

THE INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON PEACEBUILDING AND STATEBUILDING. IN BRIEF.

20 March 2012

I. WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE?

The decision to initiate an International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) originated at the 3rd High Level meeting on Aid Effectiveness in Accra (Ghana - September 2008). Its 'first phase' culminated in the 4th High Level meeting on Aid Effectiveness in Busan (South Korea - December 2011). But the discussion on aid effectiveness in so-called 'fragile states' and situations of fragility had begun earlier. In 2007 OECD DAC Development Ministers and Heads of Agencies endorsed a Policy Commitment and set of "Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations of Conflict".

These Principles aim to complement the commitments set out in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness which had acknowledged the need to adapt its principles for effective development to differing country situations, particularly fragile states. The Principles recognise that:

- ▶ Fragile states confront particularly severe development challenges such as weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crisis, persistent social tensions, violence or the legacy of civil war.
- ▶ A durable exit from poverty and insecurity for the world's most fragile states will need to be driven by their own leadership and people.
- ▶ Although international engagement will not by itself put an end to state fragility, the adoption of the shared principles can help maximize the positive impact of engagement and minimise unintentional harm.

The IDPS therefore must be understood against the background of a wider international policy dialogue on poverty reduction and on aid effectiveness. Key references there are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Paris Principles on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. The IDPS was then initiated to provide a platform for participants to

- ▶ **share** peacebuilding and statebuilding experiences
- ▶ **gather and discuss** good practices and constraints to delivering effective international assistance in support of peacebuilding and statebuilding
- ▶ **identify** a realistic set of objectives for peacebuilding and statebuilding that could guide national and international partners
- ▶ **build trust** between participating countries and organisations.

II. WHO PARTICIPATES IN THE IDPS?

The key participants in the IDPS are the "g7+" and the "INCAF" group.

The 'g7+' group is a voluntary association of the governments of 19 currently fragile and conflict affected countries, notably Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Nepal, Somalia, Burundi, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Ethiopia, Togo, Haiti, and Afghanistan, Timor Leste, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Liberia & Sierra Leone.

The "INCAF" stands for the International Network on Conflict and Fragility, and is largely made up of aid donor countries.

So far the IDPS has been essentially an ‘inter-state dialogue’. ‘Civil society’ participates, though not with equal status as the ‘states’. In 2010-11 the UN occasionally participated but usually in a ‘technical role’. Recently, the World Bank and African Development Bank are beginning to show active interest. The London based research organisation Overseas Development Institute periodically provided thematic/technical input, and has occasionally been called upon by the g7+ Secretariat. Consultants are also hired in to do preparatory work on specific topics.

II. WHAT DID THE IDPS ACHIEVE IN 2010-2011?

Central topics of conversation have been:

- a. The nature of a situation of *‘fragility’*, and the challenges for states with weak capacities and faced with challenges of conflict and violence to make significant progress towards *achieving the MDGs*;
- b. The question of *‘political dialogue’ and ‘legitimate politics’*, with particular emphasis on inclusive and participatory politics and on implementation of agreements;
- c. The problems associated with *planning in situations of instability and fragility*, notably the burden of multiple planning exercises, the challenges of adequately incorporating peacebuilding and statebuilding objectives, the need for flexibility, questions over planning time horizons and the value of a ‘national vision’, and donors supporting interventions not in line with the agreed plan;
- d. The relative *ineffectiveness of much external support to capacity-development*, notably with regard to procurement procedures that work against local providers, with regard to so-called ‘technical assistance’ (too supply driven and fragmented, often not sustained enough, not necessarily the right people), and with regard to the market distortions caused by salary differentials;
- e. The problems arising from the frequent *choice of aid instruments* that bypass the national systems, the lack of information about aid flows that do so, the high degree of uncertainty about sustained aid flows, the need for national governments to raise their internal revenues and the need to strengthen mutual accountability.

Closely linked to these conversations are also the critical topics of *‘results’* and *‘risk’*. Although these haven’t been focused on in the same way as the above topics, they have come up in the broader conversations, voiced mostly though not only by donors.

The IDPS also produced 3 important agreed documents, the **‘Dili Declaration’** (April 2010), the **‘Monrovia Roadmap’** (July 2011) and the **‘New Deal’** (December 2011). A comparative reading of the three Declarations shows some of the evolution and progress made during these first two years of the IDPS, but also that complementarities exist between the three Declarations: The Dili Declaration Annex **articulates commitments of fragile state governments to their populations**; the Monrovia Roadmap Annex **explains the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals but also the Cross-cutting Issues**; while the New Deal document concentrates **on commitments to improve the relationship between internal and external assistance actors**, and the effectiveness of the efforts undertaken. It would therefore be *an error* in future *to only look at the ‘New Deal’* and to disregard the Dili Declaration and the Monrovia Roadmap and their respective and very important annexes.

