CAPITALIZATION OF EXPERIENCES ON CSPM AND PSA IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAPEX	Capitalization of Experiences
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSPM	Conflict Sensitive Program Management
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
NFU	National Facilitation Unit
PCM	Program/Project Cycle Management
PSA	Psychosocial Approach
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

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1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The statement in the <u>UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development</u> is short and clear: **There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development**. Conflicts and violence are crucial challenges that threaten to slow down or to reverse development achievements. They adversely affect the lives and dignity of millions of people and destroy opportunities for broader growth, development, and prosperity. Addressing these challenges in fragile settings is therefore a strategic priority for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

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>
> — **SDC staff member,** Bern, April 2023

A key concept for the implementation of this strategic priority is conflict sensitivity. The concept is based on the recognition that **interventions by international cooperation are never conflict neutral**. The presence on the ground, the funding, the programming, or the behavior of staff can have positive and negative, intended, and unintended effects on (conflict) dynamics in the context and on systemic inequalities between genders and groups. Transfers of resources (food, shelter, water, health care, training, cash, etc.) into a resource-scarce environment can represent power and wealth. These resources can become an element of conflict, causing harm to affected populations if not designed in a conflict-sensitive manner. At the same time, international cooperation can contribute to reducing tensions, conflict, and violence, foster inclusion, dialogue, and social cohesion, and strengthen local capacities for peace, if implemented in a conflict-sensitive manner.

Conflict sensitivity (CS) thus refers to the attention and efforts aiming at reducing the risk that international cooperation unintentionally contributes to the escalation of violent conflict (do no harm), and instead contributes to de-escalating existing conflicts and strengthening local capacities for peace. Based on this concept, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), in cooperation with partners, has developed a wide range of methods and tools, which constitute the **Conflict Sensitive Program Management** (CSPM), and which are used by development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding actors. To address the emotional and psychological effects of conflict and violence, international cooperation increasingly complements CSPM with the **Psychosocial Approach** (PSA). The PSA aims at considering and addressing peoples' feelings in development strategies and programming. It links the personal dimension (feelings, beliefs, values, perception of self and others), the social dimension (culture, customs, traditions, relationships with others, context) and the material dimension (poverty, productive capacity, challenges of the natural environment) and looks at how these three dimensions influence each other and affect people's behavior. Thereby, it allows for enhanced resilience and agency of international and local staff, partners, and project participants, and thus greater results achievement and sustainability for sustainable development.

Despite considerable macroeconomic progress, **Latin America is one of those regions where sustainable development faces huge challenges** due to the tense relationship between (armed) conflict, violence, fragility, and very high levels of inequality. SDC has been engaged in the region for more than 50 years and has applied both, CSPM and PSA

to different degrees in its portfolio. However, under Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24, the Swiss´s bilateral development cooperation is phasing out from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) – a process that is expected to be completed by 2024. Looking back on more than 50 years of cooperation in LAC, SDC decided to engage in a process of collecting and systematizing some of the rich expertise in the region in the form of capitalizations of experiences (i.e., on the historic impact of Swiss engagement in Latin America, on culture in development cooperation, or on gender).

The capitalization of experiences on CSPM and PSA in LAC (CAPEX)[1] is one of those exercises. SDC´s cooperation offices in Bolivia, Cuba, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua have developed different experiences regarding CSPM and PSA. The CAPEX aims at learning from these experiences to a) **strengthen and provide recommendations for SDCs thematic work in other regions of the world**, and b) f**eed into the institutional and policy dialogue on international cooperation in Switzerland and internationally**. The CAPEX included two levels of analysis: 1) Mainstreaming of CSPM and the PSA at Country Program level for all Swiss representations: Nicaragua, Honduras, Bolivia, Haiti, Cuba, and additionally at portfolio level in Honduras and Nicaragua. 2) Deep Dive, including field visits to Honduras (focusing on the PSA) and Nicaragua (focusing on CSPM), on projects with explicit focus on conflict transformation.

The Peace, Governance, and Gender Section at SDC, mandated swisspeace and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation to conduct the CAPEX exercise. The consultants were Anna Leissing, Head of the Policy, and Platform Program at swisspeace and Martín Del Castillo, Regional Coordinator for Latin America, and the Caribbean at HELVETAS. Both consultants have relevant thematic expertise stemming from longstanding engagement on conflict-sensitive development and peacebuilding, as well as in-depth knowledge about conflicts, violence, fragility, authoritarianism, and shrinking space for civil society in the LAC context.

The CAPEX confirmed that SDCs cooperation offices and programs in LAC provide very rich examples from practice about CSPM and the PSA. Two main guiding questions were at the forefront throughout the process: a) To what extent are CSPM and the PSA relevant in the specific country contexts (**the why**)? How are CSPM and PSA implemented in the different contexts (**the how**)? From the documents, interviews, and field visits, it became clear that the answers to these questions and **the experiences with CSPM and the PSA are different throughout the five countries** (Bolivia, Cuba, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua). This allows considering diverse factors influencing the relevance and implementation of CSPM and the PSA in the region; and it confirms the value of collecting and systematizing these experiences to learn and further develop the use of CPSM and the PSA at SDC, both in programming and at the institutional policy level.

With several processes of capitalizing experiences ongoing in parallel (i.e., historic impact capitalization in Latin America and the Caribbean, culture in development cooperation, gender, among others), this CAPEX offered the potential to link CSPM and PSA to other debates and approaches. However, it was a challenge in terms of workload for the involved Cooperation Offices and partners, who were already busy with ensuring a responsible phasing out process. Further, the consultants faced difficulties setting up time for interviews and technical delays accessing documents over the end-of-year period. The limitations of the first two stages (desk review and interviews) could, however, be overcome during the field visits to Honduras and Nicaragua in February 2023. This was mainly thanks to the two Cooperation Offices, which put tremendous amount of time and energy into organizing a very rich and intense program, including meetings with

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1   We use the acronym CAPEX to refer to the mandate of collecting and systematizing experiences regarding CSPM and PSA in Latin America that led to this report. If we refer to other processes of experience capitalization (i.e., on gender), we will spell it out.

a variety of stakeholders, as well as organizing the travel logistics. **The consultants would hereby like to express their gratitude for this enthusiasm and commitment regarding the CAPEX**, which was an indispensable factor contributing to the rich case study on CSPM and PSA in LAC.

A last reflection refers to the scope and intention of this CAPEX: It does not compare, evaluate nor analyze the experiences systematically according to criteria such as relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. **Thus, it is not an evaluation**. Rather, this report sheds light on the experiences with CPSM implementation (chapter 2) and the PSA (chapter 3), and finally offers seven main findings and learnings from the CAPEX, including recommendations for SDC HQ, cooperation offices, and partners (chapter 4). In addition to this report, the CAPEX will provide two factsheets (one on CSPM and one on PSA) summarizing practical examples and recommendations on how to implement CSPM/PSA in SDC programs around the world, as well as two animated videos illustrating the most important lessons learned (produced by another external consultant).

2 CONFLICT SENSITIVE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The following chapter provides an overview on Conflict Sensitive Program Management (CSPM) in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), specifically in Bolivia, Cuba, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Based on the conceptual background (2.1), it addresses the application of CSPM by describing the different stages of the CSPM implementation process (2.2), as well as the different meanings, needs, and uses of CSPM in LAC (2.3). Chapter 2 is thus a response to the question "how" CSPM is applied throughout the five countries and at the programmatic level in Nicaragua.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Conflict sensitivity builds on the notion that conflicts exist in any given situation, that there is no change or progress without conflict, and that conflict can be an impulse and opportunity for positive change. However, when conflicts turn violent, they can slow down, hinder, or even reverse development achievements.

> "Conflict Sensitive Program Management is used for development cooperation, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, as it offers tools and methods to navigate with more oversight, intention, and security."
>
> — **SDC staff member** at the cooperation office in Nicaragua, February 2023

Also, international cooperation is never conflict neutral. The presence of international cooperation – the programs, the transfer of funds and resources, the communication, as well as the individual and collective behavior of staff – can have significant effects on conflict dynamics in the context. These effects can be negative (i.e., exacerbating tensions and conflict) or positive (i.e., reducing conflicts and strengthening capacities for peace). Any responsible intervention aiming at **sustainable development thus requires conflict sensitivity** (CS), which is defined as the awareness about and efforts aiming at minimizing the risk of (unintended) negative effects (do no harm) and fostering the positive ones.

Conflict Sensitive Program Management (CSPM) provides a wide range of methods and tools to do so. At SDC, CSPM is applied in three steps: **1) Analyzing the (conflict) context** to identify actors and their (power) relations, conflict issues (what are sources of tension?) and dynamics (how have conflicts evolved over time?), as well as connectors and capacities for peace (what and who brings people together). **2) Identifying the interaction between the program/project and the (conflict) context** (how does the context impact the program/project and vice-versa?). **3) Adapting the program/project** according to the findings of step one and two, to minimize the negative and maximize the positive effects of the intervention on the context.

CSPM is used for development cooperation, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Regarding the latter, it is important not to reduce it to the traditional understanding of armed conflict, but to include contexts marked by political or social conflict, (systemic) violence, authoritarianism, and/or shrinking civil society space. The CAPEX showed that CSPM is particularly helpful and appropriate in highly volatile, complex, and sensitive situations, such as in Nicaragua or Haiti. When things happen very quickly and all at once, when the positions and behaviors of different

actors change unpredictably, when the institutional and/or personal security are at risk, **CSPM offers tools and methods to navigate with more oversight, intention, and security**. Moreover, local partners from SDC-supported projects in Nicaragua mentioned that the joint analysis and reflection on CSPM in the premises of the cooperation office provided them with an opportunity to step out of the ongoing conflict dynamics, calm down and breath, reconnect with others, and renew their energy, trust, and hope. In this regard, **CSPM can be understood as a tool for resilience and prevention**, helping in being prepared for rapidly changing and highly sensitive dynamics.

