*A DeLoG Learn4Dev Joint Learning Event on
"Fragility, Decentralisation and Local Governance"
The Hague, 9 – 11 November 2015*

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Abbreviation

ADA	**Austrian Development Agency**
BTC	**Belgium Technical Cooperation**
CLA	**Country Level Analysis**
CIB	**Capacity and Institution Building Working Group**
CSO	**Civil Society Organisation**
DANIDA	**Danish International Development Agency**
DeLoG	**Development Partners Network on Decentralisation and Local Governance**
DEZA	**Direktion für Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit**
DG DEVCO	**European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development**
DLG	**Decentralisation and Local Governance**
DP	**Development Partner**
EU	**European Union**
GIZ	**Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH**
ICT	**Information and Communication Technology**
IKV	**Dutch Interchurch Peace Council**
LG	**Local Government**
LSG	**Local Self Government**
MAE	**French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development**
M&E	**Monitoring & Evaluation**
NGO	**Non-Governmental Organisation**
OECD	**Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development**
PEA	**Political Economy Analysis**
PFM	**Public Financial Management**
SDC	**Swiss Development Cooperation**
SDGs	**Sustainable Development Goals**
SLA	**Sector Level Analysis**
THA	**The Hague Academy for Local Governance**
TNA	**Training Needs Assessment**
ToR	**Terms of Reference**
UCLG	**United Cities and Local Governments**
UN	**United Nations**
UNCDF	**United Nations Capital Development Fund**

UNDP   **United Nation Development Programme**

UNICEF   **United Nations Children's Fund**

USAID   **United States Agency for International Development**

VNGi   **The International Branch of the Dutch Association of Municipalities**

1. Executive Summary

The present report covers the DeLoG[1] learning event on *Fragility, Decentralisation and Local Governance* that took place in The Hague, Netherlands, from 09 to 11 November 2015. The event was organized by the DeLoG secretariat, hosted by VNGi (The International Branch of the Dutch Association of Municipalities, VNG) and implemented together with The Hague Academy for Local Governance (THA). The learning event provided (i) a structured exchange of information, experiences, lessons learned and good practices by bringing experts and practitioners together to share their diverse perspectives. The training group consisted of 20 practitioners from different development partner organisations (e.g. UNDP, UNICEF, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, VNG International, SDC, GIZ, BTC).

The learning event was opened by Peter Knip, the director of VNGi who is also the chair of the Capacity and Institution Building Working Group (CIB) of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). In his opening note, he pointed out the relevance of the learning event and its good timing given the conflicts around the globe, i.e. the rise of ISIS, migration crisis and flaring of conflict in South Sudan.

Nils Huhn, Advisor from the DeLoG secretariat also welcomed the participants to the learning event. He echoed VNGi director on the right timing of the event; he reminded the audience that International Development Partners are facing fragile environments in many countries and regions all over the world. He therefore pointed out that effective administrative and governance structures are a prerequisite for sound state society relations, even more in fragile contexts.

The technical inputs through experts were arranged by modules, including an open space for sharing experiences for the participants and presentations from guest speakers. The three-day learning program consisted of three modules (i) Theoretical framework: unpacking decentralization, local governance and fragility, (ii) Building the state from below in a fragile context, (iii) Effectiveness of support to DLG (Decentralisation and Local Governance) in fragile contexts.

Don Seufert, the first expert to introduce into the topics, is a Team Leader of the EU`s Local Government public financial management (PFM) and payroll project in South Sudan. He shared the recent developments on DLG in fragile contexts and discussed comprehensively the dimensions and forms of fragility[2]. He pointed out that the new tool for assessing fragility can support the identification of national and international priorities by assessing specific vulnerabilities and risks. By revealing distinct patterns of vulnerabilities across several dimensions it builds on the New Deal's "one view, one plan" and can inform international priorities for jointly reducing fragility and continuing to focus on the most fragile situations. To better contextualize fragility, the expert noted that states experiencing fragility do not follow a linear path from conflict to stabilization to state-building to elections and towards legitimacy.

Don Seufert also provided a general introduction into Political Economy Analysis (PEA). In short, he mentioned that PEA is predominantly concerned with the question of political feasibility of interests and incentives, the role of formal institutions and the impact of values and ideas in state-society interactions. He argued that PEA should be broad in scope, problem-driven and address all actors that participate in the issue at stake.

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[1] DeLoG is a network of bi- and multilateral development partners seeking to enhance alignment and harmonisation of their support to decentralisation and local governance.

[2] OECD (2015). ‚*States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions*'

Dion van den Berg the second expert to intervene addressed the disconnect between state building and peace building. He pointed out that state building is more about state security and peace building is more about human security. In many cases, it is also related to the tension between the principle of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination. This occurs especially when regions are reaching for their own autonomy and independence, while the state approach is focusing on territorial integrity, as for example in Puntland in Somalia. He concluded the section by suggesting that a fragile context has often both a fragile state and a fragile society; it is not helpful to think that state is bad and civil society is good as the reality is many times more blurred.

Corina Dhaene, the third expert on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), argued that in fragile contexts specific challenges are added to the design and execution of M&E. In short, challenges for M&E related to DLG in fragile contexts are firstly related to the quickly changing volatile environment, which is generally characterised by a lack of data, a weak articulation of roles between stakeholders and an insufficient understanding and application of normative frameworks on governance and democracy. In these contexts M&E can be perceived as a threat. These challenges also raise the costs for M&E significantly. Secondly, challenges are related to the donor policies, which aim for quick results and impact and require M&E data to prove clear lines of causation (between input and impact). Complex development processes in fragile context however are often non-linear processes that need a long term results horizon of at least 20 years. Finally, challenges are related to the type of projects that are typical for DLG interventions and require adapted M&E approaches to monitor and evaluate e.g. the support to capacity development and improved service delivery as well as restoring government-citizen relations.

The learning event also provided a space for sharing practical experiences. The first experience was shared by Mihaela Haliciu (European Commission, DG DEVCO – EuropeAid, Fragility and Resilience Unit). Her presentation was on how EU works in contexts affected by fragility and crises. She referred to the two fundamental approaches which guide EU interventions in such contexts, namely the EU Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises and the EU Approach to Resilience.

The second experienced was shared by Ilona Postemska, National Programme Officer of the Swiss Cooperation Office in Ukraine (SDC). Her presentation was on decentralisation in Ukraine: systemic reform and/or tool for peace building.

The third experience was shared by Jorge Rodriguez Bilbao, Quality Support Manager of the Civil Society and Local Authorities Unit at EuropeAid. He shared his experience of the EU ACORDS Program in Madagascar. The ACORDS Program in Madagascar initially aimed at supporting Local Governments (LG) to provide basic services. The program became a "policy experimentation" contributing to shape the institutional and policy framework of the decentralisation process in the country.

On the last day of the learning event, a panel discussion with the three experts as panellists took place. The moderator of the panel, Nils Huhn, asked the members of the panel to identify key institutional opportunities and challenges to succeed DLG reforms. On the one hand, normative frameworks were described as crucial tools to understand and share the change and impact which should be realised. On the other hand, normative frameworks need to be sufficiently contextualized to allow a complex change process to start and develop in a fragile context. Don Seufert pointed out that the focus of normative frameworks for democracy lays on pluralism, elections and democracy while the factor of legitimacy is highly underestimated. He sees legitimacy as a core driver of state-building. From Corina Dhaene`s perspective, and the perspective of M&E, it is important to select and measure those indicators that allow monitoring the complexity of a change process in a fragile environment. Therefore the use of different methods is crucial.

Dion van den Berg highlighted the issue of dealing with controversial parties in fragile contexts. He mentioned that there is a need to invest a lot of time and dialogue into involved parties as well as a focus on social content and social cohesion in order to stimulate trust. This requires the involvement and consideration of the citizen during implementation but as well in normative and programmatic frameworks.

The last session took the form of a World Café discussion, providing space to identify outstanding issues and questions. Participants were asked to select three questions that would guide the discussions. The discussions took the form of three rounds, each round lasting 15 min. The questions selected and discussed were (i) How to get donors to appreciate the nature of long term programming for state building to transition beyond fragility and what is the role of local governments in this process? (ii) How to design the decentralisation reform in fragile contexts in order to advance towards resilience and legitimacy? (iii) How to stay/remain engaged with national partner governments that have fallen out of favour with some donors in order to intervene effectively at the local level?

2. Introduction

The three days learning event build on the premises that effective and inclusive local governments are essential in fragile contexts, as they play an important role in promoting and restoring state authority and building peace. Therefore, the support to strengthening the legitimacy and capacity of different levels of government as part of the stabilisation and peace building process is crucial for improving the relation between state and society and delivering peace-dividends. However, international assistance to decentralisation and local governance (DLG) in fragile contexts has not always been adequate.

It is in the spirit of discussing the above mentioned challenges between practitioners that the joint learning event was organised. The following are the central questions addressed during the event: *What lessons can be learnt from support to decentralisation and local governance in different types of fragile contexts by international development partners? When is support to DLG reforms reasonable? How can development partners increase the effectiveness of their DLG support within fragile contexts?* In the process of addressing these questions, an overview of the latest international thinking on fragility, decentralisation and local governance (incl. national and intergovernmental aspects of DLG) was provided. Furthermore, participants were given an opportunity to exchange experiences, jointly analyse concrete cases and discuss new ideas and approaches to adapt and strengthen decentralisation reforms and local governments in fragile contexts.

