CONDUCIVE SPACE FOR PEACE – STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2019-2022

Conducive Space for Peace (CSP) is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2016 by Mie Roesdahl, guided by a strong Danish board, and supported by a broad global network of like-minded change makers, and private foundations such as Humanity United. With its global scope and outreach and its focus on local actors in conflict affected contexts, it is set up to contribute to transformation of international support to peacebuilding and a paradigm shift in global collaboration around peace and development.

www.conducivespace.org

INTRODUCTION

Conducive Space for Peace envisions an effective international peacebuilding system that strengthens the agency and power of local actors and provides a conducive space for collaboration for sustainable peace based on equality and dignity. Our mission is to contribute to the transformation of the international system of support to peacebuilding in a manner that changes the structures, attitudes and processes of collaboration and creates a more enabling space for local peacebuilding.

Conducive Space for Peace (CSP) consists of people who are driven by the challenges we see, the need for radical change, and the fact that few actors take on these challenges and pursue this change agenda.

We are driven by the magnitude of the challenges, in particular how the international system for support to peacebuilding is often not providing a conducive space for local actors.

We are driven by our experience, leading to a recognition that local agency and power holds the key to effective peacebuilding. If international institutions are able to provide a more conducive space for local actors to lead peacebuilding processes, we will be more successful in achieving sustainable peace, nationally and globally.

We are driven by our experience that a momentum for change is slowly developing, most profoundly from people within the international institutions who know the challenges and who have felt deeply compromised by not being able to address the challenges.

We are driven by the recognition that global collaboration and geopolitical dynamics are changing rapidly. In this context, the space for collaboration around development and peacebuilding at country, regional and global level represents an opportunity for addressing shared vulnerabilities, building trust, and for eliciting a paradigm shift in global collaboration.

We do not accept the notion that the challenges facing the international support to peacebuilding and its ability to strengthen local agency and power cannot be addressed. We do not accept to do nothing, when change is desperately needed. We intend to play a catalytic role in enhancing the momentum for change, leveraging the power of change makers to facilitate change, and create spaces and platforms for innovative action for change. We will learn, reflect, and act together with the many who share our vision. We may not have all the answers, but we are committed to create conducive spaces, where answers can be found.

STORIES OF CHALLENGES STORIES OF CHANGE

"HELP US WRITE GOOD PROPOSALS"
Gatwal works to empower youth in peacebuilding, but often Gatwal ends up spending more time writing proposals and reporting than actually doing his peacebuilding work within communities in South Sudan and Northern Uganda. When we met Gatwal, he made a very strategic request: "Help us write good proposals". Many INGOs get the same request, and they often respond by building local capacity in proposal writing and reporting. But should the international peacebuilding support system really be concerned with helping brilliant, insightful, innovative local peacebuilders like Gatwal write proposals and reports to meet donor requirements? Or should they rather focus on changing the system so that Gatwal and his colleagues around the world can focus more on doing peacebuilding well and learn from their efforts.

"WHO ARE YOU TO TELL US WHAT TO DO"
Sadhana from Nepal expresses her frustrations of how she sees international institutions engage in her country. It feels undignified that internationals come with the money and create conditions for what to support without listening. Often, the politicians, bureaucrats, and constituencies in donor countries have developed priorities for what to support, perhaps also considering their own national interests. An international peacebuilding expert recognises the challenge that externally-driven knowledge and priorities sometimes override contextual knowledge and locallyled peacebuilding processes. He knows there is so much capacity, ideas, and power of people to build peace in this country. The system has to change.

"WE DON'T EVEN HAVE ANY REFLECTION TIME"
International peacebuilders argue there is no time to listen, learn, reflect and adapt programmes, because of the pressure to comply with contractual regulations and deliver quick and measurable results. Susanna Campbell has interviewed people working in country offices of international organisations and found that the system incentivises upward accountability to donors who report to their constituencies. Institutional incentives for involving local stakeholders are few. And yet, many staff at international country offices find ways to establish local accountability structures. They are risk takers and change makers, and they provide a pathway to broader change in the peacebuilding system.

A CATCH-22
In an NGO in a European capital, John who is Director of Programmes is struggling, together with his team, to meet the deadline of applying to the development agency for funding of the organisation's work in Africa. This funding is critical for the organisation and for the many local partners and stakeholders who will hopefully benefit. There may have been delays in approval by political parties of the overall development policy, resulting in delays in the agency's work to finalise the call for proposals. When the terms are finally known, there is not enough time to involve the local partners in developing the programme. This contradicts the policies and normal practices of the organisation. But either they finalise the application according to the deadline, or the organisation will fail an opportunity to continue its good work. They are locked in a catch-22.

