SDC Conflict and Human Rights Network: Summary report of the Face to Face meeting in Amman, Jordan, 22-26 June 2011

The first f2f face meeting of the SDC conflict and human rights network took place with 47 participants in Amman, from 22 to 26 June 2011. It was practice oriented, also, because the realities of Jordan, the Middle East and the Arab region were strongly reflecting into the workshops and discussions, including through the field visits around Amman, and the presence of the SDC colleagues from the area.

The Human Rights Based Approach HRBA and the Conflict Sensitive Program Management CSPM in Fragile and Conflict affected Situations (FCS) were confirmed as main methodological focus areas of the network, the application of which will certainly be crucial support services of the network towards SDC. Practical exchange, trainings and further development on HRBA and CSP will be crucial work streams for the network in the coming future.

Important topics for the network to work on were highlighted, like access to justice, Human Rights in Fragile and Conflict affected Situations (FCS), security management, personnel development of SDC (with regard to competencies and flexibility in Fragile and conflict affected situations), result orientation and communication matters, as well as gender in FCS, protection of civilians, dealing with the past, security and development (security sector reform, armed violence and development).

A preliminary work plan 2011/2012 with specific projects and work streams was drafted, including with responsibilities for implementation. It will be consulted and consolidated in the network until September 2011 and then form the base for the CHR net's work and services to SDC in the next one and a half years.

The preparation group for the meeting included Vesna Roch, Segolène Adam, Corinne Huser, Anne-Claude Cavin, Michael Gerber, Martin Jaggi and Markus Heiniger. The SCO Amman (Rahel Boesch, Cyril Prissette) played a crucial role, as well as the administrative support of Andrea Balmer, Bana Sayeh, Ihab Shaban and others. Participation in the meeting included the whole variety of SDC collaborators, from all 4 departments of SDC. A number of heads of offices were present.

This report (by Thomas Jenatsch) includes the summary reports of the four main parts of the meeting:
- the first day on setting the scene and getting to know each other,
- the part on Human Rights in Development,
- the part on working with conflict sensitivity in Fragile and Conflict affected Situations (FCS),
- the final part of the f2f, on setting priorities for the future work of the network.

Other elements of the meeting like the impressive field visits to SDC partner organisations and projects in Jordan are documented, thanks to the social reporting (another highlight of this f2f!), on the blog, see: http://www.blog4dev.ch/chrf2f2011/. The blog makes also available the important video message of SDC director-general Martin Dahinden on the relevance for SDC of the themes and methods of the network.

Next steps: The documentation of the detailed results of the different parts of the meeting will be finalized and the work plan will be consulted and finalized.

Markus Heiniger, SDC Focal Point Conflict and Human Rights, July 2011

1. Setting the scene and getting to know each other - Summary June 22, first day

Building common ground for institutional policies on human rights and cooperation in conflict affected and fragile contexts and defining the working schedule of the network for the coming year are the main objectives of the first Face-to-Face meeting of the SDC Network Conflict and Human Rights CHR. It is unfolding at the Mövenpick Hotel at the shore of the Dead Sea in Jordan with 47 participants from SDC headquarters and branch offices around the world including two representatives of the Political Division IV, a member of the UNHCR, two Swiss consultants and two social reporters. In his opening video address SDC Director General Martin Dahinden expressed the wish that Switzerland plays an important role in fragile contexts with both sustainable project activities in the field and by shaping policies on the multilateral level.

A main finding of the MDG+10 conference in New York in September 2010 was the fact that almost none of the countries involved in violent conflict have met the MDG's. This calls for increased attention on fragile and conflict affected situations (FCS) by the international community. As *Martin Dahinden* emphasized in his message, Switzerland wants to join this effort by stepping up its presence in those contexts. This is a main issue of the upcoming message (2013-2016) to the Swiss Parliament. Dahinden recalled the comparative advantages of Switzerland: neutrality, lack of geostrategic interests and a pool of skilled staff with experience in conflict areas and international humanitarian organizations. He shared his conviction that the topics of CHR network will grow in importance for the coming years and that Switzerland can indeed make a difference. He considers the conflict sensitive programme management CSPM and the human rights based approach HRBA as complementary tools, which should be used together and set the guidelines for our work in fragile contexts.

