

UNITY IN DIVERSITY: HOW KENYAN CIVIL SOCIETY NURTURES NATIONAL HARMONY

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Abstract

National integration is a crucial foundation for a country's survival, encompassing cohesion, stability, prosperity, and a united national identity. This process necessitates bridging ideological, ethnic, religious, and cultural divides within society. Achieving national cohesion hinges on the formulation of a common national identity, which must be people-oriented rather than authoritative. Civil society's role in fostering this integration is pivotal, as it serves as a voluntary sector distinct from the state, family, and market, interacting closely with the political sphere. This article explores the significance of civil society in Kenya's development, with a focus on its political, social, and economic impacts. While civil society can overcome external regulation and promote grassroots contributions to peace building, international approaches often inadvertently undermine its role by prioritizing external support. A vibrant civil society enhances government accountability, bolsters public policy decisions, and increases the effectiveness of development initiatives. This paper underscores the complex and blurred boundaries between civil society, the state, and other sectors, emphasizing the interplay between their roles without supplanting one another. In conclusion, a thriving civil society is integral to sustainable development, democratization, and national integration, promoting cooperation among diverse actors to strengthen governance and societal progress.

Introduction

National integration is an essential prerequisite for the survival of a country. It is generally defined as a process of achieving national cohesion, stability, prosperity, strength and feelings of being united as a nation. It may also be explained as a common national consciousness to rigorously stress on establishing a common national identity (Oghi, 2008). Additionally, it refers to the capacity of a nation to ensure the provision of welfare to all

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its individuals, with a particular focus on reducing the inequalities and polarization in a society (Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006). National integration serves as a binding force to develop a strong bond between the members of society to unite them together (Hall, 1993).

Oghi (2008), further establishes that national integration refers to developing a strong bond between the members of society that are being divided on the ideological, ethnic, religious and cultural fundamentals. For developing national cohesion, the formulation of national identity is pivotal. Studies have indicated that people are always reluctant to integrate into a single national identity leaving their regional and ethnical identity if the mode of amalgamation is authoritative and not people-oriented (Hall, 2013). Civil society has gained prominence in relation to the dynamics of political and economic structures in the last four decades in Kenya. CSOs have been agents of development in Kenya as they play a significant role politically, socially and economically.

Although the focus on civil society is meant to overcome the limits of external regulation and to emphasize indigenous and community-based contributions to peace building, the international community's approach is to make local development dependent upon the international presence. The result is a failure to address the structural problems that affect the country and to hinder, rather than foster, the formation of an open and democratic civil society (Hall, 2013).

According to Smith (2003), civil society has important roles to play within democracies. This is equally reflected in the international cooperation discourse. Since at least the early 1990s it has become clear that a functioning participatory democracy is a prerequisite for sustainable development. A vibrant civil society is considered as precondition to go beyond 'formal' democracies, to achieve long lasting attitude changes and to overcome resistance by former, undemocratic leaders and elites. Smith (2003), further avers that active civil society and civic engagements are widely accepted as critical to boost the accountability of governments toward their citizens, to strengthen public policy decisions and to increase the effectiveness of development interventions.

According to Merkel and Lauth (1998), Civil society is the sector of voluntary action within institutional forms that are distinct from those of the state, family and market, keeping in mind that in practice the boundaries between these sectors are often complex and blurred. It consists of a large and diverse set of voluntary organizations, often competing with each other and oriented to specific interests. According to Clark (2003), civil society comprises non-state actors and associations that are not purely driven by private or economic interests, are autonomously organized, and interact in the public sphere.

Civil society is independent from the state, but it is oriented towards and interacts closely with the state and the political sphere. This definition already implies a particular understanding of the interaction between civil society and the state, government and business (Spurk, 2010). Although civil society interacts with these other sectors, especially with the state, it does not replace these sectors and its political actors, but rather aims to improve their effectiveness and responsiveness (Merkel and Lauth, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

Civil Society Organizations play key roles in peace building, national cohesion and integration globally. However, they are faced with a myriad of challenges. With the proliferation of conflicts in the 1990s and the increasing complexity of the peace building and national integration efforts confronting the international community, donors and the peace building discourse increasingly focused on the potential role of civil society organizations (Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006). Participation of citizens in political decision making is a core concept of functioning democracies from the global to the local/ national perspective.

