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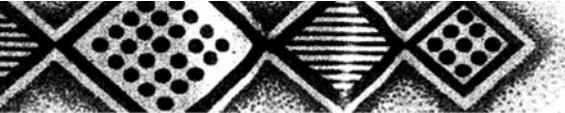
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POLICY DIALOGUE

The New Deal and the Post-2015 Development Agenda

THE JOURNEY TOWARDS RESILIENCE CONTINUES: g7+ PRIORITIES TO CONFRONT EBOLA, IMPLEMENT THE NEW DEAL AND INFLUENCE THE POST-2015 AGENDA

HABIB UR REHMAN MAYAR

The recent outbreak of Ebola in West Africa reminds us that the journey toward resilience in fragile and conflict affected states is not an easy one. It is a bumpy road, full of challenges, which requires steadfast patience and a strong commitment of the g7+ to its vision, every step along the way. As described in an earlier briefing (*Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 9: 1), the g7+ established in 2010, has emerged as a unique voluntary forum comprised of countries in fragile and/or conflict affected situations who are sharing experiences, developing strategies, and advocating more effective development cooperation based on the National Peacebuilding and Statebuilding priorities in line with the principles of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States under the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) — where it engages with Northern development partners and civil society in the realisation of the New Deal framework.

In response to the grave challenges this period in time poses, the g7+ currently has three immediate priorities: tackling the Ebola crisis, accelerating progress on the realisation of the principles of New Deal at country level, and influencing the post-2015 framework.

The Ebola Crisis

Out of the four countries affected by Ebola, three of them are g7+ members (Republic of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia). As these countries have endeavoured to move along the path from fragility to resilience they are slammed with a severe crisis situation. State institutions are trying hard to maintain the national integrity through ensuring public service delivery to their populations. Challenges such as Ebola if not responded to urgently can put the process of peacebuilding and statebuilding in great jeopardy. The Ebola crisis has reversed the still vulnerable milestones of prosperity and absorbed vast development resources internally and externally. Hence the development actors need to stay patiently engaged to help the state institutions maintain peace and fulfil the needs of their societies.

Although there have recently been some pledges to help these countries fight Ebola, the initial slow move to help Ebola affected countries is shocking. With such a severe crisis at hand, one would have expected a more rapid response from the international community. The president of Liberia in her recent call to the international community urged real actions rather than theories to stop these countries experiencing such human tragedies.¹

The g7+ group is deeply aware of the consequences that come with crises like Ebola. Each of its members has gone through severely difficult periods at more than one point in time. The Secretariat of g7+ issued a statement of solidarity with its members and called upon the development partners for urgent help.² Believing in the importance of fast actions and quick mobilisation of resources to tackle crises, the Republic of Timor-Leste pledged US\$2 million for the three g7+ members affected by Ebola under the initiative of 'Fragile to Fragile Cooperation'. Meagre as it might be, this pledge from a small country with limited resources to help its sister countries in West Africa signals an important message; even though we are apart geographically, through feelings of solidarity we are connected across the globe. In addition, there has been a strong emphasis from the government of the Republic of Timor-Leste for the grants to be channelled through the national budgets of the countries, in line with one of the important principles of the New Deal: 'the use of country systems'.

The fight against Ebola unveils the existence of several other challenges that are critical for resilience and that g7+ countries have been dealing with for decades now. Some of these are the lack of infrastructure, such as highways and rural roads to connect societies, and the human and institutional capacities to deliver basic services. These insufficiencies have already proved to pose a big challenge to peace, stability and economic development. For example, there are only 45 doctors available to treat Ebola to serve 4.5 million of population in Liberia.³ The less advanced infrastructure and capacities make it difficult to provide health support in remote areas. Such challenges might be common to all developing countries, but they are particularly severe and chronic in fragile and conflict affected countries. The critical infrastructure facilities and strengthened institutions are extremely vital for the restoration of peace and resilience. The existence of infrastructure and institutional and human capacity helps build the bridge between the state and its societies. Physical infrastructure such as roads, highways, airports, ports and dams, and sound institutional and human capacity, are the backbone of progress for countries affected by conflict and fragility.

In addition to acute crises and emergencies such as Ebola, many g7+ countries are also struggling with the restoration of nationally led democracies in their countries. Fortunately we have recently seen successful elections in Afghanistan and Guinea-Bissau, resulting in the peaceful and smooth transition of power. These experiences underline the importance of sustained international support for the newly established governments. The way this support is managed is equally crucial to countries in these situations.

Progress on New Deal Implementation — Some Warning Signs

New Deal implementation has been ongoing for some two years now. Implementing the New Deal involves the undertaking of country-led resilience strategies with the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) at the core, based on country owned assessment of the drivers of fragility and conflict that are infused within national development plans and form the basis for a discussion around priorities that inspire a compact between g7+ countries and international partners. Under the New Deal,

development partners commit to support the country owned development strategy and channel development assistance in more effective ways, recognising the importance of better risk management and strengthening recipient country ownership. An important milestone was recently achieved with the launch of the New Deal Monitoring Report. This report, recently endorsed in the IDPS Steering Committee meeting, was based on a joint monitoring exercise, with the aim to reinforce the commitment to strengthen the ongoing dialogue on the New Deal implementation.

The report shows some positive and encouraging accounts of progress. Yet it also highlights some important areas that need critical attention in addition to improve New Deal implementation and ensure commitments are met. Progress has been lagging behind in a number of areas, notably (1) using the PSGs to monitor progress; (2) use of country systems; and (3) strengthening capacities. These three areas are important enablers for the overall implementation of the peacebuilding and statebuilding agenda.

