

SUMMARY NOTE

Global Meeting on Supporting Core Government Functions in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Settings

16-18 January, 2017 – Dead Sea, Jordan



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Executive Summary

What:

First ever Global Meeting on Supporting Core Government Functions in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Settings

Key Takeaways:

- Strong and growing country office demand for CGF policy and programme support
- World Bank and UNDP committed to CGF partnership
- Need for more targeted policy guidance on CGF
- Need for increased UN Interagency CGF engagement and humanitarian agenda

Who:

Over 60 representatives from UNDP, UN Secretariat and World Bank senior managers, government and donor representatives (Switzerland, Norway, United Kingdom), seasoned practitioners and globally recognized scholars working on core government functions (CGF) in conflict-affected situations.

Emerging Themes:

- Strengthen UN-World Bank partnership on Core Government Functions through joint diagnostics and programming
- Understand how elite bargains (i.e. the political settlement) directly impact CGF support
- Foster adaptive programming options and innovations to reflect the unsettled nature of the political settlement
- Balance trade-offs between what is politically feasible in the short to medium term and technically desirable in the longer term
- Prioritize local governance in the early days of recovery and build a stronger risk appetite
- Leverage entry points for gender inclusion in early days of CGF support

Next Steps:

UN/WB Core Government Functions Assessment Framework: **UN Interagency Platform members to finalize UN/WB CGF diagnostic framework and embed it into the RPBA and other planning assessment tools and methodologies**

Develop policy guidance on UNDP's offer: **Develop a guidance note on UNDP's CGF policy offer that articulates the implications of political settlements on operational space for CGF programming and technical assistance.**

Country Office policy and programming support: **Respond to CO requests for CGF policy and programming support, in conjunction with regional colleagues to further institutionalize CGF concepts and policy guidance into real-time programming.**

Convene UN Interagency Platform **to develop and implement roadmap on joint CGF diagnostics as part of the larger UN diagnostic toolkit, and bring in UN humanitarian partners**

Background

In January 2017, this first ever global meeting on core government functions (CGF) brought together over 60 representatives from UNDP, UN Secretariat and World Bank senior managers, government and donor representatives (Switzerland, Norway, United Kingdom), to seasoned practitioners and globally recognized scholars working on CGF in conflict-affected situations. The Meeting highlighted country experiences on how the UN and the larger international community can better institutionalize how it takes volatile political settlements into account to better design and implement programmes in conflict-affected settings in ways that are not only technically possible, but also political feasible, while leveraging national ownership of the recovery process. Over 14 countries were represented, including Afghanistan, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Kosovo, Libya, Myanmar, Nepal, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Timor-Leste, Ukraine, and Yemen. What united the group was the recognition that when it comes to restoring the basic functionality of the state in conflict-affected settings, the technical is deeply political.

The Meeting served as an opportunity to build a strong constituency around how to incentivize more meaningful and productive UN and WB collaboration on core government functions commencing with the finalization of the joint UN/WB CGF framework for countries recovering from conflict. The short-term objectives of international assistance during this period are focused on the provision of some minimum level of security, to set in motion the beginnings of economic recovery, and to lay the foundations for long-term institutional development. The UN and the World Bank recognize that CGF are indeed critical to each of these objectives and as per UN Secretary General Policy Committee Decision have jointly identified five core functions for prioritization: 1) managing the centre of government, 2) civil service reform, 3) public finance management, 4) local governance, and 5) aid coordination.

In the immediate aftermath of conflict, elite bargains may produce a political settlement that does not often want core government institutions to play primarily a developmental role. Where the peace has to be bought, and where elite interests have to be pursued and protected, core government functions may provide possibly the only source of rent-seeking and patronage. In these circumstances technical, first-best solutions will fail. Key questions discussion revolved around what can external partners do in these circumstances? How can the UN and the World Bank bring together complementary skills, knowledge and toolkits to reflect growing understanding of the politics of post-conflict peace-building and development?

