

Development in Fragile Contexts

Recommendations from African civil society

The African Civil Society Dialogue on Development in Fragile Contexts gathers input from African civil society organizations and African aid experts on how government donors can better support peace- and state-building and development in fragile states. The first conference, organized by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Global Public Policy Institute, took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 18 October 2013. It focused on the role of EU and US donors and aimed to provide insights from African civil society on the following three issues:

- Conflict and peace-building in the post-MDG agenda
- Support for the New Deal on fragile states
- The role of non-security related reasons for fragility

The recommendations for each topic are summarized in the following. They will be presented at the Transatlantic Civil Society Dialogue (www.cso-dialogue.net) in Washington, DC, on 14-15 November 2013 and be disseminated among civil society groups and on other relevant platforms in order to sensitize relevant actors to the context of fragility.

Input from African civil society is critical not only to improve donor support to fragile states and to better incorporate the context of fragility into the post-MDG agenda, but also to strengthen the voice of African civil society in development debates.

Conflict and peace-building in the post-MDG agenda

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been extremely influential in defining international development priorities. Yet, the effectiveness of the MDGs in raising the profile of development in a number of countries cannot conceal the lack of tangible progress towards the MDGs in conflict-affected and fragile states. As the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda stated, “violence and fragility have become the largest obstacle to the MDGs.” These will continue to be the largest stumbling block to development if conflict and peace-building are not properly addressed in the post-MDG agenda, as the following recommendations for donors and civil society organizations (CSOs) suggest:

Strengthen the security and development nexus: Peace-building and development are still too often considered as separate issues although they are immensely intertwined and cannot be achieved without being addressed simultaneously in the post-MDG agenda. In order to ensure more conflict-sensitive development, several changes have to occur:

1. **Build capacities and change mindsets:** Development agendas mirror the mindsets of their drafters. Therefore, CSOs and donors must build more expertise in the areas of conflict and peace-building in order to better understand the linkages between achieving development and overcoming fragility. In this regard, it is promising that the EU-US Development Dialogue has chosen development and security as a focus area. Donors can additionally support the changing of mindsets by funding research on understanding the drivers of conflict and how they hinder development. Research should also address emerging forms of conflict to prepare for the ever-changing landscape of conflict; emphasis could be put on early-warning systems (EWS) and tools to anticipate increasingly unpredictable patterns of conflict.
2. **Give conflict and peace-building greater prominence in the post-2015 agenda:** The final report of the Post-2015 High-Level Panel suggests a Post-MDG called “ensure stable and peaceful societies”. Donors and CSOs should use this suggestion as a starting point for further discussions on how to address conflict and peace-building in the post-MDG agenda and to mobilize their negotiation power to ensure that the post-MDG agenda includes a set of goals and targets to support progress towards universal peace and the concept of human security. Donors and CSOs should also raise their voices to ensure that drivers of conflict, such as gender and income inequalities as well as food insecurity and lack of access to farmland, are included in the post-MDG agenda in relation to their impact on fragility (see “the role of non-security related reasons for fragility” below). The post-MDG agenda must further tackle global factors fuelling conflict such as transnational organized crime and the flow of illicit arms, drugs and war commodities.

Stress the need for good governance: Development agendas often look at development primarily from an economic perspective. Particularly in fragile states, it is, however, above all a lack of good and democratic governance that undermines development efforts. It is therefore crucial to address the following issues:

1. **Ensure that good governance takes center stage in the post-MDG agenda:** Donors and CSOs have to stress the need for clear goals and targets in the post-MDG agenda

which address the fundamentals of good governance and functioning state-society relations, such as the rule of law, access to independent and well-resourced judicial institutions, free media and transparency and accountability of the public sector. Beyond that, donors should demand and support security sector reforms in fragile states in order to increase accountability and capacity of security forces and the police. In the fight against corruption, it can be rewarding if donors channel their support to local CSOs which are driven by values rather than money and are willing to assume the role of critical observers which name and shame societal injustices, such as the culture of impunity.

2. **Support democratic processes and institutions:** As democracy has been left out almost completely in the High-Level Panel Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, EU and US donors should step in and argue for the benefits of democratic systems more than ever before. This becomes even more important in light of recent crises in Western democracies, such as the government shut-down in the US, and the apparent economic success of autocratic states which together put at risk democratic developments in Africa. In particular, donors should invest in democratic institutions and help strengthen party systems, while increasing support of CSOs which support local level democracy and promote civic education.

Strengthen collaboration: Besides promoting the issues of development and security, donors and CSOs should strengthen collaboration at all levels. More investments in conflict prevention and peace-building must go hand in hand with efforts to increase in-country coordination between donors and CSOs. Inclusive development is the overall goal and requires including donors, local governments and civil society in planning and implementing adequate programs. When defining their approach to conflict and peace-building, donors should also consult and coordinate with regional institutions, such as the the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

Support community-based solutions to fragility: Conflict and peace-building should not only be addressed at the level of states and governments, but be viewed in local contexts which take into account the various causes of conflict and the unique backgrounds of fragile environments. If the lack of national cohesion, ethnic clashes and tribalism fuel conflict, mediation and community-building become crucial issues to overcome the obstacles which hinder integration, stabilization and development. As these processes can partly be facilitated by local CSOs, donors should engage with them as well as support partnerships between governments, communities and civil society which address conflict and peace-building at local level.