2.2 PROCESS OF CSPM IMPLEMENTATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

While the process of CSPM implementation is, of course, not linear, the CAPEX allowed to distinguish four stages of implementation: **a) sensitization; b) capacity development; c) implementation and sharing; d) monitoring and learning**. The following part describes the experiences in LAC along different stages of implementation.

2.2.1 SENSITIZATION AND AWARENESS
A first step in the implementation of the CSPM approach is sensitization and awareness raising among SDC staff in the cooperation offices, as well as international and local partners. We refer to the moment when those involved in the context become aware that CSPM is necessary and useful to work in a specific context and start looking at their interventions from a conflict-sensitive perspective.

The awareness about the need for CSPM was generated through an external impulse from the context. This was evident with the sociopolitical crisis in Nicaragua in 2018. With the sudden increase in social protests, violent repression, and polarization in society, the political risks for SDC, the potential misuse of funds for political purposes, the risk of doing harm in strengthening repressive structures and fueling polarization or the need to address tensions and feelings such as anger and fear among staff and partners made the relevance of CSPM obvious to the cooperation office. Based on this recognition, the UNIR Foundation[2] started the process by creating a common understanding among SDC staff (management and program officers) on CSPM (uses, tools). Later, the UNIR Foundation presented the CSPM methodology to implementing partners and supported the sensitization process in two workshops in 2019.

Also in Haiti, the awareness about the need for CSPM among SDC staff at the cooperation office was

> "The ongoing exacerbation of conflict, mistrust, violence, and insecurity inhibits a proper implementation of programs/projects and puts staff and partners at risk."
>
> **— SDC staff member** at the cooperation office in Haiti, March 2023

triggered by the escalating political conflict, increasing social polarization and mistrust towards state institutions and authorities, and the high levels of gang violence and general insecurity in the country. Interview partners mentioned that, at times, they did not see

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2   The UNIR Foundation is a private non-profit organization in Bolivia that works in the fields of information, dialogue, democratic citizenship, and conflict resolution. UNIR engages in conflict analysis, CSPM, and dialogue processes.

the relevance of CSPM in Haiti, as it was not a classic situation of armed/violent conflict. However, **the ongoing exacerbation of conflict, violence, mistrust, and insecurity inhibits a proper implementation of programs and projects** (i.e., when gang members control access to project participants) **and puts staff and partners at risk**. Thus, while some of the CSPM tools and principles are currently used with a different conceptual framing (i.e., the leave no one behind approach ensuring the principle of inclusion and reaching out to the most marginalized, or actors mapping used for security procedures and risk management), there is an expressed desire by SDC staff at the cooperation office to enhance the capacities for a systematic application of CSPM in the country program. Thus, the awareness about the relevance of CSPM increased according to developments in the country.

In Bolivia, <u>Integrated Water Management Project</u> (GIA, for its acronyms in Spanish) started deepening in CSPM tools (context and actors' analysis, tension sources identification, etc.) as conflicts related to mining became more visible. Together with SDC´s National Program Officer responsible for that project, they started to look for proper tools and a common understanding of conflict sensitivity.

Thus, in all cases the awareness about the need for **CSPM emerged when the context of conflict or crisis reached a culmination point**, and **the demand for support** in the sensitization process came **from SDC cooperation offices and/or program partners**. However, interviewees also mentioned that both, cooperation offices and partners would benefit from applying CSPM as a means of prevention be-fore conflict and violence escalated completely to strengthen preparedness and resilience.

2.2.2 DEVELOPING CAPACITIES

A second stage in the implementation of CSPM involves capacity development for project managers, cooperation actors and local partners.

In Nicaragua, for the <u>program Society, Culture, and Memory</u>, the process of capacity development was done systematically with technical support from the UNIR Foundation and the subsequent advisory services by swisspeace to SDC staff and civil society partners. As a very first step, the cooperation office and partners of the program Society, Culture, and Memory completed an online course on CSPM and held an initial online workshop (due to the COVID19 pandemic). At the first on-site mission in 2021, the swisspeace advisor Anna Leissing visited all program partners and held project specific **mini workshops, which focused on the first step of CSPM which is context/conflict analysis**. Much emphasis was placed on the analysis of actors, and (power) relations, on conflict issues, dividers (conflictive issues, systems, symbols, events, etc.) and connectors (issues, systems, symbols, events that bring people together). With time, the second and third step of CSPM application (interaction between context and program; and adapting the projects/program) became clearer. **SDC and its partners developed the ability to identify interactions between the context and the program, and to adapt their projects/the program** to mitigate and manage risks (avoid negative effects of the context on the program and/or organization such as being hindered to conduct activities, or security risks for staff, partners, and project participants) and do no harm (avoid negative effects of the program/organization on the context such as fueling tensions and conflict, excluding specific social groups, reinforcing inequality).

> "Developing knowledge and skills on CSPM while implementing our project worked well for us, as it allowed to link the capacity building with ongoing processes such as the planning and preparing of project documents for the second phase."
>
> **— Member of a local partner organization** in Nicaragua, February 2023

The CAPEX showed clearly that **capacity development works best when closely linked to existing tools and ongoing processes**. For example, when the civil society partners of the SDC program Society, Culture, and Memory had to develop the project documents for the second phase of the program, the advisor from swisspeace held bilateral online sessions with each organization to apply CSPM analysis tools and discuss potential risks and mitigation measures in their specific project context. Another example is the workshop on conflict sensitive communication held during an on-site visit of the swisspeace advisor, which allowed participants to integrate the learnings from the workshop right on the spot by providing time to work on the "stories of change" partners were to develop anyways in the frame of the program. This approach to capacity development could be titled "**learning by doing**" and was highly appreciated by the local civil society partners in Nicaragua.

Also, it is **a process that is not one-directional** (i.e., one part being the expert and teaching, the other receiving input and learning). In Nicaragua, the process of capacity development was a joint process among a variety of actors, involving SDC, experts on CSPM, the psychosocial approach, gender, etc., implementing partners, and other international and local NGOs. Examples were a local civil society organization sharing how they had adapted one of the CSPM tools (dividers/connectors[3]) to their work with children and youth, emphasizing the connectors and diminishing the dividers, because the young project participants felt unsafe and demotivated to talk about conflictive issues (particularly in the beginning). Other examples are a program partner providing insights into their conflict-sensitive communication policies, or an international consultant who contributed to enhancing capacities among partners on qualitative impact measurement. **The different actors bring specific expertise that contributes enhancing capacities around CSPM tools and adapting them to the local realities, both institutionally and territorially**.

2.2.3 IMPLEMENTING AND ADAPTING

A third moment for CSPM implementation is the actual application of the CSPM tools and methods. Two countries (Nicaragua and Bolivia) implemented CSPM systematically and explicitly. In both countries, **the support of the management, both at SDC headquarters and cooperation offices, was decisive for the CSPM implementation**, as well as the **active involvement of the National Program Officers and their close coordination with the implementing partners of programs and projects** funded and supported by SDC (i.e., Society, Culture and Memory in Nicaragua, or Dialogue and Collaborative Support (DAC) and Integrated Water Management (GIA) in Bolivia).

In Bolivia, the cooperation office accompanied the CSPM implementation in different working areas such as the DAC aiming at strengthening civil society in the governance working area, the GIA in the field of climate change and environment, and Inclusive Markets in the field of economic development. To this end, the cooperation office collaborated with the advisors Antonio Aramayo and Gabriela Ugarte from the UNIR Foundation and Javier Zubieta, Emilio Madrid, and Martín del Castillo from HELVETAS. **Together, they developed a context- and conflict-sensitive management guide. These guidelines were later shared with all cooperation partners in the country**. Subsequently, upon request, UNIR Foundation supported the different SDC funded projects in implementing the guidelines.

> "The close accompaniment by the cooperation office in implementing our projects was a great support, not only financially, but morally and politically."
>
> — **Member of a local partner organization** in Nicaragua, February 2023

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3 Dividers/connectors is a tool for analysis, looking at what divides people and what connects them in terms of topics, institutions, events, behaviors, values, symbols, etc.

In Nicaragua, the escalation of the sociopolitical crisis in 2018 determined the need for accelerated implementation of CSPM. **SDC completely adapted the country strategy and the ways of engaging**. From working closely with and through the government, SDC shifted to working with multilateral and (inter)national organizations directly. **This required a close accompaniment of implementing partners by the cooperation office**. The cooperation office regularly invited local partners to their offices to provide legal advice, administrative, and moral support given the legal restrictions and obligations that were introduced and engage in joint analysis and exchange regarding the situation. **Through these exchanges, partners were able to adapt the tools to their specific realities and connect CSPM to other approaches** (i.e., psychosocial support or gender) throughout the implementation of their programs and projects. For example, when confronted with the reality of massive emigration of mainly men (part of the conflict dynamics in Nicaragua), a water governance program in Nicaragua realized it had to promote women's participation in the program. Otherwise, it would not be able to maintain the local water committees due to a lack of participants. However, including women in these committees implied the risk of burdening women with an additional task and thereby doing harm in contributing to existing patterns of gender inequality. **Thus, while CSPM helped to identify the risk of a specific conflict dynamic (emigration) for the program, the connection to a gender analysis allowed for an increased awareness about the program's risk of doing harm**.

In other countries as Haiti, Honduras, and Cuba, CSPM implementation was less systematic at the mainstreaming level. It was, however, directly applied in specific programs, such as the REGLEAU program in Haiti, an integrated water management project implemented by HELVETAS. The project staff in Haiti were trained on CSPM and how to upscale the tools to other projects in the country by the HELVETAS advisor Owen Frazer. In this process, the local teams put particular emphasis in analysing the context: actors' maps, analysis of conflicts, analysis of sources of tensions and connectors. In Honduras, the mainstreaming of the psychosocial approach (PSA) in the frame of the EMPODERAT program also built on CSPM tools, mainly for the purpose of analysis. Finally, CSPM tools and guiding principles (i.e., transparency, coordination, inclusivity) are also implemented under different conceptual frameworks (i.e., leave no one behind). In Cuba, for example, the Platform for Participation and Equity (PYE) does not explicitly mention CSPM as part of the program, also, because the terminology of conflict and human rights is politically sensitive. However, interviewed partners emphasized the importance of specific tools such as actor mappings, including a clear understanding of (power) relations, or the shared principles of inclusivity and constructive dialogue to achieve the aim of the projects, which is to strengthen the voices and inclusion of marginalized groups.

