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Working with Civil Society in Fragile States

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Introduction

In recent years, engaging in effective development in fragile states has become one of the major challenges and primary goals of the international development community. This new focus is appropriate, as states considered fragile give the international community various causes for concern. In these states, one person in three is undernourished, which is two times higher than in other poor countries.[1] The foundations necessary for growth and development are weak or absent.[2] As well as humanitarian concerns, studies have drawn attention to fragile states as potentially creating enormous costs and security risks internationally. Fragile states reduce the likelihood of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Recent studies have also shown that states considered fragile do not receive aid proportional to the extent of their poverty, which is attributed to the mid-1990's donor shift in emphasis towards rewarding countries with relatively effective governments and economic policies.[3] It is not solely a question of aid money though, as some fragile states do not lack funds but rather adequate governance and policies.

These findings have brought the attention of the international community to the issue of how to work well in fragile states, and recognising the necessity of effective civil society engagement is part of that process. Though this paper focuses on working with civil society in fragile states, this is not instead of state engagement or capacity building at state levels. This civil society analysis is in line with the international consensus that "state building is the central objective of international engagement in fragile states."[4] With a focus on state building as supporting the state–society contract,[5] state capacity needs to be built, but active citizens in society are necessary as well.

As fragile states are generally recognised as those lacking the capacity or political will to provide basic services to their people, working with civil society and civil society organisations (CSOs) in fragile states is essential for international NGOs and donors. There are many questions that arise from an NGO or donor perspective when contemplating working with civil society in fragile states. This briefing paper distils the core questions which the fragile states literature and experiences in fragile states present, with the aim of structuring space for discussion of these issues in NGO practice and exploring directions for further research.

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[1] DFID 2005:5
[2] Graham 2007:1
[3] DFID 2005:5
[4] OECD 2008:7
[5] Ibid:5

Definitions

Finding out what the development community means by 'fragile states' is not easy. There are several differing definitions in use, and a significant amount of research regarding fragile states merely attempts to define the term. There are debates about the term's definition, accuracy, usefulness, and indicators. What we now refer to as fragile states have been referred to in the past as 'weak states,' 'failed states,' 'difficult partnerships' and various other names before each was debated and discarded in favour of another term.[6] Even today, organisations use differing terms. Stewart and Brown assert that there are no correct definitions of terms like "fragile" and "failed states."[7] In their work they do not seek a correct definition but rather to explore definitions that make sense and are consistent with the way in which the aid community uses them.

Also problematic is that labelling a state as 'fragile' involves a great deal of uncertainty and judgment. The label might be perceived as negative or have unintended consequences, such as creating self-fulfilling prophecies. [8] Another troublesome issue for the classification is that state fragility is quite fluid, with states moving into, out of, and across the spectrum of fragility. It is for these reasons that many organisations do not publicly provide lists of the states they classify as fragile.

A prominent definition is that of the British Department for International Development (DFID), which defines fragile states as states in which the government is either unable or unwilling to deliver basic functions, such as service entitlements, justice and security, to the majority of its people, including the poor.[9] The World Bank uses the term 'low-income countries under stress' (LICUS) as well as fragile states, and defines them as states characterised by a combination of weak governance, policies and institutions which undermine the state's capacity to deliver services, control corruption and provide for voice and accountability. They are also states at risk of conflict and instability.[10] As the definitions reveal, the term fragile states is a very broad category, encompassing states which differ drastically in their situations of fragility. With this in mind, any decision-making or crafting of policy should be preceded and accompanied by an in-depth analysis of the context of the situation in the individual fragile state.

Table 1. Fragile states definitions

DFID	"Those **where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor**…DFID does not limit its definition of fragile states to those affected by conflict."[11]
World Bank	"**Fragile states are characterised by very weak policies, institutions and governance**. Aid does not work well in these environments because governments **lack the capacity or inclination** to use finance effectively for poverty reduction."[12]
USAID	Two categories of fragile states: **Vulnerable:** unable or unwilling to adequately assure the provision of security