The Civil Society sector in Kenya has grown tremendously over the past years and increasingly contributed to poverty reduction, promotion of human rights and democratic governance. For a considerable period of time now there have been informal debates on the nature and role of civil society generally (Wairagu, 2007). Civil society comes in varied forms thus making it challenging to come up with a universally accepted definition. It is against this that the paper attempts to establish relationship between civil society organizations and national cohesion and integration in Kenya by further articulating the key challenges and the opportunities available for these organizations to execute their mandate in an effective and efficient manner.

Literature Review

The Concept of Civil Society

Civil society is widely understood as the space outside the family, market and state (WEF, 2013). What constitutes civil society has developed and grown since the term first became popular in the 1980s and it now signifies a wide range of organized and organic groups including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, social movements, grassroots organizations, online networks and communities, and faith groups (VanDyck, 2017; WEF, 2013). According to Asige (2020), Civil society can also be defined as a conglomeration of groups or organizations working in the interest of the citizens but operating outside the governmental and commerce. Organizations and institutions that make up civil society include labor unions, non-profit organizations, churches, individuals and other service agencies.

On the other hand, African Development Bank argues that civil society is the voluntary expression of the interests and aspirations of citizens organized and united by common interests, goals, values or traditions and mobilized into collective action (AfDB, 2012). Civil society encompasses a spectrum of actors with a wide range of purposes, constituencies, structures, degrees of organization, functions, size, resource levels, cultural contexts, ideologies, membership, geographical coverage, strategies and approaches (WEF, 2013 ; AfDB, 2012).

The term civil society became popular in the 1980s when it was identified with the non-state protest movements in authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe and Latin America (Jezard, 2018). VanDyck (2017), further argues that there have significant changes over time in the civil society landscape and the concept has evolved from associational platforms to comprise a wide range of organized and organic groups of different forms, functions and sizes. At different periods, community-based organizations, workers' or labor unions, professional associations, and NGOs have been the most prominent in the civil society space (VanDyck, 2017).

The World Economic Forum launched the 'Future Role of Civil Society' project in 2012 to explore the rapidly evolving space in which civil society actors operate (WEF, 2013). The report argues that definitions of civil society are changing. Civil society is now "recognized as encompassing far more than a mere "sector" dominated by the NGO community. The civil society today includes an ever wider and more vibrant range of organized and unorganized groups, as new civil society actors blur the boundaries between sectors and experiment with new organizational forms, both online and offline" (WEF, 2013). The WEF (2013) highlight how information and communication technologies have opened up spaces for action.

There has been significant growth in online civil society activity, which has enabled the growth of networks across geographical, social and physical divides (WEF, 2013). WEF (2013), further highlights the example of the documentary 'Kony 2012' as an example of the ability of a small group of people to rapidly mobilize significant online activity. The concept of civil society has its roots in the work of 19th century political scientist de Tocqueville and 20th century philosopher Gramsci.

Jezard (2018), argues that the nature of civil society is evolving in response to both technological developments and nuanced changes within societies. Furthermore, the civil society roles and operating environments are also changing day and night (Jezard, 2018; WEF, 2013). Accordingly, the changing roles include civil society actors acting as facilitators, conveners and innovators as well as service providers and advocates. The changing context includes economic and geopolitical shifting from Europe and North America; technology is changing traditional funding models and dramatically shifting social engagement; and political pressures are restricting the space for civil society activities in many countries globally (WEF, 2013).

The WEF (2013) report, argues that looking forward to vision 2030, civil society leaders need to understand how shifting external contexts will shape their opportunities to achieve impact and what this evolution will mean for their relationships with businesses, governments and international actors. They argue that in a turbulent and uncertain environment, actors can no longer work in isolation (WEF, 2018). VanDyck (2017) proposes a definition of civil society as an ecosystem of “organized and organic social and cultural relations existing in the space between the state, business, and family, which builds on indigenous and external knowledge, values, traditions, and principles to foster collaboration and the achievement of specific goals by and among citizens and other stakeholders”.

This definition encompasses the wide range of actors operating in the civic space. In light of the changes civil society is undergoing, WEF (2013) argues that it should no longer be viewed as the third sector, but as the glue that binds public and private activity together in such a way as to strengthen the common good amongst those sectors.

