

A pearl in the desert: The Group NOVA in Western Sahara

Project evaluation report
“Strengthen the capacity of young Saharawis
in peace, human rights and project management”

NOVA
AFAPREDESA
SweFOR

ABBREVIATIONS

AFAPREDESA	Association of the Families of Saharawi Prisoners and Disappeared
ASAVIM	Sahrawi Association of Landmine Victims
ASVDH	Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations committed by the Moroccan State
AU	African Union
CISP	Italian Committee for the Development of Peoples
CODESA	Collective of Saharawi Human Rights Defenders
CONASADH	Saharawi National Commission for Human Rights
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EU	European Union
ICJ	International Court of Justice
MINURSO	UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
NOVACT	International Institute for Nonviolent Action
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
POLISARIO Front	Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro
RPP	Reflecting on Peace Practice
SADR	Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMC	Swedish Mission Council
SweFOR	Swedish Fellowship for Reconciliation
UESARIO	Saharawi Students' Union
UGTSARIO	Saharawi Trade Union
UJS	Sahrawi Jurists Union
UJSARIO	Saharawi Youth Union
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMS	National Union of Saharawi Women
UPES	Sahrawi Journalists and Writers Union
USA	United States of America

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NOTE

This report shows parts of the project evaluation report by Gregor Maaß. Some parts have been removed due to lack of external relevance upon agreement between NOVA and SweFOR. Nothing has been rewritten or modified, only the recommendations in chapter 8 where some recommendations have been summarized instead of showing them one by one.

1. INTRODUCTION

The youth group Non Violent Action (NOVA) has carried out the **project “Strengthen the capacity of Young Saharawis in peace and human rights dynamics and project management”** between 2013 and 2016. The project is based on a partnership agreement between Swedish Fellowship for Reconciliation (SweFOR) and the Association of the Families of Saharawi Prisoners and Disappeared (AFAPREDESA), which is the umbrella organization under that NOVA emerged 2012 in the Saharawi refugee camps in Algeria.

SweFOR’s cooperation with partners in Western Sahara is financed by public grants of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) through funding of the Swedish Mission Council (SMC). The general funding framework between SweFOR and SMC is named “Strengthening Civil Society for peace, democracy and development”, while SweFOR’s project in Western Sahara is part of the programme “Capacity Building and Exchange for peace”. The objective of this programme is that SweFOR’s partner organizations are part of a strong civil society where people gather for peaceful social change and represent a democratic force. In addition to Western Sahara, the programme is also being implemented through projects in Colombia and South Sudan.

The **use of the process evaluation** is to provide relevant recommendations and lessons learned to upcoming discussions concerning the preparation of a 2nd phase of the project and future work in Western Sahara.

The **main users** of this evaluation are AFAPREDESA, NOVA and SweFOR. All of them have been actively involved in the evaluation process. Furthermore, the evaluation is of interest for the funding agencies and potentially also for other civil society organisations working in and with Western Sahara.

According to the terms of reference the **objectives of the evaluation** are the following:

- Provide comprehensive and relevant background information regarding the conditions under which the Saharawi civil society can operate, their needs and priorities.
- Assess evaluation criteria such as relevance, connectedness/sustainability, coherence and effectiveness of the project and systematize lessons learned.
- Give recommendations on possible strategies of SweFOR’s work in Western Sahara, considering the findings made in the assessment and SweFOR’s role and financial conditions.

The evaluation has been carried out between **May and September 2016 in three phases:**

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 st phase (preparation) | Briefing session in Stockholm May 13. Between May and June 2016 background reading and interviews with organizations and actors that work in Western Sahara. |
| 2 nd phase (project visit) | Visit to the refugee camps from 6 to 17 September 2016 conducting interviews and focus group discussions and finalising with a presentation of preliminary results with NOVA and AFAPREDESA. |
| 3 rd phase (reporting) | Report writing and final presentation with SweFOR in Stockholm 29 September 2016. |

1. EVALUATION DESIGN

The evaluation has used a **systemic approach** and is inspired by the **Outcome Harvesting methodology**. The basic assumption for a systemic understanding is that all necessary elements to assess the project and to draw lessons learned are existing within the system itself. In this case, the parts of the “learning system” are the cooperating organizations SweFOR, AFAPREDESA and NOVA as well as other close actors like partners, allies and other stakeholders. This way, the participating persons are not considered as objects submitted to an external evaluation but become active subjects of a joint learning process. The external evaluator has assumed a role of facilitating the reflection process between the different parts of the system.

SweFOR, AFAPREDESA and NOVA were asked to discuss their expectations and to formulate guiding questions for the evaluation process during the project visit of the SweFOR project representative to the refugee camps near Tindouf / Algeria in May 2016. In coordination with the evaluator, following **guiding questions for the evaluation** have been previously defined:

- What have been the results of the project “Strengthen the capacity of Young Saharawis in peace and human rights dynamics and project management”?
- Has the project been appropriate to attend some of the principle demands of youth in the refugee camps?
- Has the project contributed to the development and strengthening of capacities of NOVA? How?
- How can the relation between AFAPREDESA, NOVA and SweFOR be understood, and how to make it stronger and more dynamic?
- What have been the difficulties, challenges and lessons learned of the project between AFAPREDESA, NOVA and SweFOR, and what are the conclusions for a future project agreement 2017-2019?

The **Outcome Harvesting method** has been used to assess what changes have been achieved by NOVA as a change agent. Outcome is understood here in the sense that a social actor (i.e. an individual, a group or an organization) changes its behaviour, practise, attitude etc. as a result of NOVA’s influence. While evaluations usually assess results in the light of what has been planned, Outcome Harvesting rather collects evidence of change and works backwards verifying if and how the project has contributed to the change.¹ This methodology is especially useful in complex environments where the path to meet predefined objectives is largely unpredictable. For this evaluation, Outcome Harvesting has also proven to be useful to deal with weak project planning. The following process has been adapted to determine the outcomes of the project: Based on project documentation reading and first interviews with organizations and actors working with Western Sahara (see Annex I, for a list of all interviews conducted as part of this evaluation), the evaluator prepared a set of potential outcomes that has subsequently been reviewed with the input from SweFOR and NOVA to set up a list of 10 potential outputs. In a next step, the evaluator collected feedback from individuals who have knowledge about the outcome issues but are

¹ Wilson-Grau, Britt (2012): Outcome Harvesting. Ford-Foundation
http://www.outcomemapping.ca/download/wilsongrau_en_Outome%20Harvesting%20Brief_revised%20Nov%202013.pdf

independent from NOVA and AFAPREDESA and could substantiate the predefined outcomes. 12 substantiators from different backgrounds were consulted: state institutions (3), social organizations (5), international organization (3), Saharawi media (1) (see . The external perspective of substantiators not only served to assess the correctness of predefined outcomes but also to enrich the understanding of the contribution of NOVA. Finally, the outcomes have been analysed and interpreted by the evaluator and discussed together with NOVA and AFAPREDESA during the presentation of preliminary evaluation results.

To be able to make an informed statement about the relevance of the project and to better understand the context of the project, a comprehensive **conflict analysis** has been included in chapter 3 of this evaluation. The information for the conflict analysis is based on background reading and expert interviews (see Annex I). Unless otherwise noted, the information and conclusions presented in this chapter reflect the analysis of the evaluator. The conflict analysis is **guided by the recommendation of the Reflecting on Peace Practice² (RPP) learning process**. Following RPP's definition, key driving factors are analysed to understand without which elements the Western Sahara conflict would not exist or would at least be considerably different. The analysis also captures the key issues and current dynamics of the conflict. Finally, several peace building needs are identified to point out entry points for conflict transformation.