In short, the joint learning event enabled a structured exchange of information and experiences, lessons learnt and good practices on Fragility, Decentralisation and Local Governance. It provided a platform for joint learning and linked the theory with practical lessons of successes and failures in supporting local governance and decentralisation in fragile contexts. This report includes a summary of all sessions, group work results, discussions during the training course, an analysis of the evaluations, as well as further recommendations for similar future events.

According to the consultant's ToR, at the end of the learning event, it was expected that the participants:

- Can characterize and distinguish different dimensions and forms of fragile contexts

- Have reflected on all three dimensions of decentralisation processes in fragile contexts;

- Have explored the specificities and challenges of DLG in fragile and conflict-affected countries versus non-fragile contexts;

- Have discussed critically to what extent DLG support in fragile contexts may have counterproductive effects;

- Have developed ideas for monitoring and evaluating the impact of DLG donor interventions;

- Are able to incorporate good practices and lessons learned from development partners' experiences in supporting DLG in their work and interventions in fragile countries;

- Have created a network of practitioners in this particular field.

3. Training Team

Freddy Sahinguvu is programme manager at The Hague Academy for Local Governance. He has extensive experience in facilitating training courses in the field of decentralisation, local governance

and local economic development. He has a MSc. in Public Policy and Human Development from Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, with a specialisation in decentralisation and local governance in Africa. At the Hague Academy, he works on various projects and contributes to program design and trainings facilitation i.e. local economic development, citizen participation and accountability, youth public leadership, local service delivery etc. Next to his work at The Hague Academy, he is a freelance lecturer on Global Marketing, International Economics and Law. Furthermore, he has worked as a student coach and lecturer for a university of applied science.

Don Seufert supports legitimate governments in the most difficult nations of the world, transitioning from liberation movements, regime changes, and similar conflicts to delivering services and economic opportunity to their citizens. With more than three decades of experience with national and international governments and multi-national organisations, he builds and leads effective project teams of national and international advisors and staff. He has led PFM and governance projects and initiatives in locations with very nascent and evolving political processes over the past 15 years: Iraq, South Sudan, Nigeria, Libya, and Afghanistan. He has extensive experience with complex stabilisation, public financial management, community-based development, decentralisation and sub-national governance programmes and is currently leading the EU's local government PFM and payroll project in South Sudan (EU TAPP). Before that Don Seufert worked a.o. for USAID in Nigeria and Iraq, on local governance programmes, implementing community-based approaches to strengthen LG budget transparency and local revenue mobilisation reforms, premised on creating partnerships between communities and their local governments.

Dion van der Berg has two principal fields of expertise: "democratisation and consolidation of peace" and "religion and conflict". He studied Dutch literature and linguistics. In 1980 he began to work for IKV, a Dutch NGO. He has more than 35 years of experience in decentralisation, peace building and capacity development of local governments in Africa, Middle East and Southeast Europe. Since the beginning of the eighties he has taken part in encouraging municipal policies for peace. Throughout the years he has concentrated particularly on the local authorities of denuclearized zones, municipal contact of east-west brotherhood, and cooperation with local governments and local NGOs in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia (Vojvodina and Sandzak) and Kosovo. As a peace professional, Dion van den Berg has worked with numerous individual municipalities, has organized local, national, and international seminars and conferences, and has written several publications about municipal peace policies and related matters. More recent he worked on decentralisation and peace in several African countries and on capacity development and local government in Syria.

Corina Dhaene has been a consultant at ACE Europe since 1995 and is co-manager since 2005 (www.ace-europe.be). She is an evaluator, a trainer and a coach/facilitator. As an evaluator, she has assessed various programmes and policies aimed at (capacity development of) local governments and CSOs, local development and food security and improvement of basic services such as water, health and education, in RD Congo, Mali, Uganda (North East), Benin, Senegal, Egypt, Ukraine, Moldavia and Bosnia Herzegovina. Clients included the Belgian Technical Cooperation, Dutch and Belgian NGOs, VNG International, the Belgian Ministry of Affairs and the IOB in the Netherlands. As a trainer, Corina Dhaene has given training on the design of capacity development strategies, Project Cycle Management and M&E and on the development of M&E systems (not including IT solutions). She develops participatory training methods and training materials that allow participants to learn. She has also coached a number of organisations in the assessment of their current M&E approach and in the development of more appropriate M&E systems, thereby always choosing for a pragmatic approach (not doing whatever is imaginable, but doing what is possible and what can support learning and adjustments). Last year, she wrote a basic guide to M&E for local governments, which

develop capacity development projects with colleagues in the South/North. The training of Corina Dhaene as a historian is evident in the questions that are crucial in her daily work: how did processes run and could they have been different? What has really changed and for whom? What exactly explains this change? What can we learn and remember? How can it go on? M&E is key for answering those questions.

4. Participants

The training group consisted of 20 practitioners from different development partner organisations (E.g. UNDP, UNICEF, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, VNG International, SDC, GIZ, BTC). Most notably, in an effort to facilitate the sharing of experiences and reinforce the dialogue between and across organisations, it is noteworthy that the group consisted of both development partners working in the field, as well as in headquarters. Geographically, participants also came from various regions across the globe, rendering the potential for discussion even more interesting. The participants' level of experience varied widely, with some participants being relatively new to the field of decentralisation and local governance, whereas others had greater expertise due to several years of professional engagement in the field. The variety of backgrounds and experiences enriched the course, and made the exchange between participants very interesting.

5. Training

5.1 Course Programme

The content of the course programme took into account both the training needs assessment (TNA) that the participants were asked to fill in prior to the training and the learning objectives jointly identified by the DeLoG secretariat, VNGi and THA. The content was agreed by all partners and fitted into a three days programme, reflecting the latest developments in the field of Fragility, Decentralisation and Local Governance. Furthermore, additional resource persons on specific topics were invited to enrich the discussions and share the latest development on the topic besides the three main experts of the course. In this perspective, a number of complementary case studies from various countries across the globe were shared and analysed. For a detailed overview of the course programme, please see annex 8.1.

5.2 Methodology

From the TNAs, it became clear that all participants were looking for a highly interactive course, which would leave ample space for discussion amongst participants and exchange of experiences. To achieve such a high level of interaction, different methods were applied. The participant guide developed for the training provides a detailed overview of the different methods used during the learning event. In short, the facilitators' team tried to have the participants engage with as many other people in the group as possible. Throughout the course, participants were reshuffled at the start of every day. This was appreciated by participants, as it facilitated networking and helped trigger a broader exchange of experiences and insights. Most important elements that helped stimulating interaction were the ice-breaker exercise at the beginning of the course, the wrap-ups by both the participants and experts at the end of the day and the recaps at the beginning of day as well as the numerous group works. Joint lunches, dinner and the social event did provide participants

with additional opportunities for networking and helped creating a good atmosphere in which people felt free to ask questions and share their thoughts inside and outside the training.

6. Sessions and results

The following section provides a brief overview of the constituent elements of the course programme, including brief summaries of the discussions and results of the group works.

6.1   Welcome, participants introductions & introduction to the programme, THA

The learning event was opened by Peter Knip, the director of VNGi who is also the chair of the Capacity and Institution Building Working Group (CIB) of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). In his opening statement, he welcomed all participants in The Hague and emphasised that the learning event is taking place at the right time. He mentioned examples of few conflicts, i.e. the rise of ISIS, migration crisis and flaring of conflict in South Sudan to illustrate his point. He went on to point out that in this type of situation the populations are facing uncertain future. At the same time needs for basic services, livelihoods and safe shelter remains unrelenting. According to him, there is no surprise that an increasing number of donor and development agencies are focusing more their programming on themes such as fragility, security and rule of law, disaster preparedness and resilience. He ended his opening by reminding the participants the relevance of the topic for the learning event "fragility, decentralisation and local governance", and wishing them a successful three days of exchange of knowledge and experience.

The second opening statement was provided by Nils Huhn from the DeLoG secretariat, he also welcomed the participants to the learning event. He echoed VNGi director on the right timing of the event. He reminded the audience that International Development Partners are facing fragile environments in many countries and regions all over the world. He pointed out that an efficient administrative and governance structure is a prerequisite for sound state society relations, even more in fragile contexts. In this process, decentralisation and local governance has a key role. He concluded by mentioning that the joint learning event will contribute to a better understanding of decentralisation processes in fragile contexts and provides a structured exchange of information and experiences between the participants and experts.

The introductory notes were followed by introduction to the programme conducted by The Hague Academy for Local Governance. The short session started by a short introduction to the THA vision and mission and its philosophy. This was followed by an overview of the programme, clarifying what is expected each day and which expert will be leading the discussions. The presentation of participants was performed also as an ice breaker, in a participatory and fun manner. During this exercise, participants indicated who they are, where they work, why they applied for the learning event and shared their hobbies. This process allowed the establishment of an informal atmosphere conducive to an effective learning process.

The introductory round was followed by a process of managing expectations, where participants were asked to share their *"brings and takes"* in relation to the content of the three days learning event. *Brings* are experiences and knowledge participants are willing to share. The *takes*, are questions and issues participants are struggling with in their work, which can be addressed during the training. The *takes* and *brings* were incorporated in the different sessions and were referred to throughout the three days.