[6] Governance and Social Development Resource Centre: 'Fragile states: Terms and definitions'. Accessed March 2009.
[7] Stewart & Brown 2008:1
[8] Ibid; Collier 2007
[9] DFID 2005: 7
[10] World Bank 2005b:v; Stewart & Brown 2008:2
[11] DFID, 2005:7
[12] Pavanello & Darcy 2008:6

	and basic services to significant portions of their populations and where the legitimacy of the government is in question, this includes states that are failing or recovering from crisis. **In crisis:** central government does not exert effective control over its own territory or is unable or unwilling to assure the provision of vital services to significant parts of its territory, where legitimacy of the government is weak or nonexistent, and where violent conflict is a reality or a great risk.[13]
OECD-DAC	When governments and state structures **lack capacity**—or in some cases political **will**—to deliver public safety and security, good governance and poverty reduction to their citizens…four categories…**deteriorating, violent, improving and transition**[14]
Stewart and Brown	States that are **failing, or at risk of failing**, with respect to **authority, comprehensive service entitlements or legitimacy**[15]

Context

Given the overly broad nature of the fragile states categorisation, any discussion regarding working in fragile states must start with a thorough contextual understanding. The social and political contexts must be analysed in-depth, as well as the roles and incentives of the different actors, namely the government, civil society actors, and private business interests. Analysis of the context will then allow for the characterisation of the state's fragility. Is the state emerging from conflict, with a government with the will to be accountable for its citizens but lacking resources? Is the role of civil society largely restricted to service provision out of necessity or because there is no point of doing advocacy with the repressive government?

Though the international community seems to acknowledge that there is a poor understanding of civil society and CSOs in fragile states, this recognition is only useful if subsequent efforts to remedy this allow for the possibility that the role of civil society in fragile states will be entirely dependent on each social and political environment. Attempting to engage effectively with civil society will be necessarily done on a case-by-case basis, though useful learning can be shared across similar cases.

DFID has created tools for context analysis. Aligning with their definition of fragile states being those with weak capacity, lack of political will, or both, they list characteristics of states lacking 'capacity' and lacking 'willingness,' in the areas of state authority for safety and security and administrative capacity to deliver services, among others. DFID considers the majority of developing countries to be one of four general types, 'good performers,' with political will and capacity, 'weak but willing,' 'strong but unresponsive,' and 'weak-weak,' states lacking both political will and capacity, which creates a serious development challenge.[16]

[13] Ibid
[14] Ibid
[15] Stewart & Brown 2009:8
[16] DFID 2005:8

Table 2. DFID state categories

		Willingness	
		Weak	Strong
Capacity	Weak	At risk or failed	Weak but willing
	Strong	Strong but unresponsive	Good performer

(Adapted from DFID 2005, in Brinkerhoff 2007)

Another contextual approach DFID employs is the 'drivers of change' approach. In the past, donors tried to create technical solutions to problems when in reality the problems were political. This method resulted from realising that it is crucial to understand political incentives and institutions, both of which influence chances for affecting change. Analysing the 'drivers of change,' therefore, consists of looking at "who holds power and how it is brokered and used, the informal 'rules of the game'...and the relationship between these and formal institutions," such as political appointments.[17] Many other tools for analysing the context in fragile states have been created by NGOs, academics, and official development agencies. It is imperative that working in fragile states departs from and maintains focus on this analysis and the particularities it reveals in each situation of fragility.

Table 3. USAID fragile states classification tool

	Deterioration	Post-conflict transition	Arrested development	Early recovery
Fragile state scenario description	Capacity and/or willingness to perform core state functions in decline (economic and social indicators falling). High levels of corruption, self-enriching elites, and erosion of government legitimacy. May have chronic low capacity, weak rule of law, territory beyond control, conflict/risk of conflict.	Accord, election opens window of opportunity for stakeholders to work with government on reform. High risk of return to conflict. High levels of unresolved grievance. Capacity low, willingness may be high or low.	Lack of willingness, failure to use authority for equitable or pro-poor outcomes. May be anarchic or authoritarian; may have moderate or high capacity. Entrenched elites resist reforms; may have recurring cycles of instability. Economic stagnation.	Willingness, efforts to improve performance, but uneven results. May be post-conflict or not. May lack strong leadership for reform, and capacity to implement, in government. Windows of opportunity for positive change.
Civil society	Decreased cooperation, fragmentation, localized conflict.	Polarized, initial peace-building. Limited social capital.	Suppressed, little cooperation or resilience.	Recovering, cooperation increasing.
Examples	- Zimbabwe - Papua New Guinea	- Liberia - DR Congo	- Guinea - Fiji	- Timor Leste - Sierra Leone

Source: Adapted from Meagher (2005).

