



Leveraging Faith towards Inclusive and Just Societies 2020–2024

PROGRESS REPORT TO NORAD 2020



NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID
actalliance

Cover photo: 2020, the year the world understood the importance of handwashing with soap. NCA and partners conveyed this long before the pandemic hit, in for example Pakistan. Photo: Håvard Bjelland

«This is not a time to dispute the body count and believe that faith alone will prevent and save. This is the time to show that faith is part of taking preventive and responsive actions to protect one another in every corner of our world.»

Joint COVID-19 statement (March 2020) by ACT Alliance and Religions for Peace



COVID-19 efforts in Guatemala.
Photo: Mayra Griselda Pablo Bocel

REFLECTIONS

2020 was the first year for implementing Norwegian Church Aid's new programme framework. In 2020, a new Cooperation Agreement was signed with Norad for the years 2020–2024. Moreover, we continued to work with a range of donors that supported the implementation of our programmes, including the signing of a multiyear (2020–2025) humanitarian Strategic Partnership Agreement with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In our field of work, being prepared for the unexpected is the name of the game. Risk assessment and mitigation is ingrained in all we do. The preparations we had made in our global programme framework and country strategies formed the basis of and strengthened our COVID-19 efforts throughout 2020.

As Climate Resilient Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (CR WASH) is one of NCA's key areas of expertise, the demand for our services was immense. NCA's COVID-19 response, which included preventive and responsive measures, reached more than 2.8 million people in 22 countries.

However, the Pandemic also led to an urgent need to respond to increased risk of Gender-based Violence and the rise of poverty and inequality.

The COVID-19-response has faced hurdles such as travel restrictions, lack of supplies, and health risks. Additionally, many of the countries we work in, were hard hit by many other crises as well, such as armed conflict and extreme weather events. This report shows the importance of building resilience.

Working with local partners is integrated in our work in all countries we operate in. NCA partnered with around 230 local organisations in 2020. Our collaboration with religious- and other civil society actors is the reason why we have succeeded in the response while maintaining operational capacity.

An active member of the ACT Alliance, NCA is proud to be part of the global commitment expressed by the ACT Alliance and Religions for Peace. At the outbreak of the pandemic, they made a statement to influence and change misconceptions about the virus. NCA has, through a collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation initiated in 2020, emphasised the importance of access and equity in the distribution of vaccines.



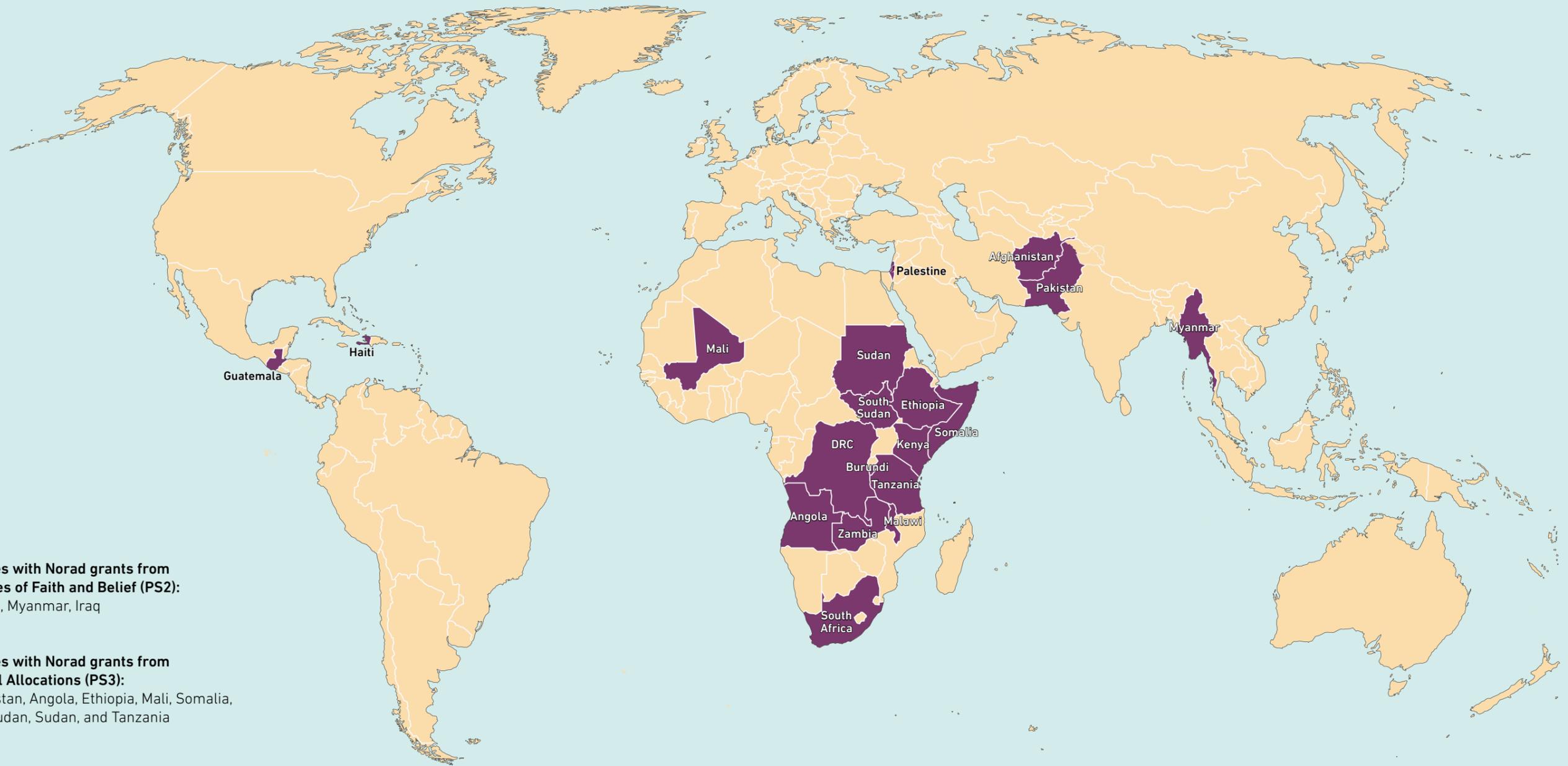
Dagfinn Høybråten
Dagfinn Høybråten

General Secretary

NCA'S NORAD PORTFOLIO COUNTRIES

COUNTRIES WITH FUNDING FROM NORAD CIVIL SOCIETY GRANT (PS1)*

* In addition to these, the civil society grant also funded the Regional Eastern Africa Peacebuilding Programme, the Regional Southern Africa Programme, and the Global Ecumenical Partners.



Countries with Norad grants from Minorities of Faith and Belief (PS2):

Pakistan, Myanmar, Iraq

Countries with Norad grants from Regional Allocations (PS3):

Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Tanzania

Micro investments in smallholder farming yielding abundance.

Photo: NCA Tanzania



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Measures in places of worship to stop the spread of the virus sends important messages, here from Malawi. Photo: Håvard Hovdhaugen.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

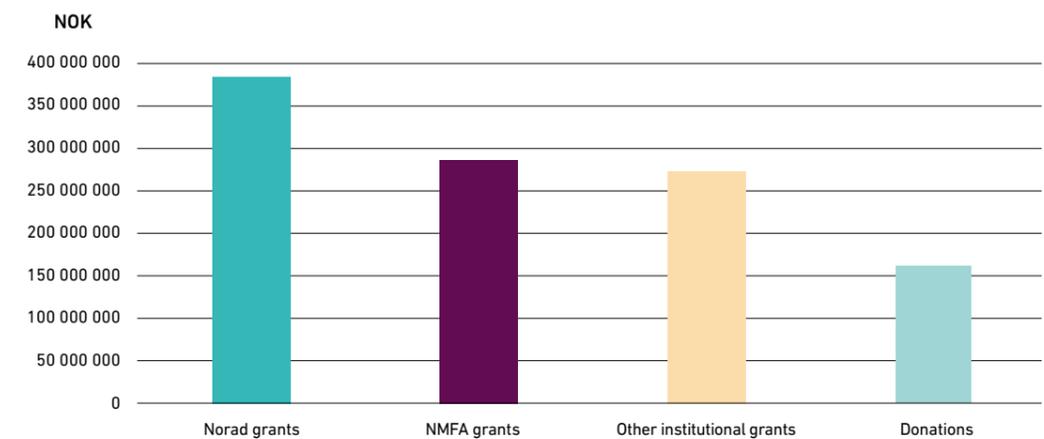
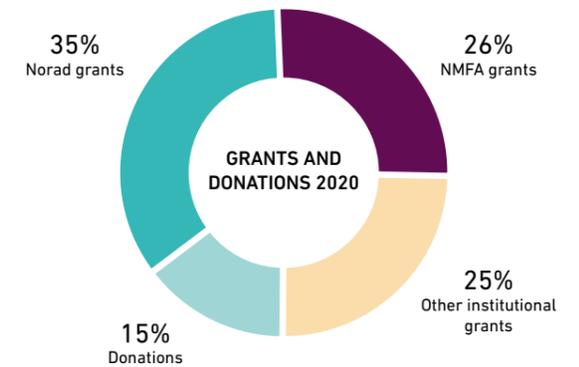
NCA and partners certainly rose to meet the challenges linked to COVID-19. Amid this different year however, NCA and partners still contributed to great results and more empowerment of rights-holders. The signs of progress are visible in every country, a testimony to the tireless engagement of civil society which NCA's faith-based partners form an important part of.

In this report, NCA highlights the main achievements and signs of progress from 2020. Each chapter also shows how implementation was affected, owing to the global pandemic and other factors.

Chapter two reflects on NCA's Theory of Change and gives an account of progress when it comes to NCA's core mandate of working with and strengthening civil society. Strengthening civil society is mainstreamed throughout NCA's Programmes, designed to capture, and give direction to the organisation's diverse partnership approach. The signs of progress documented in this chapter gives an analysis of the change in indicator values as linked to each output in the results framework.

Chapter three provides a thematic dive into each of the Global Programmes and Strategic Initiatives, providing concrete examples of progress towards achieving the long-term outcomes NCA has committed to in the Norad Civil Society grant. The thematic subchapters also reflect on deviations and provide a result case to illustrate specific progress observed in 2020.

OVERVIEW OF INCOME FROM GRANTS AND DONATIONS 2020



Chapter four gives an update to Norad on NCA's initiatives in 2020 towards strengthening the overall programme quality of its deliverables, through important measures such as strengthening methods of collecting data, risk analysis and mitigation, cost-efficiency, and how the Civil Society grant from Norad (PS1) has leveraged funding from other institutional donors. The chapter also provides an update on investments made in 2020 for systems and the organisation, with the aim to deliver better quality and more systematic management of partner portfolio and grants.

NCA's Programme Framework 2020–2030 is guided by the organisation's global strategy, **Faith in Action**¹, and contributes to reaching ambitions mapped out in the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the national strategies and plans in the countries NCA and its partners operate. It also responds to the priorities in ACT Alliance's 2019–2026 global strategy and is informed by lessons and results from NCA's previous framework periods. Everything NCA does is built on the framework, and the ten-year timeframe ensures organisational commitment and predictability for NCA's partners.

The specific results framework for the Norad Civil Society grant (Project Stream 1/PS1) is derived from NCA's Programme Framework, reporting on close to all global outcomes of NCA.

The total volume of the NCA-Norad Cooperation Agreement in 2020 constituted 35% of NCA's total income derived from grants and private donations in 2020. Through this solid commitment, Norad enables NCA and partners to maintain our engagement and make needed investments towards reaching NCA's goals to save lives and seek justice.

¹ <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/contentassets/aa5fdabb9ca418ca60830df9fb36ab9/global-strategy-2019.pdf>

OVERVIEW OF 2020 GRANTS OF THE NCA-NORAD COOPERATION AGREEMENT

NCA-NORAD COOPERATION AGREEMENT (QZA-19/0212) GRANTS	COUNTRY	VALUE OF 2020 GRANT (NOK)
PS 1: Civil Society Grant Chapter 170.70	Global	211 743 600
PS 2: Rights of minorities of faith and belief Chapter 170.70	Myanmar, Iraq and Pakistan	9 635 914
Total Chapter 170.70		221 379 514
PS 3: Regional Allocation for Afghanistan Chapter 159.72		11 000 000
Total Chapter 159.72		11 000 000
PS 3: Regional Allocation for Africa Chapter 159.75	Angola	20 000 000
	Mali	7 300 000
	Ethiopia (with SCN)	16 885 729
	Somalia (with SCN)	15 114 272
	South Sudan	35 000 000
	Sudan	15 000 000
	Tanzania	10 700 000
Total Chapter 159.75		120 000 000
Addendum 1 (COVID-19)	Mali	5 000 000
Chapter 160.70	Sudan	5 000 000
	South Sudan	5 000 000
Total Addendum 1		15 000 000
Addendum 2 (Research)	Ethiopia	765 000
Addendum 3 (COVID-19)	DRC	10 000 000
Addendum 4 (Sudo Civil Society)	Sudan	5 000 000
TOTAL ALL GRANTS IN COOPERATION AGREEMENT 2020		383 144 514

NCA'S 2020 NORAD PORTFOLIO

As the map in the beginning of this report shows, 17 countries contribute to the outcomes defined in the results framework for PS1. In addition to these countries, two regional programmes as well as the Global Ecumenical Partners programme also deliver towards the outcomes.

In addition to the Civil Society grant (PS 1), significant financing of the Cooperation Agreement is also granted from Norad through other project streams and addenda. These are the Minorities of Faith and Belief grants (PS2), Regional Allocations (PS3), and addenda (COVID-19, Ethiopia research grant and grant for Civil Society in Sudan).

Reports on all the additional streams and addenda are submitted separately to Norad, linked to specific results frameworks. Results and figures derived from projects funded through these grants are not included in this report.



