How to choose a dance partner?[1]

A research into how INGOs perceive the challenges surrounding their local partner selection and how they deal with these challenges

Student; Femke Scheers

Study; Master Conflicts, territories and identities

University; Radboud University Nijmegen

Date; March 2011

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[1] (Carolyn Hayman, personal communication, May, 2010).

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Study; Master Conflicts, territories and identities

Project; Master thesis

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Preface

In this master thesis I have researched the challenges in the selection of local civil society partners by International Non Governmental Organisations (INGOs) who operate in peace building in the war torn countries of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda and the way the interviewed INGOs perceive and deal with these challenges. Before further explanation of my research in the next chapter, I will now first explain my sources of inspiration.

During a course about civil society and conflict at the Radboud University Nijmegen I got fascinated by the cooperation between INGOs and local civil society organisations. Therefore I searched for a related internship program and I got a change at Peace Direct. Peace Direct is an London based peace INGO that actively promotes partnerships between INGOs and civil society in conflict areas with the objective of getting the knowledge of local peace builders central in all strategies for managing conflict. During this internship I conducted a literature research about the challenges that exist between INGOs and their local civil society partners and that is how I came to the research question for this master thesis which I will reveal after displaying the literature leading to my research question in the first chapter.

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Chapter one; introduction

1.1 Introduction

In this first chapter I will reveal my research question after displaying the literature leading to my research question. Following the research question I will describe the central goal and the scientific and societal relevance of this master thesis and end with a description of the methods used to answer the research question including a short description of the interviewed international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs).

1.2 Civil society; meaning

This master thesis is about the challenges that exist in the selection of local civil society partners by INGOs. Therefore I will begin with explaining civil society. Civil society is not easy to catch into a definition. It becomes even harder to define civil society within a global meaning. The reason why it is difficult to define civil society within a global context is because every society is different. Every society has its own histories, economies, politics and cultures. These elements constitute a society and determine the development and the specific features of its civil society. It follows that it is not easy to define civil society globally, since the elements determining it differ. 'Most broadly understood, however, civil society refers to the web of social relations that exist in the space between the state, the marker (activities with the aim of extracting profit), and the private life of families and individuals.' (Barnes, 2006, p. 19).

With this broad definition of civil society, we run the risk of referring to the entire spectrum of associational life. Which forms of associational life can be called civil society is subject to discussion. The only thing that is clear, is that the formal government is definitely not civil society. But are labor unions civil society? Or what about the northern NGOs, since the existence of many of them depends on state financing (van Leeuwen, 2009, p. 2)? Scholars do not agree if these examples fit into the definition, the boundaries of civil society are subject to discussion.

The boundaries of civil society are not only discussed concerning their relation to the state. Another point of discussion is if violent groups can be considered as civil society. A maximalist perception of civil society would include violent groups, but many scholars incorporate a normative quality to their understanding of civil society. They see civil society as places where citizens unite themselves to channel their interests and aspirations through

peaceful processes. In this perception there is no space for groups who advocate war or violence as an answer (Barnes, 2006, p. 20).

Besides the debate over the boundaries of the concept of civil society, the transferability of the concept is also a point of discussion. This is described in Paffenholz;

> […], civil society has been an almost purely Western concept, historically tied to the political emancipation of citizens from former feudalistic ties, monarchies, and the state during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. […]. As a result here is still much debate over whether Western concepts of civil society are transferable to non-Western countries or other historical contexts with different levels of democracy and economic structures. (Lewis 2002; Harneit-Sievers 2005; In; Paffenholz, 2010, p. 9)

The debate over the transferability of the term civil society to non-western contexts is maybe best illustrated when we apply the concept of civil society to the in the following chapters discussed fragile states of Congo, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. If we take Somalia for example, it becomes hard to define a civil society as the space between the state, the market and the private life, since there is no state. The question rises if it is possible in a context without a state to identify a civil society (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 325)? It is not my aim here to answer this question, but only to illustrate the complications around the definition of civil society. As well, to illustrate the complications around the transferability of the concept to non-western contexts and in particular to the in this thesis discussed fragile states of Congo, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

Despite the questionability of the transferability of the concept of civil society outside the western context in which it originated, the term became globally applied. Initially within political scientific research over the role of civil society in the political transition towards democracies in different regions of the world. Based on the debate of civil society's role in democratization since the 1970's, it as well gained importance in international development cooperation and in peace building since the mid 1980's (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 9) and the latter is the context in which I will discuss civil society in this master thesis.

1.3 Civil society in development cooperation and peace building.

As described above the term civil society received global meaning outside the political transition context as well in development cooperation as in peace building since the mid 1980's. This shift is observed in NGOs, which form part of civil society, increased involvement in development cooperation. This development can be explained by the neoliberal development model of the 1980's. In the neoliberal development model scepticism towards the state was encouraged as well as privatization of the state. Where the state had previously been responsible for the social sector, it now became a task for NGOs because of the privatizations (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 15). During a series of United Nations conferences in the 1990s, the formation of new NGOs was encouraged. NGOs were pictured as an alternative to the state for implementing development work (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 16).

Most of the recent development and peace building approaches of northern NGOs contain objectives for cooperation with civil society in the countries in which the operations are undertaken. Partnerships between northern and southern NGOs are established because of the realization by western NGOs that interventions of any type need to be embedded in local cultures and institutions. Partnerships are seen as a means to achieve this end. Partnerships between northern and southern NGOs are seen as a sign of respect to the local communities and as a way to institutionalise and facilitate involvement of the beneficiaries of projects and programs. Partnerships between northern and southern NGOs are also established in order to legitimize aid visa vie the local population. In addition, partnering with local organisations is seen by INGOs as crucial for the effectiveness and sustainability of aid (Hilhorst and Jansen, 2005, p. 58-59).

By acknowledging their need to work with local civil society, INGOs acknowledge their own limitations in non-western contexts. One of these limitations is described by Alex de Waal, he states that many of the world's current conflicts occur in culturally, politically and economically different states, or in failed states, where state institutions are subordinate to social affinities and patronage networks. That means that these states function according to different socially and culturally determined rules, as to whom outsiders are not accustomed. International peace building efforts are therefore at a disadvantage, because they are not attuned to the rules of the country in which they are operating (De Waal, 2009). It follows that the only persons accustomed to the local rules are the local people, which supports the argument that local civil society should be involved in peace building.

In the field of anthropology of law, Moore explains why new laws or other attempts to direct change do not always produce the anticipated results or brings unplanned and

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unexpected consequences. She explains that this is partly because new laws are forced upon going social arrangements. These new laws are imposed with the intention of changing the ongoing social rules, but the existing social arrangements are often effectively stronger than the new laws. (Moore, 1973, p. 723).

From these theories it becomes clear that transplanting western models of social, political and economical organisation into war scattered states does not fit local settings. It easily results in impositions over locally prevailing values and intervenes with existing social arrangements. They support the argument that the way to bring change is to include local people, because they know their communities and cultures best.

So on the one hand there is convincing literature about the need for INGOs to work with local partners because of their own incapacities in the contexts in which they are operating and convincing literature on how local civil society can fill these gaps. The advantages and needs for INGOs partnering with local civil society have been widely recognised and practised. On the other hand these developments and practices are not without challenges. In the following sections I will describe four separate and different, but at the same time related, challenges faced by INGOs in the selection of their local partners. Starting with the challenge of actually finding local partners in areas with diminished civil society activity, followed by the challenge of selecting suitable partners, then the challenge of recognising other forms of civil society and ending with the challenge for INGOs to guarantee a degree of local ownership of programs for their local partners.

1.4 Challenge; finding local partners in areas with diminished civil society activity

One of challenges for INGOs in working with civil society in conflict situations is rooted in the realization that armed conflict changes the lives of people at all levels. From the micro level of individuals who change in attitude and behaviour to macro economic and social change. In the context of armed conflict, the conditions for civil society to develop or sustain themselves are hard and therefore cause a decline of civil society activity. This development is described by Pearce and Stiefel in Paffenholz;

The conditions necessary for civil society to develop tend to worsen due to armed conflict; Physical infrastructure is destroyed, limiting the propensity for communication and exchange; state structures and institutions to which civil society addresses its

activities are weakened or non-responsive, security is low and the overall situation is often characterized by complete or overall lawlessness; basic human rights are suppressed, limiting even basic civil society activities; trust disappears and social capital, beyond family, clan, or ethnic affiliation is destroyed (Stiefel, 2001, p. 265); and free and independent media are not present or are severely restricted, depriving civil society groups of one of their main communication channels to other civil society groups, the general public, as well as the governments and state structures. This deterioration of the enabling environment for civil society causes a decline of civil society activities and makes recovery after war difficult. Insecurity and fear, induced by years of civil war, hinder people from participating even in local community development, as they tend to carefully observe the new power relations after the conflict (Pearce, 2005). This decline is also due to the fact that many civil society actors go into exile in times of conflict, thereby weakening the capacity of the organisations that remains, although in some cases Diaspora remains active from far. (In; Paffenholz, 2010, p. 18)

Due to a serious decline of civil society activity in war torn countries it follows that it might be hard for INGOs to find local partners in these areas. In chapter two of this master thesis I will discuss with INGO field practitioners if they recognise and acknowledge the diminished civil society activity in their areas of operation, what they see as related challenges to a diminished civil society activity when searching for local partners, how they deal with these challenges and how then they actually find local partners in these hard contexts. I will now turn to the second challenge for INGOs in search for local partners, namely the development of selection criteria.

1.5 Challenge; selecting suitable partners

In the previous section we saw that due to a serious decline of civil society activity in war torn countries it follows that it might be hard for INGOs to find a partner in these areas. In this section I will focus on the challenge of finding a suitable partner. In the next paragraphs I will explain why it is a challenge to find a suitable partner.

When selecting a local civil society partner, INGOs must realise that all potential partners are infected by the conflict. It is clear that conflict works its way through in every single vessel of life, so as well in the civil society sector. It has been observed that ethnic

bonds tend to get stronger in and after conflict situations. One must realise that civil society in (post)conflict situations tends to be organised along conflict lines (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 19). Civil society can be peaceful, but can as well be a factor for violence. It is important for INGOs not to automatically perceive civil society as peaceful. In (post) conflict situations one can expect deep divisions in the society, which works its way through in the civil society sector (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 43). A World bank report analysing civil society organisations in three war torn regions in Africa states that civil society organisations were sometimes exclusionary. As well it states that civil society organisations sometimes reinforce divisions between groups and that vulnerable groups are not represented (World Bank, 2005, p. 10; in Paffenholz, 2010, p. 19).

These observations lead us to a challenge for INGOs selecting a local civil society partner. The possibility of partiality of civil society brings the challenge of how to ensure representation of different groups in order not to do harm. Anderson taught us that aid can actually do harm. Without intending to do so, aid workers sometimes favour recipients of aid of one side (Anderson, 1999). It follows that seen the possible partiality of civil society it is important for INGOs to ensure representation of different groups in order not to do harm.

Besides the attention that needs to be paid to the representation of different groups, there is another critical point in the selection process of local partners. Widely known phenomenon's are the so called briefcase NGOs. These briefcase NGOs are only there to receive money from international donors and are not seriously occupied with working for peace. They often mushroom when international money and attentions become available. These briefcase NGOs form a risk for INGOs selecting their local partners. It is a challenge for INGOs not to select these briefcase NGOs as local partners.

In chapter three of this thesis I will discuss how field practitioners deal with challenge of representation of different groups in order not to do harm, how they deal with ' uncivil' civil society groups and how they deal with briefcase civil society groups by looking at their selection criteria for potential local partners. The aim of chapter three is fourfold; To discuss the usefulness of selection criteria; to get a better understanding of how INGO field practitioners perceive the issues of representation of different groups, 'uncivil' civil society groups and briefcase NGOs; to get an insight in the selection criteria that the different INGOs use in their local partner selection and to get a better understanding of what kind of local partners INGOs are looking for.

1.6 Challenge; recognising other forms of civil society

As we saw the concept of civil society originated in the west, in a specific historical, political, economical and cultural context. As a result there is debate over whether western concepts of civil society are transferable to non western countries or other historical contexts with different levels of democracy and economic structures. Within global development, civil society gets harder to define. In the broadest definition civil society refers to the web of social relations that exists in the space between the state, the market and the private life (Barnes, 2006, p. 19). According to this definition, civil society is more than NGOs.' Civil society takes form through various types of association. Ranging from officially constituted institutions to small, informal community groups, these associations give expression and direction to the social, political, spiritual and cultural needs of its members.' (Barnes, 2006, p. 19). In this thesis I assume that civil society is transferable, but not always on a one to one basis, since civil society does exist but might take other forms in non-western contexts. The challenge for INGOs in search for local partners here, described by Pouligny, is to find the type of association that civil society has taken in the non-western context. Pouligny describes that;

> When working in non-Western contexts, most outsiders tend to look for structures representative of a civil society, that is, something that corresponds, in reality, to the form that 'civil society' has taken in modern Western societies- NGOs, trade unions, etc. – albeit with historical and cultural varieties. Either they do not find this representation of society and thus create one, or they may find groupings mirroring Western society that suddenly emerge and claim this label. Both such groups are far from covering the range of different modalities of a collective organisation. Moreover, these groups (often limited to a small number of individuals) have difficulty in establishing links with other existing arrangements, especially at the community level. In many cases, this approach leads to a de facto exclusion of the so-called traditional forms of arrangements existing in the society- because the latter involve political cultures apparently too different from the dominant Western one [....]. (Pouligny, 2005, p. 498).

