

**Increasing Government Accountability in
Zones of Conflict
Through Public Participation in Policy Making**

Workshop Report
Entebbe, Uganda, March 1-3, 2010



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1. Executive Summary and background

The experience of violent conflict has a devastating impact on a state's ability to govern itself and the legacies of conflict – such as polarized societies with high levels of distrust and damaged institutions – create specific barriers to improving governance.

In 2008, with funding from the UK Department for Development, CR began a project working to help women, men and youth in conflict-affected communities to engage more effectively with politicians and policy makers to influence decision-making on issues that impact their daily lives. This five-year collaboration with partners in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, Uganda, Southern Sudan, Georgia-Abkhazia and Fiji seeks to support changes in governance by:

- **Increasing ordinary people's ability to voice concerns**, monitor government actions and improve their access to information about existing policies;
- **Creating better understanding of the challenges and strategies** for peacebuilding and governance; and
- **Deepening analysis** and inspiring fresh ideas through joint analysis and comparative learning between partners.

The focus of the initiative is the relationship between good governance and public participation in conflict zones. CR is eager to understand the extent to which the strategies and means employed to promote public participation in governance and peacebuilding in one region can inform the choices made in another. To this end CR convened a three-day Joint Analysis Workshop bringing together CR staff and board members with twenty-five partners from the Mano River region, the Caucasus, Fiji and Uganda/Southern Sudan to share experience of working on this project and to subject to scrutiny the assumptions and analysis that inform our shared endeavours. In doing so we examined cross cutting issues, including: local governance and decentralization; elections; and cross border issues as well as methods or tools for addressing challenges posed by these issues, including: advocacy and lobbying; awareness raising and the media; capacity building; dialogue and negotiation; community education; research; partnerships and networking; and utilizing legal process.

This report reflects on some of the key issues and approaches that were discussed rather than attempting to encapsulate all the rich experience that was shared during the workshop.

2. The key issues and approaches

The workshop was structured around a mixture of plenary discussions and working groups. While there were some inputs on specific issues (monitoring and evaluation, devising strategies to influence policy and the Ugandan context) the primary objective was to provide participants with the space to explore a range of key issues that they encounter and some of the approaches that they employ to address these. The workshop methodology promoted comparative analysis through discussions in working groups formed of participants from different

regions to bring to bear their accumulated experience of working on governance and peacebuilding issues.

Issues or problems

Three issue areas received particular attention: local governance and decentralization, elections and cross border dynamics. Participants explored their experiences of working towards increasing public participation in governance in each of these domains. The following key points of learning and successful examples of project work were made:

a. Influencing Local Governance

It was agreed that a critical challenge in governance is to create a balance in which people, often living far from the centres of power, have access to institutions and processes that determine the distribution of resources and the culture of politics. If this does not occur structures of marginalization can be created that often contribute to the root causes of conflicts. Participants shared several outstanding challenges relating to efforts to utilize decentralization processes in their respective countries to bring service delivery and access to decision-making closer to people: poor information flows, corruption, lack of transparency, lack of accountability and a lack of capacities to monitor the operations of local government. The challenges noted were connected to the degree of independence in decision-making at the local level and whether central government is prepared to devolve serious powers to local government or utilize decentralization as a ruse to assert control over regions via different means. It was observed that in cases where decentralization was not operating the laws or practices impeding decentralization of decision-making could be a target for civil society organization (CSO) advocacy and lobbying. In particular, participants identified the tension between the unresolved relationships between traditional and modern governance as a key obstacle to good governance at the local level.



While decentralization was noted as an effective means to bring governance closer to communities it was also noted that the role of central government is nonetheless important – if a culturally appropriate balance is not found there will be much scope for increased tensions. To overcome pitfalls establishing respectful relations with institutions of local government and enabling officials to see that civil society initiatives can be beneficial to them as well is a constructive means to engage.

b. Promoting Nonviolent Elections

A key point of learning from the working group examining elections was that elections should not be seen as an end in themselves, but as one step in a political cycle. Encouraging greater public participation in elections requires long-term awareness-raising with the public that should not start and finish around election time but connect elections with the broader framework of

governance. Elections are however, by definition, a critical opportunity for more intense focus on governance issues and scrutinizing the capability, responsiveness and accountability of those responsible for governing and for political parties more generally.