Civil Society, Peace building and National Integration in Kenya

Kenya gained political independence from Britain in 1963 and became a one-party state in 1969 when the sole opposition party, the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) was banned, leaving the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU) as the sole political party. Following the death of former President Jomo Kenyatta in 1978, civil society began agitating for democratic transformation (Jonjo, 2003). CSOs such as the Green Belt Movement, the Law Society of Kenya, and National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), resisted KANU's one party dictatorship by mobilizing the citizens both in the rural and urban areas to demand political reforms.

In a bid to muzzle and control civil society organizations, the KANU government, in 1990, enacted a Non-Governmental Coordination Act, which in effect sought to limit CSO operations. Opposition to the act led to the formation of strong political pressure groups, such as the Forum for Restoration of Democracy (FORD) (Wairagu, 2007). FORD, together with the Green Belt Movement, the Law Society of Kenya and the NCCCK began to organize protests and mass demonstrations for democratic pluralism. The protests ultimately made a major headway in favor of political pluralism. In 1990 and 1991, the government appointed a review committee, which recommended the introduction of multiparty democracy.

According to Badejo (2006), multiparty elections were held in 1992 and 1997; KANU won both of these elections but elections monitors and the opposition described them as largely fraudulent. Despite these setbacks, CSOs continued to put pressure on the government for increased accountability and also exposed cases of corruption and human rights abuses (Jonjo, 2003). This ultimately weakened KANU's grip on power and in 2002, civil society groups helped in the formation of a political coalition of opposition alliances, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), which took power from KANU.

While CSOs have significantly impacted the democratization process in Kenya as evidenced, democracy and civil activism cannot be described as fully entrenched. The challenge for Kenya has been that most of the leaders of CSOs who were instrumental in fostering democracy left their civil society groups to join

Government. CSO ranks since then started to weaken (Wairagu, 2007). Nevertheless, a large number of Kenya's development NGOs are still playing increasingly significant roles in advocacy at the grassroots level and in sustaining democratization and peace building efforts. It is against this that the paper attempts to establish relationship between civil society organizations and national cohesion and integration in Kenya by further articulating the key challenges and the opportunities available for these organizations to thrive in Kenya.

Materials and Methods

To achieve its goals, this paper used a descriptive research design and secondary methods of data collection in form of content analysis of documents, records, reports and periodical articles. To this end, several publications were analyzed on issue regarding civil society organizations and national cohesion and integration in Kenya. The paper further examined the challenges and opportunities for civil society organizations on National cohesion and integration in Kenya.

Results and Discussions

Challenges to Civil Society Participation in Peace Building and National Integration in Kenya

Despite the numerous functions that the civil society performs in an effort to build peace, it faces equally many key challenges in its endeavors (Wanyande, 2005). As a go between states, donors and beneficiaries, the civil society finds itself caught up between different sets of expectations making it difficult for them to roll out unbiased programs that are in the best interests of all. Stedman maintains that peace building is a political undertaking which is ultimately dependent upon the political will and commitment of national governments (Wanyande, Omosa and Ludeki, (ed) 2007). No single course of action will please all the interested parties and this can at times hold back actions pertinent to peace building.

While civil society has been actively engaged in peace building in Kenya, it will be fallacious to state here that all has been well within its circles. It is therefore imperative to dedicate some time in interrogating challenges that civil society has to combat in trying to create meaningful change and these are discussed below;

Acceptability

Over the years, the public in Kenya has come to trust and embrace civil society due to its strong presence at that level. But this has not been the case when the relationship between civil society and the government is further analyzed. This is because civil society has been long associated with opposition parties thus generating suspicion at any attempt to collaborate with the government. On the side of civil society there is a general feeling that the government is suspicious of involving civil society due to the experience it has in shaping the public opinion and its unmatched ability to mobilize masses to engineer social change.

Recent trends however suggest that political players especially the government are increasingly appreciating the role of civil society in contributing to development in Kenya. This has seen many individuals from the civil society appointed to commissions of enquiry on issues affecting the nation such as the Commission of Inquiry into Illegal/Irregular Allocation of Public Land which was set up in 2003 and the Commission of inquiry on post-election violence 2008.

Limited Resources

The economic conditions of countries in the global south and limited willingness of the private sector to contribute to nonprofit ventures has left many civil society organizations with no alternative but to depend on Northern development partners for budgetary support which comes with a price that the civil society has to pay. Most of the projects designed therefore take the shape and thinking not of the implementers but the funding agency. There also exists very little room for negotiation since the proposed project has to be in line with the thematic areas or strategic interests of the funding agency.

