



**FINAL PROJECT EVALUATION**

# **Promoting Healthy State-Citizen Relations in Africa**

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## Acknowledgements

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The assessment report was prepared by the **Agency for Peacebuilding (AP)**, a non-profit association based in Bologna, Italy. AP's mission is to promote conditions that can enable the resolution of conflict, reduce violence and contribute to a durable peace across Europe, its neighborhood and the world. AP's overall vision is of a world where conflicts can be transformed—through the research of innovative, nonviolent and sustainable solutions—into opportunities to promote cooperation that is based on an open and honest confrontation. The core assessment team was composed of Dr. Bernardo Venturi (team leader) and Mr. Bernardo Monzani. Ms. Betty Kweyu, based in Kenya, acted as an external collaborator. A short bio of each team member is provided below.

**Dr. Bernardo Venturi** acted as the team leader and was responsible for the Tanzania and Nigeria sections. Bernardo has more than 10 years of experience in development and peacebuilding as a researcher, evaluator, trainer and program manager. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Bologna and has worked for different think tanks, NGOs and universities. He is currently AP's Co-Director.

**Mr. Bernardo Monzani** was responsible for the evaluation methodology, conducted part of the fieldwork in Kenya and led the quality control. Bernardo has over 10 years of experience working in the development sector, focusing on issues of governance, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. His areas of expertise include qualitative and quantitative research, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and program development. He serves as AP's President.

**Ms. Betty Kweyu** conducted a large part of the fieldwork in Kenya and Nigeria, especially related to the key informant interviews. She has 12 years of hands-on, progressive experience in strategy development, program design, and the management of humanitarian, transitional and development programs with conflict-affected, displaced populations. Betty has worked extensively for both civil society organizations and UN agencies, in her native Kenya as well as in Somalia.

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## Abbreviations

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AFNET	Anti Female Genital Mutilation Network
AP	Agency for Peacebuilding
ACP	The African CSO Platform on Principled Partnership
CAJR	Centre for the Advocacy of Justice and Rights
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi
CDC	Corporate Development Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFA	Disability Focus Africa
FGD	Focus group discussions
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
KII	Key informant interviews
KMYA	Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance
LGA	Local Government Area
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGONEDO	NGO Network for Dodoma
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee
PWD	People with Disabilities
RPP	Reflecting on Peace Practice
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
TOC	Theory of Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAYN	West African Youth Network

## Executive Summary

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### Project background information

On November 1, 2013 Search for Common Ground (SFCG) started a 24-month project financed by USAID with the overall goal of enhancing civil society leaders' capacity to influence government policy agendas in Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania. The project sought to shift the current, predominantly adversarial, dynamic between government and civil society to one where they can work together on key issues of common concern, while maintaining their integrity in their respective roles. The project was implemented in technical partnership with two African organizations: the West African Youth Network (WAYN), based in Sierra Leone, and the Resource Conflict Institute (Reconcile), based in Kenya.

The project had three mutually reinforcing objectives: 1) to promote constructive interaction between civil society and government 'champions'; 2) to develop the skills of a diversity of civil society leaders to effectively engage with government institutions on strategically identified reform agendas; and 3) to enhance experience sharing and network building among civil society groups to improve their collective capacity to negotiate with and influence government. Project participants thus included both civil society leaders and government officials in each country; activities included trainings on conflict resolution and training, dialogue forums, networking seminars and support for all CSO partners to implement 'follow-on' projects and e-initiatives around specific policy issues.

### Evaluation methodology and limitations

The global objective of the final evaluation was to capture the change brought about by the project in enhancing civil society leaders' capacity to influence government policy agendas. More specifically, the final evaluation had three specific objectives: 1) to measure the state of the project's indicators after implementation of the activities; 2) to analyze the project's achievements under the evaluation criteria of efficiency, relevance and sustainability; and 3) to extract lessons learned and recommendations from this experience to inform future programming for supporting civil society-government engagement.

Based on the above, the consulting team developed an evaluation framework that was largely based on the OECD-DAC guidelines for evaluating conflict prevention interventions. Additionally, the team also included components to capture the project's achievements (and challenges) under several crosscutting themes, chiefly gender, and to review the quality of its underlying theory of change. For each of the three evaluation criteria, lines of inquiry were finalized and used to develop data collection tools, including a review of relevant documents, reflection workshops, informant interviews, group discussions, and a small online survey. Data collection took place between the end of March and the beginning of April 2016.

The time given to the team, from the signing of the contract to the deadline for submitting the report, was quite short, which meant that the team was unable to travel to Nigeria. Instead, data collection for that country was done by staff members from SFCG's local country office who used the same methodology developed by the evaluation team. However, the team was able to interview Nigerian participants face-to-face during the final project event in Tanzania. Overall, the challenges and limitations did not hinder the identification of important findings, lessons learned and recommendations.

### Findings

#### *Kenya*

In Kenya all participants and stakeholders agreed that the project and its approach were extremely relevant for the needs and challenges faced by civil society in Kenya. Particularly relevant for these stakeholders was the project's approach on engaging government champions in a way that eased tensions and was not confrontational. Most CSO leaders interviewed for the evaluation agreed that the approach used by SFCG within the project was both new and relevant for Kenya, as the emphasis on ICT and social

media was very relevant. Of particular note is also how the project was linked to Kenya's ongoing devolution reform, which has revolutionized governance dynamics at the local and county levels. SFCG staff in Kenya ensured that activities and themes chosen by CSO partners had a direct reference to the devolution process, which clearly contributed to increasing the project's relevance and effectiveness.

The project was effective in reaching the outputs indicated in the original proposal and, more importantly, in promoting greater trust between government officials and CSO leaders. In addition, the trainings were useful in increasing the capacity of participants on advocacy and conflict resolution, while the advocacy initiatives contributed to increased citizen participation in target communities. The effectiveness of the project in achieving the aforementioned outcomes was linked to the quality of the theory of change (TOC), which presented good linkages between changes at the individual and socio-political levels. In this area, the evaluation found ample evidence of collaboration between CSOs and governments, which, without the project, would have likely not been possible. A weakness was instead identified with e-initiatives: there are examples of successes in the way that CSO partners used ICT tools, but also some challenges (such as delays in receiving ICT equipment). Interestingly, strong coordination by Reconcile led to the above-average performance in Nakuru, whereas the greatest challenge mentioned by all partners was the lack of time and resources for the 'follow-on' initiatives—something attributable to delays both with SFCG and USAID.

In terms of sustainability, the project led in several cases to the establishment of direct feedback between government officials and citizens, thus improving governance through social accountability. This was not how the original theory of change had been designed, but it is a remarkable finding nonetheless, which shows the great potential that such a project for improving governance. Through the project, CSO leaders were also able to reach government stakeholders beyond the initial 'champions'. This said, the selection of government champions, which is a crucial factor for sustaining results, was mostly done through personal contacts that did not always contribute to institutionalizing collaboration with CSOs. Finally, SFCG mainly targeted stakeholders internal to the project, while there were little efforts to disseminate the model among other relevant stakeholders in civil society and government.

### *Nigeria*

The project in Nigeria involved relevant stakeholders who successfully acquired significant skills and knowledge through the training component. In particular, the selection of government champions in Nigeria was done through a mapping process to identify the most relevant individuals to engage. This was a more systematic approach than the one used in the other countries and it appears to have worked well. Capacity building activities were also very relevant for participants and led to improved organizational capacity for advocacy beyond the activities funded through the project. In this regard, CSO leaders said that the project influenced how they approach their work with government under other programs.

In terms of effectiveness, the project succeeded in increasing trust between CSO representatives and government champions. Most partners were indeed adamant about the fact that, thanks to the project, there was a realization of common ground between CSOs, government officials and the citizenry. This led to positive outcomes such as government enforcement of existing bylaws and continued engagement of local authorities for improved program ownership and support in environmental management. ICT activities were also generally considered useful, but the target was not always clear and that, as a consequence, work done under the e-initiatives was not always effectively connected to other components. As in Kenya, limited and resources were also a challenge, as was communication between SFCG and CSO partners.

The sustainability of the project in Nigeria shows remarkable strength. The project created several relationships and platforms that are likely to remain in place in the future, and it seems that outcomes will go beyond the project implementation period. Sustainability was also promoted by the choice, on the part of partners, to link advocacy and e-initiatives to already existing work. Today, an informal network exists among the Nigerian project partners, where they share information, technical expertise and learn from one

another. However, as in the other countries, follow-on projects were implemented for a short period, which was only just enough to scratch the surface. In addition, some participants do not necessarily feel full ownership of the project. Finally, insecurity represented a significant challenge for the project in some areas and some episodes should represent an alarm bell for future activities.

### *Tanzania*

In Tanzania all the participants stated that the project was very relevant for their roles and most of them also stated that the project involved the right people, at the right time, responding to specific needs of the time. Among the activities, the conflict resolution trainings were mentioned several times as some of the more useful activities. Overall, two years ago, CSOs had a passive attitude towards the government, while now they are more active. While it is impossible to attribute this change to the project alone, it is worth noting that in some locations, chiefly Zanzibar, CSO participants were able, thanks to the project, to promote positive change at a particularly volatile and occasionally violent time.

In terms of effectiveness, all the Tanzanian participants said that the project was successful in helping to decrease tensions, to create a good working environment and to generate smooth and effective relationships between the government and CSOs. The importance of the social dimension of the relationships was often underlined, formally and informally. The project has also enabled more transparency between CSOs and government through the use of ICT tools. A specific challenge for Tanzania was that civil society there is less dynamic and strong than in the other countries, a factor that led to some delays. And as in Kenya and Nigeria, CSO participants also mentioned the limited resources and time grants as a challenge.

The sustainability of outcomes in Tanzania is most evident and successful in relation to capacity-building activities. Participants agreed that the trainings provided by SFCG were extremely useful and that the skills they acquired would assist them beyond the project. Several participants also said that they would continue their networking activities even after the end of the project. As for the relations between CSO representatives and government champions, the project has created a model that nearly all participants said would continue to replicate in the future. A challenge will be, however, that these relations were not effectively institutionalized. Findings also suggest that the ownership of the project by local partners could be improved.

### *Regional comparison and crosscutting themes*

First and foremost, it is important to underline how, across all locations, the project was seen as very relevant, addressing crucial challenges and filling important needs on the side of both civil society and government. The high relevance and strong effectiveness of the project, which spanned not just three countries, but a total of nine sub-national locations with significant economic, social and political differences, can be attributed to SFCG's strong analysis of the core problems as well as to a solid theory of change (TOC). Specifically, the project's TOC was flexible enough to be effectively contextualized in each project location. This is one of the strongest findings that came out of the comparative analysis, and it speaks again to the quality of SFCG's underlying analysis and overall approach.

Participants also greatly appreciated all the networking opportunities provided by the project. These included the regional exchanges on using ICT for advocacy (the *teXchange* conferences), which were considered interesting and relevant, and also led, in a few instances, to interesting examples of cross-country collaboration (for example between Kenyan and Nigerian participants on countering violent extremism). In terms of common challenges, clarifying who the project's 'key' vs. 'more' people was a problem in all countries, which weakened the project's logic in particular by limiting the value and impact of the e-initiatives and of traditional advocacy initiatives by CSO partners. Staff turnover within SFCG affected implementation in all countries, mainly in the form of delays.

Regarding gender, the project positively integrated a level of gender analysis and sought to address gender-specific challenges and issues. SFCG and partners made a commitment to involving an equal

number of women in all countries and activities, and also in ensuring that women participated in key roles. This second component was most successful, and arguably most important for efforts to address challenges related to gender roles and norms. However, mainstreaming of gender sensitivity could have been done more in depth, as several of the project's responses to gender-specific challenges remained superficial. There is, finally, an information gap in relation to the gendered impact of project activities, i.e. information about the participation of women within the target group has not been systematically collected.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Overall, the project was clearly appreciated and succeeded on many fronts as outlined above. Important achievements were made under all three chosen criteria and, more importantly, had a concrete positive effect for the large majority of the CSOs targeted by the project. However, there were some specific challenges that should be taken into consideration as SFCG and its partners plan future programs. The recommendations are offered in this perspective.

1. The project was indubitably successful in creating high levels of trust between civil society and government and this work should be continued in the future.
2. We recommend more efforts to increase ownership and direct involvement of partners in all project phases. Project partners should be involved from the project's design and a 'lead' civil society partner for each country (maybe even location) can improve the effectiveness of the project and ensure local ownership.
3. The TOC should better define the project's target and who the 'key' and 'more' people are.
4. Follow-on activities were a crucial part of the project and they should receive more resources.
5. SFCG should assist CSO partners in developing communication strategies that can ensure that e-initiatives are better integrated with all other project activities.
6. Government champions should have the opportunity to reach-out more and to create durable relations with CSOs, especially through more systematized institutionalization of CSO-government relations and specific dissemination activities.
7. Provide follow-up actions to support conflict resolution trainings to exploit the momentum created by the project on this topic.
8. Improve project management and coordination through clearer communication mechanisms and planning. SFCG should also invest in a more rigorous M&E system, with a specific focus on collecting gender-specific data.



## 1. Background Information

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### 1.1. Project Overview

#### 1.1.1. Introduction

In September 2013, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) entered into an agreement with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to implement a 24-month project with the overall goal of enhancing civil society leaders' capacity to influence government policy agendas (Cooperative Agreement #AID-OAA-A-13-00094). The project had an official start date of November 1, 2013.

