March 2014

Assessing Civil Society Engagement with the New Deal

Opportunities and Challenges

Kristen Wall and Rachel Fairhurst

Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT

Alliance for Peacebuilding

Contents

This report is a product of the **Strengthening Peacebuilding Policy through Civil Society Empowerment project**, a collaborative partnership among:

- The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP)
- The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
- The Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame

The authors, Kristen Wall and Rachel Fairhurst, are research staff at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.

This report was made possible with support from the **Rockefeller Brothers Fund**. The opinions and views of the authors do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Fund.

Foreword

This report analyzes the role of civil society in implementing the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (the New Deal), which emerged from the International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) in 2011. It assesses the degree of civil society engagement in parallel international and national processes and identifies contributions civil society has made to the New Deal process and the challenges that exist to greater civil society engagement.

The report is based on interviews with twenty-one international and national civil society leaders involved in the New Deal process. Perspectives are included from eight countries implementing the New Deal. Interviewees included nine civil society leaders from six of the official New Deal pilot countries (Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, South Sudan, and Sierra Leone); five civil society leaders from Burundi, Togo, and regional African organizations; and eight representatives from international nongovernmental organizations based in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands.

Executive Summary

In spite of significant challenges to their full engagement in the New Deal process, civil society actors have made notable contributions to its implementation. Civil society engagement reflects a core tenet of the New Deal, which recognizes that strengthening state-society relations is "at the heart" of bringing countries out of fragility.[1]

While the pace of New Deal implementation varies across states, in the majority of contexts civil society actors exhibit a high amount of determination and commitment to the process, despite limited resources and often slow progress. Many civil society representatives involved in the New Deal see it as an unprecedented opportunity to bring issues of peacebuilding, development, and government accountability to the fore of national and international agendas. They believe the principles of the New Deal are sound and that the fragility assessments and indicators developed to date offer unprecedented leverage to promote accountable development and peacebuilding efforts in fragile countries.

Civil society leaders have facilitated broad and in some cases national conversations in pilot states to raise awareness of the New Deal and promote its implementation. As part of their efforts to build awareness of and support for the New Deal, civil society actors are strengthening national and international cross-sector coalitions of a broad range of civil society organizations (CSOs) working in peacebuilding, development, human rights, gender equality, and environmental protection.

The process itself is deepening relationships and communication channels among actors that previously operated in silos. It has created a space for civil society to engage with their governments on highly political issues, enabling conversations that previously would have been unthinkable. The process has encouraged the emergence of new and credible civil society leaders from the global South, providing them with a platform at both national and international levels.

Through the official New Deal Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS), civil society leaders have provided key technical knowledge and advice that has been adopted into New Deal documents. For example, civil society representatives helped formulate and advocate for sex-disaggregated data that will allow pilot countries to track progress on key indicators for women. At the international level, civil society leaders advocated successfully for the adoption of key mechanisms such as global indicators across pilot countries and perception-based indicators to ensure citizen experiences are represented when assessing country progress towards peacebuilding and statebuilding goals.

National civil society groups advocate for a robust definition of country ownership and seek to broaden awareness of and build public accountability for the New Deal's implementation. Most believe that accountability for the New Deal must come from bottom-up advocacy and an engaged citizenry, in addition to a supportive international process. Activists in pilot countries are tracking government progress on New Deal implementation and act as advocates to hold governments accountable for their New Deal commitments. They stress the importance of mutual accountability and holding donor states to their commitments as well.

Across the pilot states, civil society has sought to build political momentum on the New Deal — advocating to parliamentarians, cabinet ministers, and other government officials for its meaningful implementation. Civil society from the g7+ countries often hold themselves responsible for helping develop more positive state-society relationships that are at the heart of the New Deal. They have reached out persistently to government officials, in some cases building new state-society bridges and carving out a role for civil society in national policymaking.

Despite these contributions, significant challenges remain to civil society's engagement in the process and the implementation of the New Deal itself. Civil society engagement at the national level varies across pilot countries and depends on several factors, including the degree of government activity around the New Deal, government openness to civil society, and the preexisting organizational and advocacy capacity of the CSO sector.

Many g7+ governments are hesitant to empower civil society actors as full partners and are wary of civil society's efforts to hold them accountable to New Deal commitments. The g7+ governments have been reluctant to embrace civil society-backed mechanisms such as global indicators and perception-based indicators, seeing them as potential threats to their political legitimacy rather than a means of facilitating effective development. In some contexts governments have attempted to establish parallel networks of government-backed CSOs rather than work with CSPPS representatives.

A tension between the technical and political aspects of the New Deal process, and insufficient g7+ buy-in, are perhaps the greatest challenges to successful implementation. A low level of government engagement and awareness characterizes most contexts. Few ministries or elected officials outside of the government ministry designated as the New Deal focal point are aware of the process. Participants in the international dialogue are often technical experts who do not have the political authority to advocate for the political support needed to ensure governmental commitment and buy-in to the New Deal. Conversely, seemingly technical decisions can have highly political implications that must be resolved to move the process forward. Donor states also demonstrate varied levels of commitment and prioritization of the New Deal.

At the international level, civil society faces bureaucratic, logistical, and resource barriers that obstruct participation. While CSOs have been included in international meetings, they do not have formally allocated seats, and representatives often face difficulties securing visas. Efforts to address these logistical challenges place a significant drain on the energy and capacity of the CSPPS.

Within the CSO Platform the disparity in technological capacity, particularly in pilot countries, poses a participation barrier and results in lower visibility, inconsistent engagement and less collaboration with and among pilot state CSOs. The rapid pace of the New Deal process poses challenges to meaningful civil society engagement, as multi-sectoral civil society networks have taken time to form and civil society organizations have fewer resources to respond to the large volume of materials disseminated by the IDPS Secretariat for review.

Due to the multi-leveled nature of the New Deal process, there can be a difference between the priorities and political approaches of international and national CSOs. Northern organizations reference donors, g7+, and civil society as primary stakeholders. Pilot country CSOs see the national population as a key stakeholder that must be included in the New Deal process. Differences in the two approaches create a lack of coordination between national and international strategies to promote the New Deal. More clarity about the complementarity and place of both approaches within a unified strategy could lead to greater successes.

An initial imbalance of North-South civil society representation in the international process was recently corrected, but has contributed to perceptions of Northern predominance in the IDPS dialogue and contributed to g7+ ambivalence towards the CSPPS. Some Southern CSOs want greater support from the CSPPS in terms of funding and advocacy at national and international levels. Northern NGOs are perceived to have unrealized advocacy opportunities to support Southern CSOs, by holding donor and g7+ governments accountable to their commitments and ensuring greater support for the process. The CSPPS has increasingly emphasized the importance of collective action and mobilization of donor funds to support Southern CSOs in their efforts.

Integrating the New Deal with existing development plans is an ongoing challenge. In most contexts, there is lower awareness of the New Deal than other peace, development, or anti-poverty plans. Overlapping but distinct indicators for different national development or peacebuilding plans divides attention and limited resources. Some criticize the New Deal for not addressing corruption in aid or the need to cultivate the eventual financial independence and self-sufficiency of g7+ governments. Growing impressions of a lack of donor and g7+ commitment to the New Deal may gradually diminish support for the process. Despite these not insubstantial challenges, civil society actors at national and international levels have expressed strong commitment to New Deal principles and continue to work for its implementation.

Background

The International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS or the Dialogue) emerged from the third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Accra, Ghana, in 2008. Motivated by a consensus among donor and fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS) that the dominant global development framework as embodied in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had failed in contexts of conflict and fragility, the IDPS represents a new and innovative global forum to address crosscutting issues of conflict, development, and peacebuilding. Comprised of partner countries, bilateral donors, multilateral organizations, and civil society organizations, the IDPS provides a platform for participants to share experiences on peacebuilding and statebuilding, discuss good practice, and identify objectives to guide FCAS toward long-term resilience and sustainable peace.

The Dialogue led to the negotiation of a new set of aid principles in December 2011 at the fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan: The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (New Deal). The New Deal represents a new, multi-stakeholder approach to the problem of prolonged conflict and its impact on development.

Initiated by the g7+, a self-identified group of 19 fragile states, the New Deal establishes new partnerships between donor states, FCAS, and civil society for the purpose of creating "country-led and country-owned transitions out of fragility."[2] This approach addresses the democratic deficit in many multilateral institutions and processes by recognizing that peacebuilding and statebuilding must be led by affected countries rather than by donor states. It also recognizes that state-led implementation is not sufficient and that building peaceful societies requires a whole-of-society approach. The Monrovia Roadmap, one of the precursor agreements to the New Deal, states, "An essential pre-condition for progress in all of the following objectives is to foster confidence between people and the state and between communities."[3] Seven g7+ countries and their development partners are officially piloting the New Deal from 2012 through 2015, and others have unofficially begun the process as well.[4]

A core component of the New Deal is the identification of Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs). The PSGs identify five governance principles as a foundation to catalyze successful transitions out of conflict and fragility. These are:

1. Legitimate politics – Foster inclusive political settlements and conflict resolution
2. Security – Establish and strengthen people's security
3. Justice – Address injustices and increase people's access to justice
4. Economic foundations – Generate employment and improve livelihoods
5. Revenues and services – Manage revenue and build capacity for accountable and fair service delivery

In order to facilitate progress toward the PSGs, New Deal signatories committed to conduct fragility assessments to assess domestic drivers of conflict and identify a path towards resilience. Partners agreed to develop a set of practical indicators at the country and global levels based on the assessment. New compacts on aid delivery between donor and fragile states will be negotiated following indicator development, guided by the New Deal principle of developing 'one vision, one plan' that harmonizes existing development frameworks within fragile states.

