

Supporting Statebuilding in Situations of Fragility and Conflict

Executive Summary – January 2011

Effective states matter for development. This book provides guidance to policy makers and programme managers. It addresses the specific challenges of statebuilding in conflict-affected or fragile situations where the lives and livelihoods of millions of people are at stake. Fragile and conflict-affected states are those that have weak capacity to carry out basic functions of governing their population and territory, and lack the ability to develop mutually constructive and reinforcing relations with society.

Fragility, conflict and violence are not the same but they can exist concurrently, with each shaping and being shaped by the other. Thus, the process of statebuilding will often develop alongside, as part of and in a mutually supportive relationship with peacebuilding, with both processes supported by a range of external actors that includes the international development community.

Conceptual frameworks on statebuilding in fragile situations build from three main propositions:

- Statebuilding needs to be understood in the context of state-society relations; the evolution of a state's relationship with society is at the heart of statebuilding.
- Statebuilding is a deeply political process, and understanding the context – especially what is perceived as legitimate in a specific context – is crucial if international support is to be useful.
- Statebuilding is first and foremost an endogenous process; there are therefore limits as to what the international community can and should do.

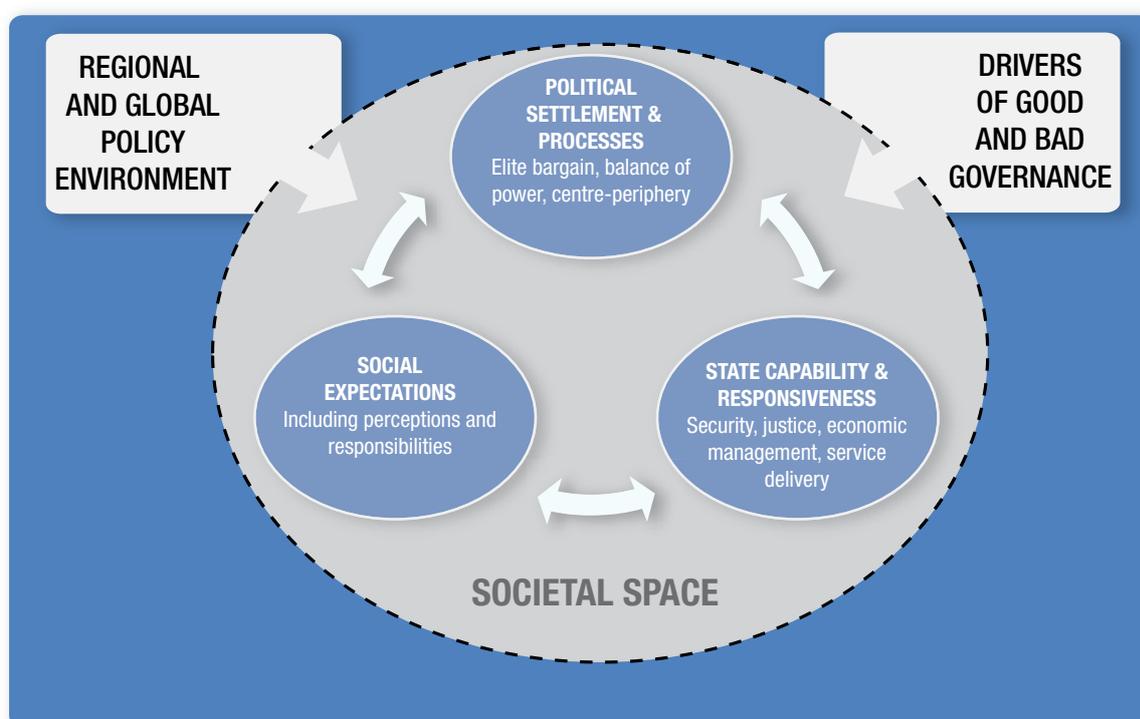
Finally, statebuilding processes at the start of the new millennium are deeply enmeshed in broader global processes that can enable or constrain statebuilding.

The challenge now lies in translating these propositions into guidance for action by policy makers and practitioners.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To broaden the understanding of the dynamics of statebuilding, this guidance focuses on three critical aspects of state-society relations that influence the resilience or fragility of states. These aspects should also be understood to exist within a larger regional and global policy environment and to operate at multiple levels – national and sub-national – within the domestic polity. The three dimensions are:

- **The political settlement**, which reflects the implicit or explicit agreement (among elites principally) on the “rules of the game”, power distribution and the political processes through which state and society are connected.
- **The capability and responsiveness of the state** to effectively fulfil its principal functions and provide key services.
- **Broad social expectations and perceptions** about what the state should do, what the terms of the state-society relationship should be, and the **ability of society to articulate demands** that are “heard”.



At the heart of the interaction between these three dimensions lies the matter of legitimacy, which provides the basis for rule by primarily non-coercive means. States derive legitimacy from multiple sources that may coexist and/or compete. In fragile settings legitimacy may be a highly contested notion, with multiple and conflicting sources of legitimacy competing for space. Understanding the sources of legitimacy must be central to external interventions in statebuilding efforts.

Although statebuilding is not a linear process, securing physical control over a territory and a basic political settlement are necessary to create the conditions for building state capacity to deliver public goods, and accountability and responsiveness to a broader range of citizens.

FROM FRAMEWORK TO PRACTICE

Understanding these statebuilding processes and the context in which they take place must be the starting point for any international engagement and support. This raises a number of challenges and opportunities for the way the international community works and engages in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Making strategic choices and defining overall objectives

A practical challenge is that the endogenous nature of the statebuilding process places inevitable limits on the scope for external action and support. This requires realism and a clear assessment of the relevance, added-value and potential harm of international engagement in each country context.

