

AIDING FRAGILE STATES: BUILDING DONOR PUBLIC SUPPORT

*The New Deal in Afghanistan & its Implication for
Donor Public Support for ODA*



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ABOUT BAAG (WWW.BAAG.ORG.UK)

The British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) was established in 1987. It is a unique advocacy network organisation with 29 current members. BAAG's vision is to contribute to an environment where Afghans can take control of their own development and bring about a just and peaceful society. We seek to put our vision into practice by:

- Bringing member agencies and the wider relief and development community together to advocate for continued international commitment to the development of Afghanistan;
- Sharing information and knowledge to improve policy debate and decision-making processes with a particular emphasis on ensuring that those processes reflect the views, needs and aspirations of the Afghan people; and
- Enhancing the abilities of Afghan civil society in influencing national and international policies on Afghanistan.

ABOUT THE MEDIA4DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME:

Funded by the European Commission, Media4Development is a three year programme delivered by a consortium of eight non-government and media organisations: Mondo (Estonia), Estonian Public Broadcasting Company, People in Need (Czech Republic), MVRO (Slovakia), Green Liberty (Latvia), House of Europe (Lithuania), VIKES (Finland) and BAAG (UK/Ireland). The programme's overall objective is to inform and raise the awareness of EU citizens about global interdependencies and aid challenges. Specifically it engages the national media and policy makers in EU member states so that they may better inform their citizens about global interdependencies and challenges of the post-2015 development framework.



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ACRONYMS

BAAG	British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group
EU	European Union
GNI	Gross National Income
ODA	Official Development Aid
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSGs	Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TMAF	Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 9th June 2015 the British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) organised a roundtable to address two key questions: How is the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (the New Deal) shaping aid in Afghanistan, with what impact? And how might the New Deal shape public support for ODA in the UK? This report provides an overview of the key outcomes and recommendations of this discussion.

1. Introduction

By 2030, two-thirds of people in poverty will be living in fragile states. Despite significant investment, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have failed to meet their ambitions, and have fallen way short in fragile states in particular. This can have a negative impact on donor public attitudes to official development aid (ODA).

The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, agreed in 2011, is an attempt to help address some of the challenges of supporting development in fragile states. By putting the host country in the lead, explicitly incorporating political dimensions (for the first time), and by applying peacebuilding and statebuilding goals (PSGs)¹, it provides a framework within which engaging with fragile states can be better planned and assessed. See Annex 1 for an overview of the New Deal framework and participating states and organisations.

The seventeen sustainable development (SDG) goals to be agreed in September this year have taken on board aspects of the New Deal. Therefore, as the aid sector moves towards implementing another, new framework, what lessons can be learned from the implementation of the New Deal? And how might these new frameworks for engagement in fragile states help improve public understanding and support for aid and development?

2. The New Deal in Afghanistan

Over the past 14 years, Afghanistan has received significant international military and political investment. As one of the world's largest recipients of aid, Afghanistan was identified as a pilot country for the implementation of the New Deal.² It therefore matters how Afghanistan progresses, not least for

Afghans, but also in terms of lessons learned and continued public support for international aid and military interventions in far off lands.

2.1. Impact of the New Deal in Afghanistan

Recognising that the New Deal is the first international framework that directly addresses domestic politics in fragile states, the roundtable participants broadly agreed that the principles of the New Deal are sound and a positive step towards 'doing development differently'. However, when assessing the value and impact of the New Deal in practice in Afghanistan, the participants could identify little impact to date.

Nevertheless, the participants agreed that the signing of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) in 2012 went some way to turning the principles of the New Deal into an Afghan-specific, operable framework. Now there is a risk-sharing framework among the donors and mutual commitment to five governance and development benchmarks under the TMAF. However, while the TMAF addresses the transparency and accountability dimensions of the New Deal, it misses some of the wider dimensions of fragility relating to legitimate politics, security and peacebuilding. Here, it was believed, the New Deal could add some value.

However, the roundtable participants believed there was a general lack of awareness of the New Deal among national and international actors. The lack of traction in-country was put down to the New Deal's failure to overcome the challenge of understanding and adapting to the politics of aid. It also assumes a post-conflict context, meaning the New Deal is less responsive to the challenges that on-going conflict brings.

2.2. Next Steps for the New Deal

While impact of the New Deal in Afghanistan to date has been limited, the participants urged policy makers and civil society to, 'not to throw the baby out with the bathwater'. Instead they pressed for governments and civil society to build on the opportunities created by the New Deal to reframe how aid and development is delivered in fragile states (to 'do development differently').

¹ The peacebuilding and statebuilding goals (PSGs) include legitimate politics, security, justice, economic foundations and revenues and services. These are goals to 'build the foundation for progress towards the MDGs and as a guide for work in fragile and conflict-affected states' (www.newdeal4peace.org).

² In fact, Afghanistan was a pioneer in some New Deal principles, as well as in earlier initiatives such as the 2005 Paris Declaration.

Recommendations identified by the participants were as follows:

1. **Maintain the principles of the New Deal but guard against hubris.** The New Deal is an important change in mind-set, however it can present an illusion of an easy solution to transforming highly complex, fast changing political dynamics.
2. **Use the five PSGs to build the conditions for development.** Build on the New Deal's strengths by using the PSGs as guides for assessing and designing development strategies.
3. **Be country-led, but do this by supporting the nation as well as the state.** To date aid delivery has mostly focused on building formal state entities. Work also with non-state and informal power structures at all levels of society.
4. **Ensure that conflict and the politics of aid are built into the design and implementation of the New Deal.** This requires a better understanding of how power and how political settlements are negotiated among all actors in fragile states.
5. **Address the imbalance between the New Deal's primacy of national ownership and lack of governance capacity in fragile states.** Despite national ownership being a core principle of the New Deal, fragile states typically suffer from weak or illegitimate governance, thus undermining their ability to take the lead.
6. **Build a broad, evolving vision of the nation for flexible planning.** Expecting multiple actors to agree to 'one vision, one plan' in a fixed time scale is unrealistic and unnecessary. A working democracy in any country allows for multiple, evolving visions and opinions.
7. **Reassess the statebuilding goals and pick the low hanging fruit.** State-building is too comprehensive and too ambitious a goal. ODA is not a powerful enough tool to achieve this, nor should it be externally driven. More immediate results are needed from development aid.
8. **Build a more holistic picture of stabilisation and growth, beyond aid.** The New Deal fails to take into consideration the wider drivers of development beyond aid, such as the private sector, foreign direct investment, remittances and trade.
9. **Recognise the declining relative importance of western approaches to ODA and the role of emerging donors.** Emerging donors were not involved in the development of the New Deal thus undermining its global legitimacy.
10. **Rewrite the approach to capacity-building and assessment.** Over-assessment and excessive training that focuses on deliverables rather than impact are absorbing local resources without strengthening longer-term capacity or transparency in fragile states. Consider more flexible monitoring frameworks as part of donor risk assessments.
11. **Use the New Deal to assess donors' own track record in fragile states.** This will help make donors better partners to host governments. It could include assessing how donor countries' domestic and foreign policies support (or hinder) the five PSGs in fragile states.

3. Building Public Support for Overseas Aid

Communication on ODA has clearly proven to be difficult, especially when relating to fragile contexts. Why is this, and what impact does it have on public attitudes to ODA and support for development? Can the New Deal principles offer any guidance for reframing the narrative?

3.1. Public Attitudes to Aid

Current attitudes towards aid in the UK can range from: 'I want to help', 'we can fix it', 'we are a generous country' to 'charity begins at home' and 'dictators steal it'. However the public feels about aid, the roundtable participants agreed that the main message that is heard by the British public about aid is a singular narrative that says, 'spend money, it is not messy, money is the solution'.

The participants agreed that it is the large development NGOs, backed up by the British public, that have pushed this agenda. NGO communication strategies, it was argued, are most often used to maximise short-term support for specific humanitarian campaigns or funding appeals. This has had a negative impact on public knowledge and awareness about the long-term nature and complexity of aid.

While Government efforts were deemed more nuanced, efforts to engage the British public on aid debates were believed to be minimal compared to the resources spent on profiling donor-funded aid projects in developing countries. As a result, Government 'can feel under attack' and hence

its response to public and media interest can be, 'temporary and reactive'.

3.2. Better Public Narratives on Overseas Aid

The roundtable participants agreed that a change of approach is necessary if the UK Government and NGOs want to retain public support for aid and development and to ensure that new campaigns to mobilise support do not backfire. Getting the message right will be critical to the UK's continued leadership in this area.

Development actors' reluctance to take responsibility for failures, to embrace complexity and to address the bigger issues were just some reasons participants identified for limited public engagement on ODA. This, participants argued, is due to the fact that transformative change is messy, complicated and long term and is not easy to talk about in bite-sized nuggets. Fixing aid expenditure at 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI), while laudable especially in comparison with other aid providing countries, has also unintentionally resulted in an over-simplified message. The participants, therefore, agreed that public discourse on aid and development needs to be reshaped. As one participant argued, 'We need to start making an effort otherwise we will get found out!'

Recommendations identified by the participants were as follows:

1. **Be clear about what the public should do.** For the roundtable participants this meant not focusing on spending more money but supporting Government and NGOs to 'do development differently'. This meant the public should encourage innovation and be more open to failure.
2. **Get stuck in and 'be honest'.** Debate the trade-offs and tensions around aid, state openly when aid has not worked and that lessons have been learned. Treat the public like intelligent adults.
3. **Dig deeper and find stories that are inherently more newsworthy.** This requires more investment as well as more creativity in the media sector, including connecting local to global issues.
4. **Shift the public mood and the 'red tops' will follow.** Present 'heroic people that the public can care about, not those they can feel threatened by'. Work with more enlightened parts of the media, using human stories and visuals.
5. **Have a theory of change behind the**

stories. This gives the public a chance to question and challenge the logic of aid. For example, are the UK Government's aid goals achievable?

6. **Deliver human stories from a peacebuilding and statebuilding goal (PSG) perspective.** This might include, for example, delivering stories that reflect how addressing corruption, clientelism or insecurity directly affects the life chances of an individual and their community.
7. **Address global challenges that matter to the British public.** Recognise public concerns over emerging issues such as the growth of China, 'failure' of the UN and EU, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, cyber-crime, and migration issues. How does aid and development fit within this new, post-world war order?
8. **Address the question of Britain's desired position in the world.** What does the public want the UK's position and role to be, with what implications?
9. **Put a spotlight on donor agencies.** Use the New Deal as a framework for assessing the donors' own record in fragile states, including their aid, trade, security and foreign policy approaches. This is important for demonstrating to the public that the sources of fragility are part of global processes.
10. **Consider how to best communicate the sustainable development goals (SDGs), including the new goals relating to peace, justice and fragility.** The SDGs could be a tool for stimulating debate about how the UK could best support their implementation in fragile states.
11. **Provide evidence.** Find examples of new and positive approaches to development, and provide evidence of impact to raise public expectations on the Government and NGO sectors.

4. Conclusion

The New Deal is no panacea for better aid delivery in fragile states. However, one key reflection from the 'Aiding Fragile States' Roundtable was the recognition that it is at least working towards reframing how to do development differently in fragile states. This includes assessing, designing and monitoring development projects according to key dimensions of fragility.

The New Deal does not, however, sufficiently address the political dimensions of aid in fragile states. There is much good, conflict-sensitive development practice on which practitioners can draw to help overcome this challenge. Thinking about development beyond aid to address the conditions and drivers of development through trade, remittances and investment will also be important to ensure the New Deal is a useful tool that is open to the interests of the emerging, as well as traditional, donors.

