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The Just Future Alliance:



 **JUST  
FUTURE**

**PEACEFUL  
SECURE &  
INCLUSIVE  
SOCIETIES**

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# 1. General introduction

This report serves as the third Annual Report for the Strategic Partnership Just Future (hereafter JF). The Just Future programme started in January 2021, for a period of five years. It is implemented in six countries (Afghanistan, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali, Niger and South Sudan), and at the international level. The programme is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) under the Power of Voices policy framework. The Strategic Partnership is implemented by an alliance of six consortium partners (ASSN, Cordaid, Search for Common Ground, TLO, WANEP and WIPC), three research institutes (RVI, SIPRI and VVI) and network organisation CSPPS, and 38 civil society organisations in the six programme countries, in collaboration with MFA as strategic partner.

The main objective of the Just Future Alliance (JFA) is to strengthen the capacity of civil society to lobby and advocate for the interests of citizens and to hold those in power accountable. The partnership aims to contribute to strengthening the social contract between citizens and the state and social cohesion in fragile contexts, with legitimate and effective policies, systems and practices providing citizens with security and justice and responsive services. To contribute to the SDG16 and 2030 Agenda the JFA puts a strong focus on capacity strengthening of civil society organisations promoting people centred security, customary and informal justice mechanisms and inclusion of women, youth and other marginalised groups in political decision-making and peace processes.

In 2023 the context of the programme changed significantly, with a coup d'état in Niger, the departure of MINUSMA in Mali, which had an important impact on the role and influence of JF stakeholders such as the EU, ECOWAS, etc. Civic space further decreased, most notably in Afghanistan, Mali and Niger. Responding to these shifts, the JF alliance intensified continuous context analysis, adjusted lobby and advocacy strategies and engaged in discussions regarding the role of civil society in restrictive environments. In the specific context of Mali and Niger, under military regimes during the second half of 2023, advocacy efforts on sensitive topics touching on governance, human rights, security, and elections, have a potential for raising divergent opinions with teams or across the alliance. We have discussed these issues in a Consultative and Reflection Workshop in Accra.

Building on the respective strengths of its partners the JFA has made a significant difference in the programme countries and in policy discussions as well as policy documents at the international level. As consortium, we were able to bring local realities and needs to the table of powerholders. The JFA has contributed to open and inclusive political dialogues by promoting and putting into practice people centred and inclusive approaches at the local and national levels, safeguarding civic space, and ensuring the meaningful inclusion of women and youth in security, justice and peace related decision-making processes. The JF programme has contributed to supporting local civil society in navigating the difficult political space in influencing security, justice and peacebuilding. Where strategic, possible and needed the voices of local partner organisations were amplified at regional and international levels.

In the programme countries, aligned with our analysis indicating the increasing importance of amplifying the voices of the people themselves to drive policy and practice changes, our emphasis was on enhancing the active engagement of JF constituencies, including youth, women, and IDPs, in lobbying and advocating for their interests. Notably, women and youth were able to address local security concerns with the authorities, resulting in tangible solutions, as seen in Mali and South Sudan. Building on JF alliance research and capacity strengthening on L&A, CSOs successfully influenced policies and practices on security, justice, and inclusive decision-making processes at both local and national levels.

At the international level, emphasis was placed on connecting local partners to international lobby and advocacy initiatives, enabling them to engage with bodies such as the African Union, ECOWAS, the EU and the UN. Leveraging JF analysis and evidence, as an alliance we advocated for people centred security, social cohesion, human rights, YPS, and the necessity for continuous dialogue with civil society. Through its activities and by using its networks, the JF alliance effectively ensured inclusion of civil society in international processes and dialogues.

We have contributed to elevating the issue of civic space which is of growing concern in Just Future countries in the Sahel. This was achieved by amplifying the perspectives of stakeholders from the "Global South", including bringing panellists to the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development and facilitating the participation of partners from programme countries in conferences and meetings held in Brussels or The Hague. Additionally, we have been proactive in raising awareness about the potential further erosion of civic space by the international community, specifically when sanctions impact funding for civil society organisations. Despite the increasingly restrictive

environments in the programme countries, the JF programme has contributed to safeguarding space for CSOs to operate and influence policies and practices.

Capacity strengthening based on annual plans developed by our partners, occurred through a diverse range of methods and topics. These included training, coaching sessions, reflective discussions, exchange workshops and knowledge sharing initiatives on conflict sensitivity, lobby and advocacy strategy development, preparation of speaking engagements, communication strategies and plans, understanding of international actors such as the EAC, AU, international processes such as the UPR, southern leadership and MEL. Significant progress has been achieved by the JFA in terms of policy and political analysis. This advancement has facilitated more substantial discussions regarding the content of updated strategies and plans.

The JF alliance continued with its learning agenda on the inclusion of constituencies in lobby and advocacy, through an exchange workshop, a deep dive session and the development of a tip sheet titled Meaningful Participation of Constituencies in JFA Advocacy. This helped us to improve our work on the engagement of women, youth and IDPs.

Southern leadership and locally led development remained an important topic in the programme. As a result of an exchange workshop between the 6 programme countries and partners on southern leadership, further action plans were made to put southern leadership in practice.

In 2023 we also organised the Mid Term Review which provided many recommendations which were discussed and followed up on.

The year report starts with a brief analysis of the contextual factors impacting the implementation of our activities, including an overview of the changing contexts in the six programme countries, regionally and internationally (Chapter 2). In Chapter 3 we present the key results achieved in 2023 per outcome area, specifying achievements per country as well as for the international efforts. Chapter 4 focuses on capacity strengthening. In Chapter 5 we report progress on crosscutting themes such as governance, southern leadership, sustainability, risk management and communication. Chapter 6, reflects on some of the key lessons learnt in the past year, concluding with an overview on progress made on the basket indicators. Finally, the report presents four case stories (Annex 1) and a list of publications by JF partners (Annex 2).

## 2. Context update Just Future

### 2.1 Context changes affecting implementation

#### Regional and international context

2023 marked the halfway point to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the world was severely impacted by escalating humanitarian crises due to geopolitical conflicts and their consequences. Next to the protracted recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is challenged by the increased pressures of the climate crisis, sharpening food insecurity, humanitarian crises and mass displacement. Geopolitical tensions are intensifying at the global and regional level challenging international security and multilateralism. In this context, the global conflict scene has diverted donor funds to military expenditures rather than allocating resources towards conflict prevention, peacekeeping and improving people's lives.

The political landscape in many fragile and conflict-affected settings and states has further deteriorated, leading to increased restrictions on civil society actors and human rights defenders due to measures taken by duty bearers. There is widespread destabilisation as we are witnessing democratic backsliding globally and expanding authoritarianism and violent extremism, including in the Just Future programme countries. The Sahel region experienced spillover-effects following the withdrawal of MINUSMA in Mali and the coup d'état in Niger, while political tensions surrounded the presidential elections in the DRC.

The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July and the SDG Summit in September were key moments in advancing on the overall 2030 Agenda, but also on SDG16. Moving towards 2024, SDG16 will undergo review at the HLPF and the Summit of the Future, presenting opportunities to enhance cooperation and address gaps in global governance through an action-oriented Pact for the Future. This initiative aims to demonstrate global solidarity towards fostering inclusive societies, sustainable development and international peace and security.

#### Country contexts

##### Afghanistan

The year 2023 remained to be a challenging year for the Just Future team in Afghanistan, followed by ongoing socio-political upheaval and tenacious challenges to peace and stability. Since the regime change in 2021, communities have faced jobs losses, economic instability, and uncertainty about the future, fostering widespread insecurity and fear. Despite the Taliban's assertion of control and the end of major armed conflicts, socio-political reconciliation remains elusive. Former government officials and members of the security forces continue to face persecution and harassment, despite assurances of amnesty from the Taliban leadership. The absence of tangible progress towards inclusive governance and political representation has fuelled discontent and disillusionment among segments of the population, contributing to heightened tensions and uncertainty.

Against this backdrop, the civic space for NGOs and CSOs remained exceedingly challenging as the de facto authorities disrupted programs and operations. The marginalisation and restriction of women has persisted across various facets of public life, including access to secondary and higher education, restricted movements, and diminished employment opportunities, particularly in the humanitarian sector.

At provincial and national levels, significant shifts in conflict dynamics have emerged, driven by changes in power structures and resource allocation. The transition from the Republic to Taliban rule has revived tribal and sub-tribal rivalries, particularly over natural resources such as water and land. Disputes over resource access and distribution have escalated, exacerbating existing grievances and increasing the risk of localised conflicts.

##### Burundi

Efforts aimed at advocating for the rights of the general population, particularly the vulnerable groups and ensuring access to justice face several significant obstacles. These include lack of legal knowledge, limited access to legal and judicial information, slow judicial processes, and the financial burdens associated with the justice process. In terms of participation in decision-making processes and inclusive peace, the major challenges in 2023 were primarily related to incomplete legal frameworks for participation and protection.

Civil society organisations, community-based organisations, social movements and informal activist groups play an important role in aggregating and articulating the needs and demands of the most excluded communities. However, they encounter challenges such as limited capacities and a lack of gender sensitivity among certain authorities.

Although there has been an improvement in the openness of civic space in certain respects, many challenges persist. These include the implementation of certain restrictive measures, particularly on the organisation of workshops at local level in the local language, the validation of terms of reference by the authorities, freedom of expression, and the closure of the bank accounts of certain civil society organisations that campaign for the defence of human rights, all of which limit civic space in the country.

## **DRC**

The situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo became even more complex in 2023. It marked the constitutional end of President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi's first 5-year term of office, and after many uncertainties due to the unpreparedness of the CENI, presidential, national and provincial legislative elections were held on December 20, 2023. The incumbent president, Félix Tshisekedi, was declared the election winner despite numerous flagrant irregularities. Earlier, in November, the DRC government and MONUSCO endorsed a disengagement plan aimed at gradually withdrawing the UN mission. The political context was also marked by tensions between the DRC and Rwanda, whose Rwandan-backed M23 occupation of certain areas and territories in the DRC accentuated the political and military crisis in the country.

The civic space for civil society, journalists and activists remains restricted and surveyed, including Just Future. While the UN Joint Human Rights Office for the DRC (BCNUDH) reported a 12% decrease in human rights violations compared to 2022, regions like Ituri, Nord-Kivu, and Sud-Kivu, where the JF programme operates, have experienced deteriorating human rights situations due to continuous attacks by various armed groups, including ADF, CODECO, M23, as well as Maï-Maï, Nyatura, and Banyamulenge groups.

Insecurity has considerably worsened, primarily due to armed conflicts resulting in multiple violations and abuses of human rights and breaches of international humanitarian law in certain regions of the country. These protracted conflicts exacerbate the precarious situation faced by the most marginalised populations, especially women, who face significant obstacles in terms of economic prospects and empowerment, including high levels of violence and discrimination.

## **Mali**

The political context in 2023 was marked by the departure of MINUSMA at the request of the Malian military authorities. The authorities claim that the gradual return of the Defence and Security Forces (FDS) restores territorial integrity and the sovereign missions of the State. Meanwhile, the authorities have strengthened relations with Russia that offers protection with mercenaries from the Africa Corps (formerly known as the Wagner Group), but which is also posing an additional security threat for communities in rural areas.

The humanitarian situation in Mali continues to be marked by a combination of several shocks that are having a negative impact on the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations. On the humanitarian front, the organisations and agencies concerned continue to face enormous difficulties in gaining access to populations at risk, whose situation deteriorates quite easily as a result of insecurity and the absence of administration. Armed conflict, particularly in the north of the country, and the dynamics in the centre, continue to generate large-scale population movements, with major repercussions for women and children in particular.

The military political transition revolved to tensions with foreign forces in the country and a new strategic dynamic with the creation of the Alliance des États du Sahel (AES). The power transition also marks a worrying narrowing of civic space, characterised by greater control over NGOs, a reduction in freedom of expression, freedom of the press, the right to information and the right to freedom of assembly and association, and the arrest and dissolution of certain associations and journalists.

## **Niger**

The coup d'état of July 26 2023, is unquestionably the major political event to have characterised the change in the context in Niger. The regime change led to ECOWAS sanctions towards Niger. The security context was marked by abuses by non-state armed groups and trafficking of all kinds (arms, narcotics, currency). This security and political context is further destabilising the populations in the programme intervention area by undermining their security, social cohesion and the effective governance of state institutions. The advent of the military to power has led to restrictions on civic space (freedom of expression, suspension of political party activities, ban on demonstrations),

with almost all marches systematically banned, the dissolution of democratic institutions, and an increase in terrorist attacks with heavy loss of life.

This political situation is not without consequences for Just Future activities. As a result of social, economic and political instability, access to justice for populations in certain regions is limited and the humanitarian situation is also deteriorating, with influxes of displacement of populations. Next to this, civic space has consequently been restricted, particularly for civil society critical of the transition regime. Yet, it should be noted that many civil society organisations were at the forefront of mobilising the population for three months to demand the departure of the French troops. When the new transitional authorities took over, they invited national CSOs to discuss the situation in the country to which quite a few CSOs responded.

## South Sudan

South Sudan is still severely hit by a dire humanitarian crisis, which has exacerbated high influxes of internal displacement, external migration to neighbouring countries, but also of refugee returnees mostly from Sudan due to the on-going conflict in the country. Since the conflict started in April 2023, 475.549 individuals were recorded crossing the border from Sudan to South Sudan, of those, 54.505 people arrived in December alone. Food insecurity remains a pressing issue, exacerbated by climate-related shocks such as flooding and dry spells, with an estimated 5.78 million people, accounting for 46% of the population, facing acute food insecurity.

The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) of 2018 has played a crucial role in steering South Sudan towards peaceful elections in 2024. It also serves as a catalyst for security sector reform, the development of the Constitution, the establishment of a robust justice system and timely establishment and operationalisation of key electoral bodies like the National Elections Commission (NEC). As the peace agreement between warring parties continues to hold thus far, there is a new wave of intercommunal violence springing up. This is observed in the fighting between the communities of Abyei and Twic County of Warrap State which continued to take lives despite the government's efforts to mediate the conflict through a joint committee. In Jonglei, the intercommunal violence between the Murle, Nuer and Dinka led to loss of lives, property, and displacement. Farmer-herder conflicts continued to create insecurity and community safety issues in Central and Western Equatoria states.