(in Brinkerhoff 2007)

[17] Ibid:14

Short-term needs, long-term perspective

Many of the challenges for NGOs working in fragile states are associated with the tension between meeting basic needs and providing services in the short-term, and contributing to the long-term development of capacity. Though we tend to advocate compromise approaches, deal with short-term needs and simultaneously work on long-term capacity building, this can be unrealistic in fragile states. Some underlying problems for creating strategies to address both the long and short term are the climate of uncertainty and lack of a multinational framework or rules for development. A related concern is that many INGOs do not have a framework within which civil society capacity building is managed, thus their default position is short-term relief without strategising for how to achieve longer term civil society strengthening.

Insofar as it is possible, a long-term perspective should be maintained. One key recommendation of the World Bank study regarding working with civil society in fragile states is that the international community should move away from a project-to-project approach to CSO support towards sustained engagement and institution building. The report states that this would involve "less ad-hoc project funding and one-off training events, and more systematic cooperation and commitment, including partnering and funding long-term institutional development of CSOs."[18] Related practical suggestions include providing incentives to invest in capacity building, for example through joint training and capacity building events, and creating forums for dialogue and cooperation between local governments and CSOs and international and national CSOs. This is with the aim of enhancing quality, accountability, and balance within these relationships.[19]

Though in recent years, capacity building has taken a more central role in development than technical assistance, Paul Collier holds that in fragile states capacity building cannot happen until a country has begun to reform. Before that point, training and providing local people with skills creates an incentive to migrate, causing 'brain drain' and perpetuating fragility. His hypothesis is that technical assistance, importing skills temporarily, for the first few years after a turnaround has a large favourable effect on the chances that the reforms will be maintained. Thus when planning for the short and long term, Collier argues that providing substantial technical assistance could be an important strategy in fragile states - keeping in mind that there is a critical point after which capacity building and government support should be resumed so that reforms are more likely to be sustained.[20] While this argument may have some validity in lending donor support to governments of fragile states, civil society support cannot be done solely through technical assistance but must focus on building local capacity.

It is very difficult to keep the long-term in perspective and devote resources to it when this seems to be taking attention and resources from more dire, immediate, and in some cases, emergency needs. For NGOs frequently working in emergency relief, doing research and having clearly funded strategies and programmes for long-term development when the time is appropriate is an important consideration. Funding for humanitarian aid is more straightforward and easier to raise, so as part of their long-term vision and planning NGOs need to ensure that funds are also available for longer term development. The challenges associated with short and long term needs in fragile states are also relevant to performing advocacy and considering service delivery options.

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[18] World Bank 2005a: 22
[19] Ibid: 21-22
[20] Collier 2007:112-116, Rogers 2008:2

The advocacy challenge

In situations of fragility when basic services are absent, CSOs are often diverted into the role of service delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid. People deprived of basic services will probably see advocacy activities as a lower priority than service delivery,[21] and organisations performing a strictly advocacy role will likely not have legitimacy within society. This perception is understandable at a community level. While advocating for good governance and accountability are necessary and worthy activities, when people are deprived of clean water, food, healthcare, or education, meeting these needs comes first.

A World Bank case study on civil society organisations in Guinea-Bissau found that when people were asked to identify their primary needs, they listed all social sector needs, such as education, roads, and health. None of the communities asked identified governance issues. As NGOs do advocacy work around governance, this raised a point about their responsiveness to the communities' priorities. As the World Bank report posits, "When people lack even the most basic social services, can they really be that concerned with democracy and governance issues?".[22] However, a major challenge for civil society is to raise community awareness of linkages between poor governance and lack of basic services.

The approach increasingly utilised involves a mix between service provision with immediate benefits and governance work, with the idea that the assistance with services makes communities more open to advocacy. A DFID working paper on delivering services in difficult environments reports that linking the tangible, noticeable results of service delivery in fragile states with governance reforms improves the chances of success for governance reforms, which are needed to promote long-term social and political change.[23] It is important to consider what this means for smaller CSOs not involved in service delivery. Support and funding to CSOs undertaking service delivery could potentially stifle the role for other unfunded civil society activity. This highlights the importance of investigating how this role can be strengthened, as active unfunded civil society can help build trust and relationships at a community level.

Also, difficult political contexts in many fragile states limit opportunities for civil society to undertake advocacy activities. A common assumption behind advocacy is that you have an effective state to deliver, which may be unclear or not present in fragile situations. As Duncan Green's recent Oxfam publication '**From Poverty to Power**' posits, both effective states and active citizens are necessary for fostering growth and development and decreasing poverty and inequalities within societies.[24] Civil society also needs to consider directing advocacy towards powerful non-state actors in fragile states.