If donors are to take on what is good about the New Deal, this requires the public to support innovation and risk taking as part of the development initiative. The public need to take back their agency and engage with and support international development issues in a way that speaks to them. This requires the media and development sector to challenge the public's own attitudes and behaviours in relation to poverty, development and international security. It means discussing difficult, messy issues and treating the British public as intelligent adults.

The success of the New Deal will partly depend on regular reassessments of it by diverse domestic and international actors. In the future, BAAG would like to progress discussions on the New Deal, TMAF and other policies related to Afghanistan development, which may have implications for other fragile contexts. BAAG also hope to continue discussions on more effectively communicating the complexities of ODA to encourage and maintain public support.

BAAG Roundtable, Chatham House, London



AIDING FRAGILE STATES: BUILDING DONOR PUBLIC SUPPORT

The New Deal in Afghanistan & its Implication for Public Support for ODA

On 9th June 2015, the British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) organised a roundtable to address two key questions: How is the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (the New Deal) shaping aid in Afghanistan, with what impact? And how might the New Deal shape public support for ODA in the UK? Twenty experts from the UK Parliament, UK Government, academia, think tanks and civil society from the UK, US and Afghanistan participated in the London roundtable.

This report provides an overview of the key outcomes and recommendations of this discussion. It raises interesting questions and points to some answers for improving international engagement in fragile states and for building new public narratives in support of aid and development in these challenging contexts. As the event was held under Chatham House rules, none of the contributors are referenced.

1. Introduction

The current ways of delivering aid in fragile states need serious improvement. Despite significant investment, results and value for money in fragile states have been modest. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the predominant aid framework since 2000, have failed to meet their ambitions, and have fallen way short in fragile states in particular. And the problem is only growing. By 2030, two-thirds of people in poverty will be living in fragile states.

This can have a negative impact on donor public attitudes to official development aid (ODA). The British public, while more sympathetic to providing ODA than their US or eastern European counterparts, are generally apathetic to a percentage of their taxes being allocated to ODA. While there is cross-party support to maintain aid spending in the UK, this has developed without broad public support or a communications strategy to effectively engage people in debates on how and why the UK should support development. There is only so long this can continue without a public or political backlash on ODA budgets. However, the message is a complex one as transitioning out of fragility is a long-term, political process. Plus, the aid sector itself is divided on how best to engage in fragile states and still has to learn the lessons from failure to meet the MDGs in these countries.

Box 1. Poverty in Fragile States

- 1.5 billion people live in conflict-affected and fragile states.
- About 70 per cent of fragile states have seen conflict since 1989.
- Basic governance transformations may take 20 to 40 years.
- 30 per cent of ODA is spent in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.
- These countries are further away from achieving the MDGs.

(International Dialogue on Peacebuilding & Statebuilding, 2012)

The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, agreed in 2011, is an attempt to help address some of the challenges of supporting development in fragile states. Agreed at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan (Korea), it is the outcome of six years of international dialogue that began in 2005 with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The New Deal was developed through the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, the first forum for political dialogue to bring together conflict-affected and fragile countries, international partners and civil society to catalyse successful transitions from conflict and fragility.

The New Deal provides a framework within which engaging with fragile states can be planned and assessed. It includes the use of peacebuilding and statebuilding goals (PSGs) to build the foundation for progress towards the MDGs. It puts host countries in the lead and focuses on mutual partnership, responsibility for risk and better results between donor and host states. See Annex 1 for an overview of the New Deal Framework and its participating countries and organisations.

The New Deal is the first international framework that directly addresses domestic politics in fragile states and which on that basis promotes host country ownership and leadership. After all, it is salutary to remember that prior to New Deal discussions, the political context in which aid was delivered was neither recognised, nor were adjustments



Box 2. New Deal Peacebuilding & Statebuilding Goals (www.newdeal4peace.org)

1. Legitimate Politics – Foster inclusive political settlements & conflict resolution.
2. Security – Establish and strengthen people’s security.
3. Justice – Address injustices & increase people’s access to justice.
4. Economic Foundations – Generate employment & improve livelihoods.
5. Revenues & Services – Manage revenue & build capacity for accountable & fair service delivery.

made, in the reports or country strategy papers of the international institutions. As one participant put it, before this, ‘just as, earlier, the World Bank could not mention the ‘c’ word (corruption), or the ‘p’ word (politics)’ despite channelling billions of dollars through fragile states.

International fragility policy is further evolving. In June 2015, the zero draft of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was published to provide a replacement for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).³ The seventeen SDG goals have taken on-board aspects of the New Deal. This includes integrating, for the first time, a goal that, ‘promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development’. In addition to including the many, wider dimensions to building peaceful societies (such as inclusive economic growth, reduced inequality), they explicitly recognise the importance of access to justice, security and accountable institutions as foundations for development.

Though not without its critics, this does represent progress towards encouraging the international community to do development differently in fragile states. Therefore, as the aid sector moves towards implementing another, new framework, what

lessons can be learned from the implementation of the New Deal? And how might these new frameworks for engagement in fragile states help improve public understanding and support for ODA?

2. The New Deal in Afghanistan

‘Since the troop surge, some progress has been made on half of one of the five peacebuilding and statebuilding goals in Afghanistan’

The morning session of the London Roundtable on ‘Aiding Fragile States’ began with an assessment of the value and impact of the New Deal in Afghanistan. Over the past 14 years since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan has received significant international military and political investment. Alongside Iraq, Afghanistan has received 22 per cent of all ODA flows to fragile states and economies in the MDG era (OECD, 2015)⁴. At their peak in 2011, there were also 140,000 NATO troops on Afghan soil. In 2011, Afghanistan was identified as a pilot country for the implementation of the New Deal, with the Governments of the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark designated as partner countries. It

³ See the SDG Zero Draft at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7261Post-2015%20Summit%20-%20202%20June%202015.pdf>

⁴ *States of Fragility: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions*, OECD, 2015.

therefore matters how Afghanistan progresses, not least for Afghans, but in terms of lessons learned and continued public support for international aid and military interventions in far off lands.