The process is neither linear nor short-term, and both domestic and international actors are faced with multiple and often competing priorities and objectives. There may be tensions between statebuilding objectives and other objectives of international actors (including a development partner's* own security, or commercial or political concerns). There may also be tensions between the endogenous process of statebuilding and a normative, internationally supported (democratic) agenda; and between short-term objectives and longer-term objectives. These tensions and trade-offs need to be recognised and actively managed.

Development partners will need to engage with a broad range of state and non-state partners and work at multiple levels of government. Understanding the interface between different levels of government and between state and non-state actors is fundamental to building more effective state-society interaction. Currently development partners often limit their support to an overly narrow range of state and non-state actors.

Statebuilding involves the complex interplay of interests relating to security, political concerns, and economic and social development. Thus, external actors need to adopt a whole-of-government approach. This requires development partners to develop a common strategic vision and shared objectives or strategies for engagement across government (or organisation). Joint assessments and/or joint financing and staffing mechanisms are key elements to make a coherent, co-ordinated and complementary approach operational.

Global and regional factors can cause instability and fragility, and seriously undermine the creation of effective public authority at the country level. International actors therefore need to be aware of these external factors and, as appropriate, link actions at the country level with international actions to tackle tax evasion, money laundering, the arms trade, illicit or irresponsible extraction of natural resources, corruption and terrorist financing, and international regulation of narcotics. This creates opportunities to combine country-level support with action through “third parties” – regional organisations and/or new international policy frameworks – which addresses the wider set of incentives affecting domestic statebuilding efforts.

Designing and delivering country programmes

Statebuilding involves the ongoing negotiation of an unwritten contract between the state and society. The international community must be alert to the way their actions can strengthen or undermine constructive state-society engagement. This requires making context-specific judgements about most appropriate ways to support both state and non-state actors at national and local levels, and facilitating effective interactions between state and society. This could be approached by:

- Identifying the underlying causes of violent conflict and fragility, as well as factors that can build peace, and supporting local conflict management and resolution mechanisms.
- Looking for opportunities to promote inclusive political settlements and political processes that strengthen state-society interaction and accountability at all levels.
- Prioritising support for state functions that are strategically important for statebuilding. The key functions to focus on are security and justice, revenue and expenditure management, economic development – especially job creation – and service delivery. Detailed priorities within these key areas always need to be formulated on the basis of the specific country context.

In all of these interventions it is important to place gender considerations among the core concerns. Apart from their normative importance, a gender-sensitive approach can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions in each of the three areas above.

* “Development partner” is the term this publication uses for representatives of donor countries, bilateral and multilateral agencies and global programmes engaged in development co-operation activities and policy dialogue at country level.

Choosing tools for analysis and monitoring

Solid analysis is a key precondition for effective interventions that do no harm. Development partners should make use of the full range of analytical tools available to better understand political context, and the factors that help explain state fragility, the causes of violent conflict and the potential to support statebuilding. Analysis should not only focus on assessing problems and gaps but also look at possible drivers of stability and peace and institutional strengths. Even in the most fragile contexts, functioning institutions and capacities exist and can help in defining and implementing strategies.

Development partners will need to embed analysis in a wider set of organisational principles about learning and integrating knowledge into practice. Such a “culture of analysis” and systematic approaches to feed findings from analysis into programming are critical to ensure strategies, programmes and day-to-day implementation are informed by contextual information.

Monitoring the impact of statebuilding interventions and measuring progress is essential for the accountability of development partner governments toward their citizens. At the same time, defining goals, setting timelines, and establishing performance benchmarks represent political commitments and need to be appropriate to the context. Monitoring and evaluation indicators need to account for the long time frames involved in any fragile or conflict-affected setting and should, where possible, seek to evaluate statebuilding outcomes rather than focus narrowly on activities.

Adapting aid delivery modalities and technical assistance

External actors face difficult choices between supporting key state functions and meeting urgent needs, in an effort to create sustainable systems and practices to underpin longer-term state capacity. These decisions are reflected in the choices development partners make between different aid instruments at their disposal.

As a first step, external actors need to understand how aid modalities and other instruments impact the statebuilding process, and match these modalities to intervention objectives. While each situation will most likely require a variety of aid instruments, international actors should increase the use of jointly managed and pooled funds as a means to provide aligned and harmonised financial support. External actors should also seek to increase the proportion of sector-wide and programme-based approaches, and extend their use beyond service delivery programmes.

There are many challenges associated with providing technical assistance (TA) in fragile situations, where the conditions needed to make TA work tend to be weak or absent. This requires a long-term vision of where TA personnel fit into the change agenda, embedding TA in national structures as quickly as possible, and developing state capacity to manage and co-ordinate TA.

Improving development partner operations

External actors need to substantively strengthen their own capacity to work on statebuilding in fragile situations. This will require devolving greater responsibility to the field, appropriately staffing country offices and putting incentives in place to attract the best staff to work in fragile contexts.

The higher risks associated with operating in fragile and conflict-affected situations need to be recognised and actively managed. Staying engaged requires a strong understanding of context but also the ability to learn from failures and to adapt programmes to changing circumstances. Risks can be shared by working with other development partner agencies, for example through joint development partner offices and pooling arrangements.

Fostering coherence and collaboration among the various government departments and with other development partners engaged in situations of fragility and conflict requires setting appropriate incentives within the organisations.

Finally, development partners should review their procedures and regulations in the context of statebuilding objectives. This should include hiring and procurement procedures to minimise the negative impact on the local labour market and the local economy. This may also mean accepting the potential dilution of visibility by reducing “development partner branding”.