OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES

What Really Works in Preventing and Rebuilding Failed States

Building Civil Society in Post-Conflict Environments: From the Micro to the Macro

SUMMARY

- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have for some time formed part of the larger policy agenda of the United States, the European Union and the United Nations directed at the promotion of democracy through a more active citizenry and civil society.

- The events of September 11, 2001, the new emphasis on "fragile" or "failed" states and the post-Washington consensus on aid harmonization for state strengthening have led several governments to promote a closer alignment of all development interventions with a broader nation- and state-building strategy. But the role of civil society in this new agenda is unclear and has not received significant attention.

- The new agenda advises against independently funding efforts to support the emerging state. Instead, harmonized, country-level development strategies are being introduced in which both NGOs and civil society are considered in collaboration with broader state-building needs.

- To play a constructive and tempering role in this new paradigm, proponents of civil society should focus more on the concept of citizenship than on civil society organizations. Citizenship is the relationship between people and the state, not between people and local NGO development partners.

- The key to successfully promoting civil society is in adapting programs to be responsive to the local dynamics, needs and pre-existing relationships and social support networks.

- Essentially, what is needed is a transition from a set of highly personalized relationships, in which individuals and organizations seek access to ad hoc state-bestowed benefits as clients, to a system of transparent, institutionalized relationships between citizens and their governments.

- Broadening the civil society sector mandate to include an emphasis on strengthening of the state would create institutionalized opportunities for social bargaining and social learning within post-conflict societies.

- A coherent state- and society-building strategy would be structural in content, medium term in length and would cut across all fields of development, broadening the mandate beyond civil society sector work. A coherent strategy would also place an equal emphasis on the state and civil society organizations.

- Consequently, it is imperative to integrate interventions that focus on service delivery at the local level and those that contribute to strengthening governance functions at the national level in order to develop an effective, country-level strategy.

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What Really Works in Preventing and Rebuilding Failed States

Building Civil Society in Post-Conflict Environments: From the Micro to the Macro

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The Changing Policy Context for Civil Society–Building

by Michael Lund

Under the aegis of the Leadership Project, the public forum series entitled *"What Really Works In Preventing and Rebuilding Failed States"* aims to bridge the gap between current policy discourse and the real world results of practice in the field. The present topic, *"Building Civil Society in Post-Conflict Environments: From the Micro to the Macro,"* explores the distinctive role that civil society promotion may have in the prevention and recovery of so-called failed and failing states.

Civil Society Defined

To set the scene for the following discussion, we first need to distinguish the notion of civil society writ large from the activities of particular NGOs, which are often uncritically equated with the larger concept. "Civil society" entails a set of interests, often quite disparate, that cut across a society's main identity groups. These interests are expected to be in principle more or less independent of both the state, political parties and other political movements within the society. While NGOs in a particular society could be potential elements within that civil sphere, they are not synonymous with the whole. Further, NGOs are part of civil society only if they act together with citizen, corporate and autonomous institutions to engender the peaceful pursuit of a variety of societal interests, and do so in ways that help to counterbalance any particular partisan force that seeks to dominate.

The Role of NGOs in Building Civil Society

Given this definition, it is important to consider the typical roles that NGOs play in countries affected by war, and how these roles relate to civil society. Support for NGOs has been a main focus among major donors for many years. Besides contracting international NGOs as distributors of humanitarian aid, donors have looked to international and country-based NGOs to carry out an increasing number of roles in pursuit of development, democratization and conflict management. Among others, these tasks have included:

- assisting the government in providing social and other services;
- mobilizing social demands to put public pressure on government to be more responsive to public needs;
- monitoring the state and playing watchdog with regards to human rights and corruption;
- convening issue-specific dialogues between disputing leaders or groups; and
- working at the grassroots level in order to foster inter-group reconciliation through sectoral projects and mediated conflict resolution.

In some countries, local NGOs also have been funded to mount "people power" campaigns. As in the recent "color revolutions," these campaigns are aimed at opening up political regimes to opposition parties and ousting leaders who were holding onto power through irregular methods. Viewed more broadly, all these programs supporting NGO activities and capacity-building are seen as ways to foster the progressive emergence of a broad civil society, one that both supplements the state in providing for public needs and makes governments more responsive to their populations.