Given the youthful demographic profile of societies in many of the countries under discussion, and many that have experienced conflict, elections present an opportunity to engage a constituency that is often either marginalized or instrumentalized by conflict. In countries threatened by conflict or having recently experienced conflict there is also a greater risk that political tensions present in pre-election phases could more easily escalate into violence because the culture of violence has penetrated further into the patterns of life. Socially and economically disenfranchised youth can be particularly vulnerable to this and therefore it is important that attention is paid to initiatives that both integrate such groups into the political process as well as enhance confidence in the integrity of the political process.

Think long-term

Awareness-raising with the public should not start and finish around election time but connect elections with the broader framework of governance, a longer-term objective.

NGOs have played many roles in promoting more effective elections and one example cited in the workshop was the way in which in Abkhazia a 'League For Fair Elections' was created to both inform the public of issues and dilemmas as well as to lobby the authorities to institute more transparent election practices. In particular, it was successful in lobbying for a change in the election code to allow independent election observers to be present at the public service level and trained students to serve as election observers.

c. Cross-border Peacebuilding Issues

Disputed borders, often arising out of a discrepancy between colonial decisions and traditional practices, can be key flashpoints for conflict, but borders and relations across them present opportunities as well as barriers. A number of elements were identified relating to the cross-border problems faced by participants: trade, natural resources, security, citizenship and freedom of movement (linked to communities divided by boundaries). For example, in the Mano river region traders, especially women, are the victims of corruption and sexual abuse at the hands of border officials (and in many regions it was noted that governments often turn a blind eye to harassment at borders seeing this as a form of income generation for security forces when the government has payroll difficulties).

Participants agreed that trade is an important confidence building measure for border communities emerging from conflict – whether this is in a localized manner, recreating trade patterns and traditional markets, which can regenerate communities and aid reconciliation or in a more structured manner, involving interaction between governments (with the European common market cited as an example that, though culturally specific, could be examined by many others).

Participants observed that states tend to see the “solution” to border problems in strengthening the role of the state, using the lens of security as the main driver. Stricter border regulation driven by security concerns can inhibit social and

economic interaction and development, this is an example of how statebuilding does not necessarily correspond with peacebuilding agendas. Balancing permissive as opposed to restrictive approaches to cross-border interaction is therefore critical. In consequence the following points of learning were presented as potential solutions:

- **At the state level**, improved channels of communication between governments, encouraging agreement on cross-border policies and the development of regional frameworks and forums, could be used as a platform for advocating more creative and constructive cross-border policy. Inter-governmental bodies in which states parties engage can play supportive roles in generating such relations. It is important for states to understand regional dynamics and not simply develop country policies in isolation.
- **At the local level**, experience of promoting trade across the Uganda-Sudan border has shown that traders and civil society actors, engaging local governments, chambers of commerce and traders can generate improved relations. While it is important for central governments and state level authorities to engage across borders, interaction between devolved authorities and civil society can create more permissive environments that promote reconciliation. The establishment of a cross-border forum for traditional, religious and civic leaders in Uganda, South Sudan, DRC and CAR was cited as an example.
- One idea that was proposed in response to the securitization of borders was to establish citizen advice bureaus in border areas with paralegals offering advice and support to traders and travellers.



Approaches, Tools and Tactics

In response to the issues or problems identified and considered above, participants examined a number of approaches and tools. The following are key points of learning and successful examples of project work using these tools:

a. Advocacy and Lobbying

Civil society organizations habitually engage in advocacy and lobbying activities to influence governments and mobilize communities. In societies faced with governance challenges advocacy is often perceived as a threat by governments, so those using it as a tool need to find a balance between critique and maintaining channels of communication. Purely negative campaigns will illicit hostile responses therefore judgement is required to ascertain when it is more effective to be conciliatory and when it is more effective to persist in potentially confrontational approaches. Workshop participants' experiences suggested that in order to find the right balance it is important to keep the door open for

engagement on urgent issues, particularly when no other mechanisms or tools exist and this often requires developing a relationship of mutual respect if not trust with interlocutors within the authorities.

Partners from Georgia identified an example of such trust building, where CSOs formed a network among organizations and activists representing displaced people. Network participants engaged in constant consultation with the government and succeeded in getting some of their members on a steering committee within the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation. These members were then able to feed in advocacy messages from the network as a means of influencing policy. In addition to lobbying on policy at the centre the network assisted a group of displaced in the provinces to lobby the local administration to reverse a decision to evict a group of displaced persons from their residence. The two-pronged approach added to the authority of the advocacy approach.

