



EU Partnership Forum - Summary Report Thematic Partnership Session 6th July 2017
**Fulfilling the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States:
Partnership for Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and Resilience**

The European Union (EU) Partnership Forum 2017 and the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) co-organized a thematic partnership session with the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) on 6th July from 4-6 pm. The session focused on the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States; the role of civil society and the partnership between the EU and Civil Society. Three country cases (South Sudan, Central African Republic and Togo) were presented as examples of how a principled approach as embarked upon within the framework of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States can harness and solidify meaningful involvement of civil society.

Speakers of the session included Ms. Rita Martin (Executive Director and Co-founder of EVE Organization for Women Development in Juba - South Sudan); Mr. Eloi Kouzoundji (President of Groupe de Réflexion sur la Démocratie et le Développement Economique et Social in Bangui – CAR.); Mr. Guy Aho Tete Benissan (Regional Coordinator of REPAOC - Network of West and Central African NGO National Platforms in Dakar – Senegal.) and Ms. Elisabeth Pape (Deputy Head of Unit for Fragility and Resilience, European Commission). The session was moderated by: Mr. Peter van Sluijs: Coordinator CSPPS and Senior Strategist at Cordaid.

1. DISCUSSION ON NEW DEAL FOR ENGAGEMENT IN FRAGILE STATES

Elisabeth Pape shared her views on why the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States is relevant for the European Union. By 2011 it was clear that fragile states were the focus of poverty – the poorest were concentrated in those countries where there is violence, while peaceful countries could get out of poverty thanks to stability. But war has huge impact on past development achievements. Elisabeth added that business as usual could no longer work and that there was a need to look at root causes and address them in a different way. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (New Deal) was a clear example of a new approach. Since 2011, the New Deal has become even more important as the number of fragile states has increased. Two-third of the world's poorest population will live in Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS) by 2030.

Elisabeth continued that there was a need to look for ownership and to work on a tripartite partnership. Civil Society involvement is key, especially given that humanitarian services are often provided through NGOs. Humanitarian/Development nexus, it is key to look at transition from one to the other. Important nexus between International Civil Society Organisations that can delegate to local Civil Society Organisations when those must go.

Rita, South Sudan representative, shared South Sudan experience pointing out that the New Deal was launched in South Sudan in 2011 and that South Sudan was one of the pilot and pioneer countries for New Deal implementation. There was a lot of hope for South Sudan to catch up with other countries – the country embarked on a Fragility Assessment. From 2011 and 2013 when conflict emerged, South Sudan developed a compact which was not launched and then conflict relapsed.

Rita continued that South Sudan is a country that has seen war since the beginning. The Peace agreement was not held, then the country relapsed into conflict. The main challenge of the peace process was that it was not

inclusive but selective – a main issue Civil Society Organisations are raising. Civil Society believes that a dialogue process must be inclusive. Rita explained that the priority now is the peace agreement signed in 2015, that remains as the main framework to keep South Sudan on its feet.

Regarding the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, Rita thinks that this framework requires a lot of work and requires working in a multi-stakeholder fashion. On the Fragility Assessment, Rita pointed out that indicators presented difficulties in the country. South Sudan was one of the countries to develop a compact on time, but this was never launched and actions not taken. Some aspects were never addressed in the CPA such as building strong institutions, reconciliation and fight corruption. Rita concluded that there is hope to be able to learn lessons and do better.

Eloi, representative of the Central African Republic (CAR), related experience of the CAR. He indicated that there were elections in the country in the 1990s following mutinies – coup d'état (new president) and then armed groups overthrew the government and took power. This rise will then create internal tension between communities (Christians and Muslims). These divisions had never happened before, politicians exploited ethnic groups – this collapsed the state. Eloi went on to say that there was a transitional government (new constitution, new president voted, general assembly, etc.) but the country is still in conflict. There are currently 14 armed groups in the country. In the 2000s, it was apparent that CAR was not going to reach SDGs. CAR is one of the founding states of the New Deal. It was known that we needed other principles to take the country out of the crisis. Civil Society supported Government in the implementation of the RCPCA – Civil Society has been fully involved.

SC has helped the government to implement the RCPCA, they have been heavily involved. One of the roots of the conflict is that many prefectures are marginalized, and the recovery plan frames these imbalances. Civil Society was solicited to establish linkages between local power and the Civil Society.

Guy, Regional Coordinator of REPAOC, reported that Senegal did not sign the New Deal but considered all aspects of the New Deal. Guy added that Togo has not had an armed conflict but since 1963, the country has experienced a very complicated political situation. The country is governed by a limited group. Global Political Agreement signed with the European Union and the Reconciliation Committee which is the basis in Togo. The situation in Togo is stable but tense. But Civil Society proposes an alternation for a system of real democracy. The situation is chaotic in several Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs). Justice works at different speeds and Economic foundation is low.

Guy further explained Civil Society engagement in the peace process – the EU has supported the civil society in the process of national reconciliation. For this to be sustainable, it is necessary to alternate the system in power.

Following above observations, a question was raised to know, in the absence of political will what is possible to progress in South Sudan? How could no one anticipate war in South Sudan?