Targeting high integrity leaders in Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania, the project sought to shift the current, predominantly adversarial, dynamic between government and civil society to one where they can work together on key issues of common concern, while maintaining their integrity in their respective roles. By helping civil society constructively engage with government on critical issues at national and sub-national levels, SFCG anticipated the potential to create positive models for engagement both within their countries and within the region at large. SFCG's approach included a combination of trainings of civil society leaders, learning-through-doing, capacity building and support to e-initiatives, civil society government dialogues, as well as regional experience-sharing activities around governance and state citizen relationships.

The project was implemented in partnership with two African organizations: the West African Youth Network (WAYN), based in Sierra Leone, and the Resource Conflict Institute (Reconcile), based in Kenya. This last organization took the place of the African CSO Platform on Principled Partnership (ACP) during year one of the project, due to a lack of agreement around partner roles and responsibilities. WAYN assisted with implementation of activities in Nigeria, where the organization also has offices; Reconcile assisted SFCG with project activities in Kenya.

By the time the evaluation took place, SFCG, WAYN and Reconcile had completed most of the activities. Only some 'follow-on' or advocacy projects were yet to be completed, primarily in Nigeria and Tanzania. A full overview of project outputs can be found in SFCG's quarterly progress reports. For the purposes of this report, it will be sufficient to say that all capacity-building and dialogue activities took place, although with some considerable delays. 'Follow-on' or advocacy projects, and e-initiatives also, were designed throughout 2015, but did not take place until the end of that year or in early 2016. This was partially due to the aforementioned delays, as well as the fact that many CSO partners needed substantial support in project design, requiring proposal revisions before approval could be requested from USAID and projects supported.

#### 1.1.2. Project Goal, Objectives and Theory of Change

The project aimed to enhance civil society leaders' capacity to influence government policy agendas. It worked to achieve this goal through three mutually reinforcing objectives:

1. To promote constructive interaction between civil society and government 'champions';
2. To develop the skills of a diversity of civil society leaders to effectively engage with government institutions on strategically identified reform agendas;
3. To enhance experience sharing and network building among civil society groups to improve their collective capacity to negotiate with and influence government.

The objectives were supported by activities designed to achieve a total of five results:

- i. Civil society organizations increase communication with similar associations in their countries, regions and across Africa;

- ii. Civil society organizations implement e-initiatives involving exchange with regional partners;
- iii. Civil society and government actors have increased trust levels (within civil society and between civil society and government);
- iv. Effective engagement between civil society organizations and government to improve transparency and accountability in governance at the sub-national level;
- v. Targeted civil society leaders and government officials have improved skills in negotiation, consensus building, conflict resolution and non-adversarial advocacy.

The project was also designed on the basis of a theory of change (TOC), which informed its design and guided the implementation approach. This was presented as follows: *if* leaders from government and civil society have the opportunity to discuss issues of mutual interest in a neutral forum, *then* they will be better able to develop practical solutions to critical problems.

## 2. Methodology

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SFCG commissioned the final project evaluation with the overall objective of capturing the change brought about by the project in enhancing civil society leaders' capacity to influence government policy agendas. More specifically, the final evaluation had three specific objectives:

1. To measure the state of the project's indicators after implementation of the activities;
2. To analyze the project's achievements under the criteria of a) efficiency, b) relevance and c) sustainability; and
3. To extract lessons learned and recommendations from this experience to inform future programming supporting civil society-government relationship-building in Africa.

Given the above, the consulting team developed an evaluation framework that was mainly based on the OECD-DAC guidelines for evaluating conflict prevention interventions, but also included components to capture the project's achievements (and challenges) under several crosscutting themes, chiefly gender, and to review the quality of its underlying theory of change (TOC). The latter was done using the Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) methodology, as developed by CDA, a Cambridge-based NGO. For each evaluation criterion, lines of inquiry were finalized and used to develop data collection tools, and to guide analysis. Finalized lines of inquiry include the following:

### **For Effectiveness:**

- To what extent did SFCG and implementing partners achieve expected outputs at the country and project-level?
- To what extent have CSO leaders used new skills in strategic communications, non-adversarial advocacy and conflict resolution in their engagement with government around policy and advocacy?
- Did CSOs increase communication with associations in their countries, regions and across Africa?
- Did target CSOs integrate new ICT tools into their work on policy and advocacy?
- To what extent did the project enable a transformation in attitudes and perceptions among CSO leaders on the advantages/disadvantages of collaborating with government on policy reform?
- To what extent is the TOC clearly articulated and understood by SFCG and project partners?
- How effectively has the project involved women CSO leaders? How has it addressed gender-specific challenges and opportunities?

### For Relevance:

- Do CSO participants believe that the knowledge and networking opportunities gained through participation in the program has strengthened the work they do outside of the project?
- Did government representatives (also beyond the ‘champions’) and civil society leaders discuss priorities and strategies for governance reform? And were discussions followed by political acts?
- To what extent have civil society leaders acquired pertinent and usable skills through the trainings and other project activities?
- Was the project TOC based on a valid analysis of the situation and needs of the partners and target groups in each country?
- Has the project been equally relevant for men, women and young leaders?

### For Sustainability:

- Did the project create positive models for engagement within the three countries and across them?
- Which steps have been taken to create long-term processes, structures, and norms for continuing civil society-led advocacy and capacity building?
- Did the project allow for greater collaboration and the creation of synergies between target CSOs in Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania?
- Did the project create effective and sustainable networking opportunities and build relationships between target CSOs in Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania?
- Have target CSOs continued collaboration outside of project activities?
- Was local ownership fully assured in all the phases of the project?
- To what extent has the building of ownership and participation included youth, men and women?

## 2.1. Data Collection and Analysis

Tools used for data collection were primarily qualitative and included, first, a **review of relevant documents** as provided by SFCG. These included the original technical proposal and budget, quarterly progress reports and the baseline assessment studies for each country. The evaluation team then conducted three **reflection workshops**, one per country, with relevant staff from SFCG country offices and selected local partners; two **focus group discussions** (FGD) per country, each involving between 6 and 20 CSO partners and government champions; and more than 30 **key informant interviews** (KIIs) with CSO partners and government champions across all project locations. FGDs and KIIs were semi-structured events based on pre-defined questionnaires. To complement all this qualitative information, a **small online survey** was also launched, which asked project participants multiple-choice questions about their experience and views of the project. A total of 46 people completed the survey questionnaire. Finally, the evaluation team led project participants attending the final event in Dar Es Salaam through **RPP workshops** where they were able to review the project’s design and TOC using the RPP methodology. A full list of evaluation activities is provided as Annex 2, and tools utilized as Annex 3.

Data collection took place from the end of March through the beginning of April 2016. Members of the team travelled to Kenya and Tanzania; and although they were not able to go to Nigeria (see below), they were able to gather data from project participants in that country both directly and indirectly. Once collected, data was analyzed through triangulation and the RPP framework in order to identify relevant findings.

## 2.2. Limitations

Overall, the evaluation could have used additional time for data collection. Unfortunately, the time given to the team, from the signing of the contract to the deadline for submitting the report, was quite short. The biggest limitation that this caused was that the team was unable to travel to Nigeria. Instead, staff from SFCG's local country office took charge of data collection there, using the same evaluation methodology as the consulting team. Additionally, Dr. Venturi and Ms. Kweyu were able to interview Nigerian participants face-to-face during the final project event in Tanzania.

Methodologically, the reflection and RPP workshops could have benefitted from more time. Each of these events lasted about three hours—sufficient time to gather relevant information, but not always enough to explore issues in depth. A last challenge was with the project documentation, including the institutional memory within SFCG, which had significant gaps. Some of these were due to staff turnover, but others were linked to weaknesses in the organization's M&E systems. This said, these challenges and limitations did not hinder the identification of important findings, lessons learned and recommendations. The documents that were made available by SFCG were rich in information, and the evaluation team was able to interview a large majority of project participants, including from Nigeria. In this sense, the evaluation was able to capture much that will be useful for future programming by SFCG and its partners.

## 3. Findings

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### 3.1. Kenya

#### 3.1.1. Project Context

In 2010, the Kenyan government approved a new Constitution, which provided for enhanced checks and balances within the government itself, an enhanced role for Parliament and citizens, a more independent judiciary, and a progressive Bill of Rights. The Constitution also provided for a major devolution reform that not only shifted resources and functions from national to local authorities, but also reshaped the local governance system. This process of decentralization (or devolution) was launched with the 2013 elections and has, since then, influenced all socio-political processes in the country, including in relation to this project. The sweeping changes in Kenya's policy and institutional framework brought about, in fact, a new regime of local governance and with it an opportunity to address equity. The changes also increased the role of participatory leadership in the management of public affairs, most specifically by creating an opportunity for non-state actors to enhance accountability with objectivity and critiques targeting duty-bearers. The national context thus offered an entry point for civil society to engage with government on critical reform processes. Early on in the project, however, these opportunities were seriously undermined by the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictments of Kenya's President and Vice-President. Vocal support for the ICC cases against President Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto by certain civil society groups increased tensions between civil society and government, resulting in harsh rhetoric, public confrontations and the harassment of activists and civic leaders.

The adversarial government-civil society dynamic was highlighted not long after the 2013 elections, when a bill to amend Kenya's Public Benefit Organization (PBO) Act of 2012 was presented to Parliament. The proposed legislation sought to grant government sweeping powers to deny registration to CSOs through a newly established PBO Authority, while limiting foreign support to civil society to 15% of an organization's total budget. Thanks to intense pressure by Kenyan civil society, Parliament narrowly rejected the bill in December 2013, but efforts by the government to regulate CSOs' operating space has not abated: in November 2014, for example, the government announced the deregistration of nearly 500 NGOs, mostly for administrative reasons.

Another important trend that affected the operating space of civil society during the project was the rise in attacks by the terrorist group Al Shabaab, which intensified in 2014 and 2015. The Kenyan government responded to these attacks by launching large-scale military operations and tightening laws on security and public order. Yet, many activists saw in these policies also a pretext by government to crack down on civil society: the de-registration of NGOs in November 2014 was, for example, justified on the ground that several NGOs were found to be funding Al Shabaab—yet, these were only 15 out of the over 500 organizations officially de-registered. Overall, the administration continues to view civil society as a tool of foreign influence and to undermine its operating space. Just in March of this year, for example, the President appointed the former Commissioner of the Kenyan Police to the NGO Coordination Board. This official was among the six people indicted by the ICC in relation to his alleged role in the violence that followed the 2007 elections. Although the charges against him were eventually dropped, there is speculation that this could be another attempt to further reduce the space for civil society work, especially given the role that several CSOs had in supporting the ICC indictments and the upcoming 2017 elections, towards which political parties, including the President's, are already positioning themselves.

### 3.1.2. Relevance Findings

**All participants and stakeholders agreed that the project and its approach were extremely relevant for the needs and challenges faced by civil society in Kenya.** This is a somewhat counterintuitive finding. Kenya boasts one of the most diverse and dynamic civil society sectors in East Africa, and perhaps in the whole of Africa. Civil society is well established and can generally count on the support of strong constituencies. These strengths mask, however, several key gaps or weaknesses, including in the capacity of CSOs for specific activities (chiefly analysis and advocacy), competition over resources and, linked to this, the fragmentation of the civil society sector, where networking does not occur regularly. Kenyan civil society has also been recently under attack, as just described above. Given these needs, the evaluation found SFCG’s project to be particularly relevant for participating CSOs, as it allowed them, first, to gain new and useful skills and, second, to learn a new approach to advocacy vis-à-vis the government, which emphasized collaboration instead of opposition.

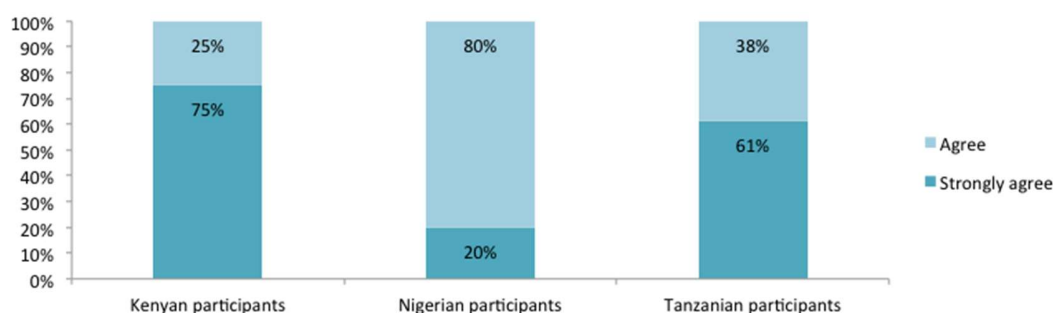
**Particularly relevant for Kenya was the project’s approach on engaging government champions in a way that eased tensions and was not confrontational.** Most CSO leaders interviewed for the evaluation agreed that the approach used by SFCG within the project was both new and relevant for Kenya. Efforts to influence the government across the country are often limited to rallies and other forms of mobilization that is generally focused on *opposing* policies (and officials). This is one crucial factor for the low levels of trust and collaboration between government and civil society—as indeed had been identified by SFCG already at the analysis stage. But the project allowed participants to break out of this cycle, as the quote on the side, by a CSO partner from Nairobi, suggests.