The challenge for INGOs is to find local partners that represent their community, and not to work with or create familiar structures that lack this connection. The challenge is to work with a whole group of people, through a certain form of civil society, and not just

with the elite, who knows how to organise according to western standards, but might miss the connection on the ground. That is not to say that it is a problem to work with the elite or western forms of civil society, but on the condition that they are having a connection on the ground. The value of working with local civil society, and I purposely am not calling them NGOs, because the issue is that local civil society might take different shapes, is the realization that development and peace building programs need to be embedded in local structures in order for programs to become more effective and sustainable. INGOs, according to Pouligny´s observation, might ironically miss out on these objectives for working with local civil society by only selecting western look alike local partners. In this thesis I will discuss Pouligny´s observation with INGOs field practitioners in order to see if they recognise and acknowledge that they often select local partners that represent the form that civil society has taken in the western world, if they recognise and acknowledge that there are other forms of organisations out there, to extent on the possible problem and its causes and to see how INGOs deal with the challenge of ensuring a connection between their local partners and their communities.

1.7 Challenge; how to guarantee a degree of local ownership of programs

In paragraph 1.2 we already saw that there is a debate over whether northern NGO are civil society or not. This because they often depend on state financing. Political scientist argue that INGOs are not as independent from donor governments as they often claim. Northern NGOs are seen by some as the implementers of development cooperation for the government. Northern NGOs receive funds from the government in order to implement a development program that is heavily influenced by the government. These northern NGOs than subcontract southern civil society organization to implement the programs (Neubert, 2001, p. 61; in Paffenholz, 2010, p. 19). Because the local partners receive their funding from the northern NGOs, they tend to be more accountable to their northern funders than to their local community.

INGOs are apparently not as independent as they often claim and they are influenced by their donors. Consequently that raises a question about how big the influence and ownership of local partners in reality is, since INGO are possibly guided by requirements of their donors instead of by the demands of their local partners. In a previous section we saw that INGOs work with local partners because they think that they should have a say in programs that affect them, because it is their right, but also because it increases the

sustainability and effectiveness of programs, since INGOs lack knowledge about how to embed programs in other cultures. If funds are channeled from donor governments to northern INGOs, which then subcontract implementation to southern NGOs, local ownership of programs might be an illusion. In order be able to call 'partners' partners, they must have a certain degree of ownership of programs, otherwise the term subcontractors would be more suitable. Hannah Reich states that within the current structure of international cooperation, local ownership cannot be seriously implemented since it is not a practical objective within the current international funding and working structures (Reich, 2006, p. 4). The challenge for INGOs is thus to give their local partners a degree of ownership within existing international working and funding structures. In the final chapter of this I will discuss with the INGO field practitioners how they deal with the challenge of guaranteeing a degree of local ownership of programs of their local partners, if they think it is desirable and to what extent they think local ownership of programs is a reality.

1.8 Recapitulation

Following the realization of INGOs that interventions of any type need to be embedded in local cultures and institutions, partnerships with local organisations are established by INGOs. The selection of these local partners is not without challenges, especially not within conflict areas. A serious decline of civil society in conflict areas might make it hard to find a local partner at all and if an INGO does find one, how does it deal with challenges of representation of different groups since the existing civil society organisations in post conflict areas are often organised along conflict lines? Besides, the western notion of civil society might cause a selection of partners that look like western structures, but who lack a connection with the local community. Another challenge for INGOs is to give their local partners a degree of local ownership within the current international funding and working structures. Despite all these challenges, working without local partners is not an option. Therefore it is crucial to find ways to deal with these challenges.

1.9 Main research question and research proposal

In this master thesis I will research how INGO field practitioners perceive the above mentioned challenges and how they deal with them. Because I do not want to exclude other challenges that are not mentioned in the literature above, but that might be mentioned in the

interviews, my main research question is broader than the above described challenges and as follows;

How do INGO field practitioners perceive the challenges surrounding their local partner selection and how do they deal with these challenges?

Sub questions;

- How do INGO field practitioners perceive the diminished civil society activity in war torn countries? (Chapter two)
- How do INGO field practitioners deal with the diminished civil society activity in war torn countries? (Chapter two)
- What are the related challenges in terms of local partner selection according to INGO field practitioners in areas with diminished civil society activity? (Chapter two)
- How do INGOs find their initial local partners in war torn countries? (Chapter two)
- What are INGOs selection criteria for local partners in war torn countries? (Chapter three)
- What kind of local civil society partners do INGOs select? (Chapter three and four)
- How do INGOs ensure that their local partners are having a connection with their community? (Chapter four)
- How do INGO field practitioners perceive and deal with guaranteeing a degree of local ownership for their local partners? (Chapter five)

Central goal

The central goal of this research project is to contribute to the insight on how INGOs select their local partners and how they deal with the related challenges as described above. I hope that this research contributes to the discussion about if the maximum potential of partnering between INGOs and civil society is reached. Hopefully it will also contribute to the continuous reflection of INGOs on their selection process of local partners and will it give an input into the debate on how to deal with the challenges of local partner selection.

Scientific relevance

The scientific relevance of this research project lies in the discussion with INGO field practitioners over the described challenges. By talking to field practitioners I would like to get

a better understanding of how INGO field practitioners perceive the in the scientific literature described challenges of local partner selection by INGOs. I will discuss the described challenges with field practitioners to get a better understanding of how INGO field practitioners perceive these challenges, if they recognise and acknowledge them, what they can add from their experiences to get a better understanding of the challenges and to share strategies to deal with these challenges.

Societal relevance

If we assume that the hypothesis and theories are true that local civil society in conflict areas has a vital contribution to make in development cooperation and peace building in post conflict countries because local civil society has the advantage of local knowledge which is essential to effectiveness and sustainability of programs, than it is essential for peace that local civil society is optimally involved. When, as described by Pouligny, the ´real´ local civil society gets overlooked because INGOs only tend to select local civil society structures that resemble western forms of civil society, which are possibly not able to link with their community, the potential of civil society contributing to peace diminishes. By discussing this issue with INGOs, I hope to get a better understanding if this issue is something they realize and by sharing strategies that INGOs use to ensure a connection between their local partners and their communities this research might contribute to the debate among INGOs about what kind of partners they are looking for and how they can legitimize their choices taking all the challenges in consideration. Researching the selection process of local civil society partner in conflict areas by INGOs will hopefully contribute to the discussion about the challenges in this selection process and possible strategies to deal with these challenges in order to get the maximum potential out of the partnerships.

Methods

Since my research question is about how INGOs perceive and deal with the challenges of their local partner selection it follows that I will write this thesis from the perspective of INGOs. To answer my research question I will use the case study method. A case study suits this research because I want to obtain an in depth insight in the finding and selection process of local civil society partners by INGOs and the related challenges. I realise that a case study brings limitations for the generalisation of specific result outside the research units and that with this method I will not be able to make sweeping general statements. The good news is that in this explorative and descriptive research I am not looking for generalisation of specific

results, rather I am trying to get an understanding of general relevant issues surrounding the finding and selection of local partners by INGOs and ways to deal with them. A follow up study could take care of generalisation of more specific issues if necessary.

Besides the generalisation of specific results another issue is the bias of the interviewed field practitioners. To get a better understanding of the challenges surrounding INGOs local partners selection it would have been better do conduct ethnographic field research but since financial resources and time for this master thesis research are limited that was not a realistic option. Interviews with field practitioners are biased and there might be some issues or challenges that did not come to the surface since it is not in the interest of the INGO to make them public. Obviously I am not without assumptions and the field practitioners neither and an interview between us stays a conversation between two people interpreting each other's questions and world. All I could do was to keep open interviews, record them and transfer them into verbatim records to stay as objectively as possible. The consequence is that I am not displaying universal truths in this thesis, but perceptions of the interviewed field practitioners.

It was hard to find INGO field practitioners willing to cooperate with this research; most of the persons I approached were too busy. My opportunities were limited, but I tried to get the maximum out of the situation by at least looking at INGOs in two countries, in the Netherlands and in Great Britain. I managed to talk to three Dutch INGOs, namely CARE Netherlands, Oxfam Novib Netherlands and IKV Pax Christi and two British INGOs, namely Peace Direct and Conciliation Resources. Two of these five interviewed INGO, namely Care Netherlands and Oxfam Novib Netherlands work with over 800 local partners all over the world, which is why I classify them as big INGOs. The other three, Peace Direct, Conciliation Resources and IKV Pax Christi work with less than 800 local partners and that is why I classify them as smaller INGOs. IKV Pax Christi and Conciliation Resources are having local partners to whom they give non-financial support. Care Netherlands, Oxfam Novib and Peace Direct give financial support to all their partners. One, Oxfam Novib, is not only a peace building INGO, but also operates in the wider area of development cooperation. That is interesting since I would like to make a comparison on how this INGO finds its partners in conflict areas with how they find their local partners in non war torn countries. I will now continue with a short description of each organisation and I will mention the person I talked with and his/her function within the INGO. Then I will turn to the next chapter in which I will discuss the challenge of finding partners in areas with a diminished civil society.

Care Netherlands; Care Netherlands forms part of one of the biggest development INGOs in the world, namely Care International. Care International exists of twelve member countries, Care Netherlands being one of them. Care Netherlands has a specific mandate within Care International and well that of peace building and disaster risk reduction, which makes Care Netherlands more of a peace building INGO than a development INGO. On their website Care Netherlands states that violent conflict often hits the most vulnerable people, who are the least resourced to do something about their situation. By cooperating with local partners, Care Netherlands tries to empower them. For this master thesis research I interviewed Iljitsj Wemerman, program coordinator for South Sudan at Care Netherlands. An example of a local project that Care supports in Sudan is the traditional Rubakasystem. This is a local system of conflict resolution which is seriously infected by administrative changes and by the conflict itself. Care assists the local partner in seeking ways to revive the system and to adapt it to the new reality. (www.carenederland.org)

Conciliation Resources; Conciliation Resources is an INGO based and registered in the United Kingdom as a charity. They work with partners in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Pacific. These include local and international civil society organisations and governments. Conciliation Resources is funded through grants from governments, independent trusts and foundations. Their vision is a world where people affected by conflict and their leaders are able to work effectively with international support to prevent violence, resolve their armed conflicts and build more peaceful societies. Conciliation Resources believes that local people have an important role in transforming their own violent conflicts and that the international community has a collective responsibility to assist these processes. To understand Conciliation Resources approach, one must take a people centred look at the challenges of global conflict politics. Most activities to promote peace are not about formal mediation between governments and armed groups. The true picture is more complex. Transforming conflict requires processes that work at all levels of society and involves different people in many roles, from civil servants and NGO activists to local journalist across conflict divides. Collaborative partnerships are at the heart of what Conciliation Resources does. They offer their partners long term and flexible support to help them to strengthen their efforts and tackle the underlying causes that fuel and prolong conflicts. I talked with Kennedy, program coordinator for Uganda at Conciliation Resources. Uganda is part of the region east and central Africa. Conciliation Resources has relationships with partners in this region dating back to 1997. The foundation of trust is essential and enables them to share

information, ideas, critical analysis, and strategies and it allows them to give personal support to conflict zones. An example of a local partner in Uganda is the Justice and Peace Commission, Gulu Archidocese (JPC). JPC is a Catholic organisation that runs justice and peace building projects in the camps for people displaced by the war. Conciliation Resources supports JPC in their reconciliation work addressing inter community fear and mistrust that has kept ethnic groups in Uganda divided for decades. (www.c-r.org)

IKV Pax Christi; IKV Pax Christi describes itself on their website as an INGO active in many fields. In conflict areas they initiate and support local peace initiatives which can be very divers, but always have the aim to build bridges between people and to improve relations. They describe that the power of peace building lies with the local people and their organisations, because they know their culture and community best. For this thesis I talked with Nico Plooijer, program coordinator for Sudan and with Annemarie Sweris, program Coordinator for Congo. In Sudan they work with the Sudan Integrated Peace Programme (SIPP) that brings different groups together and encourages dialogue to resolve local tensions. In Congo, IKV Pax Christi works with a network called Haki Na Amani. In the seven years of existence of the network all kinds of developed were directed towards supporting the process to sustainable peace and security. (www.ikvpaxchristi.nl)

Oxfam Novib Netherlands; Oxfam Novib Netherlands was founded in 1994 and is a member of Oxfam International. With 14 sister organisations Oxfam Novib makes itself strong for a world without poverty and with equal chances for everybody. With everything they do, they believe in the power and possibilities of people. Local people are on top of their agenda and that is why they support local development projects. Besides supporting local initiatives, they also lobby at the international community. In developing countries they are cooperating with hundreds of local organisations because they know the situation. Oxfam believes that what comes from the local people is most effective, also on the long term. That is why Oxfam supports initiatives and projects from local people. Local initiatives are supported with money and advice, in cooperation with 850 local organisations in dozens of countries. One department of Oxfam is peace and security. From this department I talked with Wim de Regt, program coordinator of Somalia. An example of a local partner that Oxfam Novib supports in Somalia is PHRN. PHRN focuses on mobilising elders to resolve clan conflicts, organises peace rallies and radio debates. (www.oxfamnovib.nl)

Peace Direct; Peace Direct is a London based peace NGO that challenges the conventional wisdom that the solutions to violent conflict lies with outside powers like the United Nations, external mediators and western NGOs. Instead their vision is a world where the work and knowledge of local peace builders is central to all strategies for managing conflict. They believe that they most effective way to prevent and end violent conflict is through the knowledge and activities of those living and working in conflict areas. Therefore they support, promote, and publicize the work of local peace builders. Peace Direct listens to what local peace builders say what is needed to deal effectively with conflict, and aim to fund these local peace builders so that they can deliver the programmers they have prioritized. Peace Direct hopes that the Peace Building world comes to an environment in which peace builders first ask; what can local people do and how can we support them? In order to make it more easy for INGOs to find local partners, Peace Direct founded the website insightonconflict,org. On this website, Peace Direct lists many local peace building initiatives. An example of a local partner from Peace Direct is CRC in Congo, who's main tasks are releasing and rehabilitating child soldiers and helping IDPs to return to their homes by mediating with their former communities. (www.peacedirect.org)

Chapter two; finding local partners

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will delve into the question of the limited presence of local civil society organisations in warn torn countries, on how INGOs field practitioners perceive this issue, what they see as related challenges and on how they deal with these challenges in their partner selection. I will also discuss how the interviewed INGOs established contact with their initial local civil society partners in the war torn countries of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda.

