



# **STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION INTRA AND INTER-GROUP RELATIONS IN SUDAN**

**2019-2020**

Sudan Social Cohesion Project  
Rights of Minorities of Faith and Belief, Sudan





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## ABOUT THE PROJECT SUDAN SOCIAL COHESION PROJECT



The Sudan Social Cohesion Project (SSCP) is faith-led initiative to enhance and strengthen Social Cohesion between different faith groups and to protect and promote the fundamental rights of faith minorities in Sudan.

The initiative seeks to promote interfaith dialogue, interaction and cooperation by people of different faiths and uses religious resources as tools for mobilization, building trust and positive relationships between key religious leaders, institutions and communities in selected sites in Sudan.

The Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and the Sudan Inter-religious Council (SIRC), are leading the initiative; with the accompaniment and support of their regional counterparts – that is, Arigatou International — Nairobi (AI — N), the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA), and the Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations (HIPSIR). The Initiative is supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) through Norwegian Church Aid – Nairobi (NCA) under its Regional Peace Program (RPP).



The Project aligns with two of the UN's sustainable development goals, SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and, SDG 5 on gender equality.



**Goal 16** of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to advance peace, justice and sustainable institutions.



**Goal 5** of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to advance peace, justice and sustainable institutions.



## THE HUMMING BIRD

*Illustration by Wangari Mathai.*



"The story of the hummingbird is about this huge forest being consumed by a fire. All the animals in the forest come out and they are transfixed as they watch the forest burning and they feel very overwhelmed, very powerless, except this little hummingbird. It says, 'I'm going to do something about the fire!' So it flies to the nearest stream and takes a drop of water. It puts it on the fire, and goes up and down, up and down, up and down, as fast as it can.

In the meantime, all the other animals, much bigger animals like the elephant with a big trunk that could bring much more water, were standing there helpless. And they said to the hummingbird, 'What do you think you can do? You are too little. This fire is too big. Your wings are too little and your beak is so small that you can only bring a small drop of water at a time.'

Without being destructed the bird turned to the animals and told them... 'I am doing my best with what I have...'and it continued. And that to me is what all of us should do."

We should always be like a hummingbird. I may be insignificant, but I certainly don't want to be like the animals doing nothing. We must be a hummingbird, working towards cohesion in our communities and country. Every positive action, big or small, counts.

# SUDAN SOCIAL COHESION PROJECT AT A GLANCE



An estimated **2,203** people, participated directly in the project



**15 trainings** were organised, from 2019 to 2020, on FORB, Advocacy, Enterprenurship, *Learning to Live Together* and Social Cohesion targeting and convening religious leaders, women, youth, children and policy makers.



We partnered with over **10** organizations in support of the project .



**5 Key resources** were produced; FORB Community Dialouge Facilitators' Handbook, FORB & Human Right Index, Gender Mainstreaming Tool, and, FORB Advocacy Tool



**A Baseline Survey** on FORB was conducted and a report produced



**Over 19 Grassroots Activities** were organized, with a focus on promoting FORB and strengthening civil society.



**Diapraxis**, including social interaction and income generating activities targeting youth and women, was a primary strategy