Thus, while **CSPM implementation benefits from an early-on, systematic, and comprehensive process, led and closely accompanied by the SDC cooperation offices**, it also adds value when applied in a more selective way, by focusing on a specific project or using some of the tools and guiding principles. Moreover, **CSPM gains relevance when connected to other approaches** such as gender and the psychosocial approach. **This requires recurrent exchange and coordination among actors on the ground** (SDC cooperation offices, partners, donors, and other actors in the context), as well as **flexibility in terms of programs, processes, and resources** (i.e., adapting objectives and working modalities, allocating financial resources to unforeseen, investing time in processes and exchange, etc.).

2.2.4 MONITORING AND LEARNING

The previous chapters have showed the different experiences in sensitizing, developing capacities, and applying CSPM at country level by the cooperation offices, as well as in specific programs and projects.

These experiences link to the Project Cycle at the planning stage (context analysis, mapping of actors and their relationships, identification of dividers and connectors, risk analysis) and implementation. In Nicaragua, for example, the cooperation office integrated context, risk, and stakeholder analysis into the day-to-day work of programs and projects, both at the cooperation office and in the different programs and projects consulted in the frame of the CAPEX. Also, in Bolivia, there are relevant experiences in including in CSPM during implementation, for example in integrating CSPM in the project reports (yearly/semestral), thereby even contributing to a certain degree of CSMP monitoring.

Monitoring efforts, however, mainly focus on quantitative indicators, reporting on how many trainings, activities, or publications were conducted in a specific period. While this is relevant, it does not allow for explicit information about the contribution of CSPM to long-term qualitative change. **The aim is, thus, to complement existing monitoring systems with qualitative indicators and to collect data that provides information about the contribution of projects and programs to reducing tensions, conflicts, and violence, and strengthening social cohesion, dialogue, and conflict transformation in the local contexts**.

"Change is when families of opposed political sides start talking to each other and working together to foster the wellbeing of their children."

— Member of a local partner organization in Nicaragua, February 2023

In Nicaragua, there has been an interesting experience in revising the Theory of Change and adapting the monitoring system of the Society, Culture, and Memory program. The process was guided by an external consultant, Michael Forch, who developed a combination of qualitative and quantitative indicators in collaboration with the cooperation office and the local partners. These indicators include emblematic cases of individuals, communities, organizations, or institutions that have changed their attitudes, behaviour, processes, and/or policies. **Thus, the program partners not only report on numbers, but document stories of change at the individual, collective, or institutional level**. These stories include, for example, a community where parents of opposed political sides started to engage in dialogue about a common interest (connector), which is the wellbeing of their children; or local civil society organizations, which strengthened their connection, mutual trust, and agency through joint context/conflict analysis, exchange about experiences, and sharing knowledge in the meetings and workshops at the cooperation office, which were perceived as a safe space in the midst of a tense, conflictive, and restricted context.

Documenting this kind of stories requires appropriate data collection. Local partners, in collaboration with the cooperation office in Nicaragua, and the external consultant, have dedicated significant effort to identify different options, including gathering testimonies from project participants or using digital tools during their activities (i.e., survey to collect reflections after a theatre show).

2.3 DIFFERENT MEANINGS, NEEDS, AND USES

Not all stakeholders understand CSPM in the same way or use it for the same purposes, depending on their understanding, role, and capacities. The following four main uses could be identified:

— Context analysis tool
— Risk management
— Do no harm
— Conflict transformation

How was CSPM applied/used?

- Context analysis tool
- Risk management
- Do no harm
- Conflict transformation
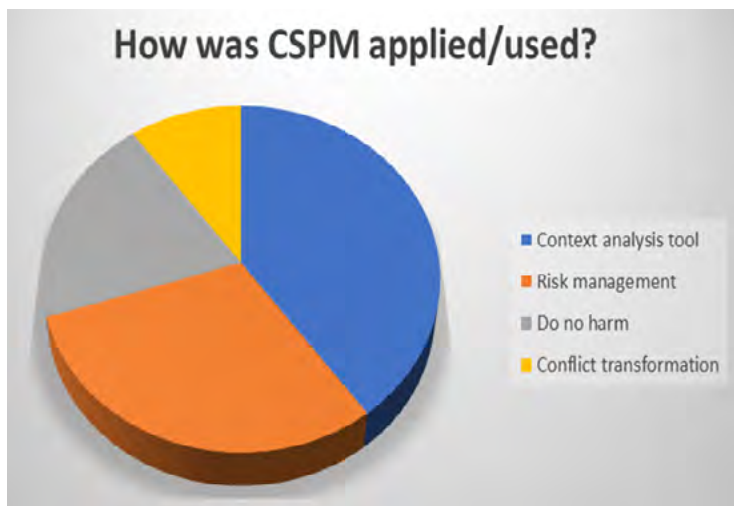
As the graphic shows, most of the interviewed actors used CSPM tools for context analysis and risk management. Less applied CSPM as a measure to do no harm, and a small minority applied CSPM as a contribution to conflict transformation.

However, when asked about how they understand CSPM conceptually, those same actors would put the priorities exactly the other way round: most of the actors understand CSPM as a direct contribution to (conflict) transformation. As a second priority, they see CSMP as a tool to "do no harm", and finally, they mention context analysis.

This apparent contradiction has its reasons in the nature and dynamics of fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The roots of conflicts, violence, and fragility often have existed for decades, if not centuries. They are closely entrenched in structures, institutions, societies, and cultures. Thus, staying engaged and achieving sector-specific sustainable development results in these contexts is hard enough, let alone transforming them. Moreover, the room for maneuver in contexts such as Nicaragua or Haiti is very limited and do not allow for a direct impact at the macro level (structures, institutions, society). Development actors thus responsibly seek to achieve the planned results in their sector (i.e., in water governance, economic development) and use the tools and methods of CSPM to do so.

Therefore, the use of CSPM in the different contexts in LAC can be described as follows:

2.3.1 CONTEXT ANALYSIS TOOLS

One of the most prominent uses of CSPM is as a tool for context analysis. The Swiss Cooperation Offices in Nicaragua and Bolivia have added and emphasized conflict analysis tools as a part of their annual context analysis. In addition, projects in different fields in Nicaragua (Society, Culture and Memory, Cuenca Dipilto, ProCacao) also stated that they apply the approach as a tool for context analysis, especially for the identification of possible sources of tension in the context of conflict and the analysis of the multiple/diverse actors in the territories. Conflict analysis tools that are particularly used are: actors mapping, including (power) relations among diverse actors, the conflict tree, and dividers/connectors.

2.3.2 RISK MANAGEMENT

CSPM has been primarily applied to avoid negative impact of the context on the program (and not to mitigate and manage risks to do harm). This has been very evident in Nicaragua to mitigate potential institutional and even personal risks, as commented by the representative of a regional NGO based in Managua, who had to leave the country and seek refuge in Guatemala. For this purpose, the focus has been placed on analysis of political sensitivities and tensions, legal and institutional frameworks, as well as of different communication channels (i.e., social media) and the implications of exposure. While the mitigation of risks to personal security is a question of risk management for local staff and partners, it is rather a question of "do no harm" for international cooperation (i.e., at SDC Headquarters), as it is their responsibility to make sure the intervention does not put people at risk.

2.3.3 DO NO HARM

The "do no harm" principle, thus, to avoid negative impact of the program on the context, is particularly important in sensitive contexts such as Nicaragua or Cuba. The Cooperation Offices there have taken great care to analyze the framing, the messages, the language, the way of communicating and relating to third parties. A particular focus lies on the question of how to relate to and work with authorities, as well as how to protect staff, partners, and program participants from negative consequences when engaging with international cooperation. While "do no harm" is clearly understood at the level of SDC headquarters and cooperation offices, local partners (i.e., in Nicaragua) initially showed more difficulties in understanding the potential negative effects of their projects on the context. There might be different reasons behind this: First, in Latin America, the notion "harm" is very much related to violent aggression, which is, obviously not part of SDCs partners' behavior. Second, the power imbalance between the government and civil society organizations in Nicaragua is huge. Imagining one's own negative effect on a context, which is strongly dominated by the much more powerful government, can be hard.

2.3.4 CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

The interview partners (SDC staff and local partners) concluded clearly that CSPM contributes directly to transformation, thus, to foster the positive impact of the program on the context. However, the scope and level of transformative change is rather limited due to the very restricted environment and huge power imbalances. While some positive changes have been identified at the project level (i.e., increased social cohesion among youth, families, or communities involved in the Society, Culture, Memory program in Nicaragua, openness for dialogue and cooperation among civil society organizations in the Participation and Equality Platform in Cuba), transforming conflict or violent patterns at a higher level (i.e., institutional, political, social, cultural) requires long-term engagement, high-level investment in terms of personnel and financial resources, and close cooperation with actors at all levels (donors, partners, public institutions).

3 PSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACH

The following chapter provides insights into the mainstreaming of the psychosocial approach (PSA) in Honduras, adding some specific experiences from Nicaragua. Based on the conceptual background (3.1), it describes the application of the PSA in Honduras by outlining the process of implementation through the EMPODERAT program (3.2) as well as an analysis of the different uses of PSA (3.3).

3.1   CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

In contrast to CSPM, the psychosocial approach (PSA) is less established, both in theory and practice of international cooperation worldwide. In humanitarian aid, there is a reference document to <u>mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings</u>. However, for development cooperation, while drawing on knowledge and approaches from psychology, social anthropology, and feminist theory, the PSA in development cooperation is mainly informed and shaped by (local) practice and lived experiences on the ground.