2.1. The Impact of the New Deal in Afghanistan

The participants of the roundtable shared the view that the New Deal remains largely words in policy documents in Afghanistan, rather than in practice on the ground. In fact, it was argued that Afghanistan and its donors were implementing more New Deal approaches pre-2001 than they are today. More aid, it was argued, was development-related and some progress was made on state institution-building indicators.

Since the US troop surge in 2010, little progress was believed to have been made against the five PSGs. The participants believed that, of these, aid has been better aligned to institution-building, yet with far less impact than should be expected. It was argued, for example, that aid follows certain individuals rather than being invested in institutions and that capacity building based on training and manuals does not work. As a result, 'the concept of capacity-building in Afghanistan needs to be fundamentally reviewed', one participant argued.⁵

It was also argued that aid has been heavily aligned to an overly-militarised security approach. This has been complicated by the militarisation of aid where, as one participant remarked, schools have become zones of conflict. Delivery of aid is also believed to be grossly uneven and significantly tied to international contractors rather than local organisations. Reflecting on the unevenness of aid and the perverse incentives it creates, one participant remarked that, 'If Helmand were a country, it would be the fifth largest recipient of US ODA globally'. Aid effectiveness, including conflict sensitivity of aid, as much as aid alignment and the behaviour of the donors themselves, were therefore deemed critical issues in the assessment of the impact of the New Deal.

Participants commented that donors are not living up to their own New Deal standards in Afghanistan. The impact of competing foreign policy agendas on the effective coordination of aid flows and priorities was given as such an example. This includes the disagreements between and within donors from Europe, the US and Japan over counter-terrorism versus statebuilding priorities. This is exacerbated, it was remarked, by the lack of confidence in the UN to coordinate so many donors with competing policies.

The participants also agreed that there is a broad lack of awareness of what the New Deal is among national and international governments and civil

society working in Afghanistan. The participants questioned, for example, the political support for the New Deal amongst the donors, particularly from the US and the Japanese. Within the Afghan Government, it was argued that while, 'some didn't know what it was, others weren't sure of the political implications'. Another participant argued instead that no host government actually wants all donors to be speaking with one voice.⁶

These comments all point to a failure in the New Deal design and/or implementation to sufficiently consider the local, national and global political context of aid delivery in Afghanistan. Several participants argued, for example, that current aid distribution, focused on the most instable provinces, has created resentment in less supported provinces. Similarly, aid connected to the eradication of poppy cultivation has in some instances encouraged this activity in previously poppy-free areas. Another participant asked, 'how do donors approach the New Deal when working with actors who do not have the same agenda as themselves?' The New Deal assumes a common will and purpose as its starting point, which is often not the case among the multiple actors in fragile states.

As well as missing the full ramifications of the politics of aid, it was also argued that the New Deal does not sufficiently take into account conflict. By assuming a post-conflict context, the framework becomes less responsive and realistic for responding to the challenges that on-going conflict brings. As one participant emphasised, monthly attacks by insurgents in Afghanistan have risen from 480 to 1400 since 2009, while the number of soldiers and police killed has risen from 80 to 500 per month. As a result, the worsening security situation has severely limited what might be achieved under the New Deal framework, as have the delays in cabinet selection in the first half of the year.

Nevertheless, the participants agreed that the signing of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) in 2012 went some way to turning the principles of the New Deal into an Afghan-specific, operational framework.⁷ The TMAF, like the New Deal, is based on broadly accepted principles of good governance, mutual partnership, national aid alignment and transparency, monitored under a mutual commitment to five governance and development benchmarks.⁸

The participants welcomed that donors are also developing a risk-sharing framework in Afghanistan, arguing that this will make them better partners. They agreed that sharing this with the Government,

⁶ In other words, poor donor coordination gives national government more flexibility and space to operate.

⁷ Agreed at the Tokyo Conference in 2012, the TMAF is the instrument through which civilian development assistance is provided to Afghanistan. The document sets out a number of commitments, 16 for the Afghan Government and nine for the international community, with 50 per cent of aid being aligned to the National Priority Programmes and 50 per cent of aid channeled on budget.

⁸ The TMAF governance and development benchmarks are: Representational democracy and equitable elections; governance, rule of law and human rights; integrity of public finance and commercial banking; government revenues, budget execution and sub-national governance; inclusive and sustained growth and development, and international commitment to improving aid effectiveness.

⁵ The OECD's recent report argues that globally 'aid budgets still appear to be adapting to the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals'. It goes on to say that, 'While there is no agreed framework for tracking aid to support the PSGs, a working model found that it remained low in 2012. Just 4 per cent of ODA in fragile states and economies was allocated to the PSGs for legitimate politics, 2 per cent for security and 3 per cent for justice' (*States of Fragility: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions*, OECD, 2015).

when appropriate, would be an important next step and in line with the New Deal framework. These developments, the participants argued, mark a step forward from the limited coordination, risk sharing and transparency of the donors prior to the TMAF and New Deal. As one participant noted, in the 2006 Afghan Compact (agreed as the framework for international cooperation with Afghanistan for the following five years), there were 77 benchmarks set for the Afghan Government, and none for the donors. This has now changed and development has, at least on paper, become a mutual endeavor between host and donor governments.

2.2. Next Steps for the New Deal

'The New Deal is achievable if expectations from the public are for the donors to 'do development differently'.