Participants identified a range of advocacy approaches that had been useful and should form part of an advocacy toolkit for civil society actors: using international instruments; constant and persistent advocacy; utilizing modern communications technologies such as text messaging or Facebook; networking; expressing advocacy messages in clear and accessible terms; and identifying allies – creating a single voice will make the campaign stronger.

Communicating with governments

In societies faced with governance challenges, civil society should engage officials and find a balance between critique and maintaining channels of communication.

b. Awareness raising and the media: communication strategies

NGOs expend tremendous efforts on attempting to raise public awareness of issues that are important to them. Participants in the JAW had all used the media as a means to convey messages to the public and connect with people. However, questions were raised about the extent to which coherent strategies are identified, recognizing limitations and opportunities. While communication strategies are an important tool it was stressed that there must be realistic expectations of what the media can do and whether the media is always the best means to convey ideas to the public. Central to this is clarity in regard to the message but also the audience: whom are you trying to influence and to what effect?

In conflictual societies a range of factors will influence how these questions are answered. Partners spoke of challenges they have experienced, such as censorship, state control of the media – especially the electronic media, limited internet access (an innovative solar powered centre was one response to this dilemma), journalists and media professionals having a limited understanding of conflict and often not accurately communicating the message and the fact that the media is, at the end of the day, a business and therefore stories have to attract audiences. Political sensitivities can be acutely felt when misplaced words could reignite violence or entrench stereotypes. The following ideas were proposed as ways to handle some of these challenges:

- **Using modern communications technologies:** whether email, Facebook, Twitter, text messaging, crowd sourcing, Youtube or social advertising there are a plethora of ways to share ideas. Young people in particular have moved beyond traditional patterns of consuming

news and information – new media only have a small audience to date but it tends to be an influential and energetic one. Nonetheless, more tried and tested approaches such as press releases or soap operas (on radio or TV) can remain powerful modes of communication.

- **Developing relationships with journalists** by inviting them to meetings, press conferences and interviews with staff and holding workshops on conflict and governance issues.
- **Employing a writer** who has experience and connections in the media industry and can take time to learn about the issues before writing copy for the organization or opinion pieces that serve as a means to influence the public or at least other writers.
- **Crystallizing the message** into a tightly worded and accessible idea or phrase that the public can remember and relate to.
- **Getting the issue talked about**, in circumstances where one cannot control the message, the focus should be on getting the issue picked up by the media and talked about and then let the public form their own opinion - in short, relinquish control.

c. Capacity Building

Capacity building was identified as a necessary activity by participants, particularly within the context of conflict affected or post-conflict countries where war has often damaged the social fabric and denied individuals and communities the opportunities to gain education and develop skills. Whilst war-affected communities develop a range of coping mechanisms and find they have skills to harness in peacebuilding and post-conflict phases, the context is often such that services and systems are either weak or non-existent. In such contexts civil society actors can be those who step into the breach and provide services to meet the material needs not met through weak governments. At the same time they are also those who take on a range of other challenges in dysfunctional conflict/post-conflict contexts. Such efforts require different skills and capacities and undoubtedly there is much experience in helping local and national civil society actors develop and address the gaps.



Good analysis of the context, of needs and of existing capacities is often a necessary first step to enable effective capacity building. It was noted that an important component of this is to identify allies – likeminded actors or actors with credibility in a community whose strengths can be harnessed in tandem to reinforce and extend capacities. These allies can be in civil society or in government – to rebuild a community’s capacity is required across the board. Concurrently it is necessary to understand where the blockages lie and identify potential “spoilers” in order to develop strategies as to how best to engage and overcome potential pitfalls. Participants recognized that exclusion often breeds fear and exacerbates any feelings of threat therefore it is more effective to help actual or potential spoilers to buy into change and build capacities accordingly. Such strategies require patience and persistence.

A number of dilemmas were identified:

- **The need to coordinate** between CSOs, international bodies and government is crucial. In many instances a lack of resources in government mean that CSOs can do a better job than government agencies – certainly CSOs have a greater ability to reach grassroots communities. However, without effective coordination, duplication and even competition to fill the void can cause CSOs to undermine one another and reduce their efficiency.
- **Patterns of external support** can create dependencies that are difficult to overcome: frequently capacity is built but the means to sustain engagement on the part of local or national organizations are lacking and they are therefore dependent on external support and the attendant agendas of donors that do not always coincide with those of communities themselves. This requires CSOs to develop effective advocacy and lobbying skills to inform external support agendas.
- **Politicization of civil society:** it is often the case that dynamic civil society actors enter politics or government. This is not automatically a negative – it can bring new skills and attitudes into government but it can deplete the strength of civic actors and sometimes see former civic champions tainted by politics. Participants said it is important not to assume the transition is negative but at the same time not to tread carefully because an official or politician is a former fellow in civic arms.