> "Conflict and violence do not happen only between groups or societies, but through concrete people and their bodies. Their long lasting, sometimes inter-generational effects on peoples' perceptions, believes, and behavior need to be considered for any transformative process."
>
> **— Dr. David Becker,** Italy, January 2023

Perceptions and understandings of PSA, depend on the discipline and standpoint. A psychologist will start connecting the individual psychological lens to collective, social, political, and economic realities. As one of the few academic sources describing the evolvement of the PSA in international cooperation states: "The psychosocial approach moves towards a lens that aims at strengthening and reconstructing the social tissue, understanding that emotional reactions are not isolated from the relational and social world (<u>Villa Gómez 2012</u>)". An agricultural engineer will complement its technical knowledge with an analysis of the human being and its emotional, social, and cultural subjectivity. And a peacebuilder will complement the conflict analysis (actors, (power) relations, conflict issues, dividers and connectors, history, politics) with emotional, relational, social, and cultural dimensions.

A comprehensive conceptual resource is the SDC Toolkit on <u>Gender, Conflict Transformation, and the Psychosocial Approach</u>. While it dates back to the year 2006 and could benefit from a revision and update, it remains a valuable resource, providing an overview on the history, relevance, and application of the PSA in different contexts and areas of international cooperation. The toolkit describes the **PSA as a lens that seeks to understand the relationship between the individual and the environment**. Thus, while the PSA has emerged and is applied mainly in the work with victims of conflict and violence or marginalized groups (i.e., survivors of gender-based and sexual violence, refugees, internally displaced people, youth), **it is relevant to sustainable development in any sector** (i.e., health, education, employment and income, water, food, and natural disasters), since they all imply a psychosocial dimension.

In LAC, SDC applied the psychosocial approach selectively in the context of the COVID19 pandemic. During the first months of the pandemic (March-June 2020) the then Latin America and Caribbean Division (DLAC) organized a series of exchanges between all offices in the region using the PSA to support staff in coping with the crisis.

The target group was the gender focal points in the offices. While the initiative for this series of Webinars came from the then DLAC, the EMPODERAT program (PSA program in Honduras, see below) played a leading role in applying the methodology developed in Honduras through the moderation of the international consultant, Dr. David Becker[4] who had contributed significantly to the development of the PSA at SDC. Local staff at the co-operation office in Cuba mentioned that these meetings had a positive effect on peoples' feelings through creating connection, enabling the expression of concerns, and fostering mutual understanding. Also in Nicaragua, **direct psychosocial support to SDC staff and local partners was provided in response to the multiple crisis** (socio-political, pandemic, hurricanes) and some local civil society partners apply the PSA systematically in their activities with children and youth.

While these selective initiatives are important and relevant, the CAPEX will focus on the systematic PSA mainstreaming process in Honduras. The process was based on the recognition that t**he long-lasting socio-economic conflicts and the endemic violence had led to a culture of fear and collective trauma, which represented significant obstacles to sustainable development**. The toolkit mentioned above proposes three categories of psychosocial analysis, which are particularly helpful in understanding these obstacles and **the conceptual and analytical background of the PSA program in Honduras**: 1) fear/threat; 2) trauma/destruction; 3) grief/loss. During the interview with the co-author Dr. Becker, he added a fourth category: 4) rage or impotence/injustice. The following table provides some insights into how these four categories play out in the context of Honduras:

	INDIVIDUAL (AND COLLECTIVE) EMOTION	SOCIAL REALITY
1	**Fear:** a culture of fear, silence, and mis-trust that tends to foster isolation, defen-siveness, and risk aversion among indi-viduals and communities.	**Threat:** constant threats due to very high levels of violence (gangs, state, domestic, femicides), a vulnerability to natural di-sasters (hurricanes), crisis (pandemic).
2	**Trauma:** unresolved past events (i.e., hur-ricane Mitch (1998), or coup d'état (2009)) are still part of the collective memory, emotional state, and narrative about the reality in Honduras today.	**Destruction:** of homes and livelihoods due to natural disasters (hurricanes), but also in the context of forced evictions, destruction of the environment by trans-national companies exploiting natural resources.
3	**Grief:** widespread and unresolved wounds, at individual, family, and socie-tal level, related to the (violent) death of loved ones.	**Loss:** due to violent death of family mem-bers, friends, or collective leaders (i.e., Berta Caceres), social structures due to migration, property due to economic cri-sis
4	**Impotence/Rage:** either passivity (i.e., in the face of poverty) and/or strong ag-gression against oneself (i.e., alcohol) or others.	**Injustice:** High levels of impunity, eco-nomic and social inequality and high poverty rates, dysfunctional state institu-tions, corruption.

Four categories by Dr. David Becker, exemplification related to Honduras by Anna Leissing.

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4   Dr. David Becker is a psychologist and trauma expert who advises organizations in international cooperation (humanitarian, development, peace-building) working in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. He is co-author of the SDC toolkit Gender, Conflict Transformation, and the Psychosocial Approach, and had a decisive role in conducting the psychosocial analysis of the SDC country portfolio in Honduras and the following establishment of the EMPODERAT program as a consultant (see 3.2.1).

3.2   PROCESS OF PSA IMPLEMENTATION IN HONDURAS

Similar to the experiences with CSPM in LAC, the implementation of the PSA in Honduras consisted roughly in four stages: a) analysis and sensitization; b) capacity and skills development; c) implementation and adaptation; d) monitoring, learning, and communication. It is worth mentioning that the systematic and comprehensive way the PSA was mainstreamed in Honduras is a unique experience that provides many valuable lessons for SDC's future engagement on the PSA, outlined in Chapter 4.

3.2.1   ANALYSIS AND SENSITIZATION

The impulse for implementing the PSA in Honduras came from the challenges of implementing a project in the productive sector, namely, the PROCACAHO project. Despite the favorable conditions and the tempting economic perspectives offered by the project, the farmers would simply not agree to participate the way they were supposed to. **Their resistance could not be understood from a purely economic perspective, it didn't seem rational**. Therefore, the cooperation office invited Dr. David Becker as an external consultant to look at the issue from a psychosocial perspective.

> "The resistance of the farmers could not be understood from a purely economic perspective. It didn't seem rational."
>
> **— SDC staff member, Bern, January 2023**

Based on the analysis along the four categories described above, it became clear that **several aspects in the farmers' environment had not been considered adequately:** First, decades of conflict and violence had created a culture of fear and mistrust among families and neighbors that would, of course, also affect the relationship with the project staff of PROCACAHO (i.e., agricultural engineers). On what grounds should farmers believe and trust in what those "foreigners" were saying? Second, the decades of (extreme) poverty and impotence had led to passivity and risk aversion. When you struggle to survive every day, there is little room for exploring new avenues and envisioning a different future. It feels safer to stay with what you know. And finally, in a context where violence and extortion are part of daily life, economic progress might attract criminals' attention. Out of this fear, some farmers very reasonably preferred to stay "small" and below the radar, to keep themselves and their families safe. These aspects had a strong influence on the farmers willingness and ability to engage with the project staff. The latter, however, were not trained to address these issues. The analysis thus showed the need for awareness raising and capacity building among project staff at PROCACAHO to create trustful relationships, address the farmers' and their families' socio-emotional realities, and thereby foster participation and results achievement at the PROCACAHO program.

The experiences in the PROCACAHO project resonated with many of the programs in the country portfolio in Honduras. Basically, the psychosocial analysis carried out by Dr. Becker created awareness about the fact that **the long-lasting socio-economic conflicts and endemic violence had led to a culture of fear and collective trauma, which represented significant obstacles to sustainable development.**

Once aware of the need for the PSA in Honduras, the cooperation office started to look out for local capacities to develop and implement the approach. However, despite a strong history and progressive discourse about psychosocial empowerment and emancipation among civil society and social movements in the country, this did not (yet) translate into everyday practice and organization. Leadership was often top down and focusing on one traditional leading figure, organizations had strong hierarchies, engaged in competition over resources and recognition, and fostered sacrifice and (self) exploitation to cope with responsibilities. **Thus, while some civil society organizations (CSO) and social**

movements did incorporate psychosocial support in some of their daily activities, there was no systematic application of PSA, not among socially invested CSO (i.e., human rights, feminist organizations), and even less among local actors, which are not traditionally dealing with social or psychological issues (i.e., productive sector, water governance).

Against this background, the cooperation office initiated a strategic long-term process to develop and mainstream the PSA throughout SDCs country portfolio – **the Transformative Empowerment Program with a Psychosocial Focus** (EMPODERAT). This allowed for a reasonable time frame (10 years) and adequate funding to build capacities and achieve the transformative agenda of the PSA in Honduras.

3.2.2   CAPACITY AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Since there was no clearly established conceptual framework for the PSA in Honduras, **the first phase of capacity development was strongly supported by an international consultant** Dr. Becker, who engaged with the National Facilitation Unit (NFU) created to implement the EMPODERAT program. The NFU consisted of a small interdisciplinary team (psychologist and social anthropologist) from the national CSO OCDIH (Christian Organization for Integral Development of Honduras), which had been selected as implementers of the EMPODERAT program through a national tender. Building capacities at this stage meant creating and adapting the theoretical and conceptual background stemming from the work of Dr. David Becker, as well as some regional experts from Guatemala and Mexico to the Honduran realities (i.e., in terms of existing psychosocial knowledge, terminology and language, the history of the country, relevant actors, etc.).

> "Developing capacities throughout the SDC country portfolio required translating and adapting the PSA to the realities of different territories, sectors, programs, and actors."
>
> **—Member of the EMPODERAT project team,** Honduras, February 2023.

