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Fragility of States and Societies: Defining the Issues at Stake for International Solidarity Players

Proceedings from 6 November 2008 Seminar
organised by the Humanitarian Commission of Coordination SUD.

Seminar: “Fragility of States and Societies”

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I. Foreword

Last 6 November, Coordination SUD and the Members of the Humanitarian Commission (Action Against Hunger – ACTED – CARE France – Handicap International - Secours Catholique-Caritas France - Secours Islamique France) organised an event to delve into the issues at stake and common practices in humanitarian and solidarity initiatives, in situations of fragility. The theme was one of the areas around which the European Union has already mobilised, expressing, in its Parliament Resolution dated 15 November 2007, that «*fragility is a complex development challenge*” and stressing “*the need for a well-defined and coherent fragility agenda*”. France, too, takes great interest in the issue, and has issued a position, adopting (in 2005) and updating (in 2007) its own commitment principles with respect to fragile States.

The “Fragility of States and Societies – Issues at Stake for International Solidarity Players” Seminar came directly in line with the Presidency’s monitoring programme, with the purpose of enriching discussion on the issue. The day was structured into three parts: a review, in order to take stock of the existing concepts and move forward in the discussion on the concept of fragile States and societies; concrete workshops focused on case studies – Haiti, Afghanistan, The Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad; and a third section dedicated to drafting recommendations, for both inside and outside the association.

The concept of fragile State – not to be confused with the concepts of failed State or collapsed State – is now an integral part of the international discussion agenda on development aid, as well as on global governance, within the current setting of globalisation. The concept is even on the verge of establishing itself as the new paradigm for international aid. Yet, and though certain commitment and action principles exist, the concept of fragility remains complex.

This concept of fragility is useful insofar as it makes it possible to revisit, first of all, conceptions of the legitimacy and role of States and societies. For the discussion about fragility is not limited to States alone, but now includes societies, and raises the question not only of their individual legitimacy, but also of the ways in which State and society interact.

Furthermore, the concept of fragility makes it necessary to re-examine the practices of international solidarity players in specific settings, in a new light. How, through humanitarian or solidarity-based action can one prevent situations of fragility from turning into situations of conflict? How can peace be fostered in contexts of fragility? How can fragility and vulnerability be alleviated, all the while reinforcing the State and society?

International solidarity NGOs need, in particular, to keep reiterating that the way to put an end to the death spiral of the fragile State is not so much by designating “best-in-class” States and new paradigms, but rather to facilitate discussion about the political conditions needed to effectively establish peace and fight poverty, and thereby, also to contribute to strengthening the existing or emerging forces for opposition at the local level.

II. Seminar Report

“Fragility of States and Societies”

1. Introduction

Henri Rouillé d’Orfeuil
President, Coordination SUD

The Humanitarian Commission of Coordination Sud is a dynamic one; its members are major organisations capable of taking action alone, but nonetheless preferring to combine their forces to delve into current topics.

The theme addressed at this event was first suggested by Secours Catholique, and the other members of the Commission immediately supported the idea. The idea was to work on the two-fold concept of fragility, in States and in societies, which interact with one another, insofar as societies can be shattered in situations of governmental or State fragility.

This topic raises a central contradiction in international relations. International relations are founded on the idea that governments represent their citizens and that all governments together represent all of the societies of the world. The concept underlying this idea is that of non-intervention, as justified by that representativeness. Another pillar of international action, however, is the Declaration of Human Rights: States have the duty to ensure respect for the rights of the men and women living on their soil. When disparagement for human rights reaches a certain level, the right of non-intervention falls; the representation provided by the government is disqualified and governance is instituted in order to make up for the failing governance of the governments.

This concept of fragile State and fragile society hovers around the borderline where the State disqualifies itself or is disqualified by the international community. It is not a matter solely of respect for human rights, but also one of destabilisation triggered by the facilitation of governments and States. Fragile States can be a danger for the environment of other countries and destabilise an entire region, if for instance, they leave a terrorist or mafia power settle on their soil. The question of interference or intervention needs to be rethought. From the NGOs’ standpoint, dealing with fragile States solely from the perspective of international aid is not enough. Response through cooperation between citizen associations, themselves often fractured and helpless in the face of failing powers, is not enough either, for the authority of the State also needs to be restored.

The fundamental question consists of defining the NGOs’ means of action. While answering this question may seem a complex undertaking, it is nonetheless essential to identify the juncture point between public-sector action and citizens’ organisations, in partnership with a destructured society. This seminar is important in that it makes it possible to reframe the debate. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is, incidentally, planning to hold a seminar around these same issues in December.

James Bishop
Vice President, InterAction

I would like to thank Coordination SUD for its invitation and hail its choice of such an initiative. Greater solidarity and heightened cooperation have become necessary in a world impacted by crises in the economy, food supply, environment and other areas still. The environment is increasingly hostile for humanitarian organisations, such that the resources dedicated to development are sometimes used to fight terrorism.

2. Inventory of Existing Concepts around the Concept of Fragile States and Societies: Debates and Issues at Stake

Participating in the debate:

Jean-Marc Chataigner, Director of Cabinet, State Secretariat in charge of Cooperation and French-Speaking Nations and Deputy Director of Cabinet, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs;

Jean-Bernard Véron, Head of the Unit on Crisis Prevention and Exit from Conflict, French Development Agency.

The debate was facilitated by François Grünewald, President of Groupe Urgence Réhabilitation et Développement (Groupe URD¹).