2.2 The limited presence of local civil society organisation in war torn countries

One of challenges for INGOs in working with civil society in conflict situations is rooted in the realization that armed conflict changes the lives of people at all levels. From the micro level of individuals who change in attitude and behaviour to macro economic and social change. In the context of armed conflict, the conditions for civil society to develop or sustain themselves are hard and therefore cause a decline of civil society activity. This development is described by Stiefel and Pearce in Paffenholz;

> The conditions necessary for civil society to develop tend to worsen due to armed conflict; Physical infrastructure is destroyed, limiting the propensity for communication and exchange; state structures and institutions to which civil society addresses its activities are weakened or non-responsive, security is low and the overall situation is often characterized by complete or overall lawlessness; basic human rights are suppressed, limiting even basic civil society activities; trust disappears and social capital, beyond family, clan, or ethnic affiliation is destroyed (Stiefel, 2001, p. 265); and free and independent media are not present or are severely restricted, depriving civil society groups of one of their main communication channels to other civil society groups, the general public, as well as the governments and state structures. This deterioration of the enabling environment for civil society causes a decline of civil society activities and makes recovery after war difficult. Insecurity and fear, induced by years of civil war, hinder people from participating even in local community development, as they tend to carefully observe the new power relations after the conflict

(Pearce, 2005). This decline is also due to the fact that many civil society actors go into exile in times of conflict, thereby weakening the capacity of the organisations that remains, although in some cases Diaspora remains active from far. (In; Paffenholz, 2010, p. 18)

Due to a serious decline of civil society activity in war torn countries it follows that it might be hard for INGOs to find local partners in these areas. In the next paragraph, field practitioners in peace building share their experiences over this issue

2.3 Field practitioners about the diminished civil society activity in war torn countries

Annemarie Sweris, program coordinator of Congo at IKV Pax Christi recognises the above mentioned issue of a lack of civil society in war torn Congo. One of the problems in IKV Pax Christi's selection of local partners in Congo is that there sometimes are no suitable people. Civil society actors are dead or fled because of the conflict and IKV Pax Christi has no other option than to work with what is there.

Wemerman, program coordinator at Care for South Sudan also acknowledges that there is little civil society activity in South Sudan. Rather than calling it diminished civil society activity he calls it the underdevelopment of civil society, since the war is going on for so long that civil society never really developed. Years of war caused the destruction of everything and nobody went to school. Conditions necessary for civil society to develop like a good infrastructure, security and respect for human rights are not present in South Sudan. The war made that people are more occupied with surviving than with organising themselves.

De Regt, program coordinator of Somalia at Oxfam Novib Netherlands thinks that civil society in Somalia is clearly not as organised as in more developed countries, but better developed than civil society in South Sudan due to the Somali culture. De Regt thinks that people in Somalia are generally more outspoken than Sudanese people. Even though in some parts of Somalia people cannot speak openly, Somali people seek ways to speak out, so if you look carefully there is a civil society.

Kennedy, program coordinator of Uganda at Conciliation Resources tells us that when they started to work in Uganda in 1998 there were three or four local organizations that they could indentify working on the conflict. At the time Conciliation started to engage in Uganda

you could count the local organizations responding to the conflict on one hand. From this statement I assume that also in Uganda there was little civil society activity in 1998. Since then the situation drastically changed, at some point Conciliation Resources knew about 800 local organizations

What becomes clear from the stories of Sweris, Wemerman, de Regt and Kennedy is that in respectively Congo, South Sudan, Somalia and Uganda they acknowledge that civil society suffered from the civil war. Sweris mentioned that civil society activity in Congo diminished because of death or people who fled. Wemerman states that civil society in Sudan is underdeveloped due to years of civil war in which everything got destroyed and people did not have a chance to develop themselves. The war in Sudan is going on for so long that one cannot speak of a diminished civil society, but only of an underdeveloped civil society since it was never developed. De Regt acknowledges that civil society is less present in Somalia than in non war torn countries, but thinks that the degree to which civil society is present in war torn countries is not only dependent on the nature and gravity of the conflict but also on culture.

From Kennedy's story it becomes clear that civil society activity does not stay diminished. Explanations for this sudden mushrooming of local civil society organizations are to be found in international attention combined with large amounts of funding that become available. Plooijer, program coordinator for Sudan at IKV Pax Christi states that the sudden increase of civil society activity is not to 'blame' on the local people, but on the international organizations including the UN and INGOs. If the international community comes with loads of money and states that it wants to work on peace building, you can be sure that all kind of people come up with a local NGO, especially when there is no other source of income which is often the case in war torn countries.

Civil society clearly suffered in the war torn countries; the question in the next section is what INGO field practitioners see as related challenges to the diminished civil society activity concerning their local partner selection.

2.4 Challenges in partner selection related to a diminished civil society activity

A challenge for INGOs related to the issue of the lack of civil society activity according to Sweris is that INGOs should not give up and leave to only work in countries were civil

society is more available. Another challenge for INGOs is to reflect on who they are working with, if choice is limited; it is tempting to work with only the one partner you can find. But realizing that the civil society organisations that are there, are often there with a reason and that civil society in war torn countries is often organised along conflict lines makes it that INGOs looking for a local partner have to think about issues of selection and representation of different groups in order not to do harm.

Wemerman, program coordinator at Care for South Sudan sees another related challenge to the underdevelopment of civil society besides equal representation of different partners. Because of the underdevelopment of civil society in South Sudan, Wemerman thinks that INGOs cannot expect local civil society to be in the driver's seat of programs that affect them. Wemerman compares civil society in South Sudan with a baby and babies are not capable of driving. As a consequence, the INGO has to play a bigger role in deciding what kinds of programs are designed, which reduces the local ownership of projects. So according to Wemerman the challenge related to the underdevelopment of civil society is to maintain a degree of local ownership of programs by civil society in areas were civil society is hardly developed due to years of civil war.

De Regt from Oxfam Novib Netherlands thinks that the related challenge to a diminished civil society activity is to find other types of associations or representatives, like traditional leaders or community women groups. Hereby de Regt touches upon the issue of different forms of organization in different societies and the tendency of western INGOs to work with western forms of organization only, though civil society can take different forms. The related challenge to a diminished civil society activity is to recognize other forms of organizing in a society (discussed in chapter four). In the next section I will explain how the field practitioners deal with the diminished civil society in war torn countries and the related challenges.

2.5 Dealing with a diminished civil society activity and related challenges

To deal with the diminished civil society activity in Congo Sweris does not only work with what is there concerning civil society, but also they try to identify what they can make of what is there. According to Sweris it is a challenge to guarantee representation of different groups, which can be problematic when there is not so much civil society activity. To ensure a representation of different groups in a field with diminished civil society IKV Pax Christi decided to create a network of organisations. One of the rules made by IKV Pax Christi is that

the network needs to include partners from different ethnic backgrounds to prevent IKV Pax Christi from supporting one representation of civil society only. Hereby IKV Pax Christi in Congo tries to reduce the risk of doing harm by only supporting a single ethnicity. The network is seen as a way to deal with the challenge of a diminished civil society activity in the way that organisations in the network can support each other to strengthen the weak and limited civil society activity.

Care faces the challenge of an underdeveloped civil society in South Sudan by a capacity building project in which Care tries to support and develop civil society activity. The related challenge of guaranteeing local ownership is faced by working with joint project cycles. If local civil society is too weak to be in the driver's seat of programs, local ownership is worked on by involving local people in every single step they take in developing and implementing projects.

De Regt thinks that when there is a limited civil society activity INGOs have to try and connect with traditional leaders or other traditional forms of organising. This requires a profound country analysis, since you need to understand how a society is functioning. A profound country analysis can be seen as a way to deal with diminished civil society activity since it might bring other forms of organisation that exist to the surface.

All, Sweris, Wemerman and de Regt apparently believe that even if they observe a diminished civil society activity or an underdeveloped civil society that it is not legitimate to work without it. Sweris mentions that you have to see what you can make of what is there; for example by creating networks in which existing organizations can support each other. Wemerman sees a solution in capacity building projects and in joint project cycles. De Regt thinks that if you search well enough, there is always a civil society and that it is a INGOs task to recognize and find it, for example by a profound context analysis.

So solutions to the lack of civil society in warn torn countries are to be found in the creation of networks, capacity building projects, in joint project cycles and in a better search for other types of organization than the ones that western organizations are familiar with, by a profound country analysis.

2.6 How INGOs find their initial local civil society partners in war torn countries

Due to the in the scientific literature described and confirmed by the field practitioners diminished civil society in war torn countries it follows that it might be hard for INGOs to find suitable partners in these war torn countries. Therefore in this section we will look at how INGOs found their initial local partners.

Oxfam Novib Netherlands started to work with local partners in Somalia since 1995. Many of the local partners that they are working with nowadays originate from that time. The contacts from 1995 started at an international conference about women's rights in Beijing organized by the United Nations. At this conference, Oxfam met a couple of Somali women groups with whom they started to create different networks. Between 1995 and 2005 it was still possible to travel to Mogadishu, so Oxfam was able to establish a relationship with these women. Nowadays it is more complicated to travel to Somalia and that causes problems in the selection of new partners for Oxfam Novib. Oxfam deals with this problem by making use of their existing contacts. These contacts are not only existing partners, but also contain other contacts such as people who are activists, or people who have worked or are working for other INGOs. It is not the case that these contacts directly search for partners for Oxfam Novib, but their function in finding new partners for Oxfam Novib is that they update Oxfam Novib about what is going on. Through their existing network they hear about the existing organizations, who are working on which issues, what works, etc. Through this information, by keeping their ears open on a distance, it becomes clear for Oxfam Novib Netherlands who can become a possible partner.

Another source of potential local partners is the capacity building project that Oxfam Novib started in 2003 called Strengthening Civil Society in Somalia, SCCIS, for a wide range of local NGOs, not only partners. Through the years Oxfam Novib trained 120 local NGOs in this capacity building program that is focused on getting structure in the organizations, to get the checks and balances. So Oxfam Novib also finds local partners through this capacity building program.

Since Oxfam Novib is not a peace building INGO, but a development cooperation INGO with a peace building department, it is interesting to see the difference with how Oxfam Novib selects partners in non war torn countries. It is clear that Oxfam Novib uses different methods for partner selection in warn torn Somalia than in more peaceful countries. Normal procedures like a call for proposals, or a scout pick mission are not used in Somalia.

A call for proposals is an open inscription for local civil society to come up with a project proposal. In Somalia this method is not used, because there are so many organizations from which Oxfam Novib cannot get to grips with their implementation capacity or accountability. Because of the existence of briefcase NGOs Oxfam Novib must be able to identify with whom they are working. The Scout Pick mission neither is used as a way to find local partners in Somalia, because with this method a consultant is recruited who checks on possible partners and their references. In Somalia there are very strong clan ties and therefore it is very hard to find an independent consultant, the scout pick mission is too dependent on the connections of the consultant. Oxfam Novib found their local partners through their international and local network and through capacity building projects.

At Peace Direct they found their local partners through their network as well, they met their Congolese local partner at a conference. Tom Gillepsy, general program coordinator at Peace Direct tells us that connections are established by people from their network recommending somebody else or at training programs organized by western NGOs. Local NGOs might attend such a training course as well and that is how Peace Direct found their current and past partners. In the future, Peace Direct wants to move to a more systematic approach, that is why they founded IOC, a website called Insight on Conflict. On this website they present a database with local peace building organizations all over the world, serving as a database for organizations looking for local partners, because it is Peace Directs objective to make more INGOs work with local partners. When Peace Direct found that one of the reasons for not working with local partners was that it is too hard to find them they started IOC to facilitate the process. The partners in the database of IOC get selected by local correspondents; they go around the country and map different peace builders. Peace Direct invited eight of the organization on IOC to a recent international peace exchange in Nairobi and is working with three of them now. So IOC also became a source for local partners for Peace Direct.

