



Fragility Assessments: Where the Dialogue Needs to Go

CSPPS Perspective

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Key Points

1. **Effectively linking nationally owned analysis of challenges to ongoing planning processes and political commitments are principles that lie at the heart of the New Deal.** Fragility assessments (FAs) are the instrument for this, and their value has been acknowledged as lying at the heart of our new International Dialogue strategy and workplan.
2. **Fragility assessments and their integration with the other FOCUS principles are key strategic pathways to support the effective realisation of Agenda 2030 in context specific ways, in countries affected by conflict and fragility.** The g7+, with support from other constituencies, can be a world leader promoting partnerships for development (goal 17) through country owned FAs, and other practices and principles developed in and through the New Deal.
3. **Some revision of the tools around these principles is needed to ensure that they respond to acknowledged weaknesses, and the new policy context involving Agenda 2030, and commitments to sustainable peace and conflict prevention. This includes:**
 - ***Changes in their substance*** to better infuse conflict, fragility and other risk factors, as well as gender, youth, resilience, private sector and humanitarian considerations;
 - ***Changes to processes*** to assure more regular FAs and strengthened links between the analysis of what drives conflict, fragility and o risk in particular context, as well as resilience, to the fragility spectrum analysis. This should, include reflection upon and measuring of *country specific* New Deal indicators along with prioritisation of country specific indicators that reflect issues raised in the FA;
 - ***Changes to how we assure strengthened impact*** by linking the outcomes of regular fragility assessments into planning, implementation and policy.
4. **We will need to overcome some particular obstacles to implement these changes, including:**
 - Revision of our existing tools and guidance to reflect this new context, and training of g7+ government and civil society focal points on FAs and their links to planning and achieving political commitment and action; guidance documentation;
 - Assuring sufficient space and time in national and international political processes to overcome obstacles and assure effective implementation of the FOCUS principles.

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Context

According to the New Deal, fragility assessments, a core component of the “FOCUS principles” are ‘periodic country-led assessment on the causes and features of fragility and sources of resilience,’ and should be inclusively developed ‘by the g7+ and supported by international partners.’ Input from key national stakeholders and non-state actors ensures that the assessment reflects ‘the views of those either affected by the current fragility or have a role in building peace and resilience’. Co-ownership of the assessment process by government, donor and civil society generates shared understandings of the challenges facing the country, and lights a path for priority actions that hold promise of shared ownership and mutual commitment. To date seven countries (Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Sudan, Timor-Leste, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Guinea-Conakry, and Comoros) have completed FAs, featuring varying degrees of inclusivity in both process and outputs. Reporting on six of these, the 2014 New Deal Monitoring Review states ‘In all cases, the fragility assessments involved discussions with national stakeholders, including civil society, although the length and extent of the consultations varied.’ Guinea-Bissau’s assessment is underway at this time.

Civil society has participated in each of these processes, as well as in the development of the “Fragility Assessment Guidance” – a document produced across Dialogue constituencies. We have consistently provided substantive, technical reflection and support to the development and improvement of these tools - building upon our experiences in and across g7+ countries. Our views on FAs have been shared across International Dialogue fora, and can be summarized as follows:

- FA processes have been fairly inclusive within countries, but certainly demand improving in this regard, if the New Deal is to become increasingly country owned;
- FA preparation, in all cases, has focused on populating Fragility Spectrums – which assess progress in Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goal (PSG) areas against an assumed theory of change. This needs to be complemented with an analysis of what drives conflict and fragility in *particular* contexts. This has not received concerted, consistent attention in most cases;
- To date, the incorporation of FA findings in national planning processes (One Vision-One Plan) and Political Compacts - two other core instruments in FOCUS - have been demonstrably weak. The tendency to date is that compacts reflect priority agreements between governments and donors without clear efforts to build inclusive and societally-owned agreement around priorities;
- National-level indicators were produced by the DRC, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Liberia, and Timor Leste, but in most cases they are not actively being utilized and infused within the frameworks and processes of the New Deal or national development plans, or in programmatic frameworks, budgetary programming or national accountability systems;
- FAs are too often “one-off” exercises - illustrating a lack of full acceptance of their value as core to an ongoing, critical process to ensure that the delicate, sensitive, political-security-development contexts of g7+ countries are regularly assessed. This gives core actors have the information needed to respond appropriately - including revising policies and programs as needed.

All constituencies have recognized the timely need to review and enhance our tools for assessing fragility and ensuring that these assessments inform planning and political commitments. Our experience from the pilot phase of the New Deal, combined with the revitalisation of commitment to the New Deal as reflected in the Stockholm Agreement, and its agreed importance in providing pathways to realise *Agenda*

2030 in countries affected by conflict and fragility, makes *now* the time to make these revisions. The inclusive assessments and their links to planning and implementation are particularly relevant with respect to SDG Goal 17. Fragility assessments can provide unified country owned analysis to foster international partnerships behind national stewardship of peacebuilding and statebuilding and development. The g7+, supported by its IDPS partners, has the opportunity to demonstrate global leadership in multi-stakeholder partnerships for development.

