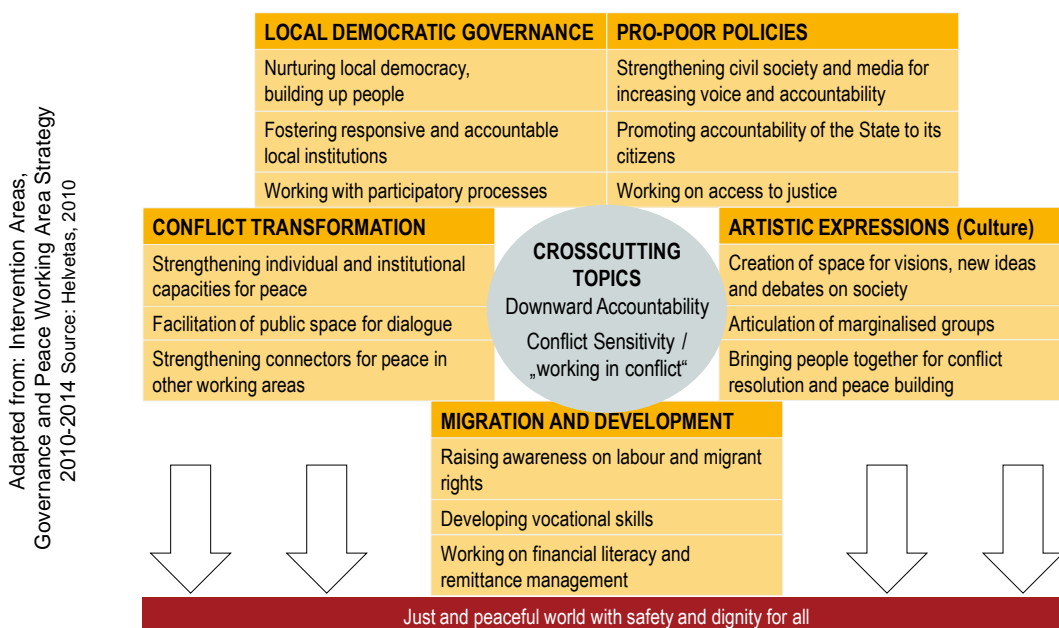
Many agree that governance is key to development. The costs of “bad governance” are enormous. The (ex)World Bank researcher Daniel Kaufmann estimated that the GDP could be increased three times if good governance principles are applied. The relations between State and citizens remain crucial in application of good governance principles and democratic practices. The importance of civil society has been recognised since the Accra meeting in 2008, but governments still prefer NGOs engaging in service delivery rather than advocacy.

International cooperation is often faced with violence, intrastate conflicts and fragile situations. Every year around 700'000 people die because of armed violence and many more suffer from “side events” such as internal displacement. With climate change influencing livelihoods, conflicts over natural resources will increase.

OVERALL GOAL: JUST AND PEACEFUL WORLD WITH SAFETY AND DIGNITY FOR ALL

Helvetas has the vision of a State that offers basic services and security to its citizens, who in return are able to make claims and influence policies in their interest. To pursue this vision, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation will work with suitable partners from all sectors – State, civil society, private sector – through a multi-stakeholder approach and emphasising inclusion of marginalised groups. Instruments, such as international human rights treaties, build the basis for citizens as right holders to claim their rights and for governments to fulfil their duties. Therefore, local processes need to be better linked with policy making and vice versa. Our projects increasingly find themselves confronted with conflict and fragile contexts. Strengthening conflict transformation and using artistic expressions can contribute to peace and dignity.

In the coming years, the working area “Governance and Peace” concentrates on four intervention areas, whereas the two crosscutting issues ought to be addressed in all projects of all working areas.



INTERVENTION AREAS

LOCAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Aim: Inclusive decision-making on public affairs based on good governance principles and human rights, ensuring that needs, priorities and rights of poor women and men are considered, represented and accounted for by the state.

Democratic processes only become attractive if people see an impact on their lives. As local governments are closest to the people, they have the most direct relationship and impact. Participation of- and accountability towards - the citizens, especially marginalised and vulnerable groups, bring the government closer to the people. It contributes to improvement of public service delivery and curbs corruption.

Decentralised planning and budgeting is a key process in local governance, where such democratic principles can be practiced.

In order to nurture a local culture of democracy, it is also essential to work with people, engaging them in open discussions and raising awareness on citizenship and human rights, as well as their responsibilities. Therefore, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation will engage in civic education through radio, open hearings, arts, and other means.

As men and women have different needs, priorities and interests, gender aspects need to be looked at particularly. In cases where women are obviously underrepresented and disempowered, special attention will be paid to closing this gap.