

Nordic International Support Foundation – NIS

Annual Report 2020

The nature of the company's business operations

Nordic International Support Foundation (NIS) carries out peace and reconciliation activities in war and conflict zones, as well as institutional development, social measures and conflict resolution. The Foundation has its offices in Oslo. In 2020, the Foundation carried out projects in Somalia, Mali and Burma (Myanmar).

NIS implements a large range of projects together with donors and key national stakeholders to assist countries and communities to successfully emerge from conflict. Escaping conflict requires a broad mix of activities targeting peacebuilding, state building, reconciliation processes and community recovery efforts. As a result, NIS believes there are multiple ways to support communities and institutions in transitioning away from conflict. Our projects include constructing, rehabilitating and installing economic and community infrastructure such as solar streetlights, stadiums and markets, roads, government buildings, solar electrification to hospitals, health clinics and government buildings. In addition, NIS works with creating vocational training facilities and curricula, managing secondees to government institutions and managing grant-making programmes supporting peace-building and social cohesion. For NIS, the exact nature of a project is secondary to its ability to help a country emerge from conflict.

NIS projects seek first and foremost to support communities and institutions to recover from the negative effects of conflict, regardless of the type of intervention. NIS works with international donors, national governments, community leaders, national civil society groups and other key stakeholders to support processes that facilitate recovery from conflict through a variety of means: improving public service delivery, rehabilitating social and economic infrastructure, supporting the functional recovery of national institutions, designing programmes that target gender and social inclusivity, and managing grant-making bodies that support peace-building and strengthening social cohesion. Across these many types of projects, we continually emphasise the need to delivery concrete benefits to conflicted-affected communities: infrastructure must support increased community activities of all kinds; grants must support relevant actors with strong local relationships; and support to institutions must help boost their ability to deliver on their mandates. In order to ensure our projects are relevant in both the practical and political dimensions of our work, NIS lays a great deal of emphasis on continuous contact with stakeholders, carrying out extensive community engagements tailored for the given context.

NIS has completed more than 115 projects in 4 countries in the past 9 years. NIS will celebrate its 10th year of existence in 2021.

Developments in funding and position

While 2020 was characterised by continued growth, our consolidation measures allowed NIS to keep administrative costs stable as a percentage of total income.

We continued to work with securing long-term financing in line with our strategy. In Somalia, NIS secured an additional 30-month grant from the European Union. On the whole, we believe NIS is well equipped to continue progressing in a positive direction.

2020 was a different and busy year that involved the following activities:



COVID-19 organisational response in 2020

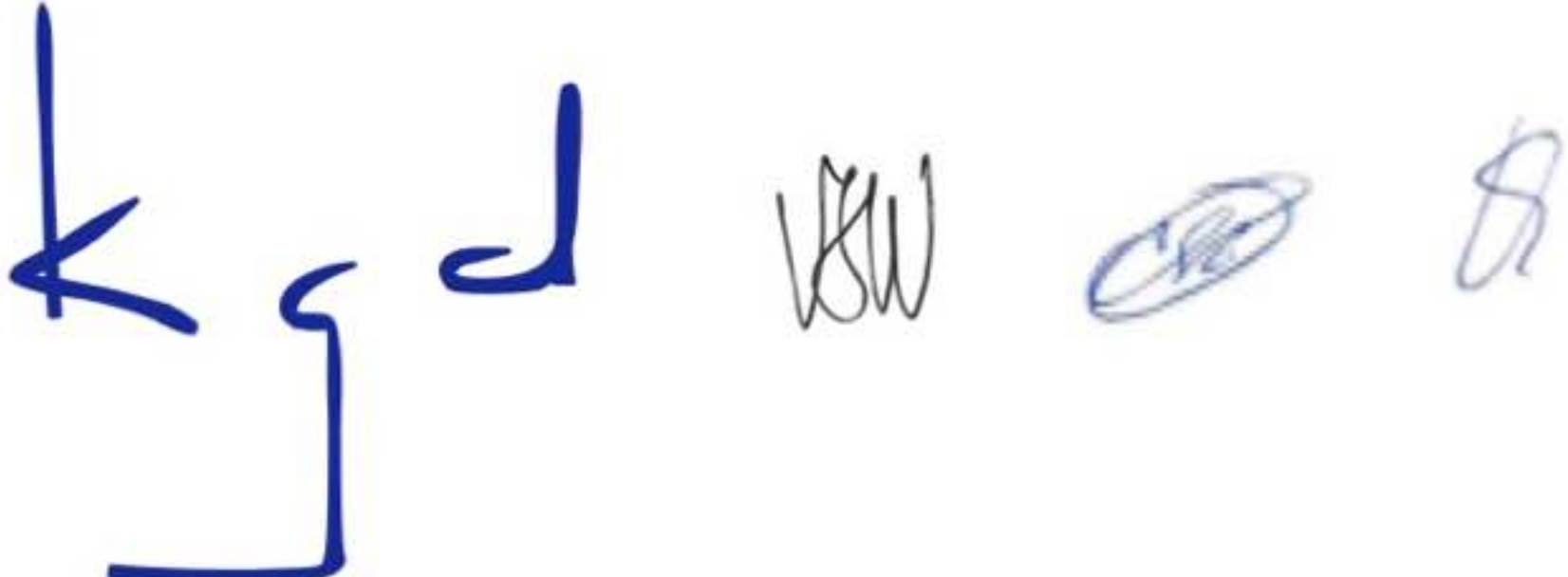
The COVID-19 global pandemic was a dominant feature for the entire world in 2020. As a global operator, the COVID-19 pandemic posed numerous challenges for the organisation across varied operating environments, including health infrastructure, political instability, security risks and extensive travel and logistics limitations. The pandemic saw a range of actions across programmes, focussing on protecting NIS staff in all locations while maintaining implementation capacity. This saw NIS HQ, as well as country offices, moving to a work-from-home set-up. In many cases, employees in country offices required support to ensure home-based offices had sufficient equipment and internet connections to carry-out their tasks. Some higher-risk staff were relocated to their home countries, as the ever-evolving limitations on travel and entry during 2020 made keeping those individuals in post too risky on health grounds. From NIS HQ, regular Emergency Management Team (EMT) meetings were held with country-level management to ensure all necessary measures for protection were being taken and to identify resources and support to best preserve implementation capacity. Further to this, NIS ensured that confidential counselling services were made available to programme staff during 2020, to help those struggling with the effects of the pandemic.

In **Somalia**, the COVID-19 pandemic slowed, but did not stop programme activities. In 2020, cases of COVID-19 were more limited than in many other countries, allowing implementation to continue, though with mitigation measures in place. These included work-from-home (WFH) arrangements being put in place in April. However, these were eased in May 2020, with one member from each team allowed to be in the office, and further in July, with two members allowed. Key preventive measures such as mask wearing and physical distancing were kept in place throughout the year. On the programme side, NIS was requested to support COVID-specific activities for some projects, including the provision of COVID-19 prevention equipment and materials to Somali authorities; COVID-19 awareness raising and training exercises for programme partners; and the secondment of 16 high-profile consultants for four months to support Federal and State-level governments in COVID-19 coordination and response efforts, under the Swedish-funded, Strengthening Somali Institutional Capacity through Diaspora (SES) programme. Additionally, 64 volunteer health workers were recruited for four months to assist health institutions and facilities.

Within this new operational realities, NIS’ Somalia efforts remained focussed on implementing programmes on behalf of donors including the EU, Norway, Sweden and IOM. In October 2020, NIS signed a new 30-month contract with the EU to implement the Infrastructures for Socio-Economic Development (ISED) programme. The multi-year programme’s key activities are construction of markets, access roads and water infrastructure to improve the livelihoods of people in the priority corridors/ geographic areas. It is complementary to NIS’ existing “Stabilisation and Peace Dividends” project with the EU. A new contract was also agreed with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to provide administrative and logistics support to selected consultants working on behalf of the IFC in-country.