Christoph Graf, Head of South-Asian division and thematic responsible for conflict and human rights, recalled the rational behind the creation of the network: to closely link the policy level with operations in the field and to enhance the exchange of knowledge and mutual learning between branch offices and headquarters. The main roles of the network are to influence and shape policies, to insure quality and to support the field with training and advice. The work in fragile settings needs a comprehensive and integrated Swiss approach. Graf emphasized the importance of close coordination among the operational bodies of SDC and other actors of the Swiss government: different mandates, same overall objective to foster peace and to support statebuilding.

The workshop has been organized with strong engagement of the COOF Amman, represented by *Cyril Prissette*, deputy regional director and acting head of the Amman office, who was warmly welcoming all the participants to Jordan. To build a common understanding of our work and to shape the network-agenda for the coming year are the main objectives of the Jordan-workshop. In his opening words *Markus Heiniger*, focal point of the CHR network, welcomed the f2f-meeting as a chance to become a truly SDC-wide network able to inform policy discussions with experiences from the field. The network has been launched in June 2010. In his short review of activities Heiniger emphasized the fact the most of the work was done by the network members themselves with little support of consultants and external partners. One important result is the increased attention to the topic of human rights and conflict affected regions within SDC, which is a solid base for focusing and deepening on those themes in the next phase.

Information on the regional context was provided by *Andrea Reichlin*, Swiss Ambassador to Jordan and *Giancarlo de Picciotto*, Head of SDC Jerusalem office.

Reichlin gave an overview on the political, economic and social situation in Jordan with special focus on the regional peace process. With its long borders and large refugee population (almost half of the national population) Jordan will strongly benefit from a peaceful and sustainable settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Arab spring was also felt with numerous demonstrations in Amman too. Although repression has been relatively moderate compared to other Arab countries, the demands for more democracy and civil

rights have not been heard. The government is unwilling to deliver a blueprint for reform. And there is presently little hope to forge a new social contract aimed to close the gap between the losers and the winners of a period of considerable economic growth in Jordan.

Giancarlo de Picciotto recalled that the Arab spring has increased instability and violent conflict in the region. However it has triggered a social and political dynamic, which has on the medium and long range a positive impact. The regime change in Egypt brought another setting of political positions to the fore, which are going to change the dynamics of the Israel-Palestine conflict. A 63-year old conflict, which is also influenced by the (unpredictable) developments in Syria, a geostrategic corner stone in the Middle East. De Picciotto supports the idea that stability at any price cannot be the goal and that conflict has a transforming potential. Therefore Switzerland is willing to support Arab counties on the path towards more citizen rights and democracy. Regarding the situation in the Occupied Territories de Picciotto stated that Switzerland is among donors with less than 1% a *nobody* by financial terms. But it is truely *somebody* when it comes to sustainable action improving people's lifes – citing the example of the economically successful value chain approach in the olive oil sector.

2. The Human Rights Based Approach HRBA - June 23/24

The CHR network confirms the usefulness of the Human Rights Based Approach as a conceptual framework for development cooperation. Participants understand the HRBA not as a technocratic instrument to be handled by law experts but rather as a guiding principle drawing from international rights and legal standards to guide the work of practitioners. It facilitates the strategic choice of actors and advocates for a more integrated and comprehensive approach to programme planning with a long term perspective.

The HRBA approach has been in the focus of the first two days of the seminar. It started with an exposé of the complementary mandates and activities of SDC and PD IV by *Corinne Huser* and *Andrea Aeby*. The pillars of the conceptual framework were recalled by *Erika Schläppi*. Case studies from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Sudan and Mongolia documented how the **HRBA is shaped differently in different contexts** – examples that created an understanding of the importance to apply HRBA with a sense for the local context. Although it has to be culturally sensitive and build on local traditions, the HRBA is universal and its applicability is not limited to countries and contexts challenged in the field of human rights.

HRBA can be applied in a **wide range of thematic fields.** Corinne Huser illustrated how the **HRBA enhances development results on community and policy level** drawing from her experience with a comprehensive water and sanitation project in Bangladesh.

Participants discussed the key concepts with regard to gender mainstreaming, to opportunities and risks of HRBA in fragile situations and non-Western cultures, as well as the approaches towards governmental actors (duty bearers) and the civil society (right holders).

Main conclusion: HRBA is **no blueprint for development results**. It is however a useful lens, which provides a strategic look and long term perspective on programme planning and implementing from the very outset. It further helps to overcome a narrow focus on a restricted group of beneficiaries and invites to **work within a larger system integrating civil society and government actors** on various levels.