Next to this, civic space continues to shrink where activists, CSOs, journalists are experiencing threats, intimidations, detentions, and disappearances. No case of arrest and/or disappearance was reported amongst the Just Future partners, however, the shrinking space poses a risk to Just Future lobby and advocacy works.

## Civic space

Restrictions on civic space persist as a significant challenge for civil society organisations within the JF alliance. The year 2023 posed unprecedented trials for civil society, marked by a surge in conflicts, heightened restrictions, repressions and coup d'états, all of which hampered the work of civil society's role in holding governments accountable. Polarising narratives from state and non-state actors are shrinking the civic space, disabling civil society from carrying out its role as partners in development and in holding duty bearers accountable. This was evident in events such as the retrieval of the MINUSMA in Mali and the regime change in Niger during June and July 2023, respectively.

Data from CIVICUS show that over a third of the world's population resides in countries with a "closed" civic space, marking "the highest percentage since CIVICUS began systematically monitoring these conditions in 2018". Five of the Just Future countries remain categorised as "repressed", after two years of Taliban takeover, Afghanistan remains in a "closed" space repressing and persecuting civil society.

In the Just Future programme countries, state surveillance over political activists and CSOs, particularly those monitoring human rights or advocating for an independent judiciary system, is notably robust. JF partners along with associated CBOs and CSOs are keenly aware of the sensitivities of their work in the different contexts, as well as of the potential repercussions if boundaries are crossed. The JFA has adopted contextualised approaches that maintain crucial space for dialogue, advocacy, and accountability, even as the space for more traditional activism is closing in several countries. The JF programme has mitigating measures, like security trainings, in place, and continuously seeks to use its influence at the local, national and international levels to defend the safety of local CSOs.

The current global trends clearly demonstrate the imperative for the Dutch government to maintain its emphasis on fostering a vibrant and diverse civil society capable of serving as a countervailing power against authoritarianism, repression and injustice. We hope and expect that this emphasis will be sustained in the government's mandate.

## 3. Advocacy results

### 3.1 People-centred security (outcome 1)



Panel of the AU Policy Framework on SSR conference

#### Introduction

In the fragile contexts where Just Future is active, security is a key concern for the constituencies of the programme. At the local level, the programme supports local structures that facilitate dialogue between communities and security actors, such as community security councils, security advisory committees and police community relations committees. Monitoring the security situation, for instance by the security observatories, provides important input for addressing the security situation, which is complemented with research. The worsened security situation in the programme countries has increased the necessity for complementing national and local efforts with international advocacy at the level of AU, EU and UN. The programme has amplified the voice and perspective of civil society actors for people-centred security policies.

#### Research

As part of advocacy for a roadmap for developing the National Security Policy in DRC, two studies were carried out by ASSN and partners in DRC: on the “*prison system in the DRC*” and “*gender issues within the Congolese National Police*”. Further, ASSN published research conducted by its Malian JFA partners documenting the security advisory committees (CSS). The Observatory for Security Sector Governance (OGS) in Niger produced three monitoring reports of the security situation and governance in the three regions (Tillabéri, Tahoua and Maradi).

SIPRI has carried out research on the Effectiveness of Civilian CSDP Missions involved in SSR, as well as the research on the transitioning of the SSR activities of UNMISS in South Sudan and MONUSCO in DRC, allowing civil society perspectives to be shared with relevant stakeholders and fed into the mandate renewal process. Given the deteriorating security context, it was important for the JF partners in DRC to properly analyse the context to ensure a smooth transition of SSR activities after the departure of MONUSCO. In December the findings of the MONUSCO study were also presented ahead of mandate renewal to the penholder and UN Member States at a roundtable organised at the Netherlands Permanent Representation mission in New York. The paper on MONUSCO is scheduled for publication early 2024.

In Mali and Niger security perceptions surveys were carried out bi-annually as planned. The surveys and findings were presented in New York to the MINUSMA IOT and Sahel teams, the UN Secretariat and to Member States at a roundtable organised by the Netherlands mission. At the roundtable also the UNMISS SSR transition report was presented. Earlier the paper was presented to the UNMISS SSR Working Group meeting, and meetings were also held with the penholder of UNMISS' mandate to feed into this mandate renewal process in March 2023.

Furthermore, SIPRI finalised research on the EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUPOL Afghanistan. And, although not yet published, findings from the study on the Effectiveness of Civilian CSDP missions have already served as direct input for an EPLO/CSDN event on the EU-wide Strategic Framework on SSR and for an expert level discussion organised by the European Centre of Excellence for Civilians in Crisis.

## International advocacy

The mandates of UN peacekeeping missions have been under discussion in 2023. Cordaid and SIPRI presented the research report on UNMISS's exit strategy to key stakeholders, including UNMISS senior officials, the Dutch Embassy in Juba, and the US Representation before the UN Security Council, which has been instrumental in advocating for a strategic shift. Our advocacy highlighted the essential need for political support, adequate funding, and a significant role for civil society in the transitional phase. We are encouraged to see elements and language of our recommendations in the UNMISS's mandate resolution, notably in the emphasis on community engagement and the integration of SSR and DRR into broader political and development agendas.

A collaborative effort between Cordaid, SIPRI and WIPC conducted in New York, helped to bring local perspectives on the global stage. Together with the Dutch Permanent Representation, the JFA jointly organised a roundtable discussion on MONUSCO's transition in the DRC, attracting significant participation from UN Security Council members, as well as representatives from other EU Member States and UN agencies. The roundtable, organised just a few days before the voting of the new resolution of MONUSCO's mandate, allowed us to reiterate the importance of consulting civil society organisations, particularly those led by women. Leveraging our extensive global network (including FONGI in Kinshasa, EurAc in Brussels, and Caritas in New York), this advocacy mission facilitated vital connections for Just Future's continued advocacy on MONUSCO in 2024.

Working closely with Crisis Action, the JFA supported the People's Coalition for the Sahel, which in the current uncertain situation in Mali and Niger has become an even more relevant means for civil society to maintain dialogue on security issues, with specific focus on civilian protection, human rights, and addressing the root causes of violent conflict. The Coalition has also done advocacy work at the ECOWAS level, including urging the regional organisation to take leadership on Sahelian issues (particularly as international partners have withdrawn).

Another key intervention is the continued strengthening of the Hybrid Security Sector Governance Observatories (HSGOs) that is making data and policies on security governance available in Mali, Niger and South Sudan, and are providing updated information on the continental and regional security architecture. The key developments in 2023 were the complete retooling of the Mali section of the HSGO website and commencement of work on the South Sudan section (the DRC will be added in 2024).

The JFA led by ASSN co-hosted a conference at the African Union Commission to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the AU Policy Framework on SSR, under the theme "*A Decade of Implementation: Successes, Challenges, and Perspectives for the Future*". For local partners from Burundi, DRC, Mali, Niger, and South Sudan the conference was a rare opportunity to learn about the regional SSR instruments and to showcase the work they are doing at the country level. Just Future participants at the AU SSR conference emphasised a people-centred approach to SSR that empowers excluded populations (such as CBOs, women, youth and IDPs) and places much greater emphasis on inclusive, bottom-up approaches to SSR planning and implementation. ASSN prepared the draft conference report and has continued to engage with the AUC in preparing the final report for presentation to the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), tentatively scheduled for May 2024.

At the request of the United Nations SSR Unit, ASSN participated in the annual United Nations Inter-Agency SSR Practitioners Workshop from 5 – 9 June in New York. A sign of recognition of ASSN and Just Future was the subsequent invitation to join the UNDP's Advisory Group (AG) on People-centred Security (PCS), an informal technical level working group sharing experiences and discussing new approaches to security to guide the work of the UNDP and its partners.

WANEP convened a coalition of regional CSOs and local CSOs from Niger, Mali and the other countries under military regimes in West Africa discussed how curtailment of democracy affects inclusive and accountable governance and

security decision-making. Joint priorities were formulated, and agreements were made for future support and coordination.

Joining efforts with 33 other European NGOs, Cordaid provided input for EurAc's statement on the renewed EU Great Lakes strategy calling for the urgent nomination of an EU Special Representative (EUSR) on the Great Lakes to facilitate dialogue processes between stakeholders and re-affirm the willingness of the EU to actively commit to peace in the region. Subsequently, a series of meetings of meetings was organised with Permanent Representatives of EU Member States in Brussels working on Africa (COAFR) to ensure that the appointment of an EUSR remained on the EU's agenda. Additionally, Cordaid provided input to EurAc's collective stance on the urgency resolution of the European Parliament concerning the escalating situation in Eastern Congo.

Search's international advocacy aimed at embedding people-centred approaches in EU policies amid the growing EU focus on hard security. Several positive outcomes were achieved. As part of a wider advocacy effort coordinated by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), Search contributed with JFA analysis and evidence into the development of the new EU Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Compact. This included feeding necessary elements into the European Parliament's official position. The annual report on the implementation of Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP-3) includes Search-proposed references to human security, YPS, impact-oriented evaluation, and conflict-sensitivity. The Annual Report was a useful first step in getting the Parliament to endorse some key principles, which later then fed into discussions on the new Civilian CSDP Compact itself. The European Parliament's resolution on CSDP and other EU civilian security assistance now includes key language concerning local needs and civil society engagement, and relations between security forces and civilians. In addition, the annual report on the implementation of CSDP called for young people to be integrated in design and implementation of DDR actions. Working with EPLO partners, Search made the case for similar priorities with key officials in the EEAS and Council.

The new EU Civilian Compact now includes commitments on better human rights due diligence, systematically applying conflict sensitivity and do-no-harm, more regular and inclusive cooperation and dialogue with civil society, impact-focused evaluation, mainstreaming gender, and promoting Youth, Peace and Security. This outcome is very important in terms of shaping future missions like the European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Sahel. The fact that Search was invited to feed into the new monitoring and evaluation framework for the Civilian Compact demonstrates that our contribution was particularly noticed by the EU.

Cordaid significantly contributed to the Partos response, endorsed by CARE Netherlands and PAX, on the Dutch Africa Strategy through a critical analysis and recommendations on its security and justice sections. Through strategic dialogues and follow-up sessions, Cordaid has highlighted the necessity of inclusive, community-centred security strategies that acknowledge and address the underlying causes of conflict and insecurity.

The strong engagement of Search with the Belgian government in the run-up to their renewed Sahel strategy led to the inclusion of social cohesion as an important element in the strategy, which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) explicitly recognised as coming from our input. As a result, Search was pro-actively invited to speak at the International Donor Group on Sahel and civic space in December (chaired by Belgium and uniting top OECD-DAC donors) and how to support civilians in the Sahel, bringing in input from JFA countries.

## Countries

Below is a summary of achievements for DRC, Mali, Niger and South Sudan. In Afghanistan and Burundi, our efforts do not focus on outcome 1.

### DRC

The programme focused mainly on two objectives in 2023: advocacy on implementation of the law on the status of career staff of the national police (PNC), and advocacy on provincial funds for the operation of the community security councils (CLSPs).

In 2023, it was urgent to advocate for the adoption by the provincial governors of a draft decree on the CLSP Fund, because previous advocacy for CLSP budgets were hampered for lack of a budget line made available at the provincial level for operation and implementation of local security plans. Work with the CLSP continued from 2022. Activities carried out in 2023 aimed at increasing the participation of communities in the exchanges and debates for the implementation and consideration of local security plans. The JF partners and constituencies strengthened the visibility of suffering populations through townhall meetings, media campaigns, and other actions to show decision-makers the importance of urgently funding CLSPs to reduce insecurity for local communities. Through strengthening

the involvement of decision-makers at the local level like district heads and mayors, as well as a strong participation of CBOs, Neighbourhood forums and CLSPs have been functioning and meeting regularly. Many of the recommendations (60%) in the search for solutions to security problems made by local populations had been considered as can be seen in the documentation of the CLSPs in Sud-Kivu and Kinshasa.

Together with local partners, we were able to direct our lobbying and advocacy actions in the direction of supporting the development and implementation of the law on the status of PNC staff careers. The social and working conditions and careers of the police officer are important given their responsibilities towards the population. Thanks to the advocacy during which JF brought in specifications from CBOs 4 ministerial decrees have been signed by the Deputy 1st Minister and Minister of the Interior, which concern the functioning of the Supreme Council of the Police, the Regulations for the protection of institutions and the mandates of the police academy.

Experts from JF partners also participated in the budget process (the 2024 Finance Bill), working in collaboration with the Ministries of the Budget and the Interior, as well as various organs of the National Assembly. As a result, several recommendations were included, and the overall budget was raised compared to previous years.

## **Mali**

The JFA has focused its main advocacy actions on the support and revitalisation of security advisory committees and on awareness-raising campaigns to enable civil society organisations and community-based organisations to participate in security governance.

With the support of WANEP and ASSN, Mali partners have established and revitalised the security advisory committees (CSS) in communes across the Gao and Mopti regions. The CSS is made up of actors from the security and justice sectors, formal and customary authorities, and members of civil society, including women and youth. The CCS meet once a month to assess the security situation from a human security perspective and issue recommendations to the local executive and security sector governance actors. Security Sector Reform was also at the heart of a conference on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the SSR policy framework, where Just Future Mali shared its experience of supporting the CCS. In response to advocacy at the local and regional level security authorities have taken actions to strengthen the security apparatus. Notably, security patrols have been intensified to facilitate population mobility. According to perception surveys conducted by SIPRI in the regions of Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu, an average of 58% of respondents believe that security has improved in these localities.

JF partners have popularised the national strategy for security sector reforms and its national action plan (2022-2024) through social networks, television, radio and a mass conference in Bamako. The population has been widely informed to strengthen trust and to boost frameworks for consultation between security actors at the local and regional levels.

Partners have carried out activities to establish mechanisms for monitoring and progress in security governance. The Observatories, a citizen monitoring instrument supported by ASSN and its local partners, monitored the evolution of the legal and institutional framework for security governance at the local, regional and national level.

WANEP has led an information and awareness campaign that was organised in collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner for Security Sector Reform (CRSS) and the implementing body of the National Council for Security Sector Reform (CNRSS). About 117 people discussed the national SSR strategy and 2022-2024 action plan. Discussions took place on the community policing approach and the importance of collaboration between the population and the SDF.

WANEP and Cordaid supported local partner CAD in their advocacy actions with local authorities in the regions of Bandiagara, Mopti and Djenné, Timbuktu, Diré and Niafunké to find the commitment for the participation of women and young people in decision-making bodies in the security sector and to increase support for women's security initiatives in the region. In Timbuktu, the programme organised a political dialogue with security sector actors on the agreement for peace and reconciliation resulting from the Algiers process to strengthen security at the regional level and better prepare the next elections.