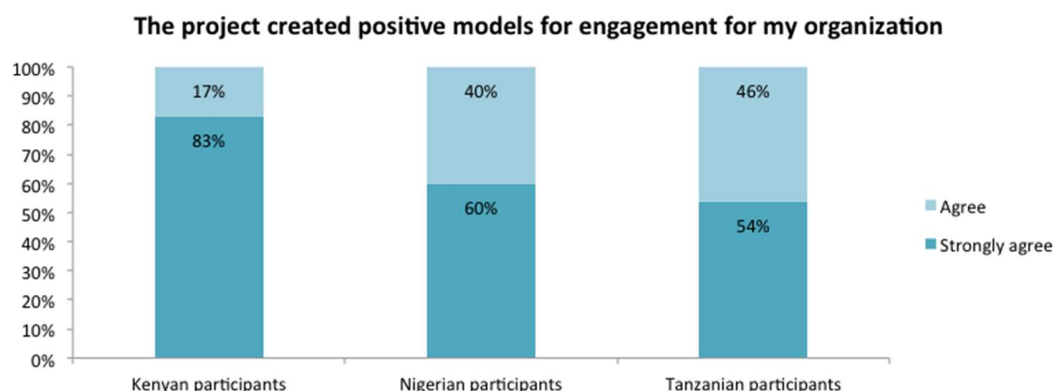
*“Historically, reaching out to government was chaotic and confrontational; having a ‘softer approach’ to collaboration is more effective. [In this project] it was instead the government itself that gave us the venue [for the forum]! It was the government that told us to come to the forums—this was a breakthrough.”*

CSO Partner, Nairobi, Kenya

Views like this one were expressed by several participants, from both civil society and government, suggesting that the project approach was indeed very relevant for Kenya, perhaps more so than in the other countries. Among survey respondents from Kenya, for example, 75% said that they strongly agreed with the statement that project activities responded to the specific needs and circumstances of the country in which they work. This is a considerably higher rate than for participants from Nigeria and Tanzania, where those who strongly agreed with the same statement were 20% and 61%, respectively. Similarly, asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that the project created positive models for engagement for their organizations, 83% of Kenyan respondents said that they strongly agreed, compared to 60% in Nigeria and 54% in Tanzania. The results are presented in the graphs below as well.

**Project activities responded to the specific needs and circumstances of the country in which I work**





**CSO partners also thought that the project’s emphasis on ICT and social media was very relevant.** Participants enjoyed being introduced to new ICT tools, and they generally agreed to have found the presentations they attended during the *teXchange* conferences very pertinent to their work. The project’s focus on new technologies is also well aligned with the media landscape in Kenya, where access to the web and also smartphones is growing rapidly.

**Kenya’s devolution process created both challenges and opportunities for the project.** Throughout the implementation of the project, the Kenyan government has been pushing forward the devolution reforms that were mandated in the country’s 2010 Constitution—as discussed in the context section. In terms of governance, the new Constitution mandated the devolution of key tasks and responsibilities to county-level government offices, which in many cases had to be created anew. This process of transferring authority from national to local representatives, which is very much still ongoing, has started to radically alter the nature of civil society-government relations: on the positive side, it has placed government officials a lot closer to citizens; on the negative side, it has created confusion about reciprocal roles and responsibilities. Qualitative data confirms that devolution created both opportunities and challenges for the project. All interviewees, for example, cited the importance of adapting to this new reality and the opportunities it provided (for example, using budget monitoring as an accountability tool) in describing just how relevant the project they considered to have been to the Kenyan context. And SFCG was able to leverage the opportunity quite effectively, as its Project Coordinator for Kenya, Judy Kimamo, steered participating CSOs to choose county-level officials as their champions and thus initiate relations that would be made more valuable as devolution went ahead. On the negative side, the process of reform has created a lot of turnover among government officials, many of whom became susceptible to sudden promotions or transfers, as new offices were set up in Nairobi and across the country. As a consequence, several of the CSO partners saw the government champions whom they had originally chosen moved (as was the case with KMYA), and had to start the process of selection and relationship building from zero.

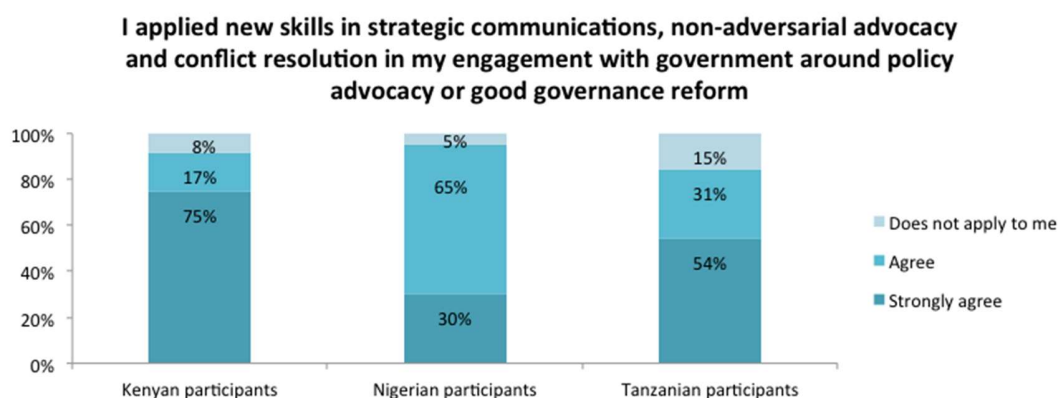
### 3.1.3. Effectiveness Findings

**SFCG and implementing partners were able to reach the outputs indicated in the original proposal.**

A review of project quarterly reports (up to December 2015), cross-referenced with information gathered from CSO partners, clearly confirms this. Particularly positive is the fact that activities appear to have been evenly spread out across all three locations. So, for example, out of a total of 7 capacity-building events (i.e. trainings and strategy development sessions), two took place in each of the targeted cities with the last being the first *teXchange* conference in Nairobi, which brought all participants together. Two particular aspects are worth emphasizing here. First, SFCG decided to provide partners with a single sub-grant to conduct both advocacy (or ‘follow-on’) activities and e-initiatives. This has proven to be a

positive decision, as it allowed partners to better integrate ICT tools around advocacy objectives (albeit, as will be discussed, with varying levels of success), and also gave them a more considerable chunk of funding to work with. Secondly, there appears to have been a strong commitment by SFCG and Reconcile staff members to coach CSO partners throughout the project and in particular around the design and implementation of activities. And while coaching is not an activity that is easily quantifiable (nor did SFCG do itself any favors by failing to properly record these efforts), it has been clearly appreciated by all Kenyan partners.

**The trainings were useful for increasing the capacity of participants in advocacy and conflict resolution.** Asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that the trainings they participated in provided them with new skills and knowledge that are relevant for their profession, 75% of Kenyan respondents indicated that they strongly agreed, compared with 55% in Nigeria and 69% in Tanzania. Similarly, 75% of Kenyan respondents strongly agreed with the statement that they applied new skills in strategic communications, non-adversarial advocacy and conflict resolution in their engagement with government around policy advocacy or good governance reform—compared to 30% for Nigeria and 54% for Tanzania. As before, while the numbers are generally positive for all countries, for Kenyan participants they appear to be slightly more so. The numbers are also consistent with the feedback received through the interviews and focus groups discussions. In the future, however, SFCG might want to consider using a system of pre-and post-training questionnaires to map, with quantifiable information, the changes in individual skills and knowledge.



**The project was effective in promoting greater trust between government officials and CSO leaders.** Specifically through the dialogue events organized by SFCG, CSO partners were able to interact with government representatives, articulate roles and responsibilities, and clarify policy and advocacy measures. In interviews, both CSOs and government representatives confirmed that these sessions were very useful in building (or strengthening) the relationship between the two groups, by cultivating patience for bureaucratic processes that are characteristic of government processes and imbuing a sense of shared goals. It is this relationship that allowed subsequent successes, as in the case of Wanawake Tunaweza in Mombasa, which was able, through the assistance of their government champion, to develop and submit a memorandum to the county assembly for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in elective and appointive positions, with particular focus on next year’s election.

**The advocacy initiatives were able to promote citizen participation.** This finding is best described in the case study cited below, which is reflective of what several other partners in Kenya were able to achieve through their engagement in SFCG’s project.



**Case Study: Midrift Human Rights Network (Nakuru, Kenya)**

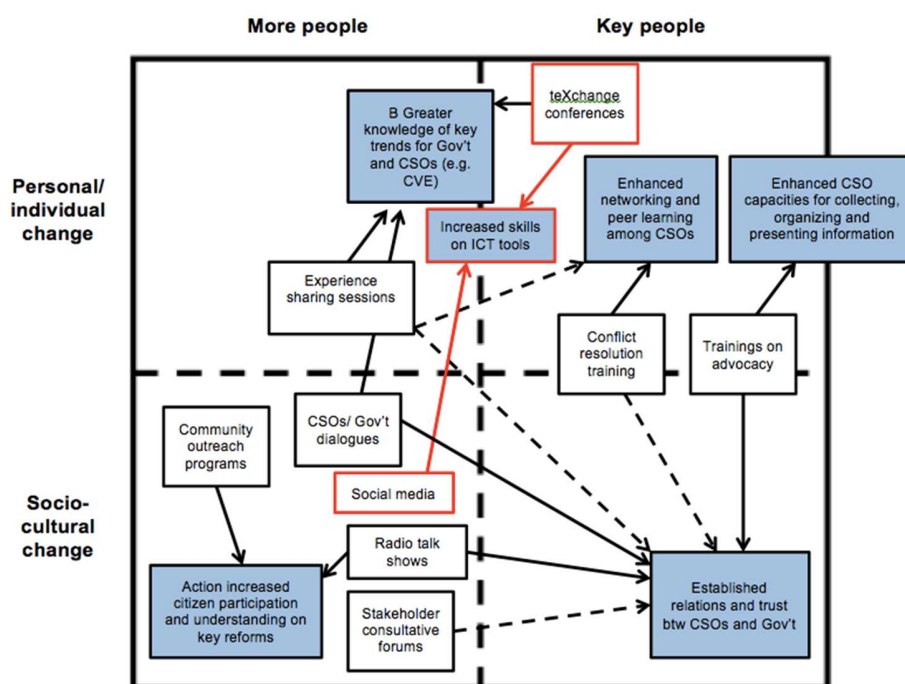
Midrift Human Rights Network (Midrift) is a small organization that was founded in 2008 to promote and defend human rights. For their engagement under this project, Midrift decided to build the advocacy efforts and the e-initiative around an already existing project, which focused on the assignment of bursaries—i.e. devolved funds to cover school costs. The objectives of Midrift’s initiative, which was called *Uwajibijaki mashinani* (‘accountability’), were, first, to increase the awareness about the disbursement of bursaries and, secondly, to create a grievance redress mechanism that could generate feedback between community stakeholders, citizens and government officials. For this work, Midrift was able to count on the strong support of its government champion, who worked for the Office of the Senator for Nakuru County. By all accounts, the relationship between Midrift staff and their champion was very positive: the latter did not participate consistently to events, but communicated regularly and wanted to be always kept up to date on project activities; he was also instrumental in allowing Midrift to engage members of the Nakuru County Assembly, to which he had considerable access.

Midrift organized seven dialogue forums in seven different villages, all part of Rhoda ward in Nakuru county. The events saw the participation of members of the County Assembly, Midrift staff, community stakeholders such as village elders, and citizens; and they included discussions and information sharing between county leaders and community members regarding devolved funds and more specifically bursaries. The events themselves were not always easy to organize: at the beginning, county assembly members were in fact not keen on facing constituents and several meetings became heated. However, strong facilitation allowed discussions to remain focused on concrete needs or issues. In parallel to this, Midrift implemented its e-initiative, through which it set up a text message platform using the SMS Frontline system. The platform allowed the organization to gather and disseminate information about bursaries to hundreds of people in Rhoda ward. They also used this initiative to strengthen their social media profile on Facebook, Twitter and on the web.

The main result from the advocacy meetings was the signing of an official memorandum of understanding between Midrift, as representative of Rhoda ward residents, and the County Assembly for the review of how bursaries are assigned. The memorandum commits signatories to increase transparency around the award of funds, so that these go to the most needy students, and to allow community representatives to vet members of the ward bursary committee. The meetings also led to several concrete actions by the government to address specific community needs: so, for example, during a first forum it was brought to the attention of authorities that a classroom ceiling at a local primary school needed repair; two weeks later, at another meeting, participating government officials mentioned that the ceiling had been repaired. This type of engagement, in the view of both Midrift staff and their government champion, had truly changed how citizens and government interacted, and even sparked the interest of residents from neighboring wards. In terms of the e-initiative, Midrift was able to use the text message based to both disseminate information about various events, as well as collect feedback from citizens. About 1,200 SMS message were sent and 600 received.

**The project design, or theory of change, was well thought out in terms of linking changes at the individual and socio-political levels.** The effectiveness of the project in achieving the aforementioned outcomes was linked to the quality of the theory of change. During the RPP workshop, Kenyan participants identified in particular two outcomes—‘increased citizen participation’ and ‘established relations and trust between government and CSOs’—which, together, provide quite a powerful description of what they thought that change at the socio-political level would look like (see the matrix below). The RPP matrix also showed that participants had a clear understanding of how changes at that level were linked to changes at the individual level, namely through the advocacy trainings and networking events, which in the graph provide a clear bridge from outcomes relating to peer learning and greater capacity (at the personal level) to the one about greater trust (at the political level). Other aspects of the TOC were not as strong, but these are discussed further below.