6.2 Session 1: Unpacking the concepts Decentralisation, Fragility and Local Governance, Don Seufert

The first session was conducted by Don Seufert. The main objective of this session was to share the recent developments on DLG in fragile contexts and to discuss comprehensively the dimensions and forms of fragility. The OECD's five dimensions is a five-cluster working model for assessing Fragility versus a single "fragile states" category. They reflect the range of risks and vulnerabilities that lead to fragility in its different forms. They are derived from the UN's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development proposed SDG Goal 16 and reflect five dimensions:

- Violence (reducing all forms of violence and violent deaths everywhere),
- Justice (promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensuring equal access to justice for all),
- Institutions (developing effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; reducing illicit financial flows and combating organised crime),
- Economic Foundations (reducing youth unemployment; promoting economic, social and political inclusion),
- Resilience (reducing exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters; building adaptive capacity.)

In contrast, forms of fragility refer to either differing contexts of failing states or states recovering from fragility. Examples of failing state contexts are escalating sectarian or ethnic conflicts, civil war, or a humanitarian or refugee disaster. On the other hand, a negotiated settlement of a conflict (even if its causes might not be fully resolved), are examples of recovering forms of fragility.

The five dimensions overlap with other recognized fragility frameworks. For instance, security, justice and economic foundations, are aspects equally addressed by the five peace- and state building goals of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. USAID's Fragile States Strategy shares some of the forms of fragility contexts with the five dimensions.

This new tool for assessing fragility can support the identification of national and international priorities by assessing specific vulnerabilities and risks. By revealing distinct patterns of vulnerabilities across several dimensions it builds on the New Deal's "one view, one plan" and can inform international priorities for jointly reducing fragility and continuing to focus on the most fragile situations. To better contextualize fragility the expert noted that states experiencing fragility do not necessarily follow a linear path when recovering from fragility, i.e. from conflict to stabilization to state-building to elections and legitimacy.

The expert observed that a state's capacity and resources, its institutions, legitimacy and an effective political process together produce resilience to fragility. With resilience comes the ability to cope with changes in legitimacy, capacity or effectiveness. Resilience in the social contract yields state stability. Participants questioned and challenged "Resilience" amongst the five dimensions as being too limiting, e.g. reducing exposure to climate-related events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters. Further discussions on this topic revealed that the five Dimensions of fragility are very context specific and even asymmetric when it comes to how countries are affected by fragility, how they can address it, recover from it and move towards resilience.

A key challenge in addressing fragility is not just establishing a common understanding about it, but rather more appreciation of how to use and implement the five dimensions to it.

Perceptions by important segments of society, that government is using its power in reasonably fairways and in the interest of the nation as a whole, is a working definition of legitimacy. Created with laws, at the ballot box, and generated or replenished by delivery of services and economic vitality, are common sources of government's legitimacy.

The expert gave examples of legitimacy in a fragile contexts noting legitimacy derived from fairness in process, performance and external recognition. He noted too that legitimacy in fragile contexts lead to rule by consent rather than coercion and are a central part of state-building. Sources of legitimacy engendered lively discussions as many participants felt the examples listed by the expert were not exhaustive. Afterwards, he continued addressing the concept of Legitimacy as a central part of state-building[3] in fragile states and why it is central in reducing violent conflict and grievances.

While sharing their experiences on this aspect, participants acknowledged that the establishment of legitimacy remains problematic in fragile contexts. In short, they agreed that it is a very challenging issue although it can be the key to reduce violent conflicts. To conclude the discussions, the expert stated that Local Governance can be the driver for different sources of legitimacy and can initiate a bottom-up approach to establish or support legitimacy on national level. After the discussions on the OECD's five dimension and the importance of legitimacy to strengthen resilience, the participants were grouped in four groups (each five people) to discuss the following questions:

- Identify one fragile situation (in a country) a group member is working or familiar with.
- Analyse it in terms of the five dimensions of fragility.
- Can DLG be an approach to stabilise and overcome the fragile situation?
- What interventions does the group conclude are needed to advance the state building process and why?

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[3] According to Dion van den Berg "state building is largely a top-down approach (with focus on the state level) for the construction or reform of governmental institutions ; in this process local actors take the role of recipients"

The groups selected the following countries: **Burundi, Lebanon, Mali and Nepal.** All groups identified similar problems on the first and fourth dimension (Violence and Economic Foundations). The countries above mentioned are all facing domestic violence as well as weak economies. The Justice dimension was characterized differently. While in Nepal the access to justice was presented as a critical issue, the aspect of independence of the judiciary in general was cited as striking in other countries. Concerning the Institutions and Resilience dimensions, the assessment in the different countries provided more diverse results. In some countries like Mali (national level) or Lebanon (local level) the institutions were characterized as relatively strong. The direct opposite to this description can be found in Burundi and Nepal, where the presenters used different examples for weak institutions. In Nepal corruption was cited as the main reason for weak institutions, whereas in Mali the absence of regularly held elections is a corrupting factor. The resilience dimension was characterized differently in each country. The presenters demonstrated that the lack of basic service delivery in Burundi, desertification and the high level of migration in Mali or ethnic- and political tensions in Lebanon and Nepal are highly significant when it comes to resilience.

The different groups agreed that DLG can be an approach to deal with fragility in the analysed countries. But, while the DLG approach is already in progress in Nepal, Burundi, Mali and Lebanon they highlighted its complexity when it comes to planning and implementing it. DLG can help to overcome weak structures, to improve state – citizen relationship and/or to bring feuding ethnic/political groups together. Key interventions mechanisms shared by all groups were the establishment of government accountability mechanisms, the improvement of institutional capacity and the distribution of basic services to citizens.

After the group work presentations, the participants highlighted that

- Donors are also political agents and can be therefore drivers of fragility!
- NGOs are connected to a political agenda. Consequently by supporting specific NGOs, one may indirectly endorse and support a given political agenda. To avoid such problems an approach is e.g. to work with sectoral NGO networks.
- Another point of discussion was the limitation of the five OECD dimensions of fragility. Participants argued that it does not allow the inclusion of different variables. For example the influence of a powerful neighbouring country on domestic policies of a fragile state cannot be captured by the five dimensions. It was also noted that the five dimensions describe fragility risks and vulnerabilities, but do not address implementation approaches in response.

6.3   Session 2: Understanding decentralisation approaches in fragile contexts, Don Seufert

This session aimed at strengthening participants understanding of the three dimensions (political, administrative and fiscal) of decentralisation processes and its specifics in fragile contexts.

The expert started the session by defining decentralisation and its different approaches; he argued that decentralisation should be seen as the transfer of authority, responsibility, and accountability from central to sub-national governments. He pointed out further that decentralized governance is commonly distinguished by its administrative (functional responsibility), fiscal (access to resources), and political (accountability) dimensions. He emphasized that fiscal decentralization prescribes the extent of financial autonomy of sub-national government. Local governments must therefore have

financial resources and capacity to carry out their responsibilities; otherwise decentralization would be without meaning.

The discussions on decentralisation in fragile contexts converged to agree that decentralization is always a process of "two steps forward, one step back". The expert highlighted that decentralization in fragile states is "work in progress", which means that it is a long-term process. Few examples were provided to illustrate the complexity of decentralisation in fragile context. E.g. Nepal's Local Self-Governance Act (1999) devolves much of the capital budget decision making and basic service provision to Village Development Councils (VDCs) and District Development Councils (DDCs). Yet here have been no local elections since 2003, the VDCs and DDCs are appointed and now function as political patronage mechanisms. In Iraq, Law 21 opens the possibility for local revenue generation, yet almost all provincial funding comes from central government transfers.

Before the group exercise, participants were asked to share a few benefits of decentralisation in fragile contexts:

- It can contribute to creating institutional discipline: systems, institutions, and individual capacities
- It can increase the speed of service delivery and contribute to local legitimacy
- It can address ethnic and regional inequities
- It can help build conflict management capacities
- It can mitigate conflict by avoiding "winner takes all" solutions
- Decentralized local governments as a starting point

After lunch, participants were divided in four groups to discuss the following question on decentralisation processes and its dimensions in fragile contexts. The question was as follows:

Under what conditions is a) deconcentration, b) delegation, c) devolution or c) fiscal decentralisation appropriate or inappropriate in fragile contexts? Please use examples from your experience to illustrate your points.

Presentation 1: Deconcentration

By sharing the experiences of the different places where participants of this group work, the group came to the conclusion that a strong system of local checks and balances is a prerequisite for an effective deconcentration in fragile states. In this process, local government associations can play an important role. However, the expert pointed out that in most cases there are no checks and balances in fragile contexts. It was asked to the group what would be the solution in this case? Due to the lack of sufficient time, the group was not able to discuss and identify potential solutions. To illustrate the point of the argument on checks and balance, Marija de Wijn, governance specialist from UNICEF at headquarters provided an example of Cambodia; a strong centralized state that would suffer strongly under decentralization at the moment because there is no infrastructure for checks, balances and accountability in place.

As conclusion, the group pointed out that in a fragile context there is a risk that the central government may use deconcentration to predetermine the outcome of the decentralisation process. For example a government that wants to keep control at the central level may use deconcentration to place its agents at all level of policy implementation, to tighten its control on public life. However, this may also be the case in non-fragile context. In any case, the process itself could actually become detrimental for the country.

Presentation 2: Delegation

The group agreed that the success of delegation in fragile contexts really depends on a) the willingness of the central government and b) the 'bottom' part of 'bottom-up', which needs to be empowered first through lobby and advocacy before it can effectively use the new resources and responsibilities delegated to it. An example of garbage collection in Lebanon was provided to illustrate this point. The central government in Lebanon was paralyzed because of political differences so they delegated the garbage collection to local municipalities, however without providing them with the financial and technical resources required. This led to four months of negotiations between both levels of government without fruitful results.