## **Niger**

Despite the abrupt changes in Niger, Just Future partners have been able to continue activities.

The Observatory for Security Sector Governance (OGS) carried out regular monitoring of the situation and governance of the security sector in eight departments and communes of three regions (Tillabéri, Tahoua and

Maradi). In total 16 weekly notes of analysis of the evolution of the political and security situation were produced and three detailed OGS reports were made (see list of publications in annex 2), but the change in the political context in July 2023 did not favour the use of these reports for advocacy towards the authorities. However, the main results of the reports have been widely disseminated to the public via internet and have been shared with CSOs, the Embassy of the Netherlands and others. The third report featured on YouTube with a video explaining the main results.

In Niger the Citizens' Coalition for the Sahel, a regional network supported by JF, has undertaken several activities at both national and local levels, spanning regions, departments and municipalities. The coalition held a workshop aimed at establishing collaboration and operational methods for the implementation of the commitments made collectively in Dakar in June 2022. This activity brought together international, regional and local organisations. At the local level, the coalition advocated with prefects, mayors, departmental and communal authorities to address the specific security needs of the most excluded groups and advocate for enhanced civilian protection in conflict affected areas. Many local CSOs, including 8 women's organisations and 8 youth organisations were engaged in these interventions.

## South Sudan

Women and youth groups who monitor and report security concerns have identified potential conflict and addressed these with traditional leaders and security actors. Through regular meetings with the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) they have prevented conflicts from escalating and discussed GBV cases effectively, thus playing a crucial role in bringing communities together early on. Women and youth conflict monitoring meetings at County level resulted in concrete solutions to concerns including night patrols by police to tackle the issue of gangs, training of girls and the formation of water management committees at the boreholes to manage water point conflicts.

An important milestone was incorporation of amendments to the national security act, which is currently awaiting its final reading. JF partner SSLS conducted an analysis of the act's compliance with the constitution and International human rights standards, resulting in the removal of the clauses that were not in line with fundamental principles of human rights and international law.

Further advocacy efforts targeted the National Legislative Assembly and Ministry of Justice to implement victim and survivor-centred legislation by the CTRH (Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing). A review of the draft bill was made with consideration for survivor-centred approach but is yet to be passed.

Advocacy was carried out by local women networks towards the women parliamentary caucus on the issues of insecurity caused by Murle community cattle raiders around Bor town. The selected lobby team met with 12 institutions including the Ministry of Peacebuilding, Ministry of Youth, Torit Municipal Council, State Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, and the Inter-Church Committee. The immediate response from the Municipality leadership was to step up night patrols in Bor town to combat gang criminal activities, but the advocacy continues as local security remains a large concern.

The partners hosted a Strategic Convening for Stakeholders on the status of security sector reform in South Sudan, bringing together 45 participants drawn from civil society, security institutions, regional bodies, UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations. The issues discussed touched on context updates on security and the SSR process, challenges derailing the SSR processes as well as opportunities for civil society engagement and participation in the SSR process. Furthermore, the Hybrid Security Observatory has been established in South Sudan with support from the African Security Sector Network, which serves as a repository and mechanism for documenting and security sector governance development and reforms.

## 3.2 Access to Justice (outcome 2)

### Introduction

In 2023 the Just Future programme mobilised collective efforts advocating for accessible and people-centred justice targeting legal reforms, community empowerment, and the promotion of peace in line with Agenda 2030. The programme contributed to key legal reforms, strengthened judicial infrastructure, and engaged communities in dialogue.

## Research



*Interview with a cattle keeper in South Kivu*

Several studies were carried out to inform and support programming and lobby and advocacy. Research in South Sudan on land and justice by VVI was finalised. VVI gave an online presentation of their final research report "*Land and Justice pathways in South Sudan*" to the South Sudan partners in the Just Future alliance, and partners and researchers discussed what the recommendations of the report meant for lobbying and advocacy work on access to justice in South Sudan.

In DRC, VVI conducted research on the lobby process for livestock legislation. The law provides a legal framework for the livestock sector and could help to reduce conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. The report will be finalised and disseminated in 2024. The findings will be used to inform the JF alliance for further actions and lobby and advocacy work.

ICTJ produced the seminal report "*Toward Victim-Centered Change: Integrating Transitional Justice into Sustainable Peace and Development*". ICTJ also conducted research on Addressing Intercommunal Violence Through Customary Justice in South Sudan. The findings were presented to the partners in December 2023, the final report will be disseminated in 2024.

Finally, Cordaid contributed to the production and dissemination of the report by the Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice (WGCIJ) "*Diverse Pathways to People-Centered Justice*". The report issues a groundbreaking call to action in the form of recommendations representing a new consensus on engagement with CIJ amongst key stakeholders in the global justice community.

## International Advocacy

In 2023 the collaborative efforts of Cordaid, TLO, and CSPPS, along with country partners, focused on advocacy for people-centred justice linked to peace and Agenda 2030's development goals. A critical event was the Community of Practice on Access to Justice, organised by Cordaid in Kigali in February. This initiative was pivotal in aligning advocacy efforts across levels and fostering active collaboration with strategic partners, such as the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was also instrumental in refining justice-related advocacy approaches and strengthening capacities, particularly focusing on strategic litigation and human rights mechanisms, such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The insights gained from the CoP catalysed the formation of an extensive coalition involving over 120 local and international CSOs in the DRC. This coalition undertook a major initiative to submit a shadow report for the 4th UPR Cycle, based on a series of consultations with Just Future's constituencies in DRC. The shadow report addresses key issues such as civic space, peace processes, participation of women and youth in elections, and transitional justice. This initiative significantly elevated the voices of community-based organisations, women's

groups, and other marginalised constituencies on a global platform. The submission of the shadow report to the UPR in March 2024 marks a critical milestone, showcasing the collective advocacy capabilities of Just Future and its partners and the coalition-building capacity of the programme.

Cordaid and CSPPS's participation in key global networks, including the Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice, Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, and the Global SDG16 Coalition, facilitated collaborative efforts on significant policy milestones in justice – also where they relate to other aspects of SDG16. Cordaid's main advocacy focus was on the need to engage on customary and informal justice systems and to strengthen and support transitional justice mechanisms to achieve SDG16. A pivotal moment in such efforts was the launch of the report "Diverse Pathways to People-Centered Justice" at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in October 2023. This initiative catalysed key UN Member States (The Netherlands, the US, Canada), UN agencies (UNDP), and international justice think tanks (Folke Bernadotte Academy; ODI; Namati). This initiative also constitutes a significant step in placing customary and informal justice at the centre of the global justice agenda. The participation of Just Future in the side event at the 2024 High Level Political Forum, organised by the Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice, is a tangible result of such efforts that will further the programme's continued advocacy on accelerating SDG16 in 2024.

A notable achievement of CSPPS was its work on the SDG16 Rome Conference, which culminated in the influential "If Not Now, Then When? - An urgent call for transformative SDG16+ commitments at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda" Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG16+. CSPPS spearheaded the consultation process for the declaration engaging with broad range of civil society actors. This declaration made a compelling call for immediate action towards peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Moreover, CSPPS's involvement in high-level forums, including the HLPF and the SDG Summit in New York, showcased its commitment to bridging local actions with global policymaking. These efforts emphasised the critical link between peace, justice and inclusion, engaging international donors and the g7+ group to highlight and address the interconnected challenges and needs in fragile contexts.

## Countries

### Afghanistan

Despite challenges posed by restrictive decrees on women's rights, Just Future in Afghanistan maintained its commitment to gender inclusion and empowerment. A core component of the project's advocacy efforts included the monitoring of informal justice system cases, notably Jirgas, to identify and document human rights violations. TLO along with its local partners SDO and AWEC, focused on amplifying the voices of Afghan citizens, especially women and youth. The programme facilitated a series of public dialogues and community engagements aimed at fostering a conducive civic space for advocacy and dialogue with de facto authorities.



TLO Roundtables: Legal empowerment through TV and radio discussions

Collaborative efforts with local CSOs and media further enhanced the capacity for identifying and reporting human rights violations. The project organised awareness-raising programs that emphasised human rights and the importance of education, leading to increased community awareness and advocacy for human rights protections. Despite the challenges mentioned above, Just Future demonstrated resilience and adaptability, highlighting the importance of community empowerment, local-level conflict resolution, and inclusive governance in fostering social cohesion and resilience amidst Afghanistan's increasingly restrictive civic space.

### Burundi

The programme's Access to Justice pillar in Burundi marked advancements in enhancing the legal rights of women, youth, and vulnerable groups. CSOs and marginalised groups effectively participated in conflict resolution mechanisms, influencing decisions and promoting justice at the local level. Community dialogues involving justice actors, including traditional leaders and administrative officials, led to improved access to justice. These dialogues

were also instrumental in raising awareness among women on legal procedures, with the view to reduce gender-based violence cases by fostering awareness among community leaders.

The establishment of communication mechanisms and coordination meetings with penal chain actors aimed to improve access to justice for vulnerable groups. This initiative was complemented by capacity-building sessions on civil and criminal procedures, empowering communities with necessary legal knowledge and awareness on their fundamental freedoms and rights. An important outcome was the formation of a national committee by the Bar Associations of Bujumbura and Gitega, advocating for enhanced service delivery and governance within the legal system.

Though technical support and advocacy efforts the JF programme contributed to presidential decrees that promulgate revised judicial codes, which are marking a leap forward in legal reform. Furthermore, the adoption of the East African Community (EAC) treaty's provisions into case proceedings illustrated a commitment to integrating regional legal standards into Burundi's judiciary.

## DRC



*Lobby and advocacy strategy update workshop in DRC*

The programme saw remarkable achievements in advancing transitional justice, thanks to the collaborative efforts of DFJ, SOS-IJM, Cordaid, and allied stakeholders like Impunity Watch. A key objective of this initiative was the push for the Congolese government to embrace and enact a comprehensive national policy on transitional justice. The efforts centred on empowering victims of mass crimes through the formation of victim associations, development of a crime type database, and strengthening their advocacy capabilities. At community level, the consultations conducted by JF partners in Hunde, Hutu and Lendu communities raised awareness on Transitional Justice processes which contributed to a reduction in tensions. The consultations helped representatives of victims of mass crimes to meet with the Minister of Justice, which led to the opening of a register to document violations of women's rights.

Through advocacy the JF programme has influenced substantial legislative progress in DRC. A milestone was the adoption by the National Assembly of a law pivotal for ensuring justice, cohesion, and security among farmers and pastoralists, which is now awaiting Senate approval and presidential endorsement. Other achievements included the Ministerial Council's adoption of a key decree to amend the National Fund for Reparations for Victims of Sexual Violence (FONAREV) and the President's ordinance appointing officials to this fund. Notable achievements also encompassed the creation of harmonised victim lists in South Kivu and effective dialogues with state actors and international missions to tackle legal challenges surrounding gender-based violence. These outcomes not only signify a forward momentum in legal and policy frameworks but also demonstrate the growing autonomy and engagement of constituencies in shaping a just future for the DRC.

## Mali

Local partners TRIJEUD, RENEDEP, and ADD supported by Cordaid focused their efforts on widespread information and awareness campaigns across radio, television, and social media, reaching out to vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons, to raise their awareness on their legal rights and justice services available to them. By

engaging directly with communities through local discussions and leveraging the power of digital advocacy with bloggers and online influencers, they have successfully broadened the discourse on justice access.

Advocacy efforts have contributed to operational improvements in the justice system, such as the increased presence of judges in the Gao region and the establishment of a new executive body for victim compensations. Furthermore, the recognition and integration of traditional justice mechanisms have seen tangible success, with traditional judges gaining legitimacy and preference among the population for their accessible and cost-effective resolutions.

## Niger

Initiatives led by ANDDH and TIMIDRIA focused on enhancing the legal framework and judicial infrastructure. They concentrated their advocacy on expediting the setup of departmental courts and on increasing the Ministry of Justice's funding in favour of the adoption of the draft Penal Code, which is taking into account 14 new articles criminalising slavery and discriminatory practices.

In October an important event was organised by TIMIDRIA that brought together justice stakeholders, the Ministries of Interior and Finance, local elected officials and community representatives for the operationalisation of departmental courts. This seminar underscored the lack of departmental courts in certain areas and rallied a commitment from all parties to prioritise funding for these courts. As a result, the Ministry of Finance pledged to consider a budget increase for the justice sector, aimed at activating existing court facilities and building new ones.

Through targeted information campaigns and sensitisation meetings culminating in a parliamentary workshop, TIMIDRIA managed to elevate anti-slavery legislation and the amendment of the penal code on the legislative agenda, securing strong support for legal reforms.

## South Sudan

Efforts on Access to Justice centred on leveraging community dialogues to enhance advocacy for youth, women, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Torit, Yei, and Kapoeta. The programme aimed to bridge the gap between vulnerable groups and justice actors, including traditional leaders and county commissioners, on access to justice. The dialogues provided platforms for direct interaction concerning women's rights and legal redress mechanisms, where justice actors imparted knowledge on legal procedures, particularly concerning gender-based violence, to the community members. The meetings culminated in heightened community awareness regarding GBV, evidenced by a marked decrease in GBV cases compared to the previous year, attributable to the proactive dissemination of anti-GBV messages by community leaders who participated in the dialogues.

## 3.3 Inclusive political decision-making and peace processes (outcome 3)



*Workshop improving the accessibility, responsiveness and accountability of security and justice institutions and an inclusive peace and political decision-making process*

## Introduction

There have been notable successes regarding the inclusion of constituencies, particularly women and youth, in decision making. Advocacy has been carried out for more representation around the elections held in DRC and the upcoming elections in South Sudan. In South Sudan legislation has been adopted to guarantee better inclusion of women. In Niger inclusion of vulnerable groups has been increased in conflict management structures and peace and security bodies, whereas in Burundi constituencies have effectively used their increased representation at local councils to influence local authorities. Youth representatives have raised their voices with the EU and ECOWAS.

## Research

In 2023, RVI finalised a research report on the role of women in authority in South Sudan and the behavioural norms and expectations that hinder gender equality in decision-making. The research, carried out in 2021-2022 aims to inform activities around inclusive decision-making and peace processes in South Sudan, such as R-ARCSS. In Burundi, Cordaid conducted a study evaluating the participation of women in decision-making, as well as a report on perceptions of security. In Niger, research focused on understanding the representation of young people, women, internally displaced persons and people living with disabilities in peace and security management at the community level.