**Box 3.1: RPP Matrix by Kenyan project participants**



**The effectiveness of e-initiatives is more ambiguous.** There are examples of successes in the way that CSO partners have used ICT tools. In Nairobi, for example, KMYA was able to create a website to disseminate information that, prior to this project, the organization only distributed through a newsletter that was printed and shared in hard copies. The website was developed through the ICT tools and capacities developed with SFCG’s assistance; KMYA also developed a phone application to be used as an early warning system for countering violence in the future. The roll out of these tools is only beginning now, however, and still hindered by a lack of funds. Another good example is from the Center for Transformational Leadership (CTL) in Nakuru, which, through the project, was able to map how information on budget meetings organized by local authorities had been disseminated. CTL then used the Ushahidi platform to develop a crowd-sourced map of collected data, thus creating a tool that could assist government and communities in disseminating information about these meetings more effectively. However, successes were also offset by some important challenges. Among these, the one that partners were most vocal about were delays in receiving ICT equipment, which, depending on the partner, included laptops, mobile phones or modems. The delays, which SFCG confirmed, were apparently due to procurement processes that required USAID approval; and while they did not stop the e-initiatives from happening, they clearly led to frustrations on the part of partners. Another challenge was that the e-initiatives were not necessarily well integrated into advocacy efforts—this is further discussed below.

**Strong coordination by Reconcile led to the above-average effectiveness of project activities in Nakuru specifically.** Nakuru appears to be the one project location, across all three countries, where CSO partners were able to achieve, on average, the best outcomes—and this appears to be due, in some (if not even large part) to the role that Reconcile, as implementing partner, had in linking and working with all the partners based in that city. In terms of data collected, survey results show that Nakuru-based partners attended, on average, 8.6 project events, which is the highest measurement across all project locations, including in Nigeria (where the highest average was 5.6 events per partner, in Bauchi state) and

Tanzania.<sup>1</sup> Interviews and group discussions also confirm that strong networking dynamics exist between partners in Nakuru, which has resulted in greater collaboration. Success by one partner (Midrift) also led Reconcile and SFCG to rely on that organization’s staff to provide guidance to other partners in Kenya.

**The TOC was not based on a clear definition of ‘key’ vs. ‘more’ people.** This was evident in the RPP matrix as already shown above, and is a common challenge in many civil-society-strengthening projects where participants are handpicked among self-defined leaders and key stakeholders. Thus construed, the selection process creates an impression that all those working within the project are automatically ‘key’ people, even if they ultimately have little or no say in influencing the conflict (or governance) dynamics being targeted by the project.<sup>2</sup> This certainly seems the case with the Kenyan participants, and the result is that the project’s logic becomes weakest in how it links results like ‘enhanced capacities and networking’ (of key people) to ‘increased citizen participation’ (of more people). Here, the lack of clarity about the outcome itself could also be a factor. Did citizen participation refer to the efforts of CSO leaders or community members more broadly? The evaluation team opted for the second interpretation, partially because participating CSO representatives were already engaged in advocacy work: the project did not, in this sense, increase their participation, but rather changed the quality of their engagement. Incidentally, the project’s e-initiatives could have been a good link between key and more people, but as the arrows and boxes emphasized in red show, these activities were somewhat separate from the project and it is unclear what specific changes they wanted to bring about, as citizen participation was largely driven by the advocacy meetings, not the use of ICT tools.

**Advocacy efforts and e-initiatives, while running parallel to each other and linked at the design level, were not always effectively integrated.** All partners appreciated the ability to work with new technologies—as already mentioned—but there is no evidence that these tools amplified the impact of advocacy efforts. This finding appears due to several factors, including the fact that many organizations were unfamiliar with new ICT tools, that there were delays in receiving equipment, and that there was pressure in implementing the e-initiatives within a very short timeframe. However, what appears to have been missing from the process of designing e-initiatives was a communications strategy: an analysis, in other words, that could match the use of ICT tools to a specific context. Midrift, for example, noted that the cost of sending messages demotivated a lot of people from responding to SMSs that the organization sent through the SMS Frontline platform. This is hardly surprising given the high levels of poverty across many of the project locations; and it could have been better addressed had project partners been guided by a strategy that matched the potential of these new tools with the realities on the ground.

**The greatest challenge mentioned by all partners was the lack of time—both in terms of the duration of ‘follow-on’ initiatives as well as the compressed schedule of implementation.** In Kenya, CSO partners all implemented their projects in two or three months at the most. This limitation did not change their appreciation for the opportunity provided by SFCG (except perhaps in one case); and some of the partners managed to stretch resources to accomplish a surprisingly high number of activities in such a short period of time. But they all agreed that the time provided was too short. As one CSO partner in Nairobi said, in describing his organization’s engagement, “this was more like a pilot”; another, from Mombasa, confirmed that, in his view, the program implementation time was too short to realize sustainable participation by citizens. Partners wanted more time and resources and, had they received them, the evaluation suggests that the impact of the project would, quite likely, have been much greater.

**The challenge of lack of time is linked to the lack of resources given to CSO partners for their advocacy and e-initiatives.** Sub-grants awarded to CSO partners were very limited in size: according to SFCG in Kenya, partners received around USD 3,000 per grant (advocacy and e-initiative combined), which is very little to be able to set up a proper project. Now, the small size of grants was due in part to

<sup>1</sup> In Zanzibar, survey responses show a higher average—10 project events attended by partner—but this was not deemed reliable as partners interviewed there were also involved in other, parallel projects run by SFCG and did not always draw a distinction between them.

<sup>2</sup> Although the definition of key people can vary from context to context, these are usually described as the individuals with the power and authority to either stop conflict or trigger it.

the decision by SFCG to provide financial support to all partners, instead of only a few of them. This was a good decision, as it eliminated competition between CSOs, a key weakness in the sector. However, the small size of grants also determined the very short duration of initiatives, as just discussed above. It also meant that initiatives had to be greatly reduced in terms of locations: in Nakuru, several partners would have liked to work at county-level or at least in multiple wards, but could not do so.

### 3.1.3. Sustainability Findings

**In several instances, the project led to the establishment of direct feedback between government officials and citizens, thus improving governance through social accountability.** This is a landmark outcome and one that, if supported and replicated, could lead to measurable long-term impact. SFCG's intervention was predicated on three outcomes—increased CSO capacity for advocacy, greater networking, and better relations between CSOs and government—which were by and large achieved. However, what the evaluation found was that, where advocacy initiatives were most successful, they managed to achieve *impact*—i.e. they changed the dynamics of social conflict in targeted communities. This was largely achieved by the establishment of social accountability mechanisms, which, although not the overt goal of the project, are nowadays considered as integral to good governance. The project did this by increasing access to information by citizens, creating new forums for community action and ensuring that government responses, when they occurred, were reported back to citizens. This type of outcome—as described in the case studies above and below—has not been achieved in all locations, suggesting that it needs specific conditions that were not necessarily replicated in all sites. The fact that it was achieved at all, however, is a testament to the strength and long-term potential of this type of engagement.

#### Case study: Disability Focus Africa (Nairobi, Kenya)

Disability Focus Africa (DFA) is a small organization working to address the needs of disabled children, youth and women in Kenya. DFA is based in Nairobi and works in several locations, including the Kibera informal settlement. For their engagement under this project, they decided to focus specifically on the right to education of people with disabilities (PWD) living in Kibera's Sarangombe ward. The objectives of their advocacy initiative were, first, to raise awareness about the education needs of PWD in the ward and, second, to engage local authorities and other stakeholders in order to improve the quality of special needs education with emphasis on access, availability and affordability. To conduct this work, DFA staff relied on the government champion it had chosen, who was a Member of the Nairobi County Assembly representing Sarangombe ward and the Kibera constituency. The relationship between DFA and their champion was informal but positive: the latter did not actively participate to activities, but DFA consistently consulted him as it reached out to other government officials, in the lead up to the forums.

To begin with, DFA conducted a series of informal meetings in the ward to map out special education needs. These meetings involved mainly parents of children with disabilities and school officials; also in attendance were 'social monitors', local volunteers whom DFA had previously trained to collect information on the needs of PWD. The organization then held two advocacy forums in the ward, each of which brought together about 30 participants representing the main stakeholders in Sarangombe: parents, civil society representatives, community leaders, school officials and local authorities. The meetings were an opportunity to discuss the findings from DFA's mapping, the need for more data to be collected, and the availability of funds for special needs education. In parallel to this, DFA's e-initiative focused on training the 'social monitors' so that they could use social media to better advocate for PWD. Specifically, DFA set up an SMS-based platform (using SMS Frontline) to be able to collect input from the monitors and relate updates back to them.

The main outcome of DFA's advocacy efforts was an agreement, among all stakeholders, about the specific problems with regards to special needs education in Sarangombe ward and a commitment to move forward with a focus on country-level funds for education. The meetings also resulted in several concrete actions: following the advocacy forums, two schools decided to put rails in order to facilitate

access for PWD; and one school hired a special needs education teacher. DFA agreed that the approach pioneered through this project was different, mainly in how it focused on the engagement of a government champion, which allowed for the creation of a different, more positive relationship with authorities. DFA staff members also remarked that it was good that there was no competition for resources among partners, something that facilitated genuine collaboration.

**The project provided opportunities to reach government stakeholders beyond the ‘champions’.** In Mombasa, for example, Wanawake Tunaweza has been able to build relations outside of the project with members of the county assembly, including the governor and other national county personnel, by applying gains made through the training received from SFCG. Specifically, the training on conflict resolution and advocacy gave Wanawake Tunaweza staff the courage to approach their government counterparts, the strategy to package and communicate their agenda as well as the need to have more knowledge on government work approaches and provisions within policy and legal instruments. This has strengthened the work that they do also outside of this project, as a similar approach has been used to gain government support for other advocacy initiatives. The short-term duration of the advocacy initiative, however, has in this case also undermined the establishment of long-term collaborative processes.

**The selection of government champions was a crucial factor for sustaining results, but it was mostly done through personal contacts that did not always contribute to institutionalizing collaboration with CSOs.** Where the selection of government champions took place effectively, it led to some of the best and most sustainable outcomes; where it was not effective, that is when partners struggled the most. It is also worth mentioning that, in general, the selection of government champions took a long time and was a rather informal process: nearly all CSO partners opted to engage government representatives whom they already knew. This informality was crucial to ensure buy-in, but it also led to relations that, even when positive, were personal first. This prevented in most cases the institutionalization of CSO-government collaboration, thus undermining the project’s sustainability. Interestingly, some partners were able to move beyond this challenge, in large part because their approach to the selection of champions was more systematic. Mombasa-based Trace Kenya, for example, initially chose as their champion a social worker within the county office of the Ministry for Land, Mining and Housing. In line with what said above, this person was selected on account of the fact that the organization had had a long-term relation with her. Over time, however, Trace Kenya staff realized that in order to be effective they needed to also include officials higher within the government. They thus conducted a mapping of key stakeholders, which led them to reach out to the governor, the county executive committee and a Member of Parliament. This had immediate positive consequences for Trace Kenya’s advocacy initiatives, and the same appears to also be true for all other civil society partners, such as KMYA and Midrift, which also engaged several government representatives beyond the chosen champion. On the other hand, where these champions were poorly chosen, as was the case with Pamoja in Nairobi, or where the choice was not strategic enough, as with the case of Huria in Mombasa, this did not lead to sustainable relations.

**Another challenge linked to government champions was that several of them left in the middle of project activities,** usually because they were transferred to other departments. This was, as far as the evaluation is concerned, something that had not been identified as a potential problem by SFCG, although it did create complications for several partners. Participant turnover is a risk for all capacity building and networking initiatives, and SFCG should make sure to address it more strongly in the future.

**Something missing was that activities were mainly targeted at stakeholders internal to the project; there were little efforts to disseminate the model among other relevant stakeholders in both civil society and government.** While some additional government partners were involved in some activities (as discussed above), in general there were no activities that specifically targeted stakeholders external to the project, either in government or civil society. Arguably, events that could have informed these individuals about the project’s model and success would have been extremely useful to increase its sustainability, especially given the limitations on resources provided to CSO partners under the sub-

grants. It is also surprising that, while the *teXchange* conferences did involve external civil society stakeholders, they did not engage them more strongly in replicating the project's approach in other locations. Other international NGOs (and even donor agencies) working to promote social accountability and governance in Kenya would have, for example, been ideal targets for this type of engagement; and doing so could have strengthened the project's theory of change by flashing out a more direct link between working with 'key' people and engaging 'more' people.

## 3.2. Nigeria

### 3.2.1 Project context

Democratic processes and CSO involvement in political activities have seen some improvements in the last two years in Nigeria—a different trend than in the other two project countries. Nigeria has clearly specified provisions on the management of CSOs through the Corporate Development Committee (CDC) and the national regulatory framework is straightforward. The main challenge remains the attitudes of state governments, who are completely independent from the CDC. These attitudes have developed over a long period of time and, while relations remain cordial, they have led to issues in how CSOs engage with authorities.

To a broader extent, the country is still characterized by a high level of violence and conflict with thousands of people killed and displaced. One example above all, as reported by international media, was the April 2014 kidnapping of some 200 girls by the terrorist group Boko Haram. In addition, the Niger Delta region continues to be an area of major conflict and the security situation there deteriorated further in the first part of 2016. The government's inability to retrieve them has led to a surge in international attention and an ever-increasing lack of confidence in the Nigerian state. Relationships between CSOs and the government have also shown signs of deterioration. Following a series of attacks by Boko Haram at the beginning of 2015, the government decided that the elections would be postponed until the end of March—a decision that many contested.

Elections were eventually held, in March and April 2015, and the opposition party won. This victory was fueled by the population's perception that incumbent candidate Goodluck Jonathan and his administration had been incapable of securing the country and protecting its citizens, as symbolized by the Chibok girls' kidnapping. The elections were considered fair and relatively peaceful by national and international election monitors, as compared to the post-election killings and destructions of 2011. This time, there were limited instances of post-election violence. This successful outcome was largely credited to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the leadership of the presidential candidates. Many felt that the peaceful elections came also from a commitment by the two candidates to encourage their supporters to avoid violence and accept the outcome of the election. President Muhammadu Buhari was sworn into office on May 29, 2015.

