



# Connector Projects Approach:

SUSTAINED INTERACTIONS FOR STRENGTHENED  
RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLECTIVE WELLBEING

**GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

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# Acronyms

<b>A3B</b>	Applying Binding, Bonding and Bridging to Land Conflicts in Mindanao Project
<b>BiH</b>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>BLGU</b>	Barangay (village) Local Government Unit
<b>BOKRA</b>	Building Opportunities for Knowledge and Religious Acceptance Project
<b>CIRCA</b>	Capacity for Inter-Religious Community Action Project
<b>CNP</b>	Connector Project
<b>CRS</b>	Catholic Relief Services
<b>C4P</b>	Connect for Peace Project
<b>HAs</b>	Hometown Associations
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>TRLs</b>	Traditional and religious leaders
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygien



Social cohesion event for the CRS 'Ita na Ita' or People to People project in Mbaiki, Central African Republic. Photo by Sam Phelps / CRS.

# Introduction and Background

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has long supported communities to design and implement Connector Projects (CNPs) as a core component of peacebuilding and social cohesion strategies. Increasingly, CNPs are being applied in a diverse range of programs. They serve as a tool linking peace interventions with development and humanitarian assistance in order to achieve mutual benefits for diverse groups. In response to this trend, CRS offers this guidance for a systematic approach to CNPs that is rooted in experience and evidence and that will maximize their positive effects. The CNPs approach enriches CRS' set of tools and methodologies aimed at fostering just and peaceful societies. As the name suggests, CNPs are meant to connect divided or conflicted groups and are appropriate for advancing bridging – the “third B” of CRS’s 3Bs methodology explained below (Section 2.0). CNPs as a platform for “bridging” can be utilized to strengthen inter-group relationships but also to foster relationships within groups experiencing intra-group divisions and tensions.

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*CNPs as a platform for “bridging” can be utilized to strengthen inter-group relationships but also to foster relationships within groups experiencing intra-group divisions and tensions.*

## PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE OF THIS GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

This document offers concise and practical guidance for CRS Country Programs and partners seeking to support communities to design and implement CNPs. The guidance describes a proven approach based on CRS' unique experience with different types of CNPs implemented over time in diverse contexts. This CNPs approach guidance is applicable to CNPs implemented within standalone peacebuilding or social cohesion programming or executed as part of integrated programming within other sector interventions in fragile and conflict-affected or prone contexts with underlying tensions and social divisions, e.g., livelihoods, food security, education, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), etc.

## WHAT ARE CONNECTOR PROJECTS (CNPs)?<sup>1</sup>

Connector projects are initiatives that provide opportunities and incentives for *sustained interactions* between diverse groups, particularly those divided by conflict or tensions, and are jointly designed, led and implemented by them for mutual benefit. Working together enables participants from such groups to deepen understanding of one another and strengthen relationships while enhancing collective wellbeing. In this way, connector projects aim to strengthen social cohesion and prospects for durable peace.

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1. Such projects may be referred to differently by different organizations. For instance, USAID's Food for Peace (FFP) refers to the concept of “collective action” that “focuses on the process of creating and strengthening social bonds by working together toward a common goal, and not just the output of what is constructed.” USAID, 2019. Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance Indicators Handbook. Part II: Monitoring Indicators for Resilience Food Security Activities. [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USAID-BHA\\_Indicator\\_Handbook\\_Part\\_II\\_June\\_2021.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USAID-BHA_Indicator_Handbook_Part_II_June_2021.pdf), Site visited 01 April 2020.





in Kenya and Niger); Connect for Peace – C4P Project (2017-2023 in Liberia); PRO-Future Project (phase I from 2013-2017 and phase II from 2017-2023 in Bosnia and Herzegovina); and a social cohesion project in the Middle East (phase I from 2018-2020 and phase II from 2020-2023). These CNPs involved concrete and/or less tangible interventions, both completed (see Case Example 1<sup>2</sup>) and ongoing.

**Experience from across contexts and types of CNPs shows that:**

- It is a long, iterative process that requires building some lag time into the Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) from the beginning to include periods of consultation and consensus building;
- CNP implementation requires two unique skillsets which may not necessarily reside in one person – not only being able to facilitate social cohesion processes but also need technical skills in the sectors that a given CNP may focus on, e.g., entrepreneurship development or water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH);
- There is no one-size-fits-all approach and adaptations should be made based on context as well as type, size and scope of the selected CNP(s);
- There are many possibilities for the focus and structure of the CNP and it is important to have an open mind, listen to affected communities and facilitate their participation before undertaking CNPs and during their implementation;
- Understanding the context and conflict dynamics in target areas, including the diversity of different communities and any social cleavages based on ethnicity, clan, race, religion, class, gender, age, livelihood occupation, etc., is foundational to achieving the objectives of any CNP; and
- It is essential to apply the Do No Harm (DNH) principle when making programming decisions and to be flexible to allow modification of strategies and the DIP to respond to changes in context.

Table 1 in the appendix provides examples of CNPs implemented by CRS and partners.

The next sections describe key elements for consideration during a CNP's pre-design, design, implementation and phase-out and evaluation stages.

2. CRS 2019, End of Project (EoP) Evaluation of Applying Binding, Bonding and Bridging for Peace (A3B in Mindanao Project).



At an interreligious prayer service in the city of Davao, religious leaders from Mindanao's three major groups -Muslim, indigenous, and Christian- encourage their followers to work for peace. Since the 1970s, regions of Mindanao have been plagued with violence related to land disputes and political power. Thousands have lost family members, homes or livelihoods to the conflict. Photo by Laura Sheahan / CRS.

**CASE EXAMPLE 1:****PHILIPPINES: A3B FOR LAND'S COMMUNITY-BASED CNPS IN MINDANAO**

The Applying the 3Bs – *Binding, Bonding, and Bridging* – to Land Conflicts in Mindanao (A3B for Land) project was implemented in Mindanao, Philippines from 2012 to 2015 in a context of competing claims over land among Muslims (Moros), Christians (settlers) and Indigenous People. CNPs served as bridging initiatives to enhance cooperation between different identity groups in the community. Local partner organizations worked with traditional and religious leaders (TRLs) and village-level Barangay Local Government Unit (BLGU) officials to plan, implement and complete 18 community-based CNPs (5 in Ampatuan, 3 in Magpet, 5 in Polomolok and 5 in Senator Ninoy Aquino). The CNPs were:

- A. Identified through participatory processes
- B. Aligned with community priorities based on Barangay Development Plans
- C. Implemented through the 'bayanihan system' (community collaborative action)
- D. Guided by regulations and mechanisms developed and agreed by communities
- E. Underpinned by Memorandum of Agreements signed for each project between the BLGU and partner organization to ensure organizational support
- F. Resourced by in-cash or in-kind (e.g., labor and food) counterpart funding by communities and BLGUs

The total cost for the 18 CNPs was \$12,560. The A3B for Land project contributed 61 percent (\$7,660) while BLGUs and communities contributed 39 percent (\$4,900). On average, each project cost \$698.

