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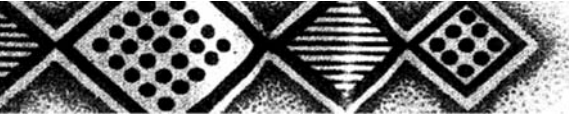
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## POLICY DIALOGUES

### The New Deal and the Post - 2015 Development Agenda

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# THE g7+ AND THE NEW DEAL: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SOUTH SUDANESE CIVIL SOCIETY ENHANCEMENT

HAFEEZ A. WANI

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In the wake of the second anniversary of South Sudan's independence, on 9 July 2013, South Sudanese everywhere must ask the question, 'Is South Sudan heading in the right direction or wrong direction?' This question inevitably inflames debates that reincarnate historic events, commitments and South Sudan's journey towards peace, justice and economic prosperity. It is without question that South Sudan, as the youngest nation in the world, faces very complex and dynamic challenges. At the same time, global support and favour for the new country must challenge South Sudan to make the best use of these opportunities.

This article provides an overview of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (the 'New Deal'), its implementation in South Sudan and the projections of South Sudanese civil society's involvement, contribution and execution of its oversight roles in the process in light of the complex dynamics within the country.

## The Emergence of the New Deal

The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) is a platform made up of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) donors, non-traditional donors such as Brazil and China, the United Nations, World Bank, African Union, African Development Bank, representatives of civil society and conflict-affected/fragile states. The IDPS was launched six months after the third High Level Forum meeting (2008) in Accra, Ghana to inform the process of identifying realistic peacebuilding and statebuilding objectives that address the root causes of conflict and fragility at the country level, led by fragile states and supported by development partners.

The IDPS undertook a series of national-level consultations between 2009 and 2010 in Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Timor Leste to inform the first International Dialogue meeting in Dili in April 2010. Just prior to the first Dili meeting, a grouping of seven countries affected by conflict and fragility, consisting of Timor Leste, DRC, Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, Sierra Leone, CAR and Afghanistan, formally established the g7+, an organisation committed to focusing on new ways of engaging to support inclusive country-led and country-owned transitions out of fragility; the group has since expanded to 17, including South Sudan. In Dili, the g7+ issued a statement called 'The Dili Declaration' which challenged donor countries and fragile states to work together to develop an international action plan on peacebuilding and statebuilding — one that

would place conflict-affected countries in the driver's seat in diagnosing their own problems, jointly prescribing solutions and carrying out treatment using the peacebuilding and statebuilding goals (PSGs) as an important foundation to enable progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This was followed by a move to more thematic-based dialogues that in turn formed the substance of the second International Dialogue meeting in Monrovia, Liberia (June 2011), where the five PSGs were agreed upon as preconditions to working towards the MDGs in fragile and conflict-affected states. The product of this meeting was dubbed the 'Monrovia Roadmap'; it highlighted the five PSGs: legitimate politics, security, economic foundations, justice, and revenue and services. This grew into the New Deal, adopted in Busan, South Korea on 30 November 2011 and endorsed by 41 countries and multilateral organisations at the fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness.

## New Deal Implementation in South Sudan

South Sudan is a pilot country for the New Deal (2012–2015), which means that it embarked on the first step of New Deal implementation by undertaking a fragility assessment exercise in August 2012 and holding a structured debate about drivers of conflict, progress and challenges in implementing the PSGs. A draft assessment report was then formulated from the fragility assessment,<sup>1</sup> and a set of indicators were developed to situate South Sudan on the fragility spectrum. In November 2012 a two-day validation workshop was held. The fragility assessment provides an opportunity to present two complementary frameworks, namely a compact for implementing the New Deal and the country aid strategy

South Sudan is one of the most active members of the g7+. The New Deal and membership in the emergent g7+ offer South Sudan an opportunity to address the causes of fragility and build a path towards resilience. Perhaps more importantly, they challenge South Sudan as a country to focus on new ways of engaging with both international and national partners and stakeholders at all levels, including civil society, as well as identifying joint commitments to achieve better results based on common processes and tools of analysis. These commitments are putting many aspects of the country's administrative and political practices to test, with inclusive and participatory political dialogue, relating the local context to the New Deal framework, combating corruption, strengthening the triangular relationship between society, state and donors, and strengthening government structures as donors take a back seat to country-led processes. While progress in many of these areas is already visible, more time, resources, planning and commitment are required to move forward with the pilot implementation of the New Deal.