François Grünewald

This first session will provide some insight on the way in which the States, bilateral organisations and multilateral organisations view the issue of fragility. Situations of fragility are often dangerous: to wit, volunteers from such associations such as Solidarité Laïque and Action contre la Faim are currently being held hostage or are missing, following their action in fragile environments.

Discussion about fragile States holds an implicit question: everyone has noted the value of the concept, but also its limits. Whether fragile States or states, the only operating question is to determine how such situations arise and what the means are for exiting them. The more dynamic concepts of “fragility” and “fragilisation” are far more operational when it comes to discussion, strategy and implementation. We will thus give preference to the concept of the fragility of States, rather than that of fragile States or societies.

Fragility is a very dual concept, in that many situations of fragility can also offer opportunities. It is important to maintain a positive vision of fragility, as a time during which rebound is possible. I feel it is important, initially, to consider the way in which States and their bodies deal with these issues.

I. Choosing the Right Instruments for the Reconstruction of Fragile States and Societies

Jean-Marc Chataigner

This concept is extremely fragile, for fragility is universal. To wit, strong States can also prove fragile, as did France during the crisis of its underprivileged Paris suburbs in 2005, or the United States, with its difficulties in dealing with the consequences of Hurricane Katrina; meanwhile, not all fragile States are on a one-track road toward crisis. Argentina has many areas of fragility, but nonetheless emerged from the major crisis – that of military dictatorship in the 1970s – without ever falling back into major social crisis. There exist no indices of strength or fragility to

¹ Groupe URD had been asked by Coordination Sud to draft the discussion documents for this conference, assist in the organisation of the group’s undertakings and provide support drawing up the summary.

categorise States. Strength is not desirable at any price: States that are too strong are not always well-balanced.

The difficulty in conceptualising and measuring fragility does not preclude the phenomenon's actuality. There exist indeed a number of weak countries and populations. In many countries, the State has gone under or is struggling to rebuild itself, as is true in Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo or, still, Afghanistan. Such countries or regions reveal new threats, such as terrorism, maritime piracy or the hostage-taking industry. In the said zones, illegal parties to international relations prosper, and particularly so in West Africa, a new home to drug trafficking. These parties take advantage of the fragilities they find: Northern countries or emerging countries, for instance, mine the populations and raw materials of Southern countries. The take-off of chairman and information dissemination has triggered a collision between the local and the global, and between strength and weakness.

How is work to be carried out in the fragile States? This effort on fragile States and societies is, in my opinion, the most significant development challenge. We find, in these countries, two major themes: peace-building and State-building. What price are we willing to pay for peace, in terms of international justice or acceptance of the rules of democracy? State-building is even more complex, in that it depends on relations within society, which evolve over time. To wit, in France or in the United States, the State was built up over several centuries, after conflicts that were sometimes extremely violent. *In fine*, the tools used by donors are generally not suited to such situations: there exists a lack of trained personnel to handle this type of situation, particularly at the government level, a lack of knowledge and investment in the local environments, of follow-up and investment over time, and assessment of results over the long term, in that donors wish to show the results they have achieved, and thus focus on the measurable, the logistical aspects and on resources. Donor action is limited to the boundaries of the Baghdad Green Zone, confining people in a single location and cutting them off from civil society and from contact with social realities. It is important not to ghettoise, however difficult that may be. The technical assistance defined is a reflection of the choices made by men and women. Project aid is often designed far from local realities and budget aid often turns out to be one long punctured tube. Humanitarian aid, however, has the merit of being present. The international community has not always chosen to put together major projects, but rather to work at the local level and bear a number of values, all the while remaining modest. NGOs should not move from the global to the local, but rather establish their action over the long term.

François Grünewald

I noted three points: a call for situational and analytical intelligence, so as to avoid applying specific formulas and instead, innovate according to the local situation – support rather than intervention; dedicating time to action; not always looking to build programmes with easily-measurable results, which is often very difficult considering the environments and "time-steps" inherent in aid.

II. Lessons to be Learned for a Development Aid Donor in Situations of Fragility: The AFD's Experience

Jean-Bernard Véron

1. Donors

Public development aid donors first look at the fragility of the State. That fragility can be defined as technical (the State is unable to exercise its sovereign powers or avail the population of its services) or political (legitimacy of the government's rise to power or exercise thereof). The latter approach carries more risk, in that the donor might then project its own models on the benefiting country, in assessing the fragility. The application of the "one man, one voice" democratic model, for instance, can lead to disaster in countries where power is disputed on primarily ethnic grounds. The example of Burundi is a perfect illustration of how Western countries' projections can have a completely negative effect, despite the best of the intentions.

A fragile society is a fragmented and inegalitarian one, home to a number of tensions, which can slow down the development process and generate crises. Donors now take into account the society's fragility, for peace and stability appear a necessary pre-requisite for development action. Letting a situation of fragility slide all the way to crisis can have very negative and costly consequences. It is thus better to be preventive and deal with the causes, rather than remedial, by repairing the damage. The Soviet Union entered Afghanistan in 1978 and the civil war lasted ten years. After those ten years, the Soviet Union withdrew from the country and almost all of the NGOs present left Afghanistan, thus making it possible for the Taliban and Al Qaeda to establish their foothold. On the African continent, our inability to solve certain problems is affecting the entire region, as illustrated by the Congo Basin or the triangular conflict between Sudan, the Central African Republic and Chad. Fragility is slowing down development action and may extend to the neighbouring countries.