Recognition of Civil Society in the New Deal

A unique aspect of the New Deal is its recognition of civil society as a partner in bringing countries out of fragility and its acknowledgment of citizens as the ultimate beneficiary of peacebuilding efforts. The agreement recognizes that, "constructive state-society relations… are at the heart of successful peacebuilding and statebuilding. They are essential to deliver the New Deal."[5]

The New Deal commits both donors and fragile states to improving government relationships with society as the foundation and basis of governance and development. The agreement commits signatories to "inclusive and participatory political dialogue" and identifies civil society actors as primary partners in the process: "We recognise that an engaged public and civil society, which constructively monitors decision-making, is important to ensure accountability."[6] The agreement also commits signatories to "support global, regional and national initiatives to build the capacity of government and civil society leaders and institutions to lead peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts."[7]

Civil society plays a role in facilitating community and state-society relationships and encouraging dialogue. It can help repair damaged trust in post-conflict countries and advocate for marginalized communities. Civil society networks can reach into remote communities and serve as a conduit for local concerns and needs that states are unable or unwilling to address. The inclusion of civil society

within the New Deal framework reflects the recognition that state legitimacy depends on its responsiveness to the needs of local communities and vulnerable populations.

Institutionally, the global IDPS structure includes a civil society secretariat, the CSPPS. Hosted by Cordaid in The Hague, the Platform consists of more than thirty international, national and local CSOs and provides a structured platform for the participation of civil society actors in international IDPS meetings and processes. Civil society representatives sit on all five IDPS working groups on indicators, implementation,[8] political strategy, governance,[9] and reporting, and are included in the IDPS steering group.

The CSPPS has identified focal points in g7+ pilot countries responsible for coordinating New Deal activities. More recently, the CSPPS amended its governance structure to ensure better representation of Northern and Southern actors in its internal governance. Working groups are now co-chaired by civil society representatives from the global North and South, and the CSPPS elected an executive committee that equalizes leadership representation from the North and South. The inaugural meeting of the new executive committee was held in Kinshasa in December 2013.

The Platform receives limited funding from some donor states, most recently the Swedish and Dutch governments.[10] It supports civil society leaders by securing civil society representation at international IDPS meetings, funds small grants for in-country activities, and facilitates information exchange within the civil society network.

Civil Society Engagement in the New Deal

As stakeholders in the New Deal, many civil society actors see the process as a springboard that elevates peacebuilding onto national and international agendas and provides an opening for civil society perspectives on conflict and fragility to be heard by governments and donor states. They are leading voices for the fullest interpretation of the country-led principle of the New Deal.

With few exceptions, national civil society leaders believe that the success of the New Deal depends on popular understanding and support for the principles of the New Deal that can provide the accountability needed to ensure government commitments are backed by action. Civil society actors see a robust oversight role for themselves, but more importantly, they see their role as building public awareness and facilitating national ownership of the process.

Civil society engagement in the New Deal at the national level varies by country and depends on the pace of government implementation, government openness to civil society participation, and the capacity of the civil society sector itself. In pilot countries such as the DRC, Togo, South Sudan, Liberia, and Somalia, civil society has given input into New Deal processes either at the invitation of government or through self-driven initiatives. In other countries such as Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Burundi, and CAR, civil society engagement has been more limited due to the slow pace of New Deal implementation, insecure environments, and low government openness to civil society input.

Most civil society groups have conducted outreach to governments to encourage progress in the New Deal process and civil society's inclusion in its implementation. In some cases, such as the DRC and Togo, such outreach has broadened government awareness of and buy-in to the process. In other states such as Sierra Leone, civil society outreach has been in the form of unanswered letters requesting greater inclusion. More consistent and successful engagement is visible in the multi-sector civil society networks that most civil society leaders have formed or strengthened to broaden societal awareness of and investment in the New Deal.

Strengthening Peacebuilding Networks

Addressing fragility and conflict requires an integrated approach that brings together multiple perspectives, including statebuilding, peacebuilding, human rights, gender, and development. The New Deal has galvanized new and existing civil society networks of hundreds of organizations around the issues of peacebuilding and statebuilding.

Addressing fragility and conflict requires an integrated approach that brings together statebuilding, peacebuilding, human rights, gender, and development.

International and national civil society actors in pilot states have been able to bring together diverse actors to address the complex demands of New Deal implementation. The convergence of these—often discrete—stakeholders generates networks working on issues situated at the nexus of peacebuilding, statebuilding, and development, helping to strengthen understanding of the varying complexities faced by actors in different sectors. New relationships and information builds the capacity of the peacebuilding sectors in pilot countries. As one representative of the CSPPS stated, "each time the groups meet, they build channels, relationships and networks that will continue to serve for other purposes." Such networks enhance civil society's political leverage and create the global and national networks needed to address the multi-faceted challenges of conflict and fragility.

In Togo, a core group of CSOs working on peacebuilding and human rights formed the Togolese National CSO Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, which represents 36 civil society organizations working in human rights, development, education, ecumenical institutes, women's rights, legal rights and conflict resolution. The platform has held three national conferences attended by government ministers, parliamentarians, and more than 70 NGOs, to introduce the New Deal and apply its principles to the Togolese context. The New Deal has facilitated new connections and partnerships within the country: "we have core group meeting two times a month for all civil society groups on peacebuilding and statebuilding to share what is happening in their networks and how can we collaborate to foster partnership."

In coordination with the Ministry of Planning, the civil society platform for the New Deal in the DRC organized two in-country workshops for dozens of NGOs from 11 provinces as well as government and UN representatives to analyze drivers of conflict and to learn about peacebuilding advocacy. A third conference brought together 100 government and political party representatives and civil society members to analyze the 2003 Sun City peace agreement for its incorporation of the PSGs and to develop proposals for future progress in its implementation.

In South Sudan,[11] existing networks and coalitions were strengthened by collaborative work on issues surrounding the New Deal. The South Sudan NGO Forum (the Forum), a coordinating body composed of 140 INGOs and 92 national NGOs representing diverse sectors, organized a roundtable in December 2012 to discuss the New Deal among its members and clarify civil society's role in its implementation. Five working groups were organized in parallel structure to the international IDPS working groups and are staffed by civil society volunteers. Since its formation, the Forum has organized civil society roundtables to raise awareness of the New Deal, advocate for gender mainstreaming in the process, and to organize civil society contributions to the New Deal's implementation.

In West Africa, New Deal civil society leaders are collaborating across borders to address similar sources of conflict and instability such as insecure borders, insurgencies and economic inequality. As one civil society actor from Sierra Leone pointed out, the countries of West Africa face similar challenges due to their comparable governance structures and socioeconomic sectors. Regional networks working on the New Deal have been able to share lessons learned across pilot countries in Sierra Leone, Togo, and Liberia. In Liberia, the core working group on the New Deal includes 12 organizations, including women's organizations, with national networks that reach into counties outside the capital. One respondent from Liberia noted that the participation of diverse organizations within the Liberian CSO coalition on the New Deal — specializing in reconciliation, health, education and peacebuilding among others — has allowed the civil society network to be informed by multiple perspectives across a variety of areas of expertise. Operating as a coalition ensures that a necessary variety of experts are available to address the complex causes of conflict and fragility.

In Sierra Leone, civil society groups are forming new relationships across traditional political divisions. A core group of 15 CSOs, including those with a regional presence, were initially excluded from the fragility assessment process as government-sponsored NGOs without large community constituencies were invited to join the government dialogue. According to a civil society leader who was not included in these initial stages, "We have stretched out our hands to those [government-sponsored] organizations and asked if we can collaborate and have real partnership around the process."

The two previously disconnected groups of CSOs have come to an agreement to conduct an internal review of the New Deal process in order to re-evaluate the fragility assessment for potential gaps, to ensure that information is disseminated across the whole of Sierra Leone, and to cooperate on future areas in which a more inclusive group of CSOs might contribute. These efforts have resulted in new partnerships in the civil society community while simultaneously broadening the New Deal process to be more inclusive.

The networks galvanized by the New Deal have also brought together new social groupings that increase social capital and create bridges to resolve societal conflict. In Somalia, the formation of the Somali Civil Society Alliance brought together CSOs from three previously warring states within Somalia.[12] In Togo, civil society has mobilized national Muslim, Christian, and secular networks to advocate for peace under the framework of the New Deal, facilitating an interfaith endorsement of the process.