**SUMMARY OF A3B FOR LAND CONNECTOR PROJECTS**

TYPES OF CONNECTOR PROJECT	NUMBER
Improvement of barangay facilities and structures	6
Improvement of foot / hanging bridge	2
Community lighting	1
Improvement of health facilities	4
Improvement of water access / facilities	4
Sanitation and hygiene	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>

Some of the women in the “most significant change” sharing sessions reported that solidarity and unity developed among members of different identity groups in their communities while working together in community peace projects. For instance, the indigenous people in their communities became more active in participating in community activities and barangay gatherings related to the A3B project. TRLs and members of the Lupong Tagapamayapa or “village pacification committees” who participated in focus group discussions during the evaluation stated that these CNPs contributed to improving relationships between community members and addressed important community needs especially for women and children.



Norma Laguiban is Barangay Rural Health Worker (RHW). She pushed for the inclusion of the Breastfeeding Hub in their barangay as in her 15 years of being the RHW in the Barangay, she saw how difficult it is for the mothers to wait outside with no seat and shade. Photo by Abril dela Cruz / CRS.

# Considerations for the Pre-design Phase

This is a preparatory phase where the necessary groundwork is laid for diverse or divided groups to meaningfully interact around issues of mutual interest and benefit. Recommended considerations include:

## INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY CONFLICT ANALYSIS:

Ensure you have a gendered conflict analysis, sometimes referred to as a conflict assessment, to inform the design of the CNP.

- A. Update existing conflict analysis:** If the CNP is part of a standalone peacebuilding or social cohesion project, make use of the conflict analysis that was used to inform its design. If you are planning to implement the CNP as part of an integrated program or project (e.g., a development or humanitarian project with peacebuilding or social cohesion components), refer to the pre-design assessment(s) for either a standalone conflict assessment or an assessment that integrated conflict analysis elements. In either case, the existing conflict analysis or assessment is a useful starting point. If more than one year has elapsed since the original analysis was conducted, the conflict analysis will need to be updated prior to CNP design. For rapidly changing contexts, the conflict analysis / assessment will need to be updated even before one year elapses.
- B. Conduct conflict analysis where it does not exist:** In cases where no conflict analysis or assessment has been done, CRS and its implementing partner(s) should conduct a rapid inclusive and participatory gendered conflict assessment/analysis involving communities that the CNP will be directly targeting to ensure solid understanding of the context. CRS' [Basic Guide for Busy Practitioners](#)<sup>3</sup> could be used.
- C. Share the conflict analysis with representatives of the groups that the CNP intends to target through an inclusive and participatory process. This is important for several reasons:** (1) These particular groups may not have been directly involved in the analysis and therefore this gives them an opportunity to validate and further nuance the analysis; (2) It facilitates a shared understanding of the different aspects of the conflict(s); and (3) It promotes ownership of the analysis and subsequent processes. All these three are vital if divided groups are to jointly pursue sustainable solutions to issues of mutual concern.

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3. Catholic Relief Services, 2017. Peacebuilding, Governance, Gender, Protection and Youth Assessments: A Basic Guide for Busy Practitioners, Third Edition - April 2017. Available at [https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/pggpy\\_third\\_edition\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/pggpy_third_edition_final_web.pdf)

- D. Use the conflict analysis to guide CNP decisions:** The conflict analysis—apart from facilitating the deeper understanding of the conflict and related contextual issues and dynamics—is instructive in guiding decisions on:
- Which groups and / or identities to include in the CNP from design to phase-out. While there may be a diversity of groups and/or identities in the targeted context, consider who must be included given the critical faultlines, divisions, tensions, etc., you intend to address through the CNP. The conflict analysis should help in clarifying the faultlines where multiple identities overlap, and conflict lines are not obvious. In other words, who should the CNP connect and why? This question should be considered in relation to the definition and objectives of CNPs as outlined in section 1.0 above.
  - What interventions need to be undertaken to prepare the diverse groups, particularly those divided by conflict and tensions, to effectively work together to implement a CNP (see more detailed guidance on willingness and readiness below).
  - What common needs, mutual interests and shared values exist on which the CNP can be designed or built.
  - What context-relevant indicators could be considered during the CNP design to enable the tracking of changes in relationships between the diverse or divided groups that will be brought together in CNP processes.
  - What considerations need to be made for conflict-sensitivity in all aspects of the CNP from design to phase-out. Based on the conflict analysis, the CNP programming processes should avoid unintentionally exacerbating the dividers and sources of tension while reinforcing the connectors and local capacities for peace existing in that context.

#### WILLINGNESS AND READINESS OF THE DIVERSE OR DIVIDED GROUPS TO WORK TOGETHER:

The conflict analysis, together with previous engagements with the target groups, should help you in assessing their willingness and readiness to collaborate on a CNP. Preliminary work may be required to prepare these groups for joint action before they can co-design and jointly implement the CNP. Determine which groups need to undertake the “bonding” process (*intra-group*) and how this should progress (not necessarily in a linear fashion but may be iterative) towards “bridging” activities (*inter-group*), including the CNP. In some cases, initial connector activities can help to jump-start and build enthusiasm for a longer-term CNP process and open the door for the more introspective binding and bonding processes that may be needed. Also determine whether there may be need for “binding” interventions. These are briefly explained below:

1. **Binding** interventions to encourage personal reflection, explore and break down stereotypes and prejudices, build awareness of and respect for the “other” and differences, help individuals gain skills to address conflict in healthy ways and encourage introspection to understand one’s deep emotions and how to constructively deal with them including coping with stress and trauma. Individuals also get to discover and appreciate their role in building peace and socially cohesive societies.

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- 2. Bonding** interventions to strengthen or rebuild relations *within* a community or group whose members are brought together by similar characteristics or identities, preparing them for substantive engagement with the “other.” In the relative safety of their own community or group, they work through their commonalities and differences, diverse understandings and opinions, and alternative visions of the future. Bonding helps single communities / groups aggregate their concerns, needs and priorities, making it easier for them to voice them during engagements with the “other”.
- 3. Bridging** interventions to bring together two or more communities or groups with either different characteristics or identities or experiencing conflict to address issues of mutual concern and to interact purposefully for mutual benefit in a safe space. Bridging builds more generalized forms of trust, thus creating the kind of multipurpose platforms for collective action that can enable divided or conflicted communities to focus their energy and efforts on advancing their shared agenda. This involves developing mutual understanding in terms of: historical analysis; joint analysis of issues and conflict incidents; generating collective information; resolution of a conflict incident; building a common vision and achieving it through connector activities / projects. A key element is to support affected communities or groups, who have built generalized forms of trust through bridging processes, to build linkages for meaningful engagement with state and non-state institutions —e.g., the market, cultural/traditional, religious, civil society organizations and groupings, NGOs, etc.— with a double aim of strengthening social relations and reducing inequalities, exclusion and divisions in an environment of equal opportunity for all. Bridged communities or groups combine resources and amplify their voice around aggregated demands and engage with institutions to address social injustices embedded in systems and structures that undermine the building of peaceful and socially cohesive societies.