d. Dialogue and negotiation

Dialogue and negotiation are staple components of political life the world over and become even more critical in contexts in which violent conflict is a factor. For civil society actors addressing governance issues it is important to consider the purpose of dialogue and with whom to engage in dialogue. Beyond notions of dialogue as a culture of doing things dialogue is also a tool to be harnessed in different contexts: partners highlighted ad hoc situations in which political actors had been brought into processes of dialogue to address specific crises; they also pointed to structured processes of dialogue that had been created to maintain channels of communication between different political actors or between civil society and the authorities. For example, in Fiji, partners assisted in organizing ‘Dialogue Fiji’, an initiative to create cohesion and discussion within the CSO and NGO community negotiations well as opportunities for relationship and confidence building with the state and security sectors.

In some instances dialogue has been used as a precursor to more formal talks and negotiations – either to pave the way for such processes or to find less formal contexts to bridge gaps when formal processes have stumbled or broken down. Informal dialogue can be a back channel with less status and formality and therefore can draw in politically sensitive actors before the formal context might be prepared for such engagement. Questions of inclusion or exclusion become paramount: in each context those promoting dialogue need to weigh the pros and cons of pursuing an inclusive approach seeking to bring all relevant

stakeholders to the process or whether it is necessary to commence with more likeminded actors to develop a stronger core before drawing in potential spoilers or those with more intransigent positions. Those seeking to facilitate dialogue or wanting to be a party to dialogue to achieve a given objective will need to undertake rigorous analysis of the threats and opportunities of pursuing different strategies. Political and traditional leaders, public figures with credibility, officials and rebels or spoilers are the actors drawn into such processes – and they need to be for the processes to be able to deliver. However a dilemma is that certain voices often get left out – particularly young people and women and civil society actors can play a particular role in creating formats that integrate these perspectives into dialogue processes.

Civil society coordination

Without effective coordination, duplication and even competition to fill the void can cause CSOs to undermine one another and reduce their efficiency.

Dialogue as an instrument to promote participation operates at different levels – it is not simply about political negotiations. Partners described how in their respective contexts they had consciously used dialogue as a means to broaden debate, often creating public forums that became safe spaces for potentially controversial ideas to be aired. They also spoke of experience utilizing dialogue as an alternative to the court system as a means to resolve legal problems or to address land disputes – as such dialogue is a tool that can essentially be utilized in regard to any type of issue. Other participants spoke about the creative use of dialogue as a means to challenge entrenched attitudes across divides – two examples cited were a structured process of meetings between young leaders following a period of hostilities and the use of film production as a means to create a “dialogue through film” around areas of identity and common concern. All acknowledged that it can be hard to measure changes in behaviour and especially attitudes and that patience and a long-term perspective are critical, although sometimes dialogue can produce immediate and tangible results.

e. Community Education

Helping a community to become more aware of their rights and their responsibilities as well as those of the government is an important step towards encouraging more accountable governance. Effective community education can be an important way to enhance levels of awareness about how to access government structures and overcome challenges that are common in conflict-ridden societies, such as illiteracy and lack of formal educational opportunities or the pervasive influence of propaganda and the lack of alternative sources of information. Those seeking to use community education need to reflect on how it relates to other forms of education in formal or informal contexts. For instance community education is often perceived as a means of awareness raising and mobilization when the state curricula does not cover issues of importance to communities, such as governance or peace. As with other tools, initiatives pursued over the long-term with follow-up activities, rather than in short bursts, such as a single training before an election, were deemed more effective as a means of providing skills and awareness for communities to learn how best to hold those in authority to account. Examples of successful community education initiatives provided by partners involved several key elements, including:

- **Responding to a need identified in the community**, rather than bringing in an external idea that does not gel with traditional experience, which may cause confusion or discord.
- **Being inclusive:** in some contexts certain groups feel less vulnerable if community education initiatives are undertaken separately, for instance when working with women's groups.
- **Using peer-to-peer education** can be an important way to work with sensitive or vulnerable constituencies, such as training young women to talk to young women.
- **Being clear and culturally sensitive**, such as using vocabulary that is accessible to those being taught rather than obscured by jargon – one participant commented on experience of working with rural communities “don't talk about budgets talk about the people's money.”
- **Relating community education to the everyday issues** that people face is a more effective way to mobilize them than to focus on abstract issues.
- **Balancing the discourse of rights with that of responsibilities** in order for people to be aware of their responsibilities as citizens as well as their rights.

