



Tackling and Preventing Ebola and Building Peace and Societal Resilience Lessons and Priorities for Action from Civil Society in Ebola-affected New Deal Countries

The West Africa Ebola crisis has put national peacebuilding and statebuilding processes in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, three g7+ countries, under severe stress. It has raised questions about the role and value of the Deal framework for countries facing crisis. The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) has published a cross-country analytical report highlighting lessons and priorities for responding to and preventing Ebola, while contributing to New Deal principles and goals of peacebuilding and statebuilding. Findings and recommendations are expected to foster dialogue and concerted action between national civil societies and their governments, as well as external actors.

Priority Findings Across Cases

1. Practical application of New Deal principles and goals provides a vital link between crisis response and prevention and the building of resilience. All cases illustrated profound ways in which the New Deal principles and instruments chart a path to forge these critical links. Yet all four New Deal countries reported a lack of awareness and use of the New Deal to inform the response. Notably:

- **TRUST:** *country systems in numerous cases were not effectively utilised to channel support to combat the crisis; civil society actors were not effectively engaged early on;*
- **FOCUS:** *there were missed opportunities in building nationally owned response and prevention strategies with requisite attention to capacity for better future response;*
- **PSGs:** *Crisis responses by national institutions illustrated a lack of alignment with the PSGs in ways that aggravate drivers of conflict and fragility.*

2. Weak institutions and systems prevail, and health systems and institutions are unacceptably weak – particularly for late post-conflict settings. Having robust institutions and systems *will support better crisis response and prevention and facilitate realisation of progress across the PSGs areas.*

3. State-society relations, a cornerstone of sustaining peace and building resilient states, demand greater attention. Across all three West African countries there is a strong common message that state-society relations (and the related structures, processes for communication and participatory governance) are notably weak. This is worrying, particularly when considering that Liberia is 10 years post conflict, and Sierra Leone, 15 years post-conflict.

Recommendations

1. Prioritise the development of inclusive national recovery strategies, by:

- *Building national capacity (both at governmental and civil society level) to achieve country ownership;*
- *Ensuring that crisis response and prevention strategies are developed in affected countries by placing national actors at the helm, and making commitments to include all key societal stakeholders in the strategy design;*
- *Infusing crisis response into national development, peacebuilding and statebuilding plans.*

2. Invest early in development of robust service delivery systems and institutions with crisis response capacity, paying attention to:

- *Building service delivery capacities at sub-national levels;*
- *Establishing early warning, crisis prevention and management systems with provisions for adequate incentives for emergency personnel;*
- *Ensuring compliance with PSG goal number five for “accountable and fair service delivery”;*
- *Enabling free healthcare for all in times of epidemics to encourage populations to seek medical care when they have symptoms;*
- *Ensuring quick and flexible financing measures.*

3. Build trust and strengthen government-citizen relations and practical means for collaboration to achieve common goals, by:

- *Conducting periodic fragility assessments and working with stakeholders to address sources of conflict and fragility;*
- *Committing to inclusive policy- and decision-making and strategy setting in all contexts, particularly in crises;*
- *Promoting dialogue between government and civil society to support a more profound understanding of the roles and means available for collaboration;*
- *Fostering effective communication and collaboration mechanisms to increase civil society’s participation in official governance systems.*

4. Place communities from the start at the centre of crisis response

- *Ensuring community representatives, including local CSOs, traditional institutions, and local coordination structures and committees, are actively engaged in the design and implementation of planning processes;*
- *Creating clear mechanisms that link community CSOs with national plans and programmes;*
- *Ensuring conflict sensitivity is at the forefront of crafting responses and prevention measures.*

5. Build national ownership of the New Deal and implement it by:

- *Building whole of government and whole of society engagement;*
- *Actively working towards the realisation of the goals through country frameworks and strategies;*
- *Advocating and practicing New Deal principles and building, strengthening and implementing national monitoring strategies.*

CSPPS calls all members of the IDPS to acknowledge and act upon this report’s findings and recommendations

There have been various attempts within INCAF and g7+ constituencies to reflect upon how the International Dialogue will proactively address crisis situations. CSPPS calls upon all Dialogue members to acknowledge and support these findings and to act upon them at all levels. Priority should be given to absorbing them into national and regional Ebola recovery strategies and wider crisis response and prevention strategies. Recommendations from this study should inform the development of the IDPS Crisis Response Paper and wider strategies of the technical and political Dialogue Working Groups. The findings in this report are also highly relevant to ensuring progress across the PSGs generally, towards the achievement of resilient g7+ states and societies.

Research for the report was conducted by CSPPS national country teams in five countries affected by the current Ebola crisis – Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria – and in DRC where an unrelated outbreak was recently successfully addressed. The CSPPS (www.cspps.org) is the official civil society platform of the IDPS and New Deal processes. It seeks to strengthen the voice and capacity of civil society at national (g7+) and global levels to effectively engage in, and influence, the IDPS process to bring results for all.