It is common for one to find Non-Governmental Organizations running a project that is yielding results only for it to collapse after a few years due to what is termed as a shift in focus on the side of donors resulting to termination of the project (Wanyande , Omosa, and Ludeki, (ed) . 2007). The civil society in Kenya presently is rethinking these happenings and new ways are being innovated as alternatives including partnership with the private sector at the local level.

Vested Political Interests

In the year 2002 an interesting phenomenon took place in the civil society landscape in Kenya. With the ushering in of a new government, key advocates for peace, human rights, gender equity and economic justice amongst other campaigns deserted camps and joined the government. This move jolted the civil society at the national level for a few years leaving it with weak leadership that was unable to push the agenda for change boldly for quite a while (Nzomo, 2003).

This was brought about by the infiltration of civil society by individuals who were out for personal benefit rather than that of the society in general. At the moment, civil society has rediscovered itself and the line between the government and civil society has been drawn clearly with a number of initiatives within which partnership is appreciated.

Corruption

There is always a lot of heat generated when the question of legislating on civil society is raised. While the argument has been that the government cannot legislate on a sector that operates parallel to its existence, civil society has never come out clearly on how best it can be regulated to weed out unscrupulous individuals heading organizations for personal benefit. The sector in Kenya is packed with what is popularly known as “brief case NGOs” meaning registered entities with no address but only exist as outfits headed by single individuals. This practice has led to corruption where these outfits solicit for funds from donors which end up in individuals’ pockets.

Ethnicization of the Civil Society

Another major weakness exhibited by civil society is their tendency to take ethnic positions on major national issues. This is a weakness that has even taken root in the faith based organizations including the Catholic Church. A good example was the position taken by the catholic bishops regarding the Wako draft constitution. While some supported and campaigned for the adoption of the Wako draft, others campaigned for its rejection at the 2005 referendum.

Catholic Bishops from Central Kenya went along with political leaders from the region and called for the adoption of the Wako draft while their counterparts from Nyanza and other parts of the country campaigned for its rejection. The sector is, in other words, unable to transcend ethnic and regional capture. In this sense one can argue that Kenyan civil society is a mirror of the broader society. This is considered a weakness because the sector stood the danger of perpetuating values and practices that retard the development of the society at that time into a modern nation.

Unhealthy Competition

Civil society actors must continue to play its watchdog role in the protection of human rights, promotion of freedoms and transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs. The sector must avoid unhealthy competition not just for financial resources but also in terms of the activities they engage in. It would be a major source of weakness if civil society organizations were to engage in unhealthy competition and duplication of activities.

Opportunities for Civil Society Organizations in Kenya

Building Strong Civil Society Networks

Stronger national, regional, and international networks are required to create additional synergies capable of providing pragmatic alternatives to autocratic government policies. Such networks could more successfully place pressure on governments for policy changes. In addition, collaborations could also facilitate the sharing of information and resources,

Supporting Democratic Transitions

An enhanced supportive role from the international community to civil society groups that promote good-governance could facilitate broader democratization process. Despite the harassment and intimidation of civil society groups by the former Kenyan president, Daniel Arap Moi, and the frustration they continue facing under Museveni's government in Uganda, the support of external actors has helped pressure the governments into introducing political reforms that opened the space for multi-party activism, or efforts towards it, in the two countries.

Increasing the Role of Women and Youth in Peacemaking

Greater support to a wider CSO constituency that includes gender-based organizations that advance and protect the interests of women and children, would ensure more productive peace building processes. Women and children are often the main victims of civil wars but are generally sidelined during peacemaking processes. Participants identified encouraging examples in Burundi, Rwanda, and Kenya of women's effective involvement in peace building efforts. Greater support for these groups to participate in peace processes would therefore contribute to productive peace building.

Undertaking Natural Resource Management, Land Reform and Democratization

Increased international support for land reform initiatives and better management of natural resources is essential to bridging the gaps and reducing tensions among ethnic communities and helping resolve major causes of conflicts in the region. Thus, attention to land reform and better management of natural resources would help bridge the gap and reduce the tensions among ethnic communities and between CSOs and governments in the region.

