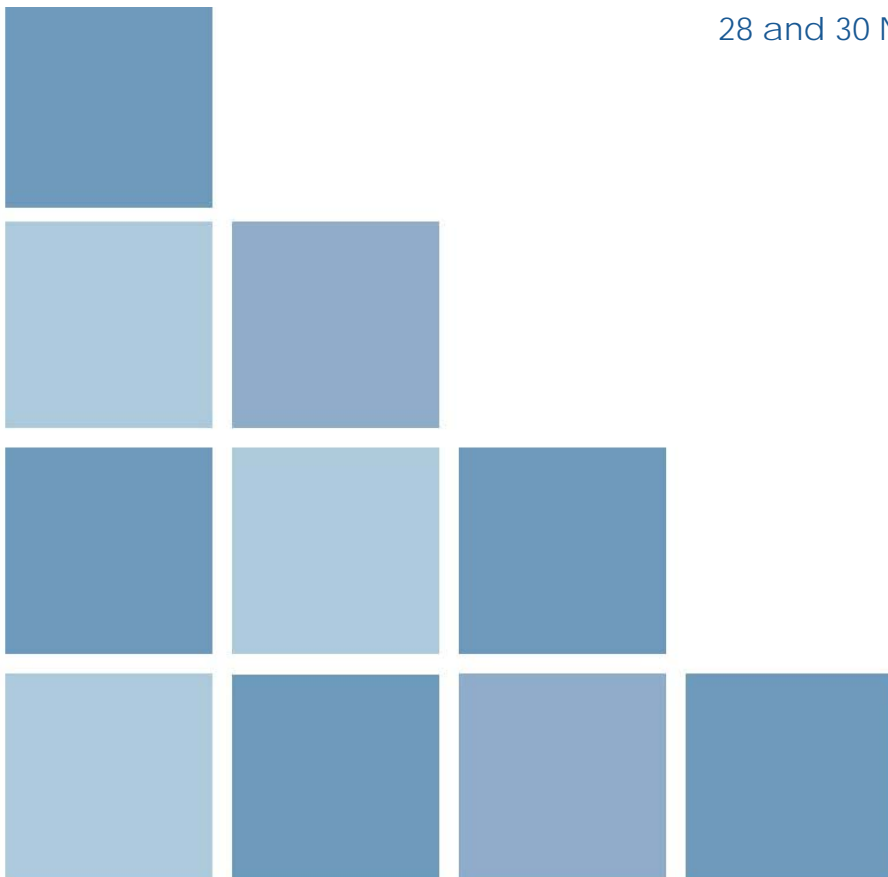


Country Dialogues: What, Where, and How

Document 07 – for discussion

19th INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE STEERING GROUP MEETING
28 and 30 November 2016, Nairobi, Kenya



Country Dialogues: What, Where, and How

General Overview

The concept of “Country Dialogues” has been endorsed by the International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) as a key mechanism for furthering New Deal/Stockholm implementation in g7+ countries.¹ Country Dialogues are inclusive. They replicate the tri-partite conversation among development partners, g7+ governments, and civil society that has been taking place at global and country level since 2008 when the IDPS was founded.

Country Dialogues focus attention on identifying and addressing the opportunities and obstacles to the application of the New Deal² principles at the country level. They aim to be inclusive by involving all three IDPS constituencies and consulting as widely as possible, and outcome oriented in order to build greater levels of confidence and trust across the constituencies. At the same time, inclusion will be determined by the theme/problem under consideration, and based on relevant expertise and levels of interest.

Inclusion in Country Dialogues

Highly specialised discussions (e.g. on the Use of Country Systems) should be inclusive, and will need to involve stakeholders that are sufficiently competent and engaged in the issue at hand, as well as a range of actors able to broaden the discussion of Use of Country Systems beyond technical questions related to public financial management. Inclusivity in this context may mean reaching out across government (central ministries and line ministries), but also engaging with civil society actors with relevant knowledge and expertise (e.g. trade unions, parliamentary commissions, and civil society organisations working on budget transparency) to actively and meaningfully participate in the discussions. Country Dialogues on the overall state of New Deal implementation in the country, on the other hand, will include a much broader range of stakeholders identified because of their ability to champion and influence the processes of New Deal implementation, and by virtue of interest and involvement in promoting peace or peacebuilding. This would typically include, but not be limited to, governments, civil society groups, UN agencies, private sector actors, as well as development partners at national level.