## International advocacy



SDG16 Rome Conference

In 2023, the JFA advocacy efforts focused on electoral processes, with particular attention to the role of women and the general elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In close collaboration with the European Network for Central Africa (EurAc), Cordaid advocated for the European Union (EU) and its Member States to promote fundamental freedoms ahead of the elections, and to press for the setup of a permanent, decentralised consultation framework bringing together Congolese civil society organisations (CSOs) and political parties, with the aim to restore confidence in the electoral process. The recommendations that were put forward, were reflected in the public statement given by the EU Delegation in DRC. Embassies from 16 EU and non-EU countries reiterated their commitment to support the organisation of competitive, peaceful, inclusive, and transparent elections. The work in favour of more inclusive electoral processes also entailed creating spaces for activists to discuss the organisation of free and fair elections with policymakers, and issue recommendations for the meaningful political participation of women as a key element of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda.

Building on previous years' achievements, CSPPS continued focusing on SDG16 and its interlinked goals (SDG16+), leveraging its networks and partnerships to engage in multilevel advocacy. This involved taking an active part in high-level events such as the SDG16 Conference, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), and the SDG Summit, during which CSPPS organised a side event on "Delivering the SDGs through Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions". These conferences also saw the launch of advocacy products, such as *'If Not Now, Then When? An urgent call for transformative SDG16+ commitments at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda'* — a civil society declaration spearheaded by CSPPS in close cooperation with the Transparency, Accountability, and Participation (TAP) Network

—, and the “SDG 16+ at the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda” statement by the Global SDG 16+ Coalition. CSPPS also contributed to amplifying voices from Just Future stakeholders in Mali, notably by arranging for a representative of a Malian CSO to attend one of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding’s Steering Committee meeting. Lastly, with the “Unboxing Localisation” learning trajectory (organised in close consultation and collaboration with the DSH and DSO departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law - KPSRL), CSPPS advocated in favour of more support for locally led peacebuilding. The outcomes of the various sessions have informed the policy development around greater support for locally led development.

The JFA continued supporting and engaging youth in L&A at regional and international level. Search maintained its efforts to foster and equip influential Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) champions among EU policymakers. This close engagement notably resulted in a request to provide input for an EEAS-led event on YPS as the Paris Peace Forum — including the preparation of talking points for the EEAS’ Director for Peace, Partnerships and Crisis Management, Mr Cosmin Dobran —, and led to the creation of an internal EEAS contact group aiming to promote the YPS agenda. Search was also invited to provide analysis and advice on the inclusion of a strong YPS section in the European External Action Service’s (EEAS) Mediation Guidelines, launched at the Mediation Community of Practice (CoP) meeting. Finally, Search continued advocating in favour of increased and better youth inclusion in EU decision making on external affairs. This entailed shaping the concept of the 2023 EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights “*Youth as actors of change for human rights*”, amplifying local voices — including by helping bring several youth from Just Future countries to the EU-NGO Forum and by securing a high-level speaking engagement for a young South Sudanese activist during the aforementioned CoP —, and coordinating input which was largely incorporated into the newly-developed Monitoring Framework of the EU Youth Action Plan.

WANEP fostered youth inclusion by developing a network of 28 West African youth activists — including from Niger and Mali — through its newly-launched Youth Transformational Empowerment and Mentoring (Y-TEaM) programme, which equipped young people to become better advocates. 2023 also saw WANEP support the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) on UNSCR 2250 in Mali and Niger (to be completed in 2024) and collaborate with Youth4Peace networks towards the completion of UNSCR 2250 goals in the region. Efforts to push for women’s inclusion and meaningful participation comprised regular engagement with ECOWAS, which resulted in a commitment from the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security, Amb. Dr. Abdel-Fatah Musa, to better engage West African CSOs and amplify community stakeholders’ voices (including women and youth), as well as to promote their agency. Finally, WANEP helped create synergies between women advocates by establishing two platforms in Mali and Niger and linking them up with existing ones, and by enhancing its advocacy, knowledge and skill-building platform, GenderTalk.

WIPC maintained its efforts to create space for and prepare local actors to speak at high-level events. This included for instance ensuring the participation of young peacebuilders and CSOs in the high-level meetings, securing panellist roles for women leaders from the DRC during the Open Session on WPS held by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), and coaching ahead of the event to develop and present their statements. In the same spirit, WIPC helped 15 leaders of women-led organisations prepare their submission to the AU PSC and present them during a consultation meeting which gathered a wide range of stakeholders. These engagements by CSO representatives in different fora led to the identification of key priority issues and to their inclusion in official follow-up communiqués of the PSC. Furthermore, WIPC’s team participated in and organised several events during which drew attention to core issues pertaining to women’s rights and empowerment, and to youth participation. These engagements included, for instance, the Africa Forum on WPS, convened by the AU Special Envoy on WPS, and the fifth “*Gender Is My Agenda Campaign*” (GIMAC) Strategic Engagement with the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Partners on the AU on “Accelerating Implementation of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)”.

## Countries

### Afghanistan

In 2023, alliance partners continued facing challenges in their attempts at registering the programme with the de facto authorities (DFAs). Although some partners were eventually able to complete the process, the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) that will allow them to start implementing are still pending. As a result, many of the activities originally foreseen under Outcome 3 could not be rolled out. It is however worth noting that the continued engagement of Just Future partners with the DFA, and the progress made towards the programme’s registration are in and of themselves significant advocacy successes. Furthermore, local partners were — to some extent — able to serve Just Future objectives by: preserving the Peace Houses established in 2021 in the provinces of Kandahar,

Nangarhar, and Balkh, thus providing local CSOs and youth with spaces to coordinate on key issues, discuss local challenges, and develop lobby and advocacy agendas (TSDO); leveraging other (registered) projects to establish and strengthen CSO networks.

## Burundi

Building on lessons learnt from previous years, the Just Future alliance in Burundi actively engaged with communities throughout the year, and involved them in defining their needs, identifying advocacy targets and carrying out effective advocacy at local and national levels. Consequently, 2023 saw some powerful work be implemented by community members — above all, women and youth —, including the resolution of family disputes through the *Umuhivu w'imboneza* platform, community mobilisation initiatives against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), as well as lobby and advocacy efforts calling for the inclusion of women and youth in local councils and key processes such as the design, monitoring, and evaluation of local development plans and annual investment plans. As a result of these efforts, local, national, and regional policymakers have worked to improve legal protection frameworks, and integrated the concerns expressed by local communities in local development plans and budgets. Moreover, local authorities have started involving young people, women, and members of marginalised groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, repatriated people, people with disabilities etc.) in decision-making processes at community level. Finally, community radios have played a key role in promoting inclusive leadership through their programmes.

## DRC

2023 was a major election year for the DRC, with close to 41 million citizens called to the polls to vote in a new president, as well as national, provincial, and local representatives. Consequently, the alliance's efforts focused on promoting increase of women's political participation and their involvement in decision-making processes. This entailed advocating for the inclusion of female candidates on political parties' lists, in a landscape heavily dominated by well-established male politicians. To this end, Just Future partners brought together women's participation advocates by creating and/or joining networks and coalitions of politically active women, helped them strengthen their advocacy skills through several capacity building opportunities, and raised awareness among political parties' executives to sensitise them to the need to include of female candidates on their lists. The alliance also helped make the elections safer and more secure by training election observers and established a pool of lawyers to provide female candidates with legal assistance in the case of electoral disputes. Finally, at the international level, the alliance called UN officials to account for women's concerns during the decision-making process on the MONUSCO withdrawal.

JF partners strengthened the collaboration with the Family and Children Commission, Human Rights Commission, and the National Gender Ministry on the implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 2250. Their advocacy efforts led the Prime Minister to draft of a new decree, related to the FONAREV law that institutionalises the role of CSOs in raising awareness on the implementation measures of the law.

## Mali

Year 3 saw continued efforts from the JFA to sensitise communities and local authorities to the importance of the meaningful inclusion of women, youth, and IDPs in decision-making and peacebuilding processes, through townhall meetings and roundtables which, according to testimonials of participants, have already fostered greater inclusivity within the target communities. Moreover, the alliance ran several lobbying and advocacy initiatives — resulting for instance in a commitment by the National Defence, Security and Civil Protection Committee to implement measures ensuring a better inclusion of people with disabilities — and accompanied local stakeholders in their own advocacy work towards local authorities. In addition to this awareness-raising and advocacy work, the alliance supported local CSOs, CBOs and local media outlets by training them in conflict-sensitive communication, and fostering knowledge exchange on issues pertaining to inclusion, the role of local communities in peace processes, and the importance of joint civil-military initiatives to improve the protection of civilians in conflict zones. Finally, JFA members and partners accompanied stakeholders' own advocacy efforts towards local decision-makers, who took a commitment to support the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) and 2250 (Youth, Peace and Security) and the national laws 2015-052 (gender promotion) and 2018-027 (inclusion of people with a disability).

## Niger

Capitalising on previous years' successes, the alliance continued working to promote the inclusion of vulnerable groups (such as young people, women, internally displaced people, people with a disability etc.) in local conflict prevention/management mechanisms, as well as their participation in transitional bodies and inclusive national dialogue. This entailed strengthening the role of local peace committees and of joint consultation frameworks against the backdrop of the new political context. Additionally, the monitoring of recommendations previously issued by stakeholders (such as, for instance, the renewal of the National Youth Council, the creation of a Directorate-General for women's advancement within the Ministry of public health etc.) is ongoing. The advocacy made by

women's organisations and CSOs ultimately led to the creation of the General Directorate for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children. The Director General was appointed on October 14, 2023 following a meeting of the Council of Ministers, which is chaired by the President of the Republic.

As a result of the actions carried out by the JFA, women now participate in all peace and security management bodies identified by the alliance, and youth are included in the vast majority of these structures (97%). Further efforts will however be required when it comes to the representation of IDPs (achieved in 9% of all bodies) and people living with a disability (18%). At community level, advocacy plans were drawn up to plan a course of action for the inclusion of the groups mentioned above and other individuals usually excluded from governance structures. Finally, the mandate of the State-CSO dialogue framework was broadened to include new state actors (e.g. the Prime Minister's cabinet, among others), to better account for inclusion issues and further support CSOs' advocacy efforts.

## South Sudan



*Annual conference on Women's Peace and Security in South Sudan*

During this third year of implementation, the alliance contributed to the significant progress towards increasing women's participation and representation in South Sudanese decision-making structures. As a result of these advocacy efforts, a 35% women's quota was included in the new Political Parties ACT, and provisions for a better inclusion of women were integrated into the bill amending the "National Elections Act 2012", in preparation for the 2024 elections. Another major milestone was the appointment of a female Minister of Defence — for the first time in the country's history —, and the nomination of women in key institutions such as the National Election Commission (NEC, with 22% women), Political Party Council (PPC, 50%) and the National Constitution Review Commission (NCRC, 33%). The alliance also joined other CSOs in calling for the extension of the constitutional review process, to allow for the organisation of public hearing aimed at gathering citizens' input. As a result, the deadline for completion of the review was extended to February 2025.

Important advocacy was continued on the Maputo Protocol. At the African Union the JF partners of South Sudan petitioned the Minister of Gender Care and Social Welfare to ratify the framework to strengthen the legal basis for protecting women's rights and advancing gender equality. The JF partners also participated in the development of the second-generation United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 National Action Plan.

In anticipation of the elections in 2024, two stakeholder dialogue sessions were held during the year to bring together various institutions, social groups and political interests to discuss and develop strategies to ensure a secure and peaceful election process as well as expedite the security sector reform process.

## 4. Capacity strengthening results



*Information and awareness campaign on SSR in Mali*

Capacity strengthening lies at the basis of JFA's programmatic approach as it aims to enhance the lobbying and advocacy capacities of civil society on the three outcome areas. Building on lessons from 2022, a shared capacity strengthening agenda was developed to improve coordination amongst international partners and assist National Coordinators to have an overview and more agency on the prioritisation and sequencing of planned activities.

JF National Secretariats remained attentive to the importance of balancing the different capacity building opportunities provided by the international alliance members with the specific needs of local partners. They prioritised sequencing these offerings in a way that complemented rather than detracted from the implementation of activities at country level.

### Capacity Assessments

In 2023, Just Future partners renewed their capacity assessments. Where baseline data were available, the average trends in organisational capacity strengthening and programmatic capacity across all six countries of intervention was positive showing small gains in all categories (see tables 1 and 2). The same trend, with more marked progress can be observed for the JF international alliance members (see tables 3 and 4). Some of the identified challenges for local partners concerned robust risk management systems and the turnover of staff who left their organisations, because these hamper the institutional memory and sustainability of programmatic capacity strengthening efforts. While a useful indication of the overall capacity, the main purpose of the assessments was to discuss the capacity strengthening priorities for the year planning.

Priorities for 2023 were to continue training and coaching CSO partners on substantive and operational aspects of their work ranging from L&A strategies and engagement, establishing and/or strengthening Hybrid Security Governance Observatories, conflict sensitivity, gender sensitivity, women peace and security, and security sector reform, to communication, financial management, and resource mobilisation.

