



# Synergy Report

Events Series on Foreign  
Engagement in Fragile and  
Conflict Affected Settings





## Chapter 1

# Program 2014

---

**On 13 March 2014, the Steering Group of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law established the thematic focus for the Platform in the year 2014, based on a consultative process.**

The thematic focus for the Platform will inform the different types of activities to be undertaken by the network in 2014. These activities involve networking activities such as roundtables, expert meetings, and trainings as well as research activities, including short studies and the development of the research agenda for the Platform.

The Steering Group encourages you to gather international and multi-stakeholder coalitions and to develop interactive and innovative activities, thereby contributing to the aims and objectives of the Platform. In its activities the Platform seeks to contribute to, but does not limit itself to, addressing the following thematic foci, in various and innovative ways.

## The role of politics in the provision of security and rule of law

Security and rule of law are often organized and provided on the basis of dominant groups' interests. This is reflected in current statebuilding processes at the international, national, and local level. While consolidating and partnering with elites can catalyze profound change, such processes may incur a legitimacy deficit among the broader populace. The politics of pursuing more representative, accountable, locally legitimized and effective security and justice services presents normative and practical challenges, including for example:

- To what extent can international actors work effectively with dominant elite groups and/or unconventional local partners, taking into account that such actors may challenge donors' own vision and values?
- Recognizing local actors' ability to provide alternative forms of security and justice at the community and sub-regional level, what alternative forms of engagement could be developed to support these actors' unique needs?

## International aims, ways of working and tools for action

Incongruent agendas and working methods of different actors within the international community can bar the implementation of integrated strategies for engagement in fragile states, whilst local voices are hardly heard. Hence, this dynamic needs to be better understood and managed, for example:

- To what extent do different actors' end-goals, theories of change, approaches, interests and operating modalities complement or undermine each other?
- What processes of joint assessments, results reporting, strategizing and sequencing are required to optimize the added value of each actor's contribution to integrated strategies?

## Deeper drivers of insecurity and injustice

Improving the accountability and effectiveness of security and justice only advances peacebuilding so far if the underlying causes of insecurity and instability remain. While such causes are many, social, political and economic exclusion stand out in the current (international) debate, for example:

- Processes of social and political exclusion polarize societies and can contribute to a further reduction in social trust (e.g. between social groups, or between leaders and communities, often termed the 'social contract'). From a viewpoint of international responsibility, to what extent have current development and statebuilding interventions sustained or exacerbated such exclusion?
- How can economic development approaches be strengthened to help address the underlying economic marginalization of certain groups, appreciating that these can be the result of conscious political choices?



## Chapter 2

# Background

The thematic focus areas have been identified on the basis of a consultative process that took place over the course of December 2013-March 2014 and was grounded in three lines of inquiry – reflecting the focus areas of Dutch foreign policy as well as international agendas.

Three lines of inquiry:

- a. The IOB Evaluation Report 'Investing in Stability' and Beyond' and the related event;
- b. Online debate on Foreign Engagement in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts;
- c. Discussions that emerged from thematic headers of the Annual Conference:
  - Violence on the Periphery
  - Globalization and Social Justice
  - New Approaches to Security

The main issues emerging from these lines of inquiry – which formed the basis for the choice of thematic foci-, are discussed below in more detail. The overview is comprehensive so as best to present the reasoning behind the thematic choices.

## The IOB Evaluation Report ‘Investing in Stability’ and Beyond - Event

On Thursday 5 December 2013, the Platform convened its first event in a series, dedicated to the evaluation of the evaluation of Dutch Foreign Policy in Fragile States with the aim to discuss the possible consequences and responses to IOB with an emphasis on the issues of theories of change and context analysis.

The intersection of these two issues led us to look at the practical application of context analysis in the process of building and continually critiquing different theories of change by asking: *‘How do we apply – or how are we hindered from applying – context knowledge and academic theory to inform our assumptions about catalysts of positive change in fragile states?’*

What emerged was an exploratory and challenging discussion on how different communities of practice interrogate the prevailing assumptions on which fragile states policy is based. In some cases, this includes prodding their own assumptions and revealing “difficult truths”.

**Key challenges** identified during the panel debate:

- The lack of operational capacity to change established ways of working in line with revised context analysis and theory of change based program design;
- A limited capacity to adopt a flexible and experimental approach due to shifting levels of political support; differing timelines, motivations and end goals of the various communities of practice; and
- The need for hybrid approaches and inclusion of lessons from recent work on ‘post-liberal peace’.