Conciliation Resources has been working in Uganda for over 12 years and initially started working with a Diaspora in the United Kingdom. That coincides with the above mentioned theory that civil society in warn torn countries tends to be underdeveloped because people are dead or fled, but that sometimes Diasporas remain active (Later in we will see that we can question if a Diaspora is a local partner, since some organizations require their local partners to have physical presence in the area of operation.). Initially, there were like three or four local organizations focusing on the conflict in Uganda, so at that time Conciliation Resources could count the local organizations responding to the conflict in Uganda on one

hand, so it was easy to know what their focus was. Since then the situation drastically changed, at some point there were around 800 local organizations known to Conciliation Resources. They got to know these organizations either by other INGOs, or by governmental wraps, by UN agencies or by community meetings because there they are able to tell you if there is an organization that can respond to a certain issue. The method that Conciliation Resources used in the Central African Republic was first to go there and listen, talk to different organizations and so Conciliation Resources started to get some basic knowledge in terms of the potential local partners that existed, they talked to as many people as they could possibly manage, including the United Nations mission, the United Nations agencies, the local leaders, other NGOs that were working in the field and some of the known activists in the area. In that way they started with a long list of potential partners, but of course they could not work with everybody, to get the list was only the first part. Then they started a research trying to understand what the organizations on the list were doing. Most of these organizations did not have their ideas written down, but through talking to them Conciliation got to know on which issue they were working, then they made a list with organization X is working on this and organization Y is working on that. From there, they started their selection.

Care Netherlands in South Sudan also used government registrations as a way to get in touch with local partners. Besides, Care visited targeted areas and organized meetings with local governments, traditional leaders and village committees. Care did not start their initial contacts at an international conference or training day. Wemerman went to South Sudan with nothing and discovered a list with civil society organizations through the government and started to visit them. This distinct approach, most other INGOs first established contact in the western world and did not go blank into the war torn country, can be explained by the fact that Care Netherlands started a country office in South Sudan. Their involvement in South Sudan was planned and not driven by a coincidental meeting.

IKV Pax Christi in Congo found their first partners on an international conference on small arms in Congo. It was there that IKV Pax Christi met a group of people, who expressed their desire to cooperate with IKV Pax Christi. Following that request IKV Pax Christi researched the possibilities.

IKV Pax Christi in Sudan established their first contacts through the churches which are seen as a natural partner, because of IKV Pax Christi's Christian background. Besides, there were hardly any alternatives. Plooijer tells us that churches were the only institution on the ground which were active and not so much engaged in the conflict. Then, IKV Pax Christi made use of the network of the church.

We see that important sources for INGOs to establish initial contact with potential local partners in new regions for the INGOs are international conferences and trainings. Oxfam Novib, Peace Direct and IKV Pax Christi in Congo found their initial local partners at international conferences and trainings. This initial contact seems to be a more fluid, coincidental process, rather than a pre-planned systematic search for a certain partner in a certain area, since the INGOs were not attending the meeting with the objective of meeting a local partner for a certain area. Once initial contact with one partner is established, and the region is added to the areas of operation of the INGO, capacity building projects become an important source for additional partners, which seems to be a more systematic approach.

Conciliation Resources found their initial partner in Uganda in a Ugandan Diaspora in the United Kingdom. Also in this case, a coincidental contact was established in the western world and later on a more systematic approach was adopted by mapping the existing organizations in Uganda. A network of INGOs, UN agencies and community members were used to map the organizations and to collect information about potential partners. As well, the government was asked for a list of registered organizations.

Care is the only interviewed INGO that did not meet their initial partner at an international setting. Instead, Care went to Sudan, established a country office and started to map the existing organization from there. The mapping was done by organizing meetings with local governments and village leaders, as well with list of the government and information from the UN and other INGOs operating in the area. That Care's approach is distinct from the other INGOs can be explained by the fact that the other INGOs are not having country offices, which makes it harder for them to start from the country of operation itself.

At Peace Direct they identified a need for assistance in the search for local partners and that is why they initiated the website Insight on Conflict. On this website, local peace building organizations are mapped and described. These organizations are identified by local correspondents. This must make it easier for INGOs to find local partners.

Important sources for initial local partners are international conferences and trainings. These seem to be random contacts. That is not to say that the INGOs do not have any criteria for their initial partners, but that their meeting was coincidental. Later on, once established in the region, organizations develop a more systematic approach to finding partners by using a wide network of INGOs, UN agencies, local governments and more traditional community representatives as well as capacity building projects. Peace Directs website Insight on Conflict is also available as a source for local partners.

Besides the initial non-presence of the INGO in the field, the seemingly random selection of initial local partners can be explained by the fact that during or immediately after conflict, there is diminished civil society activity. A more standardized plan to select partners develops later on, once the INGO added the region to their areas of operation. With time the amount of civil society organizations also highly increases and it becomes an issue for INGOs on who to select since they cannot work with everyone. In the next chapter we will take a look at the selection criteria as used by INGOs to select their local partners and see what that tells us about what kind of local partners INGOs are looking for.

Chapter three; selecting suitable partners

3.1 Introduction

INGOs looking for a local partner should realize that in conflict areas, all potential partners are infected by the conflict, since the conflict works its way through in every single vessel of life. Ethnic bonds tend to get stronger in and after conflict situations and the existing civil society tends to be organised along conflict lines (Paffeholz, 2010). A World Bank report analysing civil society organisations in three conflict affected regions in Africa states that civil society organisations were sometimes exclusionary and even reinforced divisions between groups. Plus it observed that sometimes vulnerable groups were not represented (World Bank, 2005; in Paffenholz, 2010, p.19). As well, civil society groups can be a factor for war as well as a force for peace.

These issues bring challenges for INGOs in the selection of local partners. Are INGOs working with 'uncivil' civil society groups? How do INGOs deal with the representation of different groups? And how do INGOs think about the partiality of civil society partners, since everybody is infected by the conflict? Anderson analysed how aid can actually do harm, for example by supporting one group only (Anderson, 1999), so these are serious issues.

In this chapter I will discuss with INGO field practitioners what their selection criteria are in order to see how they deal with the above mentioned issues. There are two issues from which the selection criteria surrounding them receive special attention, namely the issue of partiality of civil society and the issue of briefcase NGOs. The possible partiality of civil society in war torn areas brings the challenge for INGOs of how to ensure representation of different groups in order not to do harm. Therefore in this section, the issue of how INGOs deal with the issues of representation of different ethnic groups in their selection criteria receive special attention. In the previous section we saw that indeed initially civil society activity is diminished in war torn countries, but also that later on, when international attention and funds become available, civil society activity highly increases. In this context, the challenge for INGOs of filtering briefcase NGOs becomes an issue. Therefore the selection criteria surrounding the prevention of briefcase partners also receives special attention. Besides, I will discuss the other mentioned selection criteria. The aim of this chapter is fourfold; to discuss the usefulness of selection criteria, to get a better understanding of how INGO field practitioners perceive the issues of representation of different groups, 'uncivil'

civil society groups and briefcase NGOs, to get an insight in the selection criteria that the different INGOs use in their local partner selection and to get a better understanding of what kind of local partners INGOs are looking for.

3.2 (Usefulness of) selection criteria

While discussing their selection criteria for potential local partners it became clear that not all INGOs see selection criteria as useful and desirable. That is why, while turning to the selection criteria that the INGOs use in their local partner selection, I will at the same time discuss the usefulness and desirability of having selection criteria for local partners, since it appears not to be something obvious. IKV Pax Christi in South Sudan for example hardly has any selection criteria for potential local partners. Nico Plooijer, program coordinator of Sudan at IKV Pax Christi, says that they are not working with clear cut selection criteria for potential local partners in Sudan. He thinks that a general list with selection criteria for potential local partners is not an option because they want to stay flexible and able to adapt to the ever changing context. They select their local partners on a basis of personal trust, so you could say that trust is a selection criterion for IKV Pax Christi in Sudan. Their point of departure is always someone with whom IKV Pax Christi feels a connection, but actually they work with everybody at IKV Pax Christi in Sudan. Filtering 'uncivil' civil society groups is not IKV Pax Christi's aim. They believe that everybody involved in a conflict, needs to be involved in the program to resolve the conflict. Later on we will see that ethnic representation, non-partiality and financial accountability are explicit selection criteria for other INGOS, but not for IKV Pax Christi in Sudan. Plooijer sees ethnic representation as inherent to peace building, because in peace building you are always trying to reconcile different groups, so a variety of actors and ethnicities is automatically guaranteed. Therefore, at IKV Pax Christi in Sudan, they do not have an explicit mechanism to ensure representation of different ethnicities because this will happen automatically. What IKV Pax Christi does in Sudan is to start from a certain problem. If a problem is detected than everybody who is needed to solve the problem is involved in the program. So at IKV Pax Christi they look at the representation of different groups at the angle from a certain problem. IKV Pax Christi adheres to an inclusive vision in which all parties necessary to solve a certain problem, partial or non-partial, need to be involved to work on the problem. This is also true for militias and the government, who are not always friendly, because if they are excluded, the problem will not be solved according to

IKV Pax Christi. Anyway Plooijer sees impartiality as impossible, nonexistent, so that is another reason why for IKV Pax Christi non-partiality is not a selection criteria.

Financial accountability neither is a selection criterion for IKV PAX Christi, for the simple reasons that they are not a financial donor, so the organizations filter themselves. If a member of an organizations walks into IKV Pax Christi's office and they tell him/her that they do not have money, they will leave. One issue that is of importance to IKV Pax Christi in their local partner selection is that there is a common objective between the organizations.

Having all this said, Plooijer does mention that at IKV Pax Christi they are working on a list with guidelines to professionalize their partner selection. At the moment partnerships are too much based and dependent on trust between one program coordinator and the local partners. With a more professional view on which partners you select, there will be less of a problem might a program coordinator not be able to do his job.

At Conciliation Resources neither they have a list with clear cut selection criteria for local partners. They see the selection of local partners as a question of an organizations understanding of the conflict and of the drivers of change in that conflict. So we can say that a selection criterion for Conciliation Resources is that the local organization needs to do a good job in conflict analysis. Like IKV Pax Christi in Sudan, Conciliation Resources in Congo is not a financial donor, so financial accountability is not a selection criterion for them. The only explicitly mentioned selection criterion for Conciliation Resources is that the local partner must adhere to the same vision as Conciliation Resources.

Peace Directs main selection criteria for local partners are that they should be locally led, they should adhere to non-violence, they need to have a small momentum and they need to be addressing what Peace Direct sees as a driver of conflict. At Peace Direct they pay attention to the size of the potential partner organization and at the momentum that the organization already has. If a local organizations already has good international contacts and donors then there is little that Peace Direct can contribute, or at least there is more that they can contribute to others. It is in Peace Directs interest to focus on local peace builders that do not have a momentum yet, because it is Peace Directs objective to make the international community to work with local community, so if that is already happening, they rather focus on an organization that does not have this momentum yet. At Peace Direct non-partiality means that the local partners must be working on projects that include different groups. Non-violence is also important to Peace Direct. The issue of compatibility of local partners with Peace Directs vision is embraced by Peace Direct by stating that the local partner must be addressing what Peace Direct sees as a driver of conflict.

Peace Direct also sees financial accountability as a selection criterion. Financial control systems are not required, definitely not initially, because at Peace Direct they pay more attention to an organizations track record in peace building. Tom Gillepsy, general program director at Peace Direct, tells us that if an organization has struggled to work for peace without financial resources, then to Peace Direct that is used as an indicator that they are not after the money. On the contrary, if an organization comes up coinciding with international attention and funding, then Peace Direct gets more suspicious. Financial accountability at Peace Direct is mostly done on a basis of personal relationships and trust; for Peace Direct it is about getting a sense of what the partner's values are. So Peace Directs main criteria for local partners are that they should be locally led, adhere to non-violence, they need to have a small momentum and they need to be addressing what Peace Direct sees as a driver of conflict.

Oxfam Novib requires that their local partners are non-partial and that they do not exclude certain groups. In the selection process this criterion gets guaranteed by checking potential partners on their references with different sources to find more about the reputation of the potential partners. Oxfam Novib checks in the selection process what kind of roles the person behind the potential partner plays in various other organizations which might be local NGOs or the local government and they ask them for references. At Oxfam Novib Netherlands their official policy for the selection of local partners is that an organization needs to be registered as an NGO, they need to have an international back account and most importantly they have to address issues as described in Oxfam's policy for a certain country, for example gender issues. For this thesis I interviewed Oxfam's program director for Somalia Wim de Regt and he states that some of these official selection criteria constitute a problem in Somalia. International banking accounts for example are impossible in Somalia because of the status that Somalia has as a terrorism supporter. Registration of the local NGOs is also a constraint, because there is no functioning government. That is why for Somalia they close an eye on the official selection criteria.

Care is the INGO with the longest and clearest list of selection criteria for their local partners in Sudan. Iljitsj Wemerman, program coordinator for South Sudan at Care, tells us that they are looking for organizations that have a potential to grow. At Care they are not looking for the strongest, the biggest and the best organizations as local partners. That is because it is Care objective to let the local partners benefit from their capacity building program in South Sudan, larger organizations are not eligible. Another important selection criterion for local partners that Care is non-partiality. At Care non-partisanship means that the

local partners should be non-political. Non-violence is not explicitly mentioned in Care's objectives, but is hidden in Cares criterion of compatibility; the objectives, strategies, mission and vision of the local NGO should be compatible with that of Care. Financial accountability is a criterion for Care, and therefore Care requires their local partners to have basic financial control structures and good references. The potential partners must address Care's impact groups, described in the policy for a certain country. As well, the potential local partner needs to be physically present in the area of operation and must be registered as at the local government.