   In sum, NGOs form part of the larger policy agenda of the United States, the European Union and the United Nations to promote democratization through a more active citizenry that participates in social and political processes. This aid has been provided in part because it was thought that these many activities would add up to the kind of civil society that is needed to counterbalance the state, as well as to promote greater popular participation in government and social life. Civil society groups provide an entry point for engagement in situations where governments

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themselves are seen to be untrustworthy partners. Thus, an underlying rationale for boosting NGO capacity is premised on the desire for government accountability achieved through bottom-up, participatory and grassroot processes. At the same time, domestic NGOs have often been found to lack appropriate organizational skills, technical skills and resources either to perform adequately these diverse functions or to sustain themselves. Consequently, donors have provided training and material resources in an effort to strengthen NGO institutional capabilities. This emphasis has faced some criticism over the years, as the authors note. Efforts to fund NGOs and their professional staff have been faulted for often unduly circumventing governments and diverting resources and energy away from strengthening the organs of governments. Second, NGO engagement in political mobilization and agitation has often irritated leaders, whether justifiably or not. Third, the engendered "project culture" has been criticized for assuming naively that a mix of discrete activities can cumulatively yield significant social and political change. Conversely, civil societies can be so powerful that they destabilize and paralyze political systems, such as is happening currently in Bolivia. Moreover, some non-governmental entities are not purely "civil," as perhaps demonstrated by Lebanon's Hezbollah. Fourth, local NGOs are often personality centered and short-lived.

Civil Society Promotion in a Changing Global Context

Efforts to build civil societies through NGO strengthening in conflict-prone and post-conflict environments in particular are facing a changing global and policy milieu. The events of September 11, 2001, and the new emphasis on "fragile" or "failed" states have altered the global context within which civil society organizations operate, and they have cast a shadow over the significance of civil society and support for local NGO activities. It has come to be widely believed that ungoverned or mal-governed areas, where state services and protection are virtually absent, are breeding grounds for terrorism and violent extremism. This has dramatically shifted the policy agenda to a different diagnosis of the basic development problem, at least in these settings.

One of the results of this shift in the development agenda is that the developing world is being divided into tiers, with each tier possessing a varying degree of capacity to absorb and harness development assistance positively. States with higher levels of development are able to effectively channel external assistance towards progressive change, while other states, including fragile and failed states at the bottom of the proverbial ladder, are not able to utilize outside aid effectively. As seen in the Millennium Challenge Corporation, for example, the world has been divided up for programming purposes into different tiers of countries depending on whether their governments can make good use of development aid.

The ascendant argument is that the weaker states need help with providing public services and protection—in other words, a supply strategy. In practice, this discourse has focused mainly on the problems of post-conflict states, particularly Afghanistan and Iraq, rather than focusing on the problems of countries situated along the continuum of near-fragile, fragile and failed states. Overall, the current emphasis has shifted somewhat away from the broader democratization, capacity-building and even economic development goals, and toward policy prescriptions for buttressing failed states through a strengthened security sector, the promotion of the rule of law and improved service delivery capacities. The emphasis on failed states highlights a valid and crucial point: in failed states the basic environment for traditional development programs and democratic institution building is weak if not wholly absent. Normal state functions such as health and education are not performed or are provided by informal institutions, security is poor and the social fabric is torn. In the more stable developing societies, and during the Cold War under proxy regimes, donors could often take for granted substantial social stability and state structures through which to work. However, in the current settings where security is poor and institutional capacities are weak, donors can no longer anticipate a pre-existing environment of basic social and institutional infrastructures through which to conduct development activities.

The need is therefore to create a stable environment. Development programs thus have to do basic state- and nation-building. Indeed, as early as the 1990s, analysts were becoming aware that the governments in conflicts such as those in Somalia, Yugoslavia and Rwanda were failing to be effective or were unable to claim legitimacy, or both. These conflicts and the emerging theme of state failure revealed and affirmed the reality that a pre-existing formal state, assumed by the West to exist as posited by Max Weber's "legal-rational" model, has never existed in many poor, developing societies. In several cases, the basic functions of the state, including the provision of secure borders and social services, are not being adequately fulfilled or are handled by non-state entities. In that sense, the current effort is more accurately described not as "rebuilding failed states," but as building functioning, representative states in the first place.