**Key questions** identified during the break-out sessions:

- How can Theories of Change be harnessed to enable policymakers and practitioners to consider “unconventional” options?
- How to deal with the different motivations, logics and interests in the cooperation/ co-creation between academics and policymakers? and
- How can a new narrative or policy theory for the promotion of security unite different perspectives, end goals, and interests for engagement in Fragile and Conflict Affected Settings?

## Foreign Engagement in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts – Online Debate

During the 5 December event, consensus formed around the need to pursue a rigorous (and potentially confronting) examination of our underlying assumptions. This was seen as the best way to carry forward the momentum built around bringing contextual realities to bear upon perceived political and operational limits. To this end the following questions were identified for a first online debate:

- What are considered the leading theories of state formation and state failure? Are these applicable to fragile contexts?
- How have these leading theories been taken up into fragile states policy today? How can we detect their influence?
- How do understandings of “stability” compare across different professional fields? Do we all envision the same end goal?
- How do we recognize “agents of change”? By what criteria do we select our local partners, or perceive their legitimacy?
- What do our theories of state formation tell us about how we sequence interventions? Does form follow function?

A high-level debate emerged with more than 30 active, international participants, including international prominent figures and thought-leaders, such Erik Solheim (OECD-DAC), Joel Hellman (The World Bank), Jordan Ryan (UNDP) and Professor Michael Pugh (Bradford University). Such international engagement will be continuously sought throughout the activities of the Platform, in order to increase the visibility, credibility and relevance of the Platform’s work.

The results of the Online Debate were rich and wide-ranging. **The most significant lines of thought** are outlined below:

The importance of a **multi-stakeholder approach**, with an emphasis on actively involving **local actors** on a political as well as technical level **was articulated often**. Whilst aiming to work with a bottom-up approach, one is simultaneously challenged to account for **international and geopolitical realities, including the assumptions of “Western” value systems**. Debate emerged around what signals ‘legitimacy’, and tensions therein between international and local models of governance. In this vein, the need to recognize and accommodate different power dynamics and the influential roles of different local actors by fostering inclusive and sustained **political dialogue featured prominently**. **This can be challenging if the influential actors within a community do not fit neatly into donor models, or adhere to international standards. But do ‘we’ adhere to theirs?**

Linked to this, political dialogue and inclusive political engagement as the key to increasing stability was underscored repeatedly. The concepts of the **social contract and political settlements** drew a great deal of attention across several discussions, specifically concerning how

various interventions may contribute to (or undermine) their consolidation. Yet, there appears a paucity of ‘successful strategy’ examples for supporting inclusive and enduring political processes.

Similar consensus was built around the value of pursuing a comprehensive or integrated approach, and some advocated for sequencing priorities within a coordinated strategic framework. This touched upon the need to start exploring ways to **keep activities and programs in step with the evolving situation on the ground**, while acknowledging the **long-term** nature of development and statebuilding. Discussions delved into the complexity of coordinating actors who entertain different assumptions, end goals and visions of ‘stability’. Here again, the challenge of **bridging technical interventions and political aims** was highlighted as central to guiding comprehensive approaches so that they amount to more than the sum of individual interventions.

A number of important lines of tensions could also be identified. For example, on the one hand, statebuilding theories and historical models help donors and policy makers to set about on a course of assistance, ostensibly toward stability. On the other hand, there is emerging doubt as to **whether current “Western” models are relevant guides** in modern fragile contexts, or if these models have, themselves, been shown to ‘fail states’. So are there **viable alternatives**? Whereas some emphasized the need to explore **transnational approaches**, others advocated for minimalist approaches that allow for local **self-organization** and complexity theory.

## Annual Conference 2014

The outcomes of the abovementioned debates were incorporated the conference program and combined with the forward looking inputs of the keynote speakers. Specific emphasis was put on identifying and unpacking our assumptions in relation to the issues ‘Violence on the Periphery’, ‘Globalization and Social Justice’, and ‘New Approaches to Security’.

The conference objectives were to have conference participants (1) re-examine the assumptions of current security and rule of law (RoL) policy, (2) generate ideas that can push the knowledge frontier of security and the rule of law, (3) develop these ideas and test whether there is drive to take them forward after the conference, (4) thereby informing the thematic focus of the Platform for 2014.