Faith-based groups are highly influential in Togo and many other African countries. In some contexts their image as neutral actors gives them easier access and greater influence with government officials than that of other civil society organizations. Religious groups have a broad base and can be effective bridge builders within societies. Rooted within local communities on a daily basis, they understand conflicts — often intimately — and are less likely to retreat from operations when conflict sparks. Building working relationships between secular and faith-based civil society organizations deepens the capacity of peacebuilding networks to reach populations affected by conflict.

Civil society also has a contribution to make in building connections with the private sector to promote economic policies that support peacebuilding goals. As part of its 2014 program of work, the CSPPS has identified dialogue on peacebuilding with the private sector as a priority and intends to begin outreach to multinational corporations. Such efforts have been undertaken in Liberia, where, following a national conference on natural resource management, civil society focused on bringing the private sector into dialogue on supporting a constitutional framework that involves citizens in natural resource management. Establishing dialogue with the private sector on its influence on conflict dynamics is an essential component of any strategic peacebuilding strategy. The Liberian case is representative of many other regions where corruption in the natural resource sector has become a major driver of conflict and fragility.

The New Deal has also facilitated the creation of a new transnational civil society peacebuilding network through the CSPPS. As the official interlocutor with the IDPS, the CSPPS facilitates greater international visibility of local organizations in international processes and has added a more diverse and inclusive presence to the international peacebuilding community. The structure of the CSPPS has elevated perspectives from fragile states within the international IDPS process. Monthly communication and periodic events have created new working relationships in the global peacebuilding network.

The CSPPS's host organization, the Dutch aid organization Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid (Cordaid), has played a large role in catalyzing peacebuilding networks around the New Deal in fragile states. With CSPPS funds Cordaid has conducted workshops to introduce broad segments of civil society to the New Deal and in countries such as Afghanistan and South Sudan, and has helped recruit organizations to national New Deal coalitions.

The New Deal has encouraged the emergence of new civil society leaders from the global South, providing them with a platform at both national and international levels through which to articulate the needs and concerns of the local populations on whose behalf they are advocating. A civil society actor from Liberia praised the New Deal for empowering local collaborators, and described his transition into a national role while working on the New Deal, providing him with unprecedented access to national and international actors. The CSPPS forum has served as a vehicle for emerging leaders from FCAS to engage in international dialogue with donor states.

The New Deal has encouraged the emergence of new civil society leaders from the global South.

According to interviews with civil society leaders, the growth of these networks has helped to build the capacity of civil society working on the New Deal. It has created new relationships and linkages among peacebuilding and development actors and has broken down silos in development and peacebuilding communities. In some instances, civil society engagement in the New Deal process has normalized the practice of including civil society in development planning. Such efforts have enabled the integration of key peacebuilding tenets into frameworks for development, even though many actors from the development and diplomatic spheres do not have a peacebuilding background.

Technical Expertise

Civil society has provided technical knowledge and expertise to the process at international and national levels, including in the formulation of fragility assessments and spectrums, the development of global and national indicators, and in integrating a gender perspective into the New Deal.

Fragility Assessments

Civil society groups have been instrumental in the development of comprehensive fragility assessments in some pilot states. The assessment is a diagnostic tool intended to assist fragile and conflict affected states in identifying the causes and features of fragility and sources of resilience, in order to plan a pathway toward stability and development.

CSOs from the DRC requested a leadership role in conducting a fragility assessment, which was granted by the government, and organized a national meeting of civil society representatives to identify key drivers of conflict and fragility in the country. The resulting report informed much of the formal assessment released by the DRC government at the UN General Assembly.

In South Sudan, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning's Department of Aid Coordination reached out to civil society networks from the ten states of South Sudan in the initial stages of conducting a fragility assessment, ensuring a broad representation of civil society perspectives in the initial fragility assessment and the validation workshops that followed.

In Liberia, though the fragility assessment was initially conducted without civil society input, civil society offered community-based perspectives on regional drivers of conflict which were subsequently inputted to the revised assessment.

Indicators

In order to facilitate progress toward the PSGs, signatories committed to developing a set of practical indicators at country levels. They later agreed to develop global indicators at the proposal of civil society participants in the IDPS Indicators Working Group.

Civil society has embraced indicators as a tool for providing accountability, protecting vulnerable populations, and gauging citizens' lived experiences.

Civil society has embraced indicators as a tool for leverage in providing accountability, protecting vulnerable populations, and gauging citizens' lived experiences. According to one Liberian civil society actor, the New Deal "is a huge opportunity to hold the donor and the government accountable in terms of those developments that have been made, how those development commitments are realized and who is responsible for the development plan working or not working. The indicators present a very clear opportunity and a good benchmark in terms of being able to see concretely that yes there has been progress or no there is no progress."

One of civil society's greatest achievements in the indicator development process is the inclusion of perception-based indicators as a means of ensuring robust measurements of progress through the triangulation of data. Despite initial reservations expressed by some g7+ governments, civil society and its partners were ultimately successful in ensuring perception-based indicators were adopted alongside more objective measures in the indicator development process. Civil society pressed for designing indicators as "three sided baskets" that should include capacity indicators, objective indicators, and public perception indicators. Perception-based indicators measure how the public actually feels — adding another dimension to indicators on capacity and objective measures that can gauge public priorities and lived experiences.

Most civil society groups have been substantially involved in the indicators process. At the international level, a core group of civil society actors worked alongside government ministers and IDPS stakeholders for over a year to help develop global indicators. Over the course of the activities of the Indicators Working Group, the CSPPS has been able to create more space at many of their meetings for civil society representatives from pilot countries to attend. At official meetings there have been up to seven civil society representatives present, both from fragile countries as well as two representatives from the international platform. The inclusion of indicators on reconciliation processes and more informal mechanisms is due in part to the input of civil society.

At the national level, civil society has also been present at the policymakers' table during indicator meetings. In South Sudan, local civil society and the CSPPS engaged in strategic advocacy efforts to ensure that local CSOs were included on the national Indicators Taskforce and participated in the formulation of country-specific indicators. Civil society held a roundtable that produced an analysis of indicators, which was presented to the government and was well received, according to an actor involved in the process.[13]

In the DRC, leaders of national civil society organizations from eleven provinces met to discuss national level indicators, and civil society was represented in a national steering committee on the evaluation of the MDGs, which applied the indicators that had been defined in the New Deal.

Liberian civil society initiated an indicators project, recognizing it as an opportunity to correct some of the shortcomings of the fragility assessment. With support from the Swedish government, civil society representatives worked to bring the indicators process to different communities and regions, in order to understand the challenges faced in rural Liberia and determine how they should be addressed and progress measured.

Gender and Youth

The New Deal agreement supports women's inclusion in peacebuilding processes: "We also recognise that constructive state-society relations, and the empowerment of women, youth and marginalised groups, as key actors for peace,

are at the heart of successful peacebuilding and statebuilding."[14] Civil society has played an important role in ensuring that gender is incorporated in New Deal discussions.

Cordaid, in particular, has influenced the international discussion with its report *Integrating Gender into the New Deal*, which the OECD and IDPS have recognized as a roadmap and resource for addressing gender dynamics within New Deal processes.[15] As one interview said, "The fact that Cordaid's policy paper is on the OECD-New Deal website and an email was sent from the coordinator of the IDPS of all countries to use as resource — that for me is really good start for putting gender into the agenda."

The report offers a number of key recommendations to ensure that gender is integrated in the New Deal, including applying a gender perspective to all frameworks and fragility assessments; allocating adequate financing to women's needs and gender related priorities; ensuring gender perspectives and sex-disaggregated data in the indicators; and linking the implementation of the New Deal to existing in-country activities around the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls for the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and security processes.

Some countries, such as South Sudan, made progress in incorporating gender into the fragility assessment process. Cordaid was invited to present recommendations for integrating gender into the New Deal during a national conference on the implementation of UN Security Resolution 1325 in Juba in January 2013.[16] This engagement continued through different consultative and planning processes organized by civil society and the government of South Sudan. Through such consultations civil society was able to provide gender-informed recommendations and analyses during the fragility assessment process.

In Afghanistan, Cordaid worked with the Afghan Women's Network (AWN), an umbrella organization of 112 organizations focused on gendered issues of peacebuilding and development, to identify ways to promote gender equality through the New Deal. In Togo, the national civil society platform hosted a conference on mainstreaming gender into the New Deal process. The one-day forum gathered 45 women and the Minister of Women's Affairs to draw on lessons learned from Togolese CSOs and apply these to the implementation of the New Deal. Civil society in Liberia and the DRC has also promoted gender mainstreaming as an important aspect of the New Deal.

During the international indicators development process, civil society helped formulate and advocate for gender-disaggregated data that will allow pilot countries to track progress on key indicators for women, such as primary and secondary school enrolment and completion. Significant effort has been given to ensuring that the intergenerational aspects of peace and conflict are addressed within the indicators matrix, with the aim of raising the profile of children and youth in New Deal deliberations. Data disaggregation makes it possible to

identify disparities in access to resources, services, and benefits between groups that vary along racial, ethnic, religious, caste, clan, gender, age, and income lines. Disaggregation enables a policy response more focused on vulnerable groups, helping to drive progress toward fairness.