2. CONFLICT ANALYSIS

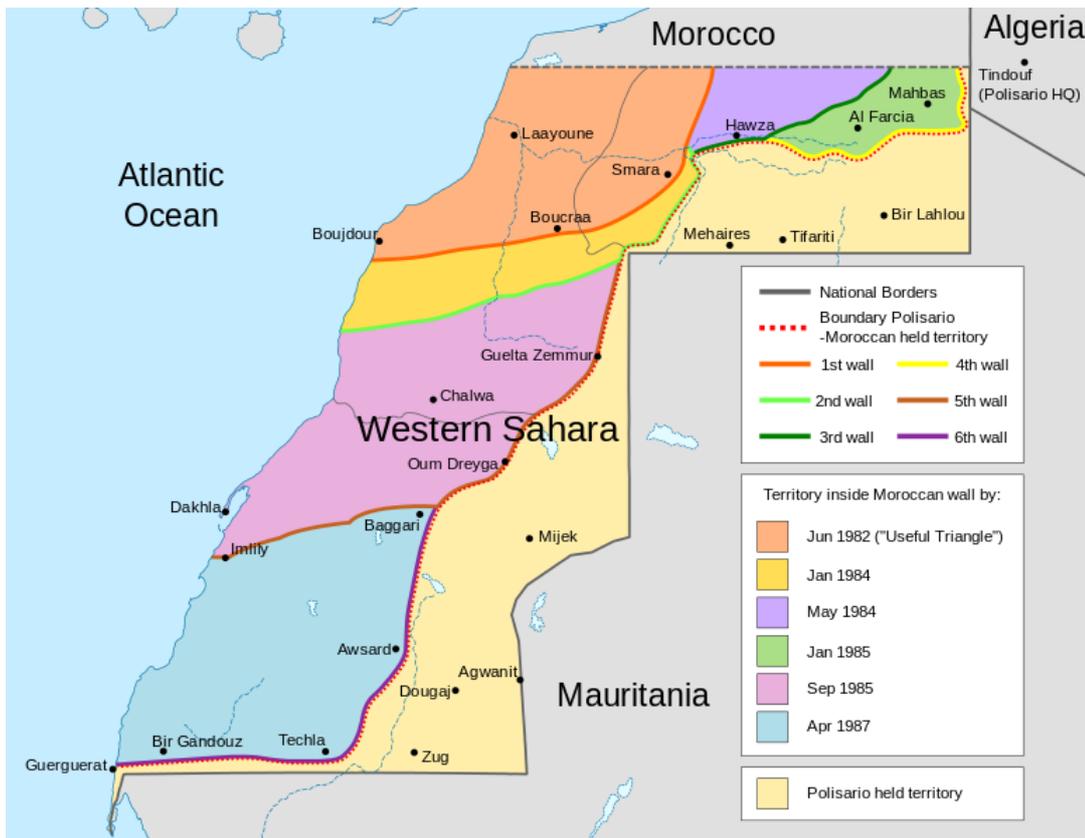
2.1. A portrait of the Western Sahara conflict

The Western Sahara situation is a **protracted conflict** that has been **largely ignored by the international community** in four decades since its origins in 1975. Today, the conflict is characterized by two apparently incompatible positions: Western Sahara nationalism with the claim for self-determination on one side and Moroccan nationalism with aspirations for a greater power in the region on the other side.

Western Sahara today is **split in two parts**, being 2/3 of the territory under the control of Morocco, and 1/3 liberated by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (POLISARIO Front). Both territories are separated by an approximately 2700 km long sand wall (berm), covered with landmines, that has been constructed by Morocco since the 1980s and moved several times to enlarge the occupied territory.

The POLISARIO Front also holds control over the camps of Saharawi refugees in Algeria. These camps were established when a large part of the Saharawi population had to flee from the war outbreak in 1976. The **number of Saharawi population** can only be estimated since there are no confirmed figures. The estimations are subject to the conflict and calculated in accordance to political objectives, varying between half a million or one million people living in the territories occupied by Morocco, in the refugee camps in Algeria, in other countries such as Mauretania, Morocco, France and Spain, and to a less extent also in the liberated areas.

² Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) (2013): Reflecting on Peace Practice. Training of consultants & advisers manual. <http://cdacollaborative.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Reflecting-on-Peace-Practice-1-Training-of-Consultants-and-Advisers-Manual.pdf>



Source:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/ee/Muro_Sahara.svg/1280pxMuro_Sahara.svg.png

Having been a Spanish protectorate since 1884, Western Sahara was in 1963 included in the United Nations (UN) list of non-autonomous territories. An **advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ)** stated on October 16, 1975, that while it recognizes pre-colonial ties between Western Sahara and Morocco and Mauritania, “materials and information presented to it do not establish any tie of territorial sovereignty between the territory of Western Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco or the Mauritanian entity”, and consequently “the principle of self-determination through the free and genuine expression of the will of the peoples of the territory”³ should not be affected. Being in disagreement with the ICJ, Morocco organized few weeks later on November 6 1975 the so called **Green March** as a symbolic act to take possession of Western Sahara. 300.000 Moroccans accompanied by the Moroccan Army marched into the territory without being hindered by the Spanish Troops. Ignoring the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ, Spain, Morocco and Mauritania signed on November 14, 1975, the “Declaration of principles on Western Sahara by Spain, Morocco and Mauritania” (**Madrid Agreement**), transferring the administering power to these two countries. The agreement was opposed by the POLISARIO Front and Algeria, but Morocco proceeded to occupy the northern 2/3 part of Western Sahara (Saguia El Hamra and north part of Rio de Oro) and Mauritania the southern 1/3 part (south part of Rio de Oro).

After the withdrawal of Spain in 1975, the POLISARIO Front, originally created on May 10, 1973, to fight the Spanish colonial power, engaged in an armed struggle with Morocco and

³ International Court of Justice (1975): Advisory Opinion Western Sahara
<http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?sum=323&p1=3&p2=4&case=61&p3=5>

Mauritania. The POLISARIO Front has proclaimed the **Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)** on February 27, 1976. The figures of how many states have recognized SADR are contested and oscillate between around 80 during the time of the creation of SADR and 40-50 after the withdrawal of several countries. Since 1982 SADR has been a member state of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and is today a member of the African Union (AU), created as the successor organization of OAU in 2002 (a reason for Morocco for being the only African country that is not a member to the AU).

In 1979, when **Mauritania** signed a **peace treaty** with the POLISARIO Front, Morocco also proceeded to occupy the southern 1/3 area of Western Sahara. The armed confrontation between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front continued until 1991. The massive human rights atrocities carried out against the Saharawi population during this asymmetric war, forcing tens of thousands of Saharawis to flee to Algeria, have not been acknowledged nor has there been any true effort of rehabilitation and restitution.

In August 1988 Morocco and the POLISARIO Front accepted a UN and OAU settlement plan that turned out into a **ceasefire agreement in September 1991** which is still in force today. The agreement included the plan for a referendum on self-determination where the Saharawi population would decide for independence or for an integration into Morocco. In April 1991 the UN established a **Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)** mandated to monitor the ceasefire and to organize and conduct the referendum. Disagreements regarding the voter lists for the referendum, that would favour the vote for independence or for integration, frustrated the referendum and Morocco decided in 2000 to stop its engagement with the voter identification process. Since then the MINURSO mandate, limited in practise to monitor the ceasefire, has been extended from year to year by the UN security council. Different from other UN-mission of its kind, MINURSO does not have the mandate to monitor the human rights situation.

The UN has facilitated **several rounds of negotiation** between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front that have all failed. Years of negotiations were spent to discuss the problems in identifying and registering voters for the referendum. Later, James A. Baker, the personal envoy of the UN Secretary General, explored together with the parties several proposals (2000-2004). The promising “third way” of proposing a temporary autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty followed by referendum after 4 or respectively 5 years was also not successful. The Manhasset Process (2007-2008), launched by UN Secretary General Personal Envoy Peter van Walsum through four sessions of direct talks in New York did also see no progress. The current personal envoy, Christopher Ross, has also made several efforts and announced in August 2016 to prepare a new formal proposal to the parties and neighbouring states.

While the negotiations are deadlocked, the **consequences of the conflict** keep affecting the people. The situation for Saharawis of being deprived of their right for self-determination since 40 years has created strong and increasing frustration. The life of Saharawis in the occupied territories is characterised by a harsh environment and repression, while the living conditions in the refugee camps are precarious and degrading for a nation that dreams of a better future. The conflict is also a hindrance for much needed integration of the Maghreb region to strengthen regional cooperation and stability and engage in a joint struggle against poverty. From this perspective the people pay a high price for the negotiation deadlock as it prevents improving the living conditions in the whole Maghreb region.