Care is having a clear cut list with selection criteria for their potential local partners, as well has Oxfam Novib Netherlands. But how useful and desirable are these selection criteria? IKV Pax Christi in Sudan is of opinion that using selection criteria makes you less flexible and less able to adapt to the ever changing context. Flexibility is an important value when working in conflict areas. Explicit selection criteria might even not be necessary since the nature of peace building work ensures representation of different groups. Other selection criteria might be a farce, since for example non-partiality does not exist in post conflict situations. Non-violence is important to all the INGOs except to IKV Pax Christi, they adhere to an inclusive vision in which all parties involved in the conflict need to be involved, even if they are not so civil. Oxfam Novib does have selection criteria but de Regt admits that they are not all applicable to Somalia, so they do not work with them. In favor of selection criteria is the argument that a possible loss of a coordinator might cause fewer problems if partnerships are more established on rules than on personal basis of trust.

There are huge differences in the scope of selection criteria, from hardly any at IKV Pax Christi in Sudan to an extensive list at Care. For the bigger INGOs, Oxfam Novib Netherlands and Care Netherlands, practical criteria like the registration as an NGO and bank accounts are important. We see that the smaller NGOs select their partners more on a basis of trust, and even more, the smaller INGOs that are not a financial donor are able to work even with violent or partial groups. IKV Pax Christi in Sudan and Conciliation Resources in Uganda are not financial donors so they do not need to be accountable to their donors about whom they are working with. I will now go a little deeper into the issues of representation of different groups and financial accountability.

3.3 Representation of different groups

An important selection criterion for local partners for most of the INGOs is representation of different local groups. In the initial chapter we saw that civil society in war torn countries tends to be organised along conflict lines and that aid can actually do harm by inciting conflict through unintended consequences, including favouring recipients of one side. Representation of different groups thus seems an important issue in the selection of local partners by INGOs. Let's see if this gets reflected in the selection criteria of INGOs

Care Netherlands strives for a balance of representation in their group of local partners, therefore, in their selection criteria ethnic background is mentioned. Wemerman explains that if Care in South Sudan would work with organization from one ethnic background only, other parties might feel underrepresented and Care would get an image of being partial in the conflict situation.

In Oxfam Novib's selection of local partners it is seen as essential to create a mixture of different local partners on different levels to prevent a reputation of partiality of Oxfam Novib Netherlands on the ground. Oxfam Novib Netherlands tries to guarantee this balance of representation in Somalia on different levels by working in different regions, by working with as many clans as possible, by working with organizations with a more traditional perspective as well as with organizations that adhere to modern democratizations and by working with organisations on community level as well as with organisations that work on a national level or in between. So by working with different partners on different levels Oxfam Novib Netherlands illustrates that they see it as essential to represent the different groups of civil society, to prevent jealousy and partiality.

At Conciliation Resources they see a diversity of local partners as desirable only if the different partners are working on a related theme. When the local partners are working with a similar theory of change, diversity gets encouraged by Conciliation resources, because they believe in debate in order not to become obsolete. If there is no common theory of change, diversity will be counterproductive according to Kennedy, program coordinator for Uganda at Conciliation Resources. Different groups can have different sources of inspiration and if one group is inspired by Human Rights in their project proposals and the other by military intervention, then these are incompatible. As much as all the different civil society groups are looking for an end to the conflict, the ways they think to work towards this objective might be fundamentally different sometimes. So at Conciliation Resources they are aware that civil society is a very diverse group and they encourage representation of different ethnicities, but on the condition that they adhere to the same underlying theory of change, otherwise it

becomes counterproductive. So within a certain theory of change, a diversity of partners is encouraged. This common theory of change is ensured by Conciliation Resources selection criteria for local partners that they must adhere to the same vision as Conciliation Resources.

Nico Plooijer, program coordinator for Sudan at IKV Pax Christi sees a representation of different ethnicities as the nature of peace building. While trying to bring different groups together, a variety of actors and ethnicities is automatically guaranteed, so at IKV Pax Christi in Sudan they do not have an explicit mechanism to ensure representation of different ethnicities because this will happen automatically. What IKV Pax Christi does in Sudan is to start from a certain problem. If a problem is detected then everybody who is needed to solve the problem is involved in the program. At IKV Pax Christi they look at the representation of different groups at the angle from a certain problem.

Where for Care a representation of different Ethnic groups in South Sudan is important, for Oxfam in Somalia the representation for different clans is more important because the Somalia society is organized in clans and not in ethnicities like in Sudan. Conciliation Resources wants to represent different ethnic groups in Uganda, but requires them to have a common underlying theory of change, otherwise they see a representation of different ethnic groups as counterproductive. Later on we will see that incompatible visions are not likely to happen because another criterion for Conciliation Resources local partners is that the local partners must have the same vision as Conciliation Resources. Peace direct does not require their partners to be ethnically diverse, because they only have one partner in Congo, but instead require that this one partner builds bridges between different groups. Potential local partners for Peace Direct must be working on projects that include different ethnic groups. So Peace direct does not seek for ethnic representation among partners, but rather for ethnic representation within the partners projects. We can conclude that all INGOs take into account that supporting one partner from one ethnicity might be harmful instead of helpful. Therefore they all have their ways to ensure that they support different groups. Care and Oxfam Novib explicitly select different ethnic and clan groups as their local partners. Conciliation Resources also encourages a diversity of partners as long as they are working with the same underlying theory of change. Peace Direct only has one partner, but requires that partner to work with programs that involve different groups only. IKV Pax Christi also works with different groups, but does not work with explicit criteria to guarantee this. They see it as the nature of peace building that different groups are involved.

3.4 Financial accountability;

As we saw in the previous section, initially civil society organizations in war torn countries are underdeveloped, but later on, when international attention and funding becomes available, local civil society organizations tend to mushroom. The challenge for INGOs is to filter groups in the selection process that are only after the money, the so-called briefcase NGOs. In this section I will look if the field practitioners recognize the existence of briefcase NGOs, how they are explained and how they filter them in their partner selection.

For Care a local NGO should be reliable in financial matters and should have basic control structures in place. Huge accountability problems with past funding are not acceptable. Wemerman is very clear about the existence of briefcase NGOs is South Sudan, they are a common phenomena. He tells us that the people in South Sudan know very well that there is money available at INGOs, and in that way, Care indirectly creates local NGOs. People try to put a logo on their house and write a constitution and think that they might get accepted as a local partner. Wemerman makes clear that the so-called briefcase NGOs are very common in South Sudan and that forms a risk for Care and therefore they try to filter these organizations in the selection process. Care makes a capacity assessment of every local organization to check if there are financial control mechanisms, it is ok if they are very basic, but they need to be existent. Another way is to check the references of the organization and Care makes a baseline before they start a partnership which basically means that they check the name of the organization in the community at different sources. Then when the partnership is established they are monitored by CARE, the local organization receives money four times a year and they need to hand in a clear rapport of how the money was spent. At Care they work with new organizations (as we will see is not always the case with INGOs) because it is part of their vision to build the capacity of the local civil society, it is part of the capacity building program to support new initiatives. Care has this possibility because they have a country office. By keeping the lines between Care and the local partner short they have space for experiment. If something goes wrong they are right on top of it. Wemerman has good experiences with new initiatives and he thinks that it is even more in the older local NGOs that corruption sneaks in. With the country office it is ok to risk sometimes, if the local partners do not live up to the contract, you end the relation. So Care filters briefcase partners by checking references, besides, they keep the distance between them and their local partners short, so that they are right on top of what is happening.

Oxfam Novib is not working with country offices and the consequence is that they, because the lines between them and their partners are long, can only work with organizations

that have a track record. Potential partners need an audit report from an external auditor. Every year an external auditor must work through all the finances of the organization. For Somalia, Oxfam Novib gets the international auditors from Kenya. Organizations go with their account to Nairobi and let their finances to be checked there. Briefcase NGOs cannot get through because from their account it must become clear that they are credible. Potential Oxfam partners need to be able to deal with grants, and small organizations do not have this capacity, that is why Oxfam, for the accountability, needs to work with well standing organizations.

At Peace Direct they think that if an organization has struggled financially for years to keep their local NGO going then that is seen as an indicator that they are not after the money. If it is an organization that existed for a year, and that coincided with international attention on the country and therefore money flowing into the country Peace Direct would be a little more suspicious about their motives, because they might just see it as an opportunity to make money. It is tricky, but it is also about reputation, personality and getting a sense of what there values are. Also peace direct looks at the impact the local NGO already had to determine if they are dedicated to peace building or that they are trying to make money out of international donors, if the partner, organization has worked in peace building for a long time without funding, or with limited funding, you know that it is just the way they were actually genuinely committed to peace building. Financial accountability at Peace Direct is mostly done on a basis of personal relationships and trust; it is about getting a sense of what the partners' values are.

At IKV Pax Christi they observe the problem in the field, but are not having these problems, because they are not a financial donor. Nico Plooijer does have an interesting perspective on the cause of the problem of briefcase NGOs. He states that aid should be question orientated and not offer orientated, in practice that works different, and that is a mistake in the system. There is a big quest for help, but we are not answering the quest for help because aid is offer related. The offer decides the question, so if we are coming with money and ideas, definitely all kinds of people will come up. IKV Pax Christi does not need to filter briefcase NGOs since they filter themselves because IKV Pax Christi in Sudan does not have money to offer. Plooijer thinks that all organisations would have to filter briefcase NGOs less, if their aid would be question orientated.

At CR they do not see themselves as a donor, they do not have money themselves and the resources that they are bringing to the table are more the competences and the point of view, so they are not a funding partner.

Where Care stays on top of their partners, Oxfam Novib has a long distance between them and their partners, so a filter for briefcase NGOs becomes especially important. A consequence is that Oxfam is less flexible in trying partnerships with less developed organization because they need an audit report from previous work, a track record and good financial systems. Peace Direct has a limited amount of partners and even though the distance between them and their partners is long, like with Oxfam, they are able to base their relationship on trust since they are a small organization. That enables regular contact with their partner organizations and a personal relation. What is striking, is that the two INGOs that are not a financial donor, namely IKV PAX Christi in South Sudan and Conciliation Resources are far more flexible in the selection of local partners. The others are tight to accountability structures towards their donors. The need to filter briefcase NGOs is of major influence on the kind of partners INGOs are looking for.

3.5 Conclusion

For the bigger INGOs, practical criteria as the registration as an NGO and bank accounts are important. We see that the smaller NGOs select their partners more on a basis of trust, and even more, the smaller INGOs that are not a financial donor are able to work even with violent or partial groups, which financial donors cannot sell to their donors which restrict them in their choice of partners (more on this issue in the last chapter). The ones who are a financial donor and who have to be accountable to their donors have far better described selection criteria than the ones who are not, which enables the latter to be more flexible in their partner selection.

Proximity of the partners also seems to be a factor of influence on which kind of partners an INGO is able to choose. Care, with a country office in Sudan, is more flexible in trying new partnership than Oxfam, which is located far from their partners in Somalia and therefore needs more stable and trustworthy structures. The size of the INGOs also matters. Peace Direct does not have a country office in Congo, but still is able to work on a basis of trust since it only has a limited amount of local partners compared to Oxfam.

Also we can conclude that not all INGOs are looking for the same kind of partners, since it is dependent on their own vision and mission. But all, apart from IKV Pax Christi, require their local partners to adhere to the same vision as the INGO, which excludes violent or uncivil civil society groups, but brings the risk of missing the point of local ownership of

programs, since it is still a decision taken in the west about who receives funds and who does not. It is still INGOs deciding the strategy and only selecting partners that work in a compatible way. Unless, the strategy is designed in cooperation with local partners, which increases the degree of local ownership (more on this issue in the last chapter).

In the next chapter I will discuss Pouligny's observation that INGOs tend to select local partners that look like western forms of civil society and that therefore they might miss out on other constituencies and lack a connection with their community.

Chapter four; recognizing other forms of civil society

4.1 Introduction

As we saw, the concept of civil society originated in the west, in a specific historical, political, economical and cultural context. As a result there is debate over whether western concepts of civil society are transferable to non western countries or other historical contexts with different levels of democracy and economic structures. In this thesis I assume that civil society is transferable, but not always on a one to one basis, since civil society does exist but might take other forms in non-western contexts.