In the second phase, the NFU engaged with SDC programs and partners in different sectors in an exhaustive exercise of **translating and adapting this conceptual basis to the realities of different sectors, programs, and actors.** This meant analyzing the psychosocial dimension (i.e., the four categories) in the local and sector specific contexts, identifying elements of conflict and violence, and their relevance in the local history and culture, or for specific groups in society (i.e., women, farmers, security forces). Based on this analysis, the NFU, jointly with public institutions, partners, local CSO, and program participants developed psychosocial action plans for each program in an open and constructive dialogue with a huge variety of actors: local police officers, agricultural engineers, feminist lawyers, community leaders, women's groups, academic teachers, administrative project staff, international professors, human rights defenders, psychologists, project coordinators, among others. **These psychosocial action plans described a roadmap for developing program-specific knowledge, skills, and capacities related to the PSA.**

While there was significant progress in fostering capacities and ownership among programs in the productive and the human rights sector, the capacity development on PSA in the academic sector was slower than planned. After the foreseen alliance with the public university National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) did not materialize, the EMPODERAT program managed to develop a certificate course in cooperation with the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO). The course also involved academic experts from Guatemala and Mexico. For institutional reasons, FLACSO was not able to further engage with the program to develop the master program foreseen in the Pro-Doc. Therefore, EMPODERAT had to build new alliances, and at the time of the CAPEX,

the brand-new master's program on PSA in Development Cooperation had just started few months ago in collaboration with a private university. While the EMPODERAT team and some of the involved academic staff were enthusiastic about PSA, **the process was still marked by structural and institutional challenges such as creating flexibility in highly rigid institutional processes and hierarchies** (i.e., integrating the external experts' input into the syllabus) or learning and accepting new ways of doing research and teaching, different from the academic traditions and culture at the university.

3.2.3   IMPLEMENTATION, ADAPTATION, AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION
While a detailed description of the ways the PSA is applied in different sectors will exceed the possibility of this report, it is worth highlighting some aspects of the rich and inspiring experiences.

An outstanding example is the Inter-Programmatic Exercise. **This territorial approach gathers four SDC programs in the South of Honduras** (water governance, women's economic empowerment, human rights, psychosocial approach). In a joint analysis of the local context the four programs (SDC, project staff, participants) identified entry points for PSA and strategies to address environmental, human rights, economic, and emotional needs in the local context. The huge **added values are the shared contextual reality, overlapping goals and interests, and the geographic proximity**, which facilitate exchange, collaboration, and synergies. **It allows for trust and alliance building in a context marked by mistrust and competition over resources, including from international cooperation.** However, participants of the Inter-Programmatic Exercise also highlighted that cross-sectoral exchange requires extra time and effort to create mutual understanding and develop a common language, as the different programs build on very specific knowledge, terminology, assumptions, etc.

In the productive sector, the implementation of PSA consisted mainly in enhancing agricultural engineers' and other project staff's skills to address the farmers' social and family situation. As a member of the EMPODERAT team put it: "The project team and the engineers had to put themselves in the shoes of the farmers to create trust and mutual understanding." While this may seem basic, it is very important, because in those remote communities, the project staff (i.e., the agricultural engineer) is often the only person to visit from the "outside" in weeks. Thus, the farmers and their families depend on this contact for way more than producing cacao. They depend on the engineers for information (i.e., on the education of their children, legal procedures, regulations (i.e., regarding COVID19), etc.) and they expect these well-educated professionals to listen to them and help solving their issues. If there is mistrust or a conflict within or between families, if there is violence threatening the farmers or their families' lives, if there is a major crisis ongoing (i.e., pandemic, hurricanes), the farmers might not be able or willing to focus on organic fertilizer or new irrigation systems. However, **the technical project staff (i.e., agricultural engineers) are usually not trained in dealing with emotions, addressing social relationships, or resolving conflicts, and might not be able to provide the support needed** (i.e., safe spaces to express concerns and emotions, empathy, trust, and mutual support).

> "The project team and the technical experts had to put themselves in the shoes of the farmers to create trust and mutual understanding."
>
> **—Member of the EMPODERAT team, Honduras, February 2023**

The same goes for a network of women lawyers for human rights defenders. As lawyers, they are trained in looking at the legal and judicial aspects of human rights violations. However, through the engagement with the EMPODERAT program, they have realized that the emotional and psychosocial support to victims of human rights violations is

essential for them not to abandon the judicial processes, which the network accompanies for strategic litigation. The safe space for victims to express fears and concerns, the close accompaniment by the lawyers' network, and their human attitude towards the victims help to strengthen trust, faith, and commitment to a process that can take years and often comes with threats, intimidation, and high risks to the personal security. Therefore, the network has integrated **PSA as a strategic pillar and core institutional value of their work.** As a core value and as an institutional practice, the PSA helps centering self-care and mutual care as feminists in a very male dominated profession and a patriarchal context of very high levels of gender-based violence.

For a women's network engaged in small entrepreneurship, **the PSA is about empowerment and overcoming traditional gender roles and stereotypes, too**. As the psychosocial gender analysis shows, some of the main obstacles to women's empowerment (economic, political, social) are: the fear of negative or even violent reactions to women breaking with the traditional gender roles, the feeling of guilt when missing out on the household and care work (children, elderly), the increasing responsibility of generating income due to men's absence (emigration, death), the fear to speak up in mixed groups and little confidence in the own competences, among others. Thus, the gatherings in safe spaces among women (and children), the solidarity and mutual support structures to ensure childcare, the moments of self-care and emotional catharsis (i.e., through joint dancing), and the positive reinforcement of confidence, faith, and trust are essential to achieve women's economic empowerment.

In the security sector, police officers talked about how **the PSA increased their understanding of themselves, strengthened their abilities to listen and develop empathy, improved the relationship between superiors and subordinates, and raised awareness about gender roles, dialogue, and conflict resolution.** Ultimately, they affirmed that the PSA enhanced their ability to engage respectfully and responsibly with citizens and helped them to cope with the challenges of the job, resulting in lower rates of desertion among young officials.

Thus, apart from the program specific objectives (cacao production, strategic human rights litigation, women's economic empowerment, responsible security forces), the PSA implementation thus adds a psychosocial objective to each program. As a result of the PSA mainstreaming through the EMPODERAT program, **all the SDC programs and projects developed a kind of two-fold objectives (sector-specific and related to the PSA).**

3.2.4 MONITORING, LEARNING, AND COMMUNICATION
The PSA promotes long-term gradual changes in people, communities, institutions, and systems to cope with and change patterns of conflict, and violence. Therefore, the PSA faces similar challenges as CSPM (i.e., the difficulty to measure long term social change, lack of qualitative indicators and data collection). However, there is a need for more, better, and different communication about the results of the PSA. SDCs programs and partners offer a variety of powerful stories, which are easy to understand and relate to at an intellectual and emotional level. This is relevant when it comes to creating (high-level) institutional commitment to the PSA, and to building political constituencies for international cooperation in general. It is, however, particularly **relevant for communication in highly conflictive, violent, fragile, and/or authoritarian contexts, where even small changes and messages of hope and solidarity can mean a lot in terms of overcoming impotence, fear, and frustration.**

Therefore, the EMPODERAT program, based on the systematization of the first phase of the program conducted by an external consultant, is currently engaging in **a participatory**

process among SDC staff and local partners to develop and adapt indicators related to the PSA (combining the qualitative with the quantitative), to explore innovative ways of collecting and analyzing data, to talk about changes through storytelling, and to integrate these approaches into the regular monitoring systems of projects and programs. This localized approach can be supported by findings from research and insights on adaptive management, social anthropology, and feminist approaches to social change. Moreover, there is great potential in including independent local media into the strategies, the programming, and the alliances on the ground, to foster conflict-sensitive communication and narratives about the PSA, sustainable development, and peace-building.

3.3 DIFFERENT MEANINGS, NEEDS, AND USES

Based on the experiences and needs of the programs and partner organizations, EMPODERAT has developed a context-specific model of how the PSA is used in Honduras. It consists in three pillars.

PSA IN THE (CONTEXT) ANALYSIS	PSA AS AN INTERVENTION	PSA AS AN INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE
PSA as a lens (like a gender lens) that takes peoples emotional, relational, social, and cultural situation into account, thereby complementing the context, conflict, and sector specific analysis with the psychosocial dimension.	PSA as a concrete activity in a program, organization, community, including psychosocial support to members of a project team, partners, program participants, and communities.	PSA as an effort to embrace the values of care and selfcare as an institution, organization, network, etc., including creating structures and mechanisms to prioritize the members' individual and collective health and wellbeing.
E X A M P L E S PROCACAHO not only looks at agricultural, economic, and technical aspects of cacao production, but considers the farmers family situation and their social and emotional state.	The tutorship-mentorship program with the Honduran National Police; psychosocial support during the COVID19 pandemic (EHAPS)	Red de Abogadas has defined care and selfcare as one of their institutional principles and strategic pillars.

Representation and exemplification of the model by Anna Leissing, 2023.

4 FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNT

This chapter will outline the main findings and lessons learnt on CSPM and the PSA in LAC. While some of the findings will be strongly related to CSPM, others might be more relevant for PSA. This will be indicated throughout the chapter. For two reasons, the findings and learnings are presented jointly. First, when taking context as a starting point and analyzing experiences of local actors on the ground, CSPM and PSA are often naturally linked and used in complementary ways. Second, the opportunities and the challenges for both approaches are often similar; describing the findings and learnings separately would imply a lot of repetition. Each subchapter consists of a description of the finding or learning, provides concrete examples to explain and sustain it, and ends with recommendations at conceptual, methodological, and practical level.

4.1 CONTEXTUAL RELEVANCE

The information gathered during this CAPEX clearly shows that both, Conflict Sensitive Program Management (CSPM) and the Psychosocial Approach (PSA) are highly relevant in the countries and programs where the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) collaborates in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The contextual relevance of CSPM and PSA relates to two main aspects that mark the contexts in the region: a) high complexity and interrelated issues of conflict, violence, fragility, and authoritarianism; and b) varied and long-lasting effects of the issues in the contexts on people, communities, and organizations.