Some civil society representatives advocate for a greater role in data collection to measure government performance against the indicators. Civil society data often has more credibility than government-collected data and civil society could thus have a role in collecting, analyzing, and presenting data to international and national audiences.

Building Accountability

The New Deal agreement acknowledges the role of civil society in ensuring the accountability of government and donor commitments. Civil society representatives embrace this role and press for greater progress and more enhanced accountability mechanisms to monitor governments' implementation of the New Deal. In some cases, CSOs and donor states are applying multi-sided pressure on g7+ governments to remain accountable to their commitments. Channeling advocacy through supportive donor governments can increase pressure on pilot country governments by elevating accountability into the international sphere.

Civil society organizations are well placed to track actual in-country implementation activities.

In Liberia, for example, civil society brought the slow government progress on the New Deal and lack of civil society inclusion in the process to the attention of the ambassador of Sweden, one of Liberia's New Deal donors. Civil society organizations are well placed to track actual in-country implementation activities. They emphasize the importance of having independent verification of government reports.

For civil society within pilot countries, g7+ accountability to the international community is insufficient, however. They believe that the g7+ must first and foremost be accountable to local populations. Local civil society groups advocate for a robust definition of country ownership and seek to broaden awareness of, and build public accountability for, the New Deal. Many believe that accountability must originate from bottom-up advocacy and an engaged citizenry, complemented by top-down pressure from the international community. They therefore identify building local community ownership and public political will as a key determinant for ensuring the success of the New Deal.

"The wider public must be engaged in understanding the issues of their own fragility and where they are. For me, this requires a lot of political buy in and broader citizen engagement and in the absence of doing that, all the work [to implement the New Deal] won't accomplish much."

Across pilot countries, civil society actors emphasized the need to build local ownership of New Deal principles and the process itself. To achieve this, many CSOs prioritize engagement with grassroots communities, viewing themselves as uniquely close to local communities and often serving as advocates for vulnerable populations.

Across pilot countries, civil society actors emphasized the need to build local ownership of New Deal principles and the process itself.

In Togo, the civil society platform expanded beyond Lomé, talking to local community leaders about the New Deal as it applied to local contexts. “We moved farther out (of the capital) into local communities beginning to talk to local community leaders in a way that they will understand the peace and statebuilding goals. [We] begin to talk about security issues, their own commitment to the national government, paying their taxes for revenue collection in transparent manner. In this way they begin to demand from their government once they fulfill their responsibilities.” The Togo platform also built local awareness among other civil society groups and held several conferences to increase the involvement and participation of well-known and influential Togolese civil society leaders in the New Deal implementation process.

A civil society activist from Afghanistan identified her key role in the process as a catalyst for sharing information on the New Deal with other CSOs, particularly those from the grassroots. In Liberia, with assistance from the Swedish government, civil society has attempted to expand awareness beyond Monrovia, in order to gather a more comprehensive understanding of fragility and how progress might be measured.

In South Sudan, the government and civil society conducted countrywide consultations on gender and the New Deal, ensuring that, although most of the NGOs are based in Juba, the perspectives being contributed on gender reflect communities across the country.

Undertaking such tasks are vital in order to ensure that programmatic outcomes have greater resonance and foster greater buy-in from communities, as “hav[ing] a representative consensus will allow the discussion to trickle down to communities and to build local ownership.” Efforts to widen awareness of the New Deal have the potential to be a primary contribution by civil society, as a means of securing nation-wide representation in the New Deal.

Local participation is also a source of important information about the drivers of conflict and fragility. As civil society leaders emphasize, communities living in rural areas have different security needs than those in the capitals. The needs and interests of more remote communities are often not represented in government. For drivers of conflict to be correctly identified, local and rural voices must be included in fragility assessments.

As one Liberian respondent said, "If you talked with [people in border areas where there is high distrust of the state security forces] about fragility, they will tell you that 'we want to be accepted, we want some level of freedom, and we want development to be given to us like is being given to others.' Otherwise, their attitude is informed by the belief that the previous leader of the country was from their area and they are being sidelined or punished because of that." Civil society is well placed to translate the principles of the New Deal into the unique contexts of each fragile country.

Advocacy

In addition to building accountability through public pressure, some CSOs are working with their government counterparts to win more political allies for the New Deal. In several pilot states, civil society has advocated to parliamentarians, cabinet ministers, and other government officials for its meaningful and timely implementation.

For drivers of conflict to be correctly identified, local and rural voices must be included in fragility assessments.

A representative from the DRC conducted an advocacy effort to ensure the national budget reflected New Deal commitments. He organized a group of fifty civil society activists to meet with the parliamentary financial and economic commission to share an analysis of the degree to which the PSGs were supported by the budget. The DRC representative also used the PGSs to analyze the 10-year old Sun City peace agreement. As a result of civil society's advocacy, the government decided to focus more attention on the security and justice dimensions of the New Deal. The government also subsequently invited civil society leaders to participate in discussions on organizing revenue services, the topic of the last PSG.

In several pilot countries, civil society actors are building awareness of and political support for the New Deal at parliamentary and ministerial levels, building new connections with government officials in the process. In Togo, for example, civil society reached out to government ministers of the environment, women's promotion, human rights, and planning and development and gained their attendance at national conferences and public events on the New Deal. "We called them and they are coming," said one civil society leader. "This is fantastic. This is never the case before. In a relatively short period of time we've been able to call them."

The Togo civil society network is using its relationships with government actors to advocate for key issues including human rights and women's empowerment when working on the New Deal. In Liberia, civil society has tried to advocate for greater progress. As one interlocutor shared, "We have been trying to push the

government so that we have a workplan to see results over time." The Somali Civil Society Coalition (SCSC) secured a meeting with the minister of finance and planning and the speaker of parliament to debrief on the New Deal process and promote civil society inclusion. Civil society organizations in the United States led by the Alliance for Peacebuilding have reached out to the US Agency for International Development's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation to raise awareness across the organization of the New Deal and promote US engagement.

In several pilot countries, civil society actors are building awareness of and political support for the New Deal at parliamentary and ministerial levels.

Ongoing advocacy efforts at the international level aim to improve civil society's access to official New Deal processes and ensure civil society participation. The CSPPS has, in certain instances, been successful in preventing governments from resorting to "GoNGOs," or government-sponsored NGOs, as their point of contact in the New Deal. The CSPPS asserted its rights under the IDPS to select representative partners, emphasizing that the New Deal empowers civil society on the basis of legitimacy and inclusiveness. This strategy has been effective in ensuring the independence and authenticity of civil society representation, although government attempts to work with a parallel network of GoNGO partners is a recurring issue.

Cordaid has engaged in advocacy at the international level to promote gender mainstreaming in the New Deal. For instance, it co-hosted a joint lunch with the IDPS Secretariat, inviting Steering Group members and government ministers. This provided civil society actors an opportunity to network and present their recommendations. Together with the CSPPS, Cordaid also organized several side events to insert gender perspectives from a fragile state context into the post-2015 development framework. Such side events were held, for example, during Commission on the Status of Women (CSWS) sessions at the United Nations in New York and at a recent World Bank meeting. These advocacy and lobbying activities have been a significant component of civil society efforts.

Strengthening State-Society Relations

A unique aspect of the New Deal is its recognition of the central role of civil society in peacebuilding and legitimate governance. The New Deal document recognizes "that constructive state-society relations… are at the heart of successful peacebuilding and statebuilding. They are essential to deliver the New Deal."[17]

In some countries, civil society has intentionally sought to constructively engage governments in the New Deal process. Although the outcomes of these efforts are gradual and not uniform across countries, the New Deal has provided a forum

for state-society relationships to be strengthened and improved. The New Deal provides a shared agenda and focus for all of the stakeholders involved, triangulating governance on peacebuilding and statebuilding in a way that, ideally, "civil society, governments and donors will all be 'pulling the same oar,'" as one CSPPS participant remarked.

"Constructive state-society relations are at the heart of successful peacebuilding and statebuilding and are essential to deliver the New Deal."

Civil society has reached out persistently to governmental actors, in some cases building new bridges between the state and society. A Togo respondent recounted,

> *We sat with the focus person from the government side, the Minister for Development. We met with him — it was not easy to get ahold of him. It took us three months. We had to be patient, we have to keep calling, and finally we were able to meet with the Minister for Planning and Development…. Then we invited the minister to meet with civil society. This was so difficult because he wasn't sure what questions we'd ask. As usual, civil society tried to ask those difficult critical questions….At the [national] conference, 70 CSOs, media, faith community, Muslims and Christians, we all came together for three days, the ministers joined us on the third day – we had 3 ministers at the table with civil society asking difficult questions for civil society involvement. This was the starting point.*

In some countries, developing a more constructive relationship with government was an intentional choice. "As civil society, we are cognizant that we can't remain on the periphery, unleashing accusations on the government – we are trying to work alongside them," one Liberian civil society advocate acknowledged. In South Sudan, where civil society held greater credibility among governmental actors, respondents also chose to "move away from an antagonizing tune to a dialogue and advisory tune." The inclusion of civil society in the South Sudanese Country Compact Steering Committee is evidence of progress made in building trust between civil society and government. In some countries, civil society actors professed a belief that their constructive advocacy and awareness raising efforts had been instrumental in ameliorating relations, even in settings where antagonism had previously dominated interaction.

