

KOFF

Die Schweizer Plattform für Friedensförderung
La plateforme suisse de promotion de la paix
The Swiss platform for peacebuilding

KOFF annual report 2016: forging new paths

swiss
peace

Schweizerische Friedensstiftung
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On the railway tracks of a train station in Myanmar. Stefan Bächtold/swisspeace

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Founded in 2001, KOFF is a dialogue and exchange platform facilitated by swisspeace connecting Swiss state and non-state actors active in peacebuilding. Its mission is to ensure that Swiss peacebuilding activities are strengthened, relevant, and visible.

To do so, KOFF facilitates dialogue and learning processes in Switzerland and abroad and fosters information sharing with a view to develop strategic alternatives, policy recommendations and joint initiatives for peace with its member organizations.

Editorial

The war in Syria, the rise in populist movements, and the ever tighter restrictions on civil society's freedom to act in certain contexts illustrate that peacebuilding and peace policy cannot be taken for granted. On a positive note, the newly adopted Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017-2020 now explicitly includes the topic of peace. Yet, the debt brake currently under way means further cuts in spending are just around the corner. This requires all of us to take an active stand for peace both in Switzerland and around the world – an ambition that remains KOFF's key mission.

Two questions stood at the center of KOFF's activities in 2016: 1) How can KOFF step up its peacebuilding efforts while respecting its platform mandate, which does not include lobbying? And 2) How can it make better use of its networks to carve out more space for peacebuilding and to shape this space in a more innovative way?

The first question was widely discussed with members in 2016. KOFF also drafted a statement for members of parliament that underscored the importance of supporting the Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017-2020. In addition, the organization actively encouraged various Swiss stakeholders to engage democratically with Swiss arms export policy. At an international level, the platform reinforced its partnership with the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) in order to inform members about and help shape international policy processes.

The second focus lay on networking peace with development, human rights, and other issues that help further peacebuilding. For instance, a roundtable was held on art and peacebuilding in cooperation with artasfoundation and International Alert. The conference on the role of Swiss civil society in implementing the 2030 Agenda that KOFF helped organize also aimed at promoting cooperation across sectors and building bridges between the different topics. Both examples reinforced our hypothesis that, in order to promote positive peacebuilding, we must also think and act outside of our comfort zones. We believe the KOFF platform is a fitting tool for this networking work because it unites almost 50 organizations operating in various sectors.

Structural changes were also made in an effort to answer these two questions. The KOFF Steering Committee was converted into an Advisory Board, a measure which we hope will increase our members' representativity and allow them to have a greater say in what we do.

In addition to our work on the arms trade and on the 2030 Agenda, we would like to point out some more highlights for KOFF in 2016 in this report. These include the learning process in Honduras, the publication of civil society's alternative report on Switzerland's implementation of the UN agenda on women, peace, and security, and the transformation of our KOFF newsletter into the attractive online magazine, à propos.

We would like to thank KOFF's member organizations for their active cooperation and critical engagement and look forward to continuing down this road together.

Sidonia Gabriel, Project Director, KOFF

1. The arms trade – a key issue in Switzerland's peace policy

As the Swiss platform for peacebuilding, KOFF aimed to play a more active role in the processes and debates surrounding Swiss policy in 2016 – for example by focusing on the issue of the arms trade.

Switzerland ranks among the world's major exporters of munitions and special military goods, a fact which has fueled heated debate in Switzerland for many years. Some defend the economic interests or point to changes in the security policy landscape, while others such as KOFF and its member organizations place development work, peacebuilding, and the protection of human rights at the center.



Demonstration by the Control Arms Coalition, 2012. Creative Commons/ Andrew Kelly

The debate became all the more relevant in Switzerland with the second conference on the international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) taking place in Geneva in August 2016. KOFF made the most of this momentum and organized roundtables in April and November 2016 in conjunction with Amnesty International, as well as dedicating the [September issue of its magazine, à propos](#), to the arms trade.

Discussions focused on the following questions: How does SECO decide whether an arms deal is approved or not? What factors and sources of information does it take into account during this process? What can we expect from the ATT and what role does civil society play in implementing it? How can we expand the circle of organizations involved and demonstrate the issue's relevance when it comes to peace and development policy?

This learning process, which was initiated with key Swiss stakeholders from the government and civil society, fosters democratic engagement with the issue, including among stakeholders with opposing views. The task now is to continue the debate and develop joint approaches to finding solutions in order to influence Swiss arms export policy from the perspective of development, peace, and human rights policy.