WHY WE NEED CHANGE NOW

More than two billion people live in fragile and conflict affected states today. Since 2014 the World has seen an increasing trend in the number of violent conflicts, the number of casualties due to violent conflict, the number of refugees as a result of violent conflict, and an increased level of structural violence in conflict affected contexts. The consequences are devastating; at the personal level, at the national level, as well as at the global level. Adding to the challenge, a large number of violent conflicts are recurring, approximately 60% over a 30-year period and almost 90% of the conflicts that erupted in the decade between 2000 and 2010 (according to Uppsala Conflict Data Program and the World Bank). Thus, the world is not succeeding in its efforts to promote sustainable peace.

There are arguably many reasons why the world is not succeeding in moving towards a more peaceful world and in effectively building sustainable peace in conflict affected contexts. For Conducive Space for Peace, one reason for peacebuilding failure overshadows the rest: that the international system of support to peacebuilding is currently not supporting local agency and power as well as it could. If those who best know the context had a more conducive space to unfold their capacity, ideas, and power in peacebuilding, the world would see more effective and sustainable peacebuilding processes. Local actors know the causes of conflict, the drivers for change, the creative ways to move on a long-term path to build peace – and they know how to shift the engagement when needed.

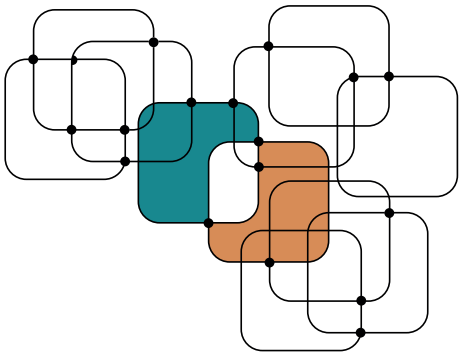
Internationals should spend less time trying to come up with solutions on how to build peace in Mali or South Sudan and more time building structures to support local actors in their efforts to build peace and create conducive spaces for collaboration. The international system is increasingly characterised by ways of working that do not hold local knowledge, local accountability, and local leadership at its core. And trust, dignity, and reciprocity, which should be defining the space for collaboration within this system, may in reality be compromised.

The challenges of the international system of support to peacebuilding have implications beyond 'peacebuilding effectiveness'. Systemic challenges embody, as both cause and consequence, lack of recognition of the knowledge of local actors and an implicit expression of power inequalities. They represent a violation of the dignity of local actors. The current way of working of the international system plays out in a way where local actors, symbolically, must come begging for money and must adapt to conditions that are not their own. At the same time, the dignity of persons within the international system is violated through the disempowerment that professionals experience when they recognise the dysfunctionalities but are not able to change it. There are many people working within the international system of support to peacebuilding who recognise the problems and are trying to change the system within their sphere of influence. At the same time, there are many who oppose change. Most people are linking the scope for systemic change to the broader global changes that is happening at this time.

Today, the world is seeing radical geopolitical change, erosion of the rules-based international order and multilateral approaches and shifts in global governance and collaboration. This is likely to affect political support to peacebuilding including changing geographic priorities, imposing additional demands for upward accountability, and a recourse to 'power politics' with shrinking space for NGOs in peacebuilding.

The space for collaboration between international and local peacebuilding and development actors at country level is a microcosm of the global power dynamics and the geopolitical shifts, but at the same it holds and embodies a potential for a paradigm shift in global collaboration: a new global 'social contract' that truly recognises the dignity of all people, the need for trust and reciprocity, and recognises the shared vulnerability and shared responsibility in pursuing sustainable peace.