As the New Deal provides a legitimate opening to talk about politically sensitive issues, it has created an "unprecedented political space" for CSOs to engage with their governments. Having these discussions on conflict and fragility increases mutual understanding of the different challenges each stakeholder faces. According to a participant from Liberia, "by participating as we do, we get

to know who the policy makers are, who is responsible for implementation, what are some of the challenges in respect to implementation, and why it is not moving as anticipated." Civil society has also gained a momentum in its relationships with donors: in countries such as Somalia, which have traditionally had strong donor-driven, top-down stabilization agendas, civil society has been given the opportunity to raise local perspectives.

Challenges to Engagement

Civil society groups have been advocates for a more inclusive peacebuilding approach among many fragile and conflict affected states. However, despite advancements in civil society's inclusion in the New Deal implementation process and clear contributions to the technical process, a number of obstacles described below hinder greater civil society engagement.

Insufficient g7+ Political Engagement

Foremost among the challenges to greater civil society engagement in the New Deal is the lack of political will and commitment of g7+ governments to the New Deal process. A low level of government engagement characterizes most contexts, and local CSOs find that the New Deal progress reports "on paper" do not match government activity. "We've passed the stage in believing what the government says," stated one Afghan civil society representative, "what we're asking the government of Afghanistan is to walk their talk."

"It is not enough for the government to say the New Deal is good; action is needed."

A representative from CARE voiced similar sentiments: "the government has still not integrated the New Deal to its agenda, only in declarations. Saying the New Deal is good is not enough, action is needed." Despite the awareness-raising efforts of civil society described above, in most of the pilot countries only one government ministry is tasked with implementing the New Deal and few others are aware of its existence. In Liberia, a Senator mistook the New Deal for a political party — a mistake that demonstrates the widespread lack of knowledge of the New Deal within many pilot country governments.

For countries in conflict, government capacity for New Deal implementation is understandably lacking. In CAR, a representative noted that, "The New Deal brings many things and its goals are recognized by the government and intended for implementation but our country is constantly in conflict. We need a sound implementation of the New Deal process but emergencies always keep us back and in consequence implementation remains superficial…. all institutions are weakened by the crisis and conflicts."

In Afghanistan, the upcoming withdrawal of NATO troops and 2014 elections dominate the international and government agenda. As attention focuses on immediate political events, the relevance of the New Deal technical process may be unclear: "If at certain times a country needs to prioritize other processes because they have to, that should be acceptable," a civil society representative stated.

Government engagement is lacking in post-conflict countries. The structure of the New Deal process institutionalizes narrow government involvement that is insufficient for widespread political support for the process. A Sierra Leonean civil society leader said, "the government leadership shouldn't be limited to establishing the focal points and then setting up a country task force. It should also have a kind of a cross-sectorial engagement on the process. Even within government I assure you that information is very limited. The way in which the focal points or the taskforce share information with the other ministries is weak."

The difficulties experienced by civil society in the face of such narrow political buy-in from the g7+ was frequently raised by interviewees, with one Liberian civil society leader calling for the spread of awareness of the New Deal "across all eighteen governmental ministries" rather than the very few directly involved.

The isolation of the New Deal within one ministry makes the process more vulnerable to capacity and organizational challenges within that ministry, fostering a perception that the New Deal is "not really put on the front burner." In the DRC, an internal conflict between the ministries of the economy and planning over the New Deal process has obstructed greater progress. In Liberia, executive restructuring of the government put a halt to New Deal meetings for months as the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, which originally hosted the country

"The government shouldn't be limited to establishing focal points and a task force; it should also have a cross-sectorial engagement."

focal point for the IDPS, was merged with the Ministry of Finance. During the merger, staff familiar with the New Deal were reassigned. Because the government drives the New Deal process, capacity gaps can slow or halt the process.

Slow government progress stymies civil society efforts to advance the New Deal. Despite strong mobilization of civil society in Togo, the government progress has been sluggish and lacking in transparency: "Government has not made us fully aware of their steps that they're taking. Civil society has a focused agenda that we are doing [to discuss fragility]. For them they're doing it in a cosmetic manner." Togo is still in the fragility assessment phase.

In Liberia, "civil society was ahead of the government in terms of moving the process forward — the energy and commitment were not matched by government." Another Liberian respondent noted, "We have been trying to push the

government so that we have a workplan to see results over time; we haven't been successful to achieve this. Things are very fluid; we haven't been able to pin them down into how we move from one stage of the New Deal process to another."

The g7+ governments do not hold a monopoly on the lack of political engagement in the New Deal. The degree to which many donor states have prioritized implementation of the New Deal remains disappointing to some civil society activists. According to one, "if you attend any of the steering group meetings, you'll be surprised at the disconnect between the discussions that go on between the steering group and the actual implementation work that is supposed to be overseen."

Donors such as the United States have been unable to or uninterested in winning broad-based support for the New Deal from Congress or other political stakeholders in the government. Donor groups have also been slow to fund civil society efforts. There is a widespread perception among many members of the CSPPS that the IDPS and the New Deal (and peacebuilding agendas in general) are not very well known or understood in donor or pilot country governments.

A compounding factor related to the lack of awareness is a perceived overemphasis on technical processes to the detriment of political dialogue. Technocrats and program officers dominate participation in meetings. "They're participating with only experts of government but not the leaders of government," objected one respondent from the DRC. Highly skilled in the issues at hand, these individuals often lack the requisite political authority to ensure governmental commitment and buy-in to the process. Conversely, seemingly technical decisions can have highly political implications that must be resolved to move the process forward.

The ongoing tension between technical responses to what is viewed as a highly political process is an issue frequently raised by civil society actors, particularly by representatives of g7+ CSOs. One respondent remarked,

> *as long as civil society follows the technical process of the IDPS it will go nowhere. The IDPS was set up as a political platform and a political space for dialogue. It was never intended to be a technical team. The technical work of the IDPS was supposed to help inform the political dialogue. What we have right now is a technical dialogue, not backed at all with any political situation or engagement. This is actually killing the process.*

Although interviewees from Northern CSOs also attested to the highly political nature of the New Deal, they did not as explicitly link the preoccupation with technical factors as a "smokescreen" for real political progress.

Related to the tension between technical and political factors is an apparent reluctance among many g7+ governments to be measured according to the indicators for fear of negative consequences for poor performance. The g7+ governments tend to see indicators in their current form as a threat to political legitimacy, though the indicators are designed to facilitate effective development.

An overly technical approach will not advance real political progress in the New Deal. However, a representative from the CSPPS pointed to a tendency among many to consider peacebuilding as an exclusively political process, which can be legitimately separated from development issues. There must be a greater attempt to find a balance of the political and the technical, as each supports the other in ensuring sustainable implementation and results. Politics without effective implementation is equally detrimental as technocratic planning without political buy-in.

Poor State-Society Relations

Mistrust and antagonism typify state-society relations in many fragile countries. There is a common belief among civil society that the g7+ governments of pilot countries view independent CSOs as a threat to their authority, and are reluctant to cede greater responsibility to non-state actors. Civil society activists from countries including the DRC and South Sudan noted that this is particularly the case for topics that are considered issues of "national security."

Speaking of Liberia, a member of civil society described the often difficult relationship with government: "Mistrust is rife, as for the past fifteen years governmental institutions have viewed civil society as a group trying to undermine them, with a subsequent breakdown in the working relationship." If long-term conflict and a return to violence are to be prevented, "a system of continuous engagement between government and society must develop," another respondent emphasized.

Where some respondents lauded the New Deal for providing a safe space for civil society to engage with governments on sensitive political issues, others urged caution and suggested that this sense of safety is something of an illusion created by international attention to the process. The New Deal, while promoted by the g7+, also opens them to criticism and difficult reforms.

A long-time civil society activist from West Africa noted, "the government seems to be afraid…It's not about the aid money. It's about the peacebuilding and statebuilding goals. Those goals seem to be simple but they are tough for some African governments." This further underscores the importance of ensuring a coordinated approach by international and national CSOs. One civil society actor from the DRC called for greater support at the international level, saying "if you want to critique the government about the organization of the elections, it's very difficult, you have to tread carefully, and you need courage. You have to be courageous to be critical."

Interviewees consistently stressed the heterogeneity of civil society and underscored how civil society's often-fractured landscape may in fact hinder progress. Preexisting divisions in civil society frequently occur along conflict fault-lines, and civil society can also be fragmented among returned-diaspora and civil society supportive of (or coopted by) the government. A respondent in CAR noted, "many CSOs can be turned. Many are used in peace marches set up by the government or actual support marches for the government."