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*Binding, Bonding and Bridging processes have opportunities to support linkages of a vertical nature between communities and their leaders, structures and institutions.*

Binding, Bonding and Bridging processes have opportunities to support linkages of a vertical nature between communities and their leaders, structures and institutions. For more on Binding, Bonding and Bridging, see CRS’ Social Cohesion methodology ([3Bs/4Ds](#)).<sup>4</sup>

#### GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY / GROUP PARTICIPANTS:

Prepare any guidelines that may be required to enable effective involvement of community or group participants and other stakeholders and to streamline and make clear CNP processes at different stages. This may require simplifying processes and/or translating the guidelines into a language that is accessible by participants. For instance:

- A. Consider simplifying the CNP** project cycle so that it is understood by community level CNP participants and stakeholders since many of them may not be familiar with programming (e.g., identifying the need(s), designing, starting-up, implementing, and closing-out the CNP while encouraging good management practice including monitoring and

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4. CRS 2017, The Ties that Bind, Building Social Cohesion in Divided Communities, [https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/crs\\_ties\\_rev-08-03-2017\\_web.pdf](https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/crs_ties_rev-08-03-2017_web.pdf)

learning to improve throughout the CNP cycle). Draw from the CRS Project Packages — [CRS ProPack I](#) and [CRS ProPack II](#)<sup>5</sup> — to simplify the CNP project cycle.

- B. Prepare process guidelines and templates** as deemed necessary and appropriate e.g., guidance on identifying an appropriate CNP, selecting CNP participants, establishing the CNP management committee, community resource mobilization, a simple CNP template to guide CNP design, etc. CRS and partners should determine which guidelines and processes can be co-created with community participants, and which decisions must be taken by the project team to provide a clear framework or ensure compliance with donor or government expectations. It is advised that any guidelines or templates developed by the team (rather than in co-creation) should be shared with participants for input, further contextual considerations and finalization during the appropriate CNP phase to enable understanding, uptake and ownership. Refer to sections below that provide more guidance on these stages and processes (e.g., the management committee, selection of CNP participants, etc.).

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5. CRS 2005, ProPack 1, The CRS Project Package, Guidance on Project Design for CRS Project and Program Managers. [https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/propack\\_2019\\_april\\_16\\_low\\_res\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/propack_2019_april_16_low_res_for_web.pdf); and CRS 2007, ProPack II, The CRS Project Package, Project Management and Implementation, Guidance for CRS Project and Program Managers. <https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/propack-2.pdf>



# Considerations for the Design Phase

This phase comes after participants representing diverse or divided groups have undertaken the preparatory activities as suggested in Section 2.0 and have shown readiness and agreement to collaborate on a CNP for mutual benefit. Key considerations include:

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*The selection process should be as participatory, consultative, inclusive, fair and transparent as possible to avoid any likely resentment of the process and exacerbating existing tensions that will sabotage the success of the CNP.*

## SELECTING PARTICIPANTS TO CO-CREATE THE CNP:

Since not all people belonging to the diverse or divided groups in the target communities can participate in co-creating the CNP, ensure selection of an appropriate number of participants guided by the selection criteria developed during the pre-design phase and understanding of the context of conflict (see Section 2.0 for conflict analysis). Share this as a draft criterion and seek input from a wide range of stakeholders for buy-in and acceptance.

The selection process should be as participatory, consultative, inclusive, fair and transparent as possible to avoid any likely resentment of the process and exacerbating existing tensions that will sabotage the success of the CNP. The CNP should be co-created with participation of representatives of the diverse or divided groups that the CNP intends to connect, inclusive of both male and female participants and with consideration of age as appropriate. Affected groups should trust those representing them in co-designing the CNP. See Case Example 2 from CIRCA I in Tanzania that demonstrates the importance of thoughtfulness in CNP participants' selection.



Participants from the Muslim and Christian community take part in a Trauma Healing Workshop as part of the the Central African Republic Interfaith Peacebuilding Partnership (CIPP) project supported by USAID and partners in Boda, Central African Republic on September 13, 2019.

Photo by Sam Phelps / CRS.



Members of the Nkuyu Coffee Group dry coffee on raised racks in Igale village, Tanzania, June 13, 2019. These youth are taking part in the Kahawa ya Kesho (meaning “Coffee of Tomorrow”) project, which is a five-year initiative funded by Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung and implemented by Catholic Relief Services. The goal of the project is to increase livelihood opportunities and strengthen the economic empowerment of rural youth between the ages of 18 and 35 in Tanzania’s Southern Highlands. The project aims to sustainably increase coffee production, engage youth in inclusive coffee value chains, build entrepreneurship and business skills, and diversify livelihood activities for rural youth and their households.

Photo by Will Baxter / CRS.

## CASE EXAMPLE 2:

### TANZANIA: THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INCLUSIVE, PARTICIPATORY AND TRANSPARENT PARTICIPANT SELECTION PROCESS FOR THE CNP DESIGN PHASE

There was a history of tensions between two religious groups in Dar es Salaam. CRS' Capacity for Interreligious Community Action (CIRCA I) project aimed at bringing together these communities of different faiths to resolve their differences, and live and work together harmoniously using youth platforms. Groups of youth from three religious umbrella organizations—the Muslim Council of Tanzania, the Christian Council of Tanzania and Tanzania Episcopal Conferences— were supported to implement Connector Projects, specifically poultry farming and gardening.

The coordinating institution mobilized 15 youth from the three umbrella organizations to participate in the project. In the initial phases, activities focused on preparing the youth to undertake CNPs. Youth actively participated in all modules of peacebuilding and social cohesion trainings.

However, as the project proceeded to CNP identification and discussions on who would manage and monitor, a lack of commitment by the youth was noted, especially regarding the role of their religious leaders through their respective umbrella organizations. One of the umbrella organizations had internal leadership wrangles that split the youth into two camps based on which religious leader had nominated them to participate in the CIRCA project activities. To resolve the dispute that affected implementation of the project, the youth expressed the need to be independent in implementing the CNPs and not participating under any umbrella organization. However, this was not possible because the focus of CIRCA was to strengthen the capacity of existing faith organizations to proactively engage in joint inter-religious action projects. These wrangles affected consensus-building on the connector projects and how to manage the resources. Upon close follow up, it was discovered that the selection process for the youth participants did not bring forth the right youth who would represent the best interest of other youth but instead was about leadership dominance within the institution. There were persistent issues to be resolved among the youth who were engaged in the CNPs design over management of financial resources.

A key lesson learnt was that it is very important to minimize or eliminate the influence of internal power struggles within implementing partner organizations on identification of CNP participants through a selection process guided by agreed criteria. It was vital to promote an inclusive, participatory and transparent process in the selection of youth participants to ensure that all own the process right from the start and, subsequently, effectively participate for the success and sustainability of the CNPs.

**SUPPORTING THE CO-CREATION PROCESS:**

This should be a community-led participatory process involving carefully selected participants as explained above. CRS and implementing partners are expected to support and accompany the process, further generating willingness among participants to take and lead action. The following proposed process is generic and should be adapted to context.