2. Implementing 2030 Agenda in Switzerland

We need both government agencies and Swiss civil society across the board to get involved and show real commitment if the 2030 Agenda vision is to become a reality and be implemented in a meaningful and effective way in Switzerland. This will mean boosting interaction and cooperation between Swiss organizations from different thematic spheres and geographical regions. Against this backdrop, Alliance Sud, KOFF, the Swiss Confederation of Trade Unions, and the Environment Alliance invited representatives of Swiss civil society to a conference in Bern on October 18, 2016. The aim was to discuss the role of Swiss civil society in implementing 2030 Agenda.

The 50 organizations taking part expressed clear support for greater cooperation. Firstly, they spoke out in favor of finding a common language within Swiss civil society and coming to an understanding despite their various roles and viewpoints on sustainable development goals (SDGs). Secondly, they supported the development of an effective role for monitoring government agencies that is as independent as possible. Participants also criticized the fact that the 2030 Agenda has too low a priority in the minds of government agencies and in Swiss policy



Members of Swiss civil society discuss their role in implementing the Agenda. Alliance Sud

and established that policy coherence is all the more important when it comes to implementing the agenda. The organizations participating in the conference therefore agreed to deal with precisely these points as part of a new civil society platform on 2030 Agenda.

Since peace has become part of the development agenda for the first time thanks to SDG 16, KOFF will be playing an active part in this platform process. It is not only able to offer added value with its specific peace policy

lens but also many years of experience in platform work and cooperation across sectors. Conversely, this partnership also offers KOFF an excellent opportunity to consider peace from a broader perspective and to strengthen the links between peace and other SDG sectors.

3. Honduras – hope amidst violence

The joint learning process on civil society's scope for action in Honduras was launched in Honduras in 2015 by Peace Watch Switzerland, HEKS, and KOFF with support from four other Swiss NGOs and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). In many ways, it shows how difficult and complex the conditions are for Honduran civil society and its international partners working locally.



In the streets of Tegucigalpa, 2016. Anna Leissing/swisspeace

A prime example of this is the murder of human rights and environmental activist Berta Cáceres in March 2016. As yet unpunished, this murder is symbolic of how government and social structures and dynamics play a major role in restricting civil society's scope for action in the political sphere. For instance, the intensive monitoring and militarized security policy that the government is justifying on the grounds of widespread violence and organized crime are frequently used against those who, like Berta Cáceres, make a stand against the neoliberal model of development. There is hardly

any protection against these threats since neither the National Human Rights Commission nor the police believe this is their responsibility. The resulting climate of oppression, fear, and mistrust prevents an open dialog with government institutions as well as within civil society and with the international community.

In addition to these difficult circumstances, however, the joint learning process also identified some potential for possible new strategies and courses of action. At a global level, certain international mechanisms like the newly opened Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights could have a positive influence. This would require civil society to play an active part in determining and shaping its agenda and work. It would also require safe spaces for discussion and dialog in order to build trust and benefit from synergies. International stakeholders and particularly platforms like KOFF could play a central role in this process.

The key source of potential, however, lies in the Honduran organizations themselves, who are proving their strength, creativity, and willingness to act for political and social change day after day in a context characterized by violence and injustice. These organizations and their processes must receive continued support – including from KOFF – that is driven by conviction, persistence, and solidarity.

4. Implementing Swiss NAP 1325 – a critical examination from civil society's point of view



The working group on Women, Peace & Security – an initiative facilitated by KOFF – has compiled the results of its reflections during 2015 on how the UN agenda on women, peace, and security is being implemented in Switzerland in its [alternative report from civil society](#). This is the first of its kind in the world. It is a critical assessment and contains some specific recommendations.

For instance, the report calls for Swiss National Action Plan 1325 (NAP 1325) to highlight the connections with other conventions (especially the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW) and Swiss guidelines on gender equality. Political debates on budget shifts like trends in military spending or spending on health, social services, and education cannot be neglected either. The contentious area of women's rights and the protection of

women remains a further challenge. Women must not be seen as mere victims but above all as people who are entitled to rights and who are active participants in security and peace policy processes.