A new end-purpose has thus emerged in development aid, in addition to support for economic development, anti-poverty and protection for global public assets, in particular environmental security. The American approach, political in nature, calls for focusing aid on the fragile countries that can, should the situation deteriorate, be a danger to the United States. The British position is much more pragmatic: observing that under-development creates a divide, tension and, potentially, conflict, the approach is aimed at supporting development in order to create peace.

Under this new paradigm, public development aid donors have set out three objectives:

- to strengthen States so that they can truly fulfil their role;
- to address the fragilities of societies and absorb their economic and social inequalities, especially if they are cross-cutting, by producing development, supported and inclusive, and by backing up civil society, which is the project-owner on efforts funded by international aid, through the creation of social capital;
- to deal with exit from conflict, through reconstruction and action on the causes of war and the specific economy instituted during the war, in the absence of a State capable of controlling the territory.

2. The AFD's Strategy

In 2007, the AFD set out its strategy on these issues and, in 2008, followed this up with the creation of a special task force. We place emphasis on preventing risks and causes, before the said causes

actually lead to conflict, for reconstruction upon exiting conflict can turn out costly and uncertain. Addressing the causes of fragility can end up being a lengthy process but, as a public development aid donor, we naturally reason on a long-term basis. Lastly, dealing with causes is something that lies largely in the economic and social field. For this reason, our action focuses on generating employment and revenue, ensuring peaceful resource management and seeing that basic social needs are covered.

This fragility-conflictuality approach requires that we navigate some finer points. The first of these has to do with two-fold or “win-win” operations, which produce an economic and social development asset, all the while addressing a cause of fragility and, thereby, generating social capital. For instance, during the conflict in Kosovo, the AFD stepped in after the war in Mitrovica to rebuild the bridge that separates the Serbian quarters from the Albanian ones, taking time so that the teams could include both Albanian and Serbian workers. The second point consists of linking up short-term and long-term action. When we intervene east of Chad, our long-term action must have a clear juncture point with what the humanitarian assistance NGOs provide, through their short-term efforts. Short-term effectiveness needs to combine with long-term sustainability.

In Chad, we fund agricultural hydraulics projects. The 4-million animal herd is largely managed using nomad modes. The major transhumants come from the North and, when they reach the southern part of the country, they enter the farming zones of sedentary farmers, and this generated conflict. They also cross a large number of other areas, in which there exist other forms of agriculture, thereby creating competition around resources. For this reason, we have stepped up the number of water holes in order to disperse the herd spatially, and this has opened up new grazing areas and delayed the herd’s arrival in farmed zones, while also enabling conflict-resolution through discussion. The project both addresses fragility and lowers conflictuality. In action over the last ten years, it has been highly effective, but has led to a significant surge in the herd, which could potentially bring about another fragility.

To work on these issues, it is important to remain modest, for the success stories are few and far between – examples include Mozambique and Cambodia. It is also important to project models on new situations, understanding the context and societies in-depth: donors are engineers, financial specialists and economists, when in fact, history, sociology, political economics and anthropology are also required for accurate analysis. The final ingredient is patience: Somalia has been a fragile country for 15 years, Afghanistan for 30 years and Haiti for 204 years. These countries should not be abandoned, even when it is difficult to take action.

François Grünewald

Donors now realise that fragility can become the norm. With the theme “development and security”, development has been saddled with managing security, in addition to everything it does to foster economic growth and social distribution. If these fragility situations are not handled appropriately and social relations deteriorate, along with the environment and national wealth, the countries can quickly fall into the trap of violence, societies into that of civil war, if not that of terrorism. The metastases of this poorly or un-managed fragility can quickly become regional or even global.

III. Toward a European Union Response to Situations of Fragility

François Grünewald

I will summarise the European Union's presentation, as Dorothee Starck was not able to be with us today.

The European Commission broached this question from three angles:

- identifying internal political consistency between the instruments, pillars and intervention parties;
- managing tools as best possible;
- displaying itself as a major player in the resolution of global dynamics.

A resolution, adopted in 2007, was later taken up by the working groups. The resulting ideas will later have to be applied and bring themselves in line with those of the other parties involved, such as the African Union. For the time being, the Commission's texts will need to interlink with the texts produced by equivalent entities: in other words, Europe's production must move beyond its natural setting and connect with other sectors.

DG ECHO, in charge of the European Commission's humanitarian action, manages the consequences of fragility. Entrusted with a humanitarian mandate, reconfirmed under the European Humanitarian Consensus signed in Lisbon in 2007, and a member of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (Stockholm Principles), it calls for respect for the basic principles of humanitarian action (independence, impartiality, neutrality) and advocates a certain degree of distance from the State. The other Commission Directorates, such as DG DEV or the DG RELE, are closer to the OECD's approach and promote respect for the principles of the Declaration of Paris: ownership by the States and alignment of donor policies with the policies of recipient States, in an attempt to achieve global harmonisation. Both of these principles are borne by different Directorate Generals within the Commission and accepted to varying degrees by the Member States; they come into collision in situations of fragility, where donors no longer know whether they should or should not support the state, in particular when the State itself is party to the violence. A whole inter-department undertaking was launched at the level of the Commission, in order to move discussion forward, gain a deeper understanding of the situations at hand and improve the Community tools dedicated to managing such situations. To this end, the European Union has launched a whole series of case studies. One of the objectives in this process was to build clear strategies to set before the Commission by end-2009.