The credit for peaceful elections can be attributed also to the tireless work of civil society in Nigeria, including organizations such as Enough is Enough and the Transition Monitoring Group, who pushed for electoral reform and worked with government bodies to support the election process. The new government is now focusing on anti-corruption, jobs and unemployment, the economy and security. Still, Boko Haram remains a threat in the Northeast of the country especially, where millions of internally displaced people require assistance. There has been major destruction of infrastructure along with the loss of lives and impoverishment in this region. The government has been responding with its own military operations; it has also tightened security and public order regulations, which has remained a source of tension with civil society groups. Human rights watchdogs have in particular accused the military of committing violations against civilians.

### 3.2.2. Relevance Findings

**The project involved relevant stakeholders.** In particular, for the government champions, the selection was done through a mapping process to identify the most relevant individuals to engage, which worked well. For instance, in Rivers State one of the government champions worked at the Ministry of Local Government Affairs and was selected due to the strategic position he occupied. He was in fact the coordinator of interior government affairs in the state, and in this position he was able to mobilize support from any local government office. Another champion was from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Development and again selected due to her strategic role. Another was from the National Human Rights

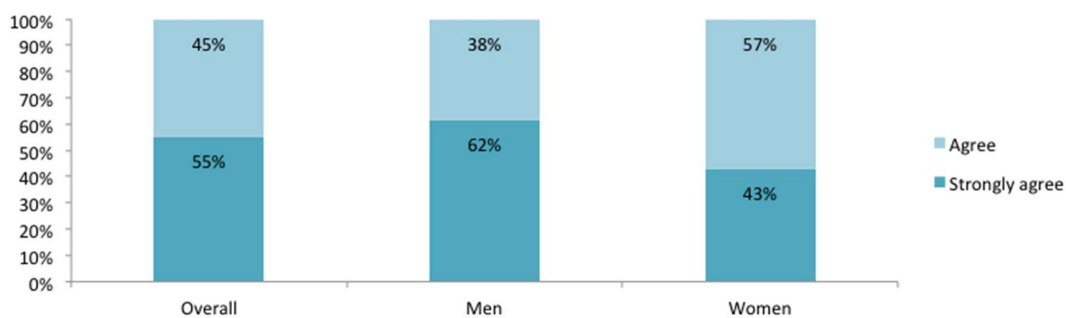
Commission (NHRC) and had an already existing relationship with the CSO partner. A last example is a champion that was Permanent Secretary within the Sustainable Development Agency. The choice of this person was strategic for the sustainability of the specific partner initiative, which focused on involving youth in development. Overall, the selected champions were relevant to the causes and the advocacy initiatives of CSO partners in all locations. A CSO partner said: “to me, it is very relevant in the sense that it causes me to be more relevant. Because I was representing an organization in Bauchi and was connected with government officials, I was called on to help other CSOs obtain information”. However, these ‘top-level’ and relevant champions were not always able to attend project activities and they often delegated participation to other colleagues. As a result, CSOs also identified other informal champions who were strategic for project processes.

*“The program has opened me to more issues, because I was able to go to the communities and hear issues that people were normally silent on. This new information gave me more information to plan which areas we really need to work in and what we need to focus on.”*

Government champion, Bauchi State, Nigeria

**The project partners successfully acquired significant skills and knowledge through the project.** Asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement that the trainings they participated in provided them with new skills and knowledge that were relevant for their profession, 55% of survey respondents from Nigeria strongly agreed, and 45% agreed (the graph below shows the results disaggregated by gender). This was confirmed through the interviews and focus group discussions. For instance, a government respondent from Port Harcourt shared that the capacity she gained on conflict management and skills in proposal writing equipped her with skills she employed in a project on water and sanitation. The project has also helped participants in gender mainstreaming and effective communication. Another participant from the NHRC in Plateau State shared how her communication skills for the delivery of her organization’s mandate has been improved and that she has been further enlightened by her participation in the project. A CSO partner from Bauchi State said that the project has enhanced her knowledge and that the capacity she gained has helped in gathering support for the Child Rights Act.

**The trainings I participated in provided me with new skills and knowledge that are relevant for my profession (Nigerian participants)**



**Participants were particularly positive about the relevance (and effectiveness) of the training components.** In particular, the training on non-adversarial advocacy and conflict resolution was very useful for participants and it promoted a more strategic relationship that was also results-oriented. Unlike Kenya, both government and CSO leaders took part in the capacity building trainings. Several partners highlighted that the training improved relations both with CSOs and the government, abandoning the old fashioned adversarial approach and adopting a collaborative attitude. Some participants felt that the training received served to demystify the reputation of CSOs as watchdogs set against the government,



promoting instead the image of a likeminded institute with objectives that are *complementary* to the role of the government. Many commented that prior to the project, while contacts with government existed, these ‘were not built’. Thus, the trainings led both partners to search for a common ground for the good of the citizenry. In addition, the training has also enhanced organizational advocacy capacity for many participating CSOs. All in all, the training received took the relationship with government representatives and elevated it to another level. However, a deeper observation of the training program through the RPP matrix (see below) shows a strong focus on individual-personal changes, with few links to how these activities then contributed to socio-political outcomes.

Still, the examples of relevance and effectiveness from the trainings are plentiful. Another organization focused on youth in Rivers State was able (through the training) to map and identify the relevant stakeholders for their needs. There was definitely an enabling environment cultivated through the use of dialogue in understanding legal provisions (rights and responsibilities) and articulating the roles of duty bearers in the matter beforehand. The NHRC official also shared how trainings she attended helped improve, through effective communication, her skills in facilitating counseling sessions at work.

**The training also improved CSO’s capacity in advocacy and influenced approaches in other programs of their work with government.** For instance, to better coordinate with government one CSO formed an umbrella of CSOs in Rivers State on the thematic area of women, peace and security. Together these organizations now have one voice with which to coordinate government affairs.

#### **Case Study: Voice of the Girl Child (Jos Plateau, Nigeria)**

In Northern Nigeria, gender inequality exists across most sectors: the economy, education, governance, health, access to justice and almost all areas of human development. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, but customary and religious laws continue to restrict women’s rights. Voice of the Girl Child (VGC) Foundation recognizes the vulnerability of women and girls within the society and seeks to promote equity through advocacy, by tackling social norms that would otherwise hinder effective participation, and by creating awareness to women on their rights and need for active participation in governance.

The training received on non-adversarial advocacy and conflict resolution enabled VGC staff to structure a more strategic engagement with the government. This new way of working had a positive effect on their profile, enabling them to mobilize like-minded agencies to form a network, Women Peace Network, to facilitate a more collaborative engagement with government. The immediate result was that the CSOs were better coordinated and projected one voice, a significant factor that facilitated a better working relationship with government.

One direct outcome resulting from this strategic engagement was the inclusion of women in traditional peacebuilding committees. This was a major achievement because traditionally peace committees are predominantly male-dominated. Through the engagement of women in peace committees the needs of displaced women were highlighted and included in subsequent planning efforts, thus ensuring a gender-balanced approach in the implementation of responses. The program also supported the CSOs network to adopt non-adversarial approaches in the implementation of programs.

With the support of government representatives and some local authorities the project initiated an advocacy strategy that targeted traditional leaders specifically focusing on social norms that hinder women’s participation in their own development. These advocacy initiatives are ongoing and will continue to push for change.

### **3.2.3. Effectiveness findings**

**Trust between CSOs representatives and government champions clearly increased as a result of the project.** Most partners were adamant about the fact that through dialogue there was a realization of

common ground between CSOs, government officials and the citizenry. Some of the positive outcomes included government enforcement of existing bylaws and continued engagement of local authorities for improved program ownership and support in environmental management. For instance, several attendants during the workshop in Nigeria agreed that “there is an improved relationship and collaboration between government and CSOs, which was not effective prior to the commencement of LIGGA projects in the three States of Bauchi, Plateau and Rivers”; and that “most citizens before the LIGGA project did not know how to constructively engage government through accountability processes, but the project has built people’s capacity to engage with government”.

A concrete example of the greater trust level and understanding between government and CSOs is the active CSO involvement in budgetary processes in Bauchi. Government there has created a more conducive environment for CSOs to participate in, while CSOs have also been increasingly appreciating the budgeting processes and ensuring that communities also appreciate and participate in their design. The government representative from the Office of the Head of Civil Service in Plateau State shared that the initiative helped her to improve her relationship with CSOs, and now she appreciates and understands the role of effective communication to project success. She perceives CSOs differently and appreciates them more; she has also gained more knowledge on how to identify problems and work out solutions, thanks to the trainings she attended. In addition, the NHRC carried out an activity in Riyom Local Government Authority (LGA), in Plateau State, which gave them a wider platform to reach the people, to engage them and execute their mandate as an organization. The high turnout to this event gave publicity and raised awareness of the existence of such organizations like the NHRC itself.

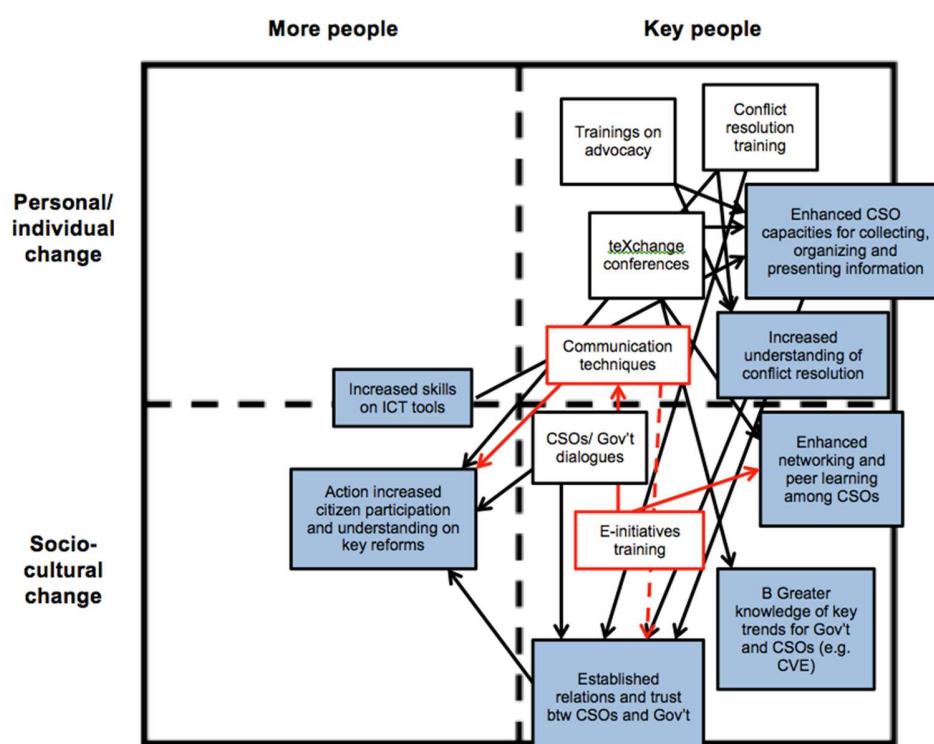
*“The skills acquired [through the project] helped me to facilitate the session with empathy as a result of the understanding, knowledge and skills acquired from the trainings where I learned that conflict is unavoidable and how it is managed matters.”*

Government champion, Office of the Head of Civil Service Plateau State, Nigeria

For another CSO representative from Plateau State one key result was also that the relations with the government had changed to better accommodate CSOs. They were now able to share information on the situation of women and children with ease (see case study in the box below). This partnership is progressing positively and they think that it will continue to do so. This is evidenced by the fact that there is an open-door policy and complementary support and also more transparency in operations are in place. There has been more support in the development of the child protection bill and the resultant effect is that the organizations in the network have now also developed strategies to adopt this new way of working with government (i.e. using a non-adversarial approach). For instance, during an advocacy meeting planned for May 2016 the CSO has been allocated time in the program to drum support for the bill and talk about the benefits of this non-adversarial approach and its positive outcome for the citizenry.

**ICT activities were generally considered useful, but their target was not always clear.** For some participants, the use of ICT was useful in reaching the masses and persuading citizens to participate. Through ICT-based advocacy, including the use of radio and SMS, citizen participation appears to have indeed increased. An organization mentioned that prior to this project, the organization already used ICT tools (website and radio), mainly to create awareness; however, it has also improved and enhanced its advocacy for citizen participation. Through the previous process they were able to receive information, but there was no linkage to government that would facilitate policy changes. This engagement with SFCG enabled them, instead, to complete the puzzle, linking government (custodian of law), CSOs (facilitation role) and citizens (demand for services), leading to a more strategic approach to accountability.

## Box 3.2. RPP Matrix by Nigerian project participants



Linked to the previous finding, it appears that work done under the e-initiatives was disconnected from other project components, suggesting a weak logic to it that might have affected its effectiveness. This finding is similar to what the evaluation has found also in the RPP matrices for Kenya and Tanzania, and is highlighted in red lines and boxes in the graph above. The e-initiatives clearly contributed to some important results, including peer learning, but the linkages of these components to other key results within the project theory of change are weak. This is also confirmed by the reflection workshop held in Nigeria. During this activity, 20 project participants were asked to show intervention activities that facilitated the outcomes that led to the achievement of project goal. Outcome 3.1 (“CSOs increased communication with similar associations in their countries, regions and across Africa”) and outcome 3.2 (“CSOs implement e-initiatives involving exchange with international partners”) of the project were tied with only one activity each (respectively, “Skills Development Workshops” and “International Exchange in Kenya”), while other outcomes were linked, on average, to 4-5 activities.