The report attracted widespread interest both in Switzerland and abroad, with members of the Swiss parliament from the Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Committees discussing it in depth. It was also presented at an EPLO meeting and during the civil society activities organized within the framework of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

5. KOFF and the Sahel roundtable

KOFF attempted to resume the Sahel roundtable in 2016. The idea was to launch a learning process dedicated to exploring how local civil society could support the peace process in Mali. While this aroused some interest, the move also attracted critics, who emphasized that the political peace process plays out exclusively between the political elites in the south and north of the country and thus at a significant remove from civil society. They also questioned whether the energy could be better spent on specific projects that benefit the people of Mali. From a peacebuilding perspective, forging links between the various levels of society, which in this case means bridging the gap between the elites and the people, is immensely important when it comes to finding a sustainable solution. In the eyes of an organization just implementing projects, however, the prospect of a long and drawn-out political process is not very promising.

The art and peace and media relations and peace sectors proposed further ideas for a learning process in the Sahel region. It is important to find a way of either supporting the peace process in Mali or else promoting positive interdependence between the individual countries at a regional level and thus contributing to peace. KOFF remains open to suggestions.

6. Communication

The numerous discussions held with member organizations in 2016 indicated that KOFF needed to strengthen both its internal communication (with and between its members) and its external communication.

Some efforts were made in this regard, with over 30 representatives holding lively discussions about KOFF's increased political involvement and affirming its importance once again at the members' meeting in May, for example. The conversion of the Steering Committee into a broader-based Advisory Board not only gives member organizations a greater say in what KOFF does but also strengthens communication between KOFF members. With the launch of the attractive [online magazine à propos](#), the platform managed to raise the visibility of KOFF and the issue of peacebuilding. There are currently 11,000 subscribers around the world.

In order to further develop this initial success at a strategic and operational level, KOFF will be devising a communications plan for 2017.

7. Appendix

A) List of KOFF activities in 2016

[KOFF Dialog-platforms: roundtables, events, workshops, working group...](#)

Date	Topic
01/02	Meeting between KOFF members and Ambassador Heidi Grau, head of Human Security Division. Topics included KOFF's strategic changes and the cooperation between Swiss NGOs and the Human Security Division in the field of peacebuilding
05/02	Meeting between KOFF members and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation as well as the Human Security Division about the new dispatch to parliament
22/02	KOFF Steering Committee telephone conference
15/03	Informal exchange on "Patterns of exclusion: women's political, economic and cultural rights in Sri Lanka" co-organized by KOFF and the Society for Threatened Peoples
04/04	KOFF roundtable on "The Arms Trade Treaty and the role of the Swiss civil society"
28/04	Meeting of KOFF Intervention Group on "Significant Change Methodology"
04/05 11/05	Facilitation of two workshops for the Human Security Division on "Impact Orientation" within the Human Security Division
12/05	KOFF Member's Assembly
20/06	Roundtable on "Women, Peace, Security – Reloaded" with the working group 1325
26/08	KOFF roundtable on Central America with Swiss Ambassador J. Benz

06/09	Meeting of KOFF Intervision Group on “Conflict Sensitivity in Youth Protection Programs”
18/10	Workshop on “The role of Swiss civil society in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda” co-organized by KOFF, Alliance Sud, Alliance-Environment and the Swiss National Unions' association
27/10	KOFF roundtable on “Civil society in the Colombian peace process”, in cooperation with NGOs from the Swiss peacebuilding program “Semillas de Esperanza”
01/11	First meeting of the KOFF Advisory Board
01/11	KOFF roundtable on “Swiss peace policy and the role of the KOFF platform”
02/11	Workshop on 1325, General Recommendation 30 and CEDAW organized by the working group 1325 with members of the CEDAW committee, representatives from women’s organizations, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Human Security Division as well as gender experts
03/11	KOFF roundtable on “Art and peacebuilding” in cooperation with artasfoundation and International Alert
24/11	KOFF roundtable on “The Arms Trade Treaty and arms export control”
01/12	KOFF roundtable on “Empowering Women to act for their Rights in Israel”

Learning processes

Date	Activities
01-02/02 21/10	Workshops on “shrinking space for civil society in Honduras” with local organizations in Tegucigalpa, Honduras
16/02	Meeting with the West Africa Division of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation with regard to Mali and the possible launching of a learning process
04/05 11/05	Learning Process on “Impact Orientation and Measurement” within the Human Security Division
24/06 07/07	Learning Process for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation on “the Role of Civil Society in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda” (2 Focus Group Discussions)