**Table 1: Organisational capacity of Just Future partners per country**

Category	Year	Afgh.	Burundi	DRC	Mali	Niger	S.Sudan	Average
Accountability to constituencies	2021/22			7.8	8.5	7.5	7.4	<b>7.8</b>
	2023	7.9	7.9	7.4	8.7	8.4	8.3	<b>8.1</b>
Adequate physical infrastructure	2021/22			6.8	6.8	6.5	6.8	<b>6.7</b>
	2023	6.5	5.8	6.8	8.0	7.0	7.3	<b>6.9</b>
Commitment to L&A development	2021/22			6.8	7.8	5.8	8.0	<b>7.1</b>
	2023	7.6	7.6	7.2	8.3	8.3	7.1	<b>7.7</b>
Commitment to leadership and development	2021/22			6.8	8.0	5.3	7.2	<b>6.8</b>
	2023	7.6	7.0	6.6	8.6	7.0	6.8	<b>7.3</b>
Commitment to gender transformation	2021/22			6.5	6.3	5.8	7.4	<b>6.5</b>
	2023	7.3	7.3	7.0	7.7	8.3	7.8	<b>7.6</b>
Clear roles and responsibilities L&A	2021/22			7.3	9.3	6.3	7.0	<b>7.5</b>
	2023	7.8	7.5	7.2	9.0	7.3	7.1	<b>7.6</b>
Clear roles and responsibilities leadership and gender	2021/22			6.0	8.3	5.3	6.6	<b>6.5</b>
	2023	7.3	7.3	6.2	7.7	7.3	7.7	<b>7.2</b>
Sufficient staff with relevant expertise	2021/22			7.3	7.5	6.8	7.2	<b>7.2</b>
	2023	7.6	7.8	6.6	8.6	7.1	7.0	<b>7.4</b>
Processes in place to react to changes	2021/22			6.5	9.0	6.8	7.4	<b>7.4</b>
	2023	7.0	7.5	7.4	8.3	7.5	7.2	<b>7.5</b>
MEL systems in place	2021/22			6.0	9.0	6.0	5.8	<b>6.7</b>
	2023	7.0	6.5	7.2	8.1	6.0	7.0	<b>7.0</b>
Relations with relevant stakeholders	2021/22			7.8	9.0	8.8	8.0	<b>8.4</b>
	2023	7.8	7.8	7.6	9.0	8.4	9.1	<b>8.3</b>
Inclusive & equal partnerships	2021/22			7.7	9.0	7.5	7.6	<b>7.9</b>
	2023	8.2	7.5	7.6	8.3	8.3	7.8	<b>7.9</b>
High levels of integrity	2021/22			5.2	9.0	7.3	7.8	<b>7.3</b>
	2023	6.2	7.0	6.4	7.3	7.1	7.9	<b>7.0</b>
Leadership capabilities	2021/22			7.7	9.7	7.8	7.6	<b>8.2</b>
	2023	7.9	6.8	7.8	9.0	8.6	8.5	<b>8.1</b>
Local leadership	2021/22			7.7	9.0	7.3	7.4	<b>7.8</b>
	2023	8.6	7.3	7.4	8.4	8.5	8.4	<b>8.1</b>

**Table 2: Programmatic capacity of Just Future per country**

Category	Year	Afgh.	Burundi	DRC	Mali	Niger	S.Sudan	Average
Representativity & legitimacy	2021/22		5.7	7.5	7.9	7.5	6.5	<b>7.0</b>
	2023	7.3	6.5	6.8	7.9	8.1	7.6	<b>7.4</b>
Vision & complementarity	2021/22		7.0	7.7	8.0	7.3	5.5	<b>7.1</b>
	2023	7.7	7.0	6.2	8.0	7.3	8.3	<b>7.4</b>
Do no harm	2021/22		5.3	7.0	7.6	7.0	6.5	<b>6.7</b>
	2023	8.8	6.3	7.2	8.0	7.6	8.5	<b>7.7</b>
Shared culture of learning & adapting	2021/22		5.3	6.8	8.0	5.5	5.5	<b>6.2</b>
	2023	7.7	6.8	6.4	8.0	6.9	8.0	<b>7.3</b>
Equal and active JFA partners	2021/22		6.3	6.3	8.3	7.5	6.0	<b>6.9</b>
	2023	8.0	5.8	6.4	7.5	7.6	6.8	<b>7.0</b>
Joint and agile L&A processes	2021/22		8.0	7.2	6.9	7.8	6.0	<b>7.2</b>
	2023	7.8	7.0	7.0	8.5	7.9	7.8	<b>7.7</b>
Effective L&A in restricted civic space	2021/22		6.7	7.2	7.3	6.8	7.0	<b>7.0</b>
	2023	7.5	5.9	7.0	8.3	7.3	7.2	<b>7.2</b>
Multi-level L&A	2021/22		7.7	7.7	7.5	6.8	3.0	<b>6.5</b>
	2023	7.0	7.4	7.6	8.9	7.4	7.7	<b>7.7</b>
Collective fundraising capacity	2021/22		6.7	6.2	6.7	6.0	5.5	<b>6.2</b>
	2023	5.6	5.9	5.8	6.6	7.0	6.6	<b>6.3</b>
External perception on credibility and influence	2021/22		7.3	8.0	8.0	5.8	7.0	<b>7.2</b>
	2023	6.5	6.6	6.6	8.8	7.1	8.3	<b>7.3</b>

**Table 3: Average organisational capacity international partners JF**

Category	2022	2023
Accountability to constituencies	6.5	8.8
Adequate physical infrastructure	7.7	8.4
Commitment to L&A development	7.7	8.1
Commitment to leadership and management dev.	6.8	7.9
Commitment to gender transformation	6.7	7.4
Clear roles and responsibilities L&A	6.8	7.9

**Table 4: Programmatic capacity international alliance JF**

Category	2022	2023
Representativity & legitimacy	6.1	7.7
Vision & complementarity	5.9	7.8
Do no harm	6.5	8.2
Shared culture of learning & adapting	6.0	7.3
Equal and active JFA partners	5.9	7.7
Joint and agile L&A processes	6.0	8.3

Clear roles and responsibilities leadership and gender	6.8	8.1
Sufficient staff with relevant expertise	7.4	8.0
Processes in place to react to changes	7.3	7.6
MEL systems in place	8.0	8.0
Relations with relevant stakeholders	7.6	8.9
Inclusive & equal partnerships	7.3	8.8
High levels of integrity	8.2	8.3
Leadership capabilities	7.3	8.8
Local leadership	6.7	7.9

Effective L&A in restricted civic space	6.5	7.7
Multi-level L&A	6.5	7.3
Collective fundraising capacity	5.0	7.3
External perception on credibility and influence	7.3	8.2

### Capacity strengthening activities

Additionally, while there is generally an appetite for training opportunities, it has not been the only way to strengthen capacity. International Just Future Partners have also provided support by accompanying specific initiatives like strategy revisions, preparation of speaking engagements and messages for advocacy, coaching, etc. Methods of capacity strengthening included workshops (gender equality, WPS, YPS, advocacy, MEL and Southern Leadership), coaching (gender transformation and mainstreaming, multilevel lobby and advocacy, financial management, accounting, resource mobilisation, and human resources management), online network exchanges (inclusion of constituencies in advocacy, Transitional Justice, opportunities and risks for working in FCAS), support to CSO networks (Youth Advocacy Network, CSO network inputs to UN drawdown and transition plans for UNMISS, MINUSMA, MONUSCO), policy drafting support (ECOWAS WPS policy inputs), and training (data collection, analysis and running of the Observatories, SSR, strategy development, conflict sensitivity, lobby and advocacy, mainstreaming youth, gender and IDP issues, as well as on communication strategies). The monthly Just Future networking meetings offered a platform to share knowledge and experiences.

Below a selection of capacity strengthening activities are highlighted:

- During the Annual Planning Workshop in Nairobi in September and the Accra analysis workshop in November, international and regional partners worked with National Coordinators and local CSO partners to address drastic contextual changes and adapt their planned capacity strengthening and accompaniment activities for 2024 (especially following the Coups in Mali and Niger, MINUSMA exit, MONUSCO planned withdrawal in the Kivus in 2024, and the spillover effects of the Sudan conflict in South Sudan).
- Cordaid and Search co-led lobby & advocacy workshops in Niger and Mali, which updated the advocacy strategies and action plans for the two countries. The national coordinators in both countries successfully facilitated substantive political and policy analyses. In both countries, the political analyses provided input for substantive discussions to update strategies and activities for the updated advocacy plans. Cordaid organised a similar workshop in DRC, while SFCG led a training of trainers on advocacy for JFA partners in Afghanistan. The Afghan partners discussed a less confrontational approach which is deemed particularly appropriate for the context.
- WIPC provided gender transformative trainings for partners in Burundi, DRC, Mali, Niger and South-Sudan. These trainings reached out to 55 female and 51 male participants and strengthening gender-transformative approaches and providing an in-depth understanding of key gender concepts and practical skills. WIPC supported partners to develop organisational-specific action plans for applying gender-transformative approaches.
- JFA local partners in Niger benefitted from a training on resource mobilisation, which enabled them to develop a resource mobilisation strategy.

- Cordaid facilitated a communication training for JF local partners in Niger which enabled them to better present the work they do and tailor the content of their materials to the right formats and audiences.



*Capacity strengthening training on communication for JF partners in Niger*

CSOs and CBOs have done effective advocacy at the local level, reflecting a strengthened advocacy capacity. In Niger for instance, the community-based organisations effectively advocated for the needs of marginalised groups to be reflected in the establishment of local tribunals and for the formation of official local peace committees. In South Sudan, the partners used research findings for influencing decision-makers on issues affecting constituencies and through the strengthening networks and coalitions they have raised a joint voice whilst providing mutual support and protection in addressing sensitive issues. JF local partners also show more agency in defining lobby and advocacy strategies and showed growing capacity to lead engagements with national governments, for instance to advance gender equality and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 at national levels.

## 5. Cross-cutting themes

### 5.1 Participation of JF constituencies

#### Gender transformation



*Regional Learning & Networking Exchange on WPS*

WIPC has led capacity strengthening on gender and women's rights in the Just Future programme. In Burundi a training on Gender Transformative programming was given for the AFRABU network. In South Sudan 47 women leaders participated in a workshop on women's rights in the constitution-making process, which led them to issue recommendations to the Government of South Sudan for translating the Constitution in local languages, involving women in the constitution-making process and awareness raising activities at the community level.

In DRC, the capacity enhancement provided to SOS-IJM and DFJ, on the Law on sexual violence and conflict related victims' reparation process, led to the two partners being recognised as victims' rights advocates and invited by FONAREV Commission to make recommendations on the ongoing reparation process. Moreover, victims of mass crime associations to present their concerns during the DRC Parliament Environment Commission retreat held in 2023. Notably, thanks in part to the capacity strengthening received from Cordaid and CSPSS, three women from JF local CSO partners in DRC (CEHAJ 1325, CEJP/CENCO) won national parliamentary seats in the elections in DRC.

In addition, WIPC also facilitated two regional learning and exchange networking workshops on Women, Peace and Security at the East African Community in Arusha, Tanzania which enabled Just Future Partners from DRC, Mali, South Sudan and Burundi to understand the role of EAC in advancing YPS and WPS agendas and share their experiences. Lastly, a Regional Workshop on Women's Participation in the Election Process in Burundi, organised by the Association des Femmes Rapatriés du Burundi (AFRABU), brought together a delegation of 68 participants (including MPs from seven EAC member states, activists and the First Lady of the Burundi) during which the role of the State to advance gender equality and promoting women's political participation was discussed and recommendations for increasing women's involvement in politics formulated.

## Youth participation



*Campaign to disseminate the National Youth Policy and its Action Plan, Mali*

At the national level, a large number of initiatives engaging youth have taken place across JF countries. The Just Future Alliance has involved youth organisations in taking a more prominent role in advocacy on the three outcome areas, for instance for more participation in the local security monitoring structures in South Sudan, Mali and Niger or as representatives in the local councils Burundi. In Mali the JFA has organised youth forums at the community level to enable youth to improve their access to both formal and traditional justice mechanisms. In DRC, youth were engaged in the development of a national action plan on Youth, Peace and Security. In Afghanistan, youth and other constituencies have been able to raise critical issues affecting their lives through town halls, dialogue sessions and radio roundtables. These are but a few examples of a broad range of youth participation across all JFA countries.

To support the participation of youth in international-level advocacy, WANEP and Search have been engaging youth representatives in advocacy networks. WANEP fostered youth inclusion by developing a network of 28 West African youth activists through the Youth Transformational Empowerment and Mentoring programme. Search continued supporting the members of the Just Future Youth Advocacy Network (YAN) on elevating youth voices in global peace processes. A group of advocates from across all Just Future countries received online accompaniment, training and support to participate in a number of advocacy engagements. A capacity strengthening workshop was co-created between YAN members and Search facilitators in Nairobi. The YAN members themselves were in charge of determining their advocacy strategies and messages. While meeting in-person annually was highly motivating, limited financial support for their efforts with the YAN network made it challenging for members to prioritise the network as all of them are also highly engaged activists at the national and even international levels. For these reasons, Search concluded that it would not be feasible or fair to its participants to continue operating the YAN as a Just Future activity after 2024.

In addition, the Alliance has fostered spaces for diverse youth from JFA countries to engage directly with international decision makers. Examples of this include ensuring the participation of diverse youth in the EU Youth, Peace and Security Coalition, which is co-led by Search. Similarly, the JFA has ensured the direct engagement of youth with international decision makers at fora such as the JFA-supported AU Conference on SSR and the EU-NGO Forum on Youth as Actors for Human Rights. In West Africa, WANEP has engaged youth in advocacy towards ECOWAS focused on the impact of ECOWAS sanctions on the population of Niger.

## Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Progress on engagement with IDPs in the JF programme remained a challenge. The JF alliance in DRC and South Sudan were most interested in further developing a strategy to support IDPs in voicing their interests. The alliance decided to look at existing interventions by other stakeholders, particularly the IOM. Meetings with IOM are planned for 2024. Draft TOR for a consultancy to support in developing a strategy were developed.

Research partner VVI conducted research on the theme of access to justice and inclusive participation. It consisted of research on state-society relations and people's access to justice and the achievement of fundamental rights. VVI zoomed in especially on interactions of IDPs with the state when it comes to registration of major life events such as birth, marriage and death. The research also investigated electoral registration, because this registration is an important gateway towards citizenship. The findings are presented in the report 'The social contract between the state and its citizens: Registration of IDPs in election times in DRC'.

Based on the findings, Cordaid RDC wrote a lobby and advocacy proposal. VVI facilitated access to a range of stakeholders for the organisation of a meeting in Bukavu on this topic. The topic of IDPs is widely overlooked and while the interest in IDPs as a vulnerable group is increasing among state and non-state actors, dedicated resources are needed to enhance participation of IDPs in lobby and advocacy.

## Conflict Sensitivity

Search provided several successful conflict sensitivity trainings to Just Future international and local CSO partners during the reporting period. The first, in Bujumbura in March 2023, laid the basis for a stronger collaborative relationship with the Burundi and DRC JFA partners in the second quarter. In April, the final versions of the conflict sensitivity training facilitator's guide, presentation, and conflict sensitivity checklist in French were shared with all partners, trainers, and conflict sensitivity focal points in Burundi, DRC, Mali, and Niger. Search followed up with refresher training.