3. Debate

1. Security and Development

Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil

It might be somewhat difficult to consider humanitarian aid separately from diplomacy and military action, in fragile States. For development aid does not have any monopoly on security and diplomacy can solve many problems.

From the floor

Security and development issues are indeed gaining breadth: synergies are being created between the NGOs working in Brussels on this field. Contextual analysis, also advocated by the OECD, is something I see as vital, for it is important to understand conflicts before putting together development projects, so as to avoid heightening existing conflicts through the action taken. Certain development projects, it is true, can stir conflict. Lastly, projects need to involve civil society.

From the floor

On the development-security concept, cooperation between humanitarian aid and the Ministries of Defence are developing, when they can be a danger for the humanitarian area, as we are seeing in Iraq or in Afghanistan.

Jean-Marc Chataigner

The situation would be dangerous if cooperation were incorporated into military action, as is the case with the projects carried out by the United States. This situation does not, in contrast, exist in Europe or in France, where we do not have enough dialogue. I feel it is vital, however, to involve the military in the debate.

Jean-Bernard Véron

It is true that the American stance gives priority to integrated approaches. In Afghanistan, the military intervenes with development workers or in NGOs. The integrated approach is aimed at mobilising all available resources to achieve a specific political objective. France is not at all in this approach. Humanitarian aid is not, however, all-powerful and discussion would be needed at least with the military and diplomatic corps, making sure, all the while taking care not to blur the lines between the respective parties' responsibilities and types of action.

From the floor

The integrated approach is particularly well-developed in the United States, but also in Great Britain. Is there European-level dialogue on this topic?

François Grünewald

The United Kingdom or Denmark are places where dialogue has long been instituted between humanitarian players and the military, and where integration risk does exist. While discussion does need to be held very far upstream and jointly, between the military and humanitarian players, there needs to be a firm separation on the ground. At the European level, there are currently very different tendencies, between certain States advocating integration, while others reject it.

Jean-Marc Chataigner

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the United Nations' Mission is composed of 19 000 men. It receives EUR 1 billion in support from the international community. It is also important to look at the UN's effectiveness. It seems surprising that Europe should intervene in the country and deploy rapid intervention forces, when the UN is present but incapable of responding. The United Nations' legitimacy needs to be questioned in that sense, and time given to determining how its intervention can be made more efficient. More broadly speaking, there is the question of its place in international action. Is it the role of the United States to be the world's police force, while Europe is the fire-fighting team?

From the floor

When discussing security and development, let us not limit ourselves to military action and hard security: the issues of police reform and reform of the security and judiciary systems also, in my opinion, fall within the scope of security.

2. Civil Society Involvement

From the floor

You mentioned the issues of the war economy and the informal economy, which develop in situations of fragility. How are the economic players taken into account, whether locally or internationally, in the debate between society and the State? You also mentioned the need to understand situations in-depth: how can analysis of civil society, and in particular local partners and peace players, be incorporated into the Partnership Framework Documents?

Jean-Bernard Véron

Civil society obviously includes the economic players, as a whole, in addition to associations. Prior analysis needs to be as comprehensive as possible.

3. European Union Action

From the floor

The European Union is currently carrying out case studies on situations of fragility. It, furthermore, needs to be considered a donor.

François Grünewald

I spend one-third of my time in Brussels and believe deeply in Europe, but have observed that it is mechanism with rules and cumbersome procedures all its own.

From the floor

I have noted a change in the way fragile States are being approached in Great Britain. Whereas the focus was previously on central government institutions, fragility and good governance are now viewed from a more general standpoint, also encompassing the informal sectors and State-society relations. Are France and the European Union following in this path?

Jean-Marc Chataigner

France has traditionally maintained a very State-centric cooperation policy. The issue of fragile States as a whole changes this: we wanted to develop an integrated, social vision, emphasising that action should not be limited to the State alone.

Europe's processes are the result of a huge conceptualising machine, though this does not give rise to concrete results, as attested to by the democratic governance incentive tranche set up three or four years ago. Can you name an instance where the incentive tranche, tied to democratic performance assessment, was not paid to a State? While the conceptualisation behind it was flawless, the measure itself proved unenforceable in reality. I really wonder about how the different approaches taken in Europe can be integrated and made operational, beyond the conceptual stage.

From the floor

The debate at the European level is interesting: it is open and civil society can participate in it to make it less bureaucratic and more concrete. In addition, Europe offers significant funding, of which it can take advantage.

From the floor

Debate at the European level does appear of the essence. In certain countries, like Iraq or Afghanistan, it is increasingly difficult for NGOs to intervene and conduct development action, for the humanitarian area has dwindled significantly. European-level dialogue would make it possible to re-establish that area, which is currently a threat to those operating in the field.

4. The Positioning of Humanitarian Organisations in War Zones

From the floor

In war zones, only the humanitarian organisations remain, thanks to their independence, at least to provide care and testimonials. What is the minimum shared by the State and donors?

Jean-Bernard Véron

It is absolutely necessary to remain on-site. To illustrate, the AFD closed its Haiti agency at one point, to save money, and lost all of its contacts. It is truly vital to remain on-site, even if the operations are not implemented, for the important thing is to understand and analyse, looking ahead to the day when action and resume.

Jean-Marc Chataigner

Being there makes it possible to maintain discussion capacity. The humanitarian organisations cannot simply be content to integrate an immediate approach, but also a reconstruction approach, on the military side. I do not believe in the concept that there is a chronological series of stages, which supposedly starts with the military stage, followed by a humanitarian stage of repair and, lastly, a development stage, of reconstruction. It is necessary, even during times of violence, to maintain dialogue, provide attention and devise solutions for the post-violence stages. France has the reputation of remaining in complicated situations, and this is a strong point for our diplomacy.