With the support from Norad, the dignity of rights-holders is upheld.
Photo: NCA Sudan



Civil Society observes, records, acts for change in Palestine. Photo: B'tselem



CHAPTER 2: STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

GLOBAL GOAL: Civil society actors and space are strengthened to foster human rights and dignity and empower people to participate in the development and implementation of public policies, development plans and humanitarian response.

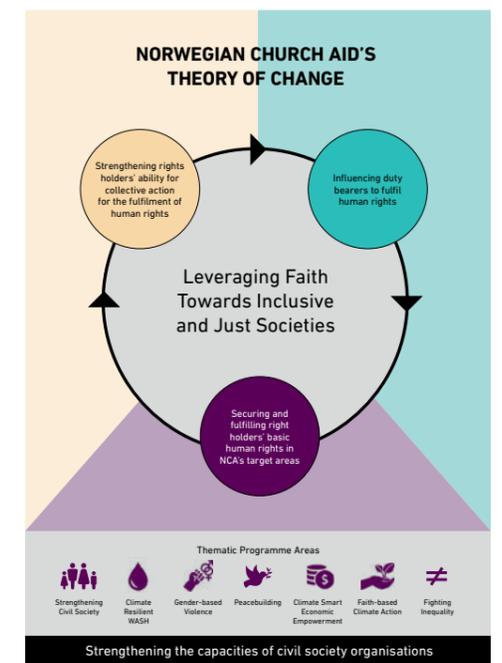
COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTING TO GOAL: Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, DRC, Eastern Africa Regional Peacebuilding Programme, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Malawi, Mali, Palestine, Southern Africa Regional Programme, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, and Global Ecumenical Partners.

NCA'S THEORY OF CHANGE

Civil Society is at the core of NCA's goals to save lives and seek justice. NCA believes that strong civil society actors and an enabling environment for civil society are prerequisites for the development of participatory democracy, accountable governance, and social justice. Contributing to strong and independent civil society is therefore a goal in and of itself for NCA. In this regard, faith-based actors are of particular importance to NCA. Religion continues to play an important role in people's lives, and faith leaders and holy scriptures exert significant authority. Faith communities represent influential constituencies and arenas for change. As an organisation mandated by the Norwegian churches and as a member of the ACT Alliance, it is natural for NCA to prioritise cooperation with faith-based partners.

A particular strength of NCA's work is the ecumenical experience in which different expressions of faith come together to promote inclusiveness and justice. Promoting cooperation and joint advocacy through interfaith networks is a key strategy for NCA in many programmes. In **Pakistan**, for example, different faiths find common ground in addressing climate change and gender injustice, while in **Tanzania** interfaith collaboration is ingrained even at the level of a village community bank. In the **Eastern Africa** Regional Peace Programme, religious dialogue is nurtured across the region to promote peace and justice, as evidenced by the regional faith leader's forum on freedom of religion and belief, organised for the first time in 2020.

NCA plays a key role as facilitator and convenor, linking core partners, especially faith-based organisations, to relevant networks and platforms in the wider civil society, and bringing together stakeholders and partners representing different identity groups (faiths, clans, etc.). The building of collaborative platforms is particularly important, as these arenas bring together significant bargaining power to put pressure on authorities to address rights deficits, and to exert moral direction and guidance against harmful cultural practices and beliefs. This is well illustrated in the result case from **Afghanistan** below, in which religious actors and communities become both agents and arenas for change. As the reporting for 2020 shows, NCA and partners have indeed been able to leverage faith towards justice and inclusive societies.



PROGRESS ON GLOBAL OUTPUTS

GLOBAL OUTPUT 1.1: RIGHTS-HOLDERS ARE MOBILISED FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION ON COMMON INTERESTS

In 2020, approximately 83,500 rights-holders were mobilised for collective action within NCA's Global Programmes and Strategic Initiatives. Overall, the results reported against this indicator surpassed the target for 2020. However, it is worth noting that **Zambia** account for about 44 % of all rights-holders organised, leaving the other countries just short of the target. The results in **Zambia** are attributed to the successful use of local level structures and interfaith committees, such as small-holder farmers, producer groups and social accountability groups. National coverage was earned for efforts by partners during the 16 days of activism campaign, scaling up activities from one to six districts within one year – reaching more than 5,000 people directly. The event was covered by 16 radio stations across the country in addition to newspapers, TV, and social media.

COVID-19 called for improvisation and innovation. In **Southern Africa**, NCA and partners estimate that through the increased use of innovative technology and digital platforms, their advocacy messages reached nearly 360,000 people. In **Angola**, mobilisation was in 2020 done through digital platforms like Zoom, MS Teams and Facebook. Despite these obstacles, and with the support of NCA, 15 civil society organisations (CSO) were able to mobilise in response to the government's decision to endorse the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), advocating for the participation of CSOs in the national EITI committee. As a result, their representation is now secured and governed through nominations and consensus, and no longer just by government discretion.

GLOBAL OUTPUT 2.1: DUTY-BEARERS ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE BY CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

A wide array of advocacy initiatives was conducted in 2020, ranging from local, to national and regional. Important milestones were reached lobbying mining companies to respect the rights of local communities, as described in the Fighting Inequality (FI) sub-chapter. In **Botswana**, persistence finally paid off as the top executives of the Debswana and Lucara mines faced local stakeholders in the Botswana Alternative Mining Indaba for the first time, having refused to do so for seven years. In **South Africa**, after several years of negotiations, Bench-Marks Foundation was able to initiate an agreement with mining company Durban Rooderport Deep (DRD) regarding a rehabilitation plan for the severely affected community of Riverlea. In **DRC**, the President of the Provincial Assembly of South Kivu instructed the Administrative and Legal Policy Commission to draft regulatory texts relating to community development and mining. NCA's partner BEST, organised working sessions with the Office of the Provincial Assembly of South Kivu for the presentation and submission of draft regulatory texts on community development and mining crafts. The texts are currently considered by the provincial assembly for final approval.

As a result of mobilisation by partners in **Mali** and **Ethiopia**, important milestones were reached as authorities signed conventions and laws curbing child marriage, as described in the GBV sub-chapter.

In **Palestine**, due to travel restrictions and absence of ecumenical accompaniers on site; the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) decided to increase its advocacy efforts carrying out 373 mainly virtual advocacy activities (37 of these attributed to Norad's support). Through these advocacy efforts, EAPPI was able to show the international community how the Israeli government's policies for Palestinian territories impact on the ground.

Globally, 294 advocacy initiatives were organised, more than three times the set target. While they all demonstrate important developments towards change, there are relatively few documented examples of advocacy initiatives that have led to definite changes in laws and policies on provincial or national level. Being the first year of implementation however, this was not expected.

GLOBAL OUTPUT 3.1: UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS ARE EMPOWERED TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING

Strategic efforts to increase the participation of under-represented groups¹ in decision-making is ongoing. In 2020, despite the challenges caused by COVID-19, about 8,400 rights-holders were empowered to participate in decision-making, well beyond the target of 5,000. The main arena for decision-making is within various groups, committees, and associations engaged through NCA's programmes. In **Guatemala**, 588 men and women (48%) assumed roles in managing entities. Young Indigenous men, however, are still lacking access to decision-making arenas. In **Pakistan**, 28 Community Peace Groups formed under NCA's Peacebuilding programme including 171 representatives from religious minorities. Efforts of local partners also contributed to empowering

marginalised groups to actively represent and participate in many policy processes initiated by the government. As a result of these advocacy initiatives, the Punjab Government announced a two percent education quota for minority students in higher education. Minority representatives were also appointed to participate in forums for legislation on family laws in Punjab and Sindh.

Strategic attempts to increase youth participation were also made in 2020. In **Malawi**, Youth and Society CSO engaged several ministries and key stakeholders, advocating for changes to the Amendment Bill of the National Youth Policy. The bill in its current form is not inclusive enough to facilitate youth participation in decision-making. In **Southern Africa**, the increase in use of digital platforms with a youth appeal, such as Twitter, Facebook, and blogs, led to a surge in overall youth outreach and mobilisation.

GLOBAL OUTPUT 4.1: MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORMS ARE BUILT TO WORK TOGETHER FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Building alliances and platforms between various actors is a key strategy for NCA. In line with NCA's theory of change, establishing these platforms is therefore a goal, as well as a precondition for proactive civic engagement. In total, 198 collaborative spaces for various purposes were set up in 2020. For example, in **South Sudan**, NCA engaged with Union of Munyumiji, a traditional age set group with influence on government and civil society. The group compliments government efforts in community safety and peacebuilding efforts. NCA's partner South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) made advocacy efforts at monitoring the implementation of the revitalised peace agreement. In **DRC**, nine collaborative spaces were established in South Kivu, aimed at facilitating exchanges between faith-based and secular women's groups, between community leaders and women's groups, and between youth and community leaders on issues such as the right of access to services, governance, and good management of resources. In **Afghanistan**, collaborative platforms between religious actors and community elders conducted 57 advocacy meetings with the department of religious and Hajj affairs to promote social cohesion (see result case).

NCA and partners were also able to establish innovative platforms to address the pandemic. In **Zimbabwe**, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) created provincial WhatsApp groups for pastors and lay leaders, facilitating sharing of information and updates enabling ZCC to remain in close contact with stakeholders and congregations. 25 key COVID-19 messages were shared through these groups in eleven local languages.

GLOBAL OUTPUT 5.1: INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF PARTNERS ARE STRENGTHENED

NCA assesses all its partners at specific intervals, to identify gaps and develop plans to address them. In 2020, NCA introduced a new partnership assessment tool (PAT) for this purpose. By the end of the year, approximately 30% of NCA's partners had been assessed using this tool. The institutional capacity of 32 partners were strengthened in 2020, which represents less than 34 % of the target. The deviation is mainly due to COVID-19, which restricted movement and the the ability to meet.

In **South Sudan**, NCA carried out institutional and organisational capacity assessments early in 2020 of 17 partners. Capacity development plans were developed, but due to COVID-19, the roll-out was disrupted. However, in **Burundi**, NCA was able to train four out of the five targeted partners in results-based planning and management increasing their capacity in budgeting and planning, while in **Tanzania** all partners received risk management training. One partner, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania – Northern Diocese, proceeded to introduce whistle-blowing policies and risk management matrices in all the economic centres of the diocese.

¹ 'Underrepresented groups' refer to a category of people who experience relative disadvantage as compared to members of a dominant social/economic/religious group. In many instances, underrepresented groups are a demographic minority, but in others a demographic majority may also be in a relatively disadvantaged position. It is important to recognize that an individual may simultaneously identify with multiple minority groups (e.g. both an ethnic and religious minority). Likewise, individuals may also be part of a minority group with regards to some characteristics, but part of a dominant group with regards to others.

While NCA and partners have taken big strides in making use of digital technology in 2020, the lack of digital infrastructure and technical know-how, coupled with unstable internet and high costs of equipment, has been a challenge for those partners with fewer resources available to them.

Based on an overall analysis, notable capacity gaps among partners are in the following areas:

1. Financial management and procurement: Most frequently noted as need for capacity development, and a reflection of the strong emphasis placed on compliance.
2. Project monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER): This relates particularly to the quality and timeliness of reporting, and in general to project cycle management.
3. Human resources and staffing: Covered here are recruitment, Code of Conduct, staff competency, understaffing, high turnover of staff, etc. A common obstacle is the “brain drain”, with partners struggling to keep key staff once they have received training.

DEVIATIONS

COVID-19 is the main cause of deviations and delays in 2020, with the usual modes of working often disrupted, and restrictions placed on movements and gatherings. The area of the work that was most negatively affected by the pandemic was the follow-up of partners, monitoring, and capacity development. These activities require travel and physical meetings. COVID-19 also impacted work in **Palestine** in a negative way as it was not possible to host delegations of third-party state parliamentarians to hold Israel accountable for its actions and violations of International Humanitarian Law.

Locally-based groups and committees however were less affected than anticipated, and in most countries they have been able to meet and operate despite disruptions. In fact, results surpassed targets for all outputs except output 5.1. While this is certainly testimony to the endurance and proactiveness of NCA and its partners in a difficult situation, it may also indicate an over-cautious approach in setting targets in the first place. Another plausible explanation for the over-achievements is that more rights-holders were reached using digital platforms and media. This may have widened the audience, but it is a challenge to analyse the reach on a qualitative basis.

RESULT CASE: CHANGING NEGATIVE CULTURAL NORMS IN AFGHANISTAN

WHAT: Faith actors and community elders mobilised to ban harmful cultural practices.

WHY: NCA and partners have over the years noted several negative impacts of traditional cultural norms in Afghanistan. In many communities, traditional practices such as forced marriage is regarded as culturally appropriate and thus legitimised. Another example is the practice of *baad*, the handing over of girls to settle disputes and restore the honour of families. Common challenges are exuberant celebrations in relation to passage rites (births, weddings, and funerals) and the rite of welcoming of Hajj pilgrims, which families are expected to contribute to. Such events place considerable financial strains on the poor. Villagers often take up loans at high interest rates. To pay their debts, some are even forced to sell land or migrate illegally. Community members who cannot live up to the social expectation face discrimination and exclusion.

HOW: NCA and partners facilitated the establishment of 16 community groups consisting of locally-recognised religious scholars and community elders. They received training on social cohesion, human rights, and advocacy, so they were able to identify and address main challenges and causes of social disharmony, discrimination, exclusion, and conflict in their communities. Through the groups, the partners succeeded in mobilising religious actors and community elders to take joint steps towards changing harmful cultural norms. At conferences and cultural events, religious actors and community elders discussed, suggested solutions, and agreed on how to transform harmful cultural norms in their communities and larger society. Religious actors and community elders in each of the 47 communities of two provinces committed to at least one of the following resolutions:

1. *If a man engages or marries a woman without her consent, even if she has reached the legal minimum age of marriage – he shall, depending on the circumstances, be reported to the authorities for legal prosecution in accordance with Afghan law.*
2. *If a man offers or accepts a woman in marriage in retribution for a *baad*, he shall, depending on the circumstances, be reported to the authorities for legal prosecution in accordance with Afghan law.*
3. *The observed days of mourning for the passing of a person is reduced from three to one.*
4. *Parties to welcome Hajj pilgrims are reduced from three days to one day. Very costly Hajj parties should not be allowed.*
5. *Celebrations for birth of a child should be kept at minimal cost, without the use of fireworks.*

Being passed by religious scholars and community leaders, these resolutions carry significant authority. Violating provisions within these is regarded as standing against community norms and rules.