IV. A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT 2010-11.

So far the IDPS has made some significant contributions and been an incubator for some innovative developments.

- It has *reintroduced* concerns about violence, conflict and peace into the mainstream development paradigm whose ‘Millennium Development Goals’ were the depoliticized and technocratic version of a Millennium Declaration (2000) that did talk about peace, security, human rights, disarmament, democracy and good governance;
- It provided a platform where governments of states that others had labeled as ‘fragile’, could voice *their* views, concerns and expectations. It became an opportunity for so-called ‘fragile states’ to discover their common concerns and develop common perspectives and proposals/demands for more and more efficient and effective assistance. This led to the creation of the “g7+” group of ‘fragile and conflict-affected states’, which has currently 19 members (the number of states called ‘fragile’ in various ‘fragility indexes’ tends to be higher);
- It has generated *a certain momentum* among aid donors and aid recipient governments to stop lamenting the ‘fragility’ and join efforts to move towards ‘resilience’;
- It confirmed the central importance of *state-society relations* in the pursuit of a legitimate state and sustainable peace;
- Its core declarations (Dili Declaration with its g7+ Statement in Annex; Monrovia Roadmap with its important Annex, and the ‘New Deal’ document) are *less ‘sanitized’ of any politics* than tends to be the case in such public inter-state documents, and overtly include the subject of ‘political dialogue/legitimate politics’.

These are significant achievements. Yet a proper appreciation of the IDPS between Accra and Busan also requires understanding and acknowledgment of what it has *not* talked about and left unexamined.

- ‘Misleading title’: Notwithstanding some work on and references to political dialogue and legitimate politics, it is fair to say that this so far has been a dialogue (and sometimes a quasi-negotiation) about ‘*aid and aid flows to fragile and conflict-affected states*’ rather than a dialogue about ‘peacebuilding and statebuilding’. A clear indicator of this is the profile of participants in the IDPS for the g7+, who overwhelmingly came from Ministries of Finance, Economic Affairs and/or Planning and from ‘aid coordination’ units therein. These are indeed core interlocutors for discussions about aid, but not normally the places in government where the mandate for ‘peacebuilding’ is situated.
- ‘Fragility’: Fragility’ is a central concept at the origins of and in the IDPS. It is rather surprising then that the Dialogue did *not* bother to unpack this vague concept, and examine what it actually refers to in reality. Throughout there has been a strong and unchallenged *assumption* that countries like South Sudan, the DRC, Burundi, Afghanistan, Timor Leste and others actually have a lot in common because they are all considered ‘fragile states’. Would it not be more realistic to assume that these countries are fairly *different in the nature, scope and reasons for their persistent fragility* (and in their potential sources of ‘resilience’). Nor did the IDPS pay any attention to why countries slide into fragility and large scale violence? Surely learning more about the ‘*pathways of descent into violence and fragility*’ is highly relevant when working on the ‘pathways out of fragility’?

- Priority to ‘statebuilding’: Another question left unexamined so far is that of the relationship between ‘statebuilding and peacebuilding’. The Dialogue has operated on the *assumption* that both are mutually reinforcing. Given its origins in questions of aid effectiveness and the difficulties of using the ‘normal’ development aid approaches and instruments in situations where the national government counterpart is ‘fragile’, not surprisingly the IDPS has tended to focus more on ‘statebuilding’ than on ‘peacebuilding’. A weak state that can’t provide protection and services to its people, and that is largely bypassed by international aid actors, is a problem indeed and a very appropriate topic of discussion. But an *assumption* that ‘stronger’ state institutions will automatically increase the chances of ‘durable peace’ has been and needs to be challenged.
- Better peacebuilding: There is a reasonable but *insufficiently examined assumption* that ‘better aid’ will also mean *greater peacebuilding effectiveness* and higher chances of sustained peace. But much of course will depend on *what* a more capable state with higher quantity and better quality of financial resources will actually do – and *how* it will do it?
- Resilience in aid providers: Evaluations reveal that over the past 5 years –by and large- the aid providers have only made modest changes in the way they do business. Evidence of efficiency and effectiveness problems with aid has been around for long and generally tends to point at similar things. The ‘New Deal’ is partially innovative but otherwise is a new document to talk about old questions. The IDPS so far has not examined the reasons for this remarkable resistance to change of Official Development Assistance providers.