In August 2012 South Sudan conducted its fragility assessment using a combination of consultations and research aimed at providing a first overview of progress, challenges and priority actions to help the country advance towards resilience. The fragility assessment commenced with a multi-day assessment workshop that brought together 100 participants from 10 state governments, civil society organisations from 10 states, academia and international partners. In focus groups, participants considered drivers of fragility, progress in implementing the PSGs, challenges and priorities. In addition to consultations, the assessment also drew on relevant literature and quantitative data, where available, to illustrate and validate perceptions. The findings and recommendations contained in the first draft were reviewed during a two-day validation workshop in November 2012 attended by more than 50 stakeholders.

The fragility assessment workshop was followed by the formulation of a 'Draft Assessment Report' and the first 'Menu of Indicators' to situate South Sudan and assess its progress on the 'fragility spectrum' — a diagnostic tool to support fragile states in the identification of their main weaknesses. To consolidate civil society's efforts in this process a civil society engagement structure was formulated made up of five slots (Civil society Organisations [CSO] country focal point, indicators focal point, implementation focal point, political strategy focal point and reporting focal point) voluntarily occupied by civil society actors. Civil society was represented in the indicators formulation process by the indicators focal point, which later organised a civil society roundtable assessment of the consolidated country indicators in order to better inform the process. Civil society's analysis of the consolidated indicators was well received by the government.

The overall assessment results as articulated in the South Sudan Fragility Assessment draft summary report suggest that the Republic of South Sudan has made sufficient progress on all five PSGs since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) interim period and independence on 9 July 2011 to move beyond the crisis stage of the fragility spectrum. While none of the PSGs has yet reached transition, reform efforts seem to have borne most fruit with regard to legitimate politics, following the 99.8% vote for secession from Sudan in July 2011. Moving forward, key challenges include sustainable internal political settlements, the transformation of the security sector, reform of justice institutions, the creation of diversified economic foundations and strengthened capacity for accountable and equitable service delivery.

In April 2013 South Sudan Partnership Conference was held in Washington, DC, organised by the United States government, which, among many things, tabled discussions about fiscal reforms, budgetary support and the New Deal compact formulation, which is an agreement between the government of South Sudan and its development partners (donors) to better consolidate their development efforts with government in the lead. Following this, South Sudan's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP) led the formulation of a compact steering committee composed of representation from MoFEP, other government institutions like the Ministry of Petroleum and Mining and the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, donor agencies and civil society. The New Deal compact steering committee is charged with outlining mutually agreed policy benchmarks for the government, matched with commitments from partners to build capacity and improve aid effectiveness, to be completed by September 2013 and signed in conjunction with the South Sudan Investment Conference.

## **The Opportunity for Civil Society to Grow through Political Engagement**

South Sudanese civil society dates back to the 1970s and includes actors from faith-based organisations, advocacy groups, service delivery organisations, relief and emergency organisations, and monitoring groups, among others. The diversity of civil society organisations, their wide geographical coverage and the existence of several thematic network groups are key strengths to be exploited in the implementation of the New Deal. What is needed is an adequate mechanism to allow the civil society to speak with a unified voice that effectively expresses the concerns of citizens from all walks of life. Civil society in South Sudan faces challenges in accessing consistent, predictable institutional funding and maintaining competent human resources — which are often lost to better-paying institutions, therefore leaving a big gap in the organisation's institutional memory.

It also faces a disservice in capacity-building initiatives provided by international NGOs, which tend to be project focused and to neglect long-term impact areas like advocacy, resource mobilisation, succession planning, leadership, etc. In spite of these gaps, South Sudanese civil society's strengths lie in its wide geographical distribution, the trust it has built among grassroots communities, and the diversity of sectors of engagement, ranging from highly active sectors like basic service delivery, peacebuilding, human rights and development to less concentrated sectors like environment preservation where its efforts can complement those of government and partners in the implementation of the New Deal.