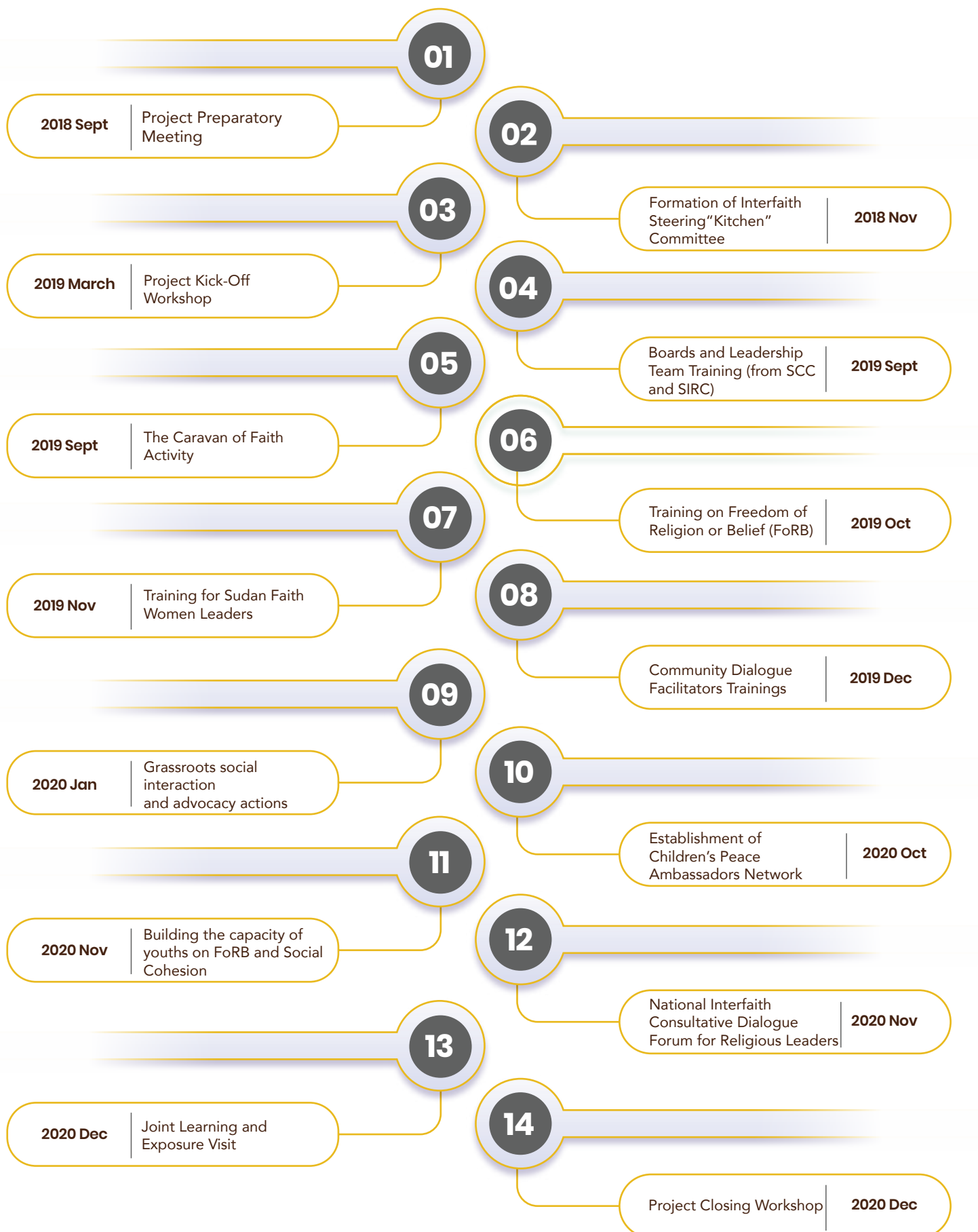


**16** faith actors from Sudan participated in a **Learning** and **Exposure Visit** in Zanzibar which sought to highlight practical models of community interaction aimed at promoting FORB



**A Children's Peace Ambassadors Network** was established and **15** children workers were trained

# JOURNEYING TOWARDS SOCIAL COHESION



## FOCUS AREAS OF THE PROJECT:

1. Trainings on FORB and Social Cohesion
2. Joint Socio - Economic Actions and Activities
3. Promoting FORB and Social Cohesion through Advocacy
4. Exposure and Experience sharing/Interfaith visits
5. Children and Social Cohesion
6. Women Engagement in Social Cohesion and FORB
7. Youth Engagement in Social Cohesion and FORB
8. Interfaith and Intrafaith Dialogue towards Social Cohesion and FORB
9. Knowledge Development and Sharing towards Social Cohesion





## 1. TRAININGS ON FORB AND SOCIAL COHESION

Trainings on FORB provided the impetus and practical knowledge that would be useful in promoting social cohesion and FoRB through out the project. To this end SSCP facilitated 15 trainings with a robust reach of participants. The implementing partners and their constituencies were trained on how to promote social cohesion, human rights, FoRB, community dialogue facilitation, interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding and advocacy skills. In addition, women and youth from those sites were equipped with entrepreneurship and livelihood skills. These trainings reached a broad base of target groups ranging from faith actors, government representatives, CSOs, men, women, youth, children workers, teachers from Christian and Islamic traditions.