IV. WHAT IS THE INTENDED WORKPLAN 2012?

Post-Busan, the IDPS will take different shape and have two main strands:

- Pilot testing the implementation of the New Deal: In 7 countries that have volunteered to do so: Afghanistan, Timor Leste, Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Sudan, Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Donor governments may also volunteer to partner with some of them.
- Ongoing work on the global level: This may be organised into two major ‘Working Groups’:
 - *Working Group 1* will a) promote the Peace and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) in key international fora such as the UN General Assembly and the UN Peacebuilding Commission, b) promote the incorporation of PSGs in the post-2015/post-MDG development framework.
 - *Working Group 2* will a) Develop practical guidance for New Deal implementation – and presumably also receive feedback from the pilot country experiences, and b) develop indicators to assess country level progress towards the five Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals. This group will have its first meeting 28-29 March in Copenhagen.

It is not clear so far if and what may take place in those g7+ countries that have *not* come forward as pilots!?

V. CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE IDPS.

Effective civil society participation in the IDPS has not been easy in 2010-11, for various reasons:

- Broader knowledge of the policy references: Given that the IDPS is inserted into a wider policy dialogue on aid effectiveness, and had set for itself as primary objective for 2011 the articulation of some key messages to HLF4, participants in the IDPS need to develop a broader understanding of that wider policy dialogue, and key references in it
- Members and participants: The IDPS has been an interstate dialogue, with only state representatives from aid providing and aid recipient countries recognized as ‘members’. Civil society was welcomed but with the status of ‘participant’, which means its voice does not need to be given the same weight as that of state representatives.
- Competitors for limited resources?: As the focus on money flows gained importance in the conversation, at least some participants from ‘g7+’ countries started showing reluctance to seeing references to society and specifically civil society included in the core documents that the IDPS was producing. This was probably indicative of a strained relationship between state and civil society in certain countries, and of a concern that the state institutions were competing with non-state actors for the limited aid resources. The fact that donors not infrequently bypass the state and provide aid and other assistance via non-state channels means that this perception is not unfounded.
- Time pressure: Particularly in 2011, the IDPS process has been characterized by a constant feeling of ‘rush’: inputs had to be produced, drafts commented upon etc. typically within a very short period of time, requiring from the participating agencies almost a standing capacity dedicated to this Dialogue.
- A small core group: By default rather than by design the CSO engagement was generally carried by a small core group of individuals/organisations. This was perhaps inevitable given the need to be able to very closely follow the IDPS process and to respond on very short notice, and to have quite an amount of thematic knowledge and insight into the wider policy processes and politics around ‘aid effectiveness’. This core group never pretended to be ‘representative’.
- Southern engagement but rarely sustained: At all major meetings there was a good balance between CSO people from the so-called ‘North’ and ‘South’ – but few of those from the ‘South’ continued to be engaged.
- Poorly resourced: The CSO engagement with the IDPS had to happen with very limited financial and hence human resources. Until mid-2011 there was essentially only a budget for some CSO people to travel to the various IDPS meetings, and almost no provision for staff time. Interpeace provided the platform for CSO input. It and the other most active organisations contributed significant amount of staff time from their own resources.

Notwithstanding these challenges and constraints, the feedback we received suggests that we did relatively well: We became increasingly timely, our written contributions were relevant and of good quality, we build on evidence, we often came across in meetings as ‘the best prepared’ group, we

increased our communications as of mid-2011, and we played an important role in protecting the vital role of ‘society’ in the official Declarations. We were certainly acutely aware of the need to broaden out CSO participation in the process, particularly among CSOs in ‘fragile and conflict-affected’ situations. To that effect, there has been a major outreach effort in early 2012, and a gathering of CSO people from a diversity of countries in Nairobi in late March.

VI. CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIETY IN THE IDPS AND THE BUSAN DECLARATION.

Non-state actors are repeatedly referred to in the three IDPS declarations, in different ways: ‘citizens’, ‘civil society’, ‘women’, ‘youth’, ‘children’, ‘marginalised groups’, ‘excluded groups’, ‘vulnerable groups’, ‘minorities’, ‘refugees’ or in general as ‘people’, ‘the public’ or ‘all groups in society’.