Swiss peace policy/international policy processes

Date	Activities
07/03	Input at the parliamentary group on International Cooperation (Groupe Suisse – Solidarité internationale) on integrated approaches in Mali
09/03	Input on Syria at the parliamentary group “Friedensförderung” with the participation of Ambassador Heidi Grau, head of Human Security Division
27-28/04	EPLO steering committee meeting and general assembly
25/05	“Argumentarium zur Bedeutung der internationalen Botschaft 2017 - 2020 für den Frieden und die Sicherheit der Schweiz”, sent to Co-Presidents of the parliamentary group “Friedensförderung” as well as some selected

	parliamentarians
30/06	Briefing Note on Georgia for State councilor Josef Dittli (heading to a meeting of parliamentarians from OSCE countries in Georgia)
13/09	Meeting with five members of the Swiss National Council to present the alternative report on Women Peace and Security. Discussion on how to use the report for political work
26/09	Input at the parliamentary group "Friedensförderung on "Friedensförderung, Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und Sicherheitskooperation: Effiziente Instrumente für die Terrorismusbekämpfung? Chancen und Risiken" with the participation of Ambassador Stephan Husy, Special Envoy for combating terrorism at the FDFA
26/10	Facilitation and coordination of a Brown Bag Lunch with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Civil Society Platform for State and Peacebuilding on the implementation of the New Deal
28/10	Facilitation of a High Level meeting organized by EPLO in Brussels on "Approaches to conflict prevention"

KOFF Newsletter/Magazine

Date	Title
01/03	KOFF Newsletter No. 144 - Acting for Peace in Syria: Initiatives and Challenges
01/05	KOFF Newsletter No. 145 - Shrinking Space for Civil Society
01/07	à propos - The KOFF Peacebuilding Magazine No. 146 - What's Next for Mali
01/09	à propos - The KOFF Peacebuilding Magazine No. 147 - Arms Trade: Controversy and Opportunities
01/11	à propos - The KOFF Peacebuilding Magazine No. 148 - Preventing Violent Extremism

KOFF Publications: Critical Reflections, Research Mirror, Reports and Articles

Date	Title
15/01	Article by Annemarie Sancar "Menschen auf der Flucht" in Neue Wege, 1/2016
15/03	Research Mirror - March edition
10/05	Annual Report 2015 - KOFF in Transition
15/06	Research Mirror - June edition
15/06	swisspeace, cfd, PWAG, Frauen für den Frieden, 2016. Frauen, Frieden, Sicherheit - reloaded
15/09	Research Mirror - September edition

External conferences where staff members made an input

Date	Topic/ Organized by/ Venue
23/02	Meeting between Swiss civil society and the Swiss delegation with regard to the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women on “Women’s Empowerment and its link to sustainable Development”
07/03	Workshop on "National Action Plans: Challenges and Opportunities" organized by EPLO in Brussels, Belgium. Input on the civil society report on the Swiss National Action Plan 1325
08-10/03	Follow-up workshop on “Human Rights and Peacebuilding” organized by FriEnt in Bonn, Germany
15/03	Input on human rights and peacebuilding in Guatemala and Honduras in the context of the ecumenical campaign of Fastenopfer and Bread for all in Windisch, Switzerland
17/03	Input on the new strategy for KOFF roundtables and joint learning processes at a meeting of the Swiss peacebuilding program for Colombia
01/06	Facilitation of a workshop for the Human Rights and Gender Equality Networks of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Bern
20/06	Input at the “High Level Conference on Conflict Sensitive approaches” in Bamako, Mali
29/06	Key note speech at the launching event for the advocacy tool “Women’s rights and Faith Based Organizations” at Mission21 in Basel
05/07	Podium discussion on “Working in conflict contexts” organized by the Geneva Federation for Cooperation in Geneva
07/07	Training on “Women’s Human Rights Advocacy for faith-based Organizations” at the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva
06-09/07	Active participation in the Core Group meeting of Civil Society Platform on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding in Berlin, Germany
09/09	Input on cooperation with civil society at the peacebuilding course in Stans
15/09	Input at a Swiss Red Cross conference on “Gesundheit, kein Gut für Privilegierte” in Bern
28/09	Presentation of key findings from joint learning process on shrinking space for civil society in Honduras at the learning event of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and NGO-platform on enabling environment in Bern
08/10	Facilitation of an EPLO workshop on the alternative report “Women Peace Security – reloaded” in Brussels, Belgium
26/10	Brown Bag Lunch on “Civil society engagement in peace- and statebuilding” in cooperation with the Civil Society Platform on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and the Swiss Development Cooperation in Bern
27/10	Co-facilitation of a FrauenFriedensTisch organized by FriedensfrauenWeltweit in Bern

