



International Peacebuilding Alliance  
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**Strategic Evaluation (2003-2008) and Prospective Analysis (2009-2013)  
of the Forum of Social Organizations Specialised in the Field of Security (FOSS)  
and of the support received from the International Peacebuilding Alliance (Interpeace)**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The organisational development of the Forum of Social Organisations specialised in the Field of Security (FOSS in its Spanish acronym) is a good case of an international cooperation programme being progressively owned by the national organisations involved. It has been a continuous process, with ups and downs, of creation and/or strengthening of endogenous capacities that has been successful not by chance but because of the long term vision of its promoters.

The FOSS Project started in september 2003, with thirteen organisations. Nowadays, as Forum, FOSS is made up of eight organisations: the Association for Investigation and Social Research (ASIES), the Association for the Study and Promotion of Democratic Security (SEDEM), the Center for Studies of Guatemala (CEG), the Myrna Mack Foundation (FMM), Democratic Impact (IDEM), the Teaching Institute for Sustainable Development (IEPADES), the Institute of Comparative Studies in Penal Sciences of Guatemala (ICCPG) and the School of Political Science of the San Carlos University of Guatemala (ECP-USAC).

FOSS has its roots in an earlier Project “Towards a Democratic Security Policy 1999-2003” (POLSEDE in its Spanish acronym), a joint venture of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Guatemalan Institute for Development and Peace (IGEDEP) and WSP International, Interpeace’s predecessor. The POLSEDE Project was the first intersectoral exercise of dialogue on security and defense, carried out after the signing of Peace Accords, co-financed by USAID, Interpeace and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Affaires Office (FCO).

Since 2004, FOSS has a Liaison Office (*Oficina de Enlace*) with Congress, allowing direct civil society engagement with parliamentarians, congressional debates and participation in discussions over legislative proposals. This seems to be a highly exceptional arrangement worldwide. FOSS’ work with Congress depends on the quality of the input generated by the FOSS members but also on the quality and capacity of the person who makes up the Liaison Office. Until now there have been four Liaison Officers.

FOSS’ original objectives were:

- 1) To strengthen the capacities of Non-State actors engaged on democratic security; to coordinate their actions and proposals; and with them to have influence on public policies in this field.
- 2) To facilitate a space for dialogue between State and Non-State actors about security issues.
- 3) To consolidate institutional mechanisms resulting from this dialogue.

The most important results obtained by FOSS as a project since 2003 till now have been:

- 1) Organisational development and much strengthened technical and political capacity of members.
- 2) The Liaison Office with Congress has contributed to the discussion, approval or rejection of almost 60 Bills and Laws.
- 3) Contribution to the design, approval and implementation of Security Advisory Council (CAS) and the National System of Security (SNS).
- 4) Contribution to embedding the democratic security paradigm in the vision and discourse of politicians, State officials, the academic community, press and public opinion.
- 5) Capacity building of human resources in different aspects of democratic security.
- 6) Progressive ownership, though not yet fully achieved, of the international cooperation programme by FOSS member organisations.
- 7) The existence of FOSS itself as Forum, that is, as a second tier organisation of eight social organisations specialised in security issues.

The present strategic evaluation aspires to give some inputs to FOSS, Interpeace and the international cooperation community to complete the FOSS transition from being an Interpeace project towards its full structural, programmatic and functional autonomy. It contains an analysis of the national situation, an analysis of the evolution of FOSS from 2003 till now, an assessment of its impact on the institutions and

institutionality of the State, and a set of strategic and tactical recommendations to increase the sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of the Forum in its new phase.

The situation in Guatemala presents one of a fragmented State and a fragmented Society. There is a long historical pattern of violence and exclusion that has been reinforced by thirty six years of civil war and not really reversed by the Peace Accords of 1996. Guatemala remains a deeply unequal and violent society, with “parallel powers” and drug-related violence currently expanding rapidly, and drug-money adding to the corruption and further hollowing-out the already weak State from within. The situation has reached crisis point with Guatemalans talking about a real risk of the “colombianisation” of their country. Certain interest groups definitely would like to see a return to the authoritarian State, and the level of perceived insecurity creates a public opinion receptive to such.

The overall trend in what was already a very violent country is towards increased levels of violence, more so today than during the civil war. Indeed, the annual homicide rate increased with 138 % between 1999 (2,655 cases) and December 2008 (6,338 cases), until reaching an cumulative total of 32,000 victims in nine years and a mean annual homicide rate of nearly 50 per 100,000.