Find below a non-exhaustive list of points participants found a common understanding on:

- ▪ **Universal character:** HRBA is based on international legal frameworks ratified by Switzerland and all member states of the UN.

- **Cultural sensitivity**: Despite its universal character, the HRBA is not a one-size-fits all approach, but ought to be applied in a culturally sensitive manner. In non-Western contexts it is recommended under certain conditions to use HRBA without explicitly name it. The term "human rights" is sometimes perceived as a concept of Western origin, serving hidden Western interests. Best results are therefore achieved when building on humanitarian principles and bodies of law drawn from the local context and tradition. This is especially useful for conservative Islamic contexts.

- **Whole of government approach**: To maximize the impact of our action emphasis has to be put on an integrated Swiss approach, which benefits from the complementary expertise of different Swiss actors such as SDC, PD IV, SECO and other actors

- **Focus on tangible results:** The HRBA is a means, not a goal. Our first preoccupation is not methodical orthodoxy handling the tool but to achieve tangible results on the ground, for example by improving people's access to public services or by improving legal standards.

- **Take the context as a starting point:** The HRBA is not a one-size-fits-all approach, which is to be adapted mandatory to any programme in any context. It requires first of all a thorough context analysis. The HRBA is a useful tool specifically in contexts with burning HR issues, that undermine the development process. It may not be applied in any given context with the same priority and in the same fashion.

- **Bottom up approach**: To get to sustainable results on the systemic level the HRBA starts from the bottom rather than from the top. Creating tangible results on the community level is a good starting point to focus on systemic change on regional and national level.

- **The HRBA is a value added to our project work, because…**
  - …it helps to sharpen our analysis in terms of rights and duties. It means to adapt a more comprehensive and integrated approach going beyond community borders, for example by including other communities and the local government, by working with different actors (political and technical) and different levels (local, regional and national governments)
  - … it demands a strategic choice of actors from the very outset of our operations
  - …it requires continuous discussions strengthening interaction between government actors and communities
  - …it means to talk with communities not only about their rights, but also about their duties and obligations

Open questions:

- How to combine the HRBA with the bilateral agenda of Switzerland?
- How to engage with other actors (international organizations, NGO's)?
- How to ensure the sustainability of our action?
- How to measure results on the short, medium and long term?

HRBA in a nutshell:

- All programmes of development cooperation should further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights charters. The HR are universal, inalienable and indivisible
- Human rights standards and principles guide all development cooperation and all phases of the programming process.
- Development cooperation contributes to enhance the capacities of:
  - duty-bearers to meet their obligations
  - right-holders to claim their rights

3. How to work in Fragile and Conflict affected Situations FCS? - June 24/25

Conflict is development in reverse. The international community is stepping up its concern for FCS and Switzerland wants to join in. In the SDC draft message 2013-2016 a substantial number of the partner countries are in fragile and conflict affected situations (FCS). In order to transform the enhanced commitment for FCS in sustainable results on the ground, SDC has to meet new challenges: Increasing the internal expertise, creating room for more flexible staffing policies and investing in analysis and risk management. Security remains a main concern.

The issue of FCS has **gained momentum** on the international development agenda**.** *Markus Heiniger*, focal point of the CFA-network, referred in his initial presentation to the World Development Report 2011 on FCS, to the recent activities of INCAF (the OECD network on conflict and fragility) and to the "International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding" – a platform of fragile states (G7+) and donor countries, which has held its second global meeting on June 14-16, 2011 in Monrovia.

1,5 billion people live in areas affected by repeated cycles of political and criminal violence causing human misery and disrupting development. Up to date **no fragile state is on track with the MDG-goals**. Fragile states need an increased attention by the international community in order to reduce poverty, improve their MDG-performance and for general security concerns. To break the cycle of violence the 2011 World Development Report – presented by *Segolène Adam* - advocates for the **strengthening of legitimate national institutions and governance** in order to provide citizen security, justice and jobs – as well as alleviating the international stresses that increase the risk of violence.

SDC shares this analysis and is willing to join the international effort to enhance peacebuilding and statebuilding. As a matter of fact almost **half of the development partners of the regional cooperation are fragile states.** Participants of the f2f-meeting in Jordan discussed what an enhanced engagement in FCS for SDC may implicate. Many methodical procedures are similar whether working in stable or fragile environments (focus on poverty, multi-stakeholder approach, the strengthening of state and civil society). There are however a number of **additional risks and challenges** which were outlined by the thematic responsible *Christoph Graf* and in a video message by the head of CIS region, *Véronique Houlman*. Their views were commented and complemented by many inputs of network members from the field and the headquarters.