HOW WE WORK



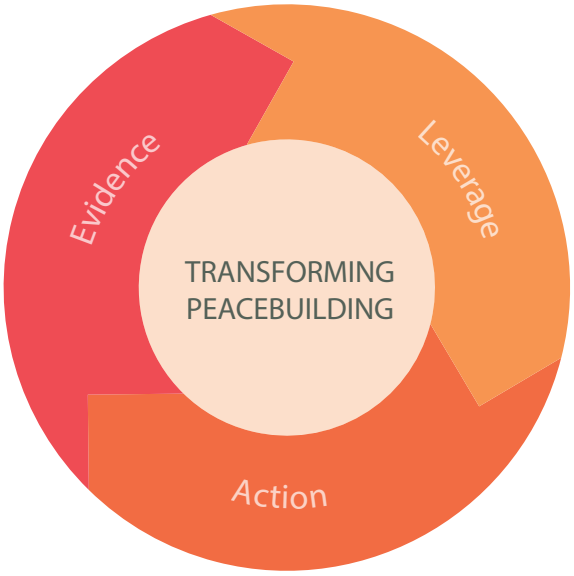
Conducive Space for Peace (CSP) will work as a catalyst to facilitate transformation in the way the international institutions work to support peacebuilding. We will be bold and disruptive; we will collaborate and co-create; we will support and accompany. And we will do our very best to embody the change agenda that we pursue – by holding the values of **dignity**, **equity**, and **integrity** at the core of our engagement, and by having the dignity and power of all human beings as our guiding principle and driver.

CSP will serve to connect the 'dots' in strategic ways that provide more value for each of the dots as well as the broader change process; with the 'dots' being both change agents (individual and institutional) and initiatives. As this change agenda is not only relevant for the peacebuilding field but has been pursued for several years within the humanitarian and development fields, linkages will be created among those directly embedded in the peacebuilding field and those organisations, platforms, and innovators that are pursuing the same change agenda in other fields.

CSP will therefore engage with multiple relevant partners around the different pathways for change and will promote linkages and cross-fertilisation between different initiatives within the peacebuilding field, as well as between different but related fields. We will never work alone. This has implications for the institutional set-up of CSP and for our approach to collaboration.

A significant element of our approach will be exploration, learning, ongoing course corrections and emergent ideas for change. We will strive to play a role in creating space for joint learning and exploration among the broader network of change agents and organisations with a stake in this agenda.

To address the challenges outlined in the previous section, CSP applies an approach which centres around **evidence, leverage, and action**. These dimensions of our approach do not represent a linear sequence – moving from evidence to leverage to action – but they represent a dynamic three-way interaction, embedded in an overall understanding that we need evidence to build momentum for change, we need to support change agents in their efforts of identifying leverage points and pursuing these, and we must seek alternative ways of creating platforms for joint action to pursue systemic transformation.



WHAT WE DO

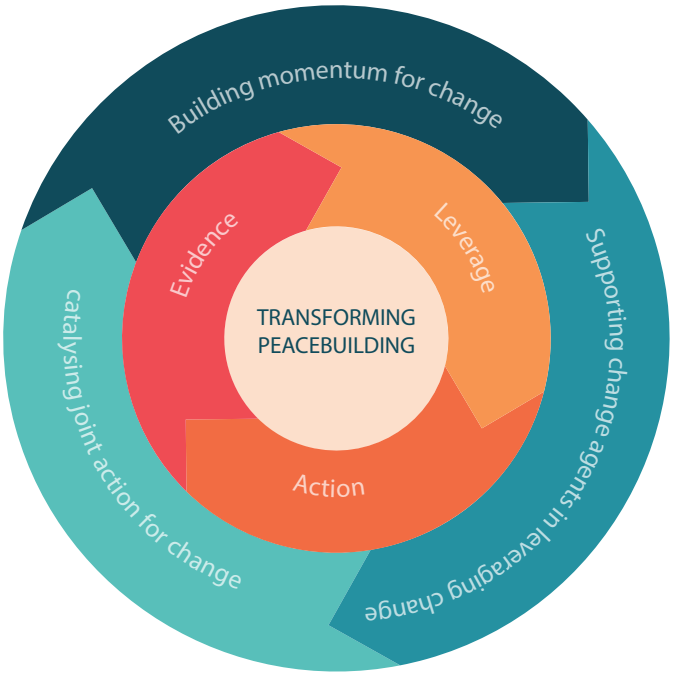
Transforming the international system of support to peacebuilding in order for it to shift its focus to local agency and power requires a multi-track change process and working strategically with multiple sets of actors, including change agents inside international institutions at country and HQ levels and like-minded NGOs, international as well as local, who pursue this change agenda.

Conducive Space for Peace (CSP) will catalyse joint engagement among change agents to create **evidence** that builds momentum for change, provides learning and direction, and forms the basis for leveraging change. We will identify and fill gaps in the evidence needed to facilitate change, create space for synthesising evidence in new ways, and channel convincing evidence to the right people at the right time and in the right way.