State-Building: The Need for a Comprehensive Approach

The *modus operandi* of development agencies has changed. Recognizing that a different approach is required when working with fragile, weak and failed states, development practitioners and programs are now focused on very basic state- and nation-building tasks. The developmental objective in such cases is the construction of effective bureaucratic capacity and institutional infrastructures that may in turn effectively channel development assistance. This change in emphasis also necessitates a multi-sectoral, holistic and comprehensive strategy. Agencies from various fields including development, defense, security sector reform, democratization and others, need to develop coherent approaches together and foster interagency coordination. Such interagency coordination is taking root in the US system and in the UK, which are both emphasizing intergovernmental coordination including deeper multilateral cooperation.

To do the comprehensive, integrated, cross-sectoral work that is called for in fragile or failed states, efforts are now being made in Washington to coordinate the several kinds of agencies that are engaged in development, diplomacy, security sector reform, institution-building and peacekeeping. Ironically, within the Washington community, it is often NGOs and private think tanks that are taking the lead in sponsoring and facilitating discussion forums to foster intergovernmental as well as NGO coordination.

But where do NGOs and civil society fit into this new picture? In the conversation about failed states, they do not seem to have a place at the table anymore. The question that arises and that this paper seeks to address, therefore, is the particular place that NGO support and civil society promotion occupy, given the current preoccupation with how to prevent and rebuild failed states. The exploration of their role involves three broad questions:

First, what are the most important specific roles and functions for NGOs on the way to building civil societies in these environments? Does civil society promotion have any compelling use in settings of state failure and post-conflict recovery?

Second, which particular approaches and roles are appropriate to specific kinds of weak state contexts? For example, what are the different roles to be fulfilled by civil society and NGOs in different stages of conflict and under differing regimes? What goals and priorities need to be set for the differing environments across a spectrum of societies?

Finally, how do we actually implement the appropriate roles for NGOs and civil society through our support practices? With whom does one engage? Should aid be provided directly to the concerned state; to auxiliary NGO service implementers; to peace alliances, international or domestic; to for-profits; or to partnerships between NGOs, civil society and state institutions? What is the best balance between local and international inputs to ensure local ownership? At the Washington, DC, New York, Brussels or London level, how does one organize the requisite intergovernmental and multilateral cooperation?

For insights and to stimulate further discussion, we turn to two analysts/practitioners who are eminently qualified to address these questions.

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Fostering Citizen Collective Action
in Post-Conflict Societies

by Peter Uvin

The purpose of this analysis is to explore how NGOs contribute to civil society development in post-conflict environments. The study draws on the cases of Burundi and Rwanda, two countries that have experienced particularly devastating conflicts. What exactly constitutes civil society is beyond the scope of this paper; its emphasis is on processes for encouraging civil society development.

Civil Society Promotion as Democratization

Democratization has become one of the key pillars of the international community's approach to post-conflict rebuilding. In all countries coming out of war where the international community plays a role, the establishment of democracy, usually within two years, is included. However, the current experience with democratization programs has been subject to severe criticisms by scholars and policymakers. Some argue we try to do too much with too little money—we seek democratization on the cheap, so to speak, and of course fail. Others have argued we seek to go too fast: the aims and timeframes are unrealistic, especially for countries grappling with unresolved legacies of conflict. Most think the democratization agenda is too externally defined, too little anchored in local society.

Nonetheless, most scholars agree that it does remain important and useful to promote relatively more democratic government structures in post-conflict environments since it is oftentimes a demand of the citizenry. Clearly, the lack of any such structures was in most cases part of why conflict erupted in the first instance. While the approaches to democratization suffer from many problems, the alternative of *not* promoting democracy has disconcerting implications.

As part of the democracy agenda, civil society is assumed to be a crucial element. Even countries that are not beset with the complications of post-conflict transition recognize civil society as one of the three main pillars of a democratic system. In addition to democratization, civil society is also considered a crucial element of any human rights agenda. There is a widespread underlying assumption that somehow a weak civil society contributes to the outbreak of violence. Underpinning this assumption is a more theoretical notion that weak civil societies are more easily manipulated by extremist leaders due to a dearth of social capital that limits the potential avenues for the constructive management and resolution of conflict.