One challenge on effectiveness with the project was the nature of **communication between SFCG and CSO partners**, which was not always predictable and did not allow for planning. For instance, the design of the proposal was done 9 months before a communication was received on the next steps. Another example was the late distribution of the in-kind contribution to the project. These delays were in part due to the centralized control of the project and to the procurement approval process required by USAID. Approvals had to be done at headquarters, which was inconvenient for how the project responded to partners’ needs and expectations.

**An important challenge was that the duration of advocacy and e-initiatives was very short and resources limited.** Project participants would have wished to do more, particularly in terms of resources and duration. This is particularly true for activities linked to the sub-grants. To a certain extent, it is possible to say that on the one hand this choice was not efficient for the project outcomes, although, as an indirect result, CSO partners were “forced to sustainability” (see below) as they tried to be creative with

the limited resources and pressure for implementation. An organization, due to short implementation time, engaged in a way that would build on some of the ongoing initiatives to ensure sustainability.

### Case Study: Centre for Advocacy of Justice and Rights (Plateau State, Nigeria)

Since 2001, violence has erupted in Jos city, capital of Plateau state, in Nigeria’s Middle Belt region. The ostensible dispute is over the rights of the indigenous groups and the rival claims of the Hausa-Fulani settlers to land, power and resources leading to constant insecurity. The Centre for the Advocacy of Justice and Rights (CAJR) a membership, non-governmental, non-profit and independent organization for the promotion of social justice, fundamental human rights, rule of law and good governance continues to work with the population to promote social justice, fundamental human rights, rule of law and good governance as critical elements of a developed and civilized society. This project was focused on engaging with the government to identify income generation activities and link the youth to it.

Through dialogue, CAJR were able to persuade community members to understand the underlying causes of insecurity and participate in creating a secure environment. As a result, they were able to work with the local governance structures to reduce incidences of insecurity. This was achieved by addressing the key drivers, i.e. lack of income generation opportunities. By identifying opportunities to enhance youth capacity and by linking the youth to the ongoing initiatives with the government, income could be generated and insecurity addressed. This approach was adopted following an outcome of the dialogue process showing that for some of the youth there was the risk to engage in crime if they were unable to provide for their families. CJAR, in close collaboration with the government, discussed and identified opportunities that were already available within the government and the strategies to prepare the youth to secure some of the income generating opportunities. Through the Ministry of Employment, they linked youth to revolving loan opportunities as a source of capital for income generation. The youth were earmarked to receive subsidies for other related investment programs. Through awareness-raising sessions, CJAR was then able to persuade youth to change behavior and exploit the available resources as more sustainable alternatives to earning income. Some of the awareness-raising sessions were sponsored by the state TV and radio stations free of charge, also an example of public-private partnership.

As post-project implementation, a blog has been set up, through which information will be shared on the project’s progress and ongoing human rights issues within the area. This will be monitored and channeled as appropriate by CJAR in collaboration with the human rights commission.

### 3.2.4. Sustainability Findings

**The relationships and platforms formed by the project are in place and it seems that they will last beyond the project implementation period.** The relationship with the government champions is

*“In Plateau State we are partnering with so many CSOs [Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development]...the work is together”*

Government official, Plateau State, Nigeria

expected to last outside of the project implementation period because the project restored CSO faith in the government processes. CSOs appear more able to organize themselves to advocate for service provision through their own representatives. However, the timing was too short for the engagement with government offices to achieve sustainable results. There exists an informal network among “LIGGA partners”, where they share information, technical expertise and learn from one another. It seems that the sustainability of

the relations is also tied to the joint work on common issues, e.g. on countering violent extremism (CVE). This was clear through various statements made by both civil society and government participants, some of which are presented below.

**Sustainability was promoted by the choice, on the part of partners, to link advocacy and e-initiatives to already existing work.** Interestingly, and as already mentioned in the section on effectiveness, CSO partners were forced, given the short-term duration of implementation and limited funding, to anchor advocacy and e-initiatives onto already ongoing projects, as a step to ensure continuity beyond the funding duration. They were, in other words, “forced to sustainability” in a way that, if they had more time, they would have likely not been. The short duration led in this sense to the unexpected outcome of increasing the sustainability of the actions in a way that can and should, looking forward, be replicated as much as possible.

*“The government champions who participated in the project will serve as our entry point and where we have difficult access, they will be able to help us and lessen the suspicion of CSOs.”*

CSO representative, Nigeria

**Still, follow-on projects were implemented for a short period, which was just enough to scratch the surface but not to ensure sustainability.** Behavior change takes time and the extremely short duration of advocacy initiatives was in this sense critical. It just stirred up thoughts that would support change. For a CSO in Plateau State, one of the ways to ensure continuity was to utilize the seed funds on existing organizational programming. The program has established linkages between different government departments and enhanced community participation. By use of the organization’s website, the program will continue to monitor ongoing developments as posted on Whatsapp groups, which were also formed.

**Participants do not necessarily feel full ownership of the project.** For instance, during a female-only group discussion in Abuja, replying to the question “To what extent do you think that the building of ownership and participation has included youth, men and women?”, a government respondent from Plateau scored each group 40% on ownership and participation. However, she emphasized that placing all groups together will take ownership on a scale of 80%. Overall, respondents scored the ownership of the program to be 80%, with the exception of two CSO respondents from Plateau and Bauchi State who both scored it 50% and 70% respectively.

**Insecurity represented a significant challenge for the project in some areas of Nigeria and some incidents should represent an alarm bell for future activities.** Government and CSO representatives described some important security challenges due to the ongoing crisis in some of the project locations. For instance, a participant remarked that his participation in this project was costly on a personal front: his son was kidnapped and later released. This incident occurred a week after he organized a joint initiative with the LGA to reduce insecurity. The evaluation could not determine if indeed this incident was linked to the specific activity; however, it appears that SFCG had not discussed this scenario or any actions to mitigate such risk. For the future, it will be important for SFCG in particular to reflect and map out potential security risks linked to specific activities. Ideally, these should be reviewed prior and following the activity, in order to re-assess the likelihood of the identified risk and its impact on the project.

Another challenge faced, which is linked to insecurity, was additional costs. There were instances in Plateau and Port Harcourt where meetings were rescheduled and alternative arrangements had to be made to bring project participants to safe areas. These costs were not included in the initial budget provided for the program. In addition, existing economic crisis stemming from the fuel scarcity affected mobility of participants, as many regularly had to queue for hours at the fueling station.

### 3.3. Tanzania

#### 3.3.1. Project context

Political stability has provided a solid foundation for Tanzania's growth and, together with its economic prospects, has raised the country's profile in the region and the world. Approximately 28.2% of the population lived below the poverty line in 2012, a noteworthy decrease from 34% in 2007. During the 2007-2012 period, there were improvements in living conditions, access to basic education, health and nutrition and labor force participation in non-agriculture employment. Nevertheless, these benefits were not distributed equitably. Inequality has increased between urban and rural population and approximately 12 million Tanzanians are still living in poverty.

The last two years have been characterized by important political and institutional developments. On February 18, 2014, just as the project was starting, the Constitutional Assembly—the body charged with drafting the new constitution based on the input of the Constitutional Review Commission—was officially sworn in. The constitutional review process, which was due to culminate with a popular referendum scheduled for April 30, 2015, has provided an opening for greater civil society engagement in governance. Civil society groups, particularly those focused on women's empowerment, have been extremely active in lobbying for the inclusion of specific provisions in the new constitution.

On April 2, 2015, however, Government declared the constitutional referendum postponed until after the elections scheduled for October of that same year. The move increased tensions between Tanzania's main opposition parties and the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and raised concerns about the legitimacy of the upcoming elections. A number of Tanzanian CSOs played an active role in the drafting of the constitution through the Constitution Forum. This postponement placed their future engagement into question.

On October 25, 2015, Tanzania held its fifth general elections since it transitioned to a multiparty democracy in 1992. Dr. John Pombe Magufuli, the ruling CCM's candidate emerged the winner with 58.46% of the vote, while Mr. Edward Lowassa, a former CCM stalwart, behind whom an opposition coalition united, got 39.97%. The election was a low point for government-civil society relations: the office of the Tanzanian Civil Society Consortium on Election Observation was even raided by police and accused of collecting and sharing election results. The election crackdown confirmed the fears of many that Tanzania's ruling party is determined to stifle dissent and rein in perceived opponents in media and civil society. Polling was largely peaceful; however, the election was not without problems. Second place finisher Lowassa refused to accept the results of the poll, while in Zanzibar the vote was initially annulled. Elections there were repeated on March 20, 2016, and President Ali Mohamed Shein (CCM) won without challengers because opposition member Yussuf Juma boycotted the election as a sham.

#### 3.3.1. Relevance Findings

**All the participants stated that the project was relevant for their roles for different reasons.** During interviews, many CSO participants expressed this view, saying for example that the project allowed them to “talk together for the needs of the people” (i.e. water problems in some areas). Another interviewee from Dar Es Salaam said that the project was relevant because “we need to work together”, and several others confirmed that it had “huge relevance”. A more nuanced explanation came from female participants from Zanzibar, who summed up that the project was relevant for four reasons: 1) it reached communities; 2) it gave responsibilities in two ways: to the governments and to CSOs; 3) it supported information sharing (media, social media, etc.); and 4) it favored sharing experiences (i.e. a women's organization focused on job issues learned to increase its media profile from a women's organization focused on media).

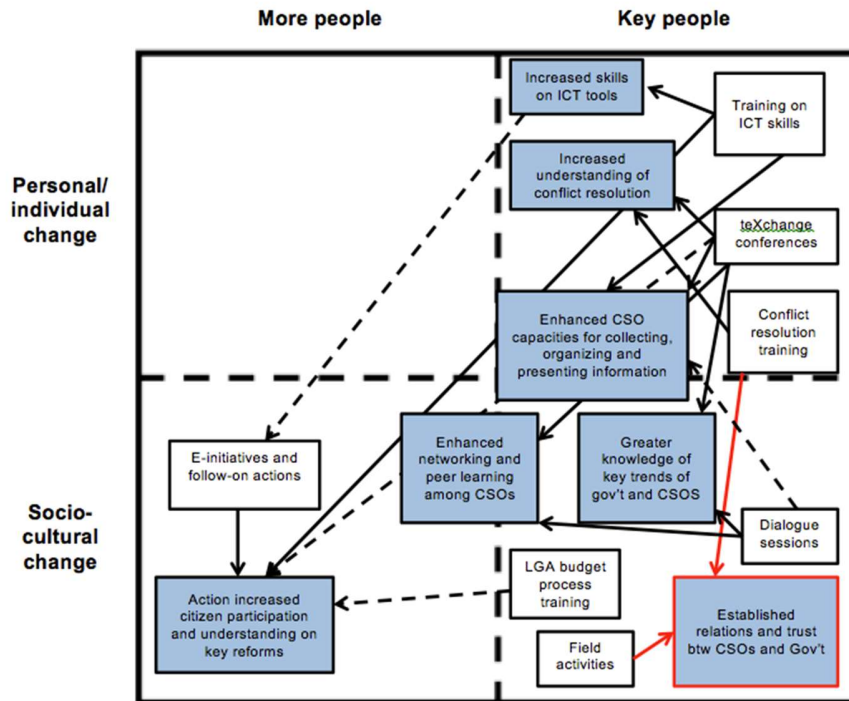
Several participants stated that the project involved the right people, at right time, responding to specific needs of the time (i.e. for elections in Zanzibar). However, the different components and levels should be analyzed separately as follow:

- **Several participants stated that the government champions were the right people involved.** CSOs partners decided whom to involve. They often involved people who were already known to them and occupied relevant positions for follow-up/advocacy activities. As a result of project activities, different CSOs representatives stated that it is easier to access government—i.e. have access to documents, a better understanding of procedures, etc. Some champions seemed also involved, with a track record of positive examples. Others, however, seemed less concrete and unable to present positive examples and case studies in relation to their engagement under the project. Similarly, some of them declared that they do not collaborate with CSOs outside of the project; others do. At the same time, the majority of the champions stated that they are not working on policy-making with CSOs representatives, as many of them are civil servants with limited competences on policy-making.
- Another element raised more than a few times by the participants, and also related to the effectiveness of the projects, is the **size of CSOs**. According to some participants, **some CSOs were too large to engage in the project activities** (TANGO was mentioned as a network) because the funds that they received were too small for them, especially on two aspects: 1) there were no funds to pay staff costs; and 2) the sub-grants were small (one participants said, “For giant NGOs, the money was too little”). This point, however, was confirmed by the majority of both small and large organizations.
- **Geographically, the project’s decision to focus on the level of divisions made sense given the length and strength on the project itself.** However, some participants declared that involving institutions closer to the citizens could be useful, i.e. at the level of villages and wards (“They are forgotten, without opportunities”). It looks like this request is also tied to the desire to reach a broader slice of population through the project activities, especially in remote areas.

**While few participants questioned that the relevant stakeholders were involved in the project, some claim that the project has had very little impact in reaching out at community levels.** A participant viewed as a problem that the project was designed only to involve CSOs staff and government offices. However, was this an objective of the project? Focusing on advocacy, “reaching out to the communities” was not a key issue. This confusion of the target of the project activities was also confirmed by the RPP matrix made by the Tanzanian participants (as shown below): there was a very heavy focus on key people, suggesting that the engagement of more people (and the definition of ‘more’ vs. ‘key’ people) was not thought out enough. A key question remains: what is the change that the project seeks among more people, and how does it want to bring it about? The RPP matrix by Tanzanian participants suggests this was not addressed, with the result that the project’s theory of change was weak on this front.