The level of impunity in Guatemala is extremely high. Only 4% of crimes are prosecuted. Only 10% of homicides are investigated and of them, only 2 % result in a sentence. Obviously, the ineffectiveness of the judicial system, the lack of investigative capacities in the Office of the Attorney General (*Ministerio Público*) and the pressures of parallel powers and organized crime on the agents for justice are the main factors promoting impunity and equally criminal actions of self-defense (linchings, illegal executions, “social cleansing”, etc.) Reciprocally, impunity reinforces these factors, making an almost unbreakable vicious circle.

Therefore, there is evidently a need to strengthen the State. There are however different models of a “strong State”: One such model favours an authoritarian and repressive approach to “insecurity”. This definitely has sympathy in sectors of society and, given the high levels of insecurity, resonates well with a major segment of public opinion. A firm hand or iron fist (“*mano dura*”) approach however threatens the democratic gains made since the Peace Accords of 1996, which brought a formal end to 36 years of civil war, and may open the door for a return of the military in power. The alternative is a stronger State that pursues security within the framework of democratic security, i.e. putting the security of its citizens first, keeping the security forces under political control and seeking to regain the monopoly on the use of force within the parameters of a democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

In this context, following the path of POLSEDE and POLSEC, FOSS has been very successful in familiarising a number of other civil society organisations with the paradigm of democratic security and developing the technical knowledge in these organisations regarding different topics of defense and security. There is possibly no other country in Latin America and the Caribbean where there is such level of technical-thematic knowledge on security issues as in Guatemala. FOSS has been extremely effective and efficient at influencing critical legislation in Guatemala. The relevance of that legislation resides in the object of the legislation but also in the fact that it is shaped within a democratic security framework.

This strategic evaluation confirms significant technical and political achievements by FOSS and therefore also demonstrates that it is possible in Guatemala to confront violence and crime without neglecting human rights and the rule of law. Such statement may seem naïve and even false, if we judge the individual achievements of the members, and the collective achievements of FOSS as Forum, against the backdrop of the indicators for violence, crime and insecurity in Guatemala today. However, as one of the persons interviewed put it: “*The situation is very bad. But without our organisations and without FOSS, the situation not only would have been worse but would not have any solution at all.*”

In the prospective analysis exercise carried out for this evaluation, three scenarios were identified, into which FOSS could find itself between 2009 and 2013. One is a catastrophic scenario, called here “FOSSilization”. Another scenario is one of ‘status quo’, which really would represent ‘inertia’: the prolongation of FOSS’ present situation. A third –ideal or idealistic?– scenario would see FOSS flourishing, and is called here “FOSSphorescence”.

(A) Catastrophic Scenario of “FOSSilization”	(B) Status Quo or Inertia Scenario	(C) Ideal(istic) Scenario of “FOSSphorescence”
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interpeace “drops” FOSS.</li> <li>2. Some Coordination but ineffective, due to lack of responsiveness of the members.</li> <li>3. There is no budget for joint projects or support from other donors.</li> <li>4. Liaison Office still works, but with less activity.</li> <li>5. Strategic Plan 2009-2013 and Operational Plan 2009 have minimum implementation.</li> <li>6. Political Council hardly or never meets while the Technical Council meets without quorum.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interpeace supports FOSS through 2009.</li> <li>2. Coordination is as active and efficient as it was in 2008.</li> <li>3. There is no budget for joint projects or support from other donors.</li> <li>4. Liaison Office is as active and efficient as it was in 2008.</li> <li>5. Operational Plan 2009 is carried out 100% and Strategic Plan 2009-2011 50%</li> <li>6. Political Council and Technical Council work as they did in 2008.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FOSS grows as collaborative Forum, with new full or ‘associate’ members, and more personnel, acceptance, activity and impact.</li> <li>2. Interpeace continues the support until 2013.</li> <li>3. There is a budget for joint projects coming from new donors.</li> <li>4. Coordination grows even more effective and efficient, as a more Executive Coordination.</li> <li>5. A FOSS Office opens in Zone 1, hosting Coordination, Liaison Office with Congress, and with a basic capacity to engage with the Executive and with the Judiciary.</li> <li>6. Strategic Plan is achieved by 80%</li> <li>7. Political Council and Technical Council have more activities and political outreach.</li> </ol>
<p>Not entirely impossible scenario, especially if FOSS loses its strategic relevance by continuing to do more of the same instead of seeing where the current requirements are.</p>	<p>A possible scenario although not the preferred one neither for FOSS members or for Interpeace. Lacks creativity and strategic adaptation. This is definitely likely to be the scenario for 2009.</p>	<p>Achievable scenario, if the FOSS members organisations decide to make it happen and if the external conditions are favourable.</p>