Presentation 3: Devolution

For devolution to be effective in fragile context there should be a clear division of competences and responsibilities between the different levels of government, in terms of spending and income generation. This can only work if the right financial institutions are in place. The above were identified as basic preconditions for devolution in fragile contexts. However, the preconditions do not address the question of authority and ownership of the financial means. The expert gave an example of Somaliland and Puntland, where the central government has established clear guidelines for financial budgeting, which provided a basis for the devolution of resources and responsibilities at the local level.

Presentation 4: Fiscal decentralisation

The group came to the conclusion that in order for fiscal decentralisation to be effective in fragile contexts there should be capacity to handle the funds at the local level and the right accountability institutions, otherwise the process becomes counterproductive. However, this is not only the case in fragile contexts. What makes fiscal decentralisation in fragile contexts more vulnerable is a problem of ownership and maintenance of public services. Tax systems are often non-transparent and people often do not know who has the mandate to collect taxes and where the money is being used. This was identified as the main reason why citizens in fragile contexts lose their incentive to continue paying taxes.

6.4 Sharing experiences: The EU Policy Framework for addressing fragility, conflict and violence, Michaela Haliciu

A presentation on how the EU works in contexts affected by fragility and crises was provided by Mihaela Haliciu (European Commission, DG DEVCO Europe-Aid, Fragility and Resilience Unit). She referred to the two fundamental approaches which guide EU interventions in such contexts, namely the EU Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises and the EU Approach to Resilience. Both approaches stand as an efficient working method aimed at improving the overall coordination, coherence and effectiveness of EU external action in countries affected by fragility or crises. As a commonality, they are both centred on working closely with national governments and local authorities as a precondition for achieving sustainable results and aid efficiency.

In her presentation she stated that the EU Comprehensive Approach is not new as such. It has been already successfully applied as the organizing principle for the EU external action in many cases in recent years, for example in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and the Great Lakes. However, the ideas and principles governing the comprehensive approach have yet to become systematically, the guiding principles for EU external action across all areas, in particular in relation to conflict prevention and crisis resolution. It is now not so much about "what to do", but about "how to do" and how to make the best use of the EU's collective resources and instruments, with a particular focus on conflict and crisis situations.

The basic principles of the EU Comprehensive Approach were presented and are as follows:

➢ Enhancing the coherence, effectiveness and impact of the EU's policy and action

➢ Across EU actions, but particularly relevant in conflict and crisis situations, and to prevent violent conflicts

➢ Working better together to draw on the whole range of EU policies and instruments to achieve results

➢ It is not about "what to do" but about "how to do it"

She went on to point out that the EU Comprehensive Approach is a relevant working method in conflict and crisis situations. The approach can be summarised as follow: Develop a shared analysis, define a common strategy, focus on prevention, commit to long term engagement, link policies, mobilize different strengths and capacities of the EU (e.g. make better use of EU Delegations and work in partnerships). To exemplify the approach, she discussed the EU engagement in the Horn of Africa (Somalia) where the EU Comprehensive Approach is adopted.

Subsequently, she presented the EU Approach to Resilience. She addressed the key documents through which the concept was adopted and made operational (e.g. the Commission communication on resilience and its corresponding action plan, Council conclusions, European Parliament resolution). In essence, the speaker underlined that resilience is an integrated multi-sectorial approach which can be defined in terms of three key characteristics:

• Country ownership – the importance of aligning humanitarian and development aid to national resilience strategies and frameworks as a precondition for sustainable development;
• People-centred – the resilience approach must bring sustainable benefits to the most vulnerable populations and households;
• Ensure coherence, complementarity, coordination, continuity between humanitarian and development partners in order to achieve results.

However, measuring resilience remains a key challenge. The EU is still in a learning process although there are examples of countries where resilience was successfully implemented by EU Delegations. As such, the EU Resilience Building Programme in Ethiopia is profiled itself as a success story. The project was briefly introduced by the speaker by pointing out how EU humanitarian and development partners are working together in partnership with the Government and in close cooperation with local authorities and other international stakeholders, in supporting the most vulnerable communities in Ethiopia to face the drastic consequences for the current drought in Ethiopia.

The presentation was followed by a discussion on how challenging it is to provide flexible funding in fragile contexts when the budgets are big. Here development partners are often being bound to funding and disbursement schemes as set by national ministries and multilateral donor agencies. The measuring of fragility was a highly discussed topic and it became clear, that there are many different frameworks with sometimes overlapping contents and methodologies. To avoid getting lost in different types of frameworks, donors have to be flexible with their adoption and use.

As a conclusion, two questions were addressed; the first one was on whether it is possible to have the same resilience approach/model for every country? The presenter, responded that resilience is first and foremost context specific and that the assumption here is that it is primarily the responsibility of national governments to build resilience, aligning humanitarian and development aid to national resilience strategies and frameworks as a precondition for sustainable results. Hence,

working in close cooperation with local authorities and governments in these contexts is crucial for achieving successful and sustainable results in terms of building resilience. RESET[4] was presented as an example on how EU works with both the government and local authorities, as well as with other international actors (Save the Children, Action Contre la faim) to address the root causes of the current draught in Ethiopia.

The second question addressed problems generated by big budgets, as the flexibility of processes becomes rather limited. It was replied that there is some flexibility in place within the EU with regard to development budgets. As an example, the possibility of EU delegations in countries affected by conflict or crises to request the use of flexible procedures was mentioned.

6.5 Sharing Experience: Decentralization in Ukraine: systemic reform and/or tool for peace building, Ilona Postemska

Ilona Postemska outlined facts and figures about Ukraine to show specific administrative characteristics of the country – 24 regions, Autonomous Republic of Crimea, two cities with special status (Kiev & Sevastopol), 490 districts, 458 cities, 783 rural settlements and 10278 villages, over 11000 local self-governments (LSG). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was (and is still) struggling with structural economic problems, administrative inefficiency, massive corruption, no clear division of competences between LSG and state administrations, regional disproportions and a highly centralized fiscal system. The political system has been closed and dominated by the oligarchs, with a high level of corruption, continuous political instability and the failure of key reforms. After the "EUROMAIDAN Revolution of Dignity", the new government launched a decentralization reform with an attempt to reform LSG, administrative- and territorial organization of power based on the European Charter of LSG. Those new reforms show already positive impact on local budgets and the process of LSG amalgamation. However, with the military conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine, the decentralization reform was defined as one of the key steps in the peace process, as suggested by the internationally recognized Minsk Agreement. As a result, the constitutional amendments on decentralization, which also have an implicit reference to the provisions of the Minsk Agreement, are at risk now and may not be adopted by the Parliament. This confusion of two processes (the peace process and the reform process) can endanger the long-awaited decentralization reform, which is demanded by the whole country. At the same time donor support for decentralization is planned to be significantly increased in 2016, which will require more effective donor coordination in order to achieve an impact on the decentralization implementation. During the short discussion which followed, the main topic was the local elections in Ukraine in October 2015. In view of the military conflict in the Eastern Ukraine, the government was not able to conduct local elections in municipalities affected by the conflict or temporarily not under control of the government.

6.6 Interactive presentation on the disconnect between peace building and state building, Dion van den Berg

Day two started with a recap of Day one. The participants were first divided into two groups and asked to share what they have learned from the previous day and what were remaining questions.

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[4] The RESET or "Resilience building in Ethiopia" initiative is being implemented in seven drought-prone areas of Ethiopia with a total population of about 2.5 million. This joint EU programme does address the symptoms of extreme poverty and the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition by better linking humanitarian and development aid. In doing so, it is helping families to build their capacity to cope with sudden crises or shocks.

They used flipchart papers to present the outcomes of the group discussions. The main points that came back in this session are the definitions of "Resilience", "Legitimacy" and "Fragility", as the participants thought they deserved more exploration. A special attention was also devoted to the five dimensions model of the OECD report and the "resilience" definition used by the EU. The Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Institutions) was highly discussed. The question was on how the OECD new approach on fragility and the existing models on fragility i.e. EU Comprehensive Approach presented by Michaela and the different definitions can support the attainment of SDG 16. The critical point during the discussions was the role of international donors in a fragile context. It was argued that in some situations donors can increase fragility, especially through implementation of not well designed and contextualized approaches.

After the recap session, Dion van den Berg took over and led the discussion on the disconnect between peace building and state building in fragile contexts. In the beginning he introduced the concepts of state- and peace building. He engaged the participants by asking them to share the specific characteristics of state building and peace building. Upon the basis of the characteristics listed, he concluded that there is insufficient interaction between state and peace building, referring to this situation as the 'disconnect'. This exercise was followed by an attempt to clarify the different concepts used in the session a bit more, starting with state building. According to Dion, state building is largely a top-down approach with focus on the state level and an institutional approach aiming to construct or reform governmental institutions; in this process local actors take the role of recipients.

While peace building is defined as a bottom-up process where local actors are key actors and the society is in the centre of the process. This approach is not focusing on the institutions but on conflict mitigation, improvement of relationships and open channels. In short, state building is mostly considered as a technical exercise while peace building is more of a political and societal character, talking about norms and values and (re)building trust. Dion van den Berg highlighted the importance of the people's power and the significance of establishing citizenship as a basis for further development of societies e.g. the improvement of minority rights.

In addressing the disconnect between state building and peace building, he pointed out that state building is more about state security and peace building is more about human security. In many

cases, it is also related to the tension between the principle of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination. This occurs especially when regions are reaching for their own autonomy and independence, while the state approach is focusing on territorial integrity as for example in Puntland, Somalia.