Key Takeaways from the Global Meeting

1. **Strong country office demand for CGF support:** Feedback from country representatives reflects a strong and growing demand for CGF policy and programme support in conflict-affected settings, especially in the Arab States and Africa regions. 2017 will see increased CGF support to Central African Republic, Nepal, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Palestine, and South Sudan based on CO requests from meeting outcomes and discussions.
2. **World Bank and UNDP committed to strengthening CGF partnership:** The World Bank and UNDP are committed to institutional collaboration on fragile and conflict-affected situations and CGF support agenda. Agreement was reached between UNDP and the World Bank, with support from DPA and PBSO, to take steps to integrate the UN/WB Diagnostic Framework on CGFs into RPBA and other planning and assessment tools and methodologies, particularly to develop and formulate programmatic responses in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

Key Takeaways

1. Strong country office demand for CGF support
 2. World Bank and UNDP committed to CGF partnership
 3. Need for more targeted policy guidance on CGF from HQ
 4. Need for increased UN Interagency CGF engagement
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3. **Need for more targeted policy guidance on CGF:** There is a high demand for better guidance on the implications of elite bargains for country-based CGF programming in conflict-affected settings. There is also a call for clearer guidance on how to use technical knowledge about how core government functions work (the ‘plumbing’ of the bureaucracy) to ‘nudge’ the political settlement to be more inclusive and robust and more profoundly, balance the trade-off between greater inclusiveness of the settlement and its robustness.

4. **Need for increased UN Interagency CGF engagement:** A theme that recurred over the Global Meeting was that not only does UNDP and the World Bank need to work more closely at country level, but that they also have to work more closely with the UN Secretariat and other UN agencies, funds and programmes in New York: particularly with members of the newly established UN Interagency

Platform on Supporting Core Government Functions in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings, co-chaired by UNDP and DPA and whose members include DPKO, PBSO, UN Women, UNICEF, UNCDF, DESA, and the World Bank as an observing member, among others. This also includes the need to bring in humanitarian actors into the discussion about CGF implementation and look at how CGF support interacts with humanitarian agenda.

Emerging Themes

1. Strengthen UN-World Bank CGF Partnership through joint diagnostics:

- The Global Meeting discussions opened with unequivocal commitments by the World Bank not only to institutional collaboration with the UN but also to the fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) agenda. It was noted that the recently concluded IDA round has doubled the allocation to FCAS from US \$7 billion to US \$14 billion. The World Bank also emphasized that its support to core government functions will be one of the top priorities of its 2017 governance agenda. The 2017 World Development Report on Governance and the Law discusses the importance - and implications - of elite bargains, a timely overlap given the Global Meeting’s complementary focus on the impact of political settlements (i.e. elite bargains) on CGF support in conflict-affected settings.
- It was agreed that there was scope for joint diagnostic and analytical work, even if joint programming may be some way off. Agreement reached between UNDP and the World Bank, with support from DPA and PBSO, to take steps to integrate the UN/WB Diagnostic Framework on CGFs into RPBA and other planning and assessment tools and methodologies, particularly to develop and formulate programmatic responses in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

2. Understand how elite bargains (i.e. the political settlement) directly impact CGF support:

- Most immediate post-conflict states do not have a coherent political community on which the foundations of a nation and ultimately a state can be constructed. ‘Bargains’ or deals between and among political elites will be the single most important drivers of decisions taken affecting the functioning and possibly the very purpose of the bureaucracy itself. We fail to understand this at our peril. This is also emphasized in the recently released 2017 WDR on section about elite bargains).
- The Meeting recognized that the effective, efficient and equitable delivery of public services, and the establishment of an appropriate enabling and regulatory environment for growth may not constitute the political priorities of the new government. More likely they will be concerned about securing power and embedding the bargains and deals that will help them in that quest.

3. Foster adaptive programming options and innovations to reflect the unsettled nature of the political settlement:

- In post-conflict settings, the political settlement is so volatile that the more traditional linear, blueprint and prescriptive approach to programme design and implementation will be highly unlikely to work. This is what the evidence tells us. The 2017 WDR note that some development organizations are implementing “internal reforms as they seek more agile, more flexible, and more adaptive projects”. Staff must be empowered with the right skills and approaches to work in these environments: the ability to build trusted relationships, to be resilient and adaptive, and to work within local culture.
- There was consensus that iterative and adaptive approaches, flexibility and responsiveness are desirable, but there were differing views – including some scepticism – regarding the extent to which systems and skills can make the requisite shift. Views differed on the extent to which internal rules, regulations and procedures of development assistance allows work in this more iterative and adaptive manner. Some argued that there was sufficiently flexibility in the system, but that there is reluctance to take advantage of it as it exposes greater risk. Some suggested that senior management (and in bilateral agencies, Ministers) demand a degree of certainty over what tax-payers money will be buying.