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*CRS and implementing partners are expected to support and accompany the process, further generating willingness among participants to take and lead action.*

- A. Clarify the purpose of CNP(s), the resources available, the timelines, the role of the community / participating groups and the role of CRS and its implementing partners. Manage expectations from the start. Emphasize from the beginning that any CNP serves two core aims and these should both be considered in the co-creation process (see Case Example 4 from a project implemented in the Middle East):
  - At least one objective / result aimed at contributing to transforming the conflict or addressing divisions and (re)building and strengthening relations; and
  - At least one objective / result aimed at addressing an identified shared development need or common challenge, etc.
- B. Share key highlights from the conflict analysis with a focus on further generating a shared understanding of the issues, common concerns or problems, what connects them and acknowledgment of existence of shared interests that they can advance together for their mutual benefit and the common good.
- C. From the conflict analysis and their contextual understanding, involve participants in discussing and building consensus on the common need or problem they experience and would like to jointly address through working together.
- D. Involve participants in jointly identifying a solution(s) to the common need or problem for mutual benefit. Emphasize the need to identify solutions that are locally embedded so that they are able to tap into existing resources, effectively participate and lead implementation.
- E. Involve participants in jointly identifying possible CNPs, aligned to the solution(s) they identified in the previous step, that bring mutual benefits to diverse / divided groups in the community. Guide them to select the most suitable and realistic CNP from the many they may have identified based on some of the following considerations:
  - Resources required for the CNP vis-a-vis available resources that CRS is providing to the community.
  - Community contributions towards implementing and sustaining the CNP. This may be in-kind contribution— what is the community / participants willing to offer? This is also a means to enhance ownership and commitment from the community members. Consider use of locally available resources and explore the possibility of using local capacity and existing structures where appropriate.
  - Legal requirements in the context. Are there legal requirements relevant to the proposed CNPs? For instance, is there requirement for the group to register with the local, regional or national government? Is there need for certification? Are there standards that have to be met? Does the CRS

country program have a guide on the kind of activities that it can engage in, in that particular country?

- Donor restrictions on what can and cannot be done.
  - Is there any specialized knowledge and technical expertise that is required during design of the CNP and its roll-out? Is this capacity readily available or it may require sourcing it from outside? For example, specialized knowledge and technical expertise required for: rehabilitating existing or drilling new boreholes; beekeeping and honey processing; etc.
- F. Once the most suitable and realistic CNP has been agreed, share the CNP template prepared earlier during the pre-design phase with the participants to jointly discuss, build consensus and complete. A simple CNP design template will facilitate the capturing of participants' decisions on: the need/problem to be addressed; the objectives they intend to achieve (both relational and developmental); the strategies and activities they intend to undertake, including timelines; the management structure; partners they intend to work with; required resources and how to mobilize these resources; their considerations for transition and sustainability; etc.
- G. Involve participants in selecting a CNP management committee / team that is representative of the diversity in the community and/or the divided groups that the CNP intends to connect, inclusive of both male and female participants and with consideration of age as appropriate. Share guidance on establishing and selecting the CNP management committee and, if this was not done earlier during the preparation stage (see section 2.0), give opportunity to participants to shape this guidance and criteria. It is important that the selection happens after those to select and those to be selected have understood the expectations, roles and responsibilities of the CNP management committee. It is vital for participants to select trusted individuals with good standing in the community, that respect the "other" and have leadership and problem-solving capacity. This committee takes leadership to ensure that CNP participants are constantly mobilized, agreed activities are implemented jointly and timelines are observed.

#### SUPPORTING THE COMMENCEMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION PHASE:

This period requires close accompaniment of the CNP management committee, participants and relevant stakeholders. It is during accompaniment that practical skills needed for the CNP to take-off are transferred to the CNP management committee, participants and other relevant stakeholders. The skills needed vary and depend on the type of CNP (see Case Example 3 from Liberia for the capacity building C4P had to undertake to prepare Hometown Associations to implement CNPs). CNP participants and management committee may also require accompaniment when linking with various stakeholders including local leadership and authority during the initial stages to seek the approvals and support needed before implementation. The timeframe needed from the commencement to implementation phase varies with the type of CNP and context.



Eunice Bellewah is a young entrepreneur cooking and selling snacks, working just outside Liberia's capital city, Monrovia. Photo by Michael Stulman / CRS.

### CASE EXAMPLE 3:

#### LIBERIA: LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR CNP IMPLEMENTATION

Connect for Peace (C4P), funded by USAID/CMM, undertook CNPs with Hometown Associations (HAs) of Nimba origin but based in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia, together with their kinship communities in Nimba. The CNPs implemented included: rehabilitation of a bridge connecting conflicting communities; communal farming among women from three different ethnic communities (namely, Gio, Mano and Mandingo); construction of guest houses by women as a self-help initiative; construction and rehabilitation of a meeting hall / town hall for use in settling community disputes and hosting community meetings; and construction of a community clinic to help provide quality health services.

C4P built on the strengths of HAs to implement these CNPs. HAs have strong influence over decision-making in their kinship communities. HAs are often consulted to direct the paths of their communities whenever they are faced with a conflicting situation. HAs also serve as gate keepers and, in so doing, defend the traditional heritage of their kinship communities. The HAs selected by the project communities had little prior knowledge in project design, management and implementation. They were not registered under the laws of Liberia and barely had bank accounts and functional secretariats to professionally implement a connector project / activity. The C4P project team and partners dealt with this challenge by providing soft skills trainings in project design, management, implementation and reporting, and provided templates that were approved to be used for the project.

HAs went through CRS' basic administrative and operations training to gain insight on how to run Community Based Organizations. Their awareness was raised on how to obtain legal documents for their HAs. The Country Program's peacebuilding unit provided guidance during the HAs registration process. As a result of this guidance, five HAs were registered as legal entities in Liberia, including Nimba Kwado, the biggest HA. However, the issue of HAs having functional secretariats is yet to be addressed. The leadership of these kinship groups used weekly meetings to update their members. They also worked with members on a voluntary basis to make sure their activities are implemented.



A Franciscan sister talks with Maha, CRS' Egypt Project Manager. Photo by Mark Melia / CRS.



# Considerations for the Implementation Phase

This naturally builds on the CNP design phase. Key considerations include:

## JOINT IMPLEMENTATION AND JOINT MANAGEMENT:

Building on the values of collaboration nurtured during the co-creation phase, foster an environment of joint implementation and management of the CNP. The joint implementation and management are intended to provide opportunities for sustained social contact and constructive interactions between diverse groups, particularly those divided by conflict and tensions, while addressing a common concern. Some elements to consider include:

- A. Inclusive participation** - Joint implementation may be fostered through careful selection of direct project participants as proposed in section 2.0 and 3.0 (also see Case Example 4 from a project implemented in the Middle East). The targeted groups should be equitably represented through a process that minimizes the likelihood of unintentionally exacerbating the conflicts, tensions and resentment between them, e.g., as suggested above. The conflict analysis conducted during the pre-design phase should facilitate understanding of the existing diversities and divisions and related dynamics. In addition, the selection criteria and process should take into consideration the contextual gender dynamics, e.g., by ensuring that both female and male are fairly represented in the direct participants (see below for more on gender and youth considerations).
- B. CNP leadership, management and decision-making** - Mechanisms should be devised for the inclusive CNP management committee to be transparent and accountable to all and not only to the group they are affiliated with. Decision-making processes should be outlined, clear and agreed, encompassing the principles of transparency, inclusive participation, integrity, fairness and respect for diversity. This is important to keep the diverse / divided groups committed to joint implementation for mutual benefit. Ideally, members of the CNP management committee will possess relevant skills, such as in basic CNP cycle management, or problem solving and conflict management skills to deal with any emerging issues between direct project participants as well as between the CNP committee and the local leadership or the larger community. Where necessary, take time to equip the full committee with the needed skills. The committee should also be equipped to engage vertically with relevant leadership, institutions and their structures (e.g. local government, traditional and religious) to garner support, negotiate or influence on matters related to the CNP (consult Chapter 5 on Civic Participation in the [Engaging Government Guide](#) <sup>6</sup> for ideas).