This case illustrates the effectiveness of working with religious actors to address injustice and foster greater cultural acceptance to reinforce progressive legislation.



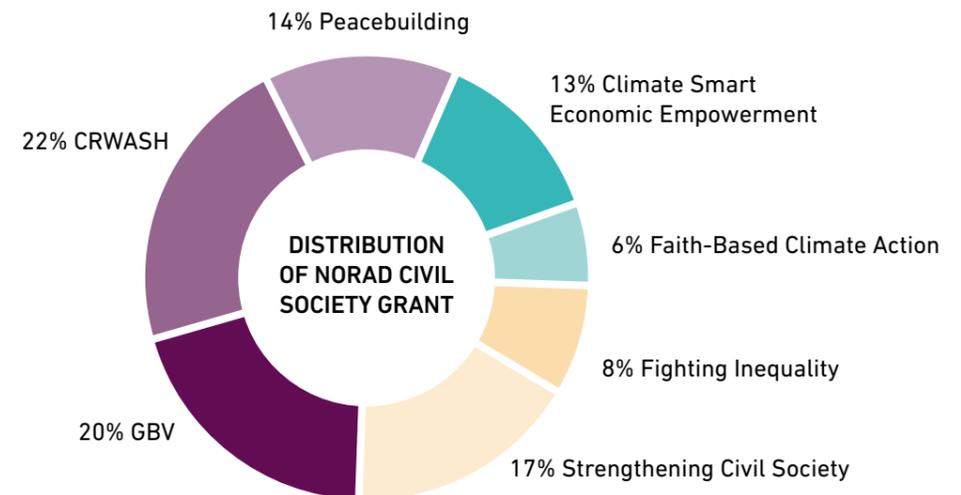
Members of community group in Sangtakht pass a resolution to ban harmful social practices. Photo: NCA Afghanistan



Drive for distribution of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) kits for adolescent girls in Ethiopia. Photo: NCA Ethiopia

CHAPTER 3: NCA'S GLOBAL PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The six thematic areas included in the NCA Programme Framework are all contained in the Civil Society grant from Norad (PS 1). They are Gender-based Violence (GBV); Climate Resilient Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (CRWASH); Peacebuilding (PB); Faith-based Climate Action (FBCA); Climate Smart Economic Empowerment (CSEE) and Fighting Inequality (FI) .



DISTRIBUTION OF NORAD CIVIL SOCIETY GRANT TO NCA'S GLOBAL PROGRAMMES TO NCA'S GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

Each Global Programme and Strategic Initiative has defined a global goal, exhibited in this figure.

Global Programme			Strategic Initiative		
GBV	CR WASH	PB	CSEE	FBCA	FI
Women and girls live empowered lives free from gender-based violence	People live in healthy and resilient communities by accessing equitable water, sanitation and hygiene services in an informed and sustainable manner	Societies are more inclusive, cohesive and peaceful	Enable people to climb out of poverty and build communities' resilience	Faith actors take action on climate change	Fair and equitable finance and redistribution of resources

The range of NCA's Global Programmes and Strategic Initiatives reflects the varying needs of the rights-holders and civil society where NCA and partners operate, and the in-house expertise NCA has built up over the past years. Each thematic area also holds a different but equal level of importance in the contexts NCA works. The documentation of results achieved in 2020 follows in the next pages. As seen in the table above, the three global programmes and Strengthening Civil Society comprised the greatest volume of the Civil Society grant from Norad in 2020.

SAY NO TO
EARLY MARIAGES



Young girl in Malawi standing up for her rights.
Photo: Håvard Bjelland



3.1 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

OVERALL GOAL: Women and girls live empowered lives free from gender-based violence.

COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTING TO GOAL: DRC, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, Zambia, and Global Ecumenical Partners.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in the world today. It knows no social, economic, or national boundaries, and increases drastically especially during conflict and crisis. All forms of gender-based violence (GBV) undermine the health, dignity, security, and autonomy of its survivors, yet it remains wrapped in a culture of silence. It is estimated that 35% of all women worldwide will experience physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime. One in three girls aged 15 to 19 have been subjected to female genital mutilation/cutting (FGMC), with prevalence rates ranging much higher in some countries NCA works in (such as **Somalia**, with a 98% prevalence rate). Access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents is important for the protection of their health and ability to plan their lives. One in five girls worldwide is married before the age of 18, exposing them for many risks. More than 20 million girls and young women aged 15–19 have an unmet need for contraception.

The ecumenical movement has expressed concern that the pandemic has contributed to an increase in GBV, especially during lockdowns. ACT Alliance has labelled this "the Other Pandemic", as home is not a safe place and pressures on families increase with dwindling income causing food shortage.

The programme addresses dominant norms regarding gender roles and the acceptability of violence on all levels, from individual and interpersonal, to community, and institutional, through policies and laws. NCA's GBV programme combines prevention and response, ensuring links with sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

«There is no space for gender-based violence ever to be acceptable or accepted, or indeed for it be condoned through our silences. The more faith communities remain silent, the more we are culpable. I would love to see – and I am committed to ensuring – that faith communities around the world, women and men, young and older, are committed to stand in solidarity against gender-based violence»

Prof. Dr Azza Karam, the Secretary General of Religions for Peace and World Council of Churches' Thursdays in Black ambassador

PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

OUTCOME 1: DOMINANT NORMS TRANSFORMED TO PROTECT GIRLS AND WOMEN FROM VIOLENCE AND HARMFUL PRACTICES

Actions under this outcome require community mobilisation and physical meetings, challenged by the pandemic due to restrictions on movement and contact. NCA and partners were able to make good progress in 2020 despite the obstacles. Communities and relevant stakeholders were mobilised to continue conversations to identify harmful practices that lead to gender injustice and GBV. To contribute to changing dominant norms that perpetuate GBV, an estimated 161,800 women and men participated in community conversations in **DRC, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and Zambia**.

In **Malawi**, NCA and partners conducted training to strengthen the capacity of 24 faith- and traditional leaders, focusing on how to apply rights-based approaches to end all forms of GBV. These 24 in turn reached more than 3,500 with various messages on its harmful consequences. An estimated 4,130 youth participated in community dialogue and conversations on GBV prevention and gained awareness of available services for survivors.

In **Ethiopia**, two advocacy initiatives by faith-leaders ignited processes in the Afar and Somali regional states for the adoption of a family law to define the legal age for marriage to be 18 years.

In **Sudan**, NCA and partners conducted community mobilisation meetings in coordination with the Ministry of Social Development. Community-based protection networks were formed in three locations, each consisting of 60 community members. Selected members include teachers, midwives, activists, and other community leaders actively advocating for rights and development. These groups form the backbone of community conversations to change norms to end GBV.

The Thursdays in Black campaign of the World Council of Churches (WCC) is a **global** effort to transform dominant norms to protect women and girls from violence. A collective call for a world without rape and violence, it engages ambassadors to spread the message. In 2020 new ambassadors were selected from the wider faith community, bringing strong statements (see box). Webinars and conversations were further hosted by the ACT Alliance addressing the concern over increases in GBV because of COVID-19 lockdowns.

2020 also saw the development of a **global** *Faith Actors Motivating (Women's) Empowerment* toolkit. This toolkit, developed by NCA with input from WCC and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) among others, is a practical guide for faith actors supporting GBV survivors, and to foster engagement to change norms that uphold GBV.

OUTCOME 2: WOMEN AND GIRLS AT RISK OF VIOLENCE AND SURVIVORS' ACCESSED LIFE-SAVING AND SPECIALISED GBV SERVICES

In 2020 15,390 women, men, girls, and boys accessed various GBV services in **DRC, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and Zambia**.

In **Somalia**, 615 women and girls were supported to access mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS) and medical assistance. To ensure a fully functioning referral system, service mapping was conducted so people in targeted communities received correct information on how and where to access services. NCA and partners are always conscious that quality of services is essential to ensuring GBV survivors are well taken care of. To this end, ten health workers were trained on clinical management of rape. Similarly in DRC, NCA and partners provided 3,475 GBV survivors access to adequate and appropriate medical, psychosocial, and legal services, plus economic reintegration support and referrals.

In Zambia, 3,827 GBV survivors (including 542 men) accessed medical, psychosocial, and legal services provided from 12 One Stop Centres (OSCs) supported by NCA. To strengthen the capacity of staff at the OSCs, 18 men and 12 women took part in a Training of Trainers (ToT) process, focusing on service provision to GBV survivors. These trained men and women travelled to all the OSCs and taught an additional 76 service providers. It is expected that this will further improve services.

OUTCOME 3: WOMEN AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS ARE EMPOWERED TO LEAD, BUILD SELF-ESTEEM AND REALISE THEIR RIGHTS

In 2020, NCA and partners made progress when it comes to empowering women and adolescent girls to take lead, increase their self-esteem, and realise their rights. An estimated 13,212 women and girls were reached with interventions intended at strengthening women and girls' agency in **DRC, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and Zambia**. An effective element was training, which in 2020 contributed to increase women's business skills, awareness, and knowledge. Such training was conducted for 351 rights-holders in **Guatemala, Malawi, and Sudan**.

Harmful social and cultural norms hinder empowerment of women and adolescent girls. To counter this, NCA facilitated community mobilisation with various stakeholders to promote gender equality and women's meaningful and inclusive participation. In **Zambia** and **Somalia** at least 4,600 rights-holders were reached. NCA's global ecumenical partner The World YWCA adapted advocacy initiatives applying podcasts and social media campaigns for the Week without Violence and Geneva Peace Week. Young women of NCA's network were part of the #YoungWomenLeaders panel on domestic violence and the podcast on GBV in post-conflict and conflict settings.

OUTCOME 4: WOMEN AND ADOLESCENTS ACCESSED COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND MODERN FAMILY PLANNING

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and family planning is still controversial. NCA has in 2020 worked systematically to integrate CSE in curriculums and education policies. Ensuring adolescent access to family planning services was also stressed. In 2020, nearly 30,000 people were reached with information related to CSE and modern family planning in **Malawi, Zambia, DRC, Mali, and Ethiopia**.

In **Malawi**, close to 20,000 youth (10% young men) accessed CSE and family planning services in 2020. These services were provided to secure adolescents' right to survive, grow, and develop. This is impressive, since schools were closed due to COVID-19, which affected interventions targeting adolescent girls. The lockdown however resulted in an increase in teen pregnancies and early marriages. It is foreseen thus that the gains made in education for girls will regrettably be reversed.

In **Zambia**, 392 teachers were trained in how to convey CSE to children and youth. As a result of NCA and partners' engagement, a total of 3,800 school children (50/50 boys and girls) were trained as CSE peer educators. They reached more than 5,000 children through outreach activities raising awareness on GBV and promoting Childline and Lifeline toll-free numbers. One hundred boys were engaged through training in transformative masculinity, further reaching an impressive 3,000 boys.

NCA developed a global toolkit for facilitators of CSE, especially designed to use with adolescents and young people. Tested in **Malawi** in 2020, the toolkit will be rolled-out globally in 2021. Similarly, the development of a global family planning toolkit began in 2020, to be applied in 2021.

DEVIATIONS

The main deviation in 2020 was the restrictions enforced due to COVID-19. GBV prevention messaging was done using social media, radio, billboards, and TV. In Ethiopia, Orthodox and Evangelical TV-stations conducted panel debates and roleplays on negative social norms, conveying messages of the harmful effects of CEFM and FGM. Awareness-raising on GBV was done concurrently with COVID-19 prevention efforts. GBV survivors were contacted over the phone and digital platforms. Contact with community groups was reduced to one representative and groups were reduced in size in order for them to meet.

RESULT CASE: GOOD PROGRESS TOWARDS A LIFE FREE FROM HARMFUL PRACTICES IN MALI

WHAT: Working closely with local partners and engaging religious leaders give confidence to NCA that it is possible to work towards ending all forms of GBV. Dialogue meetings engaged more than 10,000 community members and resulted in important commitments by authorities. Engaging people at various levels in target locations show signs of increasing respect for women's rights.

WHY: Poverty, low status in society, and social norms bestow on girls the primary roles of being a wife, mother, and homemaker. Marriage and family are regarded as sites of protection from sexual promiscuity, but also a way to control girls' sexuality. Child marriages are common, sometimes with young girls married off to provide financial security for the family. Girls married early seldomly return to finish school. According to UNICEF and UNFPA, the prevalence of child marriage in Mali is as high as 52%. Nine in ten women between 15-49 in Mali have undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a practice involving partial or total removal of external genitalia or performing other injury to genital organs for non-medical reasons.

HOW: As part of the 16-days of activism against GBV, two conferences were held in the Gao and Menaka regions of Mali. The events focused on addressing the root causes of GBV, and of child, early and forced marriages (CEFM). Simultaneously, 22 community dialogue sessions were held in the regions of Mopti, Kidal, Gao and Menaka. These gathered a total of 10,275 women, men, girls, and boys to discuss: The legal age of marriage; Causes of child marriage; Social- and health-related consequences of girls married early; Local solutions to combat CEFM; and What Islam teaches about child marriage. In-depth discussions were held to find local solutions to the challenges.

Religious leaders prepared sermons and sessions highlighting the religious interpretations and understanding of the concept of GBV and how to view the participation of women in decision-making processes in the context of religion. Community leaders had conversations with community groups on how to monitor commitments made to abandon CEFM and other harmful practices.