2.2. Driving factors of a protracted conflict situation

The Western Sahara conflict has come in its 40's years. As characteristic for protracted conflicts, it makes people suffer and it is hampering socio-economic development and regional integration.

The conflict is of **asymmetric nature**, with Morocco dominating in military, economic and political power. Still, a **"the winner takes it all"-solution has resulted impossible** for both parts. But envisioning a "win-win"-solution has so far not worked because none of the parties wants to lose, and none wants the other to win. Most likely the conflict needs a paradigmatic shift showing that a "win-win"-solution is not a threat. But there is, of course, no blueprint solution to address this conflict.

The **conflict became protracted** because for both parties involved it turned out very difficult to leave or shift their position regarding their respective idea of national identity. ZUNES & MUNDY argued that the conflict is largely based on ideas: "In the material world, both sides agree that the dispute is over a piece of land. Yet abstractly, at the level of the 'metaconflict', the **dispute stems from mutually exclusive differences in the self-perception that ground Moroccan and Western Sahara nationalism**. It pits Moroccan irredentism against indigenous desire for independence, both contentiously specialized over the same piece of land."⁴ As a consequence, from a Saharawi perspective the POLISARIO Front is a liberation movement, while Morocco considers it as a separatist movement supported by Algeria.

So what are the driving factors of the conflict? What are the factors without which the conflict would not exist? In Morocco, **the King has made the so called "Southern Provinces" to become one of the foundational pillars for national identity**, along with the kingdom and the religion, always pursuing a "Greater Morocco". Taking this pillar away is perceived by the Monarchy as a risk for power decline of the Moroccan kingdom, or a risk for the Monarch to lose face. With respect to the natural resource of Western Sahara, these are often interpreted as a decisive fact for Morocco's interest in Western Sahara. But more importantly seems to be who is actually benefitting from these resources. For ZUNES & MUNDY the interest of Morocco's military in Western Sahara economy is one of the most important challenges for a solution of the conflict. **High level military officers** control large parts of Western Sahara economy, especially with regards to real estate, fish industry and agriculture. Knowing that **a change of status of Western Sahara would imply a threat to their personal economic and political benefit**, they are not willing for a change.

For the **Saharawis, their very existence as an ethno-nationalist people is at stake**. Their concept of national identity is relatively new and linked to the colonization (as it is for many African countries, including Morocco), but it has gained a strong momentum in the last decades. The national consciousness has grown as a result of an unfulfilled desire for independence and the mistreatment by a Morocco that has missed the opportunity to become an attractive option for Saharawis. While in the beginning the Saharawi nationalism might have been more POLISARIO-driven, Saharawi nationalism today does come more from within the Saharawi people. The sensation that its very existence is at stake is a key driving factor for the conflict.

⁴ Zunes, Stephen; Mundy, Jacob (2010): Western Sahara. War, nationalism, and conflict irresolution." Syracuse University Press

The Western Sahara conflict cannot be understood only by focusing on local circumstances. Other actors, especially the **United States of America (USA), France and the European Union (EU) have strong interests. Morocco is perceived as a factor of stability for the western hegemony** and it has become an important **partner in the anti terror fight**. As a consequence of the recent refugee crisis, the EU is interested to declare Morocco as a “safe country of origin”. While the EU, France and the USA maintain the opinion that Saharawis have the right for self-determination and Morocco does not have the sovereignty over the territory of Western Sahara, in practice the occupation seems to be widely accepted. To “sacrifice” Western Sahara for the sake of stability for western hegemony is yet another driving factor of this conflict. Anyway, this could easily turn out a miscalculation and in the long term the Western Sahara conflict rather seems to be a factor of instability for the Maghreb region.

2.3. Key issues of the Western Sahara conflict

The **referendum for self-determination** has become one of the key issues of the conflict. What has once been envisioned as the solution to the conflict turned out to be a problem by itself. But the fact that POLISARIO Front and Morocco could not find agreement about voters list in the 1990s does not mean the referendum is no longer under discussion. The advisory opinion of the ICJ from 1975 is still the most important reference for the international community. To deny the referendum would not only infringe the right of self-determination, it would also mean a mayor setback for the international law and justice order system. For Saharawis the referendum is also a chance of reparation and an essential element to come to terms with the tragedy of separation, dispersion and destruction the people had to face during the last decades.

The role of the **Saharawi refugee camps in Algeria** is another key issue. The five camps (named after cities in Western Sahara: Awserd, Boujdour, Dakhla, Laayoune, Smara) and the administrative centre Rabouni are located near the Algerian city Tindouf, in a desert environment with very harsh living conditions. The access to the basic resources food and water and the provision of basic services like health, education and living depends largely on the international humanitarian aid. While Algerian authorities and POLISARIO Front estimate 160.000 refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) estimate a number of 90.000. The disagreement in numbers is linked to a dynamic where the international community is continuously decreasing its humanitarian contributions.

Despite the difficulties, the **camps are connected to the outside world**. A large amount of Saharawi refugees has spent the holidays of their childhood in summer camps in Europe. A considerable number of people have studied in foreign countries. While some of them have decided to stay abroad, others come back to the camps looking for opportunities to contribute with their knowledge. While many stay in the camps because they believe in the just struggle knowing that the ongoing existence of the refugee camps is a guarantee for maintaining the support of the international community, another large group with less resources and capacities just does not have the opportunity to leave the camps for a better place. These people know the outside world from summer camps, TV and internet, and their unfulfilled desire for a better life creates strong frustrations.

The refugee camps were established with a short-term perspective, but in 40 years they have become a transitional solution. The main **dilemma** is that people see a need to develop

and **strengthen the Saharawi State but** at the same time they are aware that they need to **maintain the category of a refugee camp**, being in a transitional phase and preparing for a return to the original territories. To constantly manage this dilemma is a big challenge. Of course, after 40 years a lot has changed. A small internal economy has flourished in the camps, stimulated by cash flow related to the humanitarian aid, remittances sent by Saharawis living abroad and to a certain extent also nourished by illegal activities like smuggling. The informal economy has eased the supply situation in the camps but at the same time social distortion is increasing when, as a matter of example, unskilled small business people have disproportionately more income than a hospital nurse.

In recent years the international community has **decreased the humanitarian aid, favouring development projects for the refugee camps**. While it is true that a small economy has flourished in the camps, the Saharawi refugee population depends largely on the resources and services provided by the humanitarian assistance. Reduced contributions expose Saharawi refugees to the risk of not being able to cover their basic needs. Reducing the humanitarian aid also insinuates that the international community would not recognize the situation as a humanitarian crisis anymore. The crisis is of a prolonged nature, but indeed it is a situation with very insecure humanitarian conditions as has been highlighted by international organisations.⁵ Not recognizing this instability would be a fatal error. While development projects are welcome in the camps to prepare for a return through creating the structures of better performing institutions and organizations, covering the basic needs of the refugee population is still a necessary prerequisite.

The **Human rights aspect** is fundamental for the analysis of the conflict. The attention given to investigate **human rights atrocities during the war**, committed especially against the Saharawi people, has been very limited. BERISTAIN & GONZALEZ have documented testimonies of Saharawi victims of human rights violations in the comprehensive report “El oasis de la memoria”.⁶ Only recently, the first cases of forced disappearance and extrajudicial killings are being investigated. In 2004, the Moroccan Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) was supposed to establish the truth on human rights violations during the years of 1956 and 1999, but Amnesty International (AI) concluded in 2010 “that the IER rather than addressing the particular breadth of violations suffered by Sahrawis, increased their feelings of marginalization.”⁷ According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), for the time before the ceasefire in 1991, there are also compelling testimonies “of the Polisario’s practices that included torture, long-term imprisonment without charge, and forced labor.” The HRW report continues to explain that “while the Polisario states that it took steps to acknowledge the abuses and make redress, it has done little over the last twenty years to investigate thoroughly (...)”.⁸ In the same report (from 2014), HRW states about the current

⁵ See Oxfam Briefing Paper, 28.04.2015: „40 Years of Exile. Have the Saharawi refugees been abandoned by the international community?“ https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-40-years-exile-western-sahrawi-refugees-280415-en.pdf

⁶ Beristain, Carlos Martín; González Hidalgo, Eloísa (2016): Truth, Justice and Reparation in the Western Sahara. The Oasis of Memory. University of the Basque Country/HEGOA
http://publ.hegoa.efaber.net/assets/pdfs/349/Truth_Justice_and_Reparation_Western_Sahara.pdf?1468839690

⁷ AI (2010): Broken promises. The Equity and Reconciliation Commission and its Follow-up
<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/40000/mde290012010en.pdf>

⁸ Human Rights Watch (2014): Off the Radar. Human Rights in the Tindouf Refugee Camps.
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/10/18/radar/human-rights-tindouf-refugee-camps>

human rights situation in the refugee camps that their “researchers found no evidence of any patterns of serious abuse”, although they identified areas of concern.