François Grünewald

In dangerous situations, the international community tends to gravitate toward two strategies: the Ivory Tower strategy, in Chad or in Afghanistan, in particular, where the United Nations remain but no longer have much contact with civil society, and that of avoidance, wherein everyone leaves, as was the case in Somalia or, to a lesser extent, in Gaza. When the intervention parties are in an ivory tower, it becomes difficult to understand, track and anticipate. The key lies in understanding, and that requires trust, dialogue and presence.

Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil

Purely humanitarian action does not lead to large numbers of partnerships: it intervenes without looking for partners, unlike the NGOs that work on development actions. In situations of danger, it is important that the NGOs be protected. Does there not exist a middle path, between avoidance and the ivory tower, in high-danger zones?

François Grünewald

Between the ivory tower, avoidance or army escort, I do feel there is a fourth path, that of acceptance, in which the populations and parties to the violence are made to understand the thinking of those intervening. This worked for years, thanks to the institution of partnerships and a dialogue strategy making it possible for NGOs to explain their actions. The strategy shifted when the parties to the violence began attacking the humanitarian workers, as a new way of waging hostility on them. This is the direct result of the excesses of "total war" against terrorism. It is as though the concept of impartial player no longer existed – a consequence of the good versus evil conception of the world from which the fight against terrorism is being waged. The strategy of acceptance needs to be rebuilt.

Jean-Marc Chataigner

This is a fundamental point. Since 2001, we have been intervening in war situations, in Iraq or in Afghanistan: in these contexts, humanitarian organisations are seen as enemies, or as merchandise, as hostages. The situations then become inextricable. For this reason, more time needs to be taken, to reflect duly on the role of the UN. Military intervention does not solve all problems, even if¹⁵

this is a tempting solution, in its immediacy. As a consequence of the war in Iraq, neutrality no longer exists: how can it be restored?

François Grünewald

There are three kinds of parties to peace: the first are those of domestic origin and come from the inside (women's groups, etc.); the second are impressed upon the situation (e.g., UN); and the third offer intermediation capacity and facilitation options, such as the San Egidio Community, the Institute for Humanitarian Dialogue (ex-Institut Henri Dunant of Geneva) or the Peace Corps.

From the floor

Respect and intercultural issues are major aspects in solving these problems.

From the floor

NGOs are in part responsible for the fading away of the humanitarian area, when they tried to take part in conflict resolution. Certain aspects have been more powerful, though. The United States realised that not all issues could be solved by the military approach alone thus took over the humanitarian area. Such intervention takes away credibility from the humanitarian area, which is no longer respected by the local players. Why do States such as France not put pressure on certain States, such as Chad, so that they respect this humanitarian area?

Jean-Marc Chataigner

It is important to recover dialogue capacity upstream, between the NGOs and the public authorities, all the while recognising the NGOs' operational independence on the ground, so as to give due consideration to the concepts and processes by which certain partnership initiatives are carried out.

James Bishop

It is true that Iraq is the cause for certain problems. The acceptance policy can, however, work, even in Iraq, through the institution of friendly relations with the tribes or local authorities. The American NGOs must fight against an integrated American policy: we took part in issuing a doctrine refusing this policy. As regards the kidnapping industry, to the extent that the NGOs pay the kidnappers, they encourage the practice.

From the floor

How should the restoration of the State be taken into consideration, including in its local decentralisation or participatory governance dimension, with a view toward helping the populations maintain checks on the national or local elected officials?

Jean-Bernard Véron

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been hovering between powerful central State and

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federated State since its inception. Before raising the topic of decentralisation, one must address the question of State workings and how wealth is divided up between the provinces.

4. Overview of Issues and Main Challenges for Country-Workshops

Four country workshops were held during the afternoon, on Chad, Afghanistan, Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The speakers presented the context of fragility and, thereafter, the action of NGOs on the causes of fragility. Lastly, recommendations were issued internally as to the workings of NGOs and, externally, to donors.

Country Workshops

I. Afghanistan

The working group heard two presentations, by Alain BOINET from Solidarités and Florence DAUNIS from Action contre la Faim. The latter emphasised crisis anticipation and the need to keep up awareness efforts based on indicators, so as to take action before States enter crisis and fragility. Taking the opposite tack to what the World Bank states, in underscoring the state of insecurity, it appealed to the NGOs to maintain a presence in the country, and in particular in the provinces, and to provide aid to civil society. Action contre la Faim also calls for support to training programmes in the countryside and autonomisation for civil society, focused on farming production. The Afghan situation stands out for the implementation of restructuring and long-term development projects, alongside emergency projects as well. Donors must thus continue to sustain the emergency funds, and not only those dedicated to development.

Alain BOINET stressed the external concepts of State fragilisation, providing a review of the country's history since 1979, the time at which the USSR, supporting the local Communist Party, intervened in the country, triggering the first war in Afghanistan. This historical review showed that the speakers must therefore always consider their contribution to their country and the impact of their action. Afghanistan relies on the local populations: the centralised model is surely not appropriate here. The international community therefore needs to question the model in place and compare it with local realities. The NGOs must institute a fairly-extensive communications policy, in the current environment where humanitarian workers are victims to conflict and where instances of kidnapping of humanitarian personnel have been recorded.