Country Dialogues are fostered through a series of inter-connected fora (e.g. workshops, meetings, conversations), which can be spread over an extended period. Country dialogues are a process, not an event. They tend to be more focused than, say, national dialogues.³ They identify and bring

¹ The IDPS has produced two relevant guidance notes: “Country Dialogues on Using and Strengthening Country Systems: A Guidance Note” and “What is a Country Dialogue? A Guidance Note” (both 2016). The CSPPS also produced a paper entitled “Inclusivity in New Deal Implementation and the Role of Civil Society” (2015).

² Throughout this paper, “New Deal” refers to realisation of the “*New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*” endorsed at the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011, and reaffirmed as part of the “*Stockholm Declaration: Addressing Fragility and building Peace in a Changing World*” in April 2016.

³ Whilst ‘National Dialogues’ are also inclusive, they tend to be much more overtly political and wide ranging, typically involving ‘political parties, and large segments of society, such as elites, political parties, organized civil society, women, youth, business, religious or traditional actors, and other relevant groups’. Unlike Country

together different constituencies with relevant interest and expertise to **forge a shared understanding of challenges of implementing the New Deal/Stockholm commitments in order to collectively identify how to overcome them, using problem-solving approaches**. At the very least, they are also intended to promote better coordination within and among constituencies so that once agreement is reached, they can collectively help to deliver on concrete action plans.

Overall, Country Dialogues should improve commitment to, and support for, the application of the New Deal/Stockholm principles in g7+ countries in ways that promote peacebuilding and statebuilding.

A Country Dialogue Process: Step by Step

High level political commitment is widely acknowledged as having been the major determinant of success in country dialogue processes.⁴ High level endorsement is therefore essential, from the outset, as it ensures that the results of the Country Dialogue can be implemented by participants.

The confidence fostered through the process of jointly identifying bottlenecks, problems, their causes and solutions will increase the likelihood of participants being willing to **make concrete commitments based on the consensus built throughout the process**.

Once high-level political endorsement of the process is secured, Country Dialogues follow three steps:

- A. The identification of the issues at stake, and identification of the key stakeholders with an interest in the issue.
- B. The initiation of a dialogue around issues identified, using a problem-solving approach.⁵ This should take place first within each constituency (intra-constituency), to arrive at a common understanding of what the problem is. This is followed by the initiation of a dialogue bringing all the constituencies together, to forge a shared understanding of the problem and work out a plan of action for addressing it.
- C. The finalisation of the process through the identification of concrete, New Deal-oriented outcomes, with a timeline, that reference the PSGs,⁶ FOCUS and TRUST principles⁷ and are supported by high-level political engagement.

Dialogues, 'National Dialogues' tend to be 'formally-mandated public forums with a clear structure establishing rules and procedures for dialogue and decision-making. They are convened over the course of several days, weeks, or even months. National Dialogues address a broad range of social, political, or economic issues concerning the entire country'. *National Dialogues*. 2016. Geneva: Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies), January.

⁴ ID. 2016. "Country Dialogues on Using and Strengthening Country Systems: A Guidance Note," p. 5.

⁵ A problem solving approach is the process of working through details of a problem or challenge to unblock it and reach a solution.

⁶ The New Deal's Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals comprise: Legitimate politics; Security; Justice; Economic Foundations; Revenues and Services.

⁷ The New Deal's FOCUS principles comprise: Fragility Assessments; One Vision One Plan; Compacts; Using the PSGs to monitor progress; and Support for political dialogue and leadership. The TRUST principles comprise: Transparency; Risk; Use of Country Systems; Strengthen Capacities; Timely and predictable aid.