The main challenges touch upon the **HOW TO WORK in FCS:**

➢ **Coping with higher risks:** To engage in FCS bears political and operational risks which may also affect the results. Delivering sustainable results on the ground must be at the core of our operations. But expectations must be realistic and the quest for results shall not lower our security standards.

➢ **Security** of the staff must always come in the **first place.** Security concerns must inform our strategic choices at the headquarters and also our operational decisions in the field. "Soft" security measures, informed manly trough the lens of *Conflict sensitivity*, comes first.

➢ **Strengthening institutional capacities**: In order to perform as credible actor and achieve sustainable results, SDC has to strengthen the internal expertise (analysis, policy development and conflict sensitive project management). The building up of capacities must be based on **staffing policies** with a long term view. Those policies have to allow for more flexible approaches with regard to working conditions, incentives and duration of contracts in FCS.

➢ **Investing in analysis:** Conflict sensitive programme management CSPM is a learning process and requires time. Additional means have to be invested in the analysis of contexts and in the shaping of strategic options drawing both from internal and external actors and resources.

➢ **Whole of government approach**: In FCS coordinated approaches and joint strategies of all Swiss actors (SDC both humanitarian aid and development cooperation, PD IV, and other governmental actors) are imperative. The **common strategies** have to build on the complementary knowledge and mandates of the different Swiss actors. They shall cover shorter periods (2-3 years max.) and be handled with flexibility in order to adapt to environments with a potential for rapid change.

➢ **Strategy to update:** The SDC peacebuilding strategy dates from 2003. In the past eight years the international debate on FCS has developed. New sources of conflict appeared (climate, water, food security) as well as new approaches (SSR) and actors (G+7) to tackle them. To mirror these international developments and to build in the orientations of the message 2013-2016 the SDC peacebuilding strategy shall be updated, as focal point *Markus Heiniger* announced.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED IN FCS:

Peacebuilding and statebuilding touch on a number of political, social, cultural, economic and security issues which require a differentiated set of tools and approaches presented in parallel workshops: **Security System Reform SSR, Dealing with the Past DwP/Transitional justice, gender issues, protection of civilians and reform of the state are among them.** It is not one single approach which has all the answers to peacebuilding and statebuilding. A difference can be made however by a smart combination of approaches according to local requirements. Where, when and how to apply and combine them and who takes the lead in a specific context setting is object to close coordination among the Swiss governmental actors (SDC, PD IV, other actors) on both technical and strategic level.

There are many **crosscutting issues** in peacebuilding and statebuilding which require specific attention. Participants of the f2f meeting got acquainted with challenges and new approaches to communication, staff management, security and financial planning, which were outlined by network members and discussed in groups.

The network advocates for a **pro-active approach to communication.** In fragile contexts involving numerous external actors with different civilian and military mandates, pro-active **communication** establishes **transparency and trust** and enhances **staff security**. Development workers must invest sufficient time in explaining their mandate to the authorities and the local population and in reporting the results of their actions, including in local languages wherever possible.

TOOLS: CONFLICT SENSITIVITY IN THE CENTRE

Aid effectiveness in FCS demands for specific instruments. The f2f meeting confirmed the utility of a number of tools for both humanitarian and development actors on the strategic as well as on the operational level. Those tools must serve the overarching **goal to improve development results** in the field. They should be combined in a flexible manner. The main tools are:

- Conflict sensitive programme management **CSPM** remains possibly the most holistic approach to the work in FCS
- **Do no harm** (do least harm)
- **Conflict (actors) mapping,**
- **Conflict tree and other instruments for analysis**
- **MERV** (Monitoring von Entwicklungs-Relevanten Veränderungen) is useful on national *and* on local level, since most FCS contain a number of specific local conflicts with or without links to the dominant conflict setting. The "MERV" format could be updated and should include humanitarian aid.

Conclusion: The f2f-meeting in Jordan has confirmed that Swiss actors share common ground with regard to analysis, approaches and tools for FCS. The views from the field and the headquarters are complementary and do not differ in substance. The meeting has set a solid base for further activities. Participants agreed that the network activities shall be *demand driven* and respond to the needs of the field in the first place. Improving security and perspectives for citizens in FCS is an overarching objective of the network.