The working group recommends that action be focused on communication so as to clarify the image of the NGOs, by distinguishing them from other intervention parties, in particular the military. The unsafe environment in which NGOs must operate is such that they have had to make safety for humanitarian workers a real emphasis, all the while being careful not to isolate themselves from the population. This means that humanitarian workers need to be encouraged to abide by certain security rules, yet without locking themselves inside a bunker. Lastly, it is important to assess the positive initiatives and capitalise on those success stories amongst NGOs. The importance of humanitarian principles has already been underscored here, first and foremost: independence, impartiality and neutrality.

Daniel Verger

Some of the topics discussed presently echo the comments from this morning. Shared responsibility is an idea to be maintained, alongside the skewing effect of imported models, which are too simple and model-based.

II. Democratic Republic of Congo

This workshop was moderated by Yves Lefort, from Secours Catholique. Three speakers presented their viewpoints: Valentin Makongo, from the Justice and Peace Commission, Kris Berwouts, from EurAc and Didier Cannet, from Médecins du Monde.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is, as was mentioned, a fragile State, dismantled since the time of independence due to its singular stance during the Cold War and because of the extent of its natural resources, which have stoked the envy of its neighbours and Western powers.

The army is now without structure and incapable of providing for the populations’ security or guaranteeing the territory’s integrity. The State has lost control over the violence and cannot provide basic services to the population. The country’s problems have given rise to the first African continental war.

The recommendations issued from the political standpoint are targeted at the States, in particular those in Europe, and to donors. They consist of requesting support from the Congolese government so that it can rehabilitate the State, from the bottom up. The idea is to support the grassroots communities and civil society associations both. Also essential is support for security reform, for, in order to rehabilitate the State, it is important to first rehabilitate its instruments and, in particular, the police, the justice system and the army. This reform will prove of the essence and the international community has a clear part to play in this. Yet a lack of coordination in the initiatives of donors has been seen. In order to carry out a reform as thorny as that of security, it is absolutely vital to harmonise action. Lastly, it is important to enable the State to provide basic services, such as health or education. This could happen through the institution of real political dialogue between the State and the European Union. The latter could, in addition, put pressure on the government when the commitments made are not upheld. Another, more operational, recommendation, has to do with the bureaucratisation of donors, ill-suited to the needs of organisations. Aid must be appropriate to the State, in particular as regards health and education: the players need to be integrated into a policy set out by the State. Donors furthermore need to stop making the distinction, in post-conflict situations, between emergency and development actions. The situation is complex for NGOs, which have trouble working in fragile situations: they need to provide support to the local organisations, over the long term, by coming in line with national policies, as opposed to only setting out a project policy. NGOs also need to become more involved, in order to influence the strategies of donors.

Daniel Verger

Thank you for such a clear presentation, which is very helpful in that it addresses all of the players present, from the State to donors and NGOs. It is fundamental to reflect upon the State, its role and its legitimacy. Your recommendations have a larger scope than that of fragile States alone, but absolutely must be applied when it comes to fragile States.

III. Chad

This working group heard a series of three presentations. Ahmat Payouni, from SECADEV, looked at whether Chad was a fragile State or a bankrupt State. For this purpose, an overview of the country's fragilities was drawn up. The consequences of the instability were raised next, in which the specific points were a territory-control problem, with the question of the reasons behind the intervention and emphasising the doubts on the motives that can lead to a lack of transparency. Intervention, in the end, might also make a State more fragile. Is consideration being given on a short-term (security provided) or long-term basis? What requirements should the Chadian government have to prove in compensation for the intervention? The situation has worsened, thus raising issues in terms of strategy.

Guilhem Soutou, from Secours Islamique France, then went on to recount his impressions from the ground, based on the observation that Chad had experienced layer upon layer of conflict, thus making the situation difficult to grasp. Intertwined here are questions of national integration and government legitimacy, along with guarantees provided by the government. He emphasised the need to coordinate donor action. It is difficult for humanitarian workers to intervene in an environment where corruption is part of everyday reality.

The discussion then turned to the concept of legitimacy: what legitimacy does Chad's government have? How can the government's legitimacy or that of other players be boosted? Which fragilities are imported? The strong States may need weak States and the fragility of the Chadian State might suite the affairs of other States, or the interests of economic players.

The next topic of discussion was the responsibility of the intervening parties. Peace is the priority for all of Chad's population, in connection with security and justice. A look thus needs to be paid to the issue of moralisation, with a Ministry of Moralisation instituted to fight corruption. How can one ensure that the populations engage in dialogue? How can a certain level of demand be placed on the Chad government with a view toward international intervention? The government could refuse impunity to people, for instance, who attack humanitarian workers. The international community needs to reflect on its reasons for intervening in Chad. The NGOs must ensure that they are not instrumentalised, used or politicised.

Lastly, a fragile State is not necessarily a fragile society in that the latter sometimes sets up mechanisms that must later not be ignored.

Daniel Verger

It is true that fragile States and societies are governed by different dynamics. You emphasised the issues of shared sovereignty, along with the problem of imported fragility, and the need to understand the situation in detail. Lastly, you raised the question of legitimacy amongst players, and in particular, the State. The populations want, first and foremost, to see peace and security return, through a rebalancing of the national, regional and international levels.