Extensive works were carried out during 2020 under the Norwegian-funded, Initiative for Stability and National Development (I-STAND) programme, all across Somalia and Somaliland. Interventions implemented during 2020 included the rehabilitation of key roads, a large-scale waste collection and removal project in Mogadishu, installation of solar-powered streetlights and the construction of markets, administration buildings and community centres.

Despite the limitations on in-person gatherings due to COVID-19 in 2020, work in support of **Myanmar’s** formal peace process, as well as efforts to strengthen social cohesion and women’s rights continued in 2020 through the implementation of our four programmes there: Paung Sie Facility (PSF); Joint Peace Fund Technical Secretariat (JPF-TS); Women’s Voice and Leadership (WVL); and Local Insights Service (LIS).



NIS' PSF project is currently in its third phase, funded by, UK, Sweden and Australia. The PSF remains focussed in its core areas of mitigating communal conflict, catalysing leadership and influencing structures to support social cohesion throughout Myanmar. While continuing and iteratively improving existing initiatives, PSF seized the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity for the facility and its partners to lead the civil society response to mitigate local conflict and social tensions. PSF rapidly rolled out a call for proposals and a process for partners to adapt their projects. These projects were aligned with PSF's theory of change.

In support of the Myanmar peace process, the Joint Peace Fund (JPF) was established in December 2015 for a period of at least six years, as a multi-donor fund to support national efforts to achieve a final and lasting settlement of ethnic armed conflict in Myanmar. NIS manages the Technical Secretariat and provides overall support to the governance of the JPF, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

For the JPF, the Covid-19 pandemic affected almost all aspects of operations during 2020. JPF has worked closely with its implementing partners to identify their key needs and maintain their operational and organizational continuity during a time when many activities were postponed or moved to a virtual space. Following the announcement on 23 March of the first confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Myanmar, and the subsequent rollout of national and local level orders and related policy changes, JPF transitioned from a preparedness phase into a full adaptation phase with implementing partners and peace process stakeholders which was maintained over the course of the year. As Covid-19 spread globally, JPF continued to work closely with all implementing partners to preserve gains made towards peace and to look for ways to promote collaboration and common action to advance peace efforts during the pandemic.

With Multi-Year Funding and support launched in 2019, the Women's Voice and Leadership team conducted several application screenings and assessments in early 2020. By April, implementation agreements were finalised with ten women's rights organisations (WROs). WVWL then launched its first round of the Rapid Response Fund (RRF) in May, focusing on responding to the strategic needs of women and girls related to COVID-19, with eight implementing partners receiving funding through this mechanism. A second round of the RRF was launched in December. Additionally, WVWL received funding from FCDO starting in September. This was used to launch the Resilience, Recovery and Renewal (RRR) Fund, aiming to sustain WROs through the pandemic. Nine organisations were selected to receive funding under the RRR Fund.

From January to December 2020, the UK-funded Local Insights Service (LIS) project produced written and verbal reports and briefings on a wide range of topics for DFID/FCDO and partners. LIS was able to consolidate and produce quality projects, even while major adaptation in both subject focus and working styles was needed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021 Update on Myanmar

While falling outside this reporting period, the context in Myanmar changed dramatically in early 2021. On 1 February, the Tatmadaw (national armed forces) overthrew the elected civilian government and took power in a pre-dawn coup. The Tatmadaw issued a statement on 1 February proclaiming that its objectives in taking power were to investigate allegations of voter irregularities, incompetence on the part of the Union Election Commission, and "possible voter fraud"; to hold a free and fair election in accordance with the 2008 Constitution; and to transfer power to the winning party in line with democratic standards.

At the time of writing, hundreds of thousands of people have been demonstrating on the streets against the coup and the imposition of military rule, rallying behind a "Civil Disobedience Movement". These



protests have been met with increasing military repression and violence against unarmed civilians. There have been widespread appeals to the military to engage in dialogue with the NLD to resolve the crisis and restore the democratically elected Government. So far, the military has shown no indication that it has any intention of doing this.