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*The joint implementation and management are intended to provide opportunities for sustained social contact and constructive interactions between diverse groups, particularly those divided by conflict and tensions, while addressing a common concern.*

6. CRS 2018, Engaging Government, A CRS Guide for Working for Social Change, [https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/egg\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/egg_final_web.pdf)



A CRS delegation consisting of Carolyn Woo, Sean Callahan, and Bishop Paul Coakley visit Gaza to witness the destruction first hand caused by the Gaza-Israel conflict. The conflict originated in mid-May 2014 and then escalated on July 8th, 2014 when Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched Operation Protective Edge against militants in the Gaza Strip. CRS works in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip implementing programs focused on food security, peace building, civic engagement and youth development. Photo by Shareef Sarhan for CRS.

## CASE EXAMPLE 4:

### MIDDLE EAST: ENSURING REPRESENTATIVE AND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

The project supported implementation of CNPs in one of the most diverse regions where people of multiple ethnicities and faith beliefs live. The targeted region experiences multifaceted conflicts that vary across religion, ethnic, tribal and political lines. The project aimed at: (1) engaging youth and community leaders to strengthen relationships among different groups in the targeted region; and (2) building youth livelihoods skills, so youth are equipped to start a small business or find work opportunities. In Phase 1 of the project, 13 connector projects were supported.

The project team focused on ensuring an inclusive and participatory planning and implementation process throughout the connector project implementation phase. Before the youth implemented their projects, youth participants presented their project ideas to community leaders. The goal of these structured meetings was to encourage the youth to seek for support and provide tips to leaders on how to provide effective feedback on the youth project ideas. The community leaders also committed to providing support during the implementation process.

Aside from leader inclusivity, the project team aimed to ensure the youth were actively and equally participating. Project staff shared the different roles the youth would take on their team. For example, the team nominated a treasurer, a keyholder (for the lockbox), a purchaser, secretary, weekly coordinator, etc. Community based staff ensured that the roles were filled by diverse ethnic and religious groups and would rotate periodically. This mitigated potential tension on the team and allowed for more equal participation and accountability.

- C. Joint progress monitoring – CNP monitoring should be conducted by a diverse and inclusive team to assess progress and decide what adjustments need to be made for the rest of the CNP cycle. In addition to monitoring progress towards the “development” objectives, progress towards improved relations between divided or diverse groups experiencing tensions or conflict should be tracked. This therefore requires that, during the design phase, CNP participants be guided to identify two categories of contextually relevant indicators of progress: (i) indicators that show progress made towards achieving the CNP’s “development” objective, e.g. progress towards completing a community bridge or a water point; and (ii) indicators that show progress towards improving the relationship between the diverse or divided groups that are participating in the CNP (refer to the [Social Cohesion Indicators Bank](#)<sup>7</sup> for illustrative indicators).

Monitoring efforts should also pay attention to any changing dynamics in the context of conflict. This context monitoring should inform any programming decisions made so that CNP processes and activities avoid to unintentionally worsen any existing or emerging undesirable social and conflict dynamics but feed positively into them. CRS’ [mini-Social Cohesion Barometer](#)<sup>8</sup> could be used as a context indicator. Flexible and adaptive management are key in facilitating effective response to changing dynamics, not only to avoid doing harm but to promptly address unpredictable developments in the operating context. For example, the A3B for Land project embraced a flexible and adaptable proactive approach. Through regular monthly meetings, consultations with participants, monitoring and mentoring, A3B for Land was able to address emerging issues and respond to changing conditions in a volatile operating environment through making necessary revisions in the detailed implementation plan (DIP) and adjusting timelines. Another example of a flexible and adaptable approach is presented in Case Example 5 from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

*Monitoring efforts should also pay attention to any changing dynamics in the context of conflict.*



Bosnian Serbs who were imprisoned in camps during the 1992-1995 war in BiH ‘in which 100,000 died’ take part in the second round of CRS BiH’s ‘Choosing Peace Together’. Photo by Sam Tarling for CRS.

7. CRS 2019, Social Cohesion Indicators Bank, Illustrative Indicators to Measure Changes in Social Cohesion, [https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/crs\\_social\\_cohesion\\_indicators\\_bank-1l-websingle\\_1.pdf](https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/crs_social_cohesion_indicators_bank-1l-websingle_1.pdf)
8. CRS 2019, The mini-Social Cohesion Barometer: A Tool to Assess and Strengthen Social Cohesion in Divided Communities, <https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/mini-social-cohesion-barometer>.

## CASE EXAMPLE 5:

### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING AND MONITORING CONTEXT

PRO-Future is a multiyear USAID funded project focusing on promoting peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The project is implemented in a challenging context characterized by an unstable political environment, opposing narratives about the past, divisive ethno-nationalistic rhetoric, persistent war crime denial, a divisive educational system created and used to separate youth along ethnic and religious lines, etc. These contextual issues are potential obstacles for connector activities that intend to involve all actors, ethnic groups, citizens and country leaders. The project has five pillars (areas of work) to address post-conflict issues in BiH society, namely: media; political; war victims; youth, educational and cultural; and religious spheres.

PRO-Future has embraced the Do No Harm principle, relationship building and cooperation with citizens and local leaders, transparent communication, regular monitoring of community context as well as flexibility and adaptive management to facilitate its effective implementation in this challenging context.

The project team has had to keep its eyes and ears on the context. For example, even low-risk events can be perceived as troubling in some sensitive local communities. In the past, the project team aimed to organize a series of cultural activities in Srebrenica as “light” interventions to support the reconciliation process and continue to decrease interethnic intolerance exacerbated by current events such as a January 2019 incident involving primary school students who promoted fascism with reference to the Second World War and the 1990s war. In cooperation with municipal representatives and local NGOs, the first cultural activity to be organized was the performance of the children’s multiethnic choir —“House of Good Tones”— at the Srebrenica Municipal Day Celebration. Even though the day and activity were thoughtfully selected and aimed to be a connector in the local community, the event had to be canceled. Parents of the choir children decided not to support the activity since they were not sure about what the full content of the event would be. Consequently, they considered the activity as a potential risk.

The PRO-Future team did not want to push for the change the community was not ready for. Instead, the team organized a series of visits to local community members to discuss and explore some new ways to promote connecting activities.