As a result of these efforts, three conventions on the protection of girls from child marriage were signed in the relevant municipalities. Authorities in Mopti also made a commitment to abandon the practice. Communities and their leaders renewed their decision to comply with the commitments.



*Women review their action plans at the Bagoundié Reflect Centre in Gao, Mali.
Photo: GREFFA*



Women taking lead in ensuring sustainable life-giving water. Photo: Håvard Bjelland



PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, safe hygiene practices and clean living environments are essential not only for good health but also for living a life with dignity. Where these pre-conditions are not fulfilled, WASH-related diseases are common and a major cause of death in children under five. A lack of these essential services has a negative influence on children's nutritional status and education. Another stressor besides deprivation of WASH services, faced by more than two billion people in 2017, is the risk of reduced access to safe water due to climate change effects caused by prolonged and more intense droughts and floods.

Evidence shows that poorer households tend to spend more on WASH services than those with access to more resources. The services they acquire are thus often of poor quality. Access to WASH services is highly dependent on whether the household is in a rural, urban, or peri-urban informal settlement. In many countries there are stark inequalities between different regions. Those living in fragile environments are twice as likely to lack basic sanitation and four times as likely to lack basic drinking water services as those living in non-fragile environments. Water scarcity is often the result of political processes and institutions disfavouring the poor and marginalised.

Women and adolescent girls carry the burden of fetching water, exposing them to risks and robbing them of opportunities for education. They face challenges related to managing their menstruation, including stigmatisation, lack of privacy, and appropriate materials.

PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

OUTCOME 1: PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN AND INFLUENCE DECISION MAKING ABOUT ALL WASH SERVICES THAT AFFECT THEM

Community mobilisation and participation in decision-making is an essential part of how CRWASH interventions are implemented. All NCA programme countries have applied methods and tools enabling communities to have dialogue with authorities and to build their capacity to plan, implement and manage WASH services in their communities. In **Mali**, 16 initiatives of consultations between authorities and communities were facilitated by NCA and partners around 19 planned climate resilient water supply schemes. Authorities and community representatives elaborated a joint plan, which addresses water and sanitation needs of the communities. This process resulted in the facilitation of water committees, later followed up by relevant authorities. The water committees, 88% of them led by women, mobilised 402 mainly female community members. They fundraised for water infrastructure, and a quarter of the communities committed to contribute at least ten percent of the cost. All committees succeeded in creating operations- and maintenance funds. NCA also constructed 17 water supply schemes, several with solar pumping systems.

3.2 CLIMATE RESILIENT WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (CR WASH)

OVERALL GOAL: People live in healthy and resilient communities by accessing equitable water, sanitation, and hygiene services in an informed and sustainable manner.

COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTING TO GOAL: Haiti, Mali, Somalia, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

OUTCOME 2: PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO PREPARE AND RESPOND TO CLIMATE-RELATED HAZARDS AND NATURAL DISASTERS AFFECTING WASH SERVICES

A prerequisite for sustainable WASH services and healthy communities is ensuring that water resources, sanitation infrastructure and services are climate- and disaster resilient. As a result of NCA and partners efforts in 2020, a total of 105 communities are better prepared to meet climate-related disasters and can adapt for example water resources to a changing climate. Progress was made towards mainstreaming climate resilience into WASH infrastructure and services. Consequently, activities were directed to prevent, mitigate negative effects on services and communities, and to adapt to impacts of climate change. Examples include community-based vulnerability and capacity assessments, contingency planning, facilitation of task management committees, water safety planning, watershed management activities, reduction of carbon emissions by solarisation of water pumping systems, tree planting and improved cooking facilities.

In **Pakistan**, 71 communities were reached with capacity building on how to strengthen resilience and improve their disaster response. This was a great achievement in a challenging year, compared to the planned outreach to 50 communities. For example, in Mirpurkhas (Sindh province), a flood response duly incorporated elements of disaster resilient sanitation and water supply structures and contributed to strengthen the capacity of local communities to operate and maintain facilities.

Another example is the planting of 2,100 trees in support of the Government's Clean Green Pakistan Campaign. In Swat (KP province), trees were planted in the upper parts of the watershed of the landslide-prone areas of Saidu Sharif, in collaboration with the Forest Department. In the water-scarce region of Sanghar (Sindh province), communities planted 3,400 drought-resistant saplings. Additionally, NCA's partner Research and Development Foundation (RDF) introduced fuel-efficient stoves aiming at reducing wood used for cooking and improve indoor air quality. As a result, fewer trees were cut down, and children are less exposed to health hazards from smoke.

OUTCOME 3: PEOPLE PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE MEASURES TO PROTECTION AGAINST KEY PUBLIC AND PERSONAL HEALTH RISKS

Handwashing with soap (HWWS) has been recognised as one of the most effective hygiene measures that can interrupt the spread of bacteria or virus, and is at the core of NCA's focus on hygiene in the CRWASH programme. Barring disease transmission through improved use of toilets and safe water chains is crucial to improved health and hygiene. NCA's ambition is to bring life-long hygiene behaviour change.

In **Afghanistan**, NCA and partners reached communities with hygiene behaviour interventions applying a nutrition-sensitive approach with a menstrual-health component. In 2020, pregnant and lactating mothers were reached with awareness related to malnutrition and community disease prevention. Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) sessions were conducted for 9,076 women to increase their knowledge regarding nutrition, personal- and menstrual health. To address the challenge of access to soap used for handwashing, exacerbated as a result of reduced affordability due to COVID-19, NCA provided WASH assistance under the umbrella of Afghanistan's WASH Cluster Kit strategy response. More than 7,700 family hygiene kits were distributed, reaching close to 50,000 men, women, and youth. About 30,000 persons received hygiene training focusing on HWWS to prevent and mitigate the spread of the Corona virus. The overall analysis indicates that 50% now wash their hands with soap.

OUTCOME 4: PEOPLE ACCESSED SUSTAINABLE, ADEQUATE AND EQUITABLE BASIC SANITATION SERVICES

In 2020, NCA and partners provided 41,954 rights-holders with access to basic sanitation facilities.

Access to sanitation services is essential for sustaining a clean environment, reducing the sources of disease, the risk of transmission, and upholding the dignity of users. All countries over-achieved their

targets in 2020. The Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) method was applied to motivate targeted households to construct and use their own toilet, instead of practicing open defecation.

In **Haiti**, a two-pronged strategy of CLTS and school-focused intervention was applied. During 2020, NCA's partners supplied two schools with WASH facilities designed to be gender-sensitive and inclusive. The sanitary blocks, handwashing stations and water points included ramps and other tools to welcome people living with disabilities. Eight out of every ten girls and women confirmed that the sanitation package reflected their needs. To help families gain access to sanitation services in their own homes, CLTS mobilisation sessions were carried out reaching 2,773 women and men who in turn constructed their own toilets. In **Afghanistan**, private businesses were strengthened through the local procurement of materials for constructing sanitation facilities.

OUTCOME 5: PEOPLE ACCESSED SUSTAINABLE, SAFE AND AFFORDABLE BASIC DRINKING WATER SUPPLY SERVICES

In 2020, NCA and partners provided access to basic water services for a total of 90,115 women, men, boys and girls. In the fragile context of **Somalia**, a solar-powered water supply scheme was constructed. Additionally, one water supply system was expanded and five rainwater harvesting systems were recovered. Water collection points were constructed near the target communities, the distance to a safe water source reduced from three kilometres or more to 500 metres. Rights-holders can now access 20 litres of potable water per person per day.

In **Ethiopia**, NCA and partners strengthened and supported communities and elaborated 16 water supply schemes. In total 15,738 rights-holders gained access to basic drinking water services in their villages. All water points were adapted to people living with disabilities.

DEVIATIONS

Deviations were to a large degree linked to COVID-19. All countries put an even greater emphasis on prevention measures, such as distribution of hygiene kits with soap. In **Afghanistan**, these kits were provided to vulnerable families, because both affordability and availability of soap were challenges in many remote areas. To prevent the spread of the virus, efforts towards changing hygiene behaviour were increased. This included awareness-raising during hygiene sessions, with information about the virus and necessary protection measures.

Several restrictions were put in place as COVID-19 affecting how planned activities were implemented, supervised, and monitored. Unable to travel to sites, remote monitoring tools and digital solutions were applied, such as MS Teams, Zoom, Whats App, Telegram, SMS, and Kobo data collect for communication, supervision, and sensitisation of rights-holders. Meetings, mobilisation, and training-sessions were on occasion cancelled, or attendance severely reduced to comply with safety regulations, for example in **Haiti**. In **Ethiopia**, a training for underrepresented groups' participation in decision-making planned for 150 participants was moved to the end of 2020, and 123 men and women were in fact trained. Targets were sometimes reduced, such as in **Afghanistan** where 14 of the planned 19 water supply schemes were implemented.

In **Haiti**, programme implementation was hampered not only by the pandemic, but also by political and civil unrest that shook the country in 2020.

RESULT CASE: CRWASH INTERVENTIONS ENGAGE YOUTH IN BUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY IN ETHIOPIA

WHAT: In Ethiopia, NCA's CRWASH programme is well integrated with Gender-based Violence and Faith-based Climate Action, which has led to a strong contribution to strengthening civil society.

WHY: Providing essential WASH services, can often be regarded as technical support filling a gap where other duty-bearers have failed to deliver to the rights-holders. NCA and partners in Ethiopia has a different view. Through the various CRWASH interventions the focus has been on how the programme can contribute to strengthen civil society. NCA and partners chose to engage youth and local communities through practical tasks and advocacy engagement, which has fostered change beyond the mere human right to water and sanitation.

HOW: In one year alone, more than 400 mobilisations for collective action on common interests were facilitated by NCA's local partners. Men and women in the targeted communities were mobilised for various collective actions such as needs identification and prioritisation, management of water supply schemes, and economic empowerment.

Closer collaboration between CRWASH and CSEE for example has spurred innovation in how water can be used for improved irrigation and income can be generated through local production of sanitary pads, improving women's menstrual health as well as their income opportunities. Participant engagement increased as a result, with 21 % increase despite a challenging year.

Another area where Ethiopia's CRWASH interventions managed to engage collective action and facilitate for civil society influence, was through a focus in 2020 on several advocacy initiatives. NCA and partners actively contributed towards changes in policies, laws, norms, and practices.

Rights-holders in Nagelle Arsi of the West Arsi Zone and in Debre Sina town of the North Shewa Zone organised several discussions with local officials, lobbying and demanding increased government commitment for the environment and better enforcement of regulations and laws for proper waste management by local authorities. Driving forces in these discussions were members of local youth associations in both towns, including young men and young women. These initiatives convinced local authorities to take measures to enforce WASH related regulations and guidelines which paved the way for youth groups to become active in sanitation marketing.



*Youth engagement for recycling spurs commitment for cleaner environments in Ethiopia.
Photo: NCA Ethiopia*



Local peacebuilding structures engaging Afghan women. Photo: Håvard Bjelland

3.3 PEACEBUILDING

OVERALL GOAL: Societies are more inclusive, cohesive and peaceful.

COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTING TO GOAL: Afghanistan, Burundi, Eastern Africa Regional Peacebuilding Programme (RPP) (Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda), Pakistan, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, and Global Ecumenical Partners.



PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Violent conflict is surging after decades of relative decline¹. Conflicts are increasingly complex as intolerance spreads and societies across the globe become more polarised along ideological and identity lines. Struggles over natural resources and political gains are increasingly difficult to manage as traditional and democratic institutions and structures that normally manage conflicts are challenged by the expansion of oppressive regimes and radicalism. The landscape of destructive conflict is not confined to national borders: actors, factors and consequences have regional and global ramifications.

Space for social action to prevent conflict and sustain peace has been reduced and human rights defenders and peace activists face great risks. Violence and fear of violence threaten a range of rights and represent a barrier to human development at all levels. Survivors of violence often suffer long-term physical and psychological harm, while individuals and families living in conflict areas are forced to focus on organising their lives to avoid violence, rather than effectively improve their living conditions. Access to basic services, sustainable livelihoods, and justice tend to decrease during violent conflict, as do freedom of expression, and people's ability to organise and participate as active citizens.

PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

OUTCOME 1: RIGHTS-HOLDERS ENJOY INCREASED SOCIAL COHESION

Although the level of constructive interaction across groups in conflict will be measured after the second year of this programme, communities and individuals targeted by NCA have already shown signs of improved social cohesion due to NCA and partners' interventions.

In **Afghanistan, Pakistan, Burundi, Mali, South Sudan, the Eastern Africa** region and through the **global ecumenical partners**, the programme reached over 17,500 people with community awareness and educative sessions promoting mutual respect and understanding. 155 religious leaders mobilised communities to improve inter-group relations and counter violence. In **Burundi**, NCA gathered a diverse range of communities (Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa ethnic groups) who were not used to meet. Participants from different groups danced together, sang peace-themed songs, and exchanged contacts to remain in touch - true signs of progress on the journey to social cohesion.

In **Pakistan** 33 sermons in Mosques, Churches, Temples, and at other gatherings were delivered to promote social cohesion and respect for human rights in communities with diverse faiths and ethnicities. Because of these sermons, Muslim faith actors expressed solidarity by participating in religious events of minority faith communities (Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians). Members of these faith communities have developed friendships, visiting each other's places of worship frequently

¹ United Nations; World Bank. 2018. Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. Washington, DC: World Bank.

and supporting each other. Additionally, 134 police officers were in 2020 trained in conflict sensitive policing, resulting in an increased awareness of their duty to protect each citizen without prejudice. In Umerkot, police conducted two public forums where different faith groups discussed how police and civil society jointly can address human rights violations against minorities.

In **South Sudan**, NCA supported the enrolment of 50 teachers in a joint training programme with teachers from diverse ethnic groups. By sharing common learning facilities and continuous interactions at the training centre, teachers were able to build trust within the group, which they transferred to their pupils and communities.