Today, severe **human rights violations** take place against Saharawis **in the territories occupied by Morocco**. The occupying power represses Saharawi people and does not allow them to defend their right of self-determination, sustaining that this would go against Morocco’s “territorial integrity”. Police violence and harassment remains unpunished. According to a recent AI report (2016), “the Moroccan authorities have continued to stifle dissent in Western Sahara, placing arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly. Peaceful demonstrations are routinely banned or forcibly dispersed by security forces. Human rights organizations are rarely allowed to register.”⁹

There is a clear **need of an independent human rights monitoring** in the Western Sahara Conflict. The UN has been called repeatedly to broaden the mandate of MINURSO to monitor the human rights situation. Repeated attempts to include human rights monitoring in the MINURSO mandate have been vetoed in the UN Security Council, mainly by France.

2.4. Role of Western Sahara civil society

Given that this evaluation is related to civil society cooperation with the Saharawi refugee camps, a special focus is placed here on the role of Western Sahara civil society in the camps. To understand the **situation of civil society in the refugee camps** its necessary to take into account the very unique conditions of Saharawi society. As a result of the tragic history during the last decades, Saharawis have developed a **strong need of unity and self-protection**. There is a common understanding that all Saharawis support the struggle for the right to self-determination. While not necessarily all people share the strategy of the POLISARIO Front, they are the official representatives. In fact, since the POLISARIO Front proclaimed the SADR, the Secretary General of the liberation movement is constitutionally also governing the Republic as head of the state. The constitution provides that after independence the POLISARIO Front is to be separated from the government.

The **POLISARIO Front has linked or integrated most sectors of society** into it’s own structures, creating several so called mass organizations like the Saharawi Youth Union (UJSARIO), the Saharawi Students’ Union (UESARIO), National Union of Saharawi Women (UNMS) or the Saharawi Trade Union (UGTSARIO). While these organizations are formally not independent, their scope of political action depends very much on the person leading the organization. Organizations that are often referred to as independent organizations are usually also linked to POLISARIO Front or state structures: in the case of the Saharawi Journalists and Writers Union (UPES) and the Saharawi Jurists Union (UJS) are branches of UGTSARIO, the platform Gritos Contra el Muro Marroquí is part of UJSARIO, the Saharawi National Commission for Human Rights (CONASADH) was created by a Presidential Decree, and the Saharawi Red Crescent is also linked to the POLISARIO Front.

In the context of the refugee camps and the SADR, the concept of civil society is blurry. Since all share the **primary objective to achieve the right of self-determination**, any organization, regardless its grade of independence, is **assumed to act in alliance with the state and POLISARIO Front structure**. To date, there are only three **independent civil society**

⁹ AI (2016): UN must monitor human rights in Western Sahara and Sahrawi refugee camps
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/04/un-must-monitor-human-rights-in-western-sahara-and-sahrawi-refugee-camps/>

organizations in the camps: AFAPREDESA (founded in 1989), the Saharawi Association of Landmine Victims (ASAVIM) (founded 2005) and NOVA (founded 2012, under the umbrella of AFAPREDESA). Despite their formal independence, they cultivate good relations with state structure and understand themselves as supportive to the state regarding the shared objective. The foundation of AFAPREDESA and ASAVIM was inspired by other international civil society organizations. Knowing that civil society has been key for change in many countries they have learned from these experiences. Establishing AFAPREDESA, ASAVIM and NOVA as independent organizations has been a useful way to relate to international civil society organizations and to work with the UN mechanisms.

There is a need to further improve the role of civil society in Western Sahara. A **critical, active and innovative civil society is necessary** to help creating a democratic state that is able to manage resources in a transparent and accountable way. The older generation is still charged with a fear of getting divided, defending the necessity of centralization of power and control to resist and survive, but the younger ones claim for more participation and diversity, recognizing changes of the conflict patterns and pointing out that indeed the whole world has changed. The challenge is how to allow for diversity without being divided in the fundamental issues for the future of the Saharawis. Strengthening new and more independent Saharawi civil society organizations is therefore a very sensitive process of changing perceptions and opening spaces step by step. It also needs strong efforts to build capacities within these organizations because in the context of the refugee camps there is a lack of capacities in terms of management and administration.

The situation of **Saharawi civil society in the occupied territory** is incomparably more critical. Social activist and human rights defenders are extremely vulnerable and their work takes place under constant surveillance and violent repression. The only human rights organization legally registered in the occupied territories is the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations (ASVDH). Groups like the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA) and many others work in a precarious, unsecure and often clandestine situation, facing security risks and problems of operating. Support is very much needed but difficult to provide given the isolation of the territory by Morocco.

2.5. Current conflict dynamics

Believing that things will sort themselves out all on their own and that the claims of Saharawis will disappear one day proved to be an error. While Morocco has changed the demographic reality in the occupied territories, the **national identity of Saharawis is reinforcing over the years**. The Saharawi intifadas 1999 and 2005 and the Gdeim Izik protest camp in 2010 have been the most visible expressions of this increasing identity in the occupied territories. The demand for the right of self-determination has grown, and is far from being limited to a POLISARIO Front driven claim.

The peace process is deadlocked. Although some factors are changing, both parties are in a **situation characterized by a continued stalemate**. Morocco has most recently benefited from the surprising decision of the Swedish government in January 2016 to withdraw from the process of recognizing SADR, and has seen in April 2016 another evidence of outright support from France preventing successfully the extension of the MINURSO mandate to monitor the human rights situation. On the other hand, in September 2015 the POLISARIO Front managed to join the Geneva Convention after 15 years of dialogue, against the protest of Morocco. The fact that in December 2015 the EU General Court annulled the European

Council Decision 2012/497/EU about an Agreement between Morocco and the EU on the liberalisation of agricultural products, fish and fishery products, arguing that it affects the resources of Western Sahara, is yet another advantage for POLISARIO Front. The outcome of the proceeding remains to be seen since the annulment has been appealed by the European Council.

In the light of the continued stalemate between Morocco and POLISARIO Front the **international community and the UN have a crucial role to support change**. Yet the incidents following the statement of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon about the “Moroccan occupation”, expressed after his visit to the refugee camps in March 2016, have shown the **weak and ambiguous position of the UN**. Morocco’s government protested against Ban Ki-moon’s statement accusing his lack of neutrality. The government organized mass demonstrations, ordered the UN to pull out 84 international staff from the MINURSO mission and announced that it would withdraw Moroccan troops from UN peacekeeping missions worldwide. Later Ban Ki-moon apologised for his statements and Morocco revoked the decision regarding their peacekeeping troops. The MINURSO mission is not yet fully re-established and has been seriously weakened.

For many years, the POLISARIO Front has tried to win the conflict through diplomatic efforts backed with military pressure. Many negotiation rounds took place at track 1 level involving high level diplomats. The recent change of the Secretary General, after the death of long term POLISARIO Front leader Mohamed Abdelaziz in May 2016, did not change this trend. The new president Brahim Ghali is a POLISARIO Front veteran and does follow the same strategy, certainly with more emphasis on military pressure. Young Saharawis are exhausted and tired of the situation. **Too little has been achieved through track 1 diplomacy**. The **new generation wants to participate and contribute**, instead of leaving the Saharawi question only in the hands of POLISARIO Front negotiators. But opinions differ about which way to go. While some aspire to mobilise and innovate strategically the Saharawi movement for self-determination, others argue that returning to the armed struggle is the answer.