Support reintegration of ex-combatants: If a development agenda aims to be conflict-sensitive and if peace-building and stabilization ought to be sustainable, it has to address reintegration of ex-combatants in fragile societies. Three issues are crucial in this regard: the psychological needs of ex-combatants, their economic needs as well as trainings to reintegrate them in the labor market. Donors and CSOs should advocate for these issues to be included in the post-MDG agenda and collaborate on programs which address the specific needs of ex-combatants.

Support for the New Deal on fragile states

Context sensitive approaches and specialized programs are crucial to address poverty reduction for the 1.5 billion people who live in fragile states. To discuss this issue, the g7+ group of conflict-affected countries formed an alliance to outline their shared development challenges and advocate for better international policies to address their needs. The result is the “New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States” which was endorsed in 2011 and centers on five peace-building and state-building goals (PSGs) which address legitimate politics, security, justice, economic issues, and revenue and services. The EU and US have already expressed support for the New Deal, but more potential for progress exists:

Communicate the added value of the New Deal: There exist many development frameworks and it often remains unclear what unique value a single agenda wants to add to development and peace-building. The New Deal is unique in that it revolves around country-led and country-owned transitions out of fragility. It argues that each society must find its own home-grown or bottom-up solutions to achieve development and sustainable peace. Societies must make their own choices about their future and develop their own resilient social institutions. In that sense, the New Deal has a huge potential to become an integral part of global efforts to overcome conflict and poverty, but discussions have thus far taken place mostly within expert circles and on theoretical levels. It is thus the duty of both civil society and donors to communicate the added value of the New Deal and increase its visibility on platforms for peace-building and development as well as among policymakers and practitioners. Moreover, the New Deal has the potential to replace the purely negative and rigid understanding of fragility by emphasizing instead the opportunity of emerging stability. This understanding can contribute to a much more forward-looking approach to development and peace-building.

Be patient but persistent: The concept of fragility has often been restricted in its use to classify countries as fragile or non-fragile, ignoring that every country faces a certain level of fragility and that fragility is a broad spectrum which ranges from acute crisis to rebuilding resilience. The path out of fragility is unique for each country and can potentially take decades in case of highly fragile countries. Realistic expectations and objective timeframes for peace-building and development are therefore crucial. Many external actors, including donors, have often ignored this fact and contributed to the very fragility they wanted to address by imposing unrealistic timeframes on their partners and by insisting on foreign institutional models to be implemented in fragile states. To improve collaboration in the future, donors should accept realistic timeframes which include incremental progress towards stabilization as defined by fragile countries in consultations with their partners and constituencies. Long-term thinking, however, should not imply diminished ambitions. Donors and civil society have to be persistent and ask for clear goals despite longer timeframes.

Integrate relevant actors and define their roles: The New Deal has been developed and driven by fragile countries and international organizations, including from civil society. While this is a promising start, the New Deal has failed to date to define clear roles for its stakeholders and to include CSOs at local level. Confusion about who is responsible for what is widespread and consultations are required to better integrate relevant actors and to define their roles. It is

particularly important to include local civil society to observe and monitor the process, provide inputs to the annual compacts and to create local ownership. EU and US donors should further try to integrate emerging economies in the New Deal as they have their own experiences in how to achieve transition to stable and more prosperous societies and can provide additional technical and financial capacity to drive the New Deal's implementation.

Help to develop and monitor national compacts: Under the term "FOCUS", the New Deal aims to support country-owned and country-led pathways out of fragility, including for each country a periodic fragility assessment, the development of "one vision, one plan", a compact to implement the vision and a mechanism to monitor its implementation. While this concept is theoretically well-founded, its implementation remains a challenge, also as many fragile states lack the capacity to develop national plans, to ensure its implementation and to monitor its progress. To overcome these difficulties, 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. By supporting the development of compacts and channeling funds through the New Deal, donors can also contribute in leveraging the potential of the initiative. Coherence is critical to ensure that the diverse peace-building and development initiatives in one country are as interdependent and coordinated as possible. The development of national compacts is key in this regard and should be the focus of support to the New Deal.

Help to build institutional capacities and resilience: Governmental and institutional capacities, at both national and community level, are critical to stimulate development and to build the resilience required to manage the tensions and risks that challenge the country's progress towards stabilization. The more resilient a society's capacity to manage change, the more able it will be to prevent a relapse into violent conflict and to establish the foundations for durable and self-sustaining peace. Given that, it is crucial that donors, civil society and partner countries define the critical elements that enable a society to develop resilience, to build institutional capacities and to better manage the risk of setbacks. EU and US donors can play an important role in this process by providing support which centers on good governance, capacity building and ensuring that public institutions are accountable to their societies.