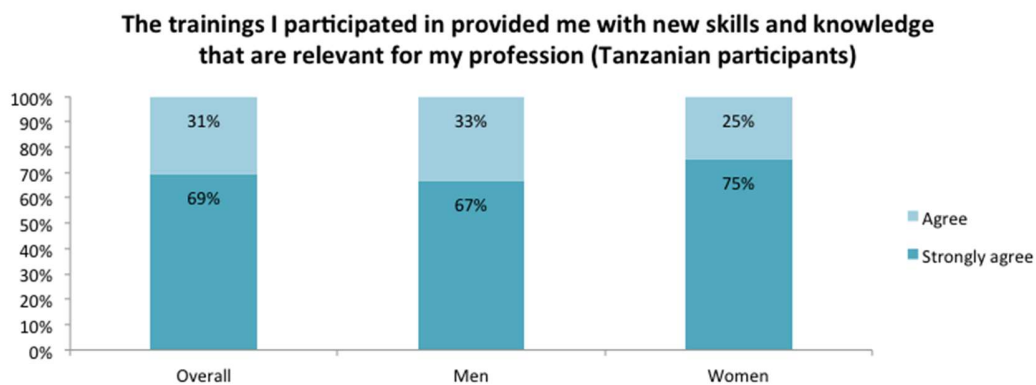
To a large extent, this is the same problem remarked in the Kenya and Nigeria sections, as well as a common challenge for most programs that promote social change and conflict resolution in complex and fragile environments. What the evaluation wants to emphasize is not, however, that SFCG and its partners should have worked with more (or different) individuals within the chosen target groups; rather, the suggestion is that they could have engaged in a more in-depth analysis and definition of whom those target groups included. The baseline study for Tanzania, for example, is almost wholly focused on describing the relationship between government officials and CSOs, but fails to provide detailed information as to the identity, the capacity, and the constituencies of these organizations. As a consequence, the project assumes that CSOs are gateways to communities and citizens, and natural agents of positive change. Had the project’s theory of change been developed in more detail, an assumption such as this could have been easily tested or at least analyzed, leading to a strong logic, and greater effectiveness.

**Box 3.3: RPP Matrix by Tanzanian project participants**



The project was also relevant for youth, especially in relation to peacebuilding activities. It raised awareness that the youth have a role to play also at the political level, and that they should gain trust from people. Also, by attending the conflict resolution training, participating youth learned that they have to know the sources of conflict and the importance of listening. This training was particularly important for participants from Zanzibar, who experienced conflicts at the political level, as was confirmed by different groups (men, women and youth).

Among the activities, the conflict resolution training was mentioned several times as one of the more useful activities. This was confirmed through the participants’ survey and informant interviews. As for the survey, 69% of Tanzanian participants said that they strongly agreed with the statement that the trainings they participated in provided them with new skills and knowledge that are relevant for their profession (see graph below).





As for the interviews, a female participant from Zanzibar said that she uses the acquired skills in her job as a lawyer; a government champion, also from Zanzibar, applied them during the post-electoral violence; and another government champion applied those skills in his professional activities on prisons. In addition, a specific package (i.e. SFCG’s training manual) was already used several times out of the project, for instance in a training for women’s leaders.

*“The project revealed the need to have stronger relationships. CSOs have great responsibility to help the government for peaceful and free elections, and they have an important role as watchdog.”*

CSO representative, Zanzibar, Tanzania

**Two years ago, CSOs had a passive attitude**

**towards the government, while now they are more active.** This result is due to external factors, but partially also to the project activities, i.e. some CSOs are more active advocating on gender-based violence, poverty and good governance. This was appropriately said by a male participant from Zanzibar, as reported in the box above.

### 3.3.2. Effectiveness Findings

**All the participants said that the project helped to decrease tensions, to create a good working environment and to generate smooth and effective relationships between the government and CSOs.** The importance of the social dimension of the relationships was underlined. Some mentioned amicable ways of settling issues, while others described the focus on commonalities as an added value. Some CSOs participants noted that “government champions changed their attitude”. However, there are indications that for the Tanzanian participants, how this outcome was brought about—how activities and other results, in other words, are linked to each other and contribute to better civil-society government relations—is less clear. This is highlighted, in the RPP matrix shown above, with the red lines and boxes, which show that, according to the partners who participated in this exercise, only two activities contributed to this outcome—the conflict resolution training and the broad category of ‘field activities’—while links to other activities and results were missing (or left unexplored). The emphasis on ‘field activities’ is consistent with information gathered during the focus group discussions and interviews, where CSO partners mentioned that the achievement of this result was due to a host of various efforts, including research on different issues (maternal health and water and sanitation, for example), participation to community parliaments, dialogue with members of parliament, etc. Not all these activities, however, were organized under this project, and it could therefore be that partners are conflating their experience under this project with their participation under other initiatives both by SFCG, which in Tanzania has various projects, and other agencies. This might explain the lack of clarity about the project’s TOC, though more analysis would be necessary to come to a more concrete finding.

**The project has also enabled more transparency between CSOs and government through the use of ICT tools.** A participant addressed ICT as a new channel for advocacy initiatives. Other participants generally agreed with this view, stating that, thanks to the project, they understood more about mainstreaming ICT in their day-by-day activities at the office. Among the activities, the *teXchange* conferences were mentioned as being particularly effective for helping to share best practices and opportunities relating to the use of new technologies. CSO partners also mentioned that the use of ICT tools had direct application for improving or strengthening their organizations’ websites, social media and blogs.

**All CSO participants mentioned the lack of time and the limited funds of the sub-grants as a significant challenge.** In terms of time, the partners had just one to two months to implement the activities. Concerning funds, SFCG awarded grants of around USD 1,500 per partner for e-initiatives and the same amount for follow-up or advocacy initiatives. The time for developing the projects was too short

for all of the organizations. There was ample time to develop the projects, but the follow-up mechanisms coordinated by SFCG took months reviewing multiple drafts of the proposals. The funds were found to be very little in particular for large organizations, though all other CSOs complained about this as well.

#### **Case Study: TGNP Mtandao/Community parliament model (Tanzania)**

TGNP – an activist non-profit organization formed in 1993 and in 2012 registered as TGNP Mtandao Limited – realized that in the Tanzanian society there was an adversarial relationship between community leaders and government, mostly coming from CSOs, in relation to issues related to the provision of social services. Therefore, they decided to promote a community parliament model engaging community leaders and communities in general to take actions for social change, increasing collaboration. The projects aimed at creating a safe space for the community members, community-based political leaders and thematic stakeholders to converse, dialogue and negotiate on the key issues of community development and social change. The project involved 300 citizens from three wards in the Dar Es Salaam region, women and men (youths and PWDs inclusive). The approach was based on collaborative problem solving between citizens, thematic stakeholders, CSOs and community leaders.

The project was implemented through different and innovative tools: score cards, citizen-led survey analysis report, community parliaments and a community-based social media platform (through blogs and Facebook pages). Citizen-led surveys were presented to leaders of the communities, while TGNP supported them to design the scorecard tool and teach them how to administer it. In practice, the scorecards aimed at checking the state of different public affairs by the citizens themselves and they were supported also by a survey presented to leaders of the communities. The project trained the involved citizens to use these tools. During the community parliaments, citizens presented their findings and concerns in meetings with community leaders. Each group also created a Facebook page to discuss and spread out.

The initiative's achievements included:

- An inclusive (government/community leaders and citizen groups representatives) follow-up committee established;
- Ward Councilors' commitment to table as an agenda item proposed solutions to the citizens' concerns to the ward council meeting;
- Proposed and mutually agreed solutions, which carried the voices of different stakeholders (women, youth, elderly and PWDs, leaders etc.); and
- Citizens' capacity enhanced to carry out community surveys.

Follow-up mechanisms were based on regular contact with the task committee leaders to obtain action implementation report and community social media updates/news posts. Some of the challenges encountered were represented by time constraints, low availability of the community to carry out e-advocacy and limited understanding of positive use of social media within the local communities.

Overall, after the project community's leaders are more cooperative that they were before. In addition, as an organizer stated during the presentation of the project in Dar Es Salaam, even the mindset of community members has changed and now they want to be part of the solution.

The management of the project encountered some challenges in Tanzania, in part from transversal issues relating to coordination. The participants appreciated the overall organization of the project, but some issues were raised. For instance, some participants mentioned the absence of proper deadlines and wasted time for the development of the final project activities. Others said that they received last-minute information from SFCG regarding project implementation, although some partners also agreed that SFCG's responses were timely and their attitude flexible. Besides, the willingness of partners and the positive response of government champions were highlighted.

### 3.3.3. Sustainability Findings

**The participants seemed to have learned from project activities and from each other.** For instance, a participant explained that the Nigerian partners have learned about democratic processes from the Tanzanians; she, as a Tanzanian, has learned from the Kenyans, and now she is using the text-based platform SMS Frontline in her office even outside of the project. She also created a website and launched a social media presence. Another participant said that that he was part of the opposition in Zanzibar during the election and he learned from Kenyan and Nigerian participants how to deal with dissent without violence. He said, “I was taking my role as a trained leader to make peace in my country”. Another participant, quote in the box above, also said that she will continue to apply the acquired skills on conflict resolution in Zanzibar during the elections. Another participant from Zanzibar had the opportunity to write a proposal and to secure funds and she is more confident now. A CSO representative said that she would include ICT in developing her organization’s strategic plan. Several participants stated that they would continue using ICT and other media, for instance local radio broadcasts, online TV channels and online radio.

*“What we learned during the training is always with us, also after the end of the project.”*

CSO representative, Zanzibar, Tanzania

**The sustainability of the relationships between CSOs representatives and government champions in the future seems possible, but with some limitations.** A positive fact is the real involvement of government champions in the project’s activities; in addition, they felt proud to be part of it. However, the relation with the government is only through the champions and is not involving their offices—it has not, in other words, been institutionalized. If the champions change office, there is a concrete risk that channels of communication will close down. In addition, only some of the champions defined the project as a priority and consequentially embedded it in their day-by-day activities. Some champions confirmed that they engaged colleagues only to a limited extent and informally.

**Case Study: AFNET - Health services (Dodoma, Tanzania)**

This project was developed in Kongwa District, Dodoma and focused on the provision of health services for poor people in the region. The project’s objectives were: 1) to increase the participation of citizens in setting health needs priorities; 2) to build the capacity to monitor health services and demand transparency and accountability; 3) to increase the willingness of district council to consider health priorities and needs from community in budget; and 4) for council members to commit themselves to improve service.

The project’s activities were: 1) establishment and use of frontline SMS system for information exchange between citizens and the District council and vice versa (also used to identify advocacy issues to policy makers and decision makers at different levels); 2) mobilization of community members to embark on improvement of their health status by learning to invest in their health through dialogue sessions, meetings and focus group discussions; 3) organization of advocacy dialogue sessions with District Health Management Team, Board members and the Ugoni health center management committee, also with the support of policy briefs for advocacy purposes; 4) organization of community-based forums coupled with participatory theatre to impart the needed skills and knowledge on their rights, obligations and how to access their health rights; 5) spreading out through radio talk shows and social media.

The project achieved the following results: 1) messages were sent on the planning calendar of the district council, in order for people to know how to engage and when was the best time to do so; 2) AFNET staff, and also staff of NGONEDO, was trained on the use of the SMS platform; 3) provision of relevant information to the need of the community; and 4) positive attitude of the government, identification of advocacy issues and follow-up with government officials.

**Concerning ownership, a key component for the sustainability of the project, the results seem mixed.** On the one hand, Tanzanian participants were actively involved, especially on the choice of the champions and on the design of advocacy and e-initiatives. However, the partners were chosen when the project was already structured, financed and active, and they had no voice in deciding on the activities to be organized. A CSO participant said, “[the project] came from Search”; and another, “SFCG is bigger, we collaborated... we accommodated... it is a mixed relation”. In addition, a Tanzanian participant stated that SFCG’s attitude sometimes was “top-down”, especially in the last part of the project.

**Several participants said that they would continue their networking activities even after the end of the project.** However, most of them mentioned social media as the only way to stay in contact, and that this could be weak in terms of sustainability. In line with this, there is also evidence that some of the participants will continue to apply the acquired knowledge and skills beyond the project. A representative from the government in Zanzibar said, for example, that he integrates SFCG’s approach in his plans, also creating connections with SFCG’s previous projects: “SFCG shows the way, i.e. through the experience of priests and imams building peace together.” Another partner said that “SFCG completed something that already existed with this project, it did not create something new.”

### 3.4. Regional comparison and crosscutting themes

This section covers two types of findings: those that are relevant or applicable to all targeted countries, and those that apply to crosscutting themes, chiefly gender.

#### 3.4.1. Regional comparison

**The project was relevant for all countries and the TOC was flexible enough to be effectively contextualized in each project location.** In spite of the differences between the three countries, participants from both civil society and government found the project to be very relevant to each of their country contexts. This is one of the strongest findings that came out of the comparative analysis, and it speaks to the quality of SFCG’s underlying analysis. It also highlights the importance of the flexible elements in the TOC, whose underlying logic, while still common to all countries, allowed CSO partners free choice in terms of choosing the policy issue on which to focus their advocacy efforts.

**A clearer definition of ‘key’ vs. ‘more’ people would have significantly clarified the project’s logic and contributed to increasing its effectiveness—in all countries.** This point has been made in considering the findings from each country, so it will not be reiterated here. Suffice to say that participants in project locations did not really engage in an in-depth analysis of how work with a few ‘key’ people would lead a change among wider segments of society (the ‘more’ people); this did not stop them from achieving positive outcomes, but it certainly affected how impactful (and sustainable) these were by the end of the project.

