



IRSP - CSPPS Collaboration 2024

Research topics proposals for Groningen University Students

What is CSPPS?

The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS, or ‘the Platform’) is a global network of civil society organisations, experts and academics supporting peacebuilding efforts in fragile & conflict-affected settings. Hosted by Cordaid in The Hague, CSPPS aims to amplify and strengthen the voice and agency of local civil society in fragile settings. CSPPS engages in and influences peacebuilding, statebuilding and conflict prevention policy development in the context of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, New Agenda for Peace and other relevant policy domains. Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), for peaceful, just and inclusive societies, is at the core of the work of CSPPS. The Platform unites a wide and ever-growing membership of 800+ civil society organisations and is present across 46 countries from both the Global South (36 countries) as well as the Global North (10 countries).

The CSPPS Secretariat coordinates and supports the efforts of its membership at the local/national, regional, and international levels, facilitating South-South and South-North collaboration, peer support, knowledge exchange, and cross-fertilization across all relevant stakeholders. CSPPS takes the lead in lobbying, advocacy, and policy influencing in the areas of fragility, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding, elevating the voices of those working on the ground to the global level. Through the empowerment and resourcing of local civil society partners, CSPPS aims to strengthen its capacity to meaningfully engage as a full-fledged stakeholder in strategic policy formulation and implementation. Together with its CSPPS Country Teams and individual member organisations, the Platform agrees on its scope of action, fosters new partnerships, and identifies strategic entry point opportunities to engage and be included in national conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and peace-sustaining initiatives.

What is the purpose of this research project?

In the framework of its partnership with IRSP/Groningen University, CSPPS is looking for four or five students willing to work as a team on a research project on a variety of issues related to SDG16+, of which all are interconnected with the topics of peace, security and justice. Four wider topics are proposed below, of which the students can choose from. The topics can also be combined or linked, and do not have to be focused on separately.

The methodology used for this project should be a combination of both theoretical and practical approaches, to expand research skills amongst the respective students and contribute to the Platform's objectives and activities for the year 2024. CSPPS has direct and strategic access to key networks [including its own membership], domains, and forums where policies on fragility, conflict, and violence are discussed, which will be available for the students to bring a practical approach to the research. The involvement of members of the Platform is thereby highly encouraged. Simultaneously, the Platform is well-positioned to bring in grounded technical expertise and advice as well as to create advocacy links and access to policymakers at the highest levels, both in the Global North and the Global South.

Abstracts

Below you will find some thematics that could be addressed throughout this research project. Each one of them represents an interest to the activities of CSPPS as well as for civil society globally. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and the CSPPS Secretariat is also open to, and encourages students to propose other relevant topics on which the students would like to expand their knowledge on.

1. Digitalisation/ AI/ disinformation/ Misinformation

Whereas digitalization has created opportunities for global civil society practitioners to be part of expanded space for expression and be part of international discussions, it has also revealed a steep inequality in digital access, leading to non-inclusive processes. As a Platform, we are concerned about the risks of dis- and misinformation and cybersecurity in general but also in regards to civic space. Furthermore, with AI on the rise and increasingly being used by policy practitioners and others, digitalization is as much a leverage and room for opportunities as it is a concern for security. The CSPPS Platform has addressed this issue at the international level, such as through the [SDG16 Rome Civil Society Declaration](#) (2023). Next to this, and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic CSPPS surveyed its members on the risks of dis- and misinformation and cybersecurity in general.

On the issue of digitalisation and AI, the positive role played by new technologies and social media in creating solidarity networks for displaced people can be highlighted, thus giving them an opportunity to access virtual civic spaces. However, there are also growing concerns about the misuse of AI and digitalization in the framework of migration control policies, with negative impacts on migrants' fundamental rights.

For the period to come, we intend to focus on further awareness creation around concerns and opportunities for the use of AI in the domain the Platform is active. Another interest would be to study the linkages between disinformation and democracy, next to shrinking civic space. In this context, it can be interesting to delve into the best practices civil society can engage in to counter dis- and misinformation. Furthermore, as we can see with recent events in the last few years, disinformation often exploits and nurtures polarization which can impact tremendously civil society activities that are based on dialogue and collaboration. An

in-depth analysis of this phenomenon can also be one of the avenues for exploration and research.