Saharawi youth is yet **another important factor for the current conflict dynamics**. Being aware of the outside world through internet, TV and summer camp visits in Europe, young Saharawis from the camps aspire a different life. They can hardly expect to find a job and see no perspective for prosperity. This **so called “silent youth”** has less access to resources and education, is frustrated by politics and does not believe in the peace process. They see the outside world changing and feel left behind. They usually don’t participate in politics or in social organizations and are only sporadically visible, most recently during the visit of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Smara where he was rejected by youth and forced to leave the motorcade by helicopter. Some who aspire quick changes are prone to the risk of engaging in criminality and smuggling, and in the worst case in regional extremist or terrorist groups. Longing for fast changes, the silent youth supports the idea to resume the armed struggle, without being conscious about the tragic consequences this could have. They reinforce a violence-prone discourse of the POLISARIO Front, while the other way around POLISARIO Front also reinforces their readiness to resume an armed struggle. If there are no answers how these young people can find new spaces to participate and open up new perspectives for their life, a pacific solution for this conflict seems to be increasingly unlikely.

2.6. Peace building needs and entry points

The **transformation of the Western Sahara** conflict is not going to happen miraculously through a one-dimensional solution but rather **depends on a reconfiguration of many pieces of the puzzle**: the changing relations within the Arab world, an increasing need for integration in the Maghreb region, a growing Saharawi national identity, opening Moroccan society, and changing relations between Moroccans and Saharawis. New media, social networks and better access to information allow for more openness and new perspectives. Given the high level of escalation in this conflict, the international community has a crucial role to play to support change and help the parties to improve their relations and transform the conflict.

Based on the previous analysis the following peace building needs can be identified as entry points for conflict transformation:

- It is necessary to **create awareness and attention for a forgotten conflict** that needs to be brought back from oblivion, making strategic use of the new communication media.
- A **strong and innovative civil society** is necessary to empower people and make their voice heard, aiming to reorient a peace process that has been dominated by 1st track negotiators combined with military threat.
- **Engage youth and give opportunities for a new generation** that is questioning the old patterns of a failed peace process and desire to become actively involved in shaping their future.
- **Dealing with past and ongoing human rights violations** in the conflict must be part of the peace process, addressing the right of victims for truth, justice and reparation and making **use of international standards and transitional justice mechanisms**.
- Building peace is about building relationships. **Creating connections between Moroccan and Saharawi civil society actors** and reducing stigmatization is extremely difficult but necessary to share perspectives and build a common ground for dialogue.

3. REVIEW OF THE PARTNERSHIP

3.1. Development of NOVA

The Group NOVA can be described as an active and innovative civil society youth group attending different needs of Saharawi society with the aim to develop a powerful non-violent struggle for Saharawi self-determination.

The group was founded in 2012 with the following objectives¹⁰: 1) Ending the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara. 2) Ending the serious human rights violations committed in the occupied territories of Western Sahara. 3) Ending the exploitation of the Saharawi natural resources. 4) Promote dialogue for peace, among the Sahrawi people and the Maghreb societies. The exact date of foundation of NOVA was June 17, 2012, chosen as a symbolic date to remind a manifestation against the Spanish colonial power in Laayoune on June 17, 1970, that was repressed with police violence (Zemla Uprising). NOVA defines itself as a non-violent continuation of this historic protest.

¹⁰ <http://novasahara.blogspot.de/2012/09/nova-intervention.html>

The organizational structure of NOVA has developed over its four years of existence. It was founded by a group of 15 members under the umbrella of AFAPREDESA, sharing the same president. They have in three committees with their respective presidents (2 males, 1 female): Dialogue and Awareness Raising, Media, Committee for Communication with Institutions.

In April 2014 NOVA decided for more independence from AFAPREDESA, adopting internal regulations and voting for its own president (position to be filled by a woman). In August 2016 NOVA's president was re-elected for another two years' period. NOVA has its own logo and its own office structures in a separate building next to AFAPREDESA. The independency from AFAPREDESA has become more visible, even if there are still many links between both organizations and people still relate them to each other.

Most of NOVA's work is done on a voluntary base. NOVA is also building an organizational structure (still at the beginning) in the occupied territories, with a general coordinator and delegates in the occupied territories and the south of Morocco. In summary, NOVA is a young group that is still working to strengthen its internal structures, but it has managed to build up its own structure and identity.

The number of NOVA members is around one hundred, including a core group of 30 very active members, and an additional amount of sympathisers difficult to quantify. In terms of gender, NOVA is well known for strong participation of women.

NOVA has engaged successfully with international organizations and networks. The group receives long-term support from SweFOR. Additionally, NOVA is currently defining a medium-term support with Oxfam Solidarité and the group is involved in several project collaborations with organizations like International Institute for Nonviolent Action (NOVACT), Italian Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP), Medicos del Mundo, UNHCR, Association of Friends of the SADR of Alava.

3.2. Commitment to non-violence

NOVA can be understood as an organization that does not believe in positive changes as an outcome of the armed struggle and that opposes to all forms violence. Based on these considerations, the founding members decided to set-up the group under the umbrella of AFAPREDESA to learn from the experience of an independent civil society organization engaged in human rights work.

The organization aims to create a perspective for non-violence in the Western Sahara conflict. NOVA envisions an end of the armed confrontation and stop risking a new tragedy for the Saharawi people. For NOVA, non-violence means to initiate a new kind of war: A war that does redirect the frustration of Saharawis, especially of the young generation, to an active way of non-violent resistance against the occupation and for the right of self-determination.

Non-violent action is being proposed as an opportunity to allow all people to participate in building the future of the Saharawis instead of keeping on passively waiting for another decade. Non-violence allows all people to develop and empower themselves.

NOVA is still in an early stage of developing an appropriate way to make non-violence effective in the context of the Western Sahara conflict. Experience showed that it is difficult to convince people of non-violence when there is still no manifest proof for its effectiveness. NOVA is still developing their own suitable concept of non-violence. So far, NOVA's strategy

is to be accepted as a new group by youth and authorities in the refugee camps and to gain their trust. Instead of directly confronting people with their non-violence approach, NOVA opted to permeate the society in the first place to be able to make the idea of non-violence grow and develop the concept further. Following this strategy NOVA has been actively engaged with a broad range of issues that are important for the Saharawi society in the refugee camps, for example: conference for intergenerational talks, activities for children in situation of natural disaster, social events in hospital, campaigns regarding the exploitation of natural resources, campaigns for the referendum, workshop on human rights with law enforcement institutions. AFAPREDESA with its extensive experience in human rights has supported NOVA in this respect.

3.3. Civil society innovation from a youth perspective

As a new civil society group NOVA is introducing creativity and innovation for the transformation of the conflict situation. Being part of the new generation, NOVA attempts to bring the voices of youth to the authorities and decision makers. They have conducted surveys to listen to young people, and organized forums and intergenerational talks to give youth the opportunity to speak.

NOVA's activities do not directly address the need for job opportunities and the economic needs of youth, but the group addresses the frustration of youth, giving new perspective for participation and active involvement in social and political life. NOVA can certainly not change the job situation but it aims support youth in bringing their concerns about the economic situation to decision makers.

They share the same objective to fight for the right of self-determination.

3.4. Organizational strengthening of NOVA

NOVA has developed as an organization over the last four years (see 4.1.). Internal dynamics have changed over time and the organization has gathered more experience. The team observes for example that meetings are better prepared than before and that the implementation of activities has improved.

The contribution of volunteers gives NOVA a huge potential for action, and the few coordinators in positions with incentives have done much effort to support this volunteer structure. Still the team concludes that NOVA's structures are very weak, especially in terms of administration. Administrative aspects have been a challenge for NOVA and the team observes that this weakness affects the performance and the efficiency of the organization. The team is convinced that neither the volunteers nor the coordinators who receive incentives can fulfil the tasks necessary for an effective administration.

When talking about organizational strengthening it must also be kept in mind that it is very challenging to build up an independent civil society organization under the very particular circumstances of the refugee camps. In an environment with a high degree of informality, and under the ambiguity of refusing to become too much established in the refugee camps (since the objective is actually to return to the homeland) it is very difficult to set up an organizational structure with a proper management and administration system. Standards requirements in planning, bookkeeping and accountancy are difficult or impossible to meet in a state in limbo that is actually a refugee camp.