4. Balance trade-offs between what is politically feasible in the short to medium term and technically desirable in the longer term:

- Participants agreed that it is critical to agree with all our partners (the government, other UN agencies, and the WB) regarding the nature of the problem: what is it that we are trying to solve specifically? This sounds easy and straightforward; in practice it is anything but. If stabilization and security are indeed the absolute priorities in the immediate aftermath of conflict, how do we build in concern for the longer-term development of the institutional infrastructure of government from day one? How can we bring together the humanitarian, peace and security and development divide?
- Experience also tells us that if decisions on the size, structure and purpose of core government functions are so heavily politically driven, in order ‘to get the job done’, this bears the risk of forcing us back to the use of parallel structures operating alongside the state (i.e. Restore or Reform? 2014 Report). This led to a discussion of asymmetric reforms. If comprehensive, holistic, public service-wide reforms are not feasible, should we advocate piecemeal, incremental, opportunistic change, agency by agency? Will our partner governments accept reforms that explicitly privilege (and ‘ring-fence’) certain critical agencies, positions and personnel above others?

5. Prioritize local governance in the early days of recovery and build a stronger risk appetite:

- Local Governance has suffered from systematic neglect by the international community in fragile and conflict affected situations. There is still a prevailing attitude amongst some members that states can flourish and prosper without local government. However, the local level is the main entry point for peacebuilding and must be an area of focus from the outset. We have to recognize that

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6. Leverage entry points for gender inclusion in early days of CGF support

we as the international community need to increase our appetite for risk in working at this level. It is often a contested area for central level power struggles and often there is little appetite to transfer resources to this level.

- Each country will likely have several different realities at the local level including different entry points for peace and state building. Service delivery alone will not ensure legitimacy of the state but it is an element, especially in how it is delivered.

6. Leverage entry points for gender inclusion in early days of CGF support:

- The redistribution of power typically entailed by a post-conflict political settlement may offer an historic opportunity to reshape long-standing patterns of gender exclusion, by increasing women's representation in politics and the administration. The potential is especially significant in public administration, where donor financing in the immediate aftermath of conflict can encourage appropriate forms of gender-based affirmative action in government recruitment. The 'political moment' may also bring in a larger pool of educated women from the diaspora, who have access to elite networks and international actors.

Next Steps:

Without a doubt this Global Meeting represents the *starting point* of the debate on programming for core government functions in post-conflict settings, not the last word. Participants left energized by the issues raised and enthusiastic about the new commitments emanating from Washington and New York. But they also left with a heightened sense of the extent of the challenges they face: not only in terms of the depth of the intellectual challenge, but also the practical implications of moving to more iterative and responsive modalities. Many times was it said how re-assuring it was that they were not alone in facing these post-conflict challenges. Next steps moving forward include:

1. **UN/WB Core Government Functions Assessment Framework:** Work with the World Bank and UN Interagency Platform members to finalize the UN/WB joint CGF diagnostic framework and embed it into the RPBA and other planning assessment tools and methodologies used at the Secretariat and other AFPs and IFIs. DPA will work with UNDP to institutionalize the CGF diagnostic as part of the larger Secretariat diagnostic toolkit.
2. **Policy Guidance:** Develop a guidance note on UNDP's CGF policy offer that clearly articulates the implications of elite bargains/the political settlement in conflict-affected settings on operational space for CGF programming and technical assistance in fragile and conflict-affected settings.
3. **CO Programming Support:** Respond to CO requests for CGF policy and programming support, in conjunction with regional colleagues to further institutionalize CGF concepts and policy guidance into real-time programming.
4. **Partnerships:** Convene the UN Interagency Platform on CGF support in Conflict-affected Settings to discuss next steps on joint CGF diagnostics as part of the larger UN diagnostic toolkit, and collaborate with DPA as Platform co-chair to bring in UN humanitarian partners as members of the Interagency Platform.

Four Next Steps

1. UN/WB Core Government Functions Framework
2. Develop policy guidance on UNDP's offer
3. Country Office policy and programming support
4. UN Interagency Platform on CGF