Establishing Strategic Alliances with the Government of Kenya

To impact public policy and decision-making, CSOs – without sacrificing their independence – need to develop strategic partnerships with the government of Kenya in promoting good governance, protecting human rights, and advancing economic reforms for sustainable development in the country. Relations between the state and CSOs in the region have historically been antagonistic, with civil society groups pressing government for political reforms and demanding new leadership. The confrontational nature of these relationships often hampers the ability to influence policy decisions nationally and regionally

Securing Long-Term Funding for long term survival of CSOs

Development partners interested in promoting peace, security, and democracy, need to commit long term and substantive resources to CSOs to engender institutional stability and strengthen organizational capacity, including personnel training and technology transfers. Lack of committed, long-term funding is a major handicap that inhibits the effectiveness of CSOs involved in conflict prevention and peace building in the Great Lakes region.

Conclusion

Civil society Organizations are key in national cohesion and integration as they need to monitor and report on the state of cohesion and national integration in Kenya. However, all too often universities are ignored in peace building and scattered NGO actors tend to engage in a number of activities with no clear overall coordination.

Many of these activities are helpful and meaningful to those who participate in them, but the overall efficacy of these programs in addressing the deep dynamics of violence and displacement is questionable. The tendency toward parallel and small-scale initiatives is accentuated by the fragmented nature of donor funding.

There is much untapped potential in Kenya to deepen and restructure interventions. The extent of violence in the future will depend in the short term on political coalitions and in the longer term on the success of structural reform stipulated in the national accord, including whether Kenya will have a new constitution that restructures the local state to make it more transparent and impartial. Violence will also crucially depend on whether national institutional change reaches the local level and creative interventions address the deep divisions and grievances in so many Kenyan communities

The government, civil society, and donors should support local institutions to better perform their duties toward the displaced and violence-torn communities more generally. Civil society and donors should encourage complaints and push the government to monitoring compliance with rights of Kenyan citizens. Courts and parliament must be properly briefed by the KNHRC and civil society and held to account for the plight of Kenyans and the larger community affected by violence. Civil society and the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs should explore how to bolster legal aid and mediation mechanisms for the displaced and other aggrieved parties, especially to handle property disputes that continue to deepen grievances.

Donor and civil society support for antiviolenze mobilization and peace building should not focus only on elections, but also reform, including of courts, local administration, and institutions dealing with land allocation. Supporting the careful implementation of Kenya's national land policy will enhance transparency over land allocations, helping to avoid deepening grievances. Opportunities to nurture, support, and expand the Peace Corps and community policing within Kenya's police⁹³ should be explored.

Most crucially, the government and civil society must support careful implementation of the National Task Force on Police Reforms. Human rights and conflict prevention and resolution skills should be taught in police training colleges, along with refresher courses to keep up a dialogue on these issues within the police.

International support for peace building must go beyond the individual rational critical dialogue model (workshops and exhortation) to support more innovative approaches that involve key local actors and institutions, such as elders' councils, women's groups, and media, in pro-peace mobilizations. As one respected peacemaker, Bishop Cornelius Korir of the Catholic Diocese, writes, "we need to facilitate amani mashinani"—peace in the village, not peace in urban hotels.

Local pro-peace mobilizations in some parts of Kenya have been successful. On the coast, violence started but was quickly stopped by a successful mobilization of elders, mosques, the local provincial administration, and civil society organizations, as well as prominent politicians and intellectuals, shifting moral authority in the region overwhelmingly against violence.

More peace building efforts should be linked to economic empowerment in hot spot areas that at the same time nurtures interethnic cooperation and linkages among the displaced, youth in communities involved in violence, and the private sector.

Universities, colleges and schools that bring youth together and create neutral spaces should be brought into peace building initiatives more centrally, both to accumulate information on local conditions but also to link empowerment with peace.

Existing and past peace building programs should be critically reviewed and evaluated, paying particular attention to whether these efforts support or displace local efforts. Finally, peace building requires democratic deepening, political space, and deeper state reforms to entrench the rule of law and democratic rights.

Authoritarianism and shrinking political space destroys room to maneuver. Everything must be done to protect and expand the hard-won political space for antiviolence mobilizations to operate.

Recommendations

Civil society is seen as an important actor in peace building and national integration processes. As such, substantive effort has been devoted towards building and strengthening it. However, little systematic evidence-based research exist to support these assumptions empirically, and provide policy-makers and practitioners with better knowledge about whether, how, when, and under what circumstances civil society can fulfill a peace support role or not. This paper therefore highlights the following recommendations;

First, there is need for continued direct support to civil society peace building Initiatives.