The New Deal recognises civil society as a principal player in the implementation process and this has provided South Sudanese civil society a platform to support their coordination enhancement initiatives across the ten states with a common focus on national priorities. The fact that the New Deal emphasises the inclusion of civil society in all aspects of analysis and implementation has shifted government–civil-society relations from one of civil society being only a critic of government, to engagement and influencing change as a key player. The New Deal engagement structure is advantageous to civil society on two grounds:

- It has provided a means to begin harmonising civil society's key messages and areas of interest around the five PSGs. With these common objectives, consensus among civil society organisations is more easily generated and efforts towards a common approach to playing an oversight role in the New Deal implementation process are ignited. This has, in the short and medium term, challenged civil society to come up with a common engagement strategy. Ongoing progress includes the formation of a civil society engagement working group, a nationwide concept/plan to strengthen civil society coordination/engagement with the New Deal, establishing an effective north–south civil society relationship, strengthening relations with government (particularly the department of aid coordination in the MoFEP) and securing a civil society seat in the country's compact steering committee.
- It has helped civil society to carve out clear roles it can play in the joint commitment efforts that make up the New Deal implementation process. The debate amidst civil society now is more focused on how to ensure its advisory, monitoring and oversight roles maintain high impact and address the issues of direct concern to citizens. Being a part of a process like the New Deal presents the opportunity for civil society to influence national guidance and reform from within the government systems where the most impact can be made.

The synergy between the g7+, the New Deal and country initiatives such as the South Sudan Development Plan and South Sudan Development Initiative is visible through the goals, objectives and indicators. The development priorities set out in the South Sudan Development Initiative (which is an outcome of the South Sudan Development Plan) target the areas of governance, economic development, social and human development, conflict/security and rule of law. These priorities are the same as the five PSGs of the New Deal, namely, legitimate politics, security, justice, economic foundations, and revenue and services. The non-duplicating nature of the New Deal implementation process further supports harmonisation efforts, as it does not provide room for contradictions in terms of priorities. It adequately serves the objective of creating an enabling environment for economic development in South Sudan.

## Challenges and Prospects for New Deal Implementation

For a country coming out of conflict with continuing insecurity risks, the success of a process such as the New Deal requires more than just political will; it requires citizen buy-in and support and an increase in government–citizen mutual accountability. Despite the New Deal's emphasis on state–donor accountability, government–citizen accountability is arguably more important in moving a country out of fragility and conflict. Adequacy and the structural necessity of financial management systems, human capital growth and economic diversification especially in the extractive industry and agriculture are vital to development as much as developing a solid local tax base through economic growth. The role of civil society in channelling citizens' voices throughout these avenues is an essential part of the New Deal implementation (through citizen awareness campaigns, harvesting citizen concerns to better inform the government on the impact of their decisions, and citizen auditing of government projects), although it is often not adequately recognised.

In April 2013, Sudan and South Sudan came to an agreement leading to the resumption of oil production, which had been disrupted as a result of a transit fees dispute in January 2012. In the same month 40 countries and international organisations gathered in Washington, DC for the South Sudan partners forum, during which five key agreements were reached: (1) developing a New Deal compact for South Sudan, (2) pursuance of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff-monitored programme to strengthen the national macroeconomic framework and reform as well as related budget support from international financial institutions, (3) an EU statebuilding contract to support health and education sectors, (4) a new multidonor partnership fund to strengthen government systems and social service delivery, and (5) support for a private sector investment conference in Juba. These commitments set a good pace for the sustained recovery of South Sudan following the 16-month oil production hiatus. However, only the New Deal compact and private sector investment commitments have civil society involvement; the rest of the commitments leave civil society out, based on the argument that some commitments are particularly relevant to government and its international (donor) partners. This highlights two issues. The first is the continued focus of the government's accountability to international donors with less consideration of accountability to its own citizens. The second issue is that it undermines civil society's oversight and advisory role in the other three commitments. It is essential that civil society is included in these commitments because a well-functioning civil society and politically involved citizenry are the backbone of longer-term sustainable development. Civil society's wide geographical coverage places it in a prime position to play the role of taking the New Deal conversation beyond the state capitals and closer to marginalised groups.