Another aspect of organizational strengthening is that NOVA members in the occupied territories demand a stronger focus on their situation. NOVA recognizes the need but further reflection is necessary on how to extend the support to the occupied territories and how to include them in NOVA's annual work plan.

3.5. Role of SweFOR

SweFOR's programme, within which the NOVA project is part of, has three different areas: 1) Establishing a protective presence and accompanying human rights defenders and civil society actors in areas of conflict (currently in Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico). 2) Supporting non-violence movements to strengthen human rights and build peace (currently in Colombia, South Sudan and Western Sahara). 3) Prevent armed violence and improve regulation of small arms and light weapons in cooperation with partners and networks worldwide (this area finished working in 2015).

Structurally, the programme work is divided into two teams: one for international accompaniment and another for international partnership. The work with Western Sahara is structurally situated within the team for international partnership. The focus is to strengthen partner organizations in terms of organizational development and project management, and to engage in capacity building on human rights and non-violence. SweFOR usually establishes long-term relations with its partners, important for building trust and to be able to accompany profound changes.

SweFOR's relation with Western Sahara started in 2000 when AFAPREDESA first participated in an international south-south exchange forum (encuentro sur-sur) on conflict resolution organized on a regular basis by SweFOR. In 2006 the exchange took place in Western Sahara. SweFOR started to follow up on some Western Sahara cases and when the exchange programme finished in 2009, SweFOR explored other support options. The efforts to build up a protective accompaniment programme were not successful, but SweFOR stayed engaged and conducted a training on non-violent action in June 2012. This training turned out to be a crucial inspiration for the creation of NOVA by a group of 15 founding members two days after the training. In dialogue between AFAPREDESA, NOVA and SweFOR, the project "Strengthen the capacity of Young Saharawis in peace and human rights dynamics and project management" (2013-2015) was designed to support the development of NOVA. This was the moment when SweFOR's Western Sahara related work was shifted to the "Team for international partnership" with a focus on organizational strengthening.

SweFOR has made the following contributions within the project (summary):

- Capacity Building
 - o Two non-violence trainings with external experts (Nov. 2014 and 2015)
 - o Training on international humanitarian law (Nov. 2013)
- Organizational strengthening
 - o Workshop on project planning with logical framework (Nov. 2013)
 - o Advisory – SWOT analysis (May 2015)
 - o Advisory on planning and reporting (May and Nov. 2015)
- Incentives for coordinators
 - o SweFOR provides small monetary contributions for three coordinators of NOVA
- Exchange
 - o South-south exchange with partners, UN Human Rights Council in Geneva (2015)

- Exchange meeting of non-violence trainers (planned for Nov. 2016)
- Lobby and Advocacy
 - Delegation mission to Morocco, report and follow up
 - Awarenessraising about the situation of the Saharawi people among Swedish public through social media, articles, conferences, seminars, urgent actions etc.
 - Dialogue with Swedish authorities (foreign affairs and parliament) and companies
 - Working in networks and facilitating contacts (for example with media)
- Others
 - Coordination with donor organizations; support for political prisoner (with AI)

From NOVA's perspective the support of SweFOR has been crucial for the development of the organization. Given that the foundation of NOVA is closely linked to the non-violence workshop conducted by SweFOR in 2012, both organizations share a very special relation. Obtaining knowledge about non-violence was key for the founding members to decide to create NOVA, and the subsequent workshops on non-violence have been very important to further inspire NOVA.

NOVA appreciates the long-term support from SweFOR through the partnership with AFAPREDESA. They perceive SweFOR as a partner "that is walking with us". In fact, NOVA is very careful about what kind of support fits their organization, being SweFOR for the moment the only long-term support. The incentives for coordinators provided by SweFOR are considered an important contribution for the operation of the organization. In terms of organizational strengthening, NOVA is aware that it did not focus on this area and consequently did not request SweFOR's support. SweFOR's efforts on lobby and advocacy have been valued as key contributions. For NOVA the relation with SweFOR also represents an opportunity to amplify its networks especially on the issue of non-violence.

3.6. Coordination and communication performance

The coordination and communication performance between SweFOR, AFAPREDESA and NOVA has been relatively poor. There are several reasons for the lack of communication regarding management and administration aspects of the cooperation. NOVA is still relatively new and needs to gain more experience in organizational aspects.

To explain the current relation between NOVA and SweFOR, the following metaphor has been used by NOVA: Imagining NOVA in a role of a child, SweFOR has been like a father (or godfather) who was always there, but the child never thought to sit down with the father to clarify what kind of support it needs. Using the same family metaphor, AFAPREDESA has been described as a mother who has been accompanying NOVA very closely. NOVA has been growing in the past four years, and the time has come for a more mature relation where both parts make clear what they expect. It's time to clarify the objectives of each part for engaging in a joint partnership, and develop the project and its budget together.

To guarantee administrative standards is an obligation for SweFOR as for any other supporting organization. If standards are not met, future funding would be put at risk. At the same time, proper project planning and administration is powerful to strategize and maintain transparency and accountability, something NOVA is certainly interested to adopt. Since other international organizations are also interested to support NOVA to strengthen these capacities, it will be also useful for SweFOR to get in touch with others to coordinate regarding this joint effort.

4. OUTCOMES OF NOVA'S WORK

This chapter analyses the outcomes achieved by NOVA. Outcomes are understood here as changes of a social actor in behaviour, practise or attitude as a consequence of influence by NOVA as a change actor. The outcomes have been subdivided in achieved outcomes, partially achieved outcomes and unintended outcomes.

4.1. Achieved outcomes

Recognition of NOVA by SADR state institutions and social organizations

Social actor	SADR state institutions and social organizations
Outcome	State institutions and social organizations have recognized the importance of NOVA as a new group representing the voice of young Saharawis committed to change through non-violent means.
NOVA's contribution	NOVA has used an adequate strategy that made it possible to gain the recognition of Saharawi institutions and organizations. It has engaged them actively in round table meetings, conferences, workshops and campaigns.
Comment	All substantiators confirmed this outcome. They note that NOVA is well known and recognized in Rabouni, the administrative centre of the refugee camps. This recognition is not for granted since NOVA's non-violent approach steps out of the traditional patterns of the organizational landscape. The general awareness that the prolonged conflict situation needs innovation was helpful too. NOVA members have used their excellent networks and were particularly concerned to invite representatives of all sectors to their events. Preferring dialogue to confrontation has been a wise decision.

Inspiration for active participation of young women in NOVA

Social actor	Young Saharawi women
Outcome	Young women consider NOVA as an opportunity for active participation in political and social life. As a result, there is a relatively high level of 60 % women participation (compared with other organizations).
NOVA's contribution	The organization provides opportunities for training and gaining experience that women cannot easily find in other spaces. Active participation of women in important roles, like the president of NOVA, is inspiring for young women.
Comment	Almost all substantiators confirmed this outcome, stating that the difference to other organizations is clearly noticeable. Women have visibility within Saharawi society and enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy but their participation in decision-making is low. The majority of young women in NOVA is well qualified or graduated. In NOVA they find what they are looking for: an opportunity to contribute and get active, meet like-minded persons, feel needed, gain work experience, take part in capacity building.

SADR state institutions recognize the importance of an active and innovative civil society

Social actor	SADR state institutions
Outcome	Institutions of SADR recognize the importance of an active and innovative civil society, tolerate the opening of space for new organizations and don't obstruct the work for peace, human rights and non-violence.
NOVA's	NOVA has proved to state institutions that a civil society organization is

contribution capable to raise attention and support for the right of Saharawi self-determination. They successfully engaged state institutions in their activities.

Comment Almost all substantiators confirmed this outcome. As a civil society group NOVA has managed to raise attention and support in international spaces where the state has not been able to do so. Being committed to the right of self-determination NOVA has proved to the state that they share the same goal but use different means. The fact that NOVA as a non-violent group has firmly established in structural independence from the armed liberation movement has given civil society a stronger standing in Western Sahara.