**BUY-IN AND SUPPORT FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS:**

Effective implementation of the CNP will require buy-in and support from stakeholders identified to be key in the targeted community. Key stakeholders will vary with context and the type of CNP selected. For instance, the key stakeholders of a CNP focusing on rehabilitating a community bridge may be different from those of a CNP designed to establish an early childhood center, a peace entrepreneurial garden or sports for peace tournament. A stakeholder mapping and analysis, conducted as part of the conflict analysis to inform project design, should be helpful in establishing who the key stakeholders for the CNP are. Key stakeholders may include: the diverse groups or divided groups in the target community; local leadership, e.g., local government authorities, religious and traditional leaders; security officials; project implementing partners; etc. Some elements to consider include:

- A. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** – Securing an MoU or memorandum of agreement is considered good practice in defining the relationship between the key parties involved in the CNP and communicating the mutually accepted expectations, requirements and responsibilities of each. An MoU also expresses the desire and commitment of the key parties to collaborate on a CNP and see it through to completion. To ensure organizational support for the CNPs completed under the A3B for Land project in Mindanao-Philippines, an MoU was signed between the Barangay (village) Local Government Units (BLGU) and CRS’ partner organization for each of the 18 CNPs that were implemented (see Case Example 1). Similarly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, CRS signed MoUs in the context of a shared “Platform for Building Peace” with mayors of local communities to strengthen support for the project, including connector activities.
- B. Contextual considerations in seeking local buy-in and support** – It is recommended that before implementing CNPs, project implementers should ensure they have buy-in and support from key stakeholders because of the important roles and support they are expected to provide to the CNPs. These roles may include mobilizing communities for participation, providing approval before the CNP begins, ensuring security of CNP participants, etc. Buy-in and support are also important to minimize possible harmful actions aimed at sabotaging or undermining peace and social cohesion, especially by spoilers in a setting of tensions and conflict.

Understanding contextual nuances before seeking local buy-in and support is imperative. For instance, while it was important to be assured of the commitment of implementing partners, the CIRCA II project in Niger learnt that it was equally vital to be assured of the commitment of key stakeholders such as religious leaders and local authorities before CNPs implementation began. In the case of Connect for Peace (C4P) project in Liberia, CNPs that were approved for seed grant funding sought support from the community chiefs and elders, rather than from local government. While these chiefs and elders are not officially part of local government, they essentially control the day-to-day running of the community. Based on this understanding, their buy-in was sought by the Hometown Association before submitting the CNP application. For the BOKRA project in Egypt, it was critical to obtain government buy-in and approval for the connector activities before they could commence. Some of the connector activities were postponed pending security clearance.

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*A stakeholder mapping and analysis, conducted as part of the conflict analysis to inform project design, should be helpful in establishing who the key stakeholders for the CNP are.*

### CAPACITY TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT AND MANAGE A CONNECTOR PROJECT LIFE CYCLE PROCESS:

Effort should be made to assess, and where needed, strengthen the capacity of staff, partners and key community participants, e.g., CNP management committees, in connector project life cycle management, from design to evaluation. Emphasis should also be placed on building capacity to facilitate a participatory project life cycle process that is inclusive of the diverse and/or divided groups that the CNP brings together. Experience has shown that this type of capacity may not exist or is inadequate among community level stakeholders expected to design, manage and implement CNPs, despite the depth of local insight they bring.

For example, the Middle East project equipped CRS, partner, and community-based field staff with additional skills needed to facilitate a project design process and manage the implementation of CNPs by youth, such as training on how to develop a budget and activity timeline as well as how to assess risks and mitigation measures. The Connect for Peace (C4P) Project in Liberia found out that the Hometown Associations, selected by the project communities to implement CNPs had limited knowledge of the project life cycle. The Hometown Associations were not registered under the laws of Liberia and they barely had bank accounts and functional secretariats to professionally implement a CNP. Therefore, the C4P project team and partners provided training in project design, management, implementation and reporting and provided CNP templates to ease and guide the process. Similarly, the PRO-Future Project (phase 1) in BiH provided technical peacebuilding knowledge and skills to project partners and community staff. The aim was to equip staff and partners with a sufficient level of knowledge and skills in peacebuilding to facilitate effective implementation of CNPs, such as understanding community dynamics and violence, including structural violence; the 3Bs approach, the DNH principle; and strengthening conflict resolution, mediation and analytical skills.

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*Effort should be made to assess, and where needed, strengthen the capacity of staff, partners and key community participants.*

### EFFECTIVE RESOURCE TRANSFERS WHERE SEED FUNDING IS PROVIDED FOR THE CNP:

Many CRS programs, whether standalone or integrated, budget for CNPs. The mechanisms for availing these funds to CNP implementers have been diverse and depend on the nature and duration of the selected CNP, who is responsible for implementation (local partner, local administration, CBO or association, community group, etc.), contextual considerations such as availability and access to banking services, etc. CRS projects have transferred funding for CNPs in various ways, e.g., through small grants.<sup>9</sup> More details on how some projects handled funding for the CNPs are in Case Example 6.

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9. Many integrated programs may use similar mechanisms (whether by choice, or as dictated by donors). In cases where small grants programs are administered to encourage CNPs, not all the steps in this guidance may apply. Emphasis could be placed on how applicants demonstrate how minimum standards of inclusion and participation will be ensured. Consider which of the earlier advice is most applicable in this scenario, where there may be more emphasis on processes and templates and less emphasis on hands-on accompaniment or even participant selection, management committee formation, etc.



At a torch parade in Zamboanga, people from Mindanao's three major groups - Muslim, indigenous, and Christian - march together for peace. Since the 1970s, regions of Mindanao have been plagued with violence related to land disputes and political power. Thousands have lost family members, homes or livelihoods to the conflict. Catholic Relief Services funds programs like peace camps and workshops to bring people from opposing groups together. During these activities, people share their stories and learn about each other. Photo by Laura Sheahen / CRS.



## CASE EXAMPLE 6:

### HANDLING CONNECTOR PROJECTS SEED FUNDING

**The ProFuture Project (BiH)** – People, groups and organizations in targeted communities apply for small grants under specified categories to implement their reconciliation and peacebuilding ideas. For instance: *Small Grants for Inter-Religious Dialogue*: The activities supported through these grants enable religious leaders to strengthen relationships between each other, organize joint gatherings and visits to places of suffering at a local level. *Small Grants for Municipalities*: Activities financed by these grants include joint commemoration of local sites of shared suffering, as well as cultural and religious activities that create safe spaces to increase trust and share alternative narratives. Grants are led and implemented by local municipal authorities. *Small Grants for Local Initiatives*: This is a flexible funding opportunity for municipalities to conduct local initiatives that support participation from diverse identities and religious backgrounds and strongly promote reconciliation.