HIGHLY COMPLEX CONTEXTS

Most of the countries included in the CAPEX are marked by high (political) **volatility, conflict, and fragility.** Nicaragua, and Honduras are classified as fragile and Haiti as extremely fragile according to the OECD State of Fragility Report 2022. In recent years, these countries have suffered the escalation of political conflict and crisis as in Nicaragua (2018) or undergone complex processes of change in political leadership, some of them with manifestations of violence, as in Bolivia (2019) and Honduras (2009), and even presidents ´assassination as in Haiti (2021).

While these major events represent tipping points for the affected countries and societies, they are manifestations of **historic and deeply rooted (political) conflict in the region**. Due to a lack of dealing with the past and reconciliation processes, conflicts are often cyclical and repeated over time, and they contribute directly to the breakdown of social structures, generating long-lasting insecurity, mistrust, and tensions.

Moreover, the LAC region is marked by historic poverty, inequality, and exclusion, as well as high levels of **direct, structural, and cultural violence**. This manifests, for example, in the use of force and violence to "solve" conflicts at all levels (families, communities, authorities, etc.), or in patriarchal societies fostering gender inequality and gender stereotypes with negative consequences for men and women.

Another aspect that marks the contexts in the region is **increasing authoritarianism**,

most evident in Nicaragua and Cuba, with high levels of concentration of power, dismantling of democratic institutions, and human rights violations. As a part of authoritarian tendencies, many countries in LAC have seen increasing restrictions or limitations to the proper functioning of civil society, especially in its role of oversight and control. As a result, several regulations have been applied, complicating, and sometimes limiting civil society´s role, both local and international. **While these restrictions are most evident in Nicaragua, shrinking space for civil society** is a common phenomenon in the region and globally, leading to strong increase of polarization and degradation of social structures.

In addition to the political and social elements, the region is highly vulnerable to and affected by **multiple crisis** such as natural disasters (especially Central America and the Caribbean), general insecurity, and migration, not to mention the recent COVID19 pandemic with massive effects on the economic and social situation in the LAC region, and globally.

> "CSPM contributes to gain confidence in developing our work and responsibilities in an efficient and accurate manner."
>
> **—SDC staff member** at the cooperation office in Nicaragua, February 2023

Against this background, CSPM, and its tools for context/conflict analysis, enable donors, international organizations, implementers, local partners, and even program participants to **be better prepared and more resilient to such volatilities** and the multiple aspects of conflict, violence, fragility, and authoritarianism. It is, thus, an instrument for prevention, and promotes flexibility and adaptability of individuals and organizations to changing contexts.

SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

The impacts of the above-mentioned aspects of conflict, violence, fragility, and authoritarianism on the actors on the ground (organizations and individuals) are manifold, although not equally strong in the five countries. Depending on the gravity of socio-emotional affectation, the need and perceived relevance of CSPM and the PSA vary.

The high levels of (political) conflict and authoritarianism (i.e., Nicaragua, Haiti) have contributed to a **polarized and fragmented civil society**, and a culture of silence, mistrust, and high competition over scarce resources, including from international cooperation. According to the KOFF Essential on civic space in Honduras, the internal fragmentation and competition and the lack of safe and trusted spaces has a very negative impact both, on civil society organizations and on individuals. Moreover, many civil society organizations are strongly **affected and weakened by migration**, i.e., the emigration of personnel, partners, and program participants (recently most prominent in Nicaragua; in Honduras this has been a phenomenon for decades).

Violence at all levels (direct, structural, cultural) has a long-lasting impact on people. It is a constant threat, resulting in a **culture of fear**, the widespread experience of loss, resulting in **collective grief**, as well as feelings of **impotence and anger** in the face of the gross injustices.

> "The psychosocial approach is about giving voice and agency to people who have been disempowered and whose rights have been violated constantly."
>
> **— Member of the EMPODERAT project team**, Honduras, 2023

Interview partners further described how historic poverty, exclusion, and disempowerment have led to a common **passive attitude**, limiting the belief in one's own ability to change the course of things.

Also, cultural, and direct violence related to patriarchy and **gendered stereotypes affect both women and men** in different ways. Women are facing very high levels of sexual

and gender-based violence, lack of participation, and exclusion from decision making. Men are struggling with militarized and toxic masculinities resulting in high rates of violent death among young men related to gang violence, organized crime, and migration, or also in the inability to show vulnerability and feelings, which are considered weak.

The emotional consequences of conflict, violence, fragility, and authoritarianism not only affect local actors such as civil society organizations and program participants, but **also SDC staff at the cooperation offices**, and even at Headquarters. This became evident during the COVID19 pandemic, when the then Latin America and Caribbean Division (DLAC) organized a series of online exchanges between all offices in the region using the PSA to support staff in coping with the crisis. Local staff emphasized the importance of these spaces to address peoples' feelings, enable the expression of concerns, foster mutual understanding, and create a sense of connection and not being alone.

PSA, with the four categories for psychosocial analysis (Fear/Threat; Trauma/Destruction; Greif/Loss; Impotence & Rage/Injustice), the principles for an institutional culture of care and self-care, and psychosocial support and interventions, is highly relevant to **address the emotional dimension of working in or on a conflictive, violent, fragile, and/or authoritarian context**.

4.2   ROLE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The multiple aspects of conflict, violence, authoritarianism, and fragility require a context-specific definition of the role and modalities of international cooperation. This is valid for any transformative process from humanitarian assistance to development and peacebuilding. **Thus, both approaches CSPM and PSA contribute to addressing the challenges for international cooperation at the triple nexus to different degrees**. While CSPM is an essential and institutionalized approach for SDC, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, the PSA has not (yet) been conceptualized and applied to the same extent. However, it has the potential to complement CSPM with the relevant socio-emotional dimensions of conflict and violence.

In authoritarian contexts such as Nicaragua or Cuba, CSPM provides the tools to assess the (political) risks of interventions and programs and adapt accordingly. Adaption is mainly about reframing language and messages (i.e., instead of human rights, use the term "equity" (Cuba) or "economic, social, and cultural rights" (Nicaragua), redefining working modalities (i.e., direct program implementation and ways of relating to authorities in Nicaragua). As for the PSA, experiences in Honduras and Nicaragua **show that people would not participate in programs and processes if the effects of conflict and violence on their individual and collective emotionality was not addressed along the way**. This applies from community art initiatives in Nicaragua, to the desertion of young police officers, or to the victims of human rights violations in judicial processes in Honduras. So, both, **CSPM and PSA are a way of staying engaged** and continue working in contexts affected by high degrees of conflict, violence, and fragility.

It is worth mentioning that, depending on the context, staying engaged and keep working is a valuable achievement per se. However, CSPM and PSA not only help staying engaged, but **contribute to achieving results regarding sustainable development in specific sectors**. CSPM provides implementing partners with the necessary sensitivity, tools, and principles (i.e., transparency, inclusivity) to adapt their work to the

context in a way that reduces the negative impact of the context on their program (risk management). In Nicaragua, the conflict sensitive adaption of programs allowed to establish working modalities for water governance, cacao production, or culture and art initiatives in communities that allowed for (adapted) implementation of planned activities (i.e., theater fora with students in their own cultural spaces instead of universities), and ultimately, achieving goals and objectives. The relevance for results achievement is even more evident when looking at the experience with PSA in Honduras. All programs, from cacao production to economic empowerment of women and indigenous communities were clear in the significant role the PSA played in achieving the sector specific results of the programs, as the PSA allowed for addressing the "human factor" conceptually and practically throughout implementation.

Finally, both approaches (CSPM and PSA) entail a transformative ambition to go beyond staying engaged and achieving sector specific results. In the long run, they **aim at systemic change of structures and institutions**. The transformative ambition applies particularly to the application of PSA in Honduras. The EMPODERAT program has transformation in its name, and the vision is to expand the PSA to the extent that it would contribute to transforming traditional, rigid, and exclusionary institutions such as the police or academia, cultural and social norms such as patriarchy or competition among civil society, as well as individual and collective behaviors such as self-exploitation or passivity. According to this vision, the PSA allows people to become agents of change in their communities and societies, to care for themselves and others, and to restore and establish trustful relations. **The SDC can contribute to processes of structural and social changes by implementing PSA in a similar way as has been done in Honduras**.

> "Conflict sensitivity and the psychosocial approach are crucial instruments to pursue higher ambitions in increasingly fragile and conflict affected contexts around the world."
>
> **—SDC staff member,** Bern, January 2023

It is, however, also clear, that **depending on the context, the scope and level for transformation is limited**. Authoritarian and rigid structures, power imbalances, restrictions of civic space, and other factors do hinder the transformative effect of CSPM and PSA. In this regard, an **open and transparent reflection on the different roles, ambitions, possibilities, and limitations** among SDC staff and partners is important in terms of expectation management.

4.3   LEAD BY EXAMPLE

This CAPEX showed the potential of CSPM and the PSA when SDC cooperation offices take initiative and lead the implementation/mainstreaming of the approaches. High-level ownership and commitment towards staff and implementing partners are key.

While CSPM is broadly known and well established in some of the contexts (Bolivia, Nicaragua), the development of the PSA is in its initial stages, fostered by strong commitment at the cooperation office in Honduras. In this case, the considerable success in mainstreaming the PSA throughout all programs and sectors related to SDCs country program goes back to the foresight and initiative of the former Head of the Cooperation Office, which allowed for the strategic long-term development of the PSA in the form of a comprehensive program equipped with committed and competent personnel resources
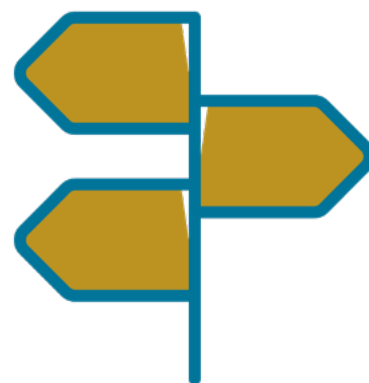
(backstopping expert, EMPODERAT team), a time frame allowing for long-term planning (10 years), and adequate funding.