The MoFEP is to be commended for establishing firm budget execution controls for the 2012–2013 fiscal year, including clear procedures for proper authorisations by accounting officers, public expenditure discipline and clear and transparent contracting and payment procedures. A Petroleum Revenue Management Bill is also being debated in parliament, which demonstrates the efforts the government has taken to put in place the necessary structures and policies to support the recovery and growth of the economy. However, the enforcement of regulations and action plans for the budget execution controls and Petroleum Revenue Management Bill do not include strong measures to arraign officials who continue to benefit from embezzling public funds because they think they are entitled to do so as a reward for their participation in the armed struggle leading to independence. The MoFEP has made efforts in consultation with civil society

to find appropriate ways of fashioning civil society's engagement in the public budget process and budget oversight. However, the Petroleum Revenue Management Bill is silent on the role of civil society in monitoring petroleum revenue flow, management of funds and carrying out citizen audits of government petroleum management processes. The level of continued laxity of government in tackling corruption can be construed as threatening to the success of the New Deal, especially in a state where economic and political power are deeply intertwined and the rule of law requires significant improvement. This weakens national ownership and affects the triangular relationship between state, society and donors. Civil society would ideally play the critical role of monitoring budgetary execution, exposing incidences of corruption and advocating for public reparation without fear of being persecuted by state officials.

Similarly in the theme of establishing controls, civil society in South Sudan has begun to refashion its engagement with government through forming specific target-based thematic working groups made up of highly specialised civil society actors to provide objective assessment and analysis of government policies in collaboration with legislators in order to provide a citizen-based perspective on government policies and regulations, for example the civil society working group on the communication bills and the voluntary and humanitarian NGOs bill. This is a practice that has proven useful at the national level and needs to be strengthened at the subnational levels.

Tribal sensitivity is a critical driver of conflict, which was eclipsed by the citizens' focus on a common enemy throughout the civil war. Notwithstanding certain tribal tensions among pastoral communities, it is imperative to reduce the risks of further tribal tensions caused by feelings of unfair distribution of resources, feelings that public offices are dominated by one tribe relative to another, or feelings that there is continued focus on developing basic services in some geographical areas at the expense of others. These tensions and sentiments of dissatisfaction are already present today; to contain the risk of outright conflict, citizen involvement in government development plans must be enforced, so that citizens are aware of the government's efforts to address their concerns and can better understand their role in contributing to economic growth. Fostering an enabling environment for income generation and the growth of a middle class by improving security, infrastructure and communications evenly across the country, and establishing a truth and reconciliation process are areas within which civil society can play a complementary role through awareness campaigns, citizen focus group discussions, harvesting citizens' opinions and presenting them to the government to better inform development processes, and leading by example through adopting friendly intertribal practices like emphasising cross-cultural tolerance in organisational activities, expanding programmes beyond the community of one's descent, etc.

In closing, this analysis lays a foundation for dialogue on four critical questions that lie at the heart of the New Deal project and deserve ongoing attention: Is, and how is, the government of South Sudan in the driver's seat of development in the country? Is civil society role well recognised, integrated and executed? Is citizens' involvement a visible element of the journey South Sudan is undertaking? And is the New Deal the answer to South Sudan's strategy for exit from fragility. The answers to these questions are diverse but what is evident is that the real work of addressing these questions is only just beginning, a redoubling of efforts is needed to ensure that the next steps to implementing the New Deal and progressing out of fragility do not produce lacklustre results like similar processes in the past and this warrants adequate joint efforts from government, civil society and donors.

The burgeoning civil society in South Sudan can lay a foundation to ensure adequate checks will be in place to monitor the progress of the joint commitments and the government's obligation to address the drivers of conflict and fragility. However, the voice of civil society is far from being incontrovertible. This is not to imply that the government of South Sudan does not recognise the importance of civil society or consider its views in its processes. Rather it is to emphasise that the strength of civil society organisations lies in their ability to produce a harmonious force that is legitimate and represents the voices of citizens from all parts of the country through a well-coordinated and targeted strategy.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.newdeal4peace.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/South-Sudan\\_FA-Summary\\_Draft\\_121212.pdf](http://www.newdeal4peace.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/South-Sudan_FA-Summary_Draft_121212.pdf)