Decentralisation & Local Governance in Contexts of Conflict and Fragility

Webinar
Development Partners Network on DeLog

May 2019

Professor Erin McCandless
Aim:

Examine decentralisation and local governance (DLG) in conflict affected and fragile settings

Specifically, we will:

◦ Reflect upon contexts of fragility and conflict

◦ Discuss the significance and challenges of DLG in such settings

◦ Consider how local governance reforms and programming through a social contract lens can help overcome fragility and conflict

◦ Discuss and reflect together
Understanding contexts of conflict & fragility
What is fragility?

‘Weak [state] capacity to carry out basic functions of governing a population and its territory’; ‘lacking the ability to develop mutually constructive and reinforcing relations with society.’

‘A State is fragile when it is unable to provide for basic human security or create the public goods and conditions needed for gains in human development’. (OECD-DAC, 2010)

‘Fragility is experienced locally, and not nationally as such.’ (Cilliers and Sisk 2013)
Fragility trends
(Fragile States Index)

Copyright (C) 2019 - The Fund for Peace

© 2019 Mapbox® OpenStreetMap
Fragility ‘is the combination of exposure to risks and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system, and communities to manage, absorb, and mitigate those risks.’ It is ‘multi-dimensional and challenges universal’ (OECD 2016, SoF)
Fragility linkages: Weak governance, violent conflict and violence

(Data drawn from OECD SoF 2016 and IDPS sources)

Weak governance
- Poor service delivery, and relations with society
- Politicization of systems and decision-making processes

Violent conflict
- 70% of fragile states have experienced conflict

Violence
- Higher homicide rates, social violence, terrorism and gender violence

Image: Cameron & Collier 2018
Conflict Trends
(Pathways for Peace 2018)

Since 2010, there is an upturn in violent conflict:
Battle-related deaths, number of armed conflicts, civilian casualties, terrorist attacks, number of refugees and violently displaced people have all increased.

Conflict is civil, non-state, urban, internationalizing, middle income.
Violence... in many forms (OECD SoF 2016)

13.3% of GDP spent on violence in 2015

Social violence

Figure 2.1. Violent deaths, by category, 2010-15

Source: Small Arms Survey (2016).

Figure 2.3. Where is the risk of lethal violence highest?

Contexts where the risk of death from terrorism, conflict and homicide was highest in 2014

Source: Muggah (2016).

Political violence
Lessons & rising consensus on pathways to peace...

‘Liberal’ Peacbuilding & Statebuilding approaches have not achieved intended results

Conflict and fragility becoming more complex, intense, non-state; adaptive & hybrid approaches key

Exclusion from power, security and opportunities– key factors for violent mobilization; grievances need to be addressed; root causes transformed

Approaches focused on growth, poverty eradication, provisions of services not enough

State–society relationship; inclusive and resilient social contract a priority

Statebuilding – an endogenous process to enhance capacity, institutions, and legitimacy of the state driven by state–society relations’ (OECD, 2008)

Sustaining peace: ‘a goal and a process to build a common vision of society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account’ (Twin resolutions 2016)

Conflict prevention – early investment in resilient institutions and inclusive, sustainable development with risk–informed strategies (PP 2016)
II. Decentralisation and local governance: Challenges in FCAS
Local governance

Institutions, systems and processes at the subnational level through which services are provided to citizens and through which the latter articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations. (UNDP 2016)
Characteristics of FCAS

- Weak national identity; competing political legitimacies
- Dysfunctional/ illegitimate/ weak institutions & HR capacity
- Unsettled political settlements
- Challenging historical & structural legacies
- Stressed livelihoods; Little investment incentive
- Weak social bases; low trust and social capital
- Entrenched governance deficiencies

Nature of all is highly context dependent; demands conflict / context analysis
Decentralisation

A national process of reform (legal, institutional, fiscal, political) piloted from the center of government (UNDP 2016).

**Pros**

- Brings government closer to the people; Better access to, and quality of, service delivery
- Helps to mitigate identity based grievances and resistance to national government decisions
- Facilitates civil society voice, participation and ownership of difficulties in program implementation
- Facilitates collective action and cooperation

**Cons**

- Can challenge coordination through greater complexity
- Can fuel greater corruption and competitive rent-seeking
- Can fuel bad governance, worsen economic performance and undermine political stability

**Influencing factors:**
- Ethnic diversity
- Cohesiveness
- Political will

© McCandless 2019
Poll question # 1

With recognition of the values of decentralization, what % of donor assistance (ODA) goes to decentralisation and sub-national governments in FCAS?
Case study: Zimbabwe

Context:
- Post-colonial commitments and policies to decentralize exist, but low political will
- Devolution in 2013 Constitution; received 95% support

Challenges:
- Lacking political will (and actions, i.e. fiscal allocations); local control of authorities by ZANU–PF
- Capacity constraints (i.e. illiterate councilors; lack of $; Resistance to paying local taxes in harsh economic environment
- Competing layers of admin/management structures at local level, i.e. around governance, land and resources
- Capture/militarization of the state; people fear holding government accountable. Little autonomy for local officials with random dismissals and appointments by central authorities

Devolution focus on power and greater autonomy linked with financial resources and development decision-making.