In response to these questions, Rita explained the geopolitical dimension of war in South Sudan. Civil Society have called for arms embargo and Civil Society has not imposed any strong resolution on South Sudan. After 2016, there was limited discussions with development partners. Then conflict escalated with the presence of more rebel groups. Not only looking within country, but there are also regional aspects to consider – 1 million South Sudan refugees are in Uganda. Uganda in turn calls for protecting refugees but is there a genuine political will to resolve the conflict? Rita added that conflict can be tackled at different levels (local on reconciliation) some communities you can access, refugees are not reachable. Rita urged for the need to address the conflict, to identify where things went wrong as South Sudan and as the global community.

In reaction to this, Elisabeth, informed that there is an intention by the International Dialogue to support South Sudan. She continued that in the south-south cooperation – there are limits to what western nations can do and are not seen as neutral. Timor Leste is playing a supportive role of fragile countries.

The EU is supporting an integrated approach to get the maximum impact of the means at disposal of the organisation. But the EU does not have all the means to resolve all conflicts in the world. Elisabeth believes at partnership at multilateral level – sustaining peace agenda. She also acknowledges the need to work on a concerted way to get best synergies of best approaches.

2. ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Guy addressed the issue on role of Civil Society in this context. He shared that civil society has the role of support to the public authorities and role to propose concrete actions. To this end, Guy made some recommendations to the European Union:

- Need to redefine the role of Civil Society to adjust to the new context (limited space, radicalization, etc.)
- Need to follow up on programs already launched and implement the New Deal principles.

Eloi on his hand pointed that Civil Society in CAR can work but with difficulties. Civil Society in CAR is always under-represented in development processes. The real issues, he continued, are not addressed – there are 1 million victims in CAR (human rights violations). Several initiatives for peacebuilding but these are not coordinated and some actors (victims) are forgotten. Eloi questioned how can peace be achieved if victims are not part of the solution? Civil society is scattered in CAR, each development partner works with its civil society. Eloi further indicated that access to funding for Civil Society is very limited - Civil Society Organisations are requested to present Bank Guarantee but no CSOs can meet these conditions. Eloi recognized that tools are available but not easily accessible. Eloi urged the EU to integrate Civil Society to have a different view of the situation. He further mentioned that the government is not in conflict with the Civil Society – Civil Society plays an accompanying role. In closing, Eloi pointed out that the role of the European Union as a key partner of the CAR is central.

3. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EU AND CS

On the issue of resources for local Civil Society Organisations, Elisabeth elaborated that the Bêkou Trustfund is implemented at 90 through Civil Society (mostly European NGOs that contract local NGOs) – here is the importance of partnership between local and international NGOs. The EU works to strengthen the capacities of local Civil Society Organisations for example on how to submit proposals, etc. 2.5 million opened for local NGOs. Elisabeth continued that the EU has noted the problem but remains accountable to tax payers from EU countries. Often in fragile states, she added, states are weak and Civil Society Organisations are strong. It's important to transfer those responsibilities back to the state (service delivery, humanitarian process). There is a big role for International Civil Society Organisations to strengthen capacities of local actors.

There are several initiatives by the EU supporting local level, Elisabeth urged carefulness on the issue of Do No Harm when intervening in countries. Elisabeth made the following comments on country systems:

- Much of countries with which the EU has SB contracts receive funds directly, complemented.
- In certain situations (humanitarian situations) the state doesn't have the capacity to absorb funds, hence the use of INGOs. The importance is that the government is fully aware and there's agreement.
- One Plan one view is also important – under government leadership.

Following questions were raised following the above comments:

- Civil Society a subcontractor or a partner?
- State often the enemy of the people (need for governance not necessarily strong states)
- Transitional justice process and victims' rights - the relationship between resilience and justice?
- Indigenous communities never included in the peace process – in what processes to include them?

In response to these questions, Rita made the following comments:

- Need to get to the table ready first, and then process can unfold.
- The faults of not addressing real issues might spur popular initiatives to do so.
- How can you call for dialogue when you are killing people? Justice cannot be overlooked.
- On Resilience in South Sudan: people are becoming resilient at seeing the worst (death, rape, etc.)
- Peace dialogues often take place abroad, that is a challenge for Civil Society Organisations.

Rita's recommendations: as they start to resuscitate the agreement, it is important to set clear benchmarks for inclusivity i.e. include the different factions and ensure Civil Society Participation next to that funding for implementation (previous agreement had no funding commitments). She also urged strengthening gender analysis and support to women in the process.

Eloi responded with following comments:

- Problem with amnesty is when offenders get away
- CAR is far from resilience – a lot is still to be done
- CAR will to end crisis is also of the essence
- Enjoying the religious structures of the Civil Society Organisations are opportunities

Guy's responded along the following lines:

- In Togo, there are expectations for constitutional reforms based on PSGs
- If the EU wants to accompany the Civil Society in Togo, it is necessary to accompany the organizations that work eagerly and those maintaining the initiated projects that have been successful.

In closing, Elisabeth affirmed that the EU is there to support the state and its institutions for the delivery of basic services (security, health, education, justice, etc.). Statebuilding is oriented towards the PSGs, looking at inclusion and legitimacy. But, according to Elisabeth, fragility is multifaceted – anchoring at community level is very important. Justice must be a part of resilience building and the EU can be a facilitator to help reinforce resilience – states are ultimate guarantors of that, added Elisabeth. It is not the responsibility of the donor to bring about peace, it's a joint response. Finally, Elisabeth mentioned that resilience in the EU vision is about better dealing with risks and increase capacities, not apathy and resignation. The EU is committed to fights violence against women.