Both the Dili Declaration and the Monrovia Roadmap Annex very clearly emphasise the “*centrality of state-society relations*”, and the importance of building trust between the state and its institutions and ‘citizens’ or ‘people’. In the ‘New Deal’ (p. 3) this question of trust is even expanded: “*An essential pre-condition for progress in all of the New Deal’s commitments is to foster confidence between people, communities, the state and international partners.*”

There are four critical considerations here:

- Civil society and ‘society’ at large: A distinction is rightfully made between ‘civil society’ and ‘society’ at large (the people, the public, citizens). There is no assumption that ‘civil society’ can or will effectively ‘represent’ the population at large in discussions about aid allocations, aid effectiveness, pathways out of fragility and progress towards achieving the peacebuilding and statebuilding goals. Just like the state institutions, civil society needs to establish and demonstrate its effective and legitimate connection to and for society at large;
- The agency of ‘society’ and ‘civil society’: A key issue in the practical implementation of these various commitments, of governments to their populations, and of international assistance actors to the stakeholders in the receiving society, will be to what degree the public and civil society are seen as legitimate ‘actors’ or rather passive ‘recipients’ and ‘evaluators’ of the actions of the state? Often used words are ‘inclusion’, ‘consultation’, ‘participation’ and on one occasion ‘empowerment’ (of women, youth and marginalized groups, in the New Deal p.1). It is also stated that one national vision and plan “*will be country owned and –led, developed in consultation with civil society*” (New Deal p.2), and that a country-level ‘*compact will be drawn upon a broad range of views from multiple stakeholders and the public, and be reviewed annually through a multi-stakeholder review.*” (New Deal p.2). The New Deal also repeats two points already made in the Monrovia Annex i.e. “*We recognize that an engaged public and civil society, which constructively monitor decision-making, is important to ensure accountability*”, and the intention to “*understand the views of people on results achieved*” and then adds: “*We will solicit citizen’s views to assess the transparency of domestic resources and aid.*” (New Deal p.3). The first challenge will be to ensure that this promised ‘consultation’ and ‘participation’ etc. is real and not tokenistic and meaningless, and that ‘all stakeholders’ or ‘multi-stakeholder’ processes involve non-state actors effectively. The second challenge will be for these non-state actors to show themselves not only critical and negative, but also able to work constructively with the state to resolve problems and make sustained improvements.

- Capacities of non-state actors: If constructive ‘state-society’ relations are central to the questions of ‘resilience’ to ‘shocks’ in general and to violence and fragility in particular, then capacities need to be strengthened not only in the state but also in wider society. The Monrovia Roadmap and the New Deal again contain some references to this. The first one refers to the building of capacities for reconciliation and conflict resolution ‘*at all levels*’ (Annex p.1), the second to building “*critical capacities of institutions of the state and civil society in a balanced manner*” (p.3) and to building “*the capacity of government and civil society leaders and institutions to lead peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts*” (idem p.3).
- The practical interpretation of ‘national’: The desire of the executive branch of a central-government to ‘lead’ national efforts and to exercise its authority in doing so is understandable and legitimate. Yet at the same time it will be critically important that ‘national ownership’, ‘nationally-led’, ‘national capacities’ etc. do not become a pretext for the de facto exclusion of other state and non-state actors. There are two strategic reasons for not doing so: In these particular contexts the government typically still faces the challenge of gaining and maintaining the trust of the population at large, and the task is so immense that even a determined and well-resourced government can’t do it alone. The constructive energies and efforts of all actors in society are required and need to be mobilized. Worth mentioning here is the fairly systematic absence in the process of the IDPS and in these key declarations, of parliament and of local government – two state institutions that typically should be closer to the people than a central government executive branch.

The Busan Declaration is more explicit in its recognition of civil society organisations (CSOs) as legitimate actors. It holds that “*Civil society organisations play a vital role in enabling people to claim their rights, in promoting rights-based approaches, in shaping development policies and partnerships, and in overseeing their implementation. (...) Recognising this, we will*

a) Implement fully our respective commitments to enable CSOs to exercise their roles as independent development actors, with a particular focus on an enabling environment, consistent with agreed international rights, that maximizes the contribution of CSOs to development;

b) Encourage CSOs to implement practices that strengthen their accountability and their contribution to development effectiveness, guided by the Istanbul Principles and the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness.” (paragraph 22)

It also more explicitly acknowledges the critical roles that parliaments and local governments can or should be playing “*in linking citizens with government to ensure broad-based and democratic ownership of countries’ development agendas.*” (paragraph 21)

The Declarations from the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, and the Busan Declaration therefore are again partially reinforcing but should also be taken as complementary in certain areas.

This is a summary of 7 (English) Briefing Papers which can be downloaded from
<http://www.interpeace.org/index.php/civil-society>