In any future scenario, FOSS member organisations could apply the following strategies of influence:

**1) With Congress of the Republic:** It is necessary to ensure continued funding after 2009, when Sweden would like to focus its grants on other areas of work. Is UNDP likely to take over? While FOSS’ specific strength has been the quality of its technical advice, its future work with Congress cannot be ignorant of the discrediting of Congress in the media and in public opinion. FOSS should not become an “apologist” of Congress but FOSS could seek to play some role in taking the work of Congress to wider society, in non-technical language and forms. But in addition, helping Congress enact enlightened laws that then are not or not well implemented, is, in the final analysis, not really strategic. Minimally FOSS has to concern itself with the questions of implementation. This means engaging with especially the Executive and to a degree the Judiciary, certainly at central level and ideally also at more local level. However, as the actors there are more diverse and dispersed than in Congress, it will require making the right actor-analysis, finding the right strategies to engage on the key issues and at the right moment.

**2) With the Executive:** The different dynamics of the Executive would suggest that collaborative work within and through a FOSS that is more dynamic than is currently the case, would be most appropriate. It was felt that a simple replica of the model of working with Congress, namely a Liaison Office, is probably not adequate. What kind of interface and how it would function and what constraints it would be likely to run into deserves more in-depth analysis. Perhaps rather than debating possible mechanisms, FOSS should do an analysis of the strategic issues and actors in the Executive, set itself certain objectives in the mid-term and then consider the question of how in practice to engage with the Executive, in order to achieve those objectives.

**3) With the Judiciary:** The protracted debate within FOSS whether to engage with justice administration or not has now been resolved. For some years there was internal opposition as there is already a network of organisations working on this, many coming from the human rights sector, so it felt like duplication. Of course some FOSS members like ICCPG work on justice issues with others, but not through the FOSS framework. There is agreement now that there are some specific issues where security and justice are closely interconnected (e.g. transitional justice, democratic controls, interinstitutional coordination) and where FOSS can legitimately engage. The coordinating platform of organisations working on justice issues remains one relevant point of reference for FOSS, but FOSS can bring added value if it finds and sticks to its specific niche.

**4) With Local Actors:** The nature of many FOSS member organisations seems to be leaning more towards research, analysis, policy work, advocacy and lobby. While some of them venture beyond the capital city in this pursuit, only two seem to be working more actively at local level and with local actors (SEDEM and IEPADES) It may therefore not be realistic to expect FOSS as such to seek to engage other sectors of society, especially in the interior and at local level. Still, given its knowledge, expertise, contacts and access at the central and capital-city level, FOSS could play a more active role in connecting local actors to the central level and in providing information about central level debates, dynamics and policies to the local level. If working with local actors is seen as strategically important, then FOSS should find the means to do so. Minimally the person in the Liaison Office can be a source of information to the local authorities and local non-state actors.

**5) With Itself as Collaborative Forum:** It is absolutely necessary for FOSS to bring “added value” to the member organisations. FOSS programmatic activities should not compete with the programmatic activities of member organisations, neither thematically or for funding. If partial overlap occurs, then the FOSS opportunity should be something that a member can’t implement on their own. The current workload constraints and some other factors that hamper greater effectiveness, can be overcome if there is agreement on a vision for a stronger (flourishing) FOSS.

**6) International Cooperation:** A more self-managing Forum would reduce the time Interpeace needs to invest in supporting FOSS, and opening up space for the identification and pursuit of additional programmatic activities in Guatemala. The Regional Office of Interpeace for Latin America can continue to play the role of strategic ally and co-fundraiser. Interpeace has no intention to simply “drop” FOSS which, given the achievements of FOSS, would not be wise. But it wants its own footprint in relation to FOSS to become lighter. Donors could offer funding for joint programmes and encourage the presentation of integrated project proposals by FOSS members, with common objectives and a joint logframe. However, the engagement and funding of the donors for collaborative projects and for some of the “infrastructural” costs of the Forum, is outside the control of the FOSS members. Therefore, it is recommended that the FOSS Political Council cultivates a relationship with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) and the Secretary of Planning and Programmation of the Presidency (SEGEPLAN) in order to introduce the FOSS needs for Scenario C into the consultations and negotiations with the G-13 (Group of Donors) and also into bilateral agreements with Agencies or Embassies interested in the agenda of democratic security.