

Development in Fragile Contexts: African Civil Society Recommendations for the EU-US Development Dialogue

WORKSHOP FROM KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG AND THE GLOBAL PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE WITH AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY ON OCTOBER 18 AT KAS, JOHANNESBURG

“Violence and fragility have become the largest obstacle to the Millennium Development Goals”. This statement by a UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda set the stage for African civil society development recommendations¹ for the EU-US Development Dialogue. The results of the workshop are presented by one participant at the Transatlantic Civil Society Dialogue (www.cso-dialogue.net) in Washington, DC on 14-15 November 2013. The goal of the workshop was to strengthen the voice of African civil society in debates around the nexus of development and fragility and thereby improving donor support to fragile states and to better incorporate the context of fragility in the Post-MDG agenda. The workshop recommendations include the following topics:

Conflict and peace-building in the post-MDG agenda

Tangible progress towards the MDGs was mostly lacking in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Therefore, the nexus between security and development has to be strengthened. The linkages between achieving development and overcoming fragility have to be better understood. That’s why donors should support the research on understanding the drivers of conflict and how they hinder development. These drivers include lack of good governance, income and gender inequality, food insecurity, transnational crime and the flow of illicit arms, drugs and war commodities.

A lack of good and democratic governance is especially harmful for development in fragile states. It is therefore crucial that political participation and accountability have a prominent role in the post-2015 agenda. When dealing with corruption in fragile states, donors should channel their support to local CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) in order to enhance their role as critical observers. Especially EU and US should argue for the benefits of the democratic system more than ever before as the short term economic success of some autocratic states has the potential to undermine democratic developments in Africa. They should invest in democratic institutions and help strengthen party systems, while increasing

¹ The official recommendations can be found by clicking on the following link:
http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_36046-1522-2-30.pdf?131122082751
(30/11/2013).

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Oktober 2013

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support of CSOs which support local level democracy and promote civic education. Community-based solutions to fragility and the reintegration of ex-combatants are two decisive elements for successful conflict management.

Support for the New Deal on fragile states

Today, 1,5 billion people live in fragile states. The G+7 group of conflict-affected countries formed an alliance and endorsed the "New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States" in 2011 which includes five peace-building and state-building goals (PSGs) addressing legitimate politics, security, justice, economic issues and revenue and services. The EU, US, other donors and civil society must communicate the value of the document and increase its visibility among policymakers and practitioners. When being engaged in fragile contexts, it is important to be patient but persistent. Often, donors imposed unrealistic time-frames on partners and insisted on foreign institutional models to be implemented in fragile states. The acceptance of long-term thinking and, at the same time, the focus on clear goals is crucial. For the future of the New Deal, it is most important to integrate relevant actors and define their roles. At the local level, CSOs must be better included. At the global level, EU and US should further try to integrate emerging economies in the New Deal as they have their own valuable experiences on how to achieve transition towards stable and more prosperous states. At country level, it will be important to develop and monitor national compacts. As many fragile states lack the capacity to develop national plans, to ensure its implementation and to monitor its progress, CSOs need to be more closely included in the development of national compacts as they can ensure that they mirror local needs and gain support among local constituencies. Coherence is critical to ensure that peace-building and development initiatives in one country are as coordinated as possible. Because the resilience of a society's capacity to manage change is decisive to prevent a relapse into violent conflict, it is crucial that all stakeholders define the critical elements for resil-

ience, for institutional capacity and the better management of the risk of setbacks. EU and US should provide support that centers on good governance, capacity building and ensuring that public institutions are accountable towards their societies.

The role of non-security related reasons for fragility

For more effective conflict prevention, peace-building and to help stabilizing fragile states, it is crucial to take social and economic factors into account. Income and social inequality are two central issues in this regard. Although many African countries have shown substantial economic growth in the recent past, it did not translate into benefits for the wider population in most parts. In order to reduce inequality, the governance of natural resources should be improved. Enhancing mechanisms of redistribution as well as giving best practice examples and introducing guiding principles for extractive industries are necessary. Initiatives such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) offer a useful framework in this regard. To address the high unemployment rates fueling conflict, educational programs have to be responsive to local labor markets and the private sector should be encouraged to create added value at local levels, for example through mineral beneficiation. Also, smallholders and the land rights of farmers should be supported in order to address food insecurity.

Gender inequality, discrimination against ethnic or religious minorities and marginalized groups are serious threats to prosperity and development. Governmental partners therefore should be held accountable for ensuring the integration and proper political participation of minorities and disadvantaged groups. CSOs can act as local advocates for these underprivileged parts of society.

Beyond addressing local root causes of conflict, also global factors have to be taken into account. Issues such as climate change, financial crises, transnationally organized crime, as well as the flow of illicit arms and drugs and war commodities have

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to be raised in development debates by donors and CSOs.

In order to support development in fragile contexts, country-owned and locally driven approaches are most effective. This includes the necessity of define development agendas at local level while being sensitive to local narratives and home-grown approaches. Donors can support these processes by sharing their expertise and by coordinating their support and aligning their policies with local strategies.

Weak institutions and a lack of political will often prevent the provision of basic social services in conflict-affected states. The lack of the state's legitimacy can increase fragility and poverty. EU and US donors can play a crucial role by being enablers for the building of stronger institutions, as they are led by values instead of pure geopolitical interests. Civil society can oversight these processes and monitor corruption and inefficiencies that might occur.