While the participants of the roundtable shared the view that the New Deal has had little impact on aid and development in Afghanistan, there was also a strong sentiment to 'not throw the baby out with the bath water'. Instead, it was argued that the New Deal, 'can create opportunities for building a map forward'. What are these opportunities and what lessons can be learned from implementing the New Deal in Afghanistan? These questions are particularly pertinent given the upcoming Senior Officials Meeting in Kabul to discuss progress and next steps for the TMAF. They are also relevant to the 3rd International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July and in advance of the agreement on the SDGs in September.

Recommendations identified by the participants were as follows:

Maintain the principles of the New Deal but guard against hubris. The New Deal was deemed an important change in mind-set due to its recognition of basic security and legitimate politics as key foundations for development, and its aim to prioritise country ownership. However, the New Deal can present an illusion of an easy solution to transforming peoples' lives in highly complex, fast changing political dynamics. In doing so, it undermines one of the very things it is trying to achieve. For this reason, one participant urged policy makers and civil society to remember its limitations and to guard against over-selling it.

Use the five PSGs to build the conditions for development. Build on the New Deal's strengths by using the PSGs as guides for assessing and designing development strategies.

Be country-led, but do this by supporting the nation as well as the state. To date, aid delivery has mostly focused on building formal state entities, ignoring the wider power structures and dynamics

in society. This means working with decision-making structures at all levels of society, including civil society and business which have the capacity to influence decisions and resource distribution (for good and bad).

Ensure that conflict and the politics of aid are in-built. Like most international frameworks, the New Deal offers 'a technical solution to a political problem'. As a result, 'being New Deal compliant (i.e. having the right formal institutions in place) does not mean governance is sorted'. In order to ensure aid delivery is responsive, effective and sustainable, aid approaches must therefore be perpetually assessed and adapted based on changing local and national political and conflict dynamics. This requires a better understanding of how power and political settlements are negotiated among all actors in fragile states.

Address the imbalance between the New Deal's primary focus on national ownership and lack of governance capacity in fragile states. The primacy of national ownership in the New Deal is hard to implement effectively due to the very problematic nature of legitimate governance in fragile states. While national ownership and leadership is a worthwhile principle, without a host state with the capacity and will/legitimacy to take on this leadership, this ambition cannot be upheld. In Afghanistan this has led, one participant argued, to the establishment of parallel state structures to implement key services, thus undermining the primacy of the state and a key New Deal principle.

Build a broad, evolving vision of 'nation', for flexible planning. Expecting multiple actors to agree to 'one vision and one plan' in a fixed time scale is unrealistic and unnecessary. As one participant argued, 'by assuming a good plan will lead to an intended impact, the New Deal (like all international compacts), misses the need to perpetually learn, evolve and adapt plans over time'. This is particularly the case when dealing with major questions of national importance, when events and individuals change quickly and when there is a history of (as yet unaddressed) conflict and weak institutions. A working democracy in any country allows for multiple, evolving visions and opinions.

Reassess the statebuilding goals and pick the low hanging fruit. State-building is too comprehensive and ambitious a goal, argued some of the roundtable participants. Foreign policy should not, nor cannot, do this. This should be an internally-driven process. Furthermore, it was argued ODA is not a powerful enough tool to incentivise leaders to change. Domestic pressure will always be greater (e.g. donors could not motivate the previous Afghan President to address the Kabul Bank scandal despite collectively withdrawing aid for over a year, with significant damage to the Afghan people). Instead, more immediate results



are needed from development aid. In addition to the challenge of donor fatigue, people cannot wait for the result of massive projects worth billions of dollars and lasting for years.

Build a more holistic picture of stabilisation and growth, beyond aid. As one participant put it, 'other countries have come out of conflict in spite of the international community'. Aid 'will not enable the creation of millions of jobs, nor is there the big thinking within the international aid community to achieve this'. This speaks to the New Deal's failure to take into consideration the wider drivers of development beyond aid, including the impact and value of the private sector, foreign direct investment, remittances and trade. A more holistic picture of stabilisation and growth is needed.

Recognise the declining relative importance of western approaches to ODA and the role of emerging donors. Emerging donors such as China were not involved in the development of the New Deal, and it is not clear how much they subscribe to it. This can risk the global legitimacy of the New Deal. What is clear is that the New Deal approach is not in line with how emerging donors currently operate. According to one participant, rather than looking to aid as the solution to Afghanistan's development, Ashraf Ghani himself is, 'looking towards opening up market access and trade with China and the Middle East'. As such, the President is far more likely to engage with China than subscribe to the New Deal Framework.⁹

⁹ This reflects the wider ideological differences in development approaches, particularly between China and the West. The New Deal focuses on addressing the more entrenched and politically challenging conditions for development, as causes of poverty in fragile and conflict-affected states. The new donors such as China and Turkey are, however, more interested in supporting the drivers of development for mutual gain (such as huge infrastructure development projects, private sector investment and trade access).

Re-write the approach to capacity-building & assessment. No-one was in disagreement with the New Deal's emphasis on building national capacity, accountability and transparency. However, the operationalization of these principles has failed in Afghanistan, one participant explained. This he blamed on a culture of over-assessment of projects and an over-emphasis on quick-fix trainings that do nothing to build sustainable, national capacity. Both of these approaches, it was argued, focus on deliverables rather than impact. A new approach or a revised objective is needed, one that allows more space and flexibility while increasing the focus on impact. Given the issues with over-assessment, flexibility on monitoring frameworks should also be considered in donor risk assessments.

Use the New Deal to challenge donors' own track record. One suggestion from the roundtable was to use the New Deal as a tool to assess donors' own capacity to support (or hinder) international development and peace. This was deemed important to make them better partners to host governments. This could include assessing how donor countries' domestic and foreign policies support the five PSGs in fragile states (e.g. Do our aid and domestic policies create perverse incentives to receive aid, to migrate?). This approach could include assessing whether the donor community is taking shared responsibility and risks for failure; coordinating their efforts; applying basic rules of good development practice as standard; being transparent and minimising the burden on the host country.