In addition, in fragile and failed states where the government's capacity is limited, civil society groups are perceived to be part of the crucial machinery that implements development goals because they are able to ensure that aid money is implemented effectively, products and services are delivered in a timely manner and participatory development is encouraged. In sum, it is assumed that investments in strengthening civil society not only help to prevent the outbreak of violence but can deliver services while also promoting democracy.

These trends can be seen in the cases of Rwanda and Burundi, where the international development community engaged in civil society development in three broad arenas: subcontracting aid to local-partner NGOs, promoting grassroots organizations and supporting local NGOs mainly in the human rights field as tools for democracy.

Subcontracting of Aid to NGOs

In post-conflict situations, the platform for engagement with NGOs has broadened. First, development partners not only engage with civil society groups in the traditional sectors such as education, health and food aid, but they have been expanding their repertoire to include

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engagement in conflict-specific emerging sectors such as justice, reconciliation, trauma and governance. These emerging sectors developed as part of the post-conflict or conflict prevention agenda where NGOs can play a relevant role. However, upon closer examination, it is foreign NGOs that dominate the latter areas. Only with the passage of time do more local NGOs emerge and begin to play a role in these sectors.

As the post-conflict environment matures, the importance of NGOs as a whole begins to dwindle. The role of civil society tapers off for a variety of reasons. First, the emergency phase of post-conflict work diminishes. Second, post-conflict governments begin to find their feet and assert their role as the responsible actors for sectors such as education, health and justice. This was certainly the case in Rwanda, where the Kagame government actively tried to displace NGOs out of certain sectors, and it is, understandably, happening in Burundi now. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the post-Washington consensus of aid harmonization for state strengthening runs counter to work with NGOs. This new agenda promotes an alignment of all development interventions in an attempt to prioritize state strengthening and consequently veers away from using NGOs for most tasks.

Promotion of Grassroots Organizations

The promotion of grassroots organizations is the second broad arena in which the international community engaged in both Rwanda and Burundi. Actually, grassroots promotion began prior to the conflict in both cases. However, post-conflict promotion of such organizations has proved a more difficult undertaking due to increased distrust and social divisions. The sense of community that existed prior to the conflict was greatly undermined, if not extinguished, by the wars. In addition, during the last decade, there appears to have been a decrease in the number of development projects in rural areas.

It is noteworthy that, as a result of the emerging harmonization and alignment agenda, the development community is now concentrated in capital cities. In Burundi and Rwanda, it appears that ninety-five percent of the foreign development community resides in Bujumbura and Kigali. Previously, smaller and more remote areas were hosts to projects and foreign aid workers that worked with local communities to create dynamic programs. Currently, most of the policy work and projects are directed from the capital. Many of the citizen structures or grassroots organizations now appear to be merely token structures created to manage project benefits and they typically exist only as long as the projects do. When the day-to-day projects evaporate, so, too, do the grassroots structures. While many grassroots organizations genuinely do represent the interests and needs of the local citizenry, many are also connected with local elite groups that promote their own vested interests. In the longer term, the degree of political openness and stability at the local level is likely to determine if a strategy of promoting grassroots organizations through external assistance can succeed.

Support to Local NGOs as Democratization Tools

The third tendency that emerged in both Rwanda and Burundi was direct support to selected local NGOs in the hopes that they could serve as system-changing tools for democracy, not simply subcontractors for aid. In Rwanda, it has been predominantly women's organizations that have been supported in this regard, followed by human rights and conflict resolution organizations. The development community tends to fund projects aimed at increasing the advocacy capacity of such organizations; support is often in the form of institutional assets such as computers and vehicles, and training projects are also popular. These types of projects are most directly associated with the development community's sense of a long-term civil society–building agenda.

However, these three current approaches to civil society promotion are insufficient.