Some governments have partnered with GoNGOs, excluding more independent civil society organizations from New Deal processes. “They tell you they’re engaging with civil society, but the question is what kind of civil society and what kind of engagement,” warned one civil society actor. A respondent from Sierra Leone remarked that, “When we looked at the fragility assessment, those that were consulted were mainly organizations that are very close to the powers that be.”

“Some governments tell you they’re engaging with civil society, but the question is what kind of civil society and what kind of engagement.”

Some believe the g7+ has interpreted the “country-led and country-owned” characteristics of the New Deal as “government-led and government-owned,” with civil society viewed as government implementing partners. Government selection of GoNGOs as partners creates obstacles to civil society engagement at the international level. One CSPPS representative shared that government-backed civil society groups defer to their governments more at international meetings, and it can impossible for civil society to jointly strategize across national boundaries as a civil society coalition. GoNGOs are also predominantly members of the elite, and are thus often out of touch with community perspectives. As an Afghan civil society actor emphasized, “even though elites might be the point of contact and listened to, they’re not representing the grassroots.”

Lack of relationships between governments and civil society in some contexts resulted in a dearth of consultations with civil society in implementing the New Deal. In some places, the government conducted fragility assessments before civil society networks or working groups had time to form. In Liberia, “The fragility assessment was drafted before we knew [about it]. We saw it [later in the process and] made some inputs.” A civil society interviewee in Sierra Leone described similar access challenges: “we got into the process when the assessment was done already. How can we influence the process? They have already formed the task force for implementation and they already presented progress reports. How can we be involved?”

Exclusion of civil society is not limited to national governments. Donors have also overlooked civil society’s participation nationally and internationally. Only a limited number of Somali civil society representatives were invited to the September 2013 conference held in Brussels to endorse a Compact for Somalia signed between donor representatives and government officials.

While CSOs have been included in official IDPS international meetings, the number of invitations and viewing passes extended and the format of civil society participation must be renegotiated at every meeting. “Civil society has always managed to ensure [our] presence [at international meetings] but at the cost of a very long negotiating process about how many can we be and how much talking

time we are allowed during the meeting." Civil society members have expressed frustration that they are not given sufficient access at IDPS meetings: "It creates so much work — all the energy and time could have been used for strategy and policy. This is one issue that civil society faces that is proving difficult."

Logistical and Resource Barriers

At international and national levels, civil society participants face bureaucratic, logistical, and resource barriers that obstruct their involvement. Few sources of funding exist for New Deal activities outside of the CSPPS, and few donor states have contributed significantly to civil society efforts despite New Deal commitments to "support global, regional, and national initiatives to build the capacity of government and civil society leaders and institutions to lead peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts."[18]

"Civil society has always managed to ensure its presence at international meetings, but at the cost of a very long negotiating process."

In the DRC, a respondent reported significant struggles to find funding for meetings organized around the New Deal. "When we organized the meeting to do [consultations with] civil society at the provincial level, I got no support. Only Cordaid helped." A civil society actor from the international platform spoke of the difficulty to secure sufficient staffing levels in order to ensure vigilance in the monitoring of pilot country progress. At the country level, "there hasn't been any kind of financial support for the process that would build the capacity of civil society to really engage the government outside of the meeting rooms and push the government to move."

Civil society representatives have volunteered their time to participate in the New Deal process. "It's been challenging because there's been no support from the government or donor community — we in the civil society community have had to bring our own resources to do the follow up, go to meetings. With the exception of the invitations from the UNDP or World Bank to go to the meetings in Kenya, there has been no other support." Consequently, ensuring sustained and consistent civil society participation and engagement from one meeting to the next is a challenge. A member of the IDPS Political Working Group emphasized the lack of standing capacity to devote full-time to support civil society advocacy. The core group of individuals who are most heavily engaged with the New Deal are often over-extended and involved in multiple policy discussions.

While funds allocated by the CSPPS are an important source of support, some national CSOs found initial funding procedures unclear and worried that delays in receiving future grants would slow or halt momentum. One representative from Togo voiced these concerns, saying "if we don't have money in the next couple of

months, we will not be able to consolidate [our advocacy] or maintain gains." In response to similar concerns, the CSPPS released funding guidelines following a December 2013 Executive Committee meeting. The new guidelines clarify activity and funding options and ensure that individual projects are in alignment with national and global civil society strategies.

Civil society participation in international meetings is compromised by mundane access barriers. Visa denial is a constant possibility, particularly for representatives traveling from fragile states. In the April 2013 Washington, D.C. meeting, several designated Southern civil society representatives scheduled to speak at high-level meetings were denied visas and unable to attend. Although the CSPPS ensures that every civil society representative travels with an officially backed letter of invitation, issues remain. The amount of effort spent negotiating visas "is a huge drain on work and energy" according to CSPPS staff, consuming time and limited resources that could be better directed elsewhere.

The rapid pace of the New Deal also poses challenges to meaningful civil society engagement. Hurried implementation hinders civil society from providing comprehensive and consultative feedback, and allows insufficient time to gather g7+ perspectives. Each step in the process has suffered from an unrealistic timeframe for completion. The fragility spectrum in Liberia suffered from a lack of depth due to imposed deadlines. This rapid pace—not unique to Liberia—limits civil society participation. Often, not enough advance warning is given when international meetings take place, and there is insufficient time to ensure representatives from g7+ countries, which require more time-consuming travel preparations. Without their input at this international level, legitimacy is lacking. Hasty procedures also preclude the development of better state-society relationships, which require time to deepen trust and mutual understanding.

North-South Differences

Due to logistical advantages, language, and greater access to resources, Northern CSOs have been perceived as having higher representation in IDPS working groups and in international events and as being more visible in internal CSPPS processes. Until December 2013, official thematic and steering group focal points, which have the most prominent engagement with g7+ and INCAF governments, were represented by Northern CSO staff, although informally working groups had co-chairs from southern CSOs and had substantial participation from pilot country representatives.

In December 2013, the CSPPS amended its structure to officially designate joint North-South working group co-chairs and create a balanced executive committee. The changes were meant to rectify tension both within the CSO network and vis-à-vis the CSPPS relationship with the g7+ Secretariat, which remains sensitive to perceptions of high Northern representation in the CSPPS. Some civil society actors note that the g7+ have opposed reforms such as the use of

perception-based indicators on the inaccurate premise that they are promoted by international, rather than country-led, actors. CSPPS efforts to formally address the North-South representation issues are a positive step.

Limited representation of Southern actors in earlier stages of the international process may have contributed to a lack of connection between international and national discourses and priorities. According to a South Sudanese representative who advocated for greater Southern representation in the Platform: "the agenda at the global level may not be fully understood at country level since the fragile states are at different stages of implementation and the advocacy effort at the global level is attuned with representing common issues across different actors. In some cases the link between the global and country level agenda may not be correlating. I believe with more participants from fragile states engaging in the core group meetings and activities, better understanding can happen and [there can be] more involvement of fragile states in steering the global level agenda." National civil society is more closely attuned to the unique drivers of conflict within each country and to their relationships with governments, and they are closer to the difficulties of implementation.

The importance that national CSOs place on including national populations as a key New Deal stakeholder is not well-reflected in international civil society statements, which tend to focus on donors, the g7+ and civil society as primary stakeholders of the process. "Our main focus is working in local communities," said a representative from Togolese civil society, a sentiment mirrored by virtually all pilot-state civil society actors. A greater international focus on local civil society engagement would provide better support for in-country advocacy needed to create widespread buy-in to the process.

The g7+ civil society respondents widely praised the role of the CSPPS in information sharing. In Afghanistan, "they are our first contact to the world when it comes as far as changes, additions, whatever happens with the New Deal from the point of view of the g7+ and donors…We're relying on them [the CSPPS] for information. We're getting the side of the government, but we depend highly on them as well." Especially in environments where governments are not forthcoming with information about the New Deal, the CSPPS plays an essential communication role and link to the process: "We rely upon them completely," said one representative from Sierra Leone.

At the same time, within the CSPPS the disparity in technological capacity, particularly in pilot countries, poses a participation barrier and results in lower visibility, inconsistent engagement and less collaboration from g7+ CSOs. One representative from CAR said, "We need more funds and many decisions seem to be taken without consulting us and only require our non-objection. We feel removed from actual processes."

Southern organizations experience greater difficulties in communication, as they lack the capacity for VoIP services. Skype, the most commonly used communications technology, is inefficient for larger conference calls. The disparity in technological capacity between Southern and Northern CSOs creates a participation barrier and inconsistent and unequal engagement for Southern participants.

Both Northern and Southern civil society leaders commented that Northern CSOs communicate more frequently with each other than do their Southern CSO counterparts, although regional collaboration in West Africa is strong. Southern CSOs see value in greater peer interaction and support the idea of Southern forums for coordination and communication. There is also a challenge in synthesizing and communicating the high volume of communications at the international level to the local.

Donor demands for faster achievement of milestones or the application of unrelated external conditions stymies collaborative efforts between government and civil society and calls into question the notion of country-led paths out of fragility. Interviewees noted that pressure by donors in Somalia to reach a compact with the government by September 2013 challenged substantive engagement in a fragility assessment or the development of indicators.