The role of non-security related reasons for fragility

Researchers and practitioners increasingly acknowledge that effective development policy in fragile contexts must address social and economic factors, such as income and gender inequality, as well as political factors, such as the non-acceptance of electoral results. A better understanding of these factors is essential for conflict prevention, peace-building and to help stabilizing and rebuilding fragile states. Moreover, the actions of donors and CSOs become more effective and lasting if they are directly shaped to respond to drivers and causes of social and economic instability, as suggested in the following:

Overcome income inequality: African countries have shown an overall economic growth in recent years which, however, did not translate into benefits for most parts of the African population. Income inequality remains at high levels and fuels conflict and fragility. To overcome income inequality, growth has to become more inclusive:

1. **Improve natural resource governance:** Income inequality is particularly widening within countries which are endowed with natural resources and where wealth is held by increasingly smaller groups to the exclusion of the poor. Mechanisms of redistribution are often completely absent. This stresses the need to engage in discussions about how to use natural resources for the benefit of everyone. Donors can help in this regard through introducing and promoting best practice ideas and guiding principles for extractive industries, particularly in countries where extractive industries are on the rise, such as in Mozambique and Tanzania. Initiatives which translate best practices into national standards and promote good governance, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), should be supported and implemented at the country level.
2. **Create jobs and promote private sector development:** High unemployment rates increase income inequality and are drivers of conflict and fragility, above all the high rates of youth unemployment. To address these issues, educational programs that are responsive to the needs of local labor markets, private sector development which creates jobs and added value, and the integration of businesses into regional and global markets need to be prioritized, also by donors and CSOs. Moreover, both donor and developing countries have to hold their companies accountable for engagement in fragile and conflict-affected states and should encourage them to create added value at local levels, for example through mineral beneficiation, skills transfer and supporting livelihoods through initiatives that promote local procurement.
3. **Support smallholders and address food insecurity:** In fragile and conflict-affected states, food insecurity and insecure incomes of rural populations remain a major impediment to development and stabilization. Besides supporting smallholders, donors should help governments to build capacities and implement policies which can, among others, ensure the land rights of farmers and protect them from volatile food prices, for example through creating and strengthening social safety nets or access to new markets. Potentials to leverage resources and expertise of the private sector should also be given greater attention.

Overcome social inequalities: Income inequality is not the only cleavage which divides societies and increases the risk of conflict and fragility. Gender inequality, discrimination against ethnic or religious minorities and marginalized groups are equally severe threats to development and stabilization. Donors should therefore ensure that gender equality and the inclusion of marginalized groups are an integral part of all activities and programs that they conduct and fund. Moreover, governmental partners should be held accountable for ensuring the integration and proper political representation and participation of minorities and disadvantaged groups. CSOs also play an important role in this process and could be supported by donors to act as local advocates for the underprivileged parts of society.

Address global factors fueling conflict and fragility: Although fragility is closely connected to the failure of domestic political institutions, corruption and violence, global factors which fuel conflict or prevent stabilization must not be underestimated, including diverse issues such as climate change, financial crises, commodity price volatility, transnationally organized crime, the flow of illicit arms and drugs and war commodities. Donors and CSOs should raise these issues in development debates and support international processes to address them jointly. Illicit capital flows are particularly detrimental to development as they siphon valuable resources from countries where they are generated and are most needed. Donors can help local governments to build financial management and taxation systems, while CSOs need to address the corruption which underlies and enables illicit capital flows.

Support country-owned approaches to development: Development is most effective if it is locally driven, including in fragile contexts. Donors should take this into consideration if they want to engage in successful collaboration and foster development as well as stabilization:

1. **Define development agendas at local level:** Development has often been defined unilaterally by donors and solutions to development have been imposed on developing countries. Such policies often failed due to a lack of ownership and understanding of local contexts. Policies have to respond to local needs, not to external interests. Local narratives have to shape responses to development and agendas need to be based on home-grown approaches. Donors can support these processes by sharing their expertise and by coordinating their support and aligning their policies and programs with what local, regional and national strategies as well as local CSOs have defined as their development priorities, for example, as part of the New Deal's national contracts.
2. **Help governments to provide social services and hold them accountable:** Fragile and conflict-affected states often fail to provide basic social services which usually reduce the states' legitimacy and increase fragility and poverty. Weak institutions and a lack of political will further undermine the states' ability to provide social services and to overcome fragility. EU and US donors can play a crucial role in overcoming such paralysis by positioning themselves as enablers for norms and positive change. Led by values instead of geopolitical interests, EU and US donors should promote reforms and deploy their full potential through helping to build institutions that can provide basic social services and through asking for equity, transparency and accountability in government activities. Civil society can play an oversight role in these processes, by providing independent mechanisms to monitor and track corruption and inefficiencies.