Aid as Institutional Destruction

Some of the main problems with these strategies for civil society–building include state resistance, internal divisions within and among the local NGO community, low internal democratic values and the generalized failure of networks. Donor-supported civil society strengthening projects are often the target of government resistance, as many of the civil society groups supported have a politicized and anti-state agenda. In my experience, donors are likely to lose the ensuing confrontations. Furthermore, these same organizations can become battlegrounds of internal power struggles and conflicting visions. Many of these local NGOs, although they seek to promote democracy, are themselves internally poorly representative of democratic values. Aid partners also like to promote networks, platforms or umbrellas. But such structures often become dominated by their secretariats, which use their authority to compete with their members rather than to strengthen them. Alternatively, they may get politically hijacked. Consequently, the experience of development partners in terms of support to local NGOs as democratization tools has been generally unsatisfactory.

There are four deeper reasons for the poor record of success in promoting and supporting local organizations. First, the societal context within which development partners work is extremely complex and challenging, and so oftentimes agencies overreach and establish over-ambitious targets. Second, project aid is a very weak tool in terms of trying to achieve the stated goals of broad development and democracy promotion. Projects are small, short term, typically inflexible and bureaucratically and paperwork driven. Moreover, the design criteria of projects are often not transparent; too often there are no clear criteria for how local partners are selected for engagement. Third, the work that is being attempted is politically very sensitive and thus difficult to carry out. Despite the neutral and apolitical rhetoric, the goals of most development projects are political in nature. Often, local NGO partners are selected based on their opposition to a government—all nationals are smart enough to recognize this and act accordingly. Fourth, development partners often fundamentally misunderstand the domestic dynamics of civil society development. A simplistic understanding of what local organizations do and of their political characteristics undermines project success. Local organizations understand the long-term dynamics much better than aid partners do, and as such, the development community often works from a position of weakness. As a consequence, external aid sometimes unintentionally weakens civil society and contributes to institutional destruction.

More fundamentally, however, the complex task of building a civil society extends far beyond the mere funding of "nice" local NGOs. The building of a civil society requires the creation of processes that allow people at all levels of society to engage in collective action; to learn to build their own capacities; and ultimately, to act as citizens. If one examines the dynamics of many conflicts, citizenship is arguably a much more important concept than civil society organization.

A Citizen-Oriented Civil Society Strategy

Essentially, what is needed is a transition from a set of highly personalized relationships, in which individuals and organizations seek access to ad hoc benefits as clients, to a system of transparent, institutionalized relationships. Clientelism is prevalent in many African states including Rwanda and Burundi. Oftentimes, the development aid system itself creates clientelist networks and reinforces such systems through its own behavior. But post-conflict situations are in need of institutionalized relationships that are governed by much more predictable, transparent rules through which individuals and groups are able to demand recognition of their rights as citizens.

Ultimately, a shift from clientelism to citizenship is necessary. In order to affect this type of change and avoid contributing to institutional destruction, civil society–building should be focused on creating capacities for citizenship through the provision of opportunities for

"Civil society–building should be focused on creating capacities for citizenship through the creation of opportunities for social bargaining and social learning within post-conflict societies."

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social bargaining and social learning within post-conflict societies. These crucial elements should be focused beyond capital cities and should more inclusively engage poor communities and individuals.

In view of the existing weaknesses apparent in current approaches to civil society development, a concrete civil society strategy should include several basic objectives and should create incentives for poor people to engage in collective action as citizens rather than as clients of either political power-holders or the development machinery. Such a strategy would be structural in content, medium term in length and would cut across all fields of development; broadening the mandate beyond civil society sector work as such. A coherent strategy would also place an equal emphasis on the state and civil society organizations. Indeed, citizenship is the relationship between people and the state, not between people and development partners. Program design and behavior is also a crucial element. It is not actually what partners do; rather it is *how* they do it that matters. Behavior should be highly adapted to local circumstances and initiatives. Moreover, a healthy dose of skepticism regarding best practices is needed. Most best practices amount to little more than platitudes. Every local context is different and "best practices" are often not generally applicable to distinctly different situations.

How such a citizen-oriented approach would modify the existing trends in current civil society–building projects can be illustrated by drawing on two cases in my own recent professional practice in Rwanda and Burundi.

