

The New Deal: Essential Information for Civil Society Focal Points

This short guidance has been prepared to help the CSO country focal points lead civil society engagement in the New Deal and the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS). Civil society is an official, legitimate actor in the New Deal – in fact our participation is essential to ensure broad public engagement and real change in peoples' lives. Each country context and process is unique, but a common approach will make for more effective and unified CSO engagement.

These essential actions are discussed more fully below:

- Understand the New Deal and the IDPS
- Build a civil society coalition and identify a lead team
- Build relationships with the government
- Engage in fragility assessments and implementation
- Keep track of progress
- Seek peer support and involve the rest of the CSO community

Understand the New Deal and the IDPS

Civil Society focal points for the New Deal should have a full understanding of the International Dialogue. While most activity at the moment revolves around the New Deal and the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGS), focal points should understand the history and motivations behind the IDPS, key milestones and the link between the IDPS and the Country level Development work.

Build a civil society coalition and identify a lead team

We all already know that engagement with governments should not be done by a few CSOs alone but instead needs a broad coalition that is seen to work together. As the New Deal is not only a development, peacebuilding or statebuilding initiative, you will need support from colleagues involved in peacebuilding and statebuilding, advocacy, relationship building and in creating a good enabling environment. Look for and build relationships with CSOs that have access to governments as well as those that have strong linkages with communities.

As well as broad representation, our credibility as civil society depends on the quality of our contribution to the New Deal processes. Within the coalition you will need to identify experienced civil society leaders to make up your core group, with expertise in the following areas:

- Policy development processes – in particular the PRSP and your own government policy frameworks and the processes that inform them, as well as international goals and frameworks i.e. the MDGs
- Conflict analysis/ peacebuilding strategy related work, especially mainstreaming conflict sensitivity into policy/programming
- Design, monitoring and evaluation, and the participatory processes around DME
- Indicator design
- Political strategy

It is also very important that you identify a backup from this group who can act in your place in dealings with both the government and civil society. This depth will add greatly to the credibility of civil society.

These are what we think are the minimum essential skills needed for our involvement in the New Deal. If you are not able to identify a suitable range of expertise, you can identify them from your peers in the South or seek the support of the CSO core group. It may also help you to have an international CSO partner that can bring together international CSOs to support national CSOs in this process. Do let us know if you would like

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us to assist in identifying a suitable international CSO partner. Please let us know if there is already someone playing this role so that we can connect with them to strengthen international support to all g7+ processes.

In order to be successful as CSOs you will need at a very early stage to build relationships with other actors. The media is important in creating awareness and pushing for a much wider debate. You will also need to ensure there is constant communication with sections of society, because pressure and support as well as ownership should reside in the larger society and not among CSOs.

Build relationships with the government

Your role as the civil society focal point makes you the legitimate civil society representative in the IDPS. As soon as possible you should make yourself known to the government leader of the New Deal process (usually located in the Ministry of Finance or Planning) and get as much information on the planned New Deal processes and their scheduling. In most countries, a Task Force made up of country MDG, PRSP and Aid Effectiveness teams will guide this process. We have successfully lobbied at the global level to ensure that there is space for civil society on these teams – and we are working to ensure that the civil society representatives should be chosen through the country level Civil Society Core Group that you lead.

Be alert to the possibility that the government may have identified its own version of civil society. While your role is supported by an internationally sanctioned process and by civil society in your own country, you will need to build your own credibility and support from the government. This depends a lot on how you actively engage, and not just confront government. This is an important issue on which your Southern peers and the international CSO core group may be able to help if there are problems.

With your core relationship established, you will need to build relationships with other government actors. The ‘whole of government’ approach of the New Deal means that its implementation involves several arms of government, as well as the legislative arm. You therefore need to familiarise yourself with key committees in Parliament that are responsible for areas such as budgeting, security and justice. You will also need to interact with other technical people within government, including international advisors, who develop policies on behalf of the political leadership.

Engage in fragility assessments and implementation

Implementation should follow the ‘FOCUS’ process that is a core element of the New Deal:

1. Fragility Assessment
2. One Vision, One Plan
3. Compact
4. Use Peacebuilding & Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) to monitor
5. Support political dialogue

Assessment

As the first step in implementing the New Deal, the fragility assessments are crucial. Ways of working that are established in the assessments may become standard as implementation goes on, so it is important that civil society is seen to be active, informed and effective. With a member on the Task Force, civil society should have an influence on the design of the assessment process. As we learn about innovative ways in which these assessments are being undertaken in different countries, we can share experiences and insights to assist you in positively influencing the design.

The fragility assessment process may take the shape of a series of workshops – one for each of the five Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs). It is important that civil society goes into these workshops

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with an understanding of how they will run. Ideally you will have had a role in planning the workshops, but even if you are not entirely satisfied with their format you should engage positively in them.