He concluded this section by suggesting that a fragile context has often both a fragile state and a fragile society; it is not helpful to think that state is bad and civil society is good, the reality is always more blurred. As a case study, Dion presented the wars in former Yugoslavia where decentralisation took place in a fragile environment. Dion van den Berg compared the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (a model of decentralisation perpetuating nationalism and violence) with the case of Croatia (a model of decentralisation that supports peace building efforts and citizenship). Through this comparative analysis, crucial factors of inclusive approaches as a driver for decentralisation programs were identified:

- The big potential of Local Governments to support peace building, however, LG`s can also become part of the problem.

- By fulfilling the social contract and supporting social cohesion, LG`s can become a mediator at the local conflict level[5]

- State- and peace building are vertical concepts which are often disconnected from each other. LG`s and civil society cooperation at the local level can establish a horizontal approach which can help to connect both concepts and to overcome contrasts.

Before breaking for group work, Dion van den Berg pointed out that in order to build peace, breaking down enemy images is not necessarily the most important point of attention. The problems are systemic so the focus should be on changing the system. On this basis, state building, peace building and nation-building all need to be linked and addressed because international efforts are bound to fail if Interventions are not well incorporated in an over-all strategy. Peace building efforts can occasionally also undermine state-building efforts; he illustrated how this could be prevented by giving the example of lessons learned in Bosnia-Herzegovina. What is crucial are inclusive approaches, with a strong national state that provides all basic services, together with sufficient regional and local autonomy to provide a sense of legitimacy. Core state functions (security) must never be decentralized. Territorial integrity needs to be maintained, but in such a way that it provides security and legitimacy by integrating local autonomy in strong regional and national structures. After the interactive session, participants were divided into two groups to discuss the potential role, risks and opportunities of local governments in supporting state legitimacy in peace building in fragile context. This is done by looking at the cases of **Syria and South Sudan**. The assignment was formulated as follows:

South-Sudan:

1. You are invited to a conference organised by the International Community to share experiences with decentralisation that could be relevant for South Sudan. Formulate three to five recommendations for your speech.

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[5] PAX uses the following definition of the social contract: "The agreement between a state and society based on mutual trust and cooperation with, as its main objectives, the guarantee of security and the provision of basic services by means of which society legitimizes the state through a constant renegotiated political process"

2. South-Sudanese CSO's ask you for suggestions how to promote inclusive local democracy development. Formulate three to five recommendations.

Syria:

1. Develop a program outline to support local democracy and local government development in the liberated areas in the north of Syria. Formulate three to five recommendations for this program.
2. Imagine an international conference in Geneva, on post-conflict decentralisation strategies. Having in mind the situation in the liberated areas, give three to five recommendations.

Group work presentation

South-Sudan:

The first observation made in case of South Sudan is the question to what extent the people are aware of what's going on and whether the decentralization process in being monitored carefully. A good first recommendation would be to invest in field presence and research. This will provide reliable information on the true purpose of creating 28 states in South Sudan for example. There is already a decentralization scheme in place, which makes the new plan less relevant. The political and financial anchorage of decentralization plans is very important for accountability and service delivery, because it is bound to fail without sufficient capacities in place. National anchorage should be paired to intergovernmental relations and institutional linkages throughout the country so that nothing will occur in a vacuum. It was suggested to look for ways of piloting different forms of decentralization in South Sudan, because the issue is so immensely complicated and very political that it seems unlikely that a single comprehensive solution will be found.

In this context, it becomes very difficult for professionals charged with peace building to come up with a new strategy because most of the precedents indicate insufficiency and even failure. The group concluded by mentioning that at the end international staff members are there to provide space for inclusive dialogue and trust-building.

Syria:

In the case of Syria, it is of key importance to always keep in mind which party/parties or local actors are providing resources e.g. weapons and funds to local power holders. International peace building needs to be developed from that starting point and this should take note of the extent to which the war in Syria is linked to the regional context (Saudi-Arabia, Iran) and how local militant groups work. It was argued that the cooperation with the military could frustrate other parties and could undermine the neutrality of the donors. At the same time, it is not wise to ignore them as they have a lot of influence and can be a huge spoiler. During the first phase of the conference preparation, it would not be possible to get all parties together. At first, the work with the different parties has to start separately to prepare them for the next phase of bringing the conflict parties together. One should keep in mind that real influence on the armed parties can only be reached through the actors who support them. If western governments support certain armed groups, they can have leverage also with regard to their behaviour in the battlefield. At the same time it is necessary to provide an economic alternative to the combatants, because at the moment their economic basis is their weapon. Towards the end of the discussions, the participants noted that donors have to take into consideration that the Brain-Drain is an important issue. People with higher degrees of education have to a certain amount already left the country. This lack of human capital has negative consequences to any public reform.

6.7 Sharing Experience: Decentralization in fragile context: What does it mean? Jorge Rodriguez Bilbao

Jorge Rodriguez Bilbao is Quality Support Manager of the Civil Society and Local Authorities at EuropeAid. He shared his experience of the EU ACORDS Program in Madagascar. The ACORDS Program in Madagascar initially aimed at supporting LGs to provide basic services. The program became a "policy experimentation" contributing to shape the institutional and policy framework of the decentralization process in the country. He stated that this project became a state building process from below. He went on and clarified the decentralization process in Madagascar and identified the drivers and dividers on different levels. The main issue was how to put money into a LG budget from the onset and how to convert this money into service delivery. He characterized the ACORDS Program as a "Decentralization Lab", and introduced the audience to several tools i.e. tailored operational guidelines or implementation steps for annual investment plans, which have been used by the ACORDS program so far. He underlined the importance of local ownership and flexible planning. When it comes to a fragile environment where people have lost faith in the government, the most important tool to regain this faith is on-going transparency.

Following his presentations, a space for questions and discussion was provided, the main points out of the discussions are summarised in the four points below:

- Donor coordination can be tricky. In the beginning the European Commission engaged with a network of NGO`s which has ended in a disaster. The cause was a different understanding of basic terms which lead to different priorities.

- How to ensure Sustainability? After experimenting with different tools the findings of these experiments need to be integrated in the political framework of decentralisation. In this way sustainability depends on the municipalities itself. It depends on institutional and legal framework that belongs to a political will as well as coordination.

- Local Governmental Associations are identified as a crucial actor which extend capacities of Local Governance and brings the local dimension to national policies

- Corruption and how to deal with it. To avoid any misuse of the donors' money you have to communicate everything you do. Transparency is the key to activate/ create awareness of the citizen. Best control against corruption is citizenship.

6.8 Applying political economy in fragile contexts, Don Seufert

At the beginning of his session, Don Seufert provided a general introduction into Political Economy Analysis (PEA). PEA is predominantly concerned with the question of political feasibility of interests and incentives, the role of formal institutions and the impact of values and ideas in state-society interactions. He argued that PEA should be broad in scope, problem-driven and address all actors that participate in the issue at stake. In terms of implementation problems, one always need to ask critical questions about to what extent the problems of planning and/or design are related to a lack of capacity, political will or other political economy problems. As an example, UNDP applies context and conflict-sensitivity analyses as part of its 'Do no harm'-approach. Different organizations are more or less concerned with these kinds of tools and analyses, but it's also very time-consuming with often little added benefit. Chris from VNGi pointed out that in his experience the most valuable information about context and conflict-sensitivity is usually derived from local contacts in the field, which is then shared with the organization, and not external studies or measurement, for example,

South Sudan. Don went on and addressed some approaches of PEA, the Country Level Analysis (CLA), Sector Level Analysis (SLA) and Problem-driven Analysis (PDA):

- CLA is taking agents, structures and Institutions into account to understand the broad political economy environment and to identify drivers of change

- SLA is helpful to identify barriers and opportunities in a sector. It analyses the environment of the actors and can in this way provide information about the incentives and constraints of the agents

- PDA is used to address specific problems at the project level.

The presentation was followed by a moment of questions and discussions. The main points of discussion are summarised below:

- The discussion highlighted the practical use of PEA, and concluded that in practice there is far too little donor harmonization

- A critical point was the huge workload which a PEA entails. Organisations would need to hire political analysts to do such work as they seldom have such staff in house. Only in countries where a political mission like a peace keeping mission is planned or takes place, you can find such experts.

- The prioritization of PEA on traditional actors has been critically discussed. Sometimes informal actors are more important than formal actors. Who are those actors, who are drivers and dividers and what are their ratios? In fragile contexts, donors and implementers have to consider that the informal actor setting can be very dynamic.

- The issue of "Time" was mentioned. In practice, there is often not enough time to do such an intense and "close" analysis in advance

- In the end, many participants explained that from their experience such an analysis and exchange of information which PEA needs and requires, simply does not take place in most cases.

Group Work (PEA Case Studies):

The participants were separated into four groups. The task was described as follows:

- Please select one fragile situation or a decentralization reform a group member is working on or familiar with.

- Identify stakeholder motivations and spheres of influence.

- What dysfunctional patterns are observed or present?

- What are the ways forward? What do you recommend as potential entry points and ways to engage?

Additionally, Groups 1 and 2 were asked to select a sector focus for the political economy analysis, preferably a sector where development has stalled, for example budget transparency, analysis of natural resource management or CSO strengthening. Groups 3 and 4 were asked to identify and apply political economy analysis to a specific problem within a project. For example local health staff and teachers are on strike for months to end not receiving monthly salaries. Revenues to pay salaries pass through state government from oil revenues. Efforts to build local institutional capacity for health and education service delivery have stalled due to the strikes.