IV. Haiti

Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil and François Grünewald took part in this working group. Haiti is experiencing political, economic and environmental fragility. At the political level, the country has been in decades of chronic political instability, with successive stages of dictatorship, chaotic democratic regimes or foreign intervention. The State has always been considered a predatory₂₀

tool by its population: corruption is persistent and a mode of governance. The country is suffering economically, due to its debt, in particular that contracted with France, and from the colonial and post-colonial exploitation. Small-scale peasant farming has been hurt greatly, in particular due to the combination of scorn and ignorance on the part of the public policies and of international aids. The country is also experiencing accelerating rural exodus, in an environment of racing demographics, which has led to the creation of shantytowns. The problem arising from the size of the Diaspora has been underscored, in that it deprives Haiti of its educated middle-classes. Haiti has become a platform for drug trafficking. From the environmental standpoint, the deforestation situation is disastrous, due to the major farming programmes and excessive use of wood to be turned into coal. The said deforestation makes the country particularly vulnerable to natural disaster.

Where recommendations are concerned, the first is to not forget Haiti. The donors are tired of financing "development", reconstruction or even emergency situations, without many visible results. This season, Haiti was battered by four major hurricanes and the mobilisation of the international community has been very weak and very slow. It is thus necessary to encourage and take advantage of periods of stability and positive political environment to give more encouragement to initiatives and projects. We are currently in such a stage, in that the government in place benefits from a good reputation. Such a period can also be the opportunity to support aid through debt relief systems, on negotiated terms. Also recommended is intervention, at all levels, by maintaining and supporting the public system, by working on good governance, particularly at the local level. There should be no hesitation in taking a family-level and individual approach in projects. Lastly, it is important to develop and strengthen partnerships in a lasting spirit. The embargo placed on the country, under Aristide, triggered a mushrooming of NGOs. For this reason, it is important to capitalise on the experiments carried out with the most effective associations and, in particular, support the creation of a national NGO platform.

The priority projects are those focusing on food safety and encouragement for subsistence crop farming, as well as those supporting utilities and governance, for instance, by providing or improving civil servant salaries, and reducing the risk of natural disasters, a factor of regression.

Daniel Verger

You have detailed the factors for fragility and vulnerability. One original point lies in the support provided to individuals, as players not to be neglected and the creation of a national ONG platform.

5. Recommendations

François Grünewald

1. The Diagnosis

These situations are common and varied; they can lead to dangerous local or regional metastases; they are governed by a dynamic process.

2. The Operational Recommendations

What is operational is the fragilisation process: the opposite of the fragilisation process is, first, a legitimisation process for the State and its players, and secondly, the construction of resilience mechanisms (crisis-resistance processes). The legitimisation of the State, in its every facet, involves ensuring legitimacy in its representation, its ability exercise its sovereign powers, and guarantee the provision of a number of services. Bringing legitimacy to the State boils down to returning it to its role in governance and its ability to be responsible. Moreover, resilience needs to be restored for individuals, the communities, societies, utilities and even aid processes. The word complexity has been uttered: it appears fundamental, in order to handle this complexity over time, to show patience and fortitude in fighting “donor fatigue” or discouragement on the part of players, and to know how to seize opportunities when they emerge. The template plan and “drop-down menu” are dangerous: flexible mechanisms that can be adapted to field realities need to be instituted.

3. Working Tools

Necessary in this area are checklists and mechanisms for monitoring, anticipating, and analysing conflict sensitivity, as well as specially-developed tools for gaining greater comprehension. Thereafter, dynamics are required to create trust and respect, which come first through dialogue and secondly through interculturality and intermediation capacity. In addition, action must be taken to strengthen and enable ownership of the existing mechanisms around peace, using the infamous peace guidelines. NGOs need to be present over time, ensuring player security (by fighting the ivory tower mindset or automatic evacuation) through the institution of partnerships on-site. The players’ legitimacy is a fundamental necessity against this background. Work must focus on re-legitimising the State, around security, justice, anti-impunity and reconciliation dynamics that use the peace guidelines, and through greater resilience (food security, provision of basic services – healthcare, etc. – disaster contingency planning). To do this, we need appropriate human resources and tools, presence over time, good communication on-site and assessment-capitalisation. To implement this efforts, State-based international community players (the European Union, UN), association-based or traditional civil society players, the private sector, national States and local authorities must take action in a coordinated manner.

James Bishop

When strengthening governmental authorities, the central government as well as the local authorities need support. On personal security, attention certainly needs to be paid to personal behaviour in order to prevent attacks.

From the floor

We have not discussed funding mechanisms.

François Grünewald

We discussed patience and the fight against donor fatigue. We mentioned the need to commit over time with flexible financial mechanisms, which make it possible to adapt to change. These are vital factors and it is up to the civil societies of the North to dialogue with the governments so that resources can be released in these directions. In the balance is the well-being of all.

Daniel Verger

It is indeed a matter of flexibility between the emergency funds and the development funds, and the ability to carry out actions that are not constantly disrupted by excessively-short timeframes, with attempts to achieve measurable results and impacts within overly-tight deadlines. It is important to be able to take action over the long term. It is important to lend a closer ear to the populations in order to better understand their needs.

From the floor

We also need to take into account realities and limitations as regards the capacities of the States to which funds are allocated. In Afghanistan, all funds go through the State, which sometimes dilly-dallies before disbursing the funds, hence stoppages in the programmes.

François Grünewald

The question of absorption capacity on the part of recipient States and societies is a vital one. We include these topics in the issue of improving resilience in aid processes.

From the floor

I would like to emphasise the issue of demographic explosion that heightens fragility.