Even with the most committed engagement from the side of SDC, the successful mainstreaming of both, CSPM and PSA, also depends on high-level ownership, as well as the availability of resources, capacities, etc. among implementers and partners. For example, the

> "SDCs implementing partners need to know that CSPM is not just another "nice to have", but an essential part of what is expected from them."
>
> **— SDC staff member,** Bern, January 2023

engagement on the PSA with the Honduran National Police, a highly hierarchical top-down institution, would not have been successful without the conviction and support of a high-ranking official. To create this kind of ownership and commitment, it is important to understand and show **how the approaches add value to the specific institutional and programmatic objectives**. In the case of the police, this added value consisted in the potential effect of the PSA in reducing the desertion rate among young police officers, a major problem of the institution. Another example is the experience in cacao production, where the PSA provides tools for agricultural technicians to address the psychosocial dimension – the "human factor" – they are confronted with when engaging with farmers and their families, but not trained for in their professional education.

> "The psychosocial approach validates people's feelings."
>
> **—Member of SDC partner organization** in Nicaragua, 2023

Creating (high-level) ownership requires **conceptual clarity and concise messages**, the so-called "elevator pitch", derived from common denominators in diverse local realities (territorial, sectorial). For PSA, the formulation of the "elevator pitch" takes place through an open and constructive dialogue among the EMPODERAT program, between the National Facilitation Unit (NFU) of EMPODERAT and SDC, with implementing partners, and everyone involved in the program to extract the key features of PSA and formulate a concise message that convinces leaders and decision makers at all levels.

4.4   CONSTRUCTING AND ADAPTING

The application of the CSPM was and is a continuous learning process, with permanent adaptation of modalities, tools and uses in each moment/step of the program/project cycle. For this reason, **exchange and joint reflection are intrinsically linked to the stage of implementation**. In Nicaragua, for example, the backstopping for the program Society, Culture, and Memory contributed to the creation of a community of practice among partners, which allowed for program specific reflection and adaption of CSPM throughout the process. The importance of spaces for joint reflection and sharing of experiences were also highlighted by Cuba and Haiti, particularly referring to experiences during the COVID19 pandemic.

About the PSA in Honduras, while the contributions of an external consultant laid the conceptual ground, the EMPODERAT program dedicated great efforts **to translating and adapting this conceptual basis to the realities of different sectors, programs, and actors**: For the police, PSA is about reducing the desertion rate. For the women's advocates network, it is about strengthening victims of human rights violations to keep up with the judicial processes. For the university it is about unlearning traditional ways of

thinking and developing new forms of knowledge and academic practice. For the human rights defenders' movement, it's about sustaining collective processes of mutual support and strengthening the resilience of communities and leaders.

> "You don't need a PHD in psychology to work with the psychosocial approach, but you must be interested in understanding people's realities."
>
> **—Dr. David Becker**, Italy, January 2023

It is a merit of the EMPODERAT program to be open and flexible conceptually and adapt the language according to the recipient. This constructivist approach to the PSA is supported by the **interdisciplinary team constellation** (psychology, social anthropology), a continuous dialogue among the team, and by the will to **take people's realities as the starting point**, rather than theoretical/conceptual frameworks.

Another factor worth mentioning in this regard is the **Territorial Approach**, manifested in the Inter-Programmatic Exercise in the South of Honduras. The EMPODERAT program gathers four SDC programs around the PSA, providing a shared contextual reality, overlapping goals and interests, and the geographic proximity that facilitates exchange, collaboration, and synergies. The same goes for CSPM in the community of practice that emerged from the program on Society, Culture, and Memory in Nicaragua. The fact that the partners work in the same territories increases the potential for joint analysis and learning from each other's experiences, creating opportunities to meet and participate in each other's activities, or providing practical support (i.e., meeting rooms or establishing contacts).

4.5 LEARNING BY DOING

To facilitate ownership and capacity development, it is crucial to link both, CSPM and PSA to the program/project cycle management, integrating them into the stages of analysis, design, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

In this sense, **when designing a new phase** of existing projects, or preparing a new intervention, SDC requested more details in the context analysis: identification of risks and threats from a CSPM perspective. A good example of this is the program in Bolivia, in the development of credit proposals for the Dialogue and Collaborative Support Project DAC, the Integral Water Management (GIA), or the Inclusive Markets programs. In Nicaragua, following the conflicts and tensions of 2018, interventions were restructured, and the country strategy was revisited based on the context/conflict analysis (mapping of actors and their relationships, issues of conflict and tensions (dividers), and connectors).

In the second phase of the project cycle management (PCM), a detailed context analysis was included in the strategic and operational planning documents (Project Documents – ProDoc, annual operative plan). Also, the capacity development on CSPM was linked to the different stages of PCM, and capacities were developed while implementing programs and projects. For example, in the Society, Culture, and Memory

> "It worked because it was "learning by doing". This means that we linked the capacity development aspects to our everyday activities related to our projects (planning, implementing, monitoring, and reporting)."
>
> **— Local partner organization in Nicaragua,** February 2023

program, the partners integrated their learnings from applying CSPM analysis tools into the drafting process of the ProDocs for the second phase of the project.

For **implementation and monitoring** a specific and executive report was solicited (Bolivia), which was also compared with internal contexts analyses such as MERV. In Nicaragua, CSPM was applied throughout the implementation of the Society Culture and Memory program by the partners associated with the two components "culture of peace" and "culture".

Hence, with regards to CSPM, SDC in LAC is on the way to institutionalizing and mainstreaming the approach into all the stages of PCM. With the approach of "learning by doing", CSPM and its tools are consistently adapted, sharpened, and the processes standardized, without this implying a straitjacket for SDC or implementing partners. While CSPM consists in a comprehensive and well-developed set of tools, the situation for the PSA is slightly different. Although the EMPODERAT program has gained significant experience in "**learning by doing**" in the process of PSA mainstreaming in Honduras, this remains a unique experience, and there is a lot of potential to develop concrete instruments for the application of the PSA throughout the PCM (i.e., guiding questions for analysis, principles for PSA implementation, PSA indicators for monitoring and evaluation).

4.6 IT'S NOT FOR FREE

Both, CSPM and the PSA are medium- and long-term processes to achieve consistency and effectiveness in their implementation. This implies that planning and budgets should systematically include different types of resources for this purpose.

It takes time. In the most advanced examples of CSPM application (Nicaragua and Bolivia), the relatively systematic application of the toolkit, outside of a common understanding of the uses and important levels of mainstreaming, took at least a couple of years. In Bolivia, the mainstreaming exercise was developed with the UNIR Foundation and HELVETAS since 2014. In direct collaboration with SDC, the 3 Steps to Working in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations" guide (HELVETAS) was adapted to a simpler and "hands on" instrument, which also integrated context analysis. This experience was then scaled up with the UNIR Foundation to Nicaragua in 2019. In this second example, progress was made over four years, evidently with a situation of extreme tension that made it necessary to be more reactive in this exercise, and the COVID-19 pandemic that made any joint reflection and/ or capacity development exercise even more complex.

"The institutionalization of CSPM required quite some resources in terms of working time, operational and financial flexibility and support to partners, technical assistance of different organizations and a full-time communicator to properly showcase Swiss collaboration in the country."

—SDC staff member at the cooperation office in Nicaragua, February 2023

In Honduras, the EMPODERAT program to develop and mainstream the PSA was conceptualized as a strategic long-term process. This allowed for a reasonable timeframe (10 years) and adequate funding to build capacities and achieve the transformative agenda of the PSA in Honduras. Unfortunately, the phasing out of the Swiss bilateral cooperation from LAC will reduce the duration of the program.

Financial resources and staff time are needed. The described cases of SDC country programs in Bolivia and Nicaragua are a clear example of the need to budget resources for an adequate application of the CSPM. The process of sensitization and subsequent capacity development involved the contracting of two entities for Nicaragua, UNIR Foundation and later swisspeace.

Not only did SDC invest resources for this purpose from its cooperation offices and from the projects in which they collaborate, but the local partners also dedicated institutional time, not covered by SDC, to carry out periodic analyses of context, risks, actors, in short, to adequately apply CSPM. In addition, project, program, and partner staff should invest time in developing their own capacities for conflict sensitive management, and thus be able to replicate and upscale this toolkit in other spaces. Such was the experience of Action Aid and Books for Kids in Nicaragua, as well as for Solidar Swiss or Swisscontact in Bolivia, and for HELVETAS in Haiti.

4.7   WHAT CHANGES?
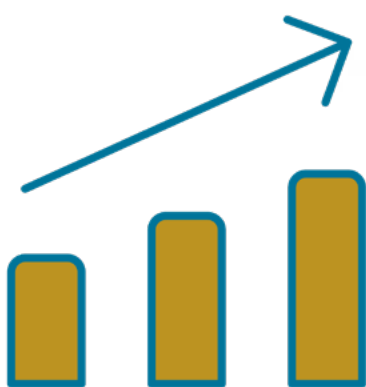
Both, CSPM and the PSA promote **long-term gradual changes in people, communities, institutions, and systems** to cope with and change patterns of conflict, and violence, and to find ways out of fragility. Thus, the desired results are to be measured at two levels: first, one needs to know that change has the desired quality (i.e., individual empowerment, social cohesion, inclusive institutions). Second, there is a need to attribute these changes to the use of CSPM and/or the PSA, or to SDCs intervention in general. Due to the "attribution gap" and the difficulties related to the qualitative and long-term nature of the envisaged changes, this remains a common challenge for the different SDC programs in LAC – and globally.