1. **Burundi Group:**

The country is facing a crisis which was trigged by the President´s persistence to have a third mandate although the constitution only allows two terms. As reaction and a way to put pressure on government institutions, donors like GIZ or SDC stopped their cooperation with the Burundi Government. Right now there is at least little dialogue between donors and government. Main entry points to keep donor projects running are cooperation with mayors and NGO's. But Mayors are not fully independent and civil society became extremely politicized. The identification of stakeholder characterised national authorities, local elected bodies, bilateral and multilateral donors as very influential in current Burundian crisis. However, in the current situation both national authorities and local elected bodies are considered as none legitimate. The dysfunctional patterns observed or present that were identified are: a) Institutional arrangements at local level have both political and technical functions; b) Civil society is threatened by the Government. There is no possibility for an open dialogue. As suggestions for ways forward the following actors were recommended as potential entry points and ways to engage: Current partners for donors are at the moment, Mayors as the chiefs of the local administration, the civil society, local leaders, Actors of local economy, deconcentrated sector ministries. The institutions that may be able to change behaviour are the church and traditional leaders. The other potential entry points are local associations and humanitarian aid.

The presentation was followed by questions and discussions. The participants highly discussed the role of international donors. Should they stay and be engaged or should they leave the country? In this case donors are facing a moral dilemma, while stepping out of the country means leaving those people in need of care behind. At the same time it is difficult to find a legitimate partner to engage with. Another topic of the discussion was the budget of the government. While more than 50% of the government budget was provided by donors, the idea was to influence governmental behaviour by cut off the budget support. But in the end it turned out that this sanction had no impact on the government in Burundi. In this way the participants discussed the role of informal and illegal donors like criminal organisations or covered budget support through a third country.

2. **Kyrgyzstan Group:**

As a Post-Soviet-Country, Kyrgyzstan is organized in Oblasts, Provinces and Districts. There is no specified function for the system-level of Provinces and Districts. They are just the hands of the line-ministries. At the same time there is certain autonomy of the municipalities but they have little to no capacity. In this way, the access to data to improve social services is not the main problem. Data is available but the capacity to use it does not exist. The identification of stakeholder motivations and spheres of influence showed that citizen behaviour is highly influenced by the remains of the Soviet Union, they are passive receivers and they take what is provided. The Local Authorities are elected and they highly focus on patron-client linkages and the central level provides a top-down information flow only. The donor Community is driven by geopolitical incentives. When it comes to dysfunctional patterns observed or present, the group came to the conclusion that there is no evidence based planning at local level. The recommended potential entry points as ways to engage are:

a) Strengthening intermediate level of the Government. This includes to provide a top-down advice through bench marking and especially to provide bottom-up information; b) Trying to support data literacy skills; c) Trying to change the behaviour of the citizens from passive to active (through e.g. social accountability, participatory planning and budgeting).

The presentation was followed by questions and discussions. The participants discussed the specific problem of governmental resistance to reform approaches. While the current system is trying to keep status quo, donors have to try through piloting to create cascades which could establish reforms.

3. Cambodia Group:

The project discussed aimed at strengthening the social welfare-system and addressing social work services for children by working with the Cambodian Ministry for Social Affairs. The stakeholder motivations and spheres of influence identification indicated that the main actor was the Ministry of Social Affairs which had the main mandate. The Ministry was divided into two departments: the provincial- and the district department. Furthermore, the Communes Councils, the bodies on the local level which are elected and supported by the Ministry of Interior and the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD).

In assessing the dysfunctional patterns observed or present, the group came to the conclusion that the district level was responsible for the delivery of pensions for retired civil servants. This responsibility was more attractive for the social workers as delivering other social services. In this way the social workers did not bring out many services to the communities. The coordination between the district department and communes' councils was very weak. People recognized the state as the deliverer of social services and there was no demand for the people to put any sort of pressure to government. There were limited ownership and funds for social work, but, commune councils had a broad function which gave them some sort of ownership. In short, the whole pension system has an extreme impact on the social welfare system in a negative way. The recommendations to improve such situation are the following: a) Communes should play a larger role in identifying vulnerable children or other social problems; b) Support the communes as it is necessary to strengthen the accountability system and to focus on a human rights based approach to create more upward accountability; c) Improve Funding processes: there are no funds to provide social work, so lobbying on the ministerial level to create funding is needed; d) Better coordination between the district department and the commune councils is a prerequisite. The donors can play a role to improve the relation between departments through institutional capacity development and by initiating dialogue.

4. Ukraine Group:

A case of water supply was discussed. Due to climate change, the lowered groundwater table is a big problem in a society where most of the people receive their water from wells. In order to improve access to water for lower areas, a co-funded project by Suisse Development Cooperation (SDC) and local Ukrainian authorities started a project to improve local water supply. The identification of stakeholder motivations and spheres of influence, pointed out that rent-seekers in this project are companies who get involved in the project looking for economic profits as well as local farmers who need to secure water supply and run their business. The dysfunctional patterns observed or present are: a) Institutional functioning. Because all public budgets are linked to the state treasury, direct budget support would not be directed to the communities. It would get lost in the state budget;

b) Through the military conflict in the Ukraine, the Government has new agenda focusses which lead to lower state support for this project; c) Legislation changes made it difficult to finance the projects.

The recommendation for improvement pointed out that citizens were encouraged to activate local participatory planning and budgeting and to reorient financing through local NGO`s or communal enterprises. The presentation was followed by questions and discussions. The audience exchanged

on the topic of creative forms of financing. The solutions for budget support are always temporary and have to be monitored. The need of flexible planning was highlighted.

6.9 Monitoring and Evaluation of Support to DLG in Fragile States (Part I), Corina Dhaene

The third and last day of the training started with a recap of the second day. The participants reviewed the concepts presented so far. Pros and cons of types of decentralisation, state building vs. peace building and especially the PEA approach.

After the recap session, Corina Dhaene, co-director of ACE Europe, introduced the topic of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of support to DLG in Fragile States. This sessions was introduced by a short exchange with participants on the main stakeholders involved in M&E of DLG projects in general, their roles and their interest in M&E. Interest in M&E ranges from accountability (for donors) to increased legitimacy, learning and the using of M&E data to ensure control and/or influence over decentralisation policies. The emerging picture showed, that many different stakeholders are involved, which requires M&E to be developed as a project with clear task divisions. More and more, the population is becoming an active actor in M&E with a specific role to play, next to project management teams and local governments.

Subsequently, Corina Dhaene tried to frame the issue in order to contextualize her presentation. She referred to the OECD report (2015), "*States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions",* which calls for more specific attention to M&E, in particular the formulation of global indicators for impact and universal tracking of dimensions of fragility (where donors share data on input). Furthermore, the Accra Agenda (2008) and Busan (2011) are guiding in the design of any M&E approach with their focus on domestic accountability, democratic ownership and the use of country systems. In fragile contexts however, specific challenges to the design and execution of M&E are added. Challenges for M&E related to DLG in fragile contexts are firstly related to the quickly changing volatile environment, which is generally data poor and characterised by a weak role articulation between stakeholders and a weak understanding and application of normative frameworks on democracy and governance. M&E in these context can be perceived as threatening. These challenges also raise the costs for M&E significantly. Secondly, challenges are related to the donor policies, which aim for

quick results and impact and require M&E data to prove clear lines of causation (between input and impact). Complex development processes in fragile context however are often non-linear processes that need a long term results horizon of at least 20 years. Finally, challenges are related to the type of projects that are typical for DLG interventions and require adapted M&E approaches to monitor and evaluate, such as e.g. support to capacity development, support to improved service delivery or restoring government-citizen relations.

Therefore, specific principles for M&E in situations of conflict and fragility should be taken into account (OECD, 2010, 2011). Corina Dhaene highlighted some key principles to ensure relevant and effective M&E systems. One of the principles is the need to take context as the starting point – rather than policy, which is sometimes hard to accept for donors and the need to contextualise as much as possible normative frameworks ("how to give content to the frameworks in daily operations"?). Another principle is to carefully select indicators: indicators should help stakeholders to capture change processes on the ground. Indicators that are directly derived from normative frameworks will not always do the job. Overall, donors need to understand that all interventions in fragile states are potentially harmful and that M&E should be considered as an intervention. Therefore, the design and execution of M&E should reflect the 'Do no harm' principle, for e.g. by clarifying the inclusivity of the system (who will be involved, who can provide data/information and who is allowed to make use of the data).

The thinking on M&E, also in fragile contexts is obviously influenced by some current trends and issues in M&E:

- Monitoring and Evaluation are often treated as separate processes with monitoring being about implementation and evaluation about analysis and learning. Researchers argue that, especially in rapidly changing contexts, the strict division between the 'M' and the 'E' is no longer effective. More efforts should be invested in 'experimental learning' during implementation. Real time evaluation which is already known in the humanitarian aid is also an approach, which supports learning in action. These approaches are better adapted to quick and drastic changing contexts and allow for better and quicker adjustments in programmes (objectives and pathways of change).
- Theory of Change (ToC): more and more donors require the formulation of a Theory of Change before an intervention starts. A ToC describes what outcomes are expected from interventions, what pathways for change are envisaged and what assumptions are behind this. A ToC helps to manage expectations and to identify main evaluation questions from the beginning.
- Looking at impact (evaluations): donors are increasingly looking for impact and for ways of proving impact of the interventions they financed, for e.g. through evidence based methods (such as randomised control trials). The difficulty is that it is almost impossible to attribute impact to a particular intervention.
- The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT): More and more, ICT based approaches in M&E are being explored. This is partly inspired by the idea that "The more we know in an absolute certain objective way, the better". The new methods can be helpful to allow for faster (real time) M&E and to organise direct feedback from citizens (or users of public services). The general idea is that an M&E approach should use a combination of methods.