Rwanda Decentralization (Ubudehe)

In post-genocide Rwanda, major donors became interested in the concept of *ubudehe,* community-driven reconstruction, as advocated by the Rwandan government. *Ubudehe* envisioned block grants at the local level for development schemes. These block grants would go to the lowest level of the state—the *collines* or hill-based communes. The idea was that the program would begin at the local and provincial level and then be expanded nationwide. As in most post-conflict development interventions, individual donors acted within the confines of their own methodologies and available funding. The EU acted as the prime donor.

In order for donor support to the *ubudehe* project to be successful, my colleague Sue Unsworth and I advised that funding should be predictably pooled, accountable to local communities and facilitated. A long-term, predictable strategy allows communities and donors to learn from past mistakes and improve upon their historical record. If development is carried out on a one-time basis, it creates the space for middlemen to capture all the benefits without delimiting any form of accountability. But if a project is predictable and long term, it creates incentives for a wider range of people to mobilize. It allows the development donors and local partners to acquire the experience to plan for, manage and monitor resources.

Additionally, pooled donor support would allow for the equitable distribution of funds throughout the territory and reduce the clientelist incentives that undermine collective action. Through pooled, predictable resources, the international community would undercut the clientelist system of powerful intermediaries and grant people the basis for collective action toward the state.

We further recommended that donor funding should pass through the appropriate government channels. Thus, the accountability mechanisms for funding would not align with donor systems, but rather with those envisioned by the local laws that govern audit systems, elections and other accountability mechanisms. By encouraging such local accountability, the relationship dynamic changes from one of donor-client accountability to one of state-citizen, thus facilitating the important development of a citizenship culture. The donor community should certainly monitor such systems, for neither in the case of Rwanda nor Burundi has

there been particular reason to trust that local accountability systems will always be applied. But by encouraging improved mechanisms for local accountability and better management of public expenditure, civil society is provided with entry points to challenge the misuse of funds.

Burundi Local Governance

In Burundi, as elsewhere, two main approaches are utilized by development projects seeking to work with local communities. The first approach saw monetary support channeled via the government machinery down to the local communes. This approach was adopted by the UNDP, EU and other bilateral and multilateral funders. With these funds, training was provided for newly elected officials and investments were made in communal and community infrastructures. The second approach, used by the World Bank and NGOs, bypasses the public structures and engages directly with the population typically via the creation of local committees or associations. This approach has been generally ad hoc and has been implemented in a few provinces, bypassing local administrations.

In assessing local governance projects, I proposed that the donor community start from the premise that better institutions in Burundi cannot be created by donors, but need to emerge from a long-term process of internal politics as well as from social bargaining and learning within the available institutions of citizenship. Consequently, donors anchor their projects in the lowest official level instituted for citizen representation, in this case the *conseils de colline*, rather than continuing to create their own local institutions. They should work with these *conseils* to help them interact both with the populations that voted for them and the higher levels of government, including the aid agencies that support the government. The donor community should seek to harness the multiple opportunities that exist for bottom-up planning and build on already existing local dynamics.

Conclusion

The process of building civil society in post-conflict situations is a daunting one. The role that the donor community plays should be assessed critically. The key to successfully promoting civil society is not in identifying more "lessons learned"; rather it is in understanding local dynamics and needs and adapting programs to be responsive to them. In order to be successful, the donor community must find more effective and constructive means of supporting citizen opportunities for local learning and bargaining within the framework of the law. Promoting a culture of citizenship is crucial to effective civil society promotion.

Integrating Diplomacy and Development

by Sarah Cohen

A New Nation-Building Paradigm

Current efforts to address the diverse range of nation-building needs and priorities in fragile and failed state contexts have been frustrated by a lack of coordination, tensions between short- and long-term priorities and funding mechanisms that place significant restrictions on the budget allocation, distribution and reporting mechanisms for development funds. However, the manner in which development agencies implement projects in these contexts is undergoing a sea change. A new paradigm that can be termed "diplomatic development" is emerging. Defined as a broader nation-building strategy, this new paradigm aims to link the various sectors and actors involved in development assistance, specifically in fragile and failed state contexts, to more effectively build or restore conflict-affected states.