CSP will accompany and support change agents in **leveraging** change and will create innovative spaces for jointly identifying 'acupuncture' points and adding the 'critical yeast' to the systemic change process. We will catalyse change by creating spaces that connects change agents to be part of a 'community' of change makers that reflect and strategise together and pursue joint action to leverage change.

CSP will catalyse joint **action** for change with a focus on creating platforms for ongoing for ongoing collective reflection and action on systemic transformation, linking the country level engagement with global level engagement/dialogue. Through this collective action we will scale innovative and transformative initiatives so that they contribute to broader systemic transformation.

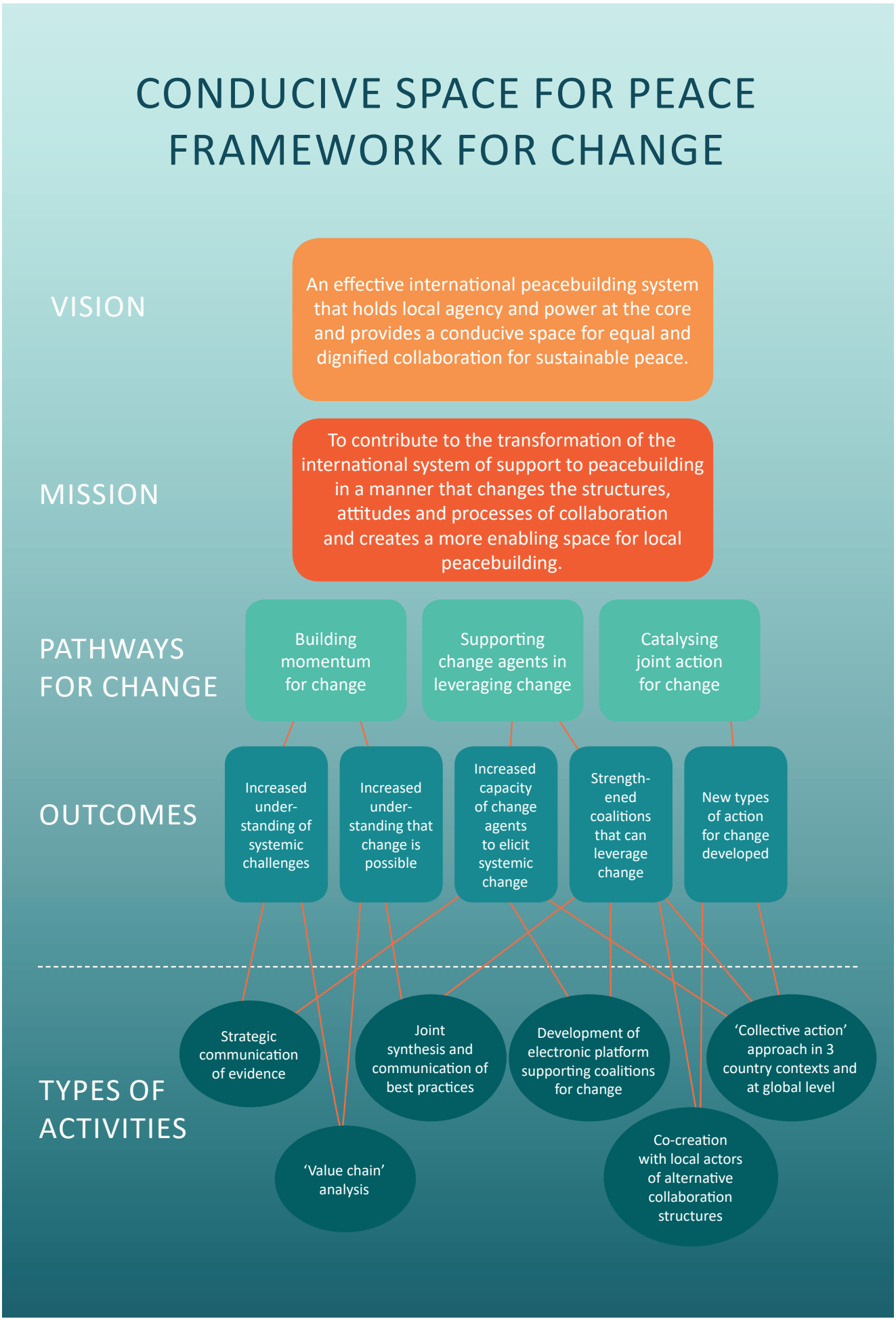
This way of working through evidence, leverage, and action will form the core part of our three overall pathways for change:



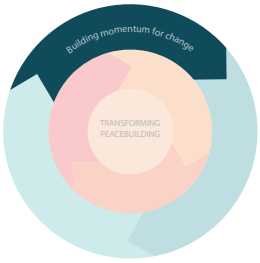
- *Build momentum for change*
- *Support change agents in leveraging change*
- *Catalyse joint action for change*

CSP will seek complementarity of change efforts that address the three key dimensions of systemic change: structures, attitudes, and practices. Changing the modality of support to local actors through new funding mechanisms can be one avenue for change, but it will not amount to broader systemic transformation unless accompanied by changes in attitudes and new everyday practices. Changes in practices on local accountability processes may not amount to broader systemic transformation if not taken to scale, and if the insights gained through that process do not lead to institutional learning and changes in programming.

CONDUCIVE SPACE FOR PEACE FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE



BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR CHANGE



In order to build momentum for change, there is a need to understand the challenges in the peacebuilding support system and their causes, the lessons learned on alternative ways of working, and the opportunities and barriers for change. As we are aiming for sustainable systems transformation – in structures, attitudes, and practices – it implies developing new types of evidence, synthesising existing evidence in new ways, and communicating this evidence to the right people at the right time and in the right way.

Types of evidence will include analysis that illustrate the complexity of the system and systems change and identify ways of facilitating change. This will include a 'value chain analysis' that explores the root causes of the challenges that we see in enabling local agency and power at country level, and explores how each level, entity, and actor within 'the system' either contributes positively or negatively to local agency and power in peacebuilding.

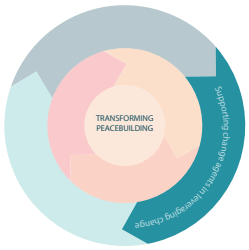
Conducive Space for Peace (CSP) will be catalytic will be catalytic in enhancing complementarity between efforts to leverage momentum for change. We will help to amplify momentum for change through existing evidence developed by like-minded organisations and platforms, and we will create linkages to the evidence developed within related fields on similar change agendas. How we communicate the evidence will be critical for the change it elicits, and we will facilitate dialogue on strategic communication of evidence and joint influencing strategies.

When developing and communicating evidence in new ways, we must consider the risks of being counter-productive, as it may result in and further inhibit the effectiveness of peacebuilding and the conducive space for local actors in peacebuilding, at least in the short- to medium-term. For example, evidence of peacebuilding ineffectiveness and/or systemic challenges may lead to a demand from bilateral donor constituencies for additional layers of upward accountability rather than enhanced local leadership and accountability. Such risks and polarities will be constantly explored and strategically navigated as an integrated part of CSPs engagement.

The outcome we pursue through this pathway for change are the following:

- *An increased understanding among key decision-makers and potential change agents of the systemic challenges of the international system of support to peacebuilding (and the broader development framework), the magnitude of the challenges, as well as the causes and effects of the challenges, and thus a recognition of the urgency to take action for systemic change.*

SUPPORTING CHANGE AGENTS AND COALITIONS IN LEVERAGING CHANGE



In order to facilitate systemic change, Conducive Space for Peace (CSP) must work with people in positions inside the international institutions that support peacebuilding and development. This means working alongside and accompanying 'insiders', whether decision makers, peacebuilding experts or reform agents. CSP must engage with them in different ways depending on their role as change makers, and their position, power, interest and willingness to share knowledge and invest political capital.

Change agents are at the centre of our thinking, whether we pursue changes in structures, attitudes, or practices, or a combination of these, within the international system of support to peacebuilding. We know that there are many people working to support peacebuilding who see potential for doing better. CSP aims to support and serve these change agents and accompanying their change efforts.

We also know that there are many actors in the international systems that aim to support peacebuilding, who don't believe that change is important or possible; who may be resistant to change. They may be afraid of losing power or afraid of being part of a motion toward radical transformation at a time when the multilateral system is being challenged by nationalist voices in European and North American countries. For these actors, we aim to inspire them to see that there is, indeed, great potential to do peacebuilding support better.

And we know that currently there is little space for change agents from conflict affected countries to have a 'voice' in this agenda for systemic transformation. CSP will seek to support a community of local peacebuilders and development practitioners that pursue this change agenda. While we may need to support different spaces for dialogue among different types of change agents, we will facilitate linkages, complementarities, and joint action when possible.