Such trainings were critical in promoting SSCP's overarching goal of Strengthening Social Cohesion and Intra and Inter-Group Relations in Sudan, as they aempowered participants to create social change through carrying out local social cohesion events and creating spaces for building of trust and relationships.



*FORB empowers women to be agents of change in their own life*





## 2. JOINT SOCIO - ECONOMIC ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Joint socio-economic actions and activities are valuable tools for creating and deepening understanding between people of different faiths and backgrounds. Hence, SSCP used interfaith activities to promote positive inter faith relations, social cohesion and FoRB.

### 2.1 Symbolic Interfaith Gatherings

These occurred during the December 2018 Christmas Interfaith Dinner for over 298 leaders, the 2019 Eid-ul-Fitr Interfaith Breakfast meeting for over 560 leaders and the Ramadhan Feast Dinner attended by over 500 people. The events gathered Christian and Muslim leaders, high ranking government leaders and duty bearers, the media and various SOs representatives.

These events were held in an effort to foster dialogue, build positive relations between the various groups, as well as to model harmonious social interaction among people of different faiths, to the wider Sudanese community. Both events gained wide and positive press coverage, thereby furthering the objectives of the project.

### 2.2 The Caravan of Faith Activity

SSCP organized the Caravan of Faith Activity on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020 to mark the International Peace Day, which was celebrated globally under the theme "Shaping Peace Together".

Those who participated included, Sudan Interfaith Women Network, Religious leaders and Youth. Specifically, there were 450 (320 Women, 30 Youth and 100 Men) in attendance including senior officials from the government. The activity provided space for intergenerational, interfaith engagement as well as for interaction with the government officials.

## 2.3 Income generating and livelihood activities

Women and youth who received interpersonal trainings participated in joint income generating activities. These activities were designed to boost their livelihoods, confidence, team building, trust building and relational skills by bringing community members together to work toward that goal.

*Regular joint discussions and initiatives among Muslim and Christian leaders continue to help and unite Zanzibaris to carry out their social economic activities in harmony. In addition, the culture of trusting each other has taken roots among the Zanzibaris adding that Zanzibar varies from most African countries in maintaining peace and religious tolerance.*

Mufti of Zanzibar,  
Sheikh Saleh Omar Kaabih



Socio-economic wellbeing and stability is important as it creates greater opportunities for all. Discrimination based on religion can lead to grievances and destabilise society. Thus working for religious freedom fostering social development and inclusion, reducing inequalities and hostilities is something that everyone benefit from







*Religious freedom is important in itself, because it respects human dignity for all...gives individuals the right to form personal beliefs and to manifest and express them.*

### 3. PROMOTING FORB AND SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH ADVOCACY



#### Introduction

From the onset, SSCP adopted the use of advocacy for policy and social change, as a strategy to promote Social Cohesion and FoRB in Sudan. To this end the project conducted or convened:

#### 3.1 National Dialogue Forum

The forum brought together 87 participants including Government officials, Non-Governmental Organizations, the media, and Civil Society representatives from Christian and Islamic traditions. The aim of the forum was to create space for dialogue on the promotion of unity, national cohesion, FoRB and trust building among the religious communities in Sudan. The consultative forum culminated into a joint dinner which was attended by government officials from the Ministry of Religious affairs and social welfare, CSOs, media, Muslim and Christian religious representatives.

#### 3.2 Advocacy through participation

By inviting influential duty bearers (including high-ranking government officials) to the project activities and events, faith leaders gained opportunity to build ground for future advocacy and lobbying. During these interfaith meetings, social cohesion was at the forefront of the discussions. For example, meeting with the two ministers – for Religious Affairs and Social Development and Labour during trainings gave SCC/SIRC great opportunity to discuss the key priorities critical to Social Cohesion and FoRB in Sudan. Their visit also provided the opportunity to share an advocacy statement with them and strengthen strategic relationship between the two Councils and the key duty bearers in Sudan.