Measuring and communicating about change is, however, necessary to be more specific about the effects and added value of CSPM and PSA, about the challenges and actions needed, as well as about the time and financial resources required for the implementation of the two approaches. Moreover, well communicated concrete results may contribute to increasing the ownership and build commitment at different levels (SDC HQ, cooperation offices, partners, among others)

Two programs have advanced in this direction: In Honduras, SDC, through the program EMPODERAT, initiated two processes that seek more clarity in this regard. On the one hand, it aims at developing an adequate monitoring system that includes qualitative-quantitative indicators and allows to see the two expected metrics: changes in environmental conditions and possible avoided damages. On the other hand, it seeks to learn from the pro-

> "We need to get better in explaining why and how we work."
>
> — **Participant of G/CSPM training** in Bern, March 2023.

gram's experience by identifying lessons to be systematized and analyzed, and socialized among different stakeholders, to be integrated within the framework of a structured knowledge management process.

The second program is the Society, Culture and Memory program in Nicaragua. With the support of an external consultancy, SDC and partners of the Society, Culture, and Memory program revised the Theory of Change, adapted the monitoring system, and

developed qualitative indicators regarding changes in social cohesion through art and culture. These indicators include emblematic cases of individuals, communities, organizations, or institutions that have changed their attitudes, behaviour, processes, and/or policies. **Thus, the program partners not only report on numbers, but document stories of change at the individual, collective, or institutional level**. These stories include, for example, a community where parents of opposed political sides started to engage in dialogue about a common interest (connector); members of youth groups who strengthened their confidence and voice in a context marked by adultism and authoritarianism, or local civil society organizations, which strengthened their connection, mutual trust, and agency through building a community of practice on a culture of peace.

However, the **monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning systems in international cooperation** require enhanced investment in innovative ways of collecting and analysing data, measuring impact, and communicating about change when it comes to long-term social transformation processes. This is relevant when it comes to building political constituencies for international cooperation, or to creating (high-level) institutional commitment and ownership with CSPM and the PSA. It is, however, particularly relevant for communication in highly conflictive, violent, fragile, and/or authoritarian contexts, where even small changes can mean a lot in terms of overcoming impotence, fear, and frustration.

5 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following key recommendations are based on the findings and main lessons learnt from SDCs experiences with CSPM and the PSA in Latin America and the Caribbean. They are directed to SDC cooperation offices and programs in different regions of the world, providing key messages about how to apply CSPM and the PSA in a systematic way. These efforts should be supported by the thematic PGE-Section in cooperation with the respective regional sections at SDC headquarters.

USE CSPM TO INCREASE INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE
While CSPM is a key tool in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, it can contribute to strengthening preparedness and resilience when applied systematically as a means of prevention (i.e., in regular context and risk analysis by SDC cooperation offices) before the (complete) escalation of conflict and violence.

MAINSTREAM PSA TO ENHANCE PORTFOLIO'S SUSTAINABILITY
Considering and addressing people's individual and collective socio-emotional realities throughout all sectors and programs contributes to the effectiveness and sustainability of any intervention. Creating a program to mainstream the PSA is a very promising way to do so. As a starting point, SDC cooperation offices can integrate the psychosocial dimension into the context analysis and identify local or international actors who can support the process with expertise.

PLAN FOR A LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT AND ALLOCATE RESOURCES
The proper implementation of CSPM and the PSA requires a strategic engagement that considers different scenarios and allows for flexibility in terms of objectives, procedures, and budgeting, as well as adequate resources in terms of time, human resources, and funds. These resources should be foreseen at the time of project planning and budgeting, and adjusted periodically (usually annually, but in times of crisis, on a semi-annual or even monthly basis).

ENSURE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR CSPM AND PSA
The high-level commitment to CSPM and PSA at the level of SDC management is key to ensuring strategic foresight, long-term planning, and the allocation of adequate re-sources to the processes of context-specific (conceptual) development and practical application of both approaches.

APPLY CSPM AND PSA INTERNALLY AT SDC'S OFFICES
If CSPM and PSA are properly applied at SDC, both, at the headquarter and in cooper-ation offices, the message towards staff, implementing partners, program participants, donors, and other stakeholders is much more convincing. It is an opportunity to show both, the "why" and the "how" of CSPM and PSA in institutional practice.

5SUPPORT PARTNERS OPERATIONALLY AND MORALLY
The close accompaniment of partners by the cooperation offices on the ground at the operational and the political level, is an important factor for successful CSPM and PSA implementation. To position the international cooperation as an ally who is part of the context, rather than merely as a distant (financial) donor allows to provide moral support in times of increasing pressure and build trust in contexts marked by fear, fragmentation, and mistrust.

OPENLY DISCUSS THE SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF CSPM AND PSA

In terms of a responsible presence and intervention, it is very important for SDC cooperation offices on the ground to hold space for open and transparent conversations with staff, partners, and other (local) actors about the different roles, agendas, and ambitions, incl. the scope and the limitations of CSPM and PSA in a specific context and situation.

ENABLE SAFE SPACES FOR LOCAL ACTORS TO BUILD TRUST

In contexts marked by conflict, violence, fragmentation, and mistrust, it is particularly important for SDC to use its institutional leverage and financial resources to create and maintain spaces for (local) actors (staff, partners, program participants, others) to meet, reflect, share experiences, and create a sense of mutual support, thereby strengthening relationships and trust among local actors.

LINK CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ON CSPM AND PSA TO PCM

Instead of adding another intense capacity development process on CSPM and/or PSA, leverage the time and resources of local partners by connecting to existing processes and activities related to the project implementation (i.e., capacity development on conflict analysis during the design and planning of projects, learn about conflict sensitive communication during the reporting phase).

PROMOTE CONTEXT-SPECIFIC ADAPTATION OF CSPM AND PSA

Rather than teaching the "right way of doing CSPM or PSA", allow for a context-specific co-construction and adaptation of CSPM and PSA with local actors such as local staff, partners, and experts to foster local ownership and sustainability. A territorial approach – fostering geographic and social proximity among partners – enhances this potential.

USE CSPM AND PSA IN A COMPLEMENTARY WAY

In the face of local realities, programs and projects benefit from a complementary use of CSPM and the PSA, contributing to increasing resilience, effectiveness, and sustainability in complex, volatile, fragile, and violent environments. The same applies for other approaches (i.e., gender, human rights). Building on the fruitful linkages between these approaches instead of compartmentalizing into thematic silos allows for an application closer to local realities.

IDENTIFY POWERFUL STORIES AND INVEST IN MEASURING CHANGE

SDCs programs and partners offer a variety of powerful stories, which are easy to understand and relate to at an intellectual and emotional level. Therefore, it is important to invest and engage in participatory processes among SDC staff and local partners to develop or adapt indicators related to CSPM and the PSA (combining the qualitative with the quantitative), to identify and establish innovative ways of collecting and analyzing data, and to integrate these approaches into the regular monitoring systems of projects and programs.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The CAPEX provides a range of experiences **and practical examples about the relevance and implementation of CSPM and the PSA at the intersection of conflict, violence, and sustainable development in LAC**. The cooperation offices and implementing partners in LAC (Bolivia, Cuba, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua) have progressed to different degrees in the implementation process. Their experiences range from an **awareness about the relevance and need for CSPM and PSA** in all countries **to the selective application** of CSPM tools and principles (i.e., risk assessments in Haiti, dialogue, and inclusion in Cuba) or psychosocial support to staff or specific groups (i.e., Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua) **to systematic capacity development and implementation** of CSPM (Bolivia and Nicaragua) and the PSA (Honduras). The CAPEX also showed that **monitoring and evaluation is a challenge for both approaches**, as measuring long-term change at the structural, institutional, social, and cultural levels requires qualitative indicators and appropriate data collection. While there have been selective experiences in specific programs in Nicaragua and Honduras, this is an area that requires further investment and efforts.

Collecting and systematizing these experiences was important to learn and further develop CPSM and the PSA at SDC, both in programming and at the institutional policy level. The following learnings stand out: Both, **CSPM and the PSA benefit from strategic, long-term processes, led and accompanied by SDC cooperation offices on the ground**. These processes need **adequate resources** (time, money, personnel), as well as the necessary **flexibility** (i.e., regarding objectives, working modalities, funding procedures, etc.) to **be prepared and adapt to highly volatile and complex contexts** such as Haiti or Nicaragua. Moreover, CSPM and the PSA are highly context-specific and **need to be translated and adapted to the local context** to strengthen local ownership and commitment. **Safe spaces for joint analysis, sharing of experiences, and creating synergies and mutual trust** among local actors are key to these processes. A **territorial approach** (cooperation between different programs/sectors in the same geographic region, as in the South of Honduras) further facilitates these processes.

Finally, the CAPEX confirms that both, **CSPM and the PSA are relevant to the different ambitions of Swiss development cooperation in fragile and conflict-affected contexts**. It is, however, important to note that while CSPM has been institutionalized and is applied systematically in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, the PSA has not (yet) been conceptualized and applied to the same degree. The experiences with the PSA in SDC programs in the region of the Great Lakes and in Central America however show, that the PSA is highly relevant in complementing CSPM, particularly in contexts marked by high levels of violence, conflict, and fragility. In these situations, the approaches **help staying engaged, support sector-specific results achievement, and even contribute to transforming conflicts and violent patterns** at the individual, family, community, or organizational level. Also, both approaches have the potential to contribute to **strengthening preparedness and resilience** when applied before the (complete) escalation of conflict and violence as a means of prevention. However, the **scope and limitations of CSPM and the PSA need to be clear, too**: Longstanding root causes for conflict and violence, increasing authoritarianism and restrictions of civic space, massive power imbalances, and other factors inhibit the transformative effect of CSPM and PSA. In this regard, an **open and transparent reflection on the different roles, ambitions, possibilities, and limitations** among SDC staff and partners is important in terms of expectation management.

While both approaches need a context-specific adaptation and implementation, the authors hope to contribute to **strengthening SDCs thematic work on CSPM and the PSA in other contexts of the world**, to **fostering SDCs institutional knowledge** about the two approaches, and to **inspiring institutional and policy dialogue** with the present collection and systematization of experiences, findings, and recommendations.

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