From the floor

We have broached the importance of building organisation capacity in civil society so as to provide support for the priorities which civil societies themselves determine. These are not operatives, but full-fledged partners that need to be helped to define their own policies.

Daniel Verger

International intervention does run the risk of always shifting responsibility and decisions to outside parties, hence imported situations of fragility complicated by international intervention. Capacity-building is indeed necessary, based on local and national realities.

From the floor

We need to be careful that our recommendations do not lend legitimacy to forceful intervention, whether integrated or military, in response to fragility, especially as we cannot guarantee what will happen, nor the consequences thereafter.

Daniel Verger

The legitimacy of the States or intervention parties is provided by the populations. This is the problem in Afghanistan. The mechanism is not a natural one, but must be built.

From the floor

I feel it is important to ensure that NGOs intervening on the ground plan for local communities to be the project owners. In addition, the model suggested to exit the fragility situation must not be pre-ordained.

From the floor

How will the recommendation on donor coordination and harmonisation be translated on the ground?

François Grünewald

We are not going to impress rules upon them, because it is not within our remit to revamp the Paris Principles, but we will alert them to the fact that their inconsistencies generate considerable difficulties in our intervention.

Recent research has shown that harmonisation does not mean homogenisation. It is important to coordinate and work on a sufficiently-large palette of action to respond to all situations, with a view toward complementarity.

6. Conclusion

Henri Rouillé d’Orfeuil
President, Coordination SUD

We must always place ourselves in a dynamic: the word fragility is static, whereas the word fragilisation is dynamic. The same is true of the words democracy (static) and democratisation (dynamic). We must always pay attention to the players in those dynamics. In the face of realities on the ground, the dynamics and overall power balances, NGOs must also see the players as bearing values and projects which they share.

Regarding the idea of State legitimisation, much of the focus has been on regulation, today. In the eyes of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher or the World Bank, it appeared legitimate that the failing States fall out of power. Today, crisis has led States to return to the fore, to provide services, fight hazards, regulate markets, etc. We are in the midst of a real turnaround.

Nonetheless, all the while restoring legitimacy to the State, it is important not to turn a blind eye to the diseases that a State may harbour, such as corruption. The efforts dedicated to restoring a State, rather than remedying the ailments, can to the contrary intensify them. We do have to consider that conditionality is necessary.

The idea of conflict implies refusal of others and their identity: the prevention and conflict resolution process thus must include the institution of substantial and in-depth inter-cultural dialogue. I think that this issue of intercultural exchange is fundamental.

Building lasting relations between societies must also be an in-depth and lasting investment. If such relations do not come about, NGOs would enjoy no visibility in their action, as they would be unable to approach the realities and causalities of the problems which they wish to take on. NGO support procedures must take into account their need to build relationships over time. It is also important to help our partners come together as associations and geographic or thematic platforms.

Today was one step in a dynamic that must help us progress. The financial crisis is transforming the way we see the State: we must not cut reality into little bits of time and space, or intervention in limited segments, on the claim that the budgets come from different countries or agencies. There is but one reality and, subject to a variety of forces and players, it evolves. We must position ourselves with respect to that evolution and the players that make it shift.

3. Appendix: Seminar Programme

9:30am Plenary Room	Participant Welcome Introduction: Henri Rouillé d’Orfeuil , President, Coordination SUD James Bishop , Vice-President, InterAction
10:00-11:45am Plenary Room	REVIEW OF EXISTING CONCEPTS AROUND THE CONCEPT OF FRAGILE STATES AND SOCIETIES: DEBATES AND ISSUES AT STAKE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jean-Marc Chataigner, Director of Cabinet, State Secretariat in charge of Cooperation and French-Speaking Nations, Deputy Director of Cabinet, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs: “<i>Choosing Instruments for the Reconstruction of Fragile States and Societies</i>” • Dorothee Starck, Policy Officer at the European Commission (DG DEV C2 – Pan-African Issues and Institutions, Governance and Migration): “<i>Toward an EU Response to Situations of Fragility</i>” • Jean-Bernard Véron, Head of the Unit on Crisis Prevention and Exit from Conflict at the French Development Agency: “<i>Lessons for Development Aid Donors in Situations of Fragility. The AFD’s Experience</i>” <p><i>Moderator - François Grünewald, President, Urgence Réhabilitation et Développement (URD)</i></p>
11:45-12pm	Break
12 – 12:30 pm Plenary Room	OVERVIEW OF MAIN ISSUES AND CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED IN COUNTRY WORKSHOPS: Cases considered: Chad, Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan
12:30 – 2pm	Lunch Break
2 – 3:30pm Working groups	COUNTRY WORKSHOPS <p>CHAD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahmat Payouni, SECADEV • Stephen Cornish, Care International • Guilhem Soutou, Secours Islamique France <p>AFGHANISTAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alain Boinet, Solidarités • Andréa Brezovsek, Handicap International • Florence Daunis, Action contre la Faim <p>HAITI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frédéric Apollin, Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières • François Grünewald, Groupe URD • Guillaume Chirron, AFD <p>DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valentin Makongo, Commission Justice et Paix • Kris Berwouts, EurAc • Didier Cannet, Médecins du Monde
3:30 – 5pm	Reporting from Working Groups in Plenary Session Participant Response and Commentary Review and Insight on Main Recommendations
5pm-5:30pm	Conclusion by Henri Rouillé d’Orfeuil , President of Coordination SUD

The Members of the Humanitarian Commission Coordination SUD



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