The challenge for INGOs in search for local partners here, described by Pouligny, is to recognise and find the type of association that civil society has taken in the non-western context. Pouligny describes that;

> When working in non-Western contexts, most outsiders tend to look for structures representative of a civil society, that is, something that corresponds, in reality, to the form that 'civil society' has taken in modern Western societies- NGOs, trade unions, etc. – albeit with historical and cultural varieties. Either they do not find this representation of society and thus create one, or they may find groupings mirroring Western society that suddenly emerge and claim this label. Both such groups are far from covering the range of different modalities of a collective organisation. Moreover, these groups (often limited to a small number of individuals) have difficulty in establishing links with other existing arrangements, especially at the community level. In many cases, this approach leads to a de facto exclusion of the so-called traditional forms of arrangements existing in the society- because the latter involve political cultures apparently too different from the dominant Western one [....]. (Pouligny, 2005, p. 498)

The challenge for INGOs is to find local partners that represent their community, and not to work with or create familiar structures that lack this connection. The challenge is to work with a whole group of people, through a certain form of civil society, and not just with elite, who knows how to organise according to western standards, but misses the connection on the ground. That is not to say that it is a problem to work with the elite or western forms of civil society, but on the condition that they have a connection on the ground. The value of working

with local civil society, and I am purposely not calling them NGOs, because the issue is that local civil society might take different shapes, is the realization that development and peace building programs need to be embedded in local structures in order for programs to become more effective and sustainable. INGOs, according to Pouligny´s observation, might ironically miss out on these objectives for working with local civil society by only selecting western look alike local partners. In this chapter I will discuss Pouligny´s observation with INGOs field practitioners in order to see if they recognise and acknowledge that they often select local partners that represent the form that civil society has taken in the western world, if they recognise and acknowledge that there are other forms of organisations out there, to extent on the possible problem and its causes and to see how INGOs deal with the challenge of ensuring a connection between their local partners and their communities.

4.2 The selection of western structures of civil society

Sweris, program coordinator of Congo at IKV Pax Christi, recognises the practice of the above described observation of Pouligny that INGOs tend to select western structures of civil society as local partners though there are other forms of organisation out there. INGOs tend to opt for those western look alike groups because they are having a certain status, a certain position and therefore INGOs might assume that they are more capable of taking action and that they are having a wider outreach than the average citizen. That might indeed be the case, but it can also be true, that because of their position, those elite groups are less capable to reflect the voice of the people. Sweris mentions that the problem is that civil society in war torn areas is often led by elites. The danger of only working with those elites is that INGOs think that they are working with a whole group, but that the elite groups are actually detached from their community. A way to deal with this issue is to always question the legitimacy of groups where you as an INGO is working with, because their legitimacy is not something that you can assume. According to Sweris it is not wrong to work with western forms of civil society, but an INGO working with such does need to question and ensure the legitimacy of their partners. IKV Pax Christi in Congo also works with more developed, western shaped forms of civil society organisations. This is an intermediary network of Congolese NGOs that in turn works with more local initiatives. Sweris recognises and acknowledges the practice of INGOs working with local partners with a western structure but does not necessarily sees this as something wrong or problematic as long as the legitimacy of the organisations is constantly

questioned. IKV Pax Christi also works with more western structures of local civil society as partners, but sees them as an intermediary NGO who in turn works with more local structures.

Oxfam Novib works in a similar way. De Regt, program coordinator for Somalia at Oxfam Novib Netherlands, acknowledges and recognises that there are different forms of organization out there in Somalia than the way we tend to organise ourselves in the west. He tells us that people in Somalia tend to work more on the basis of trust and family ties, and that is not how we work in western structures. At Oxfam they work with more established structures that are set up according to western norms because they see it as hard to avoid these western structures due to the need for an accountability structure. The local civil society organisations in Somalia do not meet these accountability requirements. That does not mean that more local organisations are not involved. Oxfam Novib sees it as essential that the local structures are involved, but they are unable to directly work with them due to the different forms of organisation they have. Therefore Oxfam Novib Netherlands works, like IKV Pax Christi in Congo, with intermediary NGOs as direct partners. The intermediary NGOs have the best of two worlds for Oxfam Novib, they know how to connect and work with the local organisations and at the same time have the required structures for Oxfam Novib. De Regt says that a direct connection with local partners might have been better, but since Oxfam Novib does not have a country office in Somalia, they need a more stable accountability structure.

Kennedy, program coordinator for Uganda at Conciliation Resources also recognises the above mentioned theory that INGOs tend to work with local partners that have a western structure and that this might constitute a problem because they possibly lack a connection with their community. But Kennedy, like Sweris, also mentions that this does not always needs to be the case. It can also happen that you, as an INGO, are lucky, that you go to Kampala and find a smart organization that perfectly speaks the language that you understand; that they have a well developed strategic plan, a good financial system and the same narrative as the local community. But more often, Kennedy estimates that in about 70 per cent of the time, there is a discrepancy between the narratives of the well developed organisations and the narratives from the local community living in and with the conflict situation. For this reason, Conciliation Resources in Uganda mostly works with organisations from which they think that they are closer to the conflict than those western look alike organisations often based in Kampala. When Conciliation Resources started to work in remote areas, they did not encounter organisations with a financial and strategic plan, so they worked alongside them. Kennedy does not exactly know if it is a cultural thing, a capacity issue or something else, but

he definitely recognises other forms of organisations out there. In the west we are used to organisations that put their stories on paper, and that is what Conciliation Resources advises local organisations to do; they tell them to put their story on paper.

Wemerman from Care Netherlands in South Sudan thinks that they often work with western structures, or otherwise, work towards creating them because that is where they are familiar with. While working in South Sudan, Care Netherlands would like to contribute to the development of a civil society and a state and often that is directed towards constructing a democracy according to western ideas. Wemerman thinks that part of the problem is that INGOs are not familiar enough with traditional structures. It is the modern structures where INGOs believe in, at the same time they have to respect the traditional structures. INGOs should research thoroughly how things are working in the countries where they operate, because often they know too little about it.

At IKV Pax Christi in Sudan they also acknowledge the existence of the practice of selecting organisations that mirror western structures. Nico Plooijer tells us that he often sees that INGOs are trying to create a mirror of ourselves in Sudan. IKV Pax Christi's main local partners in Sudan are churches, which according to Plooijer have a natural connection with the community. So at IKV Pax Christi in Sudan their point of departure is a western structure.

At Peace Direct they recognize the issue, but try to avoid doing it themselves by paying more attention to personalities, than to the form of the organisation. In looking for a local partner they do not look at organisation structures, so when it comes to their reporting, they do not mind, and they do not expect that the local partner can respond in a form that suits Peace Direct. For a long time, Peace Direct tolerates a lack of western organisation; they try not to push for a certain structure. But at the same time they admit that it is tricky not to do so, because Peace Direct has needs as well, and those needs are reports on a regular basis and financial statements. So in a way, they cannot escape from asking organisation for their financial statements. But Tom does not see that as harmful for the organisation, on the contrary, often it is beneficiary for the local organisations to be more organised. But overall Peace Direct does not think that they are looking for western structures in partners, they do not even require an organisation to be an NGO or to call themselves an NGO and often they work with individuals.

All the field practitioners recognize the existence of the practice of INGOs selecting partners with western structures, knowing that there are many different forms of organisation out there which are closer to the culture of the country of operation. So, yes, traditional organisations

get excluded and yes, INGOs tend to opt for western structures. There are two main causes mentioned for this phenomenon;

The first has to do with the way the international community is organised, the way the international community is organised forces INGOs to be accountable to their donors and therefore they need reports from their local partners, which makes INGOs to opt for partners that are capable in doing so. This coincides with Hannah Reich's theory that given the current structure of international cooperation, local ownership cannot be seriously implemented since it is not a practical objective within the current international funding and working structures (Reich, 2006, p. 4).

The second reason mentioned about why INGOs tend to work with western structures of civil society organization is that INGOs do not have sufficient knowledge about the local forms of organization. It is easier to identify and work with familiar forms of organizations.

Overall, all INGOs are aware and acknowledge the tendency to select western structures of civil society as their local partners, but they are also aware of the attached risk of a missed connection with the wider community. If a connection with the wider local community is ensured, the selection of western types of civil society partners does not need to be a problem. Therefore we will now take a look on how the interviewed INGOs try to ensure a connection between their local partners and the wider community.

4.3 Ensuring a connection between local partners and their community

Kennedy from Conciliation Resources makes clear that it is always a challenge and work in progress to ensure that local partners are having a connection with the local community. He describes that sometimes you as an INGO can start on an issue whereby you and the partners are on the same path, but either one of them moves on. Kennedy thinks that it is a question of regularly checking and ensuring that you are still working on issues that are on top of the agenda of the community. If not, it is possible that one of the partner's moves on and that you as an INGO get detached from the real issues. To check with the local community is a matter of understanding how the community works. The community in Somalia functions very different from the community in Sudan and the Sudanese community functions different from the northern Ugandan community. One of the mistakes that INGOs sometimes make, according to Kennedy, is that when they check the community, they follow administrative structures of the community. But if an INGO follows that approach of checking the community, they miss out on another important constituency. The challenge is to find the

traditional set-ups, but they are difficult to identify. An example is a community meeting where people voluntarily come together without an international organisation facilitating such. Once you start to appreciate and recognise how a society functions, you can listen to the people who really know what the community feels. The disadvantage of this approach is that it is very time-consuming, too labor intensive, and sometimes there is a language problem, translating technical language into a language the local people understand and vice versa is not easy.

For de Regt from Oxfam Novib Netherlands in Somalia personal regular contact is not an option with all their local partners, certainly not in Somalia, mainly because they do not have a country office. Because of the existence of briefcase NGOs, Oxfam needs to ensure accountability but at the same time recognizes that the organisations that have the accountability structures tend to lack a connection with the local community. To get both, and the accountability structure and the connection with the local community, without having a country office, Oxfam Novib works with intermediary NGOs. The intermediary NGOs have the best of two worlds for Oxfam, the accountability structure and the connection with the local community. That is not to say that Oxfam takes the connection between the intermediary NGO and the local community for granted. De Regt mentions different methods that Oxfam uses to see if an organisation has a connection with the local community. The projects need to be community based in the sense that they have to identify their projects in cooperation with the local communities and they have to keep meetings with this community. This is checked upon by the presence of community representatives in their boards and participant list. At Oxfam they always try to involve community leaders, traditional leaders and women groups, but it is an intermediary NGO that works with them.

For Peace Direct it is essential that their local partners are having a connection with their community because that is what makes them successful. Organisations can ensure that the local NGOs really have this connection with the local community by the conversations you have with them about where they work, their knowledge of the ground, the location of their offices, the number of staff they have and where the staff is based. Just through casual conversation with Henry, Peace Directs local partner in DRC, Peace Direct got to know that sometimes Henry's task forces needed to travel two days to their quarterly meetings, so they were far away from where Henry, the local partner was. That is enough for Peace Direct to know that they have a wide outreach into remote areas. Peace Direct looks to ensure a connection with local community of their local partners on a case to case basis; this is possible in a small NGO, where the lines are short.

Now we know that the interviewed INGOs do recognise the exclusion of local forms of organisations as their direct partners, it also seems that it does not necessarily mean that there is no connection with the local community. The question is how to guarantee a connection with the local community. Oxfam Novib checks if the local partner that they are working with is having a connection with the local community by checking participant lists or board members. Peace Direct detracts a connection with the community from the conversations they have with their local partners. Kennedy thinks that ensuring a connection with the community is a continuous project, since the local partner and the community are subject to change. The important thing according to Kennedy is that the rights sources are questioned. To identify the right sources a profound country analysis needs to be made. Another option is to directly work with the community. An obstacle for this approach is that some INGOs need local partners with accountability structures. This obstacle can be overcome by abstaining from being a financial donor, so that accountability structures are not necessary and one can work directly with the local community. Another way is to work with an intermediary NGO that has the required accountability structure and that in turn works with more local structures. Establishing a country office is another option to ensure a connection between the local partners and their community, when lines are short, it is easier to know what is happening.

Chapter five; who is in the driver's seat?

5.1 Introduction

Political scientist argue that INGOs are not as independent from donor governments as they often claim. Northern NGOs are seen by some as the implementers of development cooperation for the government. Northern NGOs receive funds from the government in order to implement a development program that is approved of by the government. These northern NGOs than subcontract southern civil society organization to implement the programs (Neubert, 2001, p. 61; in Paffenholz, 2010, p. 17). Because the local partners receive their funding from the northern NGOs, they tend to be more accountable to their northern funders than to their local community. INGOs are apparently not as independent as they often claim and they are influenced by their donors. Consequently that raises question about how big the influence and ownership of local partners in reality is, since INGO are possibly guided by requirements of their donors instead of by the demands of their local partners. In a previous section we saw that INGOs work with local partners because they think that they should have a say in programs that affect them, because it is their right, but also because it increases the sustainability and effectiveness of programs, since INGOs lack knowledge about how to embed programs in other cultures. If funds are channeled from donor governments to northern INGOs, which then subcontract implementation to southern NGOs, local ownership of programs might be an illusion. In order be able to call 'partners' partners, they must have a certain degree of ownership of programs, otherwise the term subcontractors would be more suitable. Hannah Reich states that within the given current structure of international cooperation, local ownership cannot be seriously implemented since it is not a practical objective within the current international funding and working structures (Reich, 2006, p. 4). The challenge for INGOs is thus to give their local partners a degree of ownership within existing international working and funding structures. In this section I will discuss with the field practitioners about how they deal with the challenge of guaranteeing local ownership of programs, if they think it is desirable and to what extent they think local ownership of programs is a reality.