As a result, several conflict analyses and discussions on strategy adaptations were carried by JFA national and international partners in Niger and Mali. The analysis showed the need to expand the geographic coverage of the programme to the Tahoua region of Niger. It also raised an alert that under the military regimes some recalibration of advocacy on sensitive questions was needed. The conflict analysis also brought to the surface that local partners may not always be perceived impartial, and Search is planning to assist partners to navigate these sensitivities through virtual discussions and a field visit by the conflict sensitivity expert early 2024.

The trainings were helpful for JFA partners in Mali and Niger to note how the changes in political contexts following the military coups increased the level of polarisation in society, but also amongst staff. These disagreements are



*Capacity building session for CSOs, CBOs and local media on conflict sensitive communication and cyber law in Djenné, Mopti region*

normal given the current context of political change. The partners in Mali have maintained openness to these issues prior to agreeing on advocacy topics. In Niger, the members of the alliance agreed to maintain an apolitical posture and not to pass any judgement on the authorities in place. After the coup d'état in Niger, a situation monitoring framework was created by ASSN and CAO which is used to guide and adapt lobby and advocacy actions according to the evolving context.

A thorough context analysis that includes an analysis of possible opposing stakeholders has been done as part of yearly planning sessions, as well as for updating the L&A strategies. Furthermore, risks and conflicts were also analysed during the perceptions studies and the evaluations of the security situation (see annex 2 for the list of publications).

## 5.2 Governance and partnership



*Annual Planning workshop 2023, Nairobi*

The governance of the JF programme is embedded in the governance structure with International (ISC) and National Steering Committees (NSCs). The committees held regular meetings and provided direction to the alliance partners and the secretariats. The Steering Committees discussed and approved the annual plans and budgets developed at annual planning workshops which were organised in all countries, followed by a global planning workshop. The Steering Committees also reviewed the Mid Term Review report, discussed its recommendations and agreed on follow up action plans.

In some countries the NSC decided to change the membership and leadership of the NSC, which lead to more leadership roles for local partners. In 2023 the ISC was chaired by a representative of a local partner from Niger. As planned, Cordaid and Search provided tailored support to the NSC and NS in the 6 programme countries.

To ensure coordination at consortium level, the International Secretariat organised monthly alliance coordination meetings, bringing together country and consortium coordinators. In general, we observed that country coordinators were more acknowledged in their coordinating roles which has strengthened coordination at country level as well as between country and international level. The added value of working as alliance was increasingly taken advantage of, for example by bringing together representatives of local partners to international lobby and advocacy events (AU, EU, UN) and by sharing knowledge and experiences.

The JFA continued promoting the principle and importance of flexible and adaptive programming. For instance, following the contextual changes in the Sahel, WANEP and Cordaid organised a two-day workshop to discuss the implications of these changes for the role of civil society and for the JF-programme. During the annual planning workshop in Nairobi, the partners reflected on the exit strategy for the JF programme. This will be followed by more in depth discussions on the sustainability of the programme's results in 2024.

With the Dutch MFA we continued good information sharing and discussion on contextual changes, progress and challenges of programme implementation. There was also advanced coordination with the MFA and closer collaboration with the Netherlands Embassies in various countries. This included advocacy initiatives regarding UN Peacekeeping missions in the DRC and South Sudan, and active involvement of the Dutch Embassy in the JF learning event on access to justice in Bujumbura. It was an opportunity to fine tune strategic communication with Dutch MFA on L&A initiatives and direct involvement in related activities. Finally, Search organised a workshop with the Dutch MFA in response to their interest in developing YPS strategic actions.

## 5.3 Southern leadership



*Consultative workshop on military takeovers in Mali and Niger: What are the impacts and implications for governance in the Sahel and West Africa?*

Southern leadership and building an equitable and effective partnership are key building blocks of the Just Future Alliance as set out in our values and governance structures. Efforts to advance southern leadership in year 3 show that real steps have been taken and important lessons were learnt, while the speed with which changes happen differs in each country.

The focus for 2023 was to continue unpacking the concept of southern leadership during guided discussions and to support the countries to develop concrete actions plans for working on the handover the coordination role of the National Secretariat to a local partner. The gradual transfer of responsibilities of the National Secretariat to local partners with continued support of Cordaid and Search is considered an important step towards southern leadership. Handover plans of national secretariats were completed in Mali and Niger. CAD will take over the National Secretariat of the Just Future programme in Mali as of January 2024, while the international alliance member organisations technically support CAD Mali to strengthen its organisational capacity. In Niger, the National Steering Committee is hosted and chaired by ANDDH and the National Secretariat will be taken up by CAO. Local CSO partners in Niger have also established direct working relationships with several governmental institutions, namely, the Prime Minister's Office, The Ministry of Justice, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Assembly. While the handover of the national secretariat and steering committee to local CSOs have advanced in both countries, the on-the-job coaching remains an important value add.

In South Sudan progress in transferring leadership to local partners can be seen in the successful elections of the chair of the National Steering Committee and the representative to the International Steering Committee. In DRC, the transfer of the National Secretariat from Cordaid to a national partner CSO is still ongoing.

Despite these real changes taking place in the governance of the programme, women and youth representatives continue to be underrepresented in decision-making in the NSCs and in the roles within the National Secretariats.

In July, a Southern Leadership Workshop was held in Bujumbura, Burundi. On the first day of this workshop only local partners from the countries participated, whereas international consortium members joined on days 2 and 3. Guided by an external facilitator, the local partners exchanged about how they envision and experience southern leadership within the programme. During the workshop challenges, solutions and opportunities to further support the southern leadership process in the Just Future programme were discussed. The workshop helped to generate a common understanding amongst JF partners about the key concepts of localisation, locally led development, and power imbalances. JF partners identified concrete steps to take, which have then been tailored to each country's specific situation and wishes of the local partners.

## 5.4 Risk management

Risk management remained an important and ongoing activity in the Just Future programme. The risk registers provide an overall overview for regular discussion. However, the volatile contexts in the programme countries requires daily monitoring for security risks. These risks are monitored by Cordaid and Search security advisors and discussed at country and at consortium level. In 2023, insecurity increased in DRC, Mali and Niger, which had temporary impact on activities on the ground and on (international) travel.

Following the coup d'état in Niger, the alliance put in place weekly meetings to exchange about evolving context, discuss L&A & messaging, and manage risks. It was decided to increase monitoring of the context, which was done by ASSN and CAO through writing and disseminating regular Monitoring notes on the political, security and socio-economic situation.

The alliance also uses a conflict sensitivity tool to reflect on risks for the programme, partners and constituencies (see also par. 5.1.). Several risks materialised, such as further such as further restrictions on women in Afghanistan and a political crackdown in Mali and Niger. In Afghanistan, the major risk that the project would not be approved, materialised. Cordaid and Search did not manage to get approval from the Ministry of Economy, most likely because of the nature of the programme. Only TLO, registered with another ministry, received approval from the authorities to implement activities. A new risk identified is that the military regimes in both Mali and Niger consider implementation of advocacy activities as being pro-ECOWAS or ousted governments in those countries, which might lead to further restrictions on civil society.

We continued training on integrity and safeguarding. In South Sudan partners have policies for safeguarding and integrity in place and Cordaid provided training of partners on integrity. In Burundi sessions on safeguarding and integrity were held again in 2023 within the three partner organisations and two partner organisations of the three appointed an Integrity Focal Point. DRC worked with an analysis and risk mitigation and integrity plan which was completed by all six local partners in 2023. A complaints management policy and strategy and a hotline were put in place, which have been used last year to manage community feedback. The tool has been made available to all local partner and CBOs. Search facilitated a training course on integrity in administrative and financial management in Niger to build the capacities of JFA local CSO partners which increased their knowledge.

## 5.5 Communication



*Afrikadag, November 2023.*

In 2023, the primary focus was to enhance and strengthen both internal and external communication efforts. This included increasing the visibility of the programme across various audiences, aligning communication with advocacy objectives, enhancing internal coordination and strengthening the capacity of local partners.

To achieve a more cohesive messaging approach, priority was placed on aligning and coordinated messaging efforts. The Comms Group was reinvigorated, scheduling monthly meetings to facilitate improved information-sharing and coordination. For the same purpose, Communication Focal points were appointed to aligning collaboration between the country and the international level. Quarterly newsletters were developed throughout the year, with a continuous rhythm of production. An updated Communications Strategy, prepared by the Communications Advisor was presented and adopted by the ISC. Additionally, the Communications Group developed and subsequently adopted the Communications Annual Plan, together with a Communications Content and Social Media calendar to keep track of the relevant events and activities taking place throughout the year.

To bolster communication capacities, the Communication Advisor organised a workshop for Just Future partners in Niger, aiming to reinforce their capacities and adopt stronger messages. Trainings will continue to take place in the programme countries in 2024, starting by DRC, followed by Burundi and South Sudan.

Throughout 2023, we leveraged important events such as "*Afrikadag*", UN Open Debate in New York to showcase our activities and amplify the voices of our local partners on the global stage. These endeavours underscore our commitment to fostering meaningful dialogue and driving substantive change within the communities we serve.

## 6. Drawing lessons

### 6.1 Mid-Term Review

Between July and August, a Mid-Term Review was conducted by Gender Associations International Consulting GmbH (GAIC). An internal reference group with four representatives from the JF programme supervised the proceedings of the MTR. GAIC consulted partners from the countries and the international coalition, as well as external stakeholders. The MTR focused on learning and adaptability, the achieved results, and the functioning of the partnership.

The evaluators acknowledged the challenge of building an alliance within five years with diverse stakeholders in fragile and conflict-affected countries, which is southern-led and sustainable, is a challenging task. In spite of this, they conclude that one of the key strengths of the programme is its relevance, its cross-country and cross-sector partnerships and its adaptability. While armed violence, regime changes and political instability have substantially challenged its implementation, there are already significant and tangible lobby and advocacy results in every JF country.

GAIC produced a long list of recommendations, which were discussed with the alliance partners and the International Steering Committee. Priorities for follow-up have been included in the year planning for 2024, and progress in these points is addressed in the alliance meetings. In the planning report key recommendations have already been presented in detail. Important steps have been initiated on coaching the Steering Committees and National Secretariats to strengthen the governance structure, on enhancing collaboration and synergy for advocacy efforts, on defining and documenting success in preparing track records as part of the sustainability strategy, and on fostering learning.

### 6.2 Learning agenda

The Theory of Change (ToC) of the JF programme remained valid and relevant in 2023. It holds the following key assumptions:

- Our **constituencies to take collective action** articulate their needs and advocate for their demands. (Assumption 1)
- **CSOs to influence policies and practices** with and on behalf of the most excluded constituencies. (Assumption 2)
- The alliance to **generate political will and capacities of duty-bearers** to respond to the needs and demands of the constituencies. (Assumption 3)
- **International and regional CSOs and networks support these national processes.** (Assumption 4)
- **Addressing the weak social contract** resulting in fairer, more inclusive, sustainable and legitimate power relations between the Just Future constituencies and duty-bearers. (Assumption 5)

The learning agenda of the programme focusses on the first two assumptions of our Theory of Change. As an alliance we want to gradually improve our practice on supporting constituencies (women, youth, IDPs and other vulnerable groups) in their advocacy.

The alliance's learning agenda was facilitated by an informal working group composed of representatives from Search, WIPC and Cordaid. In March, a learning exchange was organised targeting country coordinators, gender focal points, youth focal points and other participants from local JF partners. For the learning exchange, country partners prepared cases for which they analysed the roles women, youth and other constituencies assumed in advocacy. It provided lessons on how to increase local ownership of advocacy processes.

Following the learning exchange, the working group organised a Just Future Networking Meeting deep dive session examining meaningful participation of constituencies, with presentations of case studies from Mali and Burundi. Building on the learning exchange and networking meeting, a tip sheet titled *Meaningful Participation of Constituencies in JFA Advocacy*, containing practical advice for advocacy programming was discussed with the country coordinators. Collaboration through the informal working group has helped provide a clearer mandate and process for capacity development related to engagement of constituencies across the alliance. This provides a strong foundation for continuing shared learning and capacity development in 2024.

## 6.3 Lobby and Advocacy



Capacity building session on advocacy technical reporting techniques of JF partners in Mali -RENEDEP

The lessons learnt from 2023's advocacy efforts highlight a clear pathway forward: by fostering deeper integration and collaboration between international and national initiatives, and by grounding our efforts in evidence-based research, we can amplify our impact. The early inclusion of national partners in research projects, from conceptualisation through to the presentation of results, is more time-consuming, but ensures that our research is relevant and impactful. Such a shift towards evidence-based advocacy ultimately empowers our partners to employ findings with increased ownership, accuracy, and impact. This strategy not only enriches our understanding of the issues at hand but also strengthens our collective ability to drive meaningful change, ensuring that advocacy efforts are firmly rooted in the realities of those they aim to serve.

For outcome 1, the changes of power in Mali and Niger underlined the need for adaptive management. Responsiveness to security needs is crucial for being able to adapt advocacy and operational strategies. Conducting bi-annual perception surveys in Mali and Niger offered valuable insights into local security perceptions, aiding in the advocacy efforts at international forums, especially in volatile contexts. Additionally, the establishment and reactivation of the security advisory committees, as seen in Mali, facilitated monthly assessments of the security situation from a human security perspective. These initiatives combined underscored the importance of grounding security initiatives in the experiences and perceptions of local populations.

The ramifications of the regime change in Niger and the end of the UN Peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA) have had justice-related impact that has not fully displayed yet, particularly on the political will and capacity of the authorities to deliver on access to justice, and especially for the most vulnerable. Efforts to maintain inclusivity and community empowerment highlighted the continuous need for advocacy to protect and advance access to justice. This experience demonstrated the power of collective advocacy in achieving legal reforms and the necessity of responsive strategies. This approach proved crucial in overcoming obstacles, such as parliamentary delays and the need for localised engagement, to facilitate significant legal progress. One of the most critical insights gained from our collective work is the importance of fostering robust coordination between international alliance partners, such as through the 2023 Community of Practice on Access to Justice.

In the face of more restrictive environments, it became clear that JFA partners need to adopt new approaches to maintaining civic space, strengthening civil society and ensuring participation of women. In some contexts, just lobby and advocacy do not seem sufficient to influence policies and practices. Accompanying activities like small grants can

increase legitimacy and possibilities for advocacy. In 2024 we will conduct research on lobby and advocacy in restricted environments to enhance our learning on contextually appropriate approaches that maintain crucial space for dialogue, advocacy, and accountability.

