

**Civil Society Input into the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Working Group Meeting in Kinshasa, 13-14 April 2011**

**1 Introduction**

This document has been compiled based on consultations among a number of civil society organizations and civil society networks coordinated by Interpeace. It is presented with the best interest of citizens in conflict affected areas in mind. It draws on the perspectives of civil society organizations involved in relief, development, peacebuilding and statebuilding in several countries experiencing challenges of conflict and fragility around the world – as well as international civil society organizations focusing on these issues. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of Interpeace.

This input draws on a variety of sources, including a day of discussion and feedback on a draft version of this paper by representatives of International Alert, Saferworld, West African Network for Peacebuilding, African CSO Platform for Principled Partnership, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office and Interpeace in The Hague (April 2011).

The perspectives in this statement build on previous statements by civil society expressed in the run up to the Dili meeting and the resulting Declaration. The following are of particular relevance to aid instruments and capacity development:

- The International Dialogue should keep in mind the end goal: building lasting peace and reviving (or creating) the social contract between the people and their State.
- Each situation has its own dynamics and key actors. What may be necessary and sufficient for one situation is not so for the other.
- Peacebuilding and statebuilding are political undertakings that require real political will – not least from national governments. An absence of such will may produce frustrated expectations, provoke new conflicts, and damage the credibility of new democratic institutions.
- If the state was party to the conflict, strengthening it will not necessarily contribute to peace.
- The International Dialogue should consider how donors can better work not only with the government and the State, but also with society at large.

**2 For the working group on aid instruments:**

*A consistent focus on conflict prevention*

Aid should support peacebuilding efforts in the long term – even when conflict is no longer visible. For example, in the Middle East, many places that would not previously have been classified as ‘conflict-affected’ could have benefitted from concerted earlier support to constructive change. Instead they are now undergoing serious unrest and conflict. At all times, it is thus the task of all state- and peacebuilding efforts to begin from the premise that it is the society that we are working with, and that it is their peace that we seek, not simply that of the state or governments. Supporting peace means aid not only working *in* conflict affected societies but also working *on* conflict dynamics effectively at all times.

- **In a much broader range of countries, but especially in fragile states, donors and partner governments should develop a strategy to address drivers of conflict based on conflict analysis and a credible theory of change.**

It should be noted that aid can be undermined by other kinds of co-operation. For example, provision of military support can embolden a state to avoid undertaking democratic reforms, or financial support can enable a ruling party to win an upcoming election regardless of its management of the economy. Thus decisions about what external actors provide must be taken considering the impact this will have on conflict dynamics between groups.

- **All external engagement in trade and investment, military cooperation and political dialogue should be consistent with a focus on peace and the strategy for supporting relief and development through better aid.**

#### *Tailoring aid instruments to the context*

Different aid instruments are appropriate in different contexts. It is important the group recognizes the political impact of using specific aid instruments in relation to a specific context. For example, in some countries viewed as 'success stories' it has been felt that on-budget support has strengthened the state in a context where pluralism and democratic space has been weakened. In the long term, underemphasizing the importance of off-budget support to a broad range of societal actors may undermine positive state-society relations, reduce the ability to manage differences constructively, and ultimately lead to renewed conflict.

- **Aid instruments should be developed with an open mind, based on analysis of conflict and governance dynamics, and awareness of the political consequences of using different models.**

As has been acknowledged in other working groups on planning and political dialogue, there should be broader societal input into how aid is allocated and targeted (through planning processes that ensure the agenda of the poor and marginalized is the focus of donor alignment). Civil society recognises that it *is* positive to move beyond a donor driven agenda, and to align quickly and unequivocally behind *genuine* positive transitions. However, in many conflict-affected and fragile contexts there is not yet a clear enough commitment to take forward such a positive transition. In these contexts, civil society has concerns about the discourse encouraging donors to accept risks in channeling support to fragile states and make aid more predictable. Swifter alignment and use of country systems may be beneficial in contexts of positive transition – but could be dangerous elsewhere.

International dialogue participants should consider whether alignment and use of country systems are appropriate in contexts where, for example, the recipient government has used state budgets to win elections, committed major violations of electoral law, increased military expenditures disproportionately, committed war crimes or violence against women.