### 3.3 Organizing and hosting events

Faith leaders were instrumental in organizing and hosting the national Religious Freedoms Workshop on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019, in Khartoum, bringing together over 180 prominent leaders. These included senior Christian and Muslim faith leaders; diplomats, representatives of various embassies and ambassadors from various countries; educators and representatives from academia; representatives of various Sudanese government ministries and departments; and the media. The workshop was organized around 3 key sessions: 'Religious Freedoms as in Jurisprudence and Law'; 'Procedures required for Building Places and Scholastic Vacations'; and thirdly, 'Religious Coexistence in Sudan: Reality and Challenges'.

The seminal workshop resulted in key recommendations geared towards fostering, promoting and upholding dialogue, social cohesion, protection of the rights on non-Muslims, and FoRB. The recommendations were thereafter widely disseminated, and the event itself received significant press coverage. This workshop was organized by the Sudan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Directorate of Human, Women and Child Rights) and Religious Freedom Committee, in collaboration with SCC and SIRC).



#### Signing of the Sudan Peace Deal

Two church leaders participated in the signing of the Sudan peace deal on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020 in Juba, South Sudan after an invitation from the government. The two church leaders were the General Secretary of SCC, Fr. William Deng and Rev. Musa Timothy, General Secretary of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference.

This invitation to participate was important in that the state is now recognizing the role of the church in promoting social cohesion in Sudan. This event also provided church leaders with spaces for advocacy and networking. It enabled SCC to ensure the voice of the church as regard to peace in Sudan is heard. Additionally, the event facilitated the creation of spaces for engagements with relevant national, sub-regional, regional and international entities namely UN and AU, EU among others. These also strengthen the collaboration between the Government of Sudan and the Church. The two church leaders appreciated the efforts that led to the signing of the peace deal.

**"We are very happy about the peace agreement. The people are tired of war and want peace. Any effort that "silences the guns" and allows the people of Sudan to live in peace is highly welcome,"**

Fr. William Deng, General Secretary of SCC.

**"The peace agreement is well accepted and appreciated by all Sudanese people in general and particularly those of Darfur since it will end the war and the suffering of the people which started in 2003,"**

Rev. Musa Timothy, General Secretary of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference.



#### 4. EXPOSURE AND EXPERIENCE SHARING / INTERFAITH VISITS



These highlighted practical models of community interaction aimed at building harmonious coexistence among people of different ethnic and faith groups. It included dialogue, emphasizing good practices and challenges of such work visits to different religious and historical sites and advocacy opportunities with senior government officials and religious leaders.

In partnership with the Zanzibar Interfaith Centre (ZANZIC) a joint interfaith learning and exposure visit was organized for 16 member representatives of SCC and SIRC, including youth, women and men. 5 representatives from the RPP nested partners accompanied the SCC and SIRC team.

The visit that took place in December 2020, sought to highlight practical models of community interaction aimed at building harmonious coexistence among people of different ethnic and faith groups.

It included workshops; a public dialogue event, emphasising good practices and challenges of such work; field visits to different religious, social and historical sites; and advocacy opportunities with senior government officials and religious leaders.

The learning and exposure visit allowed for a critical exchange of ideas and experiences between the Sudanese and Zanzibar faith actors. Specifically, it helped the participants to deepen their understanding on issues of social cohesion, peaceful coexistence and freedom of religion or belief in the two countries.

## 5. CHILDREN AND SOCIAL COHESION



Children are an integral part of building social cohesion within their communities, and this was embodied in the project through formation of the Children Peace Ambassadors Network. The Children's Network is both a platform and a social space where children can gather together to learn, play and interact with one another, as well as learn how to live together.

The Children's Network is termed as a 'Peace Ambassadors' network because of the recognition that the children have agency, and can be empowered to build peace and strengthen social cohesion in their lives, in their homes, among their peers, and across the wider society.