Youth linked to NOVA or sympathisers adopt a non-violent perspective

Social actor Youth linked to NOVA or sympathising with the group

Outcome Youth linked to NOVA or sympathising with the group have realized that non-violent action provides opportunities to become actively involved in the demand for self-determination and the search for a solution of the conflict.

NOVA’s contribution NOVA inspires young men and women for non-violence in a wide range of public events carried out with attracting and innovative methods. Internal trainings and reflections contributed to strengthen non-violence perspective.

Comment Most substantiators confirmed this outcome. Youth linked to NOVA and sympathisers agree to oppose an armed confrontation but a clear concept how non-violent action can really contribute to change still needs to be developed. The outcome is limited to a relatively small group of youth while the large group of “silent youth” remains unreached. It’s necessary to reach out more to the Wilayas in the refugee camps.

International organizations and networks are interested to support NOVA

Social actor International Organizations and networks

Outcome International organizations and networks working on Western Sahara perceive NOVA as an innovative independent group of civil society and are interested to collaborate, contributing this way to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of their work.

NOVA’s contribution NOVA has participated in diverse spaces for international exchange with different organizations and networks. The group has actively pursued the expansion of international support for self-determination of the Saharawis.

Comment All substantiators who felt themselves in a position to comment on this point fully agreed on this outcome. NOVA is in contact with different international organizations, some engaging through more continuous support, others through more sporadic collaborations. NOVA has become a welcome interlocutor for delegations from international organizations and networks.

4.2. Partly achieved outcomes

State institutions adopt a more inclusive attitude towards youth

Social actor SADR state institutions

Outcome Saharawi state institutions have reinforced a more inclusive attitude towards youth. Youth issues receive more attention and the state increasingly appreciates their opinion and participation in political and social affairs.

NOVA’s contribution NOVA realized continuous efforts for demanding the rights of youth, bringing their voice to the authorities. They conducted surveys about youth issues and

presented the results to the authorities. The group also invited institutions to workshops about the topic and to dialogue-conferences with youth.

Comment Substantiators only agreed partially to this outcome. Although there is a tendency to give more importance to youth participation, it is limited to a symbolic change waiting to be implemented by the state. Youth is specially underrepresented in decision-making bodies. In fact, a part of youth is leaving the refugee camps because they feel that their personal and professional progress is limited. NOVA's aim to activate the potential of young people and demanding more participation is of high importance.

4.3. Unintended outcomes

Part of youth reinforce their rejection of a non-violence approach

Social actor	Youth in the refugee camps
Outcome	Part of the youth in the refugee camps has shown an attitude of rejection regarding non-violence and NOVA. Especially at the beginning of NOVA the frustration of youth became more visible.
NOVA's contribution	NOVA has actively carried out activities such as surveys, public debates, round tables and campaigns, addressing the importance of non-violence.
Comment	When approaching youth, NOVA is dealing with a high level of frustration. This frustration became visible in spaces provided for expression of opinion and dialogue where young people started to voice and reinforce their discourse in favour of returning to the armed struggle. This dynamic is changing since NOVA adapted a less confrontational approach, not pretending to give a "salvation message". NOVA still needs to further adapt the concept of non-violence for the local situation and to explain well what non-violence really means for them. This part of the youth is one of the reasons why NOVA exists, trying to engage them in the non-violent struggle.

4.4. Additional outcome comments

Three potential outcomes previously defined with NOVA could not be substantiated:

- Contrarily to what had been expected, substantiators consider that the general population in the camps still does not recognize NOVA as a non-violent youth group. NOVA has actively reached out to people in different events on many important topics, but the knowledge about NOVA in the Wilayas is still limited and their non-violence approach is still not widely known within the general population.
- NOVA's success to develop a dialogue with Moroccan activists has been limited. The dialogue opportunities during the Social Forum in Tunis failed under a high level of tension. An external facilitation would have been necessary. More efforts are necessary to take on this difficult task and to engage in dialogue with Moroccan activists.
- Support extended to NOVA activists in the occupied territories is limited. A stronger involvement of these structures is crucial for a more effective non-violent struggle.

It must also be mentioned here that NOVA has possibly achieved other outcomes that are not outcomes of the project with SweFOR but result from collaborations with other organizations (for example in terms of international advocacy).

5. OVERALL EVALUATION FINDINGS

The overall findings of the evaluation presented in this chapter are based on the criteria for evaluations established by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

RELEVANCE

- Is the project relevant to the peace building needs of the Western Sahara conflict?
- Is the intervention appropriate to the problems and needs of youth?
- To what extent has the intervention responded to the needs and priorities of NOVA?

With regards to the context, the project is highly relevant. NOVA is doing a very important work to address several peace building needs. Building a non-violent movement under the circumstances of the Western Sahara conflict is of outstanding importance for change. Their effort to build an active and innovative civil society is crucial for the transformation of the conflict. Civil society is key to change the protracted conflict situation. NOVA has also done much to draw the international attention to this forgotten conflict.

While the project does not respond directly to the economic needs of youth in the refugee camps, NOVA is an important advocate for the rights of youth, bringing the voice of youth to the authorities. Engaging youth and providing opportunities of participation is important to encourage the new generation to take their future in their own hands.

The project has responded to the needs of NOVA in terms of capacity building on non-violence and contribution for the incentives of NOVA coordinators. Contributions to the organizational strengthening have been limited due to the fact that this was not one of NOVA's priorities during the last years. In the context of this evaluation NOVA clearly identified and expressed a need for organizational growth and strengthening of internal structures. Supporting organizational strengthening is relevant for future project support.

EFFECTIVENESS

- To what extent were the objectives of the project achieved?
- What are the observable results of the project?
- What changes in behaviour, attitude, practise or politics have been achieved?

The project has proven to be effective in view of the difficult context in the refugee camps. To understand the contribution of the project a set of outcomes has been identified in chapter 5 of this evaluation. Most importantly, NOVA achieved to commit more young people to non-violence, expanding the group to approximately a hundred members and many more sympathisers. Particularly young women have been inspired by NOVA, resulting in a relatively high level of women participation of 60%. An important result is the fact that state institutions recognize NOVA as a new group committed to non-violence. NOVA's success also contributes to open new spaces for an active and innovative Saharawi civil society and it has attracted international organizations to support these efforts. A negative unintended result that needs to be handled with caution is the rejection towards non-violence by a part of the youth. It has proven to be difficult to deal with the high level of frustration. NOVA's effort for non-violence must consider conflict sensitivity to be effective and the group needs to further develop their local approach of non-violence.

Using the Outcome Harvesting methodology, the evaluation did not assess the project's progress towards predefined objectives but rather identified changes in social actors that can be attributed to the influence of the project. The outcomes identified by the outcome harvesting methodology adopted in the evaluation can be understood as partially achieving the objectives set out in the project:

- The first planned result, aiming that the group broadens the international connections and raises their concerns to international players, has been achieved. NOVA has established many links to international organizations and has received significant support to be able to present their situation and concerns at the international level.
- The second planned result, aiming that group members' increase their knowledge about non-violent means and human rights as well as their awareness of the risks and safety, has been partially achieved. While a local non-violent approach still needs to be developed, NOVA members have obtained basic knowledge about non-violence action and human rights. Awareness raising about risk and safety issues is less relevant for the NOVA group in the refugee camps, while it will become a crucial element for the extension of NOVA's networks in the occupied territories.
- Regarding the third planned result, aiming that Moroccan authorities receive international reactions on the human rights situation in the occupied territories, no reliable statement can be made since international reactions expressed to Moroccan authorities have not been assessed within this evaluation.

COHERENCE

- How does the project relate to the politics and strategies of other actors of international cooperation?

Most organizations working with the refugee camps are engaged in humanitarian assistance. Major donors such as ECHO or UNHCR have decreased their funds posing a threat to the refugees and risking unpredictable consequences. Donors have also become increasingly interested in supporting development projects. While projects with a development focus are important, they should not be expanded at the expense of humanitarian aid. The partnership of NOVA, AFAPREDESA and SweFOR is focused on human rights and non-violence. While some international organizations also support human rights work, these contributions are relatively small compared to the volume of humanitarian aid. An increase in support for human rights, non-violence and conflict transformation is desirable. SweFOR could play an important role connecting other organizations through its networks.