2. Thematic review of SDG16

2024 is an important year for SDG16 as the sustainable development goal will be under thematic review at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2024. SDG16 focuses on promoting peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. This presents an opportunity for CSPPS to reflect and explore with its membership the advancements as well as the challenges related to this goal. CSPPS will closely monitor this review process and provide inputs.

Students are encouraged to delve into the details of how member states review their progress (Voluntary National Review or VNR) and explore specific aspects of peace, justice, and inclusive societies within SDG16. This might also involve looking at how SDG16 connects with other SDGs and is interlinked with human rights, its impact on gender equality, or how it is being put into practice locally among other topics.

Moreover, CSPPS is the networking partner of the Just Future Alliance, a five-year program that aims to improve security, justice and inclusive political decision-making processes through coordinated lobbying, advocacy and support for local leadership of civil society organisations in six countries¹ by engaging with relevant actors and advocating for accountability, responsiveness, and inclusion in accordance with human rights standards. The alliance's purpose is to improve accessibility, responsiveness and accountability of security and justice institutions, and inclusive political decision-making and peace processes, by mobilizing civil society for collective action and advocacy that contributes to acceleration and localization of SDG16+ in the respective fragile countries. The aim is to empower the most excluded constituencies to realize their rights and manage disputes non-violently through diverse pathways to justice, and strengthen the accessibility, responsiveness and accountability of justice providers. This is facilitated through advocacy, capacity strengthening, local leadership, South-South cooperation, and conflict-sensitive and adaptive practices. A research project dedicated to the review of the SDG16 in one or all of these countries would have a meaningful impact, as 2024 is dedicated to the thematic review of this specific SDG by the United Nations.

3. Conflict Prevention and Migration

The activities of the Platform are linked with complex challenges that civil society in fragile and conflict-affected settings is confronted with. Peacebuilding and efforts to strengthen social cohesion are particularly relevant in refugee contexts. Efforts from local peacebuilders in these contexts are aimed at the reconciliation of differences. At the same time the Platform supports its members in nexus approaches where interlinkages between migration, climate

¹ Afghanistan, Burundi, DRC, Mali, Niger, South Sudan.

change and conflict are dissected or integrated programming approaches following the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus are operationalised.

As a result of violence and conflicts, local populations often have to flee their homes. Even though they are the first impacted by conflicts, there is also very little space for them in peace and conflict resolutions forums. Internally and externally displaced individuals find themselves in difficult and precarious situations, often with limited access to civic spaces. In this regard, various challenges should be addressed, such as the need to highlight the interlinkages of migration with civic spaces, the balanced attention that needs to be given to refugees, internally and externally displaced persons and their host communities.

4. Peacebuilding and Climate Change

Increasing attention is being placed on the interrelationships between climate change and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP) by policy-makers to explore possible solutions for the challenges it poses. Climate change and environmental disasters should also be addressed when thinking about migration, as these are increasingly interlinked in inducing migration decision to migrate. This is all the more important as the reasons for migrating are often interlinked, and include patterns related to violence, natural resources scarcity, environmental disasters and socio-economics issues, among others. As we witness the proliferation of violent conflicts worldwide and the use of chemical weapons we know that conflicts exacerbate the effects of climate change. On one hand, climate change can exacerbate existing tensions or create new ones in regard to resource scarcity. In that sense, targeting or control of vital resources such as water and land becomes a war tactic. On the other hand, the utilization of chemical weapons further compounds the issue, resulting in significant and lasting environmental consequences. These repercussions are often underestimated, as they tend to emerge gradually over time, and environmental concerns are frequently relegated to a lower priority during the conflict itself, as well as in the subsequent recovery and rebuilding phases. This underscores the need to address and study further the interlinkages between peace and climate change, especially in conflict prevention approaches. In this context, CSPPS has engaged on various occasions on the interlinkages with climate change, and will this year attend COP 28 to strengthen this further.