The Network will bring together girls and boys from schools, Madrassas, church congregations, and other faith based institutions. As a foundation towards the formation of the Children's Network, training was organized for 15 children's workers, including representatives from these institutions. The training utilized the Learning to Live Together approach, which emphasizes interfaith and intercultural dialogue, values and ethics education for children.





## 6. WOMEN ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL COHESION AND FORB

SSCP aimed at advancing participation and influencing power of women towards the achievement of its objectives. To this end the project focuses on promoting women's rights as part of its social cohesion and FoRB campaign. With the knowledge that, efforts to strengthen women's training over time have contributed to security benefits and enhanced women's participation rather than focus on victimization, SSCP held two women focused workshops, with the reach of over 100 participants. The first workshop focused on Social Cohesion, FoRB, peacebuilding, mediation, advocacy and lobbying and gender mainstreaming. Whereas the second - follow up training focused on entrepreneurship. The training At the end of the workshop, the women developed small income generating plans and groups and they were provided with start up grants. Over and above the acquiring skills and knowledge, the trainings provided the women with, spaces for dialogue, visibility, economic empowerment, networks and leadership skills necessary for the promotion of social cohesion and FoRB.

*The healing of pain and trauma of the past is a central concern in building Social Cohesion*

*Social Cohesion Handbook*



“

*FORB empowers women to  
be agents of change in their  
own life*





## 7. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL COHESION AND FORB



Young people have a vital contribution to make in creating a society where there is trust, respect and cooperation between people of different faiths and beliefs. So it is more important than ever that young people have the chance to develop and strengthen skills for inter faith dialogue, learning and cooperation. To this end more than 30 youth leaders were trained on how to promote social cohesion and FoRB. The training strengthened the interfaith relations among the youth who committed to work together during their local engagements within grass-roots as they advance social cohesion and the promotion of FoRB.

In addition, in order to mitigate the challenge of unemployment among the youth, a follow up workshop on Youth Entrepreneurship was conducted. The workshop brought together 17 youth participants. At the end of the training, training, the participants were provided with Start-up grant for their livelihood – business initiatives. The forum provided an opportunity for trust building among the participants – a value necessary for interfaith social cohesion.





## 8. INTERFAITH AND INTRAFaITH DIALOGUE TOWARDS SOCIAL COHESION AND FORB



Strategies for promoting Social Cohesion and FoRB under SSCP included sessions, activities and workshops designed to change attitudes, clarify and change perceptions and perspectives, develop communication skills, manage difficult conversations through interfaith dialogue and actions. Such dialogue spaces included: Omdurman Community interfaith dialogue forum, Khartoum Community Interfaith dialogue forum and a workshop on conflict management and building a culture of dialogue for faith leaders. Cumulatively the forums and trainings gathered 133 participants. These dialogue spaces were vital to building the mutual respect, understanding and cooperation towards the promotion of Social Cohesion and FoRB.

One of the key initiatives supported under this project included the convening of an Intrafaith Dialogue. To this end, the project convened Church leaders Self Advocacy Workshop towards strengthen the intra-faith relations within the church in Sudan.

The trained 18 church leaders called for unity amongst all SCC member churches as a step to strengthen their prophetic advocacy voice towards FoRB. They also vowed to take the unity and peace messages to their local assemblies.



## 9. PROJECT CLOSING WORKSHOP



A project-closing workshop was held on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020, in Zanzibar, immediately following the joint interfaith learning and exposure visit. A total of 21 people participated in the closing workshop.

The workshop aimed to facilitate accountability, through reflection on the outcomes of collective work, and the process taken to attain these results. The workshop also provided opportunity to give recommendations, lessons learned, and nascent suggestions for the next steps. During this workshop, the results of the various Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning processes were presented, as well as brief summary of all the project activities and financial reports.

It was largely observed that the project has resulted in positive change in the community, despite the various challenges, and it was recommended that the process be supported to continue.





### Introduction

The project developed knowledge material as well as contributed to existing knowledge on peaceful coexistence with regards to Social Cohesion and FoRB. The Social Cohesion Community Facilitators handbook, the FoRB index survey among other documents remain compelling sources of knowledge developed through the project.