Focusing on Relationships

When discussing a more unified approach to nation-building, it is important to explore and analyze the existing relationships between the government and members of civil society within the community in order to determine the primary actors. Many current definitions of civil society remain amorphous, ambiguous and confusing. However, in this analysis, civil society is defined as citizens, local and international NGOs and social movements that function within the society. In failed states, the government is often incapacitated and civil society may be filling the governance gaps. Civil society in these contexts is often weakened, traumatized and the concept of citizenship non-existent. However, understanding the actors and how service provision is implemented within the society is important when undertaking development and capacity-building activities. Within post-conflict environments, four broad types of relationships between the state and civil society—tenuous, hopeful, nascent and evolving—have significant implications on the efficacy of international development interventions.

Tenuous relationships are often found in protracted post-conflict environments or highly repressive states with regional conflict dimensions. In such contexts, a relationship exists between civil society and the state which is characterized by decentralization, weakness and deep mistrust between national institutions and local government structures. Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, Nepal, Ethiopia and the Philippines are cases that display historically weak institutions and mistrustful citizen interaction with local and national governments. Such pervasive mistrust within the society will inevitably affect interactions with international development actors at all levels of society.

Hopeful relationships are characterized by improved dynamics between civil society and the state as evidenced by positive expectations and a population that is willing to place a degree of hope in their leadership. South Sudan is an instructive example of a hopeful relationship in which the Comprehensive Peace Agreement triggered an improved level of expectation and confidence in the national government. However, in many cases where hopeful relationships are present, citizens place unrealistic expectations upon a newly formed or struggling leadership. Consequently, international actors should be cognizant that the existence of a hopeful relationship provides a window of opportunity for the design and implementation of relevant projects to strengthen the government and engage the citizenry.

Nascent relationships are exemplified by authoritarian regimes that are undergoing the transition to a new democracy. Often characterized by citizens with very limited interaction with or experience in governance, advocacy or civil society groups, these relationships can be

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marked by the lack of recognition of a functioning state. Consequently, international interventions should focus on achieving successful decentralization and the establishment of the basic machinery of a democratic state. In these environments, the program design of donor projects would be vastly different from those in places like South Sudan.

Evolving relationships are exhibited in cases such as Afghanistan, Tajikistan or Sierra Leone where citizens have to negotiate space between the state and other powerful entities such as warlords or alternative power structures that are in contention with state elements. Often these various entities are folded into the state following a peace settlement. Recognition of this reconfiguration of the state to include previously contentious elements is very important as it determines the manner in which local provincial governments, civil society and local institutions are constructed. These reconfigurations impact the manner in which citizens build associations and social networks and determine the amount of social capital available for alignment between different interest groups.

Country-Level Strategies

Taking into consideration the differing relationships and roles of civil society and the state within the various fragile and failed state environments, it is important to determine the most appropriate mechanisms for implementing development and nation-building interventions. The most daunting questions facing international development organizations in these contexts are often where to start, and how to effectively begin to build institutional capacity. International actors, therefore, need to understand the enabling factors that allow a society to function and then examine how they might facilitate a healthy society-state relationship.

In line with the emerging paradigm of diplomatic development, there is a recognized need for international development interventions to be implemented through more effective mechanisms at both the local and the national level. It is crucial for international actors to analyze and understand the country context and move beyond what might be done at a project level to focus on a country-level impact. Specifically, international interventions need to identify and build upon the pre-existing relationships and supportive networks within the local environments in the country of interest. In the absence of effective state governments, local actors, institutions and governing structures often develop and can be nurtured through international support to strengthen civil society initiatives at the community level. However, these efforts alone are insufficient to ensure the level of investment and the integrated approach that is necessary to achieve a cohesive and coordinated civil society. A country-level strategy also necessitates collaboration amongst donors in the implementation of a harmonized, national implementation strategy to harness effectively the development potential among the broad range of civil society actors. The current development paradigm is not designed to support this type of comprehensive country-level strategy. Consequently, current mechanisms for aid distribution need to be reviewed and suggestions need to be made to develop and strengthen efforts to create an integrated, cohesive, nation-building strategy.