5.2 Field practitioner's experience

At Conciliation Resources it varies who is in the driver's seat of the invented programs; there are some areas where Conciliation Resources sees opportunities before the local organization

sees them. As an example Kennedy mentioned a bill in the United States congress called the Lords Resistant Act, when the law came up, Conciliation Resources got a draft of it and they realized that there were some flaws in the bill, so they alerted their local partners to some of the red flags in the bill. Conciliation Resources helped their local partners to understand the law and they organized a meeting. After the meeting the local partners decided to issue a statement and later traveled up to Washington to support their arguments to some congress men and some people in the administration. That is an example of a case where Conciliation Resources triggered the program. But there are other situations in which the local partners themselves trigger a project. Who should be in the driver's seat depends of a program depends on the issue.

Plooijer thinks that it is desirable to have local partners in the driver's seat of programs that affect them, aid should be question orientated, but in reality, he says, local people are not in the driver's seat. Even though INGOs tend to work with local partners nowadays, Plooijer does not think that these local partners have a say in the policy of the INGO and that INGOs are not flexible enough to answer to the demands of the local partners, to answer to the demand for aid. He thinks that there is a lot of demand for help, but that this quest is not adequately answered. Stronger, he thinks that the autonomy of people got less instead of more, because with this system of local partners, the local partners get integrated into the system. In this system the INGOs are the ones who decide what they should do and to create the local partners in a way they would like to see them. And that is not because people do not know what they want. In Sudan there is almost nothing, people did no develop themselves and initiatives are weak according to our standards, but still all are capable to tell you what they think that should happen

Wemerman from Care Netherlands has a more ambivalent point of view on the local lead of conflict resolution. He definitely recognizes and acknowledges the value of local civil society in conflict resolution, but sees practical constraints in some areas. South Sudan for example is a very remote and marginalized area where civil society is hardly developed and where the existing local NGOs have a very weak institutional set-up. So even if you would like to have local ownership in the fragile state of South Sudan, it is hard to realize, because civil society is like a baby there, and baby's are not allowed to drive because they lack capacity. Wemerman believes that total local ownership of peace building programs is desirable, but only possible in more adult, more developed country. In an adolescent country like Kenya civil society is better developed, so you can expect more lead from local civil society which in turn is also in a better position to demand from the international community.

The demands of international community are next to the underdevelopment of civil society in certain areas another obstacle to local ownership of programs. You can try to work bottom up, but in practice Wemerman experienced that there are a lot of requirements attached to the grants from big donors like the Dutch ministry of foreign affairs or the European Commission and Care must be able to live up to that requirements if they want to receive the money. That means that there is a field of tensions there, on the one hand you need to work on the priorities of the donor and on the other hand you want to identify the local needs, so you need to find a balance in that. Care tries to find this balance by involving civil society in the whole project cycle. A project cycle starts with a needs assessment which is made in cooperation with the local community. Care organizes a workshop in a certain areas to discuss the existing problems with the local government, the local community and the local NGOs. After the needs assessment follows a project proposal in which again an important role is designed for the local community. When a project proposal is approved of, it will be implemented by local implementing partners. So in all the different stages of the project cycle, from the context analysis needs assessment to the project implementation, Care tries to work with the local community as much as possible to solve the problems of an underdeveloped civil society.

At Oxfam Novib they strongly believe in local ownership of programs and they cannot think of any situation in which it is desirable that western INGOs take a leading position to tell the local community what to do. De Regt acknowledges that there are certain areas where it is harder to achieve local lead because civil society is less developed, but in that case it is the NGOs job to get out what is in there. In that scenario the INGO has a more facilitating and capacity building role to make people able to analyze their situation and to come up with programs. One condition of this more facilitating, capacity building role that an INGO should play in a context with an underdeveloped civil society, but where local lead is desirable is that the INGO has a country office, that means a physical presence in the area concerned. To build a strong civil society it is necessary to be close to the people because from a far distance you cannot intensively guide civil society. Care indeed has a country office in South Sudan and spends it resources on capacity building. Oxfam Novib does not have a country office in Somalia which makes it harder to work with new, infant organizations.

The way Oxfam realizes its vision of local ownership is through intermediary NGOs, that are NGOs which are more established and more designed according to western norms, these NGOs work with local structures and try to connect with communities. It might be better to directly work with the local communities to enhance Oxfam's vision, but there is a problem of access in Somalia, so Oxfam does not have a country office. The intermediary

NGOs are seen as a solution to the problem of local ownership versus donor and credibility issues. The intermediary NGO knows the best of both worlds. It is not Oxfam who deals directly with the beneficiaries, but it is the intermediate NGO that does it for them. Of course there are some monitoring mechanism to check if that really happens. Oxfam has a policy on a country and they look for suitable partners that match the policy. That does not prevent local people from being in the driver's seat, because the policy is designed in cooperation with partners. Every time a new policy is designed, Oxfam keeps a partner consultation and asks about the partner's analysis of the situation. So the policy is made in cooperation with local partners and other stakeholders. Within the policy it is totally up to the partners themselves to hand in project proposals which match with the policy and they have a lot of freedom in that.

At Oxfam Novib they believe that local people should be in the driver's seat of programs, they do not think or try to decide what should happen in a certain country. But at the same time, de Regt acknowledges that their partners need to have an established structure according to western norms for accountability reasons. Local people should be in the lead of programs, but the local organizations need to meet the requirements of Oxfam, that is why Oxfam mainly works with intermediate NGOs. Civil society gets involved in the whole process of a project, from policy making to implementation, but it is not Oxfam that deals directly with that civil society, the intermediate NGOs are in touch with traditional leaders or local NGOs.

5.3 Conclusion

There are huge differences between the INGOs field practitioner's ideas over the degree of local ownership that is desirable and realistic. Kennedy thinks that it is dependent on the issue who should be in the driver's seat of a program. Plooijer thinks that in all cases it is desirable to have local people in the driver's seat, but does not see it happing in practice. As a cause he mentions that INGOs are not flexible enough to deal with the local partners. He even thinks that people's autonomy becomes less instead of more, since they are incorporated into the system. Wemerman believes that local people should be in the driver's seat, but sees some practical constraints. Civil society might be too underdeveloped to be in the driver's seat of programs. A way to ensure a degree of local ownership in this situation is to work in joint project cycles. Besides the underdevelopment of local civil society the demands of the international community are another obstacle for local ownership of programs. There are requirements attached to the grants of big donors like the ministry of foreign affairs, or the

European Union and if the INGO wants to receive that money they have to live up to the requirements. Oxfam Novib believes in local ownership in all situations. To be able to deal with the requirements of the international community, Oxfam works through intermediary NGOs. And even though they prefer partner who fit into their policy, local ownership is still worked on because the policy is designed in cooperation with local civil society.

Chapter six; conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In the initial chapter I described that INGOs are working with local partners and that there are some challenges in the selection of these local partners. One of these challenges has to do with the diminished civil society activity in war torn countries, the related challenge for INGOs is to actually be able to find local partners in these areas. Another has to do with the fact that potential partners that do are there are partial and infected by the conflict. The related challenge for INGOs is to select partners from different groups in order not to do harm by favoring one kind of partner and to prevent briefcase partners. The third challenge described has to do with the transferability of civil society (from which INGOs select their partners). In this thesis I assume that civil society exists in non-western context, but that it might take other forms than we are used to in the western context. The challenge for INGOs is to recognize the forms that civil society has taken in the context in which they are looking for a local partner. That might be a western form, but it can very well be a form that we are not so familiar with. Important is to guarantee that the local partner, in whatever form, has a connection with the community. The last challenge described has to do with the dependency of INGOs on their donors. Since INGOs receive funding from their donors they need to be accountable to their donors. The question rises if that intervenes with the local demand for aid. Are programs implemented the way the donors like to see them, or are it the local partners who are in the driver's seat? Since partners are called partners and not sub-contractors, they must have a certain degree of ownership of the programs; it is the challenge for INGOs to guarantee this degree of ownership in the current international structures in which INGOs are dependent on their donors. For this thesis I interviewed INGO field practitioners in order to see if they recognize and acknowledge the above mentioned challenges in their local partner selection and to see how they deal with these challenges. In this final chapter I will describe the answers I obtained to the main research question;

How do INGO field practitioners perceive the challenges surrounding their local partner selection and how do they deal with these challenges?

And to the partial questions;

- How do INGO field practitioners perceive the diminished civil society activity

in war torn countries?

- How do INGO field practitioners deal with the diminished civil society activity in war torn countries?
- What are the related challenges in terms of local partner selection according to INGO field practitioners in areas with diminished civil society activity?
- How do INGOs find their initial local partners in war torn countries?
- What are INGOs selection criteria for local partners in war torn countries?
- What kind of local civil society partners do INGOs select?
- How do INGOs ensure that their local partners are having a connection with their community?
- How do INGO field practitioners guarantee a degree of local ownership for their local partners?

To answer my main research question I will start with individually answering the partial questions, since they break the main question into pieces which together form the answer to the main research question; I will end with the final conclusion.

How do INGO field practitioners perceive the diminished civil society activity in war torn countries?

What becomes clear from the stories of Sweris, Wemerman, de Regt and Kennedy is that in respectively Congo, South Sudan, Somalia and Uganda they acknowledge that civil society suffered from the civil war. Sweris acknowledges a diminished civil society in Congo because people who used to form civil society are dead or fled. Wemerman talks of an underdeveloped civil society instead of a diminished civil society since in South Sudan the war is going on for so long that civil society never developed. De Regt's vision adds that civil society activity in war torn countries is not only dependent on the gravity of the conflict, but also on culture. Some cultures are more outspoken than others and will always seek for ways to organize themselves. Kennedy's story illustrated that civil society in Uganda also diminished during and short after the civil war. Later on, when international attention and funding became available, civil society activity highly increased.

What are the related challenges in terms of local partner selection according to INGO field practitioners in areas with diminished civil society activity?

Different challenges related to a diminished civil society activity in war torn countries are identified by INGO field practitioners. Sweris mentions that a challenge for INGOs in search for a local partner in an area with diminished civil society activity is not to give up and leave to another region or country were civil society is more active and developed. Another challenge is to reflect on who you are working with, since choice is limited it is tempting to work with the only one partner you can find, but realizing that the civil society organisations that do are there, are often there with a reason and that civil society in war torn countries is often organised along conflict lines makes it that INGOs looking for a local partner have to think about issues of selection and representation of different groups in order not to do harm. Wemerman sees a related challenge for INGOs in search for a local partner in areas with an underdeveloped civil society in guaranteeing a degree of local ownership for the local partners. If civil society is underdeveloped they can impossibly be in the driver's seat of programs since they do not have the capacity. The challenge is to give the local partner a degree of ownership of programs even though they cannot be completely in the driver's seat. De Regt mentions that it can be a challenge for INGOs to recognise other forms of civil society that might be present in the context of a diminished civil society activity. People in Somalia cannot always speak openly, but that does not mean they do not organise themselves. The challenge is to get to know the country of operation so well that you are able to recognise other forms of arrangement of civil society that might be there.

So there are different challenges related to partner selection in areas with a diminished civil society, one is not to run away to areas with more potential partners. Another is to ensure a representation of different groups. Also in the context of an underdeveloped civil society it can be hard to guarantee a degree of local ownership of programs. The last challenge related to a diminished civil society in war torn countries described in this thesis is to recognise other forms of civil society than the western forms.

How do INGO field practitioners deal with the diminished civil society activity and the related challenges in war torn countries?

Solutions to the challenges of finding local partners in countries with a diminished civil society activity are to be found in the creation of networks of local partners, in capacity building projects, joint project cycles and in a profound country analysis. The creation of a network of local partners is a way to deal with diminished civil society activity since it unites

weaker and stronger initiatives so that they can support each other. When different ethnic or clan background is made a requirement for the network it also deals with the challenge of representation of different groups in order not to do harm. Capacity building projects aim to strengthen the capacity of civil society which makes them a way to deal with diminished civil society activity. Joint project cycles are a way to deal with an underdeveloped or weak civil society that cannot be in the driver's seat of programs. By joint project cycles a degree of local ownership is worked on. A profound country analysis is also a way to deal with diminished civil society, since it might bring other forms of civil society to the surface.

How do INGOs find their initial local partners in war torn countries?

We saw that important sources for INGOs to establish initial contact with potential partners in war torn countries are international conferences and trainings. Oxfam Novib Netherlands, Peace Direct and IKV Pax Christi in Congo found their initial local partners at international conferences and trainings. Conciliation Resources found their initial partner in Uganda in a Diaspora in the United Kingdom. These initial contacts with the local partners in international settings seem to be a more fluid coincidental process, rather than a pre-planned systematic search for a certain partner in a certain area since the INGOs were not attending the conferences and training with the objective of meeting a local partner for a certain area. That the initial contact seems to be coincidental is not to say that the initial local partners are not subject to selection criteria.

Care is the only interviewed INGO that did not meet their initial partner at an international setting. Instead, Care went to Sudan, established a country office and started to map the existing organization from there. The mapping was done by organizing meetings with local governments and village leaders, as well with lists of the government and information from the UN and other INGOs operating in the area. That Care's approach is distinct from the other INGOs can be explained by the fact that the other INGOs are not having country offices, which makes it harder for them to start from the country of operation itself.

Besides the initial non-presence of the INGO in the field, the selection of initial local partners in the western world can be explained by the fact that during or immediately after conflict, there is diminished civil society activity. A more standardized plan to select additional local partners develops later on, once the INGO added the region to their areas of operation and when civil society activity highly increases due to international attention and funding that becomes available.