To reduce local tensions in **Afghanistan, Burundi, and Pakistan**, NCA supported 76 collaborative community initiatives involving groups in conflict. For example, in **Pakistan**, NCA organised joint religious celebrations by key religious leaders of diverse faith communities. In **South Sudan**, activities emphasised for communities to respect all tribes and ethnicities, avoiding tribal-, linguistic-, and ethnic prejudices. Around 1,000 people were reached through and succeeded in discussing peacefully, taking constructive decisions, collaborating in concrete activities, and passing joint declarations.

In **Somalia**, NCA supported young people to meet with local decision-makers, creating new linkages with a stakeholder group who often view youth as troublemakers. Indeed, in many countries, youth played a key role in community activities after benefiting from NCA's training and accompaniment.

In **Burundi**, 35 youth leaders were trained in conflict prevention and management, leadership, and non-violent communication. Some initiatives were shared on social media platforms to convey messages of peaceful co-existence to the larger community. Diverse media channels, such as radio talk-shows, booklets, flyers, billboards, newsletters, and Digital Audio Players (DAPs) were used to disseminate messages on social cohesion. In **Mali**, women facilitated broadcasting of 80 social cohesion awareness-events over radio.

OUTCOME 2: PEACE STRUCTURES PREVENT AND TRANSFORM CONFLICTS

NCA supported the creation and revitalisation of 110 Local Peace Structures (LPS), groups of voluntary women and men working to prevent and resolve conflicts in their local context. In 2020 these structures contributed to the transform 136 ongoing conflicts in **Afghanistan, Burundi, Mali, Pakistan, and South Sudan**. Conflicts managed by these structures were related to religious discrimination, disputes over land, access to resources, domestic violence, ethnic tension, and political disputes. NCA's support focused on articulating LPSs with existing formal conflict- management structures. In 2020, government authorities referred 20 conflicts to NCA-supported LPSs. In **Mali**, the LPSs reached 40% women's participation. Stories are told of women gaining confidence and pride through mediating local conflicts.

In Sindh, **Pakistan**, an NCA supported local LPS helped mediate a conflict that turned violent after a mob accused a Christian doctor of the death of a Muslim woman he had treated, claiming it was religiously motivated. In South-Sudan, tensions between two communities de-escalated due to interventions by the LPS who mobilised elders, women, and religious leaders to participate in community dialogue meetings. This act even contributed to improve trading relations, benefiting approximately 4,500 people of both communities. In addition, the LPSs engaged with local government authorities to address conflicts related to land delimitations. As a result, the local government convened a meeting involving local chiefs, elders, religious leaders, and youth to agree to a plan to end protracted conflicts.

OUTCOME 3: PEACE PROCESSES ARE MORE INCLUSIVE

In 2020, NCA supported 21 women-led advocacy initiatives for peace in **Afghanistan, Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Tanzania**. In addition, five youth-led initiatives were undertaken. All advocated for the active and meaningful inclusion and participation of women and youth in peacebuilding activities and talks. These initiatives were led by 20 civil society youth or women platforms supported by NCA; and have resulted in commitments and actions by duty-bearers towards increasing the role of marginalised groups in peace and decision-making processes. In **Afghanistan**, women, and youth inclusion in peace-talks increased because of these interventions. NCA's partners recorded 150 local conflict management talks in the targeted provinces where women were present.

Following NCA's training on mediation and advocacy, young women mediators in **Somalia** met with the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). During this meeting, AMISOM committed to invite young women to a training on mediation and elections. NCA's partner, The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA), supported five regional faith women mediators in **Burundi** to participate in observations during elections in May 2020. This was done through the National Council of Churches of Burundi (CNEB), one of few CSOs with accreditation as election observers. This is an important change, as only men were election observers in the past.

DEVIATIONS

Community gatherings were restricted by COVID-19 regulations in all countries. Consequently, partners conducted activities at smaller scales or had virtual gatherings when possible. In **Mali, Pakistan, and Afghanistan**, NCA reduced targets, and instead contributed to prevent the spread of the virus by providing masks and hand sanitisers to the local population. Awareness campaigns were held and information material about Corona disseminated in vulnerable communities, for example by the interreligious councils of **Kenya and Uganda**. COVID-19 restrictions reduced the space for civil society action in many countries due to militarisation and limited government accountability. In such contexts, partners used mass media to issue statements and call for investigations of human rights violations.

Monitoring visits and partner meetings were reduced and occasionally replaced by virtual meetings. In **Mali**, NCA's capacity to monitor projects was limited caused by reduced availability of UN-managed flights to remote areas.

In addition to deviations caused by COVID-19, Eastern Africa experienced increased restriction of freedom on civil society groups, forcing NCA and partners to adapt their initial plans. For example, in **Burundi and Tanzania**, international and local independent observers were not granted accreditation during the elections. Increased incidents of conflict impacted implementation and travel in **Ethiopia (Tigray) and Mali (Mopti)**.

In **Pakistan**, peacebuilding was hampered because of heavy monsoon rains and flooding in parts of Sindh province, while in Somalia, locust invasions, floods and drought disrupted implementation.

RESULT CASE: THE POWER OF A PHONE CALL IN SOUTH SUDAN

WHAT: The Power to Forgive campaign of the South-Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) engaged young and old, and provided effective trauma counselling for individuals and communities through a radio programme and a hotline. This resulted in an important contribution to healing and conflict resolution.

WHY: NCA's partner witnessed how war had traumatised the people of South Sudan, both at individual and societal level. This trauma manifested itself through daily aggression, lack of trust, and a dominant culture of violence. Being aware that rebuilding the collective sense of wellbeing is necessary to build sustainable peace, and that there is no peace without mental health and healthy relationships, NCA understood the need for professional trauma healing in South-Sudan. Professional counselling is not available for most South Sudanese especially in the most conflict-afflicted areas. Professional counsellors do not enjoy the same credibility to deal with these issues, as do pastors and religious leaders.

HOW: The SSCC trained youth in communications, how to build a culture of peace and basic counselling techniques. The youth started a radio programme with national coverage to address the wounds left in society after years of war, and to convey the need for reconciliation. A toll-free number was established for the public to make calls to the radio programme and share their experience on air. The response was overwhelming. In 2020, a total of 33,454 calls were made by women and men affected by war and conflict. Calling from all the regions of the country, people anonymously shared stories of trauma related to communal and intercommunal conflicts. Both the callers and listeners to the show discovered that they were not alone, and that all sides to the conflict have been affected in similar ways. Those who picked up the phone, received basic counselling from trained staff of NCA's local partner. As the callers belonged to different communities and regions, they spoke in their own languages and dialects, with translation to English or Arabic offered by the SSCC staff.

To promote the programme, SSCC took to the streets of Juba, spreading their messages using megaphones and pamphlets. More than 60% of the people who called the toll-free number reported receiving healing when listening to the messages aired on radio and through the counselling they received over the phone. Most of the callers also indicated that they had changed their behaviour and attitudes towards others as a result. SSCC heard many testimonies of people being less confrontational towards other groups, as their wish for revenge and hatred had subsided. Some users even reported a drop in domestic violence following counselling. Interestingly, most callers in 2020 were soldiers or other persons associated with armed groups. This is testimony to the reach of this intervention to the populations most at need, and to its potential for reducing tension among armed actors.



*Volunteer explains to an elderly woman how she can call into the radio show.
Photo: Lakoyo Shakira*



Caption. Photo: Håvard Bjelland

3.4 CLIMATE SMART ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (CSEE)

OVERALL GOAL: Enable people to climb out of poverty and build communities' resilience.

COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTING TO GOAL: Burundi, Haiti, Myanmar, Palestine, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, Somalia, and Global Ecumenical Partners.



PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Smallholder farmers are relentlessly in the firing line when it comes to the effects of climate change, being the main producers of the food supplied from within the continent. NCA's CSEE programme empowers marginalised people economically and build their resilience by increasing their access to climate smart food production systems, jobs, and other income opportunities. This will contribute to reduce unemployment and strengthen food security. Most emerging economies are facing growing levels of food insecurity and unemployment. COVID-19 has intensified this challenge, which was there even prior to the pandemic. Strict directives to combat the spread of the virus, has led to disruption of supply chains, and loss of employment and income, which has reduced rights-holders' accessibility to goods and services. This has put direct pressure on people's ability to feed themselves, impacts expected to continue into the foreseeable future. According to the World Bank, global food prices have risen by 38% since January 2020¹. Many African countries are net importers of food, and the 2015 level is projected to triple by 2025².

PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

OUTCOME 1: WOMEN, MEN AND YOUTH SMALL-SCALE PRODUCERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS ARE ECONOMICALLY EMPOWERED

In 2020 climate smart innovations were such as drip irrigation were promoted, and relations between private sector players, markets, and cooperatives were strengthened. Furthermore, NCA and partners incorporated agroecological methods into food production by small holder farmers to build robust mechanism to cope with the effects of climate change.

Significant progress in 2020 is seen **Zambia**, a total of 1,092 small-scale producers (75% women) organised in producer groups were introduced to the micro-investing model which allows them to be productive in the horticulture value chain year-round with efficient and simple irrigation technology and climate smart agricultural (CSA) practices. The small-scale producers were supported and mentored by agronomists who visited them on a weekly basis for 12 weeks. In addition, training was conducted to a total of 2,153 (1,507 women and 646 men) small-scale producers in CSA.

In **Myanmar**, 310 small-scale producers and service providers were able to increase their income because of training in value chains and thus improved market access to sell their produce. Whilst in **Burundi**, more than 4,000 small-holder producers attended reinforced training on CSA practices to increase their productivity. Thirty Farmer Field Schools were established in the communities to serve as practical demonstration sites. A total of 461 compost pits were installed producing 46,164 tons of organic compost. In 2020, 729 women and men have invested in livestock farming for manure production in Bujumbura and Kirundo.

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-and-covid-19>

² <https://www.afdb.org/en/the-high-5/feed-africa>

Haiti supported 249 farmers in 2020 to implement eco-friendly agriculture and to increase income by providing technical and financial support so they could establish their organic plots. Of 145 organic plots established in 2020, 13 serve as demonstration plots. Support was provided to five groups of women engaging in income-generating activities related to sheep farming, sales of inputs, and a manure depot.

In **Sudan**, despite COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings, training and support was provided to 214 Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC), engaging more than 3,000 mainly female members. The SILC groups deployed various approaches, from revolving loan funds, savings through investments in agricultural assets or in generating income through small women-led businesses. This contributed to counter the adverse effect of the devaluation of the Sudanese currency in 2020 and even ensured that some families were self-sufficient with a surplus in their milk production.

In **Tanzania**, NCA and partners mobilised and enrolled small-scale farmers into horticulture micro investing schemes, with some graduating to poultry raising. A total of 5,119 micro-investors were reached, surpassing the target for 2020 by 35%. Using drone technology, close to 1,200 farmers were provided with safe and affordable pesticide spraying services. Information was shared using existing structures such as village meetings. Drone technology as a method is innovative, climate smart (reduces water use by 80%), and cost-efficient. Farmers use smaller amounts of chemicals and spend less time spraying, as one acre takes 20 minutes instead of three days. The method is better for farmers' health as exposure and proximity to harmful chemicals is reduced. It also frees up time for women who usually do the weeding, so they can instead engage in other productive activities.

OUTCOME 2: JOBS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES ARE CREATED FOR YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN

Vocational training in **Palestine** has contributed to improve the socio-economic status of young graduates through opportunities for jobs and income as well as engagement for social change through participation in community activities. 227 youth entrepreneurs and ICT graduates in Gaza received training in developing business plans. They were followed up by coaches and mentors and received seed funding to start up their ventures. NCA's partners linked youth with private companies and provided 40 young women ICT-graduates with technical and freelancing skills.

Youth unemployment was addressed in **Tanzania** through the creation of internship- and placement opportunities for school graduates and opportunities in agricultural value chains, for rural youth entrepreneurs. In 2020, 330 young women and young men secured internships through NCA's local partners' networks. More than 1,000 youth also obtained opportunities in agribusiness through the establishment of youth groups for selected value chains.

DEVIATIONS

The outbreak of COVID-19 meant a need to reformulate business continuity plans, and some activities such as the roll-out of the Micro Investing model were postponed particularly in **Zambia, Burundi, and Tanzania**. Monitoring was done remotely using smart-phones and tablets for data collection. The effects of the pandemic were coupled with a persistent economic situation marked by high inflation and continuous currency devaluation in many countries, resulting in higher prices for essential commodities and reduced purchasing power of the local population. **Somalia** suffered setbacks on the selection of local partners partly due to political tensions arising from the challenges during the presidential elections, which affected access to some targeted districts.

RESULT CASE: INNOVATIVE EDUCATION AND YOUNG ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN PALESTINE

WHAT: Through a collaboration between NCA, a top Norwegian manufacturer of urban furniture, Vestre, and the Oslo School of Architecture (AHO) the quality of vocational skills training in Palestine is enhanced and youth employability increased. This is a unique model where education experts and private sector join forces to spur innovation and new thinking around education and entrepreneurship, through creation and rollout of a high-quality training course in "design thinking".

WHY: Economic growth in Palestine has consistently been below two percent over the last three years. This stagnation amplifies the unemployment rate, which stands at 25%. A country where young people easily fall outside both higher education and working life, it is especially important to enable youth to create their own workplace and increase their employability.

HOW: With a goal match the skills of graduates with the needs and demands of the labour market and opportunities in the local markets, NCA facilitated links between its Palestinian partners running well-established vocational training centres (East Jerusalem YMCA, the Lutheran World Federation, and Palvision), and two Norwegian resource partners.

With a rich experience in education, AHO designed a multi-year course on the topic "design thinking" targeted at trainers of vocational schools, foundations, and start-up environments. Learning methodologies were further developed in collaboration with the vocational schools. It is foreseen, that those enrolled will pass on knowledge again to their students and environments so they can offer quality products and services that boost their employability. Vestre, with industry insight, contributes with know-how on production methods, sustainable material choice and circular thinking. While AHO is strong in capacity-building, Vestre brings expertise in process and design of high-quality functional furniture to strengthen product development, mixing innovation and traditional crafts in carpentry, metalwork, and painting.