Relating your message to the everyday

Relating community education to the everyday issues that people face is a more effective way to mobilize them than to focus on abstract issues.

Participants felt that it is necessary to navigate a potentially fraught path in that those in authority can be prone to see community education as a threat or a forum to promote oppositional thinking. Therefore it is important to consider how to allay such fears or to create contexts in which participants are secure. This prompted the recognition that there is much political sensitivity to the way in which messages are formulated. Furthermore, education does not have to take place in traditional classroom settings – experience of working with radio drama as a means to reach a wider audience was described. Another innovative approach undertaken in Gulu, Uganda, described how a ‘public information room’ was established in order for both NGOs and governments to display their mandates and strategies and plans. This public space proved a useful tool in dispelling concerns and making the activities more transparent.

f. Research

Civic actors use research in different ways and it is rarely an isolated activity, but rather one that underpins a range of other engagements. In particular research is critical to identify gaps in knowledge and understanding of complex situations and help to provide the insight to devise strategies and actions in response. This poses a dual challenge – to undertake research in a credible way and to utilise the product of the research. Participants noted that it is important that local people feel involved in research that concerns them in order for it to be deemed credible in the target region. Too often communities are objects and not subjects of research and one way to address this is to ensure that populations from whom insights have been gathered have an opportunity to have research presented back to them: this gives the impression of being a dialogue rather than information passing one-way. This will also address a sense of research fatigue that many communities have when external researchers consume information but then never feed back. A good method for feeding back research findings is through community meetings where any solutions uncovered will also go some

way toward making the community feel they have benefited from the experience. Furthermore, the provision of information and analysis will enable communities to consider their own response strategies in regard to how to influence the relevant authorities, rather than being dependent upon external actors to do this.

Participants also emphasized that ensuring any research used as base line information is cross-referenced for accuracy, as many public consultations fail to be inclusive. For example in Liberia, partners found that women were not properly represented in a public consultation after uncovering that the only woman supposedly consulted had in fact not been present for any of the meetings.



g. Partnerships and Networks

All participants agreed that networks are an excellent way to ensure coordination and cooperation between organizations with shared objectives. Networks help build competence and relationships, and by uniting voices they can give their members and participants greater coherence in voicing demands for accountability. The more a network is able to bring together actors rooted in a particular context the more credible they will be and thus better able to articulate a coherent voice to those they seek to influence. In conflict contexts networks can provide much needed solidarity to vulnerable actors. If networks are able to bring together partners from across divides then they have the potential to be even more powerful forces. Working in such contexts there can be significant capacity issues for network members and for the network itself – in terms of skills, resources and communications. Networks often start from ad hoc sets of relations and over time become more structured – as they do there is a risk that they lose their initial impulse and partners observed that sometimes inertia sustains networks that have outlived their cause. In this regard networks, be they single issue or have a wider remit, need to maintain a clear sense of purpose.

h. Utilizing legal process

Using legal processes as a means of challenging injustice can be a powerful tool. In post conflict settings in which the rule of law has been damaged, faith in due process is often absent. This jeopardizes the credibility of legal instruments and yet their appropriate use can serve to recalibrate attitudes to the law and the integrity of governance. From the perspective of civil society actors the law can be a critical means to hold governments – whether central or local – to account. Focus on transitional justice issues in post-conflict contexts can also be a first step in rebuilding trust in the legal system, although in this context external support can be instrumental.

Analyzing these points, participants in the workshop discussed three key ways to use legal processes to hold governments to account - parliamentary bills, court cases and international mechanisms. Each requires a different approach. A Fijian NGO related how it had made submissions to bills regarding freedom of speech

and one on reconciliation; Ugandan partners spoke of providing insight on bills dealing with domestic violence, national reconciliation and violence; and Abkhaz NGOs lobbied their legislative body regarding a law on access to information. In so doing partners needed to engage in a process of political dialogue to maximise the influence of their advice.

Working for legislative change, as above, is a different strategy compared to working on public interest law. The latter is something NGO partners were much less familiar with and were intrigued to hear how in Fiji an NGO partner acted as a “friend of the court”, providing legal expertise in support of a court case challenging the legality of a military coup. Such interventions can involve considerable expense. While public participation in a legal case is low, press coverage of legal cases is often high and can be a good way to raise awareness, stimulate debate and potentially to publicly delegitimize unlawful or corrupt government decisions. In certain contexts it might be extremely difficult to defeat an incumbent government in a court of law, and involve a degree of risk, but the exposure to public scrutiny involved in a case and the oxygen of public attention can play significant roles in changing attitudes.