SUSTAINABILITY

- What areas of improvement can be found in terms of building on and developing local capacity and ownership?

NOVA gives the impression of a new dynamic organization that is just at the beginning of a long way to go. NOVA has benefitted from the project but without a doubt the volunteer-based group would also exist without ongoing support. SweFOR's contribution to capacity development on non-violence has been key to develop NOVA. Support for institutional strengthening in contrast has so far hardly been requested. For a sustainable growth of NOVA's capacity for non-violent action further organizational strengthening is needed.

EFICIENCY

- Were activities cost-efficient?
- Is this the most efficient way to contribute?

The direct project contributions to NOVA are very small and are basically spent for the incentives of coordinators and specific activities. As a volunteer-based organization NOVA has only very small expenditures, resulting in an imbalance between the small direct contribution for NOVA and larger expenditures for SweFOR's support. An important part of SweFOR's expenditure is money spent for trainings to increase the capacity of NOVA in non-violence, for organizing international exchanges with other organizations, and for providing close project management support through visits by SweFOR staff.

In order to meet the mandatory administrative requirements for the project, SweFOR compensates the administrative weakness of NOVA by a close follow up on project management and administration. This solution is relatively cost-intensive but it has allowed the development of the project under the very particular conditions in the refugee camps.

6. LESSONS LEARNED

Dialogue instead of confrontation

During its four years of existence NOVA has obtained valuable experiences on how to win the support of people for their non-violent struggle. While the organization initially rather confronted people directly with their ideas on non-violence, their strategies have changed over time. Direct confrontation provoked rejection against NOVA and their non-violence approach, and it discouraged especially youth from participating in activities.

A dialogue-oriented approach has proven to be much more fruitful compared to confrontation.

Development of a local non-violence concept

NOVA still needs to develop a local concept of non-violence that is appropriate for the Western Sahara context. What has been learned in theory has proved to be difficult in practise. The most obvious challenge is that NOVA does not have a direct confrontation with Moroccan authorities in the refugee camps. Typical non-violent activities like occupying installations, realizing massive disobedience and public demonstrations are not effective in this context. The group is still developing their own ideas for the context of the refugee camps.

NOVA's members in the occupied territory need to be more involved to develop an appropriate non-violent concept and to plan strategic non-violent actions.

Need to spread the message about what non-violence really means for NOVA

People know that NOVA stands for non-violence, but most of them are not really aware of what this actually means. While people might think that non-violence means to simply stick to the ceasefire, NOVA does actually envision an end of the armed confrontation. And while people perceive that non-violence means to suppress the frustration of youth, NOVA actually wants to kindle the flame of youth. NOVA wants to encourage people to struggle for their right for self-determination, but the struggle they call for is a struggle with non-violent means. To promote this struggle, NOVA needs to gradually include a message about their understanding of non-violence in their activities.

Organizational strengthening is indispensable for organizational growth

A discrepancy can be observed between the exceptional results of NOVA's work on one side and the weak performance in management and administration on the other side. NOVA is aware that the current performance is a limit for further development and growth of the organization. More organizational strengthening is needed to be able to develop more powerful non-violent actions.

SweFOR and other international organizations are ready to support the strengthening of NOVA. In fact, this is a crucial aspect for SweFOR since the work with Western Sahara is structurally situated with the "Team for international partnership" that has a focus on organizational strengthening of partner organizations.

Taking the unique relation between NOVA and SweFOR to the next level

SweFOR and NOVA have been linked since the foundations of the group. In the last four years NOVA has perceived SweFOR as a partner that walks with the group the difficult path of developing a non-violent struggle. Both organizations share the focus on non-violence and can mutually enrich their knowledge to stimulate and support each other in this unique relation.

To take the relation to the next level it is important, establishing a fluent communication between NOVA and SweFOR. Starting a new project phase in 2017 is an opportunity to establish a more direct relation between NOVA and SweFOR. Its an opportunity to review the foundations of this partnership, and to exchange openly about the objectives and expectations of each organization.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take the time to exchange about each others objectives for the partnership. Clarify the expectations for a new project agreement.
- Reflect how to extend the support for non-violent action to the occupied territories. Activists in the occupied territories should be better involved in capacity building. The circumstances of direct confrontation present much potential for non-violent action, but also require a clear strategy and effective risk and security management.
- Promote NOVA's non-violent approach more strategically and make people aware of what non-violence really means for NOVA.
- Strengthen the training capacities of NOVA members on non-violence. Start to conduct and replicate trainings in the Wilayas and for activists in the occupied territories.
- Focus on organizational strengthening based on NOVA's needs and SweFOR's own concept for organizational strengthening as a necessary prerequisite for organizational growth. Organizational strengthening is an opportunity to build a structure that is able to strategically organize events of higher impact.
- Exchange with other international organizations that are also engaged to contribute to strengthen the capacity of NOVA.

ANNEX - Interview List

Teresia Carlgren, SweFOR, Stockholm 13.05.2016 (Briefing)

Kari Berg, SweFOR, Skype 19.05.2016

Baptiste Chapuis, Oxfam Belgium, Skype 14.06. and 12.07.2016, Camps 14.09.2016

Maria Padrón Hernández, Emmaus Björkå, Skype 14.06.2016

Lotta Johansson Fornarve, Member of Swedish Parliament, Skype 14.06.2016

Lotta Comé, Afrikagrupperna Göteborg, Skype 15.06.2016

Linda Johansson, Praktisk Solidaritet, Skype 15.06.2016

Jesús Castañar Pérez, non-violence trainer, Skype 16.06.2016

Björn Cedersjö, Swedish Christian Council, Skype 16.06.2016

Sanna Svensson, SweFOR, Skype 17.06.2016

Julia Finér, CISP, Skype 21.06. and 23.06.2016, Camps 14.09.2016

Carlos Beristain, Human Rights Expert, University of the Basque Country/HEGOA, Skype 16.08.2016

Abdeslam Omar Lahsen, President AFAPREDESA, 7.9. and 13.9.2016

Abida Muhamed, President NOVA, 8.9. and 13.9.2016

NOVA Group meeting I: Introduction and Outcome Review 1st part (Abida Mohamed - President, Ali Buzaid - Coordinator, Mahmud Jatri - Coordinator, Lamina Aflwat - Coordinator, Jusef Abdelmonem - Vice-president Comité Mediático, Ahmet Baba - Volunteer), 8.9.2016

Ali Buzaid, Coordinator NOVA, 9.9.2016

Salamu Hamad Nafe Ali, Volunteer NOVA, 10.9.2016

NOVA Group meeting II: Outcome Review 2nd part (Abida Mohamed - President, Ali Buzaid - Coordinator, Mahmud Jatri - Coordinator, Lamina Aflwat - Coordinator, Jusef Abdelmonem - Vice-president Comité Mediático), 10.9.2016

Marco Antonio Velasco Fernández, Medicos del Mundo, 10.9.2016

Cheja Lawlad, member CoNaSaDH, member Unión de Abogados Saharais, 11.09.2016

Jalihenna Mohamed, OESARIO, Board Member, 11.09.2016

Abba El Haisen, CONASADH, director, 14.09.2016

Zen Sedahmed, UJSARIO, secretario general,
Hamma Mehdi, Unión de Periodistas y Escritores Saharawis, Junta Directiva, 14.09.2016

Ahmed Lehibib, Ministry of Youth and Sport, Minister, 15.09.2016

NOVA Group meeting III: Organizational Strengthening and Coordination with SweFOR
(Abida Mohamed - President, Ali Buzaid - Coordinator, Mahmud Jatri - Coordinator, Lamina
Aflwat - Coordinator), 15.9.2016

Namir Bacar, Hospital General Rabuni, Director, 15.09.2016

Maata Belau, Asociación Saharaui de Víctimas de Minas (ASAVIM), 16.09.2016

Najem Bani, Ministry of Defence, Political and military awareness rising, 16.9.2016

Mohamed Lamine Emhamed, NOVA volunteer, 16.09.2016

NOVA Group meeting IV: Presentation of preliminary results, approximately 15 members,
16.09.2016

Saleh Yarba, RASD TV, Representative of the Spanish speaking sector, 16.09.2016