A start-up mindset in students is also nurtured, who are already applying the "design thinking" methodology to their furniture production. Vestre has supported students to establish an E-commerce platform to sell their products to the local market, and it is expected they will further enhance their marketing skills through the training.



*Design thinking inspires young Palestinians to create a better future in a fragile setting.
Photo: Camilla Grøtta.*



Tree-planting efforts in Ethiopia give hope for the future. Photo: Håvard Bjelland

3.5 FAITH-BASED CLIMATE ACTION (FBCA)

OVERALL GOAL: Faith actors take action on climate change.

COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTING TO GOAL: Angola, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Pakistan, and Global Ecumenical Partners.



PROBLEM ANALYSIS

People who live in poverty are disproportionately impacted by extreme and unpredictable weather patterns. Those who have contributed the least to climate change are the ones who suffer the most from its effects.

The obligation to care for creation is strong across all faiths. Climate change is a threat to our lives, livelihoods, and creation itself. It intensifies poverty and inequality and undermines the ability of vulnerable communities to enjoy a life with dignity. NCA enables faith actors to respond to this shared risk, and links faith actors with other key stakeholders to join forces for greater impact. The FBCA programme seeks to mobilise faith-based organisations and movements for climate change action. Methods include engaging in interfaith-, ecumenical-, or faith-inspired climate change initiatives and partnerships. An added value to this method is that it builds on the religious-, moral-, and ethical capital, and the potential for community mobilisation that faith actors possess.

PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

OUTCOME 1: COMMUNITIES INCREASE THEIR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Activities to increase community climate resilience were carried out in **Ethiopia, Pakistan, Angola, and Guatemala**. Aggregated results for 2020 show that 51 communities in these countries increased their climate resilience. As an example, in **Ethiopia**, communities in four districts were able to complete essential activities to increase their resilience to the changing climate through afforestation, reforestation, watershed protection, sustainable land management, and climate smart agriculture. Communities also organised their own taskforces for preparedness and response to hazards related to climate change.

In **Guatemala**, 31 communities strengthened their resilience in 2020. Community climate resilience in Indigenous areas revolves around the management of micro hydro-electric plants, management of forests, nurseries, water reserves, seed banks, silos, and other agro-ecological initiatives. These facilities are governed through collective guidelines and mandates for community organisations and public service institutions, safeguarding collectively owned commodities and resources.

As a result of NCA and partner efforts in **Ethiopia**, a total of 150 HA of land was put under sustainable management, and 70,000 tree-seedlings planted in 2020. Twelve rainwater harvesting systems were installed, securing catchment of 0.5 million litres of water. 300 rights-holders were trained in climate smart agriculture and sustainable livelihood development benefiting 1,000 households. In 2020, Ethiopian faith institutions took advantage of their outreach potential to broadcast COVID-19 messages through their own television and radio channels combined with airing messages to raise awareness about climate-change, value of tree planting, and religious harmony.

OUTCOME 2: RIGHTS-HOLDERS HOLD DUTY-BEARERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR CLIMATE ACTION

In **Pakistan**, rights-holders from Umerkot and Peshawar districts undertook 12 advocacy initiatives to hold duty-bearers accountable. These initiatives included lobby-meetings with Pakistan Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Ministry of Climate Change as well as public advocacy campaigns on climate action, conveyed through radio and TV. Faith actors delivered climate messages through sermons, highlighting the importance of environmental protection with reference to scriptures.

Other initiatives included tree planting drives and awareness sessions to reduce the use of plastics.

In **Ethiopia**, interreligious climate platforms at *woreda* level convening representatives from major religious actors were established in four districts in 2020. Conferences and advocacy events were organised with various faith actors and government representatives. Policy dialogue forums were carried out at district level and discussions had on policies related to climate, environment, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster risk management (DRM).

In **Angola**, seven advocacy events targeted duty-bearers at national, municipal, and communal levels. These addressed the government response to the drought in the south of the country, and its consequences on the food security situation for rights-holders. During the approval of the state budget 2020, NCA's partners questioned deputies on decisions regarding funds allocated for drought response, while at community level the local administration was queried on their measures to assist the most vulnerable families.

On a global level, NCA has engaged in climate justice advocacy together with **Global Ecumenical Partners** through the ACT Alliance. In 2020 ACT contributed to the newly established Climate Working Group of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN headquarters in New York. A side- event for the High-Level Policy Forum invited a youth representative of ACT Alliance as one of the panelists. In Asia, the ACT Alliance participated in the Green Climate Finance event as a civil society observer. In the Middle East and North Africa region, a new climate justice working group mapped the engagement on climate justice work among ACT Alliance members, the findings of which indicate that there is a need to improve climate literacy in the region to enable advocacy work.

DEVIATIONS

The pandemic restricted some programme activities, but overall targets were generally met in 2020. Plans in **Ethiopia** and **Pakistan** to promote climate messages at major religious events and large gatherings had to be altered. Stakeholder consultations and trainings were significantly limited. In **Guatemala**, monitoring was done remotely, and adjustments made to reduce size of group activities.

Due to the pandemic, the UNFCCC decided to postpone the COP26 to 2021. Virtual workshops and preparations were nonetheless carried out by the **Global Ecumenical Partners**, even if the main event was postponed. Similarly, the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on DRR, which ACT alliance in the Asia-Pacific had prepared for, was also postponed.

Natural disasters did impact on the results, with tropical storms destroying crops for several families in **Guatemala**, and project activities put on hold in **Pakistan** during August and September due to unusually heavy monsoon rains and floods. In **Ethiopia**, the desert locust invasion posed a significant threat to rights-holders. A sad outcome of the conflict in Tigray was the unintended destruction of areas previously protected and rehabilitated.

RESULT CASE: BREAKTHROUGH FOR FAITH-BASED CLIMATE ACTION IN PAKISTAN

WHAT: With the support of NCA, Muslim scholars have established Quranic Gardens in connection to *madrassas*, embracing the religious obligation to care for Creation.

WHY: NCA has chosen to partner with faith leaders and religious communities to increase community resilience to climate change and raise awareness about the importance of protecting the environment. By having a faith perspective, we tap into a wealth of resources found in scripture, faith expressions and worldviews that promote the conservation of nature and biodiversity.

In Pakistan climate change and natural disasters have dramatically negative effects on agricultural yields and livelihoods. Restoring indigenous forests and natural habitats is crucial in mitigating these effects and increasing resilience to withstand. Faith leaders are important stakeholders in this effort.

HOW: NCA and partners organised an interfaith gathering in Pakistan for 105 faith leaders representing Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, and Bahai' faiths. Drawing on methodologies and concepts from the Ethiopia Interfaith Climate Platform (EICP), the faith leaders were trained on climate change and its related teachings in various religions. Different faiths have different theological rationales for the Care of Creation. Sharing interpretations and experiences through dialogue enhances understanding and inspires faith-based responses to environmental degradation.

As an outcome of the gathering, and with the support and encouragement of NCA's partner, faith leaders, monks and nuns, and religious scholars took the initiative to establish Quranic Gardens in two madrassas in the Peshawar district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. These gardens are dedicated for growing trees and plants mentioned in the Quran. The gardens will inspire and encourage students, teachers, and other staff members to plant trees as part of their religious obligation to Care for Creation and strengthen resilience to climate change.

The gardens are inspired by NCA's commitment towards the Orthodox church forests, which play a vital role in the conservation and protection of biodiversity in Ethiopia. The development in Pakistan illustrates the scalability of this concept. The result is a testimony to the ability of NCA and local partners to facilitate interfaith dialogue and exchange of ideas. Experience from Ethiopia has shown that evoking theological discourse is key in mobilising religious communities. The church forest methodology links theology with practical action and shows that interfaith and theological approaches to climate action have gained a foothold in Pakistan.



Quranic gardens inspire student, teachers and faith communities to care for creation
Photo: NCA Pakistan



Reducing inequality only possible through a vibrant and vocal civil society. Photo: NCA



3.6 FIGHTING INEQUALITY (FI)

OVERALL GOAL: Fair and equitable finance and redistribution of resources.

COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTING TO GOAL: Angola, DRC, Malawi, Southern Africa Regional Programme (covering Botswana, Mozambique, South-Africa, and Zimbabwe), Tanzania and Zambia.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

2020 has put inequality on display and underscored the need for governments to prioritise social protection, including healthcare, education, and social security. According to the UN¹ about 120 million people have been pushed into extreme poverty because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and close to 114 million jobs have been lost. While a decade of development is lost, the world's 1,000 richest individuals recovered their financial losses within just nine months, according to Oxfam². Reducing inequality is a prerequisite for poverty reduction, and domestic resource mobilisation is key in delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. In the countries where NCA implements this programme, the abundance of natural resources could in fact finance development. But, high levels of corruption, coupled with lack of participatory and accountable governance hinder equitable distribution of public resources. During 2020, under the auspices of implementing infection control measures, several governments have introduced laws and regulations limiting the freedom of expression and association, making it more difficult for civil society to operate.

PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

OUTCOME 1: DUTY-BEARERS ARE INFLUENCED TO INCREASE FINANCE FOR AND SPENDING TO REDUCE POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Holding governments accountable for social protection of citizens has been crucial in 2020, as COVID-19 has severely impacted their socio-economic situation. NCA's partners have been relevant and responsive to needs on the ground and have linked policy asks to reducing inequality linked to COVID-19. For example, in **Mozambique, Zimbabwe** and **Botswana** partners published policy briefs and contributed to increase public insight and debate around the impacts of the pandemic through several advocacy initiatives. For example, in **South Africa**, NCA's partners joined civil society in demanding extension of the government's COVID-19 emergency grant for most vulnerable households, reaching six million people and alleviating negative impacts. Civil society continues to advocate for the grant to be permanent. In **Zimbabwe** partners advocated for reserving two percent of the Intermediate Money Transfer Tax for COVID-19 response. NCA's partner ZIMCDD invited the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare to participate in a digital workshop. As a result of lobby efforts, the Minister committed to the shielding, eventually implemented by the government.

NCA's partners have influenced national budgets, for example through nationwide consultations. For example, in **Malawi**, the Malawi Economic Justice Network lobbied 21 Members of Parliament to prioritise social protection in the national budget. Several of their recommendations were adopted and allocations increased as a result. In **Zambia**, partners' advocacy contributed to an increase of the budget for social protection, from one to four percent in one year. In **Zimbabwe**, the health budget increased from seven to thirteen percent in 2020, the highest increase ever.

OUTCOME 2: RIGHTS-HOLDERS HOLD DUTY-BEARERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR JUST RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

Faith actors play a critical role in claiming community rights in mining areas. In **Zambia**, conditions for workers at the Beker Zulu Lime Mine improved after NCA and partners facilitated an exposure visit for faith leaders and journalists. After the visit, the local faith-leaders committee called upon the relevant

¹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088292>

² <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/inequality-virus>

Members of Parliament to act, resulting in pay raises and personal protective equipment for workers. Efforts to hold duty-bearers accountable is usually a long process, so this was an extraordinary example of immediate change. In **South Africa**, justice was achieved in 2020 after many years of negotiating with the Durban Rooderport Deep mining company. They finally agreed to rehabilitate a mining area, by cleaning the land, offering land to the community, and providing solar panels to families. In **Angola**, the CATOCA mining company agreed to an eviction compensation plan, after NCA's partner Maos Livres negotiated on behalf of displaced families. In **DRC**, the establishment of an advocacy platform for religious leaders has laid a foundation for strong faith-led advocacy on mining.

To hold duty-bearers accountable, rights-holders must know their rights and be able to utilise advocacy opportunities. In **Malawi** 1,897 rights-holders were empowered on mining governance. In **DRC**, NCA's partner AFEM broadcasted 314 radio programmes on GBV and women's participation in natural resource governance. Listeners responded with 140 phone calls and 422 texts, illustrating the relevance of the issue. 758 people participated in open circle sessions, resulting in communities demanding development projects from mining companies. NCA's partner BEST, submitted draft regulatory texts on community development and mining, currently considered by the provincial assembly of South Kivu. In all countries partners have used own media, social media, newspapers, TV, and radio to raise awareness and increase public pressure to reduce inequality. In **South Africa**, the Fighting Inequality Alliance attracted 18,000 online views during their month of action against inequality, which included an online rally featuring grassroots activists, art, poetry, and workshops.

Efforts were made to increase rights-holders' ability to influence public policies, plans and budgets to be more pro-poor. In **Zambia** 550 community members were trained in the budget process and communication of national- and district-specific needs to the Finance Ministry. NCA's partners simplified the 2021 national budget to expand accessibility and provided platforms for community members to engage. Some community-led submissions were adopted, for example increasing the non-taxable income threshold. In **Tanzania** 251 rights-holders took part in tracking public expenditure. In all, 67 concerns raised by rights-holders were addressed by duty-bearers.

DEVIATIONS

Policy advocacy is dependent on face-to-face interactions and strategic networking. Hence, implementation was hampered by COVID-19 measures limiting physical meetings. Some activities were postponed, and strategies adapted, such as moving from physical to online training and mobilisation. The Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI) conferences were arranged partly digitally. Some partners had difficulty accessing and engaging policymakers virtually. An Increased focus on online tools has, however, improved digital mobilisation. For example, partners in the **Regional Southern Africa** programme, reached nearly 360,000 people online, which was more than expected.

In **Tanzania**, due to the general elections in October, assemblies were only allowed with a police permit, which was very cumbersome to get. Thus, partners could not mobilise communities for public expenditure tracking, social accountability monitoring and campaigns for enrolment in the health insurance scheme. NCA also had to postpone the planned National Inequality Symposium.