You should go into the workshops a clear set of civil society's policy objectives. While each context will have its own priorities, others are common to all countries. The international CSO core group has developed these common objectives (which accompany this document), but in summary they are as follows:

- Identifying and mainstreaming drivers of conflict as part of the fragility assessment, and then later into strategy/planning
- Ensuring that the assessments create a platform for ongoing and meaningful government accountability on issues of fragility
- Identifying and mapping linkages between the PSGs – avoiding silos and ensuring an integrated approach
- Influencing the process and shape of PRSP development (or any other country development strategy) so that it is not simply 'business as usual', *and* working to ensure that drivers of fragility and resilience influence other areas of government and societal response – not just the PRSP
- Ensuring that governments do not focus solely on the New Deal aspects while ignoring other key commitments under the International Dialogue. These include the FULL Monrovia Road Map

The fragility assessment workshops are not the end of the process: finalising the fragility spectrum and developing indicators to monitor and assess progress on the five PSGs continues after the workshops.

We strongly encourage you to choose a CSO Fragility Assessment/Indicator Focal Point with DME/conflict sensitivity experience for the workshops and finalisation of indicators. We can support this person in quickly learning about the history/politics of this role and the activities being undertaken, and work to ensure learning feeds into the process in both directions. This person will need to be ready to commit to a period of intensive work before, during and after the fragility assessment workshops. **** Please communicate this Focal Point, at your earliest convenience, to CSO Indicator Group Chair, Erin McCandless (contact below).***

Implementation

One of the first challenges for civil society is to make sure that implementation ***follows*** the fragility assessment – however it is likely that in some cases governments will want to be seen to act before the assessment is complete. This should be resisted as being counter to the intent and logic of the New Deal. Assessment needs to come *before* planning if this process is to have any meaningful impact.

Immediately following the fragility assessment and development of the fragility spectrum there is a need to achieve tangible results that will inform the government's current development strategies and donor commitments:

1. How government plans its development agenda
2. How the State relates with the society, especially its representatives (CSOs) and community
3. How donors work and support development at country level.

You will need to ensure that these immediate priorities are visible and infused into government, donor and civil society engagements. In the longer term, the 'TRUST' concept is central to the New Deal. All government processes – planning, monitoring, donor negotiation, dialogue and service delivery – will be affected. A vital role of civil society is to assure that applying the New Deal becomes more than a labelling exercise and that transparency, predictability and systems strengthening are applied.

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This transformative agenda will require time. Civil Society should be ready to commit to a long term process. In time, the New Deal may become the guiding framework for all CSO engagement with government. There will, however, be particularly intense periods at the beginning, and around national strategy processes (e.g. annual budget cycles and PRSP development).

It is likely that the composition of your core CSO group will change over time as the New Deal implementation progresses. Political strategy and policy influence will become more significant, and so will participatory monitoring of New Deal implementation right down to the local level. Just as important as influencing the government will be working to ensure that all of civil society is active in some degree.

Keep track of progress

The final page of this document is a format to help track essential information through the New Deal process. This information should be helpful to you as the focal point, and also to the international CSO core group – both to support you and to plan across the various New Deal countries. This format can be adjusted to suit your country, although it will help us if you can share information and retain this structure as far as possible, especially on key personnel, dates, status and progress.

Seek peer support and involve the rest of the CSO community

The CSO community is ready to support you in your role as the CSO country focal point. This support can include technical advice, financial assistance and other support. In addition to the CSO leads (listed below), as noted above, you may wish to have a dedicated international CSO contact point. Let the CSO core team know if this would be useful.

Following are the core team leads. This group represents CSOs on the formal New Deal Working Groups, and is also responsible for collaborating with each of the country focal points as required:

CSO Core Group Chair	Francois Lenfant	Cordaid	Francois.Lenfant@cordaid.nl
Indicators	Erin McCandless	Interpeace	erin.mccandless@gmail.com
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Steering Group	George Mata Thionza François Lenfant	PREGESCO Cordaid	pregescocr@yahoo.fr Francois.Lenfant@cordaid.nl

Useful documents

A New Deal for engagement in fragile states (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/35/50/49151944.pdf>)

Civil society summary of positions

Draft Format of the Fragility Spectrum

Piloting the Fragility Spectrum Within Countries: Draft Guidance Note (forthcoming)

Document 3A: Draft New Deal Implementation Guide, Meeting of Steering Group Nairobi, 6-7 June 2012

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g7+	Name	Organisation	Name	Position	Contact
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Senegal	Guy Aho Tete Benissan	Réseau des Plateformes Nationales d'ONGs d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre			
Zimbabwe	Rita Nyampinga	Gender and Economic Alternatives Trust			