Country Dialogue Themes

Based on a series of consultations with IDPS members and the Implementation Working Group (IWG), three broad thematic areas have been identified as the subject of Country Dialogues throughout the next mandate period:

1. Use of country systems and transparency (New Deal's TRUST principles).
2. Integration of Fragility Assessments into political commitments (Compacts) and national planning processes (One Vision, One Plan).
3. Realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) using New Deal principles.

In-depth examination of the outcomes of the most recent Fragility Assessment exercises, may also suggest further pointers for Country Dialogue thematic content and scope.

Role of In-Country Mechanisms

Once established, tripartite in-country mechanisms for collective action on advancing New Deal/Stockholm implementation, consisting of Focal Points/teams from each of the three Dialogue constituencies, will play a critical role in fleshing out the content, location, scope and timing of Country Dialogues, which may result in a road map or timetable. It is not necessary to wait until a mechanism for regular inter-focal point consultation is in place before initiating Country Dialogue processes, however, particularly if there has been sufficient consultation with the tripartite mechanism and if there is high level buy-in. For example, Use of Country Systems country dialogue planning processes, initiated by the International Dialogue Secretariat, in consultation with the g7+ focal point from the Ministry of Finance and development partners (e.g. World Bank) have been underway in Somalia since 2015. Preliminary Country Dialogue consultations are scheduled to take place with each of the IDPS's three constituencies in Timor-Leste in November 2016 with a view to determining in-country appetite and plans for building on existing progress on the Use of Country Systems by development partners (e.g. Public Financial Management reforms being driven by the Ministry of Finance). Approaches in a given country will be tailored to specific country contexts and priority themes identified by country level actors.

Prioritisation of countries

Guinea, Sierra Leone, Comoros, Liberia and Somalia are the g7+ countries that have already expressed an interest in holding Country Dialogues. Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the DRC have all requested initial support from UNDP for 'Country Dialogues on New Deal/SDG Implementation' (citizen-driven Country Dialogues on deciding priorities for the SDGs).⁸ As the potential host of the next international IDPS meeting, Central African Republic, like other g7+ countries, may subsequently request support for Country Dialogues, as emerging learning on the experience is disseminated throughout the g7+ countries.

⁸ UNDP. n.d., New Deal Implementation Facility 2017-2021. Supporting SDG implementation through the New Deal in g7+ countries, p. 18.

Support to Country Dialogues: Complementarity within the Dialogue

The IWG IDPS constituency members at country level and the in-country tripartite mechanism will all play roles in supporting the Country Dialogue processes in g7+ countries. Donors may select implementing partners to provide flexible support to Country Dialogue processes on New Deal implementation related to SDG planning and monitoring, on a demand-led basis.⁹ The IDPS Secretariat will work closely and facilitate communication among members of the IWG, the g7+ Secretariat, focal points and networks from each constituency to support Country Dialogues, on a demand-led basis to ensure that Dialogue-wide perspectives inform robust Country Dialogue processes.

The IWG, supported by the IDPS Secretariat, will provide advisory support to shape the content, facilitation, and conduct of Country Dialogue processes, including to ensure that inclusivity and relevance criteria are respected. This will involve the development of a monitoring/evaluation framework to ensure that the progress on achieving the milestones identified in the Country Dialogues is monitored systematically. Learning from the processes will be shared within and across Dialogue constituency members (g7+, donors and civil society) to foster peer-learning about how to advance New Deal implementation at the country level and at the global levels. The IWG will also serve as a forum to reflect across country experiences on lessons emerging from the Country Dialogues, on the challenges arising and strategic routes for addressing them. It will provide advisory support (through sharing of best practices) to in-country mechanisms delivering Country Dialogues and document the impact of those dialogues.

Where possible, existing aid coordination mechanisms in country will be used to logistically support and host the Country Dialogues.

⁹ UNDP. n.d. New Deal Implementation Facility 2017-2021. Supporting SDG implementation through the New Deal in g7+ countries, p. 3.