Similar pressures have been put on the Liberian process. According to a Liberian respondent, “We recognize there is a level of speed that the international community wants. We were not finished with setting elements of the previous agenda [related to developing community-informed indicators], and we were supposed to start preparing for another meeting – it’s not an in depth – it’s an attempt to meet some deadlines.”

In South Sudan, following close collaboration between the government and civil society on developing the fragility assessment and indicators, the South Sudanese focal point presented a joint report to donors “and they realized donors were not interested in picking it up. They felt extremely frustrated that they’d done so much work, but meanwhile the donors started introducing other demands which were not related to New Deal process at all.” The joint donor team disbanded.

Northern NGOs are perceived to have unrealized advocacy opportunities to support Southern CSOs by holding donor and g7+ governments accountable to their commitments and using strong donor relationships to support greater civil society inclusion at the national level. The efficacy of these leveraged networks has much potential. For example, Cordaid was able to work with the Dutch development minister and civil society to jointly petition the South Sudanese Finance Ministry to incorporate gender into the compact. Using the connections among donor countries as a means to encourage pilot governments to attend to the recommendations of local CSOs could increase the power of civil society in influencing reform within country-level governments.

A supportive international advocacy presence is an important tool for leverage within national contexts. The CSPPS could also expand its activities in this area, as one South Sudanese interlocutor pointed out: "What could be improved is the power the overall civil society has in influencing reform with global players, as with country level players—especially in cases where governments are not open to expanding civil society's involvement in the government level processes." Creating a robust advocacy link among global and national actors and issues will project more unified and collaborative pressure from civil society on New Deal priorities.

Lack of Harmonization

Unique to the New Deal is its stated goal to provide 'One Vision, One Plan' that harmonizes the development, peacebuilding, and security frameworks in fragile countries. Yet with insufficient implementation, the New Deal is in danger of becoming yet another framework for development and aid priorities among many, provoking confusion or contradictions with other frameworks. While in Burundi and some other states, national development plans are well aligned with the New Deal, many other g7+ civil society representatives raised concerns about ensuring integration and coherency between the New Deal and existing national development plans. "If we have competing indicators and policies, it will be a very confusing situation," a Liberian interviewee warned.

Creating robust advocacy among global and national actors will project more unified pressure from civil society on New Deal priorities.

Compounding the problem, in many contexts there is lower awareness of the New Deal than other peace, development, or anti-poverty plans. Even within the New Deal process, peacebuilding is often considered as separate rather than interrelated with development goals. For this reason, the CSPPS has attempted to spread awareness of the New Deal—and the relationship between peacebuilding and development—among all stakeholders, including donor governments.

A civil society representative from Afghanistan expressed concerns at the initial decision by the Afghanistan government to use the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework in lieu of a formal fragility assessment. At the same time, she recommended flexibility in the technical implementation of the New Deal as long as core principles are integrated, saying "there should be a choice given to countries about whether to [develop indicators] or not as long as [New Deal operational guidelines] of TRUST and FOCUS are there."[19]

An international member of the CSPPS emphasized donor responsibility in assisting with efforts to harmonize development efforts. "Divide the tasks, but coordinate the processes. Donors are guilty too because donor countries aren't coordinating with each other or bringing coherence."

In Sierra Leone, a civil society respondent emphasized the importance of ensuring that the eight pillars of the national development framework are harmonized with the five PSGs. The two different coalitions that are supporting each must be brought together to integrate efforts. In Liberia, a comprehensive five-year poverty reduction strategy, the Agenda for Transformation (AfT) was completed just as the New Deal was introduced. While the New Deal has been written into the AfT and a government monitoring body has been charged with monitoring both the AfT and New Deal, the parallel processes have resulted in confusion and delays in the New Deal process. It is unclear how indicators for both processes will be harmonized.

A frequent criticism of the New Deal is its failure to comprehensively address corruption in aid or the need to cultivate the eventual financial independence and self-sufficiency of g7+ governments. Said a South Sudanese representative, "Corruption is one of the main causes of the conflict, and in our neighbor's countries. The problem is that corruption affects the mineral sector, and the contracts for extraction of resources."

Without provisions to address the contours of conflict, it is unlikely that the New Deal will be comprehensive enough in its reach. One civil society representative called for clear conditionality of development money in the event of continued misappropriation of donor funds or misconduct fueled by corruption. The New Deal must also ensure funding comes from national legislatures in addition to donors. Because New Deal negotiations have been with the executive branch, determining how and when to include legislative involvement is unclear.

Uneven Gender Inclusion

Although there has been a great deal of discussion around gender and the New Deal, this has been largely haphazard, and the process has not engaged with gender issues in a systematic fashion. In high-level dialogue, gender equality and women's empowerment is recognized as a critical element for realizing the central aims of the New Deal. However, stated commitments have not been translated into action in all settings. In a recent press release on the New Deal, the co-chairs of the IDPS process asserted that peace "… underpins the achievement of other global development goals like … gender equality."[20] Such statements fail to recognize that gender issues can be a driver of conflict —sustained peace is unlikely without addressing gender inequalities.

The g7+ governments and donors alike have acknowledged the importance of ensuring that gender is recognized as a key component of the New Deal. Translating stakeholders' stated commitments into firm action has been uneven. Somalia, the first country to sign a compact, referred in the document to the importance of gender as a crosscutting issue. However, in the compact's specific recommendations, priorities, and objectives, gender is not visible. It would be an unfortunate precedent for future compacts not to incorporate gender and women's empowerments in the actual body of the compact text.

The CSPPS does not presently have an institutionalized mechanism to ensure that gender is comprehensively integrated into New Deal implementation. As countries finalize their compacts, civil society must ensure that gender inclusion moves beyond mere discussion and is implemented in dialogue outcomes. Civil society must continue to advocate for the translation of high-level commitments on gender into concrete indicators and compacts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

> *The only way the New Deal can be successful on the national level is if the government fearlessly comes to sit with local communities, sit with civil society, sit with their citizens to work together. Government sees the New Deal as political document. But civil society sees it as the best most comprehensive document ever crafted by the international community to help move countries in violent conflict away from fragility.* — Togolese civil society leader

Despite not insignificant challenges, the majority of g7+ civil society groups interviewed see the New Deal as an unprecedented opportunity to elevate issues of peacebuilding, conflict, and development within national and international platforms. The framework provides entry points for constructive engagement with governments on previously unaddressed drivers of conflict. “We consider the fragility assessment as a springboard – it’s the launching pad for us and we will now use that to see how we can make our voices heard and to make our own input. For us having an assessment done is a step in the right direction but we need to improve and tie it in with the national development framework.”

The fragility assessment is a “springboard” that civil society can use to provide input and make their voices heard.

While many acknowledge the New Deal process is imperfect, the larger consensus is that the principles of the New Deal are sound and that the fragility assessments and indicators developed to date reflect unprecedented leverage to promote accountable development and peacebuilding efforts.

Much of the mistrust exhibited in state-civil society relations is the legacy of an acrimonious and often violent past in fragile states, as well as a continuing state of fragility. The mistrust need not, however, paralyze the New Deal. In fact, the New Deal presents an opportunity to improve existing relationships. Many g7+ governments have demonstrated a growing acceptance of civil society, in part due to active efforts of CSOs, as well as the inclusive engagement conditions incorporated into the New Deal framework. Stipulating inclusiveness may initially begin as a forced requirement, but may result in a gradual and learned genuine

acceptance. One Liberian respondent noted that, “As a result of our [outreach] efforts, there has been a small level of improvement.” Civil society leaders are promoting a culture of inclusion, tasking themselves with developing more positive state-society relationships that inform the core concepts of the New Deal.

While the New Deal officially recognizes the importance of improving state-society relations, civil society’s work to engage government must be recognized by donors and the g7+ as a critical element of peacebuilding, equally as important as outcomes in the technical process. It is important that efforts continue to improve trust and cooperation among the many different stakeholders involved, as well as to ensure that recent progress is sustained and built upon. Without persistent relationship-building efforts, any change risks being cosmetic, and a truly enabling environment for civil society will remain unrealized.

Donor and g7+ governments must ensure the continued presence of civil society and equip CSOs with the requisite capacity and resources to continue their work. As one CSO representative said, “We don’t want a government-singlehandedly handling the entire issue – we want to see inclusive process and dialogue. We need to ensure we’re part of the process and we’re able to make an impact.” Civil society is an under-resourced and under-recognized partner in realizing the transformative potential of the New Deal.

Civil society is an under-resourced and under-recognized partner in realizing the transformative potential of the New Deal.

There is a widespread concern that gains made to date in civil society access to the process will be slowly reversed as the New Deal moves into later implementation stages, especially the formulation of aid compacts between donor and g7+ governments. Civil society representatives interviewed voiced fears that the policy window would become narrow, with governments designing policy almost exclusively. Proactive strategies should be developed by the CSPPS in order to guard against a fall-off in civil society participation within the later stages, and donor governments should advocate for their inclusion. It is important to prevent the policy window from narrowing.