For each of these trends, Corina Dhaene highlighted the importance and/or challenges in a fragile context.

After the presentation and the discussion, participants were asked to perform an individual self-assessment on M&E in their own work and projects. Corina Dhaene developed a practical tool to assess to what extent the M&E approaches of the participants' organisations were 'fragile prone'. After the assessment, participants were grouped according to their type of work: a) at an agency in the field, b) at the ministry & implementation team and c) in a development agency at headquarters. The groups were tasked to answer the following questions:

1. What is the overall conclusion of the assessment of the current practice in your organisation/your group with regards to the content, process and people of the M&E approach (What is weaker/stronger?)

2. Share particular challenges? (start with the strongest part)

3. Can we exchange solutions?

4. What challenge do we want to discuss in plenary?

Group presentations:

The results of the group presentations are summarised below in a very concise manner.

1. **Group: Development Agency in the field:**

   - Challenges: (a) How do donors measure capacity development results? (b) How can donors access data and how can they trust the data quality? (c) How to mainstream the achieved learning's into a development program or program implementation? (d) How to improve harmonization?

   - Central part of the presentation and discussion was the role of stakeholders. It is important that donors should act very sensible and more like a facilitator than an implementer.

   - Donor programs with the aim of developing joint development interventions are often limited by obligations coming from the headquarters, co-funding-partners, etc.

   - The main difference between M&E in a regular context and M&E in a fragile context is that donors often have to do M&E without their partners (somehow by default), because related to the specific fragile situation even the discussion about M&E could do harm.

2. **Group: Ministry & Implementation Team:**

   - Challenges: (a) Time and resource challenges; (b) How to define the indicators of fragility?; (c) How to ensure the quality of data in a fragile context?; (d) Political aspects of data collection; (e) How to improve Harmonization?

   - To go deeper into the problem of political aspects, an example from Palestine was given, where the GIZ came up with its own perspective and phrasing for data collection which was rejected by their Palestinian partners.

   - To improve knowledge on specific (geographic) areas, the tool of perception surveys has been identified as a good solution.

3. **Group Development Agency at the headquarter:**

   - Challenges: (a) The disconnect between distributing plans at headquarters and the M&E framework at the country level; (b) Accountability for whom? For donors or

citizen? Today, the focus is more on accountability for donors than accountability for the citizen; (c) How can the log-frame approach be modified to allow changing indicators and outcomes when this is appropriate?; (d) How can we improve Harmonization?

- The topic of accountability was vividly discussed as well as the use of reporting to headquarters, which often is not critical about the results of the intervention. Here the learning aspect through the reporting should be given more emphasis and be improved.

- With regard to log-frames in a fragile context the participants discussed the need of flexibility (a 'log-frame' is not very useful in a context that requires constant adaptation to new challenges). Log frames should be used as a baseline for a project and not as a strait jacket. However, the formulation of log-frames needs to be as clear, well-structured and unambiguous as possible.

- With regard to the topic of joint programming and harmonization the participants agreed that in practice such programs mostly do not work and that there is a huge need to improve on that.

6.10 Monitoring & Evaluation of Support to DLG in Fragile States (Part II), Corina Dhaene

After the group presentations Corina Dhaene continued with the second part of her session and introduced "Contents and tools that matter" for M&E, with a focus on M&E of DLG processes in fragile states. She outlined the seven building blocks for a learning oriented M&E system, i.e. the definition of information needs, the determination of the focus, the organisation of data collection and data processing, the sense making of data collected, the connection of M&E with the rhythm and spaces of an organisation, the organisation of the reporting & communication and the attention for building capacity for M&E. She explained a number of these building blocks in more detail and also showed some practical tools.

She continued by making a distinction between output and outcomes and their importance in the M&E context. While outputs describe tangible products (such as a build school), the outcomes are the desired change at the level of stakeholders (social actors), e.g. in their attitude, behaviour, knowledge, which lead to impact. Outcomes are more difficult to monitor and as such sometimes forgotten, but they are the key to understand why projects stuck or show no long term impact at the level of the wider community/society. Especially in the context of capacity development, this is important: Corina Dhaene explained this while showing a figure that portrays capacity development as a transformative tool (example based on the concept of the Five Core Capabilities).

Corina Dhaene then continued with an overview and description of various methods than can be helpful in the context of M&E of DLG in fragile states, some of which are still in a testing phase. She described three groups of methods: (1) methods that focus on local governance assessments. An example of the local governance assessment published by the UNDP (2009) was provided. (2) methods that have been tested in fragile states and (3) innovative approaches such as: *Crowdsourcing, Real-Time Evaluation, Simple Reporting, Participatory Statistics, Mobile Data Collection, The Micro-Narrative Data Exhaust, Intelligent Infrastructure, Remote Sensing, Data Visualization, Multi-level Mixed Evaluation Method, and Outcome Harvesting.* She concluded with an overview of instruments and techniques for data collection (techniques that stimulate reflection

amongst implementers, techniques for questioning actors and beneficiaries, techniques to visualise change in a geographical area).

Main points are:

- A combination of methods works the best: To achieve the best result it is important to combine different tools. Qualitative and quantitative approaches should be combined as much as possible. The choice of methods depends on the information needs, the budget, the available capacity, the context (and its constraints with regards to safety, logistics, etc.)

- Tools (especially scorecards, perception surveys,) have the capacity to influence the local governance processes, so they should be used with consideration and should be sensible to the local fragile setting. In this respect, it is of utmost importance to triangulate findings to allow for strong conclusions.

- Tools and methods should be understood by local staff and stakeholders and add meaning to their work.

The presentation was followed by questions and discussions. The focus was on the use of new tools and of the practice of *scoring (giving scores to a certain change).* This was critically discussed as scoring is not able to grasp complex change processes. Participants argued that e.g. capacity development is rather difficult to measure through a scoring approach. The aspect of donor harmonization in M&E was highly discussed. Most of the participants pointed to the fact that donor organizations tend not to share their data, while an exchange of information would be helpful for everyone. To address this issue and establish more harmonization, it was suggested that the higher levels of donor organisations should be involved instead of the project offices in the field. There should be a system of incentives established to improve harmonization between donors. In short, harmonization on M&E approaches remains a challenge in the field as long as each headquarter is pursuing its own methodologies and impact logics.

The M&E session was the last session providing new technical input. The following sessions (Panel discussion and World Café) allowed to wrap up the different sessions and provided an opportunity to address remaining questions.

6.11 Panel Discussion: What are institutional challenges and opportunities for improving development partners` approaches to support DLG in fragile contexts?

Panellists: Dijon van den Berg, Don Seufert, Corina Dhaene

Facilitator: Nils Huhn

To open the discussion Nils Huhn asked the members of the panel to identify key institutional opportunities and challenges to succeed DLG reforms. On the one hand, normative frameworks were described as crucial tools to understand and share the change and impact which should be realised. On the other hand, normative frameworks need to be sufficiently contextualized to allow a complex change process to start and develop in a fragile context. Don Seufert pointed out that the focus of normative frameworks for democracy lays on pluralism, elections and democracy while the factor of legitimacy is highly underestimated. He sees legitimacy as a core driver of state-building. From Corina Dhaene`s perspective, and the perspective of M&E, it is important to select and measure those indicators that allow monitoring the complexity of a change process in a fragile environment. Therefore the use of different methods is crucial. Dion van den Berg highlighted the topic of dealing with controversial parties. He mentioned that there is a need of a lot of time, a lot of dialogue and a lot of trust between these parties as well as a focus on social content and social cohesion. This requires the involvement and consideration of the citizen during implementation as well as for the (conceptual/strategical) frameworks. Another point of the discussion was the dependency on the political will and the importance for successful lobbying to pay attention to intergovernmental linkages.

The participants came together on the point that as an implementer or donor you have to be flexible and to be willing to look for "windows of opportunities". That means, that implementers and donors should pick up chances if they see them instead of sticking to a pre-defined project design or a pre-defined stakeholder mapping. Throughout the implementation, priorities, partners or the whole setting may shift. In such situations donors and implementers have to keep a flexible approach.

In the course of the debate, the facilitator raised the following additional questions:

- *How can we as donors still work on decentralization in countries in which at least big parts of the national actors do not want democracy? How do we make sure that we do not lose our credibility and legitimacy in front of the partners but as well in front of the civil society?* Dion van den Berg responded by pointing out that donors can use the log-frames in a more strategic way, by emphasizing more on the technical aspect while incorporating a political dimension as well. For example, they may consider bringing different parties to work together on a specific project (waste management at the local level). In working together to solve this problem the parties are implicitly learning to work as a team and they are building trust between them. This could be a start for change and collaboration and an entry point for the donors. This is possible given that in fragile context, a third party is needed which can facilitate this process in terms of resources and expertise. Donors should be aware of that role and the political dimension of technical projects.