There are many ways in which civil society can be supported by donors including financial and other aspects of support. Similarly, the Kenyan Government, donors and other key actors/ stakeholders should encourage the participation of civil society in official peace building processes and programs in order to advice the key organizations and personalities on the same field.

Secondly, actors should recognize that civil society initiatives are not a panacea for peace building. Donors should be mindful of critical factors and key limitations in supporting civil society peace building initiatives. Donor policies and funding guidelines should reflect good practices (including contextual analysis, transparency, independent peer reviews and donor evaluations by CSOs). This will enable key stakeholders to establish their roles in peace building process

Thirdly, there is need to start with a broad notion of civil society and extend support beyond NGOs. Given regional and cultural variations, as well as civil society differences in each country, a broad notion of civil society is essential. This will prevent ignoring other groups and help to overcome the current preference to support mostly capital-based national NGOs. External support should partner with a broad range of CSOs, selected according to the civil society peace building functions to be strengthened, and based on a solid, empirically-grounded understanding of the CSO landscape, roles, capacities and potentials.

Also, CSOs need to be clear on their objectives in Kenya. The functional perspective developed in Kenya should help make more strategic choices regarding the objectives of civil society in peace building support. The framework should be tested and validated further, especially its value to guide the outcome and impact evaluations, planning and programming and harmonization of donor policy and programming in the country.

Furthermore, there is need to base civil society support on rigorous analysis and develop appropriate instruments. Three analytical steps that could be considered include thorough conflict or political analysis to identify the most essential areas for civil society engagement; secondly, solid civil society assessment, which analyzes civil society composition, the existence of uncivil society, internal factors (capacity, organization, governance, and networking); and the enabling environment and lastly review civil society capacity and experience with peace building initiatives to capture successful and promising approaches, understand success factors and limitations, and capacity needs. Donors should invest further in the development and application of analytical instruments, as well as in-country independent capacity, wherever possible through coordinated or joint efforts.

All stakeholders to improve understanding of outcomes, impacts and critical success factors in the quest for peace building initiatives. Outcome and impact evaluation methodologies should build on case study analysis and project/program evaluations, as well as thematic evaluations. Donor organizations and I-NGOs should support the elaboration and testing of qualitative impact assessment methodologies, building on existing peace impact frameworks. Efforts should also be made to clarify the feasibility and design of rigorous impact

evaluation. Reconcile the need for partner-led approaches with donor requirements. This paper further point out at local ownership as a key success factors, coupled with the need for better impact assessments.

Furthermore, there is need to reconcile locally-led efforts and donor accountability for results requires that both partners become convinced of the relevance and usefulness of the proposed activities. Donors should engage in a strategic dialogue with their partners on civil society functions in peace building, the need for more upfront analysis and impact assessments. This will give more confidence to civil society actors to cement their position in peace making processes in Kenya

Also, key stakeholders should develop flexible, responsive and long-term approaches to support local initiatives in Kenya. Donor support has to go beyond simple funding and short-term training. Donors should invest more systematically in longer-term capacity building and joint learning, while making full use of their capacity to encourage greater space for civil society initiatives, improve the enabling environment, and facilitate links with formal peace processes.

There is need to take into account constraints in the enabling environment for CSOs and the role of the state in Kenya. The state and the enabling environment have a major influence on the effectiveness of civil society peace initiatives country wide. The enabling environment, particularly the rule of law, respect for human rights, and security for citizens should be assessed and used to inform decisions regarding areas for civil society support and identify complementary measures to strengthen state capacity in areas critical for peace building in general and civil society contributions in particular. This will not only give CSOs confidence but to also promote sustainable strategies to be adopted in the country.

Additionally, key actors should link independent civil society support and other development assistance instruments. Greater donor policy and strategic coherence is needed to ensure the effective transfer of insights, lessons, and programmatic recommendations across policy domains and assistance instruments. Beyond direct civil society support, it is important to promote civil society collaboration in official peace building and reconstruction processes led by governments or the international community and strengthen functions and capacity of the state that affect the enabling environment for civil society.

Lastly, there is need to invest in research and evaluation to fill knowledge gaps. Such a research program should pay particular attention to improving the interface between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, bringing these constituencies together to better understand the contributions and functions of civil society in conflict settings and nation building. This will facilitate dissemination of key findings and lessons learnt from the local to the global perspective.

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