- **Donors should require clear indications of progress on fundamental peacebuilding and statebuilding principles before committing to alignment and use of country systems in fragile and conflict affected contexts. Alignment and use of country systems should be reserved for contexts where:**
  - **Planning processes are inclusive and equitable between groups, including women**
  - **There is progress towards democratic, responsive and accountable governance,**
  - **The state is taking all feasible steps to uphold and fulfil international humanitarian law and human rights,**
  - **The state is tackling corruption,**
  - **Outcomes of peace agreements and planning processes are being implemented on time,**
  - **Aid is reaching communities.**

### *Monitoring and adjusting instruments in conflict affected contexts*

Alongside these conditions, civil society feels there must be a way to ensure aid advances the vision of peacebuilding and statebuilding set out in Dili and other internationally shared values such as human rights. An example of how this could work in practice is the process under which the EU monitors implementation of commitments to human rights instruments in determining whether states qualify to benefit from its Generalised System of Preferences trade scheme.

- **There should be a mechanism for monitoring progress towards these results, and this should include a role for civil society and a cross-section of the public in holding states to account.**
- **The mechanism should also be made meaningful with more political will to channel aid through non-budgetary channels when fundamental peacebuilding and statebuilding principles are being ignored.**

### *Doing no harm – and doing some good*

Existing commitments to be conflict sensitive and do no harm<sup>1</sup> have rarely been translated into action. In many countries, different social groups and especially the parties to a conflict have fought for the power and resources that aid injects. For example, a youth centre built in one village may be burnt down by its neighbours. But when different groups have a role in deciding how aid is to be shared (and under what criteria) and have ways to feedback on unfair aid allocation, this can reduce the potential for such divisions.

- **Aid instruments should be designed to ensure benefits are shared in a way that reduces rather than enhances divisions, from national down to local level.**
- **Decentralised structures, shadow alignment and community development funds may be useful ways to avoid strengthening some groups and actors while marginalising others.**

### *Meeting emergency needs and supporting state-society relations*

Off budget support to CSOs to maintain essential relief, services and protection is necessary and has important benefits in some contexts. In many conflict contexts, the state is absent from large geographic areas, or unable to provide food, water, shelter, medical services and protection to huge numbers of vulnerable people. Until the state is able and willing to take responsibility to protect and provide for war-affected people, off budget support can be crucial to save lives and maintain essential services. When national governments remain unstable for protracted periods, much can be achieved by working from the bottom up – giving communities voice, means and processes to resolve problems with local stakeholders. After conflict, continued donor support for vibrant civil society is crucial to maintain the healthy state-society relations promoted by the Dili Declaration.

- **Existing capacities of local civil society organisations should be better recognised and supported by continued use of off-budget support.**
- **Domestic civil society organisations should have better access to international donor funds particularly to:**
  - **Develop their own capacity, and that of the public, to hold government to account and advocate for positive change,**
  - **Assist in connecting communities to the state,**
  - **Provide essential services until the state becomes able and willing to do so, and**
  - **Support the state’s longer-term organisational development and sustainability.**
- **Donors should take steps to ensure application processes are accessible to organisations of different capacities.**

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, in the Accra Agenda for Action and OECD fragile states principles

*Effective aid management in conflict-affected and fragile contexts*

In conflict affected contexts, trying to reduce transaction costs through harmonizing aid delivery and reducing staffing levels can sometimes be a false economy. There are positive and negative sides of harmonization – for instance, MDTFs may be poor at supporting creative, innovative and sensitive activities and local organisations.

- **Donors should maintain higher staffing levels in complex and rapidly changing fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Officials should remain in post for longer and have the opportunity to pursue career paths focused on conflict and fragility. This is necessary to retain institutional knowledge and expertise so that donors can understand and respond to changing dynamics with more flexible and responsive programme management. This is particularly important so that donors can maintain direct support to a range of local actors.**
- **Some non-pooled, bilateral aid delivery should be maintained to ensure progress in politically sensitive but crucial areas of peacebuilding and statebuilding - such as the protection of women and children noted as a key challenge in the Dili Declaration.**

**For more information on the CSO engagement with the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, or would you wish to contribute as a CSO to this process, please contact [pbsb@interpeace.org](mailto:pbsb@interpeace.org)**