Box: Definition of FCS

Fragile states is the term used for countries facing particularly severe development challenges: weak institutional capacity, poor governance, and political instability. Often these countries experience ongoing violence as the residue of past severe conflict. Ongoing armed conflicts affect three out of four fragile states.

The way out: To break the cycle of violence, it is crucial to strengthen legitimate national institutions and governance in order to provide citizen security, justice and jobs – as well as alleviating the international stresses that increase the risk of violent conflict.

Source: The World Bank Development Report 2011

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4. Shape policies and support operations - priorities of the CHR network - June 25/26

How shall the CHR-network function? The last f2fsession was dedicated to the organization and self-concept of the CHR-network, a late-comer within SDC (start only in June 2010). This is a challenge, but has also advantages since it benefits from the experiences made by other SDC-networks. Members discussed the structure and operational focus of the network and established a preliminary list of tasks for the next 18 months.

One underlying question was, whether it is meaningful to address **Human Rights issues** and the development work in **fragile and conflict affected situations** (**FCS**) within the same network? The meeting confirmed the chosen approach, since the **links between the topics are manifold**. Human rights issues are often at the heart of the concern in FCS (even though Human Rights are also crucial outside of Fragility and Conflict). It is therefore useful to maintain and promote both topics within the same network. The tools of FCS and HRBA can be combined and applied in a flexible manner.

Although there is a basic structure in place, the **network is still in the making**. It has to shape its identity, strengthen the links between the headquarter and the field and find effective ways to communicate: A task which is at the core of the working plan for the next 18 month. Find underneath a **summary of common positions** on the self-concept and organization of the network:

- **Objective:** The network has two overarching topics - HR and FCS - and two fields of activities: shape policies and support operations. The objective is two-fold:

   1) It shall foster the impact of Swiss programmes in FCS by enhancing the focus on conflict sensitivity in the design, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian and development policies and programs.

2) It shall promote the issue of human rights within SDC and support the use of HRBA in all development programmes.

- **Structure:** Participants agreed on a decentralized structure with a defined centre, which takes thematic lead and animates the network. The headquarter core group with the focal point in the centre shall be a transparent heart piece sensitive for the needs and inputs from the field.
An active network requires the **inputs and commitments of its members**. Each member can propose projects and take the lead for certain activities of the network. The focal point encourages network- members to come up with initiatives, which can be carried out on local, regional or general network level. It is simply as that: The more members are committed, the more productive is the network.

  Role of the focal point: *Markus Heiniger*, the CHR-focal point, has the intellectual lead within the network. He advises both headquarters and the field on policy issues, edits comments and position papers and closely follows the international debate. He plans the network activities in line with available resources. He animates the network with thematic inputs and launches discussions. He is supported by the core group and all the network members.

- **Activities/Prioritization of tasks:**
The sharing of information and the exchange of knowledge is at the heart of network activities. But it is not a goal for itself. The network shall:

  a) contribute to the shaping of Swiss policies in the field of HR and FCS

  b) develop a series of products and services, which support the field and enhance the impact of SDC operations.

  Regional trainings on CSPM and HRBA are part of the latter activities. The next CSPM workshops will take place in Hünigen end of August and in Bogotà in November 2011..

  In participatory workshops network members proposed a number of learning projects, tasks and activities, including with offers to contribut themselves. Based on these inputs the focal point and the core group will develop a working programme for the coming 18 months.

- **Communication:** The **shareweb** is the central communication platform of the network. The platform offers the possibility to launch dialogue groups on certain issues, it serves as an archive for official documents, reports and project lists and announces upcoming events. Members can post comments and launch discussions. The shareweb is moderated by *Armin Rieser*. A new version with more interactive features will be launched in January 2012. To **get advise** or to ask for a second opinion on communication issues members can get in touch with *Thomas Jenatsch*, head of internal communication.
In order to give the network a visual identity (for shareweb and events) a **logo** shall be developed. A competition among network members generated a number of proposals. The winning proposal will be finalized by a graphic designer.

- **Resources:** Activities must in line with resources. The network presently counts over 50 members (half of them in the field). 48 members attended the Jordan-f2f – a good turn out to build on. Members may dedicate 5%-15% of their time to the network. At the headquarters there are at the moment around 2 positions (200%, in the South Asia division) at the disposal of the network which also have to cover the related thematic tasks like e.g. coordination with PD IV, OECD-DAC INCAF etc. Due to limited resources a clear prioritization of tasks is imperative.

Thomas Jenatsch, Berne, June 30, 2011