Conclusion

The absence of state-led basic service delivery is not simply overcome by creating parallel structures through civil society. While service delivery through local NGOs and civil society organizations is often prioritized by international actors, it is important to note the existing traumatized nature of the environments and the "fend-for-yourself" mentality that can lead to further competition and violence between social groups. International aid, distributed through various mechanisms, can serve to worsen these pre-existing divisions within the society or create new cleavages. Additionally, regional, ethnic and religious disparities

can become politically sensitive, creating greater risks that services are delivered along party or ethnic lines. Similarly, when support for national-level governments is diverted, due to the belief that it takes too long to implement aid through state mechanisms, repressive actions are often taken by the state towards civil society, as evidenced in Nepal, Sudan, Ethiopia, Angola and Burundi.

Consequently, investment in the relationship between the local government structures and the role of civil society organizations should not be overlooked or minimized. In order to assist the development of a healthy society-state relationship, it is important for international agencies to anticipate and adapt to environments in which both national and local needs should be addressed. As such, it is imperative to integrate interventions that focus on service delivery at the local level and those that contribute to strengthening governance functions at the national level in order to develop an effective, country-level strategy. These interventions also need to monitor their impact on these societies through regular, in-depth evaluations that assess the wider implications for civil society development.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The **Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity**, launched in June 2005, expands upon the work of the former Conflict Prevention Project and responds to the growing demand for leadership training directed at both the prevention of violent conflict and the reconstruction of war-torn societies.

There is an emerging awareness of the importance of leadership training in achieving sustainable peace. On a technical level, the art of building democratic state capacity is well understood. But the harder political task—helping the leaders of warring factions achieve their objectives, to work collaboratively in avoiding war or supporting postwar reconstruction and to build democratically accountable links between the governors and the governed— requires a careful examination of the underappreciated "leadership factor" in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.

Under the leadership of former Congressman and Presidential Special Envoy Howard Wolpe, the Leadership Project aims to address the missing process and leadership dimensions of peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction; to expand the cadre of professional trainers capable of working in regions in conflict or emerging from conflict; and to deepen the international community's capacity to conceptualize, implement and manage these complex interventions.

Presently, the Leadership Project is composed of three core elements: a standing Working Group on preventing and rebuilding failed states; a major capacity-building initiative in war-torn Liberia; and public forums and issue conferences.

ABOUT THE WOODROW WILSON CENTER

The **Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars** is the living, national memorial to President Wilson established by Congress in 1968 and headquartered in Washington, D.C. It is a nonpartisan institution, supported by public and private funds, engaged in the study of national and world affairs. The Wilson Center establishes and maintains a neutral forum for free, open and informed dialogue. The Center commemorates the ideals and concerns of Woodrow Wilson by providing a link between the world of ideas and the world of policy and fostering research, study, discussion and collaboration among a full spectrum of individuals concerned with policy and scholarship in national and world affairs.
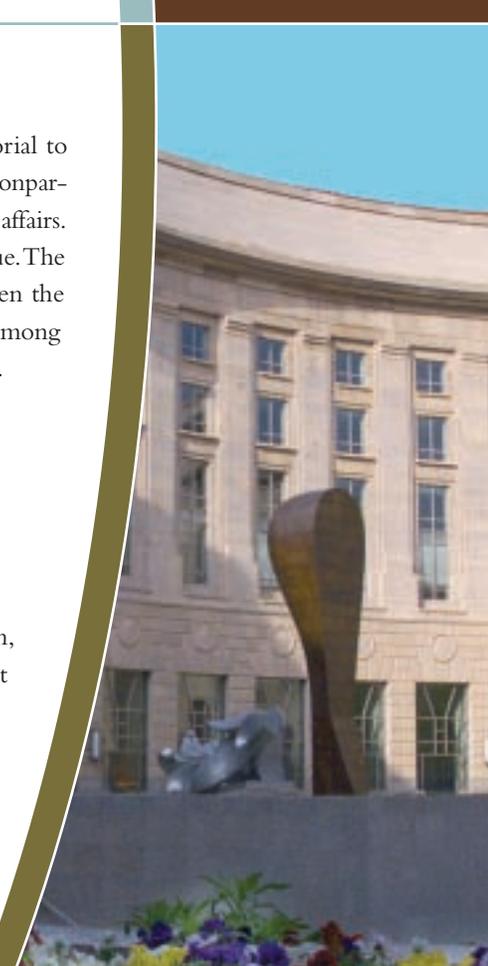
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