Government opposition can be another obstacle to undertaking advocacy in fragile states. Governments tend to view advocacy less positively than service delivery. More hindering is when advocacy activities are subjected to government controls and legal barriers, which is frequently the case in fragile states with weak governance and accountability. Angolan human rights organisations face several obstacles in obtaining approval from the government to operate legally. In Togo, there are few organisations working explicitly on issues of governance, democratisation, and human rights.[25] More or less repressive governments view advocacy activities as threatening to their grip on power, as these activities seek to expand governments' accountability and to demand good governance.

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[21] World Bank 2005a: 10
[22] Word Bank 2005a:16
[23] Berry et al 2004:11
[24] Green 2008
[25] World Bank 2005a:21

This has implications for NGOs working in fragile states. Depending on the situation in the state, NGOs have to decide whether to support CSOs doing advocacy at the potential risk of expulsion or government persecution. For NGOs working with CSOs also doing service delivery, expulsion could also mean high costs for human security and well-being. In situations of state fragility, emphasis on advocacy work might need to be placed on external actors, such as influential countries and international organisations, in order to bring about significant changes. It is paramount that NGOs working in fragile states understand the political environment and potential consequences of advocacy activities.

Two-track dilemma

By definition, in fragile states, public sector service delivery has collapsed or lacks the capacity or will to provide services for all regions and people of the country. Because of the immediacy of the humanitarian needs NGOs often work with CSOs to deliver services to those in need. Though the state's weakness drives actors to work around it, literature state that we "cannot bypass the public sector completely – both for reasons of long-term sustainability of service delivery programs, as well as for the necessity of building, however slowly, effective, transparent, and accountable public institutions."[26]

The 'two-track dilemma' refers to the fact that service delivery and public sector reform are usually separated, with different time-frames, conceptual frameworks, and donor bureaucratic divisions. The responsibility of providing services for people, including the poor, lies with the public sector, because of international rights agreements as well as reasons of equity. The international community often views development as a continuing spectrum which moves from relief and humanitarian assistance to development. Ideally, the government would pick up responsibility for service delivery somewhere along the continuum, but if the international community is working solely with non-state service providers and neglecting to build the state's capacity, we run the risk of creating two parallel tracks, one government and one non-governmental, that never meet.[27]

Several reasons are cited as to why the absence of government in service delivery is problematic. One is that reliance on CSOs is not sustainable, given that CSOs are limited in number, their projects are often limited in time-span, and they lack the infrastructure and resources to be a permanent presence. Ensuring services are delivered throughout the country requires a nationwide presence, which most CSOs do not have. A related concern is that CSOs cannot provide the overall framework to ensure that everyone has adequate access to services. A multi-sectoral approach is needed for the efficient delivery of services, which is best coordinated at the state level. Also, for public accountability, it is important that there are feedback mechanisms of development institutions, such as elections. Finally, government participation in service delivery can contribute to legitimacy, and lack of government participation could conversely contribute to instability.[28]

Brinkerhoff inquires, "How can donors and capacity builders rapidly improve services while at the same time enhancing, in the long-term, the effectiveness and accountability of public institutions?"[29] There is no clear answer to this, as situations differ greatly and also as it is sometimes hard to give attention to building government capacity when the government seems to be part of the problem, during a conflict, or in a post-

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[26] Commins 2005:2
[27] Ibid:3
[28] World Bank 2005a
[29] Brinkerhoff 2007a:3

conflict scenario. In some places the government is content with others performing service delivery.[30] Regardless, the issue of building state capacity in fragile states – where it is greatly impaired and where immediate needs lead to a focus on working with non-state actors – must be addressed.

One idea is that CSOs can introduce participatory development and accountability at a local level. In Angola, participatory methodologies introduced by capacity building activities of NGOs inspired some local government institutions to make use of new more democratic and participatory models. Neighbouring municipalities learned from the new approach, and it received endorsement from the provincial government.[31] NGOs working with CSOs can analyse the context to assess if there are any entry points at which the public sector can be engaged, for example in determining which service delivery mechanisms and channels are ideal, in helping to administer budgets, or assessing the accountability of services to low income communities.[32] Sharing the learning and experiences of CSOs with public institutions should be an aim wherever possible. As Commins states, "the temptation to avoid the state is understandable, but without some clear and shared donor strategy for rebuilding a responsive and effective state, the proliferation of NGO, CSO, Community Driven Development and Social Fund initiatives will lack breadth of impact or sustainability."[33]