2.3. Conclusion

During the morning session of the 'Aiding Fragile States' roundtable, the participants broadly agreed that the principles of the New Deal are sound but that impact on the ground in Afghanistan has been limited. It was agreed that the TMAF goes some way to operationalising the transparency and accountability dimensions of the New Deal but misses some of the wider dimensions of fragility relating to legitimate governance, security and peacebuilding as foundations for change. The lack of take-up of the New Deal was put down to a lack of awareness of it among national and international actors, as well as a broader political resistance to it. The challenge of understanding and adapting to the politics of aid has not, it was argued, therefore been overcome through the New Deal framework.

One outcome drawn from the roundtable participants' discussion, therefore, is a better awareness of the relevance of the New Deal. This includes a better awareness of its limitations. With all these challenges and 'greyness' in mind, what implications does this have for public attitudes and support for ODA in fragile states? Does it matter what the public think and why? And how might these debates inform a new approach to engaging with the public on issues of international aid and development?

3. Building Public Support for Overseas Aid

'We have mis-educated the public. We have taught them that they can help by writing a cheque. 0.7 per cent (of GNI to ODA) means it is taken care of. Nor is it true that development is not messy, that administrative costs in charities are low, or that aid always reaches its intended beneficiaries..... We must change the construct of the narrative by discussing beyond aid and 0.7% to how the public can affect change through their own behaviour.'

The afternoon session of the London Roundtable on 'Aiding Fragile States' was focused on the question of how to build public support for ODA. Communication on ODA has clearly proven to be difficult, especially when it is delivered in fragile contexts. Participants broadly agreed that messaging from both the UK Government and the NGO sector on ODA can be oversimplified, competing and confused, as well as lacking in honesty, bravery, human substance and relevance. However, it was also acknowledged that it is easier to sell catastrophe than success stories to the media and general public.¹⁰ Why is communication on ODA so difficult, and what impact does it have on public attitudes to ODA? Can the New Deal principles offer any guidance for reframing the narrative?

3.1. Public Attitudes to Aid

Current attitudes towards aid in the UK can range from: 'I want to help', 'we can fix it', 'we are a generous country' to 'charity begins at home' and 'dictators steal it'. However the public feels about aid, the roundtable participants agreed that the main message that is heard by the British public about aid is a singular narrative that says, 'spend money, it is not messy, money is the solution'.

The participants argued that it is the large development NGOs, backed up by the British public that have pushed this agenda. In 2005, the 'Make Poverty History' campaign, led by the large development NGOs, ran a successful, celebrity-driven campaign that captured parts of the British public's imagination. Whether this was the desired message or not, what was cemented in the British public's mind was the need to increase and fix development spending. However, as one participant cynically argued, 'once the public realised how small an amount 0.7 per cent actually is, they realised they needn't object'.

It was also argued at the roundtable that NGO communication strategies have most often been used to maximise short-term support for specific humanitarian campaigns or funding appeals. Natural disasters such as the recent earthquake in Nepal, for example, result in huge public donations, that can exceed the figures given via state ODA.¹¹ The public, as one participant noted, tends to be far more generous in responding to natural rather than man-made disasters.¹² However, by pushing on an open door and appealing to what the public is most sympathetic to, this has had a negative impact on public knowledge and awareness about the long-term nature and complexity of aid.

In terms of government engagement with the public on the aid debate, the British Government does have an agreed narrative on aid and does attempt (like some development NGOs) to address its complexity and provide examples of impact. An example given was the media coverage of David Cameron pushing corruption issues at the recent G7 Summit. However, it was also argued that while the Government spends significant time and resources ensuring profile across all its funded projects in developing countries, there is no such approach towards the UK public who pays for it. Without a broader strategy, the participants argued, the 'Government can feel under attack' and hence engagement with the public can be 'temporary and reactive' in its approach. However, why do public attitudes to ODA matter?

¹¹ In 2014, an estimated £10.6 billion was given to charity by the UK public, for which 20 per cent of people gave 12 per cent to overseas assistance (*UK Giving 2014*, Charities Aid Foundation, April 2015).

¹² Public giving was up in the UK in 2014, for example, most likely reflecting the launch of the Disasters Emergency Committee Ebola campaign.

¹⁰ Only 4.3 per cent of UK print media coverage relating to Afghanistan between 2008 and 2013 was, for example, focused on aid and development, with negative portrayals dominating (BAAG, 2014).



The cross-party consensus on the expansion of aid spending in recent years, supported by much of the NGO community, developed without broad public support or a communications strategy. Little is done to effectively engage people in debates on how and why the UK should support development processes. The British public, along with those in the Scandinavian and northern European states, are broadly either sympathetic or apathetic to a percentage of their taxes going to ODA. This is highlighted through comparison to their counterparts in the United States and in eastern Europe, where the 'sell' is much more challenging. However, unless the UK public can be better engaged in meaningful debates around aid, cynicism and apathy will creep in and turn to opposition.

The participants agreed that a change of approach is necessary if the UK Government and NGOs want to retain public support for aid and development and to ensure new campaigns do not backfire (particularly relating to aid in fragile states). Getting the message right will be critical to the UK's continued leadership in this area.¹³ Therefore, what challenges, lessons and ways forward did the participants identify for communicating clear public narratives on ODA?

3.2. Better Public Narratives on Overseas Aid

'The public has sold its conscience to Oxfam.'

Development actors' reluctance to take responsibility for failures, to embrace complexity and to address the bigger issues were just some reasons participants identified for limited public engagement on ODA. This, the participants argued, is due to the fact that transformative change is messy, complicated and long term and is not easy to talk about in bite-sized nuggets.