**A3B for Land (Mindanao, Philippines)** – The project provided a “Peace Action Fund” for small community-based projects to address community concerns identified by the community members through a participatory process. At an average cost of Php 20,000 (USD 465), the aim of these projects was to prepare the different groups to work with each other first on issues not directly related to the land conflict in order to build trust and improve relationships before undertaking bridging activities related to conflicts in their communities. These projects also involved a collaborative and cost-sharing approach. In at least 10 barangays, the costs of the project exceeded the Php 20,000 provided by CRS and the rest of the complementary amount was provided by the BLGUs. In all these cases, BLGU and the community members provided labor and materials. Funds were channeled to partner organizations who engaged with local government units and community core groups. The local government units also provided counterpart support (in kind and financial) to the CNPs.

**C4P (Liberia)** – Seed funding was provided to Hometown Associations (HAs) and their kinship communities to support their CNPs. A seed grant application was launched and HAs were encouraged to apply for the funding opportunity based on the following criteria: *the CNP operates with clearly defined goals, demonstrates active community involvement and promotes positive peace. Funds were transferred once an HA funding approval form sent by CRS was signed by the Association’s leadership. This form mandated the leadership to authorize a person to receive the funding through cheque on their behalf. Once this happened, the approved form was used to raise the cheque in the name of the authorized person to support CNP implementation.* In some project communities, the chiefs and elders provided in-kind support to the approved project/activity as co-funding, contributing to CRS’ seed grant ceiling of USD 2,000 per CNP.

**CIRCA II (Niger)** – Start-up funds for CNPs were granted to all groups (women and young people) targeted by the project. This amount was already planned for in the project budget, an average of USD 6000 per CNP. Funds for the CNPs were transferred to the implementing partner organization –the Catholic Diocese of Maradi– after submitting a proposal that highlighted the selection process of the participants, capacity building activities to transfer skills to the community and a mechanism to empower the community to sustainably manage the CNP after the end of the project. This involved signing a sub-partner agreement between CRS and the Diocese, followed by a transfer of funds.

**GENDER AND YOUTH CONSIDERATIONS:**

Effective involvement and participation of women and youth, as well as other marginalized and minority groups, in the CNPs requires intentionality in understanding their unique experiences, capacities and challenges and planning interventions informed by this understanding. The gendered conflict analysis conducted to inform the CNP design should be used to shape implementation planning—considering how gender norms (sets of societal and cultural expectations about how women, men, boys and girls should behave) in that context will influence effective involvement and participation of women and men as well as female and male youth in the CNPs. Measures should be put in place to address barriers to the effective participation of women, youth (female and male), marginalized and minority groups in a manner sensitive to people’s traditions, culture and religion, to avoid triggering or exacerbating tensions or conflict. This may include addressing barriers related to traditional / cultural gender norms, limited leadership capacities, consideration of communities’ gendered seasonal and activity calendar when planning activities, etc. See Case Example 7 from Egypt’s BOKRA Project for considerations made to improve youth participation.

**CASE EXAMPLE 7:****EGYPT: MAKING EFFORT TO EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE YOUTH**

In Egypt, the BOKRA Project’s experience indicates that it is imperative to give adequate attention to gender and youth considerations when implementing CNPs. BOKRA experienced delays in implementing some activities due to the unavailability of the youth as sometimes they were busy taking school exams, working outside the villages or because of the holy month of Ramadan or Christian celebrations. To address this, implementing partners developed an activity timeline that avoided scheduling activities during Christian and Muslim celebrations and consulted with youth on its suitability.

Furthermore, in the final quarter of implementation, CRS encountered another challenge which was engaging youth during the outbreak of COVID-19 and the lockdown period. Consequently, all the CNPs preparation meetings were conducted virtually. Once the lockdown was lifted, youth implemented CNPs in response to the pandemic such as sanitizing the most visited public places.

Although the project engaged young women as change agents (in addition to targeting both in-school girls and boys), BOKRA only targeted male youth for CNP activities and missed the opportunity to involve female youth. Reflecting on this gap, the project team recommends engaging both male and female youth in the CNPs to make them gender inclusive.

Finally, community initiatives were an effective tool to build ties between youth and with their communities. These shared actions created a sense of responsibility among youth toward bettering their communities, while also allowing the community to see youth as capable of leading change and not just talking about it.

Similar lessons were learned from CIRCA II in Niger on effective participation of women and youth in CNPs. See details in Case Example 8.



Representatives from ECHO, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, visit the Accelerated Education Program at the Refugee Community School in Cairo. Photo by Karim Nabil for CRS.



In Garin Wanzam village, Niger, people are collecting water that was delivered to the community by Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Local communities and people displaced by Boko Haram violence are drinking the water and also using it to cook and improve sanitation and hygiene. Photo by Michael Stulman / CRS.

## CASE EXAMPLE 8:

### NIGER: CONSIDERATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE WOMEN AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CNPS

CRS Niger, in partnership with the Catholic Diocese of Maradi and the Islamo-Christian Commission, implemented the Capacity for Inter-Religious Community Action (CIRCA II) project in Agadez and Konni. In these communities, there is a relatively peaceful relationship between the Muslim majority and the small Christian minority. However, sporadic violence with religious overtones destabilize relations between religious groups. The effects of Boko Haram's violence further increase tensions. Given this context, CIRCA II employed a preventive approach to conflict. Among other interventions were four CNPs implemented in Agadez and Konni, with women and youth targeted as key participants.

Progressively, the project team noticed the gradual demotivation of young people regarding their involvement in activities. This was because some young people had hoped to gain individually from the project. This led to the departure of some members, necessitating the renewal of the group by replacing those who left with new ones. Unfortunately, these newcomers were not part of the initial basic training that oriented participants on the aims of the project and the role of young people in promoting social cohesion in their communities. This, coupled with irregularity of schooled young people at meetings, created challenges in sustaining the functioning of the groups. During monitoring visits, the implementing partner, the church, and CRS conducted reflection meetings to identify potential solutions to revamp young people's interest and participation. Religious leaders, key stakeholders in the project, were often involved in problem solving, particularly in issues related to young people's groups.

Similarly, women groups initially experienced leadership problems, but this was resolved. A training on team building, guidance on developing a group constitution and rules and regulations for the group was conducted. There was also a problem of management of loan money collected from women's weekly contribution. Indeed, the Muslim women refused the reimbursement with interest in line with Islamic teaching and the CNP therefore focused on sharing profits. A slowdown in activities was as well observed during periods of school vacations since most women went on a trip with their families.



March 15, 2017 - Santa Cruz del Quiché, Guatemala - CRS Livelihoods Manager for the Youth Program Lheslye Pérez Santis (right) greets a staffer from a partner agency at the Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center in Santa Cruz del Quiché. CRS works with the center on the YouthBuild project. Photo by David Snyder / CRS.

# Considerations for Phase-out and Evaluation Phase

This naturally builds on the CNP design phase. Key considerations include: This section focuses on two key considerations: fostering sustainability and joint evaluation of CNPs, as outlined below.