- *Can you do direct local budget support and at the same time sustain fiscal decentralization? How to make sure not to bypass or side line the national government?* Don Seufert responded that it is possible to do direct local budget support, but one should be cautious and avoid replacing fiscal transfers from the central government. The support to local government budget should be directed to small scale infrastructure and should be clearly identified in the budget formulation both in terms of quantity and quality (i.e. scale and nature). The approach has to be related to the overall objective of the local governments, which helps to ensure the sustainability and ownership of such an intervention. He pointed out that direct support in terms of salaries for example are not sustainable and end up taking over respectively undermine the role and responsibility of the central government. In the whole process, the donors should be aware of the established levels of intergovernmental linkages to avoid duplicating efforts.

- *Is it sufficient to address M&E at the level of a single programme or project in the context of a fragile state? Are we hereby capturing the essence of a complex DLG reform in an even more complex fragile environment?* Corina Dhaene pointed out that the ideal option would be to have less evaluations at the project level but more thematic evaluations or evaluations of sectors that are jointly managed by several donors/stakeholders. Furthermore, the questions for M&E should be formulated already at the beginning of a programme rather than at the end, to allow for exchange and cooperation for M&E between donors and projects. M&E processes should focus more on the learning about what worked and what not to realise change and the analysis of this learning with all stakeholders involved.

6.12   World Café summary

The following part summarises the World Café discussions which provided a space to identify outstanding issues/questions.

The world café methodology is described in detail in the participant guide which was shared prior to the learning event. Participants were asked to select three questions that guided the discussions. The discussions took the form of three rounds of discussions, each round lasting 15 min. All participants have had the chance to contribute to each question. For each question, a facilitator was identified to guide the discussions and summarise all inputs and present them. Below, a short summary is provided for each question.

1. *How to get donors to appreciate the nature of long term programming for state building to transition beyond fragility and what is the role of local governments in this process?*

   - Invite the donors with no presence in the field to visit the field

   - Closer and more regular "informal" coordination, to make reporting more effective and accurate

   - The use of a movie documentary in which the target group by specific projects convey the real message to the donor and highlight the need for long programming

   - Proper M&E structure/approach, which is linked to the need to understand values and address them

   - Use of pilots projects to prove effectiveness and build trust with the donors

   - Demonstrate and communicate the benefits of working with LG

2. *How to design the decentralisation reform in fragile contexts in order to advance towards resilience and legitimacy?*

   - Focus at the local level and on service delivery

   - Inclusive participation is very important

- Start by pilot projects
- Multilevel and -stakeholder communication (vertical and horizontal) is very much needed for successful interventions

3. *How to stay/remain engaged with national partner governments that have fallen out of favour with some donors in order to intervene effectively at the local level*?

- Keep the do no harm approach in all interventions
- Expanding the space, by working with other actors i.e. civil society involved in service delivery and humanitarian assistance
- Identify the role of regional actors and their influence
- Alignment with national strategy and harmonization with other donors
- Remain in negotiations with government and try to find common grounds

7. Outcomes

7.1 Material outputs

The materials that have been developed and distributed on a flash drive to the participants as part of the learning event include:

a) A comprehensive participant's guide containing background material to the learning event and relevant literature;

b) PowerPoint presentations and exercises of all sessions;

7.2 Impact on participants' learning and knowledge

To get a sense of the impact of the course, two methods were applied, notably a) a recap by participants on day 2 and 3, b) a final evaluation at the end of the course. The results of the recap sessions are summarised at the beginning of the summary of days 2 and 3 in this report. The following part will discuss in short the outcome of the final evaluation which was performed using an online questionnaire at the end of the learning event.

7.3 Final Evaluation

For the final evaluation of the learning event, a comprehensive online questionnaire was used. Among the general messages that can be drawn from the evaluation, one can note a general satisfaction of the participants with the overall course organisation. Participants recognised that the course was designed for a mix of practitioners from the field with colleagues working in headquarters. It took – as best as possible – varying degrees of knowledge on the topic of Fragility, Decentralisation and Local Governance into consideration. The exchange of experiences among participants during the several discussions, the resource persons contributions, the final panel discussions and the world café were acknowledged as very useful parts of the course where 'participants could learn from each other'. In this sense, the diversity in experience and expertise among the participants was an added-value to the discussions. The participants pointed out that the overall facilitation guidance of the group learning process was clear. The graph below provides an

overview of the participant appreciation of the different sessions. The graph is designed on the basis of the average scores on sessions/experts (1 = poor; 5 = excellent).

Average Score
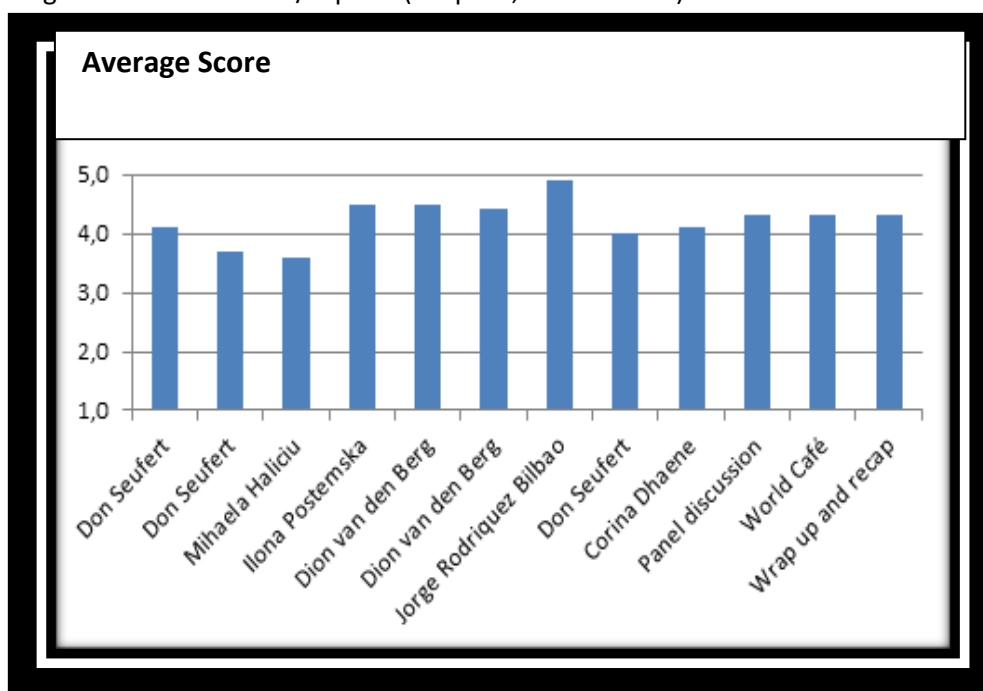
7.4   Recommendations

The course was generally considered successful. A few recommendations for improvements can be made for similar future learning events organized by DeLoG. The experience of a small group size (around 20 participants) was quite satisfactory, in terms of facilitation, group work and discussions. A recommendation for future learning event is to aim for such group sizes of a maximum of 24 participants. The participants could then be seated in four groups of six, which leaves sufficient room for interaction between trainers and participants and hence makes it easy to set the right pace and address their different learning needs.

Furthermore, future events should continue making use of a diversity of interactive training methods. The use of exercises and small group discussions helps participants to digest the theories and relate it to their own country contexts. It should however be noted that plenary presentations by participants of their own project experience are certainly a good way to balance theories with concrete examples, but do not count as really interactive training methods.

In order to make sure that the main conclusions of the day are recorded in the participants' minds, it is recommendable that the facilitators and the experts take the lead in the wrap-up sessions at the end of the day using visual aids if possible whilst asking one or more participants to share their reflections as well.

On the content, participants provided some suggestions for similar future learning events. They recommended that more case studies would be rather useful. Further, it was suggested to include even more time for conceptual discussions and clarification of main concepts to set the common ground for all participants, especially during the first day. Concerning the length of the programme, it was suggested to extend the training days to four days and shorten the training hours per day. This would ensure full engagement and maximum concentration of the participants.

With regard to specific topics to be added or intensified, specific sessions on "social contract" approaches and capacity development in fragile countries were pointed out as interesting and promising.

8. Annexes

8.1 Course Programme

	Day 1: **Theoretical framework: Unpacking decentralisation, local governance and fragility**	Day 2: **Building the state from below in a fragile context**	Day 3: **Effectiveness of support to DLG in fragile contexts**
Start of the day - recap			
Morning session 1	Opening: Welcome and participants introductions Introduction to the programme	Session 1: An interactive presentation on the disconnect between peace building and state building - Dion van den Berg	Session 1: M&E of donor support to DLG in fragile contexts - Corina Dhaene
Coffee Break			
Morning session 2	Session 1: opening session: Unpacking the concepts Decentralisation, Fragility and Local Governance – Don Seufert	Session 2: Local governments' contributions to bottom-up state building and peace building - Dion van den Berg	Session 1 continued - Corina Dhaene
Lunch			
Afternoon session 1	Session 2: Understanding decentralisation approaches in fragile contexts – Don Seufert	Sharing experiences: Decentralisation in fragile context: what does it mean? - Jorge Rodriquez Bilbao Session 3: Applied political economy analysis in fragile contexts - Don Seufert	Panel discussion: What are institutional challenges and opportunities for improving our approaches to support DLG in fragile contexts?
Coffee Break			
Afternoon session 2	Sharing experiences: 1. The EU Policy Framework for addressing fragility, conflict and violence - Michaela Haliciu 2. Decentralisation in Ukraine: systemic reform and/or a tool for peace building? – Ilona Postemska	Session 3 continued – Don Seufert	**Welcome to the World Café!** Evaluations & closure
Wrap up and reflections on lessons learned			
Evening	Joint dinner		Goodbye drinks

8.2 List of Participants

	First Name	Last Name	Country	Organisation	Position	Email
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