27/10	Input at a discussion on the alternative report "Women Peace Security – reloaded" organized by the gender network of the Swiss Development Cooperation in Bern
01/11	Moderation of a panel on "Colombian delegation on peace process from a gender perspective" organized by terre des hommes schweiz in Basel
10/12	Participation in a panel discussion on the human rights situation in Latin America organized by the university of Zurich

Other activities

Date	Activities
18/02	Meeting with the new KOFF member Stiftung für Integrale Friedensförderung
24-26/02	Peacebuilding Leadership Atelier
01/07	Launch of the new KOFF peacebuilding magazine "à propos"
01/09	Election and establishment of the KOFF Advisory Board

B) KOFF Head Office

Annual figures (in CHF)

INCOME	Accounts 2016	Budget 2016
FDFA HSD	350'000.00	350'000.00
swisspeace contribution	22'000.00	
NGOs contribution	26'800.00	20'000.00
Trainings	11'406.67	10'000.00
Other income	16'389.95	10'500.00
TOTAL	426'596.62	390'500.00
EXPENSE		
Personal costs	273'360.98	238'877.00
Activities	45'578.44	62'363.00
Organization & members	12'268.10	7'000.00
Direct costs (ZEWO)	59'687.34	51'206.00
Indirect costs	36'196.00	31'054.00
TOTAL	427'090.86	390'500.00

Staff members

Sidonia Gabriel	Project Director
Nadina Diday	Conflict sensitivity, secretariat of the parliamentary group on peacebuilding, operational management of the Basel Peace Forum
Anna Leissing	Human rights and conflict transformation, coordination of the roundtables and learning processes
Annemarie Sancar	Gender and Peacebuilding
Marie Seidel	Communication

Interns

Marieke Fröhlich
Evelyne Schoffe

Steering Committee (until September 2016)

Sabrina Dallafior (FDFA/HSD), Damiano Sguaitamatti (FDFA/HSD), Markus Heiniger (FDFA/SDC), Esther Marthaler (HELVETAS SI), Ruedi Tobler (Swiss Peace Council), Béatrice Faidutti Lueber (Eirene Suisse), Matthias Boss (swisspeace)

Advisory Board (as of September 2016)

Christophe Barbey (APRED), Katharina Thurnheer (Caritas), Béatrice Faidutti Lueber (Eirene Suisse), Sacha Meuter (Fondation Hironnelle), Ruedi Tobler (Swiss Peace Council), Una Hombreicher (HEKS), Regula Gattiker (HELVETAS SI), Dieter von Blarer (humanrights.ch), Peter Aeberhard (IFOR-MIR), Lucas Beck (LIPS), Katharina Gfeller (Mission 21), Sibylle Ganz-Koehlin (PBI Switzerland), Marianne Widmer (PWS), Carmen Meyer (cfd), Matthias Boss (swisspeace), representatives of the SDC and HSD.

C) List of acronyms

ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSPPS	Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
HEKS	Swiss Church Aid
HSD	Human Security Division
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

KOFF is a dialogue and exchange platform facilitated by swisspeace. It is jointly supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the following Swiss NGOs which are members of the platform:

ae-centre
Alliance Sud
APRED
artasfoundation
Baha'i
Brücke · Le pont
Caritas Switzerland
Caux – Initiatives of Change
cfd
DCAF
Eirene Suisse
Fondation Hironnelle
Grains of Peace
Green Cross Switzerland
GSoA
HEKS
HELVETAS SI

IAMANEH Switzerland
ICP
Interpeace
Luzerner Initiative für Frieden
und Sicherheit (LIPS)
medico international schweiz
MIR Switzerland
Mission 21
MIVA Schweiz
Palmyrah
PBI Switzerland
Peace Nexus Foundation
Peace Watch Switzerland
PeaceWomen Across the Globe
Pestalozzi Children's Foundation
Quaker United Nations Office
SKF

Society for Threatened Peoples
Solidar Switzerland
SOS Children's Villages
Stiftung für Integrale
Friedensförderung
Swiss Academy for Development
Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund
Swiss Peace Council
Swiss Red Cross
Swiss Refugee Council
SWISSAID
Terre des Femmes Switzerland
terre des hommes schweiz
Women for Peace Switzerland

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