In 2020, NIS **Mali** started implementing the Renewable Energy for Peace and Stability in Mali programme. 60 solar poles were installed in Gao's markets as well as in the village of Forgho. The planned interventions in the villages of Hombori and Bentia were postponed to 2021 due to the insecurity on the roads leading to these villages. The programme is financed through the Energizing Development Fund (Endev) in close cooperation with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). It focusses on the delivery of solar-powered streetlights, solar PV production and solar-PV home systems in northern Mali. The programme includes the extension of nano grids and establishment of new nano grids in 3 villages, installation of 80 solar streetlights in markets in Gao, creation of energy kiosks, provision of home solar systems and extensive training of local technicians in the targeted communities.

NIS Mali also successfully expanded the Solar Street Lights Programme in Gao and Timbuktu. Financed by the Norwegian government via the trust funds of the MINUSMA, an additional 250 solar street lights and traffic lights on 8 junctions were installed in Gao as well as 70 solar street lights in Timbuktu, the two biggest cities of the North of the country.

Income

The Foundation recorded an income of NOK 318 407 581 in 2020 in grants from Great Britain (DFID/FCDO), EU, Somalia Stability Fund, The World Bank, Sweden (SIDA), Canada (GAC), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Australia (DFAT), UNOPS, MINUSMA, IOM, Energizing Development (EnDev), the Netherlands and Germany (GIZ). Annual results for 2020 amounted to NOK 6 111 388.

	31.12.2020	31.12.2019
Balance Sheet total	254 779 018	163 573 392
Organisational capital	16 029 512	9 918 124
Organisational capital percentage	6,3%	6,1%

We aim to continue consolidating our organisational capital in the future, and the Board has made plans to do this.

The Foundation is not exposed to much market risk and has a low credit risk related to donors. We are working actively to lower liquidity risk related to new projects and control currency risks. We will continue to focus on these two areas in the future.

No other circumstances have occurred after the end of the accounting year which are relevant to the accounts, including the Covid-19 outbreak and the February 2021 military coup in Myanmar. The annual accounts present a fair and true view of development in the Foundation, for the result in the accounting year and the position at the end of the accounting year. The Foundation's liquidity is satisfactory in relation to operations.

Going concern

The annual accounts have been presented under the going concern assumption. Further plans and progress form the basis for this assumption.



Work environment and personnel

The working environment is considered to be good, and continuous measures are being taken for improvement. A new organisational staff survey encompassing the entire organisation was undertaken in 2020. The level of participations was high (85%) and the results overall positive. Improvements within selected focus will be identified and implemented going forward. This type of survey will continue to be undertaken on an annual basis going forward, albeit in a different form.

Absence due to sickness has been insignificant.

Gender Equality

The Foundation's employees in Norway counted 9 women and 4 men in 2020. The Board was made up of 1 woman and 2 men. There were 170 employees (ca. 48% of women and 52% of men) at our country and project offices outside Norway. The Foundation aims to be a workplace with full equality between women and men.

Discrimination

The Foundation strives to provide its employees with equal opportunity and hinder discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, gender, skin colour, religion, sexual orientation or functional abilities. We work actively and methodically to promote the objectives of anti-discrimination in our activities. These activities include e.g. recruitment, salary and working conditions, promotions, opportunities for skill enhancement and protections from harassment.

Report on the Environment

Environmental risks are systematically included in the Foundation's risk mitigation strategies for all its activities. Where relevant and appropriate, the Foundation prioritises the use of renewable energy.

Net Earnings and Allocation of the Annual Results

The Board proposes the following allocation of the annual results which amount to NOK 6 111 388:

Transfer to Other organisational capital: NOK 6 111 388

Total: NOK 6 111 388

Oslo, 24/06-2021



Christopher Sean Eads
Chair of the board



Eric E. A. Sevrin
Board member/General Manager



Kassim Gabowduale
Board member



Vilde Straume Wiig
Board member