In **Zambia** shrinking civic space limited possibilities to do mobilisation activities. During the *campaign week against inequality*, the government interfered and instructed partners to postpone activities. To mitigate, NCA's partners engaged traditional leaders to negotiate with the government, who finally agreed to accept resumption of activities.

RESULT CASE: FAITH ACTORS BOOST ENROLMENT IN HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME IN TANZANIA

WHAT: In the areas where religious leaders mobilised their constituencies, the number of households covered by health insurance increased from 5,683 in 2019 to 18,757 in 2020. This shows the power of faith actors in mobilising rights-holders.

WHY: Rising inequality is still a challenge in Tanzania. Although people pay taxes, few have access to social services, such as quality healthcare. Poverty is both a cause and effect of poor health. For people living on the margins of poverty, health shocks present a double burden; expenses for medical treatment increase, while income is lost as poor health reduces one's ability to work. Accessible and affordable quality healthcare services are crucial for reducing poverty and inequality. In Tanzania, the health insurance scheme (iCHF) is a good solution for the poor, as it is affordable and guarantees access to basic services. However, enrolment has been low, as officers and coordinators of the scheme have not been effective in mobilising communities to enrol.

HOW: NCA and partners' Make it Possible campaign advocated for increased health budgets and universal healthcare. It pinpointed opportunities for Tanzania to secure a good health budget through an increase in revenue from natural resource extraction, introduction of more progressive tax regimes, and in the fight against illicit financial flows and corruption. An element in the campaign was to mobilise rights-holders to enrol in iCHF. If more people sign up for iCHF, the public pressure for a single universal health insurance for all Tanzanians is expected to grow.

Through the campaign NCA's partners have succeeded in positioning themselves as relevant stakeholders for the government to consult on health-related issues. In 2020 they were invited to give input to the government on how to strengthen mobilisation for the iCHF. During the meeting, Christian Social Services Commission (CSSC) illustrated how faith actors could play a key role and asked the President's Office Regional Administration and Local Government offices to engage faith leaders. The government agreed and in Kigoma, Lindi and Manyara NCA and partners engaged religious leaders to take part in the mobilisation.

Faith leaders visited radio shows together with iCHF implementers and coordinators, responding to questions raised by community members. Shows were broadcasted on three major radio stations and reached an impressive 3.7 million people. Consultative meetings between religious leaders and the Regional Administrative Office were held, discussing progress and challenges in coordinating the enrolment. This inspired awareness-raising in mosques and churches. Posters were displayed, and registration desks set up for easy access for people to enrol. As a direct result of the mobilisation 18,757 households had enrolled in the health insurance scheme by the end of 2020.



Rights-holders using their Community Health Service insurance to pay for services at the Consolata Catholic Dispensary in Temeke, Dar es Salaam. Photo: Nizar Seleman Utanga.



Welding broken joints and rebuilding quality of life in Malawi. Photo: Håvard Hovdhaugen

CHAPTER 4: PROGRAMME QUALITY

4.1 RESULTS MANAGEMENT

2020 was the first year NCA applied its global indicator guide, designed to ensure a coherent approach to how progress is measured, and results are documented. The guide proved to be especially useful during the baseline process and the exercise of gathering annual results data. It also gave NCA valuable lessons to follow up on. The collected data supports NCA's ambition of gender equality and increased youth engagement, with women composing 56% of the rights-holders and youth a promising 42%.

The 25 indicators of the global results framework for the portfolio of the global Civil Society grant (Project Stream 1) provide a snapshot of NCA's programme efforts. The progress on all applicable thematic programme outcomes is reflected in chapter three of this report.

Some global indicators measure change only on a higher level in the results chain. Typically, these are normative changes which take longer to achieve. By design therefore, these indicators do not have any set targets for year one of implementation. For the other indicators with targets for 2020 however, the progress made so far is very promising, even in a year overshadowed by the pandemic.

In terms of target achievement, seven out of ten indicators show success ratios falling within the range of plus/minus 20% of the established targets. An equal distribution of under- and over-achievement is noted across these. Notable under-achievement is seen on one indicator of the CSEE programme (15% under) and one of the GBV programme (21% under). The lies in lack of progress or missing data from two countries, which in turn contribute to alter the global average. One indicator Strengthening Civil Society (SCS) indicator shows a skewed actual of overachievement by 306%, due to a significant outlier country.

In most contexts the pandemic affected data collection in general, and the baseline processes specifically. To mitigate these challenges, a guidance note on programme adaptation was developed. This note also covered adapted methodologies for data collection for monitoring and evaluation. The baseline process gave NCA staff an entry point for building their expertise in data collection. Capacity building activities involving external consultants focused on process management, and how to apply various key methods in baselines processes to internal designs.

Building on NCA's successful application of digital data collection in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) over the past years, the attention in 2020 was on increased utilisation of data. Examples include capacity building for HO and CO staff on data visualisation using Power BI. One example of was a regional Power BI training carried out in Ethiopia with 12 COs present.

4.2 LEARNING

NCA has continued its commitment to promoting learning for transformation and growth and increased effectiveness and efficiency. Recommendations from reviews and evaluations have been followed up for programme improvement. To highlight only a few among many good examples, NCA and partners in **Tanzania** established and strengthened producer clusters to improve accessibility to markets, inputs and information to farmers based on recommendations from an internal assessment of the smallholder empowerment (SHE) project. In **Ethiopia**, recommendations from an evaluation of the emergency WASH and Food Security Assistance to the South Sudanese Refugees has led NCA to always engage users of WASH facilities from the onset of construction of their own sanitation facilities, instead of leaving all to the contractors. This has increased rights-holders ability for performing basic maintenance and fosters a sense of ownership, crucial aspects of ensuring sustainability.

While there are many good examples of learning from processes and evaluations within the organisation, an internal assessment conducted by the NCA's HO revealed that good learning practices often remained siloed, and lessons learned are limited to those directly involved in the processes. To succeed as a learning organisation, NCA will strengthen its integrated and systematic approach to capturing, transforming, sharing, and reintegrating knowledge assets. To improve learning practices across the organisation, in 2020 NCA developed a *Knowledge Management Strategy*, which includes tools and methods for building a strong learning culture among staff, guidelines for better digital collaboration and learning, and new and updated processes and routines related to planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. This will contribute to strengthen project cycle management.

4.3 EVALUATIONS

With a renewed commitment in 2020, NCA laid the foundation for the development of best practice evaluations. Initial initiatives were aimed to enhance the utility of NCA's evaluations, by securing independence, credibility, and stakeholder participation. NCA also continued the push towards increased capacity building by initiating a *deep-dive* course in evaluation management, two evaluation clinics and individual capacity building through external training for 20 staff (most from NCA's COs).

In 2020, NCA conducted 25 evaluations and reviews of its programmatic interventions in 13 countries and/or regions. In addition, three global evaluations were carried out. In sum, this might suggest that there has been a slight decrease in the number of evaluations conducted in 2020, compared to previous years. This appears to be largely affected by a heavy focus on completing the baseline processes and hindrances due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

NCA views and uses evaluations to a large degree to document results, progress, and obstacles. To address this, NCA's *Evaluation Policy* and its *Operations Manual* are revised to reflect NCA's renewed commitment to learning. Going forward, evaluations in NCA will specifically aim to produce data-driven and results-based learning outcomes to inform and improve programming, as well as guide development of future interventions.

4.4 CATALYTIC PARTNERSHIPS

NCA encourages its COs to apply Norad funding to leverage funding from other institutional donors, as a good way to increase impact and outreach when opportunities can be aligned with existing results frameworks and ambitions for NCA's programmes.

As can be seen in the table, all NCA's programme countries secure important funding from sources in addition to the Norad Civil Society grant. For example, in **DRC** NCA was able to use Norad funds as a contribution towards co-funding requirements of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) to address GBV. Because NCA applied Norad funds as co-funding, an additional NOK 10 million was secured from SDC. Building on approaches already established, the resilience of GBV survivors was as a result strengthened. With the added grant from SDC, NCA was able to reach about 40,000 additional rights-holders, including 3,200 survivors and women and girls at-risk of GBV.

Through leveraging funds from two Norad grants, NCA **Angola** was in 2020 able to obtain two additional grants from EuropeAid through the Portuguese Camoes-institute, at the value of EUR 1.35 million. With this additional support, Norad contributed to increase and widen the Faith-Based Climate Action (FBCA) programme of NCA Angola for outreach to the Huilã province. This has strengthened the capacity and resilience of smallholder farmers on issues related to climate change, through capacity building related to food and nutrition vulnerability and construction of cisterns to increase number and quality of water points. Furthermore, farmers have improved their advocacy to influence public policy and spending, particularly related to securing water points and livelihood, as well as greater public transparency on these issues.

PERCENTAGE OF NORAD CIVIL SOCIETY GRANT COMPARED TO 2020 TOTAL INCOME

COUNTRY	NORAD CIVIL SOCIETY GRANT % OF TOTAL INCOME
Afghanistan	47%
Angola	15%
Burundi	71%
DRC	38%
Ethiopia	23%
Guatemala	9%
Haiti	9%
Mali	38%
Malawi	16%
Myanmar	15%
Pakistan	48%
Palestine	20%
Reg. EA Peacebuilding Programme	44%
Reg. SA programme	83%
Somalia	21%
South Sudan	17%
Sudan	11%
Tanzania	31%
Zambia	31%

OVERVIEW OF ALL EVALUATIONS AND REVIEWS (EXCL. BASELINES) CONDUCTED IN 2020

COUNTRY	TITLE	TYPE
Afghanistan	Final evaluation of the Social Council for Consolidation of Peace (SCCP) programme phase 6	External evaluation
Angola	Capacitar - final evaluation	External evaluation
Ethiopia	Safe Space: Accelerating action to the wellbeing of Adolescent girls in Gambella regional state, Ethiopia	Internal review
Guatemala	Review and assessment of 2020 AOP	Internal review
Guatemala	Programmatic evaluation	External evaluation
Haiti	Vulnerability and Resilience to Climate Change and Food Insecurity study	External evaluation
Haiti	KAP survey for NMFA project in Big South (initial)	Internal evaluation
Pakistan	External Evaluation of Telethon Funded WASH) project in Sindh province, Pakistan.	External evaluation
South Sudan	Dpos Mapping	External evaluation
South Sudan	Gender Analysis	External evaluation
South Sudan	Conflict Analysis	External evaluation
South Sudan	Impact evaluation report on MFA-NCA Scholarships prog.	External evaluation
Reg. Southern Africa	Review of Regional Southern Africa (ROSA) Programme mandate/ Organisational Review	Internal review
Syria	WASH TPM Syria (2019–2020) (I-APS)	External evaluation
Syria	WASH TPM Syria (Trust – 2020)	External evaluation
Syria	GBV Syria TPM (Jouri for Research and Consulting –June 2020)	External evaluation
Lebanon	Solar Power Projects' review and assessment	External evaluation
Zambia	Making Agriculture a business midterm review	External review
Burundi	Barriers study	External evaluation
Mali	Final Evaluation of the emergency WASH programme in Mopti and Ménaka (in French)	Internal review
Mali	Final evaluation of Phase 1 of the Debbo Alafia programme in Mopti, Ségué and Gao (in French)	External review
Palestine	Review of the Station J Project	External review
Palestine	Review for Economic Empowerment Project in Gaza (WAC-ASALA-MAAN)	External review
Palestine	Palestine DCA/NCA Joint Country Programme Evaluation 2016–2020	External evaluation
Palestine	Eval. of N-MFA 2020 project - Multisectoral resp. to hum. needs in Gaza (WASH-Nutrition-GBV)	External evaluation
Global	Evaluating Norwegian Church Aid interventions through multivariate analysis with big data	External evaluation
Global	Targeting right? An evaluation of programmatic target setting at NCA	Internal evaluation
Global	Final Evaluation of NRK Telethon Campaign Programme (TCP)	External evaluation

With funding from Innovation Norway and NCA's unrestricted funds, NCA has formalised a partnership with the Norwegian company Tinkr in **Palestine** to develop a digital capacity building programme. It is carried out in collaboration with the Norad-funded vocational training centres run by NCA's local partners, who will be testing the concept. A technical skills-course and digital tool will be developed simultaneously to ensure the course is efficient and targets innovation and entrepreneurship. It is expected that the end-products will be of high quality and relevant to local as well as international markets, while enhancing employment opportunities for youth and securing sustainable livelihoods.

4.5 TOWARDS A DIGITALISED NCA

2020 has been a year where out of necessity, the digital literacy improved throughout the whole organisation. We have in recent years invested heavily in improved bandwidth for all COs to improve digital communication. As online-based meetings and remote working became the standard in 2020, all staff members improved their skills on communication platforms such as MS Teams and other collaboration tools. This natural development was complemented by webinars and online training material to increase digital literacy, including Nano courses in Digital Privacy Awareness and Anti-Corruption and skills training for all staff members on how to best work remotely.

Early in 2020, NCA signed a contract with Precio Fishbone to use their software NGO Online as NCA's new Project Information and Management System (PIMS) for programme staff at NCA HO and COs. PIMS supports all processes that manage NCA's project and programme cycles, such as application processes, grant management, project implementation, stakeholder management, results reporting and document handling. Throughout the design- and implementation phase, the focus has been on change management and human-centred design to prepare a good transition and adoption. This also included the development of easily accessible online training tools, such as e-learning courses, educational videos, and webinars. PIMS is rolled out in NCA globally from February 2021 onwards.

4.6 REDUCTION OF NCA'S CARBON FOOTPRINT

Digital solutions applied to adapt to a COVID-19 reality of less travel and on-site monitoring, contributed to reduce carbon emissions. In 2020 we reduced our CO₂-emissions from flights by 59% from 2019. The result was a consequence of travel restrictions following the pandemic, but also increased focus on reducing emissions. NCA plans for considerably less air travels in the years to come compared to pre-covid travelling. Before the pandemic NCA was well underway with the development of its Climate and Environment Policy, finalised in 2020. Serving as NCA's main policy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, it identifies four focus areas for improvement: Air travels, internal operations in our offices, long-term programming and humanitarian response, and logistics. Under each focus area are specific initiatives which will contribute to the reduction of NCA's carbon footprint.