What needs to change?

The International Dialogue tools to assess fragility need to be revised so that they support the new directions we have been mandated to take - in sum, so that they are fit for purpose and able to fulfil their potential as world leading processes. With increasing attention to how the Dialogue will inform a 'New-Deal sensitive' realisation of *Agenda 2030*, they should be developed on the basis of gathered, documented and shared experiences, models and approaches that offer insight and inform practice. The following changes we believe, are needed:

Substantive

Conflict/fragility/risk analysis needs more clear linking/infusion within the International Dialogue assessment tools:

- As our ongoing analysis and the global policy commitment to these principles suggests - analysis of conflict, fragility and other risks (i.e. climate and disaster related) should inform the design, monitoring and evaluation of policy and planning.
- We have a model for this - owned by both government and civil society in the DRC - where conflict and fragility analysis was done prior to, and informed the population of, the fragility spectrum.
- We need to reflect further upon the methodologies and processes for integrating this analysis into / alongside the fragility spectrum on the one hand, and into national planning processes on the other. We believe that quality thinking in this regard can also address the challenges of understanding the interaction of conflict, fragility and other forms of risk *across* PSG and SDG areas.

We need to add / infuse the lenses of:

- **Gender:** The central importance of gender considerations in reducing the risk of conflict and promoting resilience has been well recognised by the IDPS since the development of the New Deal, yet this understanding is not yet well integrated into our guidance documentation.
- **Youth:** In context of the commitments made in Stockholm tangible action needs to be taken that will enhance the inclusion of youth in all aspects of the New Deal; including youth perspectives in FAs.
- **Resilience:** All constituencies have supported the need to think more about assessing national/societal strengths, capacities and resources (drivers of resilience, not just weaknesses (drivers of fragility)). We have the resources within our constituencies to do this; let's stop talking about it, and do it.
- **Links with humanitarian/crisis:** Our experience in the New Deal has demonstrated the need to consider the relationship between peacebuilding and statebuilding and humanitarian and crisis situations. This includes the continued relevance of FOCUS (and TRUST) in crisis response, as was demonstrated in the Ebola crisis, and in the complex dynamics of fragility and emergency that have been seen in South Sudan, CAR and elsewhere.
- **Private Sector:** The potential for the private sector to contribute to positive change, particularly if advanced in conflict and peace sensitive ways, is well recognised and their participation in FA

processes and should be welcomed (i.e. in relation to PSG 4) to assess what type of investment can help stability and look at current challenges.

Process

Fragility spectrums are only part of an “assessment” process (as offered in the New Deal Fragility Assessment Guidance). The *processes* themselves are as important as the assessment outcome.

- **Inclusive processes are at the heart of quality assessment outcomes** - New Deal principles are fundamentally about building ownership around *analysis* and *priorities* for action – vertically (at all levels of society) and horizontally (across sectors), which can be addressed to address, i.e. in the compact, and national planning process.
- **Discussion of process is now especially important**, to support coherence and linkages with other instruments and tools, both within the New Deal, and outside externally, i.e. in *Agenda 2030*.

Fragility assessments should be undertaken and validated, to ensure legitimacy, regularly, i.e. minimally every 2-3 years, but ideally annually and where clearly fluctuating circumstances.

- **They should be structured processes** that can serve as a basis for sustained dialogue about the sources of fragility, or a tool for assessing progress in this area, over time. Timor Leste and Sierra Leone have provided leadership by undertaking follow-up fragility assessments.
- **Institutional mechanisms should be in place** that enable regularized monitoring and infusing of these issues into national development planning, including with SDGs in mind.

Processes for outlining and measuring progress on indicators need revisiting, discussion and elaboration are needed, and should avoid duplicating standard sectoral development measures.

- As noted in the IDPS Conceptual Note on the realisation of the SDGs through New Deal principles, ‘the prioritisation of goals, targets, and indicators must be informed by New Deal principles and processes.’ Through the SDGs, FOCUS and TRUST principles, we have the opportunity in each fragile state to present a compelling suite of indicators that look squarely at the issues for each sector (which will vary from country to country) that interact with conflict and fragility.
- The g7+ list of 20 SDG indicators is not enough; New Deal country specific indicators should draw upon the g7+ developed Menu of Indicators to measure progress against the PSGs.

Impact

We need clear guidance tools - rooted in experience sharing - on varied models for infusing fragility assessment considerations into planning processes

- This is not new - much can be garnered from historical experience beyond the New Deal, i.e. around how conflict issues are infused within national development plans.
- We must deepen our reflection on how to link our analytical tools to top policy conversations and our own Dialogue commitments.

Overcoming challenges

CSPPS recognises that this work is not easy, and that challenges around addressing drivers of conflict, fragility and other risks – both domestic, i.e. around political will and capacity, and international, i.e. around unrealistic timeframes and requirements. Overcoming challenges is beyond any one actor group. Leadership of g7+ governments is needed to open conversations in countries around the political obstacles to addressing findings in FAs.