#### i. Desk review and Index on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Sudan

The project conducted a preliminary desk review on social cohesion and FoRB which was used to develop a comprehensive index on FoRB in Sudan. The index covered diverse markers promoting social cohesion and FoRB, documenting the actual FoRB practices on the ground. These include areas of convergence and divergence between different faiths, as well as intra-faith relations and harmony/disharmony within the faith communities (e.g. the Church), and its impacts.

#### ii. Development of Relevant M & E Tools

Monitoring and Evaluation (M/E) tools were developed, which included a template and framework for gathering results.

The tools were used during the subsequent workshops and trainings to gather perceptions, attitudes and knowledge of each other's respective country experiences, and identify areas of joint advocacy.

#### iii. Gender mainstreaming tools and guidelines

The gender tool development involved providing guidelines on gender mainstreaming that can be implemented in the project. The gender mainstreaming tool served as a reference tool to promote gender mainstreaming in FoRB throughout the implementation of SSCP.

#### iv. Survey on Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)

The survey was used to gauge different issues including knowledge levels and rights, advocacy and practice levels of the various rights and collaborative spaces in the country. The survey recommends that religious leaders work closely with the government in pushing for the full implementation of freedom of religion and belief. It further recommends that both the Sudan Inter-Religious Council (SIRC) and Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) continue to work together in educating its members about the importance of FoRB, particularly, on the religious minority rights.

## CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

In order to ensure sustainability and coordination, the capacities of implementing partners were strengthened by:

- Boards and Leadership Team Training: 25 leaders from SCC and SIRC were trained on governance. The training reinforced the respective Boards efforts to promote social cohesions and FoRB, through ensuring they have strong structures, good will, and cooperation to do so. It enhanced participants' understanding of governance principles and best practices for organizational and project success; equipping participants with governance skills in order to strengthen their capacities to coordinate and manage SSCP in transparent, effective and efficient ways.
- The establishment of four interfaith structures namely: Interfaith Steering Committee, the Children's Peace Ambassadors Network, Women of Faith Network and Interfaith Youth Network.
- Training the implementing partners on FoRB and offering support to the SCC and SIRC secretariats.

## KEY FINDINGS, LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Some of the lessons from the project on relation to the theory of change are:**

**1. Influential Inter-religious dialogue:**

Religious leaders and other faith actors have an important role in promoting peace, social cohesion and FoRB. Intrafaith and interfaith dialogue therefore is an important aspect of creating and sustaining this positive influence.

**2. Diapaxis:** Inter-religious dialogue needs to include practical activities that bring people of different religions together. Along with this is the need for economic empowerment, especially of women, youth, and vulnerable adults.

**3. Capacity in advocacy and issues of FoRB:** It is important for religious leaders and key partners in FoRB to have a good knowledge and strategy for advocacy with government officials as government support is crucial for the success of FoRB.

**4. Inclusion of women and youth:** Women and youth engagement is crucially important for the success of social cohesion and FoRB initiative.

**5. Strengthening of local institutions:** Efforts to strengthen the Boards and Executive Committees, as well as the Secretariats of the SCC and SIRC, were critical to the success of the initiative. Without the support of the boards, these achievements would not have been possible. This is a process that will continue in the next phase of the project.



**6. Strategic media use:** The initiative enjoyed constructive and extensive coverage by local media in particular, including print, radio, and TV; as well as modest international media coverage. This multiplied the reach of the work beyond the direct participants of the project activities. Going forward, more of this media work will be encouraged and supported.

**7. All-of society approach:** The initiative adopted an all-of-society approach, including the different demographic age groups - women, men, children, and youth - each perceived to bring unique contributions. More than that, it recognized that social cohesion and FoRB is the concern of everyone in society. This approach will continue with shared outcomes and objectives, articulated through different actions by these groups.

**8. Long-term engagement:** By using a process approach rather than a one-off or stand-alone events only, the initiative was able to reach some of the desired results – for example, increased positive social interaction and capacity enhancement on community dialogue. However, other changes, such as improvement of laws touching on FoRB, require a longer-term. Thereby, the SCC and SIRC together with their partners, encourage support for long-term work on strengthening social cohesion and FoRB.