During the conference, the participants determined the topics of the break-out discussions by casting their vote, out of which the following topics received the majority of the votes.<sup>1</sup> Together with the outcomes of the previous debates (online and offline), the conference outcomes importantly informed the identification of the thematic focus.

What follows is a brief pitch of the outcomes of each break-out session.

---

<sup>1</sup>For an overview of all topics presented, please consult the Conference Program Booklet.



## Violence on the Periphery

### **Breakout session: Urban surge: multi-layered violence**

Chaotic urbanization in Low- and Middle-Income Countries creates areas with soaring population density. In such congested settings, violence has a direct and negative impact on economic activity, movement, and social capital. What do such situations teach us about the multi-layered nature of violence? What sectors of the population are affected by different layers of violence? And how can the different layers be addressed?

Plenary pitch:

Fragile states policies have not yet been tailored to chaotic urban contexts that exhibit social exclusion and unconventional violence. Reactive ‘crack down’ policies contrast with more socially inclusive approaches. What can we learn about the impact of different approaches to urban violence?

### **Breakout session: Organized crime in ungoverned areas**

In the ungoverned borderlands of developing states, criminal organizations have been able to thrive. Sometimes they become the dominant coercive force, and even take up “state roles”. This can include collecting taxes, regulating trade, distributing resources and enforcing their form of local law. What is the impact of modern-day organized crime on human security, democratic processes and the rule of law? What needs to be done to respond to the threat in fragile states?

Plenary pitch:

We would need to know more about how corruption or engagement in criminal activity affects the legitimacy of public officials in the eyes of local people. Can they regain legitimacy after associating with criminal groups? Was their legitimacy ever really damaged in the first place?

## Globalization and Social Justice

### **Breakout session: The global trade in natural resources**

In about a quarter of all fragile states, capital accumulation happens through the sale of natural resources. Such resources are easily controlled and monopolized by elites and bought up by the international community, a process that bypasses citizens entirely. How can international actors reduce their complicity that is now covered by the logic of the free market?

Plenary pitch:

The management of natural resources affects many lives, and can lead to conflicts. It is also important to bring NGOs and donors to engage with companies. Could supporting local researchers help us gain better data? Perhaps it could also increase local the population’s and civil society’s leverage to negotiate with their governments and the extraction companies?

## New Approaches to Security

### **Breakout session: The partner's dilemma: who is 'legitimate'?**

Despite increasing interest to work with non-state actors, some note a gap between the actors that donors favor and the actors that exert real influence in their communities. Sometimes actors with strong local legitimacy do not comply with donors' norms. This reveals some of the fallacy of "local ownership". In working to build sustainable, legitimate rule of law systems, what would it mean to expand the scope for potential partners?

#### Plenary pitch:

Further explore the research question into the different value systems of different stakeholders (including our own). One concrete follow-up action proposed is to have a meeting and exchange about best and worst practices. More contextualized research on partners' 'legitimacy', or 'end-user' legitimacy would also be helpful;

### **Breakout session: Expanding the toolbox: do our instruments live up to our ideals?**

Exploring new approaches to security means adjusting the kind of support provided. Technical expertise, equipment, and direct financial assistance to governments have been primary tools in donors' support kits. What other tools might be appropriate to make approaches more holistic? How do security policy and practice need to change to take into consideration the political dynamics of conflict and peace?

#### Plenary pitch:

We need an honest debate about what works and doesn't work (lesson learned); we also need to involve other actors, such as local actors, non-state, financial/legal people, parliamentarians, private sector, etc. in the development of our interventions tools and our results frameworks; and facilitate meetings where we compare innovative approaches, select most promising ideas and further explore their application.

### **Breakout session: Comprehensive, successive approach? Can different end-goals be sequenced?**

Much has been debated about how actors in different fields contribute to development and security, when contexts are "ripe" for such contributions, and what their "end goals" are. Could an integrated approach be better coordinated according to an agreed sequencing strategy? How could such a strategy be developed?

#### Plenary pitch:

It's important to not see pursuing this topic as solely a research agenda, but as a networking activity within the Platform, to get different actors to discuss their Theories of Change, assumptions and end goals. Further discuss the Comprehensive Successive Approach within the Platform. This could also be taken up by the current "Reconstruction Tender" working group.





Sophialaan 10  
2514 JR The Hague  
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)70 302 8130  
[info@kpsrl.org](mailto:info@kpsrl.org)  
[www.kpsrl.org](http://www.kpsrl.org)