## FOSTERING SUSTAINABILITY OF CONNECTOR PROJECTS:

Depending on the nature of the CNP, plan the sustainability strategy right from the design phase and subsequently develop a sustainability plan through a participatory and inclusive process. This will enable consideration of diverse perspectives and ideas agreeable to all participating groups on how they propose to carry on after close of the project and what needs to be done along the way to ensure that happens. These plans may consider strategies to ensure continued funding and resourcing of CNPs or related activities, e.g., by influencing their inclusion in community development plans and budgets. Where relevant, the project team may also facilitate development of a phase out plan before hand in preparation for handover to ensure continued maintenance and management, for instance in case of community bridges, water points, infrastructure, etc. Some of the ways through which sustainability could be fostered include: enhancing local capacity to equip key stakeholders, partners and community members to sustain action after the project closes; strengthening systems as well as horizontal and vertical networks and collaboration; aiming to cause change at multiple levels — personal, relational and institutional / structural while engaging both “key people” and “more people”; and promoting participatory programming processes deliberately planned to cultivate local ownership.

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*Depending on the nature of the CNP, plan the sustainability strategy right from the design phase and subsequently develop a sustainability plan through a participatory and inclusive process.*

Lessons learned from the C4P project in Liberia indicated that involving kinship communities in the CNP design process from the beginning engenders stronger local commitment and ownership which are necessary for effective management and implementation of CNPs and subsequently sustained impact and continued action. The PRO-Future project in BiH targeted efforts at different levels of change to foster sustainability: capacity building; youth mentorship; and networking and institutional change. In addition, the PRO-Future project ensured sustainability by influencing the adoption of the Platform for Peace at national and local levels and developing action plans jointly with local governments for its funding and implementation.

The A3B for Land project in Mindanao used multiple strategies to promote sustainability of CNPs. The project engaged stakeholders in the early phases of the project cycle to inform development of the sustainability strategy and plan. Participation in these processes was reported to have increased a sense of local ownership and empowered stakeholders to generate creative ideas about how they would continue the work after the project phases out. Stakeholder and community participation in project processes —including participation in decision making and contributing to meet project costs (cash and in-kind)— encouraged local ownership, improved relationships and built community capacity to carry on after the project closed. The A3B project CNPs were officially handed over to the partner

Barangay (village) Local Government Units (BLGUs) and the community. Policies and maintenance plans for each CNP were drafted and agreed by key stakeholders and the BLGU officials to ensure that these projects are properly maintained and sustainably used even after the project closed. These plans outlined how the facility was to be used, who was to be the primary caretaker, how the income generated from its utilization, if any, was to be managed and used.

#### JOINT EVALUATION OF CONNECTOR PROJECTS:

Just like for CNP monitoring, evaluation of CNPs should be conducted by a diverse team that is inclusive of various groups or identities that the CNP aimed to connect. The team should assess achievement of results and outcomes in two areas as envisioned during the CNP design phase: evaluate the extent to which outcomes regarding the “development” objectives of the CNP were achieved as well as the extent to which the CNP contributed to improving relations between divided or diverse groups experiencing tensions or conflict. The evaluation team therefore considers the relevant result / outcome indicators determined at design stage for the above two areas.

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*Evaluation of CNPs should be conducted by a diverse team that is inclusive of various groups or identities that the CNP aimed to connect.*

Taking the example of the A3B project in Mindanao (Case Example 1), the CNPs were evaluated as “relationship connectors.” Their evaluation revealed that there was high appreciation among key stakeholders for the CNPs because they addressed urgent community concerns as well as provided effective platforms for members of various identity groups to interact and build positive relationships.



# Appendix A

TABLE 1 – EXAMPLES OF CRS AND PARTNER CNPs

PROJECT NAME	EXAMPLES OF CONNECTOR PROJECTS (CNPs) IMPLEMENTED
Applying Binding, Bonding and Bridging to Land Conflicts in Mindanao (A3B for Land Project) in Philippines (2012 - 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement of Barangay facilities and structures</li> <li>• Improvement of foot / hanging bridge</li> <li>• Community lighting</li> <li>• Improvement of health facility</li> <li>• Improvement of water access / facility</li> <li>• Sanitation and hygiene</li> </ul>
Advancing Interreligious Peacebuilding (AIP), Bridge in Philippines – Mindanao (2016 - 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garbage composting</li> <li>• Construction of interreligious youth centers</li> <li>• Tree planting</li> <li>• Street lighting</li> <li>• Indigenous traditional clothing</li> </ul>
Building Opportunities for Knowledge and Religious Acceptance (BOKRA) in Egypt (2015-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural activities, theatre performances, arts and sports tournaments by Muslim and Christian youth</li> <li>• Photography workshop for Muslim and Christian youth with post-workshop activities such as documenting a village heritage (Sarsou’ wood production) and photo exhibition</li> <li>• Zero Hunger awareness sessions for children by Muslim and Christian youth</li> <li>• “Free your will” community initiative to address the lack of social participation among Muslims and Christians through a series of activities: interactive theatre, a book club discussion and intergenerational meetings between youth and their fathers</li> </ul>
Capacity for Inter-Religious Community Action (CIRCA II) in Niger and Kenya (2017 - 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table banking (Garissa, Kenya)</li> <li>• Women empowerment project that involves Savings and Lending (Matolani, Kenya)</li> <li>• Income generating activities (Konni and Agadez, Niger)</li> </ul>
Capacity for Inter-Religious Community Action (CIRCA) in Egypt, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda (2013 - 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boreholes for water (Malindi (Kenya); and Kano and Sokoto (Nigeria))</li> <li>• Table banking to support small business initiatives (Konni, Agadez (Niger) and Garissa (Kenya))</li> <li>• Environmental sanitation (Sokoto (Nigeria))</li> <li>• Farming and poultry keeping (Dar es Salaam (Tanzania))</li> <li>• Car wash (Garissa (Kenya))</li> <li>• An early education center (Luxor and Sohag (Egypt))</li> <li>• Honey processing plant (Yumbe (Uganda))</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX

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<p>Commerçantes Solidaires pour la Paix / Région des Grands Lacs (COSOPAX / RGL, Women Cross-Border Traders United for Peace) in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda (2013-2020)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cross-border trade promoting activities among and between participating women</li><li>• Joint trainings, meetings and peace promoting events</li><li>• Saving and lending groups using CRS' Saving and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) model complemented by regular entrepreneurship trainings</li><li>• Production and marketing of fruit juice with a COSOPAX label</li><li>• Baking – doughnuts and cakes</li><li>• Detergent / soap processing and marketing</li><li>• Fabrication of paper bags</li><li>• Basket waiving and selling</li></ul>
<p>Connect for Peace (C4P) in Liberia (2017-2023)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Village women cassava processing (Super gari, Starch, flower for baking and fufu)</li><li>• Roadside brushing connecting disputed communities.</li><li>• Tribal groups communal farming</li><li>• Rehabilitation of Peace Hut</li><li>• Rehabilitation of Community clinic</li><li>• Peace and reconciliation sporting tournament and musical Concert.</li></ul>
<p>PRO-Future in Bosnia and Herzegovina (phase I from 2013-2017 and phase II from 2017-2023)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joint visits to places of suffering</li><li>• Joint public speaking events – story telling by war survivors</li><li>• Peace advocacy camps for youth</li><li>• Cultural and religious activities that create safe spaces to increase trust and shared alternative narratives</li><li>• One-year peace education program in schools</li><li>• Public debates on locally important topics on reconciliation</li></ul>

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