Growing impressions of a lack of success surrounding the New Deal on the international front due to low g7+ engagement may gradually diminish support for the process, both from civil society and governmental actors. There is therefore a need to demonstrate that the New Deal is truly making a difference: that it is informing a new approach to peacebuilding and statebuilding by the major actors who are driving peace and conflict dynamics. If civil society perceives that the New Deal is merely a matter of governments paying lip service at the international level while continuing with the national status quo, it will be difficult to maintain their engagement.

"Civil society needs to feel that the New Deal is reshaping dynamics and that it is providing a way into discussions and engagements with the governments," remarked a member of the CSPPS. "Otherwise," he continued, "the entire process will be more of an international policy discussion on valuable concepts, but without the necessary momentum and results that are needed within actual contexts of fragility."

Many civil society leaders are investing their efforts in the New Deal out of a conviction that its framework is needed to help countries move from fragility to resilience. While implementation progress varies, in the majority of contexts civil society actors exhibit a high amount of determination and commitment to implementing the principles of the New Deal despite limited resources and often slow progress. Their vision of peace and resilience in the face of significant challenges is a valuable asset to g7+ efforts to emerge from cycles of violence and fragility.

An interlocutor from Afghanistan articulated the conviction of many civil society actors working in countries struggling to emerge from conflict: "Resilience to me means that in the face of all that can go wrong and is negative and the challenges, you still will have a stance for peace, security, education, rights. To me that is resilience."

Recommendations

For donor states:

- Recognize civil society as key partners in promoting oversight of and accountability for the New Deal.
- Give greater political and financial support to civil society efforts.
- Formalize civil society presence in international meetings and increase the minimum number of civil society participants at international meetings; seek special visa status for civil society members based on precedents in other international processes.
- Consult with pilot country and international CSOs to establish verification and accountability systems to track g7+ performance and progress on New Deal implementation.

For the IDPS Secretariat:

- Plan meetings with more advance notice to allow for greater CSO participation and designate longer timeframes to solicit feedback on circulated documents.
- Address the challenge of integrating the New Deal with preexisting development plans by holding thematic consultations and workshops on this topic.
- Build private sector alliances to broaden awareness of the New Deal within the private sector on issues such as natural resource management.

- Reopen space for political dialogue and debate in addition to holding technical meetings. Balance technical and political approaches to the New Deal.
- Ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated into all stages of the New Deal process, particularly the formulation of the compact.
- Develop early warning and crisis response mechanisms in the New Deal process based on the fragility assessments and indicators.

For g7+ governments:

- Invite civil society organizations to participate in regular discussions on New Deal implementation; include civil society in discussions on a New Deal Compact.
- Integrate the New Deal with preexisting development plans.
- Conduct educational outreach among and within government ministries and the parliament to raise awareness of and promote the New Deal.

For the CSO Platform:

Internally

- Create internal forums for Southern NGOs to share experiences and lessons learned with international Platform members.
- Support more peer-to-peer consultations among Southern civil society, possibly in regional groupings.
- Invest in improving communications technology and infrastructure.
- Continue to clarify guidelines and priorities for Secretariat funding; discuss the balance of using of funds for international meetings versus in-country implementation.
- Expand representation to East Asia and the MENA region.

Externally

- Connect g7+ CSOs with donors to advocate for greater support of civil society work in-country.
- Develop greater oversight and advocacy roles for Northern civil society organizations in holding donors and g7+ accountable to their commitments.
- Proactively articulate civil society's role in the Compact formulation and advocate for a civil society seat in the table in all countries, (as in South Sudan) to maintain civil society's inclusion at later implementation stages.
- Continue to advocate at the international level for the legitimacy of civil society's role within the New Deal process in building local ownership, ensuring accountability, and improving state-society relations.
- Advocate for a more political approach and the inclusion of political leaders in New Deal discussions.
- Develop an institutionalized mechanism to ensure that gender is comprehensively integrated into civil society strategies on New Deal implementation, particularly in the Compact stages.

Authors' Endnote: The New Deal in South Sudan

Just prior to the publication of this report, a political crisis between President Salva Kirr and former Vice President Riek Machar plunged South Sudan back into violent conflict. The crisis has raised the specter of a civil war mobilized along ethnic lines between Dinka and Nuer who claim loyalty to Kirr or Machar, respectively. Within a month of fighting, over a thousand people have been killed and many thousands displaced. Initial negotiations have begun between the warring factions, but commentators agree that without addressing the underlying issues of the renewed conflict, such as overly broad executive powers, ethnic cleavages in the military, and insufficient mechanisms for ethnic-powersharing, the negotiations will not reach a sustainable conclusion.

Renewed violence in South Sudan offers a cautionary tale for advocates of the New Deal, whose implementation is now suspended. Interviews conducted with civil society leaders before the renewed fighting revealed an inclusive process supported by government ministries, and the country's fragility assessment optimistically claims that, "reform efforts seem to have borne most fruit with regard to legitimate politics."[20] Among the pilot states, South Sudan's New Deal process was one of the more inclusive, committed, and consistently paced.

A closer analysis of the fragility assessment, however, finds that key political drivers of the current conflict were not identified in the assessment. While inclusive political settlements, representative institutions, and security are highlighted as principles of the New Deal, the assessment did not identify uneasy ethnic powersharing in government or the military, or recognize a dearth of checks and balances on the executive as potential drivers of conflict.

Despite the assessment's recognition of security sector reform as a major initiative to be addressed, no measures addressed unstable ethnic cleavages within the military. Recent consultation with one South Sudanese interlocutor reveals that, despite the success and inclusivity of the technical process of the New Deal, the fragility assessment missed the mark and is largely irrelevant to the current crisis.

The tragedy in South Sudan demonstrates a weakness in the design and application of the New Deal to crisis settings that should be addressed in other pilot countries. Where political events are unfolding rapidly, the New Deal lacks robust early warning mechanisms. The tragic events unfolding in South Sudan underscore the difficulties faced by frameworks such as the New Deal that seek to build durable peace in conflict affected areas. If the New Deal is to serve as more than a technical exercise, it must engage with highly political issues of executive accountability, ethnic power-sharing, and civil-military relations. These are not easy issues, but the case of South Sudan demonstrates that efforts to promote durable peace will fail if such issues are not engaged.

The CSPPS issued a statement on January 17, 2014, that offers a similar critique of the fragility assessment methodology and calls for an ongoing and more robust process for conducting analysis of root causes of conflict in dynamic political situations.[21] Their analysis underscores the needs for more political dialogue in the New Deal process and for greater inclusivity in the implementation process. A discussion paper by the United States Institute of Peace suggests, "a narrow bargain among elites, which has been the standard practice in negotiations in Sudan and South Sudan, only perpetuates the exclusionary and corrupt politics that are one cause of the crisis, and will inevitably lead to future crises."[22]

Civil society's inclusion in dialogue on peacebuilding and citizen participation in political dialogue is necessary to establish government accountability and broaden social powersharing. The New Deal's conceptual emphasis on the important role of civil society and citizen participation must be more robustly operationalized.

Endnotes

[1] International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, December 2011, 1.

[2] Ibid, 2.

[3] International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, Monrovia Roadmap on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, July 2011.

[4] A partial list of states currently engaging in New Deal discussions include Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Timor Leste, and Togo.

[5] International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, December 2011, 1.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] In December 2013 the IDPS adopted a provision to merge the Implementation and Indicators working groups. The change was implemented in January 2014.

[9] The governance working group has remained inactive.

[10] Since the interviews were conducted, additional donors include the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Switzerland.

[11] Interviews with South Sudanese civil society leaders were conducted prior to the outbreak of violence in late 2013. The implications of the current violence for the New Deal process in South Sudan are discussed in the authors' endnote.

[12] Paul Okumu, "State-Society Relations: The Prospects for the New Deal Engagement in Addressing an Enabling Environment in Conflict-affected and Fragile States," in CIVICUS, State of Civil Society 2013, (accessed November 14, 2013 at http://socs.civicus.org/?page_id=4289), 204.

[13] Hafeez Wani, "The g7+ and the New Deal: an opportunity for South Sudanese civil society enhancement," *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 8(2013), 118.

[14] International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, December 2011.

[15] Cordaid, "Integrating Gender into the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States," Policy Paper, September 2012, (accessed February 14, 2014 at http://www.cordaid.org/en/publications/gender-new-deal/).

[16] The event was organized in collaboration with the Republic of South Sudan's Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare.

[17] International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, December 2011, 1.

[18] Ibid, 2.

[19] According to CSPPS staff, Afghanistan has since begun the initial stages of developing a fragility assessment.

[20] International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, Note from the co-chairs of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, Promoting Peace in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, (accessed February 21, 2014 at http://www.pbsbdialogue.org/FINAL%20-%20co-chairs%20paper%20on%20post-2015%20and%20peace.pdf).

[21] Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, Amplifying the chances for stability and peace in South Sudan: Statement from the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS), January 17, 2014.

[22] Princeton N. Lyman, Jon Temin, and Susan Stigant, "Crisis and Opportunity in South Sudan," Peacebrief no. 164, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, January 8, 2014), 1.