Collier presents a hypothetical alternative for engaging in states in which nothing else seems to be working, which might be considered in cases where direct aid to the government will not work. In this 'independent service authorities' model, government, civil society, and donors work together to create and jointly manage a system for spending public money. [34] The system would be characterised by "a high degree of scrutiny by civil society as to how the money was being spent; competing channels of service delivery, encompassing public, private, and NGO; and continuous evaluation to see which was working best," with both government and donors channelling money through the organisation if it proved successful.[35] This is a very controversial idea, and there is a major risk of contracting out the delivery of public services to private sector organisations that have no track record of working in fragile states. Collier's idea also relies on monitoring by civil society, but in fragile states where civil society is weak and regulatory mechanisms often nonexistent, it is difficult to see how this would work.

High costs and high risks: operations and security

The costs of operating in fragile states are great and can be prohibitive. If NGOs wish to operate through country offices, they must bear the costs of property, housing, salaries, and guards, to name a few. Often infrastructure and communications are poor in fragile states, resulting in high costs for those working there. There may also be legal barriers to financial support of NGO operations in fragile states. These factors contribute to extremely high operating costs which could easily create problems even for large NGOs and be prohibitive for many medium and small NGOs.

Another risk factor, and potential cost, for NGOs working in fragile states is the often tenuous security situation and 'politically volatile environment'. NGO fieldworkers and CSO partners are both at risk if the government is authoritarian or if the recurrence of conflict is probable. In Zimbabwe, for example, organisations self-censor and act cautiously in the name of security. If CSOs receive support from British or

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[30] World Bank 2005a:20
[31] World Bank 2005a:10
[32] Commins 2005:5-6
[33] Commins 2005:8
[34] Collier 2007: 118-120
[35] Ibid:119

Americans, “the organisation is then labeled anti-government, which puts its staff at great personal risk, but…makes it hard for organization to operate in its constituencies as well.”[36] There is also the risk that operations will be shut down by the government. These security risks present moral choices and decisions about actual and potential costs for NGOs and CSO partners alike.

Environment of mistrust

NGOs working with CSOs in fragile states will frequently be working in an environment of societal mistrust. Brinkerhoff’s study of capacity development in fragile states notes that the one major difference between capacity development in fragile states and in general is that social mistrust in fragile states is more severe. He notes that “in societies that have been fragmented by deteriorating or conflict conditions, people’s trust and tolerance levels tend to be lower and their suspicion levels are heightened.”[37] Potential impacts of this could be reduced willingness to cooperate across different societal groups and to trust in the goodwill of other groups. This aspect is confirmed throughout the literature.

Because of this disposition in fragile states, NGOs must address critical questions about working in partnerships with CSOs. In divided societies, civil society might reflect the social cleavages within the society. CSO partners may only represent one group or only reach certain sections of the community. As a result, CSOs might reinforce the exclusiveness of society.[38] Whether the exclusion is deliberate or not, NGOs working with them risk “being perceived as intentionally unfair or as demonstrating favouritism.”[39] More blatant moral issues arise when choices for cooperative work include actors such as warlords or private militias. Looking beyond an organisation’s general aim and objectives and investigating political and social alignments of potential CSO partners are important steps in the context analysis and decision-making processes for NGOs.

In ‘**Fixing Fragile States: A New Paradigm for Development**‘, Seth Kaplan asserts that social cohesion is a necessary prerequisite to fix, or build, successful fragile states. He defines social cohesion as shared informal institutions, built-up social capital, and the level of interpersonal trust within a society. As a business consultant to companies in developing countries, Kaplan’s private sector perspective aims to improve the investment conditions in fragile states. He states that the business environment must be able to support and sustain private investment, and secure low-cost transactions and property rights in order for development efforts to be successful. The central thesis, thus, is that building social cohesion is the fundamental frame through which to view all efforts at ameliorating situations of fragility and achieving long-term development successes. Stated differently, this consists of reducing the impacts of the environment of mistrust in fragile states.[40]

Dutch NGO IKV Pax Christi posits that one of the central characteristics of fragile states is a lack of “social trust that underpins the social contract between government and society.”[41] This is tied to poor or absent basic services, the government’s lack of monopoly of legitimate violence, and the failure of government to respect the rule of law. IKV Pax Christi believes this contributes to conflicts and divisions between different groups in society. Restoring social trust is crucial; according to IKV Pax Christi it is the most key task in strategies for working in fragile states. This is a significant challenge, and CSOs can contribute considerably

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[36] Scanteam 2007:12
[37] Brinkerhoff 2007(a):2
[38] Rombouts 2006:34
[39] Brinkerhoff 2007(a):2
[40] Kaplan 2008
[41] IKV Pax Christi 2009:2

to this by building social cohesion, facilitating dialogue, combating impunity, and fostering social stability. Sudan is presently plagued with such challenges.[42]

Actions by external actors are insufficient to create or rebuild a social contract; the process must be locally led, with institutions and trust-building rooted in society.[43] NGOs can explore strategies with CSOs for ameliorating this environment, and it is, at the minimum, essential to recognise the environment's significance in fragile states.