Building and strengthening of the institutional capacity is of the highest priority in g7+ countries. For achieving this aim, the use of country systems for delivering the development aid is of crucial importance. Its importance lies not only in building up of the essential institutional capacity, but it also contributes to the legitimacy of the state institutions which is critical for maintaining peace and stability. Avoiding the existing systems and institutional arrangements does not only hamper the capacity building efforts, but has also proved to make the aid delivery more costly due to the need to install parallel delivery mechanisms.

The g7+ fully recognises the presence of risk perceived by development partners while channelling aid through the treasury of the beneficiary government. g7+ governments are not turning a blind eye to this fact. Thus it is helpful to jointly sketch a plan of action that assesses the risk and proposes a mitigating strategy. It is this kind of strategic thinking around the use of country systems that is currently still lacking.

An additional point is important to make here. Although the use of country systems refers to the channelling of development assistance, there is also a more broad way in which development partners support the building up of institutional capacity. There still is a need for a stronger recognition of the fact that building up institutional capacity takes time, and has its own evolutionary path. In all countries, the national systems and institutional arrangements have evolved in an endogenous way in response to the needs, context and priorities of these countries. Unfortunately our institutions are still weighed against the standards and norms in place in the developed countries. But it is an often forgotten fact that these norms and standards in the developed world have also evolved in natural phases and an endogenous manner.

Countries in a fragile situation are still in different stages of evolution and their institutions need to be nurtured at its natural pace of evolution as required for resilience. Development assistance can play a robust catalytic role in enhancing this institutional capacity but only if this is done in a context-sensitive way. There also needs to be a stronger basis of trust in this natural evolution, and in context-specific institutional arrangements. The policymakers in the donors' capitals need to empathically consider the specific context of the countries in fragile situations, before they impose their own thinking. These ambitions are clearly reflected in the New Deal principles, but will still require a more fundamental reform in the way development intervention is designed and thought of. Furthermore policymakers need to see the endogenous evolution of institutional arrangements as an important determinant

of successful peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts in fragile and conflict affected countries.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda

The submission of the recent outcome documents of the Open Working Group on the sustainable development goals is another important milestone taking the process a step closer to agreeing on the final global development framework of the post-2015 development agenda.⁴ After a robust initial negotiation process, it is promising to see goal number 16 on peaceful societies, access to justice and effective institutions proposed in the outcome document of the Open Working Group.

Being aware of the pressures coming from some UN members on reducing the number of the proposed goals and the risk goal number 16 is therefore exposed to, the g7+ group is seizing every opportunity to get the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals integrated into the final development framework. To this end, the g7+ held a high-level side event during the UN General Assembly in September 2014. The event was co-hosted by the Republic of Sierra Leone, the new Chair of the g7+, and was attended by the Prime Minister of Republic of Timor-Leste in addition to Ministers and Permanent Representatives of g7+ and donor countries, as well as UN agencies and civil society partners. The participants emphasised the universality of peace and stability, the nexus of peace and development and the criticality of effective and capable institutions.

The inclusion of the goal on peace, effective institutions and justice for all will determine the degree to which the post-2015 agenda will be relevant for all countries, including the fragile and conflict affected ones. However, the practical implementation of the final framework with the goal on peace, effective institutions and justice will determine the real influence and relevance of the post-2015 development framework. The question of universality and differentiability, and how this will be operationalised in practice, will determine the real success of the framework. This would require strong ownership and leadership of the countries pursuing the benchmarks of the global development framework. This is particularly important for the countries affected by conflict and fragility as their leadership and ownership is absolutely critical to ensure the relevance of the development benchmarks to their specific situation.

The g7+ group through its missions in New York will be vigorously involved in the discussion relating to the final framework of the post-2015 agenda to make sure that the goal on peaceful societies and effective institutions is included in the post-2015 development framework.

Spearheaded by 'F' to 'F' Cooperation

The g7+ has introduced the initiative of supporting its member countries through what we are calling 'Fragile-Fragile' cooperation. This is based on a solidarity pillar of the group. The context in each fragile country differs, but the challenges are broadly similar. Thus the g7+ member countries are in a better place to support each other and share lessons.

The solidarity among g7+ member countries is based not on geopolitical interest but on the desire for all countries to move out of fragility; the experience of some g7+ countries

in building effective, inclusive and resilient institutions, against all odds; the g7+ countries' network of influential and inspiring figures who have steered their own societies through such difficult periods; their expertise in specific frameworks, processes and tools that can support sustainable peacebuilding and statebuilding, as laid out in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

To this end, the g7+ is in the process of proposing its policy note on the 'F' to 'F' cooperation, which is meant to advance the initiative and promote this spirit of solidarity and peer learning.

In closing, the g7+ countries are fighting tough battles, full of multifaceted challenges. Although acute crises (such as outbreak of Ebola), and precarious political transitions in countries pose hurdles in our collective journey toward resilience, they build our solidarity, strengthen our resolve, and enhance our learning. The g7+ is, and will remain, committed to supporting countries on their way out of resilience, though deeply conscious of the setbacks that will occur along the way. We call upon our development partners, the civil societies and parliamentarians in donor countries, and equally our own citizens to understand our plight. We ask for sustained commitment and support, even — or rather especially — when times get rough. As painful as it is, we, in g7+ countries, know that the road out of fragility will never be a straight one, but we need to continue to walk it. We ask all our partners to walk with us with patience and support.

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Endnotes

¹ 'The time for talking or theorizing is over. Only concerted action will save my country, and our neighbors, from experiencing another national tragedy': <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/n/2014/1020/c90777-8796825.html>, accessed 20 October 2014.

² <http://www.g7plus.org/news-feed/2014/8/4/g7-statement-of-solidarity>, accessed 20 October 2014.

³ <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2014/africa/statement-on-ebola-and-conflict-in-west-africa.aspx>, accessed 20 October 2014.

⁴ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E, accessed 20 October 2014.