**Regional networking and cooperation was appreciated (by participants) as being interesting and relevant for them, but there are no indications that they contributed to effectiveness or sustainability.** The project undoubtedly contributed to networking and to connecting CSOs with peer organizations in their own country and across borders. Civil society and government participants from all three countries all spoke very positively of the *teXchange* conferences organized by SFCG, describing them as good opportunities for peer learning. Tanzanian participants, for example, said that they learned from Kenya and Nigeria about the use and effectiveness of ICT tools during elections—something that was particularly relevant for them given the national context and the important elections their country held in October 2015.

With just one exception (see point below), the evaluation has found little evidence suggesting that this type of networking contributed to the project’s effectiveness or sustainability in individual countries. A

review of all the case studies presented in the report, for example, highlights that the key to their success has been the very *local* nature of CSO efforts—how they were contextualized in terms of both issue-selection and community engagement. In this respect, the networking conferences were welcome opportunities to present the work done and learn about new ICT tools, but there is no indication that they contributed substantially to how CSO partners developed their advocacy and e-initiatives.

**Regional cooperation and networking were perhaps most effective around specific issues of common interest.** This is the one exception to the previous finding, and it is related to how Kenyan and Nigerian participants were able to collaborate and learn from each other in relation to anti-terrorism and countering violent extremism (CVE) policies. In May 2015, SFCG’s Nigeria Country Director, Chom Bagu, travelled to Kenya, where he participated in a workshop with CSO partners and government champions from Nairobi and Nakuru. The event focused specifically on the issue of CVE and elections and it allowed Mr. Bagu to talk about the experience of how his country has managed the threat posed by Boko Haram, including how civil society contributes to these efforts. The topic resonated with Kenyan participants, in large part because of their own country’s experience with terrorism, and it led to at least one clear case of cross learning, by Nairobi-based KMYA and their government champion. The memory and appreciation of this exchange (which was also reinforced later by *teXchange* conferences in Nigeria and Tanzania, where a specific seminar on CVE was held) was still vivid in the mind of the stakeholders at the time of the evaluation—and it might point to a way to ensure that these events can truly support effectiveness and impact, namely by making sure that they focus on issues of clear common interest.

**Finally, staff turnover within SFCG negatively affected project implementation in all three countries.** This is a point that has been made by partners in each country: after a quick start in early 2014, which focused on relationship-building and baseline assessments, SFCG’s implementation stalled, leading some CSO partners to wonder what had happened. Implementation re-started in earnest in early 2015; however, given the short time that remained before the end of the project, SFCG’s staff had to put a lot of pressure on partners to implement their advocacy and e-initiatives. In fact, SFCG eventually had to request a six-month no-cost extension. The evaluation found that the delay was largely the result of unforeseen staff turnover in all three countries. This is of course a regular challenge for all NGOs, although it is surprising to see how much impact it had on the implementation of activities even in countries—Nigeria and Tanzania—where SFCG had fully staffed offices.

The impact that the unexpected departure of staff had on activities might have also been due to the lack of clarity in regards to who held overall leadership over the project—something that is indeed consistent with other challenges mentioned by individual participants in different countries (with communication, for example). It is also telling that once a decision was taken to give a more prominent role to Judy Kimamo, SFCG’s coordinator in Kenya, in working with partners in Nigeria and Tanzania, implementation proceeded a lot more smoothly than before. Having Ms. Kimamo lead the work in Kenya and then transfer her experience to other countries certainly helped to ensure that the lessons learned from one location could be taken up in another—in a way that was very similar to how, also in Kenya, partners from one location (i.e. Midrift Hurinet in Nakuru) were called on to assist peer organizations in others, as discussed in the Kenya findings section.

### 3.4.2. Gender

**Positively, the project did integrate a level of gender analysis and sought to address gender-specific challenges and issues.** In terms of numbers, the project sought to achieve parity between male and female participation. And although it appears that a majority of participants still ended up being male (among participants who responded to the survey, for example, 67% were male and 33% female), this can be mainly attributed to the male-dominated nature of society in all three countries, where women continue to be underrepresented in most sectors, including civil society. This divergence from equal participation was in any case offset by the quality of positions occupied by women within the project: in Kenya, for example, the project’s implementation team, which included SFCG’s coordinator and assistant and

Reconcile's coordinators, were all women. In addition, there was clear appreciation and respect for women's voices during the activities sponsored by SFCG. As a CSO participant from Zanzibar said, "the project was gender sensitive from the start; it was relevant for women."

**However, the mainstreaming of gender sensitivity was not done in depth and several of the project's responses to gender-specific challenges remained superficial.** Equal participation is only the first step in ensuring that gender-sensitivity is fully mainstreamed within a program, and unfortunately beyond this there is little evidence that SFCG engaged in a more systematic analysis (and subsequent response) to gender-specific dynamics. This might have had more impact in some countries than in others. In Tanzania, for example, there are strong cultural obstacles to women's empowerment. Sometimes women are active for their rights in public life, but are passive in private life. As a Tanzanian CSO partner from Zanzibar said, "If you would like to empower women, you have to involve men, to change their mindset" from the governmental to the family level. She added that, in her view, the project was "working somehow in this direction", but sometimes women hesitated to speak because of the presence of men, some of whom were local leaders or relatives. And another participant from Zanzibar said that in more remote areas women could not talk at all, especially on marriage life or family problems.

This was clearly less of a challenge in Kenya, at least in Nairobi and Nakuru, where it was clear that women, once they were in a formal meeting, did not have the same hesitation in engaging with male peers. In Nigeria, there are indications of a rural-urban divide, with views being more like those of Kenyan partners for urban areas, and closer to those of the Tanzanian partners in rural ones. All in all, the main sense is that SFCG's efforts to mainstream gender sensitivity were quite sufficient, given the organization's values and overall experiences on this issue, but not deliberate enough. Gender was not, for example, a specific topic of any training or conference, nor it appears that limitations (or opportunities) related to gender were systematically analyzed in the design of advocacy and e-initiatives.

**There is, finally, an information gap in relation to the gendered impact of project activities.** Information about the participation of women within the target group (i.e. CSO partners and government champions) exists, but it has not been systematically collected: it is there for some training workshops, in some of the countries, but not all of them. And at the level of the advocacy and e-initiatives, the gap becomes even more significant: there are in fact no attendance lists to show participation by gender, nor is there any information about the use of ICT tools by women and girls—for example, how many of the messages sent by and to partners in Nakuru were from female community members. This should, however, be a key data set to understand whether a given initiative is reaching everyone in a community, or just men. In the future, SFCG should make sure to include, within its M&E systems, tools that adequately collect gender-specific data.

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

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Based on all data and information collected during the evaluation, the following recommendations are provided by the evaluation team. Overall, the project was clearly appreciated, and it succeeded on many fronts. However, there were some poignant and more specific challenges that should be taken into consideration as SFCG and its partners plan future programs. The recommendations are offered in this perspective.

1. **The project was indubitably successful in creating high levels of trust between civil society and government and this work should be continued in the future.** SFCG’s advocacy approach has been proven effective at building civil society-government trust, but this type of work is fruitful especially in the long-run. It therefore makes sense to build up on the newly established channels of trust. Several participants echoed this sentiment during the final meeting in Dar Es Salaam, where they asked for a follow-up project. This attitude strengthens the idea that the project was relevant and that participants would like to continue networking, learning from each other and strengthening the collaboration between government and CSOs through advocacy initiatives. To some extent, the attitude of some participants seemed passive, asking SFCG for a new project, but without bringing concrete proposals on the table. For this reason, it is also paramount to involve the potential partners from the early drafting of the project, which is the next recommendation.
2. **Increase ownership and direct involvement of partners in all project phases.** As described in the findings, the participants felt themselves as part of the project, but the results about ownership were also varied. SFCG is a large organization, and this project was already financed and running when the partners came in, relegating them to an implementation role —and explaining the passivity as remarked above. To improve ownership and partners’ involvement we propose the following:
  - **Project partners should be involved from the project’s design.** Involving the project’s partners – or at least some of them – in shaping the project could contribute to having them fully involved in the activities and being aware of the project’s dynamics; it could also support local ownership and strengthen sustainability.
  - **A ‘lead’ civil society partner for each country (maybe even location) can improve the effectiveness of the project and ensure local ownership.** The evaluation findings show that having an organization like Reconcile increased the effectiveness and quality of the project with its above-average experience; however, only two technical partners were involved for three countries (and one changed during the project). In the future, it is recommended that SFCG finds similar organizations to act as intermediaries between itself and smaller CSOs: as an international NGO, SFCG will always have limited resources and will not be present across any given country; relying on such organizations can increase networking while supporting the sustainability of results.
3. **The TOC should better define the project’s target and who the ‘key’ and ‘more’ people are.** Another crucial finding from the review is that there is confusion among participants between ‘key’ and ‘more’ people. As a result, the impact of the project was likely reduced. A future project should clarify which is the target of each project’s activity and establish clear and concrete connections from the TOC to the project’s activities and the expected results. A definition of the ‘more’ people will in particular be important to then guide public awareness and mobilization activities, including the use of ICT tools and media.
4. **Follow-on activities were a crucial part of the project and they should receive more time and resources.** SFCG made a wise decision to extend the small grants well beyond the 12

planned in the original project proposal, thus giving all CSO partners an opportunity to develop follow-on actions and e-initiatives without the pressure of competition. However, the time at disposal for implementing these projects was extremely short compared to the planned outcomes. And, as discussed in the findings section, the challenge of lack of time was linked to the lack of resources given to CSO partners for their follow-on actions and e-initiatives. In the future, project budgets should provide a larger chunk of funds for supporting CSOs.

5. **SFCG should assist CSO partners in developing communication strategies that can ensure that e-initiatives are better integrated with all other project activities.** As presented in the findings' sessions, there is no evidence that ICT tools amplified the impact of advocacy initiatives. This link should be built up more clearly during the project-planning phase. The best way to achieve this is to work with CSO partners (and government champions, too) to develop communication strategies with clear objectives, target groups and guidelines in order to use the best ICT and media tools to support advocacy in their specific context. Developing these strategies would also provide an opportunity for considering gender-specific dynamics (answering questions such as: do women and girls enjoy the same access to phones as men and boys?) and thus make the project more gender-sensitive.
6. **Government champions should have the opportunity to reach-out more and to create durable relations with CSOs.** The findings section already talks at length about the good quality and overall success of the involvement of government champions. It is particularly positive that the champions were chosen by local partners and through a needs assessment (albeit often an informal one, for the most part). However, nearly all CSO partners opted to engage government representatives whom they already knew. This approach was crucial to ensure buy-in, but it also led to relations that, even when positive, were personal at first. This prevented in most cases the institutionalization of CSO-government relations, thus undermining the project's sustainability. A more structured work to have government offices involved (or at least informed) could underpin the project's sustainability in the future. In addition, specific dissemination activities (i.e. workshops within government institutions, specific meetings, etc.) could help wider the impact of the project—and should be agreed with government champions as a key task for them to complete as part of their engagement.
7. **Provide follow-up actions to support conflict resolution trainings.** Most participants said that the trainings on conflict resolution were an activity through which they acquired relevant skills for their day-by-day work. However, the skills acquired were basic and future challenges could show the limitations of these trainings. Due to the strong motivations and applicability of the training, follow-up activities (i.e. a second-level training) should be considered as a priority.
8. **Improve project management and coordination through clearer communication mechanisms and planning.** Overall, the project implementation worked quite effectively and SFCG's staff made a great effort in the project, but some gaps were present. Staff turnover and a siloed management structure (i.e. divided by country) led to important delays, which at one point even threatened relations with some partners. Secondly, some participants mentioned gaps in internal communication. To address these issues in the future, we recommend the following:
  - SFCG should ensure that the selection of CSO partners is conducted quickly and in the first months of any future engagement. To account for risks related to partners' low capacity (a strong assumption in many African countries), SFCG should seek the assistance of a more experienced implementing partner in each location, as it did with Reconcile and WAYN.
  - Internal communication should be improved, in particular by providing all partners updates on the different phases of the project and informing them also on the ongoing challenges (staff turnovers, delays, relation with the donor, etc.). A newsletter would be



an easy way to do this and, if tied to a flexible ICT platform (like Google Drive) it could reinforce the project's use of ICT and new media.

- Ultimately, SFCG should have more than a part-time staff member coordinating a project of this size and scope. It should instead choose a full-time project coordinator or manager officially dedicated to monitoring the progress of activities and overseeing internal communication. This person would be key to ensure coordination also within SFCG, which should not be treated as a given. In a multi-year planning scenario, this position could also be phased out and itself become an indicator for the transfer of capacity to local organizations.
9. **Finally, SFCG should invest in a more rigorous M&E system, with a specific focus on gender-specific data.** SFCG did an excellent work at reporting on the project, and quarterly reports are important sources of relevant data on the project's achievements. However, some important gaps remained, notably in the baseline studies and in the collection of data relating to the advocacy and e-initiatives. In the future, SFCG should be more rigorous in collecting M&E data: it should clarify, specifically, all the documents that it expects to collect from activities (e.g. attendance lists, pre or post-training questionnaires, etc.) and ensure that CSO partners are aware and capable of collecting this information. SFCG should also make sure that this data is regularly analyzed during the project and not only at the final evaluation stage. A two-year project is not long, but a mid-term review, even if conducted internally, can for example be a useful exercise to improve the logic behind any intervention and lead the organization to make useful adjustments based on identified challenges. Finally, future M&E systems should be focused on collecting gender-specific data.

## 5. Appendices

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### Annex 1: Project Indicator Table

### Annex 2: Evaluation Activities and Interviews

### Annex 3: Evaluation Tools

### Annex 4: Evaluation Terms of Reference