Network and umbrella organisations

One notably consistent recommendation across fragile states literature is to improve or increase support to network and umbrella organisations. According to the World Bank, these networks currently exist in the three countries analysed in their case studies, but are weak and underfunded. The study suggests that given the observed uncoordinated nature of the CSO communities, an effective umbrella organisation could have particular importance as a representative of the collective interests of civil society. They purport that if the donor community gives more resources to support umbrella organisations, the results could be improved distribution of resources, intra-CSO coordination, and sharing of lessons learned. This could also lead to strengthened CSO voice in dealings with government and be a useful channel for dialogue between these groups.[44] Other logical benefits could be legitimacy gained from membership of such an organisation, the building of trust through communication and cooperation in society, and visibility to the outside world, which might provide security or resources.

These benefits would be desirable especially in fragile states, but networks are not a panacea. They are not guaranteed to produce these benefits with increased support and resources. The reality is that experiences of supporting CSO networks in fragile states are not as positive as initial aspirations indicated. Some networks struggle with secretariats that become more like advocacy NGOs with minimal participation from weak members. Other problems may be caused by donors attempting to simplify their work by giving a large cheque to a network organisation, which would in theory be distributed to the member organisations, but places a burden on the network that it might not be able to handle. In weak states, it is likely that networks will also lack capacity, and thus the international community must be wary of indiscriminately increasing support to them. CSO networks should strive to maintain dynamism and flexibility, and donors should not follow too dogmatic a network support blueprint, as it "misses the subtleties of long-term success being based on intangible and developing relationships between secretariats and members."[45] Other observations are that networks work best when they come about organically as opposed to being fostered by external actors, and that specific issue-based networks made up of NGOs with similar goals are more effective and perhaps less susceptible to dysfunction than general NGO networks.

[42] Ibid:3
[43] Ibid:3
[44] World Bank 2005a:22
[45] James 2006:35

Conclusions

This paper has attempted to put forward major questions and issues of concern relevant to NGOs working with civil society in fragile states. The research and literature review revealed several prominent themes meriting attention and exploration:

- Balancing short-term needs with a necessary yet difficult to maintain long-term perspective.
- The challenges of undertaking advocacy in fragile states in the face of oppressive governments or populations which view service delivery as the sole priority.
- The two-track dilemma, where those working in fragile states with civil society organisations must be careful not to hamper the development of the state's capacity by creating a second track for service delivery. The danger is that the second track never incorporates or engages the state in order to prepare it to take responsibility for these functions.
- The prevalent extremely high costs and security risks which NGOs must face and manage.
- The environment of mistrust which NGOs must work in and strive to ameliorate through building trust and social cohesion at a community level.
- The common recommendation and assumed benefits of working with networks and umbrella organisations in fragile states. These networks are not guaranteed to work better solely by having increased resources and in many cases are not the magic solution sought. While the benefits of an effective network could be great, it is important that the network be organic with participatory members, which is often not the case.
- Finally, underlying all fragile states discussion must be a thorough and continuous contextual analysis, as cases of fragility vary greatly and are individually extremely dynamic. NGOs goals and strategies need to be flexible in order to correspond with this dynamic nature.

There is clearly a need for civil society to innovate and pursue alternative solutions in fragile states where traditional methods do not seem to be working. The influence of Paul Collier's work shows the huge interest among donors in new ideas for working in fragile states but there is potential and space for others to contribute to the debate. The challenge for civil society is to engage more effectively in policy dialogue on fragile stages, building on their programmatic experience of working directly with poor communities.

Only by recognising these issues can we begin to understand their impact on working in fragile states. For an NGO, it is important to reflect on these themes and dilemmas, and questions they may call to mind. Further research should aim to address if and how some of these issues are dealt with by different NGOs on the ground in various contexts of fragility and to foster NGO and civil society-oriented innovations for working in fragile states.

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