Lastly, a key takeaway is the clear benefit and necessity of progressively integrating national civil society into regional networks like the Coalition Citoyenne du Sahel, and global coalitions like EurAc and the Customary Informal Justice Working Group. These alliances are increasingly aiming to make a tangible impact on the ground, focusing on the individuals and communities directly affected by their efforts. CSPPS, specifically created for this purpose, highlights a growing openness to this approach. Involving national partners helps to ensure that global agendas are both informed by and responsive to the real needs of local communities, bridging a crucial gap in global advocacy efforts. In addition, alliances such as Just Future and the Coalition Citoyenne du Sahel, can provide safety for local activists and CSOs to advocate for their interests and rights.

## 6.4 Capacity strengthening

National Secretariats play a crucial role in balancing the different capacity building efforts, The country teams organise their capacity strengthening activities, and the various international coalition partners organise workshop according to their specific expertise. Monitoring progress on capacity strengthening proved a challenge and needs more accompaniment. The capacity assessments are informative and contribute to discussing priorities, but a broader reflection on the effectiveness of different capacity strengthening methods would be useful to inform assigning the capacity strengthening budget.

Community Based Organisations were increasingly brought into the capacity strengthening activities. In Burundi and DRC surveys have been done to measure the satisfaction of constituencies and of beneficiaries, but it the contribution of capacity strengthening to increased effectiveness of advocacy activities is hard to verify, and certainly not depending on training workshops alone.

## 6.5 Partnership and adaptive management

The JF alliance has grown as alliance, demonstrating collaborative efforts and good between the partners to work as alliance. Improved coordination between international and national level L&A has been observed. A key takeaway is the necessity for clearly defined lead roles and the formation small working groups focused on specific lobby and advocacy initiatives.

As the Alliance operates in volatile contexts, adaptive programming emerges as a need but also as a challenge. While thorough analysis is essential, agility is equally crucial to respond quickly to changing situations. We see more use of adaptive programming at activity level, but no major changes in programme strategies, what would be expected in Mali and Niger for example. Following the coup d'état in Niger, the alliance put in place weekly meetings to exchange about evolving context, discuss L&A & messaging, but this did not lead to major changes in the programme. WANEP and Cordaid organised a workshop for a consultative and reflective process to help identify more creative and innovative programming and advocacy activities that are adaptive and transformative within the current dynamics in West Africa as a whole, and in Niger and Mali in particular. An action plan was prepared and will be further discussed in 2024.

The JF programme in Afghanistan serves a good example of adjusting strategies in response to changing circumstances. Since the power transition in 2021, continuous contextual analysis and adaption of the programme strategy have been evident. A valuable lesson learned is the importance of considering changes from different angles and backgrounds, as discussing their implications for the programme can be sensitive.

## 6.6 Monitoring results on basket indicators

With the assumption that advocating for changes in laws requires sustained lobby and advocacy, the countries have set the targets for 2025 relatively high. As can be seen in table 5, the gap to reaching the targets for influenced laws and policy implementation is considerable. This can be partly attributed to the significant contextual changes resulting from regime changes in Mali and Niger, and previously in Afghanistan, causing delays or changes in priorities of policy reform processes. JF partners regularly had to adjust their advocacy efforts. It is anticipated that the 2025 targets for indicator SCS021 will not be met, but this will be assessed during 2024. Nevertheless, CSOs partners have been involved in a number of policy reform processes at national level in DRC, Burundi and South Sudan, and in spite regime changes also in Niger and Mali. The target for SCS012 is still within reach.

Indicator SCS042 counts the number of lobby and advocacy initiatives, which gives an indication of the total efforts of the Just Future partners to influence decision-making. An initiative is a long-term advocacy trajectory around one specific topic, so most initiatives have been continued from 2022 to 2023. A L&A initiative involves many meetings, workshops, or other activities to reach the goal. As can be seen in table 5 some new topics were taken on by the JF partners in 2023. The Just Future alliance includes over 30 local partners and 10 international organisations, which all take part in several L&A trajectories. This is reflected in the substantial number of initiatives, both at country level, as well as at the international level reflects where JF partners are engaged in influencing various international policy frameworks and priorities.

**Table 5: 2023 scores on the basket indicators for policy change compared 2025 targets**

Indicators		SCORE 2023		Cumulative 2021-2023		Targets 2025	
Code	Title	local	national	local	national	local	national
SCS021	Number of Laws influenced by primary stakeholders (CSOs)	5	3	7	11	57	37
SCS012	Number of times institutions have improved implementation of governmental policies benefitting the constituencies of the programme as a result of advocacy by primary stakeholders (CSOs)	25	7	36	16	65	35
Code	Title	national	Inter-national	national	Inter-national		
SCS042	Number of advocacy initiatives by primary stakeholders (CSOs)	12	5	106	57	No targets	

As can be seen in table 6 the programme is already exceeding the 2025 targets for the number of CSOs that have strengthened their advocacy capacity. In the first two years this included the Just Future partners as the capacity assessments show (see chapter 4). In addition, the programme supports many CSOs and CBOs with training and strengthening their advocacy efforts. Each strengthened CSO or CBO is counted only once during the implementation period of the programme. At country level a list of organisations and the support they received is documented, including if these organisations are led by women or youth. International JF partners are supporting the countries in strengthening the advocacy capacity of local CSOs.

**Table 6: 2023 scores on the basket indicators for L&A capacity compared to the targets for 2025**

Indicators		Score 2023	Cumulative 2021-2023	Targets 2025
Code	Title			
SCS053	Number of primary stakeholders (CSOs), not women or youth led, with increased advocacy capacity, cooperation and action to influence and negotiate with duty-bearers and power-holders	16	77	76
SCS051	Number of women led primary stakeholders (CSOs) with increased advocacy capacity, cooperation and action to influence and negotiate with duty-bearers and power-holders	18	59	19
SCS052	Number of youth led primary stakeholders (CSOs) with increased advocacy capacity, cooperation and action to influence and negotiate with duty-bearers and power-holders	11	48	19

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Case stories

### 1.1. Beyond Skin Colour

By **BANGIRINAMA Anicet** - Legal Representative of the Association Albinos Sans Frontières du Burundi "AFB", and champion of inclusion.



My name is BANGIRINAMA Anicet, 47 years old, born on Ruvumu hill, Kanyosha commune in Bujumbura province. I am married and father of 4 children, a girl and three boys. I was born an albino; the community and even family discriminates against albinos believing we are *ghosts*. I experienced prejudice from a young age. But despite the challenges I faced due to my difference, I was able to complete my university studies and I am currently the director of a primary school under Catholic convention in the Province of Bujumbura.

I have always had a desire to do advocacy for improving the living conditions of my albino community. Unfortunately, I didn't have the ability to do that. Therefore, I was grateful for the chance to become involved when I was approached by the women leaders of the *Umuhivu w'Imboneza*, a platform made up of women, youth and elected officials that is very well known in the community. I have become an active member and I had the opportunity to strengthen my lobbying and advocacy techniques, non-violent communication and networking. This platform has been for me a vehicle to defend the rights of women, young people and the most excluded groups, but especially albino people. I cannot express how proud I am to participate in the development of advocacy plans within the framework of the Just Future project. It is a great pleasure to represent albinos from my home province Bujumbura as well as other provinces.

Thanks to training by the Just Future project, I organise advocacy meetings with albinos. I show them that we have to be methodical in our approach and that we must first define the problem, the desired change and identify the relevant decision-makers before making the plea. Through my hard work and determination with the other members of the provincial committee of the platform "*Umuhivu w'Imboneza*", I have contributed to the identification and sensitisation of women, young people and albinos who are potential candidates for the elections of the members of the councils of the notables. The councils play a key role in resolving conflicts at the community level. I am very proud that through our work various women and albinos were elected to the local decision-making structures in 2022. I also contributed to the sensitisation of community leaders who previously believed that the council of notables had to be traditional male structures.

In 2023, I contributed to influencing decision-makers on the specific challenges we face as albino people, including access to education and healthcare. As a result, the Government of Burundi through the Ministry of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender has distributed lotions for the skin care of albinos, and provided sunglasses, caps and school supplies for more than 1000 albino children. Further, I successfully advocated for the rehabilitation and construction of 20 houses for albinos thanks to funding from the German Embassy.

As a representative of the albino community, I do my best to be a catalyst for change. I organise awareness-raising sessions for families to send their albino children to school. I hold sessions with school directors on allowing protective clothing for albinos and seating near the blackboard, and I do awareness-raising in the local community to combat stereotypes about us and promote inclusion. My commitment has contributed to transforming attitudes and perceptions towards albinos in Burundi. I have been appointed to various committees as secretary of the communal ombudsman committee, school data coordination committee, parish committee, and I am coordinator of the school network which includes seven schools.

Being a member of the provincial advocacy platform gives me opportunities to access different decision-makers. Together with the members of the "umuhivu w'imboneza" platform, I contribute to paving the way for greater participation of women, youth and the most excluded groups in decision-making and peace processes as well as local development mechanisms. A striking development is the involvement of a number of albinos in the process of developing the Communal Community Development Plans 2023-2028 integrating priorities for marginalised people.

I am so pleased with the support of CORDAID, AFRABU and OAG who have strengthened us and stimulated the inclusion of the albino community in the Just Future programme. *"Long live the Just Future programme, which pulls everyone together to encourage a neglected community without leaving anyone behind."*

## 1.2. A Transformational Journey in Western Equatoria State

By Yobu Annet



In the realm of governance in the Western Equatoria State, a transformation process unfolds, driven by the concentrated efforts of women leaders. As part of Just Future initiative of capacity strengthening for parliamentarians, EVE organisation organised a 2-day transformational leadership training in Yambio for women state parliamentarians.

The training was attended by 38 women members of parliament, representing the diverse fabric of the state's constituencies. Guided by the tenets of transformational leadership, they immersed themselves in a discourse on advocacy and gender gender-sensitive policy making.

The training received momentum when a number of women ministers (4 in number) participated giving it legitimacy among the women parliamentary caucus. Together, they prioritised the women peace and security agenda, signalling a shared commitment to societal progress beyond individual interests.

As a results of the training, women Members of the Parliament took significant steps to strengthen their advocacy for gender equality. They began by reviewing their caucus constitution, aiming to advance women's issues within the parliament.

The training led to an increase in women MPs' participation in parliamentary proceedings. They successfully lobbied for the inclusion of motions addressing gender issues on the parliamentary agenda, ensuring that these critical matters received due consideration and discussion. Next to that, it contributed to the improved enforcement of gender quotas within the Western Equatoria state assembly. As a result, the assembly achieved a 35% representation at leadership levels.

Most significantly, the female speaker of the assembly utilised the strategies learned during the training to hold male ministers accountable by summoning them for questioning, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability within the government.

*"Since the training, I feel empowered to create positive, productive, and successful better-informed decisions. I have started attending meetings organised by the women group once again and I am now more engaged in understanding of the issues that affect women and to raise awareness about these issues so that appropriate action can be taken", says Hon. Asunta Sabath, MP Mundri County.*

This narrative of achievement underscores the transformative power of collective action and strategic interventions. As Western Equatoria State continues on its path of progress, fuelled by empowered women leaders, it paves the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for all its citizens.

### 1.3. Inclusion in security governance structures in Mali

Mali has just begun its process of reforming the security sector, which provides for the establishment of several structures for the management of the process. It is important that women and young people will be represented and heard in these governing bodies. Local partner CAD-Mali has been organising advocacy meetings and forums together with beneficiary groups for the participation of women and youth in security sector structures and bodies. The involvement of beneficiary groups began with training workshops and organising core teams for the design and planning of the advocacy.

Mrs. Fatouma Cisse, member of the Association of Victims of the 2012 Crisis in Timbuktu, said she was proud to be able to be with a pressure group. She is a member of the monitoring and alerting core team set up to monitor progress. She embraces the opportunity to be able to influence the authorities, especially concerning the reparation for the damage suffered during the 2012 crisis. She remains committed to participating in all forums for consultation priority security needs of women and young people and their involvement in the security bodies set up for this purpose.

Following joint advocacy with the beneficiary groups in Timbuktu, the local authorities, including the Mayor and the Prefect, expressed their willingness in their speeches to spare no effort to meet the needs of the population in terms of security. As a result, a framework of monthly meetings was agreed upon to assess progress on the security situation.



### 1.4. Representative Communal Peace Committees in Niger

As part of its missions, the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace (HACP) initiated the creation of Communal Peace Committees (CCP) in all the Regions of the Niger. These CCPs serve as early warning on the security situation and collect information necessary for the authorities to make the appropriate decisions to consolidate peace and to improve security.

SOS Civisme carried out a study that has identified shortcomings in the composition of communal peace committees and communal consultation frameworks. For the CCP to be effective it is important to have good representation of all social strata, particularly vulnerable groups, therefore the Just Future alliance organised multi-stakeholder dialogues bringing together all the stakeholders, where the communities expressed the need for having inclusive CCPs.

Lobbying was carried out at different levels. SOS Civisme advocated with the HACP to take into account the participation of excluded groups in the composition of the CCPs. Whereas, at the local level organisations from different excluded groups were consulted for their effective participation. Departmental and communal youth councils, women's organisations, representatives of internally displaced persons and associations of persons living with disabilities, took part in the multi-stakeholder dialogues.

One active advocate is Mr. Ibrahim Zakoua Alhachimi, president of the youth of the commune of Dakoro. He played a major role in the process that led to the modification of the decree for setting up the CCP in Dakoro. He personally ensured that an extraordinary session of the framework was held to rule on the issue, which ultimately resulted in the signing of a new decree by the Mayor of the commune on October 16, 2023. The decree increases the representation of marginalised groups from 18% to 36%. The official recognition from the Mayor is important, because he is president of the CCP and responsible for its functionality.



## Annex 2: Overview of publications and reports

The following documents were published by the Just Future Alliance in 2023:

### Burundi

- JF. "This time, we made a big leap forward". Gender advocacy and women's governance participation in Burundi. ([Link](#))
- JF. Rapport Atelier Leadership du Sud. (26-28 Juillet, 2023). L'Amélioration de l'accessibilité, de la réactivité et de la redevabilité des institutions de sécurité et de justice, et processus de prise de décision politique et de paix inclusif.
- JF Burundi. Rapport final de l'évaluation de la participation des femmes dans les postes de décision.