A few COs were selected to pilot several of the initiatives in the policy in 2020. **Ethiopia** developed a baseline for continued work on greening NCA's COs. As part of NCA's refining its Sustainability Standards for the organisation, development of a specific environmental sustainability standard was begun in 2020, to be finalised and rolled out in 2021.

4.7 COST EFFICIENCY

As reflected above, NCA has in 2020 made concerted efforts aimed at increasing its cost-efficiency through strategic investments in to ensure tools and systems are in place to enhance project cycle management, effective data collection and monitoring, as well strengthening the systematic approach to learning processes. In addition to these cost saving measures, in 2020 the model of joint programming was further strengthened through a refined Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) effective from 2021 - with the collaborating ACT Alliance agencies of the current Joint Country Programmes in **Zambia, Palestine, and Myanmar**. In 2020, NCA also laid the foundation and prepared for a merger between NCA's and DanChurchAid's (DCA) programmes and operations in **Malawi**, with the Joint Country Programme there taking effect 01 January 2021. NCA will be the lead agency for the joint **Malawi** programme. This cooperation is expected to result in more sustainable offices and programmes with a higher potential for growth through increased levels of funding and more efficient use of available resources.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING AND CO-LOCALISATION

In addition to joining forces with other ACT agencies in joint programmes, NCA puts great emphasis on integrating of own thematic programmes, to increase synergy and have greater impact in targeted locations. Integrated programming enables NCA and partners to address the multifaceted needs of women, men, girls, and boys in the various contexts we operate. Another benefit to integrated programming is improved quality and increased cost-efficiency because of working with the same target groups through various interventions.

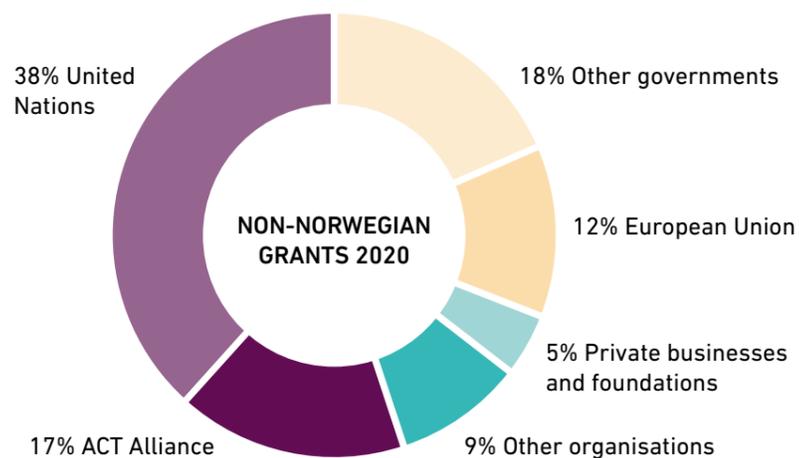
For example, in **Mali** NCA carried out a review of the partner portfolio in 2020, where partners were selected based on their added value. After a series of consultations in 2020 with implementing partners, an external study was commissioned to assess the opportunities for integrated programming as well as the potential for strengthening complementarity and cooperation with local authorities, community leaders and civil society organisations. At the launch of the new country strategy, a bundled approach was established, presenting an integrated package of CRWASH, GBV and Peacebuilding components to targeted communities. This was possible as NCA Mali over the past years successfully has scaled down the geographic outreach of its interventions to currently focus on eight targeted locations. A significant change from outreach to 100 locations, this focused model is already yielding sustainable impact. With a similar reduction in the partner portfolio from 30 to ten, gains are seen as NCA's capability for capacity building and monitoring is strengthened.

In **Afghanistan** initiatives taken in 2020 towards the religious actors of the Social Council for Consolidation of Peace (SCCP) has spurred closer collaboration and a genuine interest to explore how work in the Nexus can be bolstered. Models of working and activities carried out in the peacebuilding programme is considered applied to other thematic programmes. An enabling environment has been established for introducing integrated programming in targeted and will be a focus for NCA moving forward.

Closely linked with integrated programming, co-localisation also contributes to better impact and increased cost-efficiency, as different programmes apply the same strategies for example for community mobilisation. In 2020, additional efforts in hygiene for preventing the spread of the virus, were carried out targeting the same communities of the existing programmes using already tested methods of communication and mobilisation such as using communication channels of faith-based partners to spread COVID-19 prevention messages along with raising awareness on GBV.

One example of successful integration of co-localisation is in **Ethiopia**, which NCA has not only come far in integrating the various thematic programmes of the country strategy, but also explored opportunities for co-localisation. NCA and partners have assessed how they could bring together the various programme activities into one bigger effort, which saw fruits in 2020. For example, the GBV

NON-NORWEGIAN INSTITUTIONAL GRANTS 2020



initiatives worked with the CRWASH programming in addressing for example women's participation in WASH committees and hygiene promotion. The FBCA worked closely with GBV programme to address the disproportionate effect of climate change on women. The integration of different activities has helped reduce cost, increase efforts, and ensure more focused outputs and outcomes.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

Both integrated programming and co-localisation are aligned with the 2019 organisational review, recommending focus and concentration. While it is important for NCA and Norad to maintain a strong focus on strengthening a variety of civil society actors, NCA has in 2020 systematically assessed its partner portfolio using the new partnership assessment tool. As mentioned above, an important aspect is to consider needs and potential for scaling up in more than one thematic area targeting the same rights-holders. As pointed out in the organisational evaluation, a further concentration of the project portfolio is recommended ensuring the best possible impact of the resources available. At the end of 2020 therefore, NCA's Senior Management Team requested that the Department for International Programmes reviews its portfolio to ensure that:

1. NCA's country portfolio is not spread too thin.
2. Capacity and resources are adequate to support COs on compliance and programme quality.
3. NCA can invest in COs with growth potential both in terms of reaching rights-holders with quality programmes and strengthening civil society, but also in terms of access to revenue.

The review will be concluded by the end of June 2021.

As shown in the figure above, non-Norwegian institutional grants were ensured by NCA from a variety of donors. With a total value in 2020 of more than NOK 259 million, 38 % was committed by various UN agencies. Significant portions also derived from other ODA sources, ACT Alliance, and the EU.

In the last quarter of 2019 and first quarter of 2020, NCA's Department for International Programmes (DIP) undertook an exercise to assess the set-up of the department to ensure organisational efficiency. The main objective of the exercise was to make sure that the department structure is optimised to

deliver quality results within the architecture of NCA's Programme Framework 2020–2030, and on the expected deliverables to MFA, Norad and other donors. This process further aimed to secure that the department is fit for purpose to comply with standards, commitments, requirements, and new ways of working together and develop a plan for people and organisation. The process concluded in March 2020, and changes applied from 01 April 2020.

BUDGETING AND PROCUREMENT

As multiple grants from different donors finance NCA's projects, it is important for NCA to have a fair, consistent, transparent, and efficient distribution of common costs for all projects across grants. NCA has over the course of 2019–2020 established a Cost Allocation Policy (CAP) applying to all Cos, which took effect 01 January 2021. The policy and technical annex were shared with Norad in December 2020. Common costs are related the services and supervision of all projects and partners in a CO portfolio, which are shared and cannot be attributed to only one grant. The CAP model is cost-efficient in that it enables all projects to draw on the CO's common pool of services and expertise. In addition, it contributes to accurate budgeting and detailed follow-up of all costs by efficiently distributing shared direct costs across grants. Shared costs incurred at NCA's HO will also be subject to a slightly modified policy, which will be developed and implemented at a later stage.

NCA cost-efficiency measures implemented in 2020 within the area of procurement included a significant change in the way capacity building is provided to COs. Before the pandemic, training was mostly provided by NCA HO staff travelling to COs to conduct workshops and other training. This is now done online, with webinars conducted every two weeks for CO Logistics, Finance and Programme staff. A total of 21 webinars on a variety of topics were offered in 2020 with attendance of about 50 CO staff members per webinar. In 2020, NCA put further emphasis on local procurement of goods and services to the extent possible as this not only is cost-efficient, but also supports local markets and provides an income and increases a sense of ownership.

4.8 RISK MITIGATION AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The main risk factors affecting implementation in 2020 relate to insecurity, economic instability, degradation of infrastructure, natural disasters, fraud, corruption, and a shrinking space for civil society. All these were anticipated and included in the risk management matrixes both at country- and global level. The coup in **Mali**, as well as the Tigray crisis affecting both **Ethiopia** and **Sudan**, appeared suddenly and unexpected. Some countries also experienced sudden onset of natural disasters, including **Guatemala** (tropical storms), **Pakistan** (monsoon and flooding) and **Somalia** and **Ethiopia** (desert locust invasions).

COVID-19 imposed an exacerbation of current risks and introduced new and unexpected risks. These include the risk of infection for NCA staff and their family members; delayed implementation; restricted or no access to project areas; limited on-site project monitoring; lockdowns; and restrictions on gatherings hindering capacity building of partners and actions relying heavily on human contact. Another negative impact is the reduced information authenticity regarding disease prevalence, cyber interference and bullying as a direct result of increased use of digital platforms.

The above-mentioned known and new risk factors have had the following unintended consequences for the cross-cutting issues:

ANTI-CORRUPTION - As stated in NCA's anti-corruption report 2020¹ most of NCA programme countries are rated high on risk for corruption, which present numerous and complex challenges. NCA meets these challenges with continuous training of all staff, strict adherence to financial procedures, and close and frequent monitoring of local partners. NCA Head Office (HO) completed two anti-corruption reviews (**Burundi** and **Zambia**), the findings of which are followed up by HO senior management in 2021 annual assignment letters to each CO. Many resorted to remote project monitoring due to COVID-19 and/or conflict-related travel restrictions. To mitigate the risk this may pose for detecting irregularities, NCA reiterated its anti-corruption policy prior to signing agreements and at kick-off meetings. Where possible, staff visited partners to discuss the policy, and review documentation to ensure transparency.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE - Many of NCA's global programmes are designed to be climate smart. In particular, the CSEE and CRWASH programmes have strengthened NCA and partners' awareness and expertise in climate risk- and vulnerability mapping, development of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans and actions, and their application of practical environmental considerations. In **Pakistan**, COVID-19 measures led to negligence of medical waste in urban and semi-urban areas, which significantly overburdened existing resources and posed a grave threat to the health and wellbeing of local communities. NCA did community sensitisation around safe disposal of solid waste (facemasks and hand gloves) and training for local health and sanitary workers. In **Guatemala**, 27 communities in Quiché lost crops and housing and thus increased their vulnerability to the Corona virus and tropical storms. In **Ethiopia**, the war in Tigray had damaging effects on previously protected and rehabilitated project sites. Watersheds were damaged by bombing and deforestation, a result of displacement of communities and set-up of a military base.

HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES - The Human rights-based approach (RBA), the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), and the Do-no-harm principles were applied by NCA and its partners in all interventions, as part of NCA's reinforced conceptualisation on the cross-cutting issues as programme sustainability standards. Several COs (**Afghanistan, DRC, Sudan, South Sudan**) designed interventions that ensured inclusion of people with disabilities, both through raising awareness and practical facilitation of their participation.

The **regional Southern Africa** programme reports of violation of human rights justified by the government in the quest to enforce strict COVID-19 lockdown measures. In **Myanmar**, 2020 marked an escalation of conflicts, which coupled with COVID-19 added to a further deterioration of the human rights situation in the country. **Guatemala** saw an increase in evictions of rural farming communities and more than 1,000 acts of aggression reported against community leaders defending natural resources in their territories. Assassinations and assassination-attempts were directed at collectives and leaders demanding the nationalisation of the power supply in the country. In **Pakistan**, the government introduced restrictive laws limiting the operations of CSOs particularly those working exclusively on GBV issues.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY - In many countries the pandemic has put additional stress on women and increased their vulnerability. Restrictions on movement, lack of access to healthcare facilities and reduced income opportunities have impacted women economically and socially, further widening the gender gap. Prevalence of GBV increased in **Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan**, and **Guatemala**, as women have had to spend even more time at home, with their perpetrators who are often a relative or intimate partner. In **Malawi**, the limited presence in the communities of those who assist vulnerable women, resulted in fewer cases of abuse reported. Malawi also saw a 25% increase in teenage pregnancies, due to school closures.

In **Ethiopia**, cultural norms restricting women's participation in CRWASH were further exacerbated as COVID-19 restrictions hindered planned community discussions, important arenas for awareness-raising about the importance of gender equality and women's involvement in for example WASH matters. Violation of women's rights have also been among the unintended effects of the conflicts prevalent in **Ethiopia** and **Mali**. In addition to deaths, destruction of property and displacement of civilians, armed conflicts exposed women to GBV as rape is used as weapon of war. Women's vulnerability increases if they cannot carry out daily tasks for fear of physical or sexual assault. In **Mali**, schools have become unsafe for girls, because radical groups are hostile to their education.

In **Guatemala**, criminalisation of human rights defenders has affected women of the project areas, as they are more actively engaged in protecting natural resources. Five women community leaders were accused of serious offenses that may entail imprisonment. In **Pakistan**, the government introduced restrictive laws limiting operations of CSOs working exclusively on GBV issues.

On a positive note, in **Sudan**, the regime-change contributed to an enabling environment for increased participation of women, as key stakeholders have become more acceptive of their engagement. NCA took advantage of this and is seeing the positive effects.



How to prepare for the unexpected? Locust invasions in 2020 hit Somalia and Ethiopia especially hard. Photo: Dai Kurokawa/NTB

¹ <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/contentassets/05484ae5f7784a5cbff8aaa0f452b5ce/anti-corruption-report-2020---pdf.pdf>



Reflections from Angola. Photo: Håvard Bjelland



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