Development success stories (and the case for failure) do not sell news. However, if development in fragile states is to be accepted and given the priority it deserves, some tolerance of failure needs to be accepted by the media and British public. As one participant said, 'to implement 0.7 per cent well, we have to innovate and accept failure. However, we cannot sell this to the media. It is a vicious circle'. This challenge has been further complicated by the fact that fixing aid expenditure at 0.7 per cent of GNI has unintentionally resulted in an over-simplified message that 'people are poor because they have no money' and gives the public an excuse to 'sell their consciences'.

It was argued that there is also an assumption that the public cannot understand complexity, are naïve or disinterested. However, it was suggested that it is the development sector and media themselves who are missing the big, global issues that matter to and will engage the UK public. There was also

13 See *Understanding UK Public Attitudes to Aid and Development*, IPPR & ODI, 2012

the question raised of missing evidence to back up claims of the impact and relevance of international aid. All these issues, the participants believed, could result in the British public becoming increasingly suspicious and apathetic towards overseas aid and development.

With this in mind, **recommendations** for building public support for aid and development in fragile states identified by the participants were as follows:

Be clear about what the public should 'do'. Roundtable participants argued that before reconstructing the narrative(s) on ODA, the Government and NGOs need to be clear what they want the public to actually 'do' in relation aid and development. For the roundtable participants this means not focusing on spending more money but supporting Government and NGOs to 'do development differently'. This means the public should be more encouraging of innovation and more forgiving and open to failure. It meant the public adjusting their own patterns of behaviour. This could be in relation to how individuals support and engage in new business and enterprise, fair trade and immigration issues within our own domestic lives, work and politics.

Get stuck in and 'be honest'. Debate the trade-offs and tensions around aid as well as the sources of fragility (e.g. do they reside just in fragile states or in global processes?). Openly state when aid has not worked and that lessons have been learned. A single narrative is not needed. Get people engaged in a discussion and treat them like intelligent adults. Be honest that development is hard and get the sympathy of the public. Engage the 'progressive sceptics.' As one participant put it, 'drop the defensiveness and embrace the complexity'.

Dig deeper and find stories that are inherently more newsworthy. This requires more investment as well as more creativity in the media sector. Compare, for example, the difficulties in Afghanistan with those issues in Britain and Europe (e.g. the high level of sexual violence in the UK, the corruption embedded in FIFA). This helps the public to connect with the issues rather than as something that happens 'over there'.

Shift the public mood and the 'red tops' will follow. Charities and DFID are scared of the Daily Mail. The participants believed that if the public mood can be shifted, then the 'red tops' will have to shift too. Members of the silent majority came forward, for example, when tragic, personal stories of the migrants crossing by boat to Europe were presented. Work with more enlightened parts of the media, using human stories and visuals. Present 'heroic people that the public can care about, not those they can feel threatened by'.

Have a theory of change behind the stories. This is critical for presenting aid in a more legitimate light and addressing the question of why aid matters

and works. It also gives the public a chance to question and challenge its logic. For example, are the UK Government's aid goals achievable? One participant argued that they are not, saying, 'Donors are imposing too much, too soon on fragile states. Aid can help educate Afghan girls, not rebuild states'.

Deliver human stories from a peacebuilding and statebuilding goal (PSG) perspective. Break away from the traditional portrayal of poverty just as an issue of lack of resources (e.g. access to clean drinking water) to an issue of lack of access to power with the space to exercise it. This might include, for example, delivering stories that reflect how addressing corruption, clientelism or insecurity directly affects the life chances of an individual and their community.

Address global challenges that matter to the British public. As geopolitical power structures are breaking down and shifting away from the post-World War II political and economic settlements, new sources of power and instability have emerged. How does aid and development fit within this new world order? One participant argued that this includes recognising public concern over emerging issues such as the growth of China and their reach in the world, the 'failure' of the UN and EU, the shifting balance of power in the Middle East, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, cyber-crime, criminality and migration issues.

Address the question of Britain's desired position in the world. What does the public want the UK's position and role to be, with what implications? One participant argued, for example, that the British Government should sell the fact that, as the second largest aid donor in the world, the UK punches way above its weight overseas (i.e. Britain's position is strengthened by investing 0.7% of GNI in ODA).

Put a spotlight on donor agencies ('Reverse the New Deal on the donors'). Use the New Deal as a framework for assessing the donors' own record in fragile states. This is important for demonstrating to the public that the sources of fragility are part of global processes. This might include assessing how aid, global trade and the foreign policy, domestic and security interests of donor states affect the achievement of the PSGs in fragile states. Reintroduce inconvenient truths about, for example, the causes and responses to migration. Civil society has an important role in producing the evidence for this.

Consider how to best communicate the sustainable development goals (SDGs), including the new goals relating to peace, justice and fragility. The SDGs could be a tool for stimulating debate about how the UK could best support their implementation in fragile states. It could raise issues around the successes and failures of the MDGs. For example, as one participant questioned, 'why do development success stories only come from strong states, or from states that received Chinese investment?'.



Provide evidence. One roundtable participant argued that 'the New Deal is achievable if expectations from the public are for the donors to 'do development differently'. Find examples of these new approaches, and provide evidence of impact in this regard to raise public expectations on the Government and NGO sector.

3.3. Conclusion

During the afternoon session of the 'Aiding Fragile States' roundtable, the participants agreed that public discourse on aid and development needs to be reshaped. As one participant argued, 'We need to start making an effort otherwise we will get found out!' If the current narrative is, 'spend money, it is not messy, money is the solution', a reframed narrative might include, 'it is chaotic and hard, there is more than one narrative and approach, you can play a role by changing your own behaviour and challenging global development processes.'

In order to do this, the participants argued that the media and development sector need to raise discussions beyond aid and the 0.7 per cent question, and address issues that concern the British public by linking the local to the global. They argued that it was important to be clear about how the British public can affect change and to encourage individual responsibility (do not let the public sell their consciences to big charities).