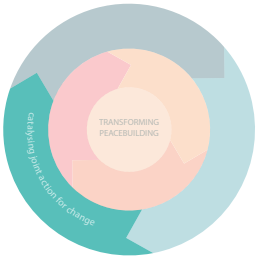
There is a need for stronger platforms and coalitions within and beyond the peacebuilding system to jointly pursue this change agenda. CSP aims to play a convening role creating conducive spaces for reflection, innovation, and action as part of the change process. It must be the spider that reaches out, creates linkages, and weaves the threads that tie the change efforts into a more consolidated framework for change. The scope for building platforms and coalitions for change must balance the need to create a movement for change with the need for strategic 'critical yeast'-oriented engagement to leverage change from within.

The scope of building alliances extends beyond the peacebuilding field itself. The localisation agenda in the humanitarian sector has been gaining ground for a number of years, and innovation for action is taking place. There is much to learn and build on for the peacebuilding sector. At the same time, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus discussion creates a more conducive space for cross-fertilisation between these different but related and sometimes complementary fields.

The outcomes we pursue through this pathway for change are the following:

- *The capacity of change agents to elicit systemic change within the international system of support to peacebuilding has increased, and the change efforts sparked by change agents are increasingly effective in changing the system.*
- *Coalitions that can leverage action for change have been strengthened.*

CATALYTIC ENGAGEMENT FOR CHANGE



CSP will facilitate opportunities and space for innovation and transformation through processes which bring people together to co-create and test new ideas, models and alternative paths for systems change. Focus will be on how to scale innovative and transformative initiatives so that they contribute to broader systemic transformation. Innovation will focus on all three core dimensions of systemic change: structural, attitudinal, and practice-oriented. And it can focus either on horisontal linkages and innovations or vertical linkages and innovations, or both. An example of the horisontal is the co-creation with local actors of alternative support/enabling structures, while an example of the vertical is the development of new accountability mechanisms that merge local knowledge of and needs for accountability with those of international actors/institutions.

Collective action will be a core pathway to scaling innovative change efforts, and we will develop a platform for collective action in three conflict affected contexts and linking it to a global platform for joint action. Methods such as Transformative Scenario Planning and Collective Impact will inspire the development and 'way of working' within these platforms.

While we will explore how technology can serve as a vehicle for collective action and systemic transformation, technological solutions will not be overestimated. It will be a core part of the multi-dimensional change effort, but it will not be the centre-piece. Innovation in concrete practices and procedures, including those developed by 'backroom heroes' within the bureaucracy of peacebuilding, in administration, human resources, etc., will be recognised as equally innovative despite their perhaps more prosaic nature. Innovation in apparently unusual places can be a key to systemic transformation.

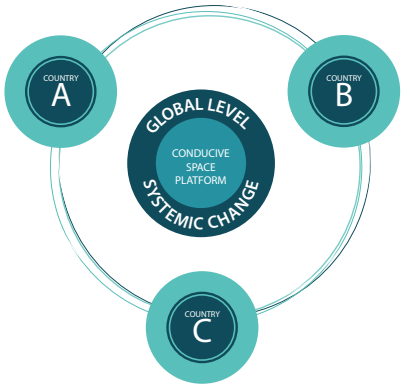
The outcome we pursue through this pathway for change are the following:

- *New types of action for change developed.*

WHERE WE WORK

CSP focuses on facilitating change in an international system of support to peacebuilding, which functions in very similar ways irrespective of country context. The challenges we have identified, and which are aligned with the findings of researchers like Severine Autessere and Susanna Campbell, show that the characteristics of the structures, attitudes, and practices of the international institutions play out at country level in similar ways, and the causes of the systemic challenges are largely the same.

Therefore, CSP will focus on engaging where the scope for facilitating systemic change is greatest. Our learnings from our engagement since 2016 has shown us that we must identify entry points for change in collaboration with change agents and likeminded organisations and pursue these in complementarity with the other entry points taken.



CSP will continue its engagement in West Africa and build on the relations already established but will also work with partners in countries like Kenya, Nepal and Syria as entry points for engagement are opening there. As outlined in the third pathway for change, CSP intends to launch a 'collective action' approach that combines a global platform with an engagement in three specific country contexts.

What would an international framework for peacebuilding support look like that is better fit for sustaining peace and preventing violent conflict than what we see today?

How do we ensure that those who know best how to create sustainable peace in a country, the local actors, are supported in their peacebuilding efforts in the best possible way?

And how do we best contribute to a process of systemic transformation?

These are key questions for *Conducive Space for Peace*.

CONDUCIVE SPACE FOR PEACE