Programming efforts:
- Capacity building of parliamentarians on devolution
- Zimbabwe Resilience Fund, aiming to build community ownership in projects
Case study: Liberia

Context:
- Post-war pledge by President to devolve power to local governments to address exclusion and defunct local administration (yet implementation slow)

Programming efforts
- UN County Support Team (CST) to bring UN together to build & capacitate county administration
- Liberian Decentralization and Local Development Project (LDLD) to provide national framework for decentralization and elected local governments

Achievements
- After 5 years, all 15 counties had county offices staffing 2000 employees; supported capacity development of staff
- Facilitated inclusion in planning processes

Lessons
- Sub-national statebuilding is a long term process; Attaining sufficient, long-term donor support to finish the job
- Anchor local governance interventions in wider peacebuilding, statebuilding, capacity-development strategies
- Flexible funding, iterative program design, sequencing of CSTs paid off
III. Local governance supporting peace
Local governance in FCAS: Common goals and approaches

- Help restore **security** and promote **peaceful conflict resolution**; build societal resilience
- Transforming institutions; Respond to pressing **service delivery** needs while building capacity
- Facilitate **recovery** through infrastructure and support to local economy
- Increase **voice** and inclusive **participation** in decision-making and accountability of decision-makers

Community driven development

Short term capacity strengthening of local government and civil society

Decentralisation reform

Wide agreement on need for context / conflict analysis & conflict sensitivity
Responsive Institutions
- Rebuild local government capacities
- Enable co-production of basic services and public goods
- Facilitate participation
- Improve accountability

Resilient society
- Local peace architecture
- Conflict management skills
- Leadership development
- Strengthen social cohesion
- Improve community security

Inclusive Politics
- Widen political participation
- Peaceful & credible local elections
- Empowerment of local councils

The social contract: a framework for strengthening local governance (UNDP)
A **Resilient Social Contract** is a dynamic **national** agreement between state and society, including different groups in society, on how to live together, and notably, around how power is distributed and exercised. It allows for the peaceful mediation of different demands and conflicting interests, and different expectations and understandings of rights and responsibilities (including with nested or overlapping social contracts), over time, and in response to contextual factors (including shocks and stressors), through varied mechanisms, institutions and processes.
Drivers of Resilient Social Contracts

Key finding: Virtuous movement of each of these three drivers, and virtuous interaction of the drivers, supports resilient social contracts.
Poll question #2

What percentage of countries were assessed to effectively address their ‘core conflict issues’ identified in peace agreements, in follow on mechanisms and policies, towards their resolution?

(referencing 9 FCAS case studies in the RSC study)
Early stages of peace negotiations offer possibilities for redefining parameters for inclusion and positioning of different groups and issues, often with long-term effects.

Resilient social contracts are undermined by:

- Social contract making “spheres” and “mechanisms” are often not well linked in ways that coherently address core conflict issues (or engage resilience capacities), thus inhibiting effective peace agreement implementation and an increasingly inclusive political settlement.
- Institutions (including customary, informal and non-state) are not sufficiently transformed (engaged in addressing core conflict issues) - especially at sub-national levels.
Inclusive processes do not automatically lead to inclusive results given the potential for other intervening factors.

Poor progress in achieving inclusive political settlements and providing fair service delivery can weaken vertical and social cohesion.

Horizontal social cohesion tends to be stronger within groups than between them, and weaker when political issues (rather than ethnic or religious issues) come into play.
Fragility is context dependent, multi-dimensional and experienced locally. It commonly co-exists with conflict, violence and weak governance.

Decentralisation can facilitate inclusive peace and development or fuel conflict and deepen fragility; they must be handled with care and supported by robust context analysis.

Preventing violent conflict, transforming conditions of fragility and sustaining peace involve securing resilient and inclusive social contracts that deliver inclusive and sustainable development. These must be forged from above & below, and embedded in agreements, mechanisms, policies.

A key challenge for local governance is forging seeking to engage and forge cohesion between competing systems and forms of legitimacy.

Local governance approaches must be context specific while ultimately supporting the coherence and allegiance to a national vision.