The participants agreed that the New Deal framework cannot be a starting point for an effective communications strategy but it can frame the approach. It can, for example, raise questions about the primacy of country leadership in fragile states, and about the role of peace, security, legitimate politics and statebuilding in development. It can act as a focal point for questioning the differing ideologies and approaches to development between and within the traditional and emerging donors. This includes addressing the question of the balance between the conditions versus the drivers of development, and who should and can affect this change. The participants also argued that the New Deal could be a useful tool for challenging the record of the donors, including the role of global processes and international publics themselves.



4. Conclusion and Next Steps

The New Deal is no panacea for better aid delivery in fragile states. However, one key reflection from the 'Aiding Fragile States' roundtable was the recognition that it is at least working towards reframing how to do development differently in fragile states. This includes assessing, designing and monitoring development projects according to key dimensions of fragility.

There was a clear agreement on the need to build on the New Deal's strengths. These include the use of the PSGs as indicators of fragility and building blocks for development. It was also clear that the development sector need to learn from the New Deal's weaknesses. This includes the risk of creating an illusion of a simple, technical solution to what is essentially a political problem.

If donors are to take on what is good about the New Deal, this requires the public to support innovation and risk taking as part of the development initiative. The public need to take back their agency and engage with and support international development issues in a way that speaks to them. This means the media and development sector challenging the public's own attitudes and behaviours in relation to poverty, development and international security. It means discussing difficult, messy issues and treating the British public as if they are intelligent adults.

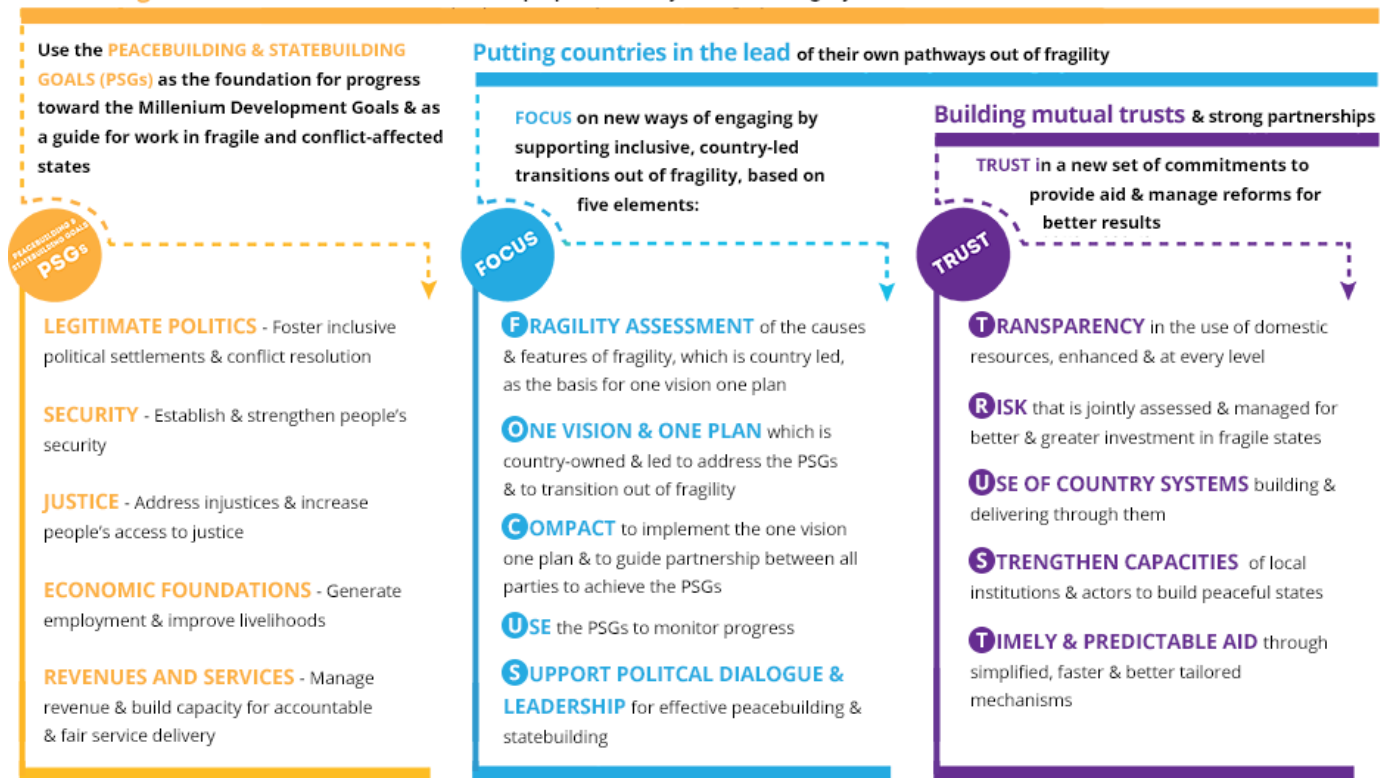
The 'Aiding Fragile States' roundtable in June this year was one of the few forums in the UK where experts, policy makers and practitioners exchanged views about the New Deal. The success of the New Deal will partly depend on regular reassessment of its impacts by domestic and international actors. In future, BAAG would like to progress discussions on the New Deal, TMAF and other key policies that have implications for Afghanistan's development, and for doing development in other fragile contexts. Additionally, with member agencies, the wider NGO community, donors and the British media, BAAG aim to facilitate further discussions on how to improve communications intended to encourage and maintain public support of ODA.

Annex 1: The New Deal Framework

Participating countries and organisations: Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Haiti, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Liberia, Luxembourg, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Togo, United Kingdom, United States, African Development Bank, African Union, Asian development Bank, European Union, International Monetary Fund, International Labour Organisation, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, United Nations, World Bank.

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