What are INGOs selection criteria for local partners in war torn countries?

For the bigger INGOs practical criteria as the registration as an NGO and bank accounts are important. We see that the smaller NGOs select their partners more on a basis of trust, and even more, the smaller INGOs that are not a financial donor are able to work even with violent or partial groups, which financial donors cannot sell to their donors which restrict them in their choice of partner. The ones who are a financial donor and who have to be accountable to their donors have far better described selection criteria than the ones who are not, which enables the latter to be more flexible in their partner selection.

What kind of local civil society partners do INGOs select?

We can conclude that not all INGOs are looking for the same kind of partners, since it is dependent on their own vision and mission. But all, apart from IKV Pax Christi, require their local partners to adhere to the same vision as the INGO, which excludes violent or uncivil civil society groups. This approach brings the risk of missing the point of local ownership of programs, since it is still a decision taken in the west about who receives funds and who does not. It are still INGOs deciding the strategy and only selecting partners that work in a compatible way. Unless, the strategy is designed in cooperation with local partners, which increases the degree of local ownership.

Proximity of the partners also seems to be a factor of influence on which kind of partners an INGO is able to choose. Care, with a country office in Sudan, is more flexible in trying new partnership than Oxfam, which is located far from their partners in Somalia and therefore needs more stable and trustworthy structures. The size of the INGOs also matters. Peace Direct does not have a country office in Congo, but still is able to work on a basis of trust since it only has a limited amount of local partners compared to Oxfam.

All the field practitioners recognize the existence of the practice of INGOs selecting partners with western structures, knowing that there are many different forms of organisation out there which are closer to the culture of the country of operation. So, yes, traditional organisations get excluded and yes INGOs tend to opt for western structures. There are two main causes mentioned for this phenomenon;

The first has to do with the way the international community is organised, the way the international community is organised forces INGOs to be accountable to their donors and therefore they need reports from their local partners, which makes INGOs to opt for partners

that are capable in doing so. This coincides with Hannah Reich's theory that given the current structure of international cooperation, local ownership cannot be seriously implemented since it is not a practical objective within the current international funding and working structures. Local projects do not have the capacity to deal even with small grand's and funders often expect a project proposal though other societies do not work in this way (Reich, 2006 , p.).

The second reason mentioned about why INGOs tend to work with western structures of civil society organization is that INGOs do not have sufficient knowledge about the local forms of organization. It is easier to identify and work with familiar forms of organizations.

How do INGOs ensure that their local partners have a connection with their community?

Oxfam Novib checks if the local partner that they are working with is having a connection with the local community by checking participant lists or board members. Peace Direct detracts a connection with the community from the conversations they have with their local partners. Kennedy thinks that ensuring a connection with the community is a continuous project, since the local partner and the community are subject to change. Important is, according to Kennedy that the rights sources are questioned. To identify the right sources a profound country analysis needs to be made. Another option is to directly work with the community. An obstacle for this approach is that some INGOs need local partners with accountability structures. This obstacle can be overcome by abstaining from being a financial donor, so that accountability structures are not necessary and one can work directly with the local community. Another is to work with an intermediary NGO that has the required accountability structure and that in turn works with more local structures. Establishing a country office is another option to ensure a connection between the local partners and their community, when lines are short, it is easier to know what is happening

How do INGO field practitioners perceive and deal with guaranteeing a degree of local ownership for their local partners?

There are huge differences between the INGOs field practitioner's ideas over the degree of local ownership that is desirable and realistic. Kennedy thinks that it is dependent on the issue who should be in the driver's seat of a program. Plooijer thinks that in all cases it is desirable to have local people in the driver's seat, but does not see it happing in practice. As a cause he mentions that INGOs are not flexible enough to deal with the local partners. He even thinks that people's autonomy becomes less instead of more, since they are incorporated into the

system. Wemerman believes that local people should be in the driver's seat, but sees some practical constraints. Civil society might be to underdeveloped to be in the driver's seat of programs. A way to ensure a degree of local ownership in this situation is to work with joint project cycles. Besides the underdevelopment of local civil society the demands of the international community are another obstacle for local ownership of programs. There are requirements attached to the grants of big donors like the ministry of foreign affairs, or the European Union and if the INGO wants to receive that money they have to live up to the requirements. In case of the underdevelopment of civil society, local ownership of programs can be worked on by joint project cycles. When requirement from donors are an obstacle for local ownership, an intermediary NGO can be an option. Oxfam Novib believes in local ownership in all situations. To be able to deal with the requirements of the international community, Oxfam works through intermediary NGOs. And even though they prefer partner who fit into their policy, local ownership is still worked on because the policy is designed in cooperation with local civil society. So ways of dealing with guaranteeing a degree of local ownership of programs is done by joint project cycles and by working through intermediary NGOs. As well, policies are designed in cooperation with the local community.

6.2 Conclusion; how to choose a dance partner?

The importance of this master thesis is that it summarizes the issues surrounding north south partnerships and translates them into concrete challenges for INGOs in search for local partners. One of these challenges has to do with the diminished civil society activity in war torn countries. The related challenge for INGOs is to actually be able to find local partners in these areas. Another has to do with the fact that potential partners that do are there are partial and infected by the conflict. The related challenge for INGOs is to select partners from different groups in order not to do harm by favoring one kind of partner and to prevent briefcase partners. The third challenge described has to do with the transferability of civil society (from which INGOs select their partners). In this thesis I assume that civil society exists in non-western context, but that it might take other forms than we are used to in the western context. The challenge for INGOs is to recognize the forms that civil society has taken in the context in which they are looking for a local partner. That might be a western form, but it can very well be a form that we are not so familiar with. Important is to guarantee that the local partner, in whatever form, has a connection with the community. The last challenge described has to do with the dependency of INGOs on their donors. Since INGOs

receive funding from their donors they need to be accountable to their donors. The question rises if that intervenes with the local demand for aid. Are programs implemented the way the donors like to see them, or are it the local partners who are in the driver's seat? Since partners are called partners and not sub-contractors, they must have a certain degree of ownership of the programs; it is the challenge for INGOs to guarantee this degree of ownership in the current international structures in which INGOs are dependent on their donors.

Despite these challenges, the literature shows that it is not wise for INGOs to operate without local partners. To transform a society is hard from outside and therefore INGOs need to work with people who are part of the system in which they are operating. This is essential for the legitimacy and sustainability of programs and with that, for the effectiveness of projects. Since it is not wise for INGOs t operate without local partners, there must be a way to deal with the existing challenges in local partner selection. From this thesis it becomes clear that the INGO field practitioners are aware of the existing challenges, but that there is not one way to deal with them. One size does not fit all. One could say that selecting a local partner resembles choosing a dance partner. Dance partners have an interesting relation. They need to trust each other, they need to be flexible, the need to lead as well as follow, they need to be empathic and they need passion for their work. Choosing the right partner is essential, since dancing is team work. Even though it might be challenging to find the right partner, dancing without one is out of question. For INGOs it is also essential to have a local partner, and choosing the right one is essential for peace.

The kind of partners that INGOs select is dependent on the objectives, size and location of the INGO. The bigger the organisation, the more likely that they are working with established local partners. That is because the INGO must meet the requirements of the donor and since they are not able to keep close ties with all their partners they have to work with established structures. A large INGO can be more flexible in their choice of local partners when there is a country office. With a country office a large organisation is able to try new and/or weaker initiatives, because lines are short. Smaller INGOs select their partners more on a basis of personal trust. Lines are not short, but personal and tight. A risk that comes with selecting partners on practical criteria as degree of organisation and professionalism is that these organisations might lack a connection with the local community. The transformation processes need to take place in the local communities, among the local citizens. Local organisations must feed these transformation processes. If the local partner does not have legitimacy among the local population this process will be hard. That makes it essential that the local partners are having a connection with their community. If that indeed is the case

appears to be hard to monitor. Oxfam Novib for example checks the number of community representatives or the amount of women present on a training day. This is a quantitative measurement and does not tell us anything about the real contribution and participation of these local members. A connection between the local partner and the local community is not only hard to monitor, but also a continuous process. A local partners and their community can start with the same visions and ideas, but both are in motion. They probably are no always moving in the same direction or in the same pace. That is why it is important to continuously check with the local community if they are on one line with the local organisations. The tricky part is that a profound country analysis must be made in order to know who the real community representatives are. A profound country analysis is often seen as time consuming by INGOs, but working without will be even more time consuming.

In practice a profound country analysis is not always happening because of the pressure from donors. Difid for example announces a call for proposals and gives an INGO two weeks to react. That is not enough time to make a project proposal based on a profound country analysis. INGOS hand in project proposal with objectives to which they commit themselves based on two weeks of brainstorming. If they indeed receive the grant, they committed themselves to these objectives and will stick with them. The international system of aid is an ever returning obstacle in this thesis. This system has a lot of influence on the partners that INGOs select. In the existing international aid system, in which donors have an influence of the programs of the INGOS, the will of the local people is under communicated. The demand for aid should come from the local community and not from what donors want to offer. The degree of local ownership in the current situation is low. To change the international aid system would be a evolution. What INGOs can do is to adapt their vision to one in which they make it their aim to let local people to decide what is best for them. Potential donors must agree with the consequences of this vision. That means that social legitimacy and local ownership of programs are more important than practical criteria as degree of organisation, professionalism etc. INGOs could also opt for not being a financial donor. In that way, restrictions because of accountability structures can be escaped from. This master thesis is of relevance to IGNOS working in conflict areas because this master thesis research provides an insight in how INGOS find their local partners in war torn countries and summarises the challenges identified in this process. As well, it gives you an overview of how the interviewed INGOs deal with these challenges. Ever returning issues underlying most challenges are the way the international community is structured, especially with regard to the accountability systems, and the lack of knowledge about the country of

operations. By reading this master thesis INGOs will hopefully reflect on their process of finding and selecting local partners in order to get the maximum potential out of the partnerships.

Executive summary

This master thesis is about the challenges that INGOs encounter in their local partner selection. One of these challenges has to do with the diminished civil society activity in war torn countries. The related challenge for INGOs is to actually be able to find local partners in these areas. Another has to do with the fact that potential partners that do are there are partial and infected by the conflict. The related challenge for INGOs is to select partners from different groups in order not to do harm by favoring one kind of partner and to prevent briefcase partners. The third challenge described has to do with the transferability of civil society (from which INGOs select their partners). In this thesis I assume that civil society exists in non-western context, but that it might take other forms than we are used to in the western context. The challenge for INGOs is to recognize the forms that civil society has taken in the context in which they are looking for a local partner. That might be a western form, but it can very well be a form that we are not so familiar with. Important is to guarantee that the local partner, in whatever form, has a connection with the community. The last challenge described has to do with the dependency of INGOs on their donors. Since INGOs receive funding from their donors they need to be accountable to their donors. The question rises if that intervenes with the local demand for aid. Are programs implemented the way the donors like to see them, or are it the local partners who are in the driver's seat? Since partners are called partners and not sub-contractors, they must have a certain degree of ownership of the programs; it is the challenge for INGOs to guarantee this degree of ownership in the current international structures in which INGOs are dependent on their donors.

For this thesis I interviewed INGO field practitioners in order to see if they recognize and acknowledge the above mentioned challenges in their local partner selection and to see how they deal with these challenges. From these interviews it became clear that all the field practitioners recognize that civil society in war torn countries suffered from the civil war. There are different challenges related to local partner selection in areas with a diminished civil society, one is not to run away to areas with more potential partners. Another is to ensure a representation of different groups. Also in the context of an underdeveloped civil society it can be hard to guarantee a degree of local ownership of programs. The last challenge related to a diminished civil society in war torn countries described in this thesis is to recognise other forms of civil society than the western forms. Solutions to the challenges of finding local partners in countries with a diminished civil society activity are to be found in the creation of networks of local partners, in capacity building projects, joint project cycles and in a profound

country analysis. Concerning the finding of local partners we saw that important sources for INGOs to establish initial contact with potential partners in war torn countries are international conferences and trainings. Concerning the selection criteria for local partners we see that the bigger INGOs see practical criteria as the registration as an NGO and bank accounts as important. We see that the smaller NGOs select their partners more on a basis of trust and are more flexible in their local partner selection. What kind of partners INGOs are looking for is dependent on their own vision, mission and objectives. If local partners should be in the driver's seat is a point of discussion. Some say that it should always be the case, though others believe that in some countries local civil society is not always capable to be in the driver's seat of programs. The degree of local ownership in the current situation is low. Ever returning causes for the existence of the described challenges are the way the international aid system is functioning and the lack of knowledge about the areas of operation.

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Annex 1; Interview questions

- Why do you work with local partners?
- How did you find these partners, how were the partnerships established?
- Do you have any selection criteria for local partners?
- How do you deal with issues like representation, non-partiality, non-violence?
- Do you make concession if you do no find what you are looking for?
- On which criteria do you make concession and on which you do not?
- How do you think about representation of different ethnicities/clans/groups
- Is it hard to find a suitable partner?
- Pouligny's observation; what are your experiences with this observation, is it something you recognize and how do you deal with it?
- How do you ensure that your partners are connected with their community?
- What are the obstacles you experience in the field in the selection of local partners?
- Did you end partnerships and why?
- Who is and who should be in the driver's seat of programs?