### DRC

- ASSN, RRSSJ, JF. (Décembre, 2023). Perception des prisonniers sur le Centre pénitentiaire et de rééducation de Kinshasa (Prison de Makala). ([Link](#))
- SIPRI. (March, 2023). No Exit, Without an Entry Strategy: Transitioning UNMISS SSR Activities. ([Link](#))
- VVI (Septembre 2023). Recherche sur Lobbying en faveur de la législation sur l'élevage : Une analyse du processus législatif en RDC.
- VVI, KUTAFITI, Universiteit Leiden, JF. (September 2023). The Social Contract between the State and its Citizens; Registration of IDPs in election times in DRC. ([Link](#)).
- VVI, KUTAFITI, Universiteit Leiden, JF. (Septembre 2023). Le Contrat Social entre l'État et ses Citoyens : L'enregistrement des personnes déplacées en période électorale en RDC. ([Link](#))

### Mali

- ASSN, ADD, JF. (Juin, 2023). Rôle et engagement des jeunes dans les différents groupes armés et initiatives de protection et d'autodéfense des communautés dans la région de Gao. ([Link](#))
- ASSN, Renedep, JF. (Février 2023). Le rôle des femmes dans la gestion des conflits dans la région de Gao. ([Link](#))
- ASSN, JF. (Janvier, 2023). Les Dispositions Institutionnelles et Légales Adoptées depuis août 2020 en matière de Sécurité au Mali. ([Link](#))
- ASSN, JF. Défis Sécuritaires et Résolution des Conflits : le cas du Mali.
- ASSN, JF. Le Rôle des Acteurs non Étatiques dans le Contexte Sécuritaire Malien.
- ASSN, ADD, RENEDEP, JF. (Septembre, 2023). Rapport de l'Atelier Régional de Diffusion et Dissémination de la Stratégie Nationale de Réforme du Secteur de la Sécurité au Mali au Profit des Membres des Comités Consultatifs de Sécurité des Communes de Gounzoureye et Bourem à Gao. ([Link](#)).
- JF. Advocating for inclusive security in Mali "Top-down approaches have failed. It's high time to turn things around." ([Link](#))
- RENEDEP, JF. (Septembre, 2023). Rapport Analytique sur la Participation de la Jeunesse dans la Promotion de l'Accès à la Justice au Mali.
- SIPRI, Point Sud, JF. (Février 2023). Policy brief : Des populations en manque de protection. Résultats et enseignements des enquêtes de perceptions menées dans les régions de Gao, Tombouctou et Mopti au Mali (2021-2023). ([Link](#))
- SIPRI, Point Sud, JF. (Février, 2023). Enquête sur les perceptions relatives à la sécurité dans les régions de Mopti, Tombouctou, Gao au Mali. ([Link](#))
- SIPRI, Point Sud, JF. (Octobre, 2023). Enquête sur les perceptions relatives à la sécurité dans les régions de Mopti, Tombouctou, Gao au Mali. L'insécurité n'épargne personne. ([Link](#))

### Niger

- ASSN, CAD, JF. (Mars, 2023). Opérations militaires et protection des civils au Niger. ([Link](#))
- ASSN, JF, Re-Genovico. (Décembre, 2023). Observatoire de la Gouvernance de la Sécurité : Rapport de monitoring n°4. Avril, mai, juin, juillet 2023. ([Link](#))
- ASSN, JF. (Juin, 2023). Observatoire de la Gouvernance de Sécurité : Rapport de monitoring n°3. Janvier, février, mars 2023. ([Link](#))
- ASSN, JF. (March, 2023). Observatoire de la Gouvernance de Sécurité : Rapport de monitoring n°2. Septembre, octobre, novembre 2022. ([Link](#))
- SIPRI, Lasdel, JF. Policy Brief: Des populations en demande de protection Résultats et enseignements des enquêtes de perceptions menées dans les régions de Tillabéri, Tahoua et Maradi au Niger. (2021-2023). ([Link](#))

- SIPRI, Lasdel, JF. (Juin, 2023). *Enquête sur les perceptions de la sécurité dans les régions de Maradi, Tahoua et Tillabéri au Niger.*
- SIPRI, Lasdel, JF. (Octobre, 2023). *Enquête sur les perceptions de la sécurité dans les régions de Maradi, Tahoua et Tillabéri au Niger.* ([Link](#))
- SOS-Civisme, JF. *Rapport de l'étude sur l'état de lieu et l'évaluation de la représentativité et de la participation des groupes exclus des organes et instances de gestion de la paix et de la sécurité du 1 septembre au 6 octobre 2023.*

### South Sudan

- ICTJ. (31 August, 2023). *Final Narrative Report Customary and Informal Justice in Contexts of Massive Human Rights Violations: Case Study on South Sudan.*
- SFCG, JF. (March, 2023). *Information Brief: Putting Women at the Centre of South Sudan's Peace and Security Agenda: Insights from Civil Society's Engagement with the African Union's Peace and Security Council.* ([Link](#))
- VVI. Ubink J.M. & Almeida B. (2023). *Local self-governance and the state in South Sudan: studying gendered tenure relations in times of uncertainty, Politics and Governance.* 11(2): 357-367. ([Link](#))
- VVI. Ubink J.M. & Almeida B. (2023). *Community mediators in South Sudan: empirical legitimacy and post-conflict rule of law building, Utrecht Law Review.* 19(2): 44-57. ([Link](#))
- WIPC, JF. (2023). *Putting Women at the Centre of South Sudan's Peace and Security Agenda: Insights from Civil Society's Engagement with African Union's Peace and Security Council.* ([Link](#))

### General

- Cordaid. (November, 2023). *COP28 Position Paper Dubai. Addressing the Climate Crisis in Fragile and Conflict Affected Settings.* ([Link](#))
- Cordaid. (October, 2023). *Outcome Document Women, Peace & Security Expert Panel: The nexus between the WPS agenda and elections unpacked: Women's participation in elections in the DRC, South Sudan and other contexts.* ([Link](#))
- Crisis Action. *Final Report for Cordaid - People's Coalition for the Sahel. September– December 2023.*
- CSPPS, Pathfinders, Tap network, Wfuna. (June 2023). *SDG16+ at the halfway point to the 2030 Agenda. Global SDG16+ Coalition Statement.* ([Link](#))
- CSPPS. (December, 2023). *Compounding Challenges in Conflict Settings; Local voices reflecting on climate, peace and security interlinkages.* ([Link](#))
- DCAF. (2023). *The Contribution of Civil Society to Sustainable Development Goal 16 through security sector governance and reform; a selection of case studies.* ([Link](#))
- EPLO, CSDN. (October, 2023). *Discussion Paper: 'Peace' in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: Good Practices and Recommendations.* ([Link](#))
- IDPS. (18 September, 2023). *Turning the Tide for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. A Statement by The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS).* ([Link](#))
- IHRDA. *Report on Advocacy Training: Working with the African Regional Human Rights Mechanisms, 13th – 17th February, Kigali Rwanda.*
- JF. (2023). *Tip Sheet: Meaningful Participation of Constituencies in JFA Advocacy.*
- CSPPS. (26 June, 2023). *Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG16+. If Not Now, Then When? An urgent call for transformative SDG16+ commitments at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda.* ([Link](#))
- SFCG, JF. (November, 2023). *Civilian-Led Support to People-Centred Security Sector Practices. Reflecting on lessons learned to inform future action.* ([Link](#))
- SFCG, JF. (Novembre, 2023). *Initiatives dirigées par des citoyens et par la société civile sur la sécurité centrée sur les personnes. Réfléchir aux leçons apprises pour orienter notre action future.*
- SOS-Civisme, JF, SFCG. (Novembre, 2023). *Rapport de l'Étude sur l'État de Lieu des Organes de Gestion de la Paix et de la Sécurité au Niveau Local et l'Évaluation de la Participation des Groupes Exclus dans leur Fonctionnement.*
- VVI, KUTAFITI, Universiteit Leiden, JF. (Décembre, 2023). *Policy Brief. Un Processus Législatif Inclusif pour un Futur Juste ; Cinq idées clés pour les législateurs et les acteurs de la société civile.*
- VVI, KUTAFITI, Universiteit Leiden, JF. (December, 2023). *Policy Brief. Inclusive Law Making for a Just Future; Five key insights for lawmakers and civil society actors.*

## Annex 3: Acronyms

<b>ADF/NALU</b>	Forces démocratiques alliées / National Army for the Liberation of Uganda
<b>APCOF</b>	African Police Civilian Oversight Forum
<b>ASSN</b>	Africa Security Sector Network
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BCNUDH</b>	Bureau Conjoint des Nations Unies pour les Droits de l'Homme (DRC).
<b>CBOs</b>	Community-Based Organisations
<b>CIJ</b>	Customary and Informal Justice
<b>CLSP</b>	Community Local Security Plans
<b>CNDH</b>	Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme (Mali)
<b>CNESS</b>	National Centre for Strategic and Security Studies (Niger)
<b>COP</b>	Community of Practice
<b>CRSS</b>	National SSR Commission (Mali)
<b>CRSV</b>	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
<b>CSDP</b>	Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (EU)
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>CSPPS</b>	Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>CTRH</b>	Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (South Sudan)
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
<b>DFA</b>	De-Facto Authorities (Afghanistan)
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>EAS</b>	East African Community
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West-African States
<b>EEAS</b>	European External Action Service
<b>EPLO</b>	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUCAP</b>	European Union Capacity Building Mission
<b>EURAC</b>	European Network for Central Africa
<b>FAMA</b>	Forces Armées Maliennes
<b>FONAREV</b>	National Fund for Reparations for Victims of Sexual Violence (DRC)
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>HLPF</b>	High-Level Political Forum
<b>HSGO</b>	Hybrid Security Governance Observatory
<b>IATI</b>	International Aid Transparency Initiative
<b>ICC</b>	International Criminal Court
<b>ICTJ</b>	International Centre for Transitional Justice
<b>IDLO</b>	International Development Law Organization
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>ISC</b>	International Steering Committee
<b>JF</b>	Just Future
<b>JFA</b>	Just Future Alliance
<b>JFIS</b>	Just Future International Secretariat
<b>L&amp;A</b>	Lobbying & Advocacy

<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>MHPSS</b>	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
<b>MINUSMA</b>	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
<b>MINUSMA-IOT</b>	MINUSMA International Operational Team
<b>MONUSCO</b>	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo
<b>NAP</b>	National Action Plan
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
<b>NL</b>	Netherlands
<b>NS</b>	National Secretariat
<b>NSC</b>	National Steering Committee
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OGS</b>	Observatoire pour la Gouvernance du Secteur de la Sécurité (Niger)
<b>PO</b>	Programme Outcome
<b>POC</b>	Protection of Civilians
<b>PCRC</b>	Police Community Relations Committee
<b>PSC</b>	Peace and Security Council (AU)
<b>R-ARCSS</b>	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
<b>REC</b>	Regional Economic Communities (Africa)
<b>ROL</b>	Rule of Law
<b>RVI</b>	Rift Valley Institute (Kenya)
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>Search</b>	Search for Common Ground
<b>SFCG</b>	Search for Common Ground
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>SIPRI</b>	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
<b>SL</b>	Southern leadership
<b>SP</b>	Strategic Partnership
<b>SSR/SSRG</b>	Security Sector Reform / Security Sector Reform and Governance
<b>TLO</b>	The Liaison Office (Afghanistan)
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAMA</b>	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNMISS</b>	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>VVI</b>	Van Vollenhoven Institute of Leiden University
<b>WANEP</b>	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
<b>WG</b>	Working Group
<b>WIPC</b>	Women's International Peace Centre
<b>WPS</b>	Women, Peace and Security
<b>YAN</b>	Youth Action Network
<b>YPS</b>	Youth, Peace and Security

## Annex 4: Partners of the Just Future Alliance

The Just Future programme is implemented by an Alliance of six consortium partners (ASSN, Cordaid, Search for Common Ground, TLO, WANEP and WIPC), three research institutes (RVI, SIPRI and VVI) and network organisation CSPPS, and over thirty civil society organisations in the six programme countries.

### Afghanistan

APT	Afghans for Progressive Thinking
AWEC	Afghan Women's Educational Center
AWN	Afghan Women Network
SDO	Sanayee Development Organization
TSDO	Tawhid Social and Development Organization
WCLRF	Women and Children Legal Research Foundation

### Burundi

AFRABU	Association des Femmes Rapatriés du Burundi
Barreau	Le Barreau du Burundi
OAG	Observatoire de l'Action Gouvernementale
RFP	Reseau Femmes et Paix

### DRC

ADEPAE	Action pour le Développement et la Paix Endogènes
CEHAJ	Centre d'Etudes pour Handicap, Justice & Résolution 1325
CEJP	Commission Episcopale Justice & Paix de la CENCO
DFJ	Dynamique des Femmes Juristes.
RRSSJ	Réseau pour la Réforme du Secteur de Sécurité et de Justice
SOS-IJM	Informations Juridiques Multisectorielles
WLPF	Women's International League for Peace & Freedom

### Mali

ADD	Consortium ADD : Aide au Développement Durable
AJCAD	Association des Jeunes pour la Citoyenneté Active et la Démocratie
APROFEM	L'Association pour la Promotion des Femmes et des Enfants au Mali
CAD	Coalition des Alternatives Africains et Développement
Point Sud	Point Sud
RENEDEP	Le Réseau National pour l'Eveil Démocratique et Patriotique
TRIJEUD	Tribune Jeunes Pour Le Droit au Mali "TRIJEUD-MALI"

### Niger

ANDDH	Association Nigérienne de Défense des Droits de l' Homme
CAO	Centre Afrika Obota
LASDEL	Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociale et le Développement Local
Re-GENOVICO	Réseau pour la Gestion Non violente des Conflits
SOS-Civisme	SOS-Civisme
TIMIDRIA	Association Timidria

### South Sudan

CARD	Christian Action for Relief and Development
CEDAR	Community Empowerment for Development Agency and Development
EVE	EVE Organisation for Development
IPCA	Initiative for Peace Communication Association
SRIC	Security Research Information Centre
SSLS	South Sudan Law Society
V4G	Vision for Generation
YWCA	Young Women Christian Association

### International consortium partners

ASSN	African Security Sector Network
Cordaid	Organisation for Relief and Development Aid
Search / SFCG	Search For Common Ground
TLO	The Liaison Office
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WIPC	Women's International Peace Centre

**International network partner and research partners**

CSPPS	Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
RVI	Rift Valley Institute
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
VVI	Van Vollenhoven Institute