Utilising either approach might require working with allies and often the need to build coalitions with likeminded actors. Georgian partners related the experience of supporting IDPs to push through a legal case that revealed the importance of working in concert. Legal processes can be intimidating to the uninitiated and therefore such approaches, especially in often-dysfunctional conflict and post conflict environments, will require legal expertise.

3. Discussion on monitoring and evaluation

Following discussions on project work and shared learning there were two sessions on log frames and monitoring and evaluation where tips and advice were provided, followed by open discussion. The following is a summary of key tips and points of discussion:

Logframes

The logical framework (or logframe) is one way, increasingly popular among donors, of keeping track of project progress against objectives. They can aid teams to think through activities in advance and provide a clear framework against which to work in the implementation phase. However, in order for logframes to be effective **objectives should be realistic** rather than aspirational. Donors prefer to see modest aims that are met than high aims that are not. Participants also noted that logframes should be created with partners in order for them to feel ownership over their responsibilities.

Baseline data

Baseline data is the information against which a project team will measure success, so it is important to use multiple sources of information to provide the team with flexibility later in the project when measuring progress. When there is little information available, the use of focus groups and questionnaires are helpful in building baseline data. It is important to cooperate with other organizations and donor governments who share a need for such data. Another useful tip is to record attitudes and behaviour, rather than relying on statistics, as this is an excellent way to measure real change that cannot always be captured through numbers.

Set realistic objectives

In order for logframes to be effective objectives should be realistic rather than aspirational. Donors prefer to see modest aims that are met than high aims that are not.

Indicators and measures

How indicators are designed translates into how well success can be communicated at the end of the project, so indicators of change should be recorded regularly in order to track progress or spot problems early. Risks should also be clearly articulated at the outset, as this will help in making indicators more flexible to changes in context. Finally, indicators that measure behaviour should indicate meaningful change rather than simply activities completed. For example, participation in a training event in itself is only a partial indicator, whereas a change in behaviour following on from participation is a more powerful indicator.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

In order to actively monitor change throughout the project cycle, time for doing M&E activities should be built into work plans so that time can be devoted to doing it well, rather than trying to fit it in at the end. A good way to do this is to draw up an M&E plan that includes:

- A list of M&E activities,
- A timeline,
- Clarity on which donor or funding relates to which activities, and
- A standardized reporting format.

It is also worth noting that verbal reporting or interviews are a good way of animating reports and capturing anecdotes to illustrate changes in behaviour, as this can be more effective than a written report, especially where partners may be less able to supply written documents.

4. A summary of learning and conclusions

Having discussed and shared the different issues partners are working on and the approaches and tools for increasing public participation in governance in conflict affected areas participants were, in the final sessions, able to reflect firstly on the foundations of the programme, followed by some of the broader conclusions to be drawn from the learning summarized in this report.

One common element identified in all of the regions represented at the workshop was a tension that frequently characterizes relations between government and citizens in regard to the operation and meaning of good governance. For DFID “good governance” is about a state’s capability, accountability and responsiveness. Building upon this definition CR posits that

governance is central to peacebuilding. CR's particular approach argues that good or better governance can be achieved by; **increasing government accountability in zones of conflict through public participation in policy making.**

CR and its partners are pursuing a range of initiatives to support changes in governance by assisting conflict-affected people to:

- Participate better in decision-making;
- Foster institutional change;
- Promote accountability;
- Increase the responsiveness of decision makers; and
- Address those unmet needs and contested issues that give rise to conflict.

These aims underpin the programme that CR and its partners began more than 18 months ago. What emerged from the learning shared in the workshop discussions, rooted in experience gained, was a clear understanding that **credible, legitimate governance is enabled when governments are able to hold a conversation with society.** Such conversations are more fraught and challenging in conflict-affected countries. Nonetheless, in order for this conversation to take place, society must be enabled and informed and CSOs are in a position to prepare people for this dialogue. CSOs also play a vital role in defending the public space so that homegrown solutions can be envisioned and developed at the local level in order to inform meaningful conversations that permeate into political practice.



The continued enthusiasm of partners despite two coups, three wars and many violent protests during the first 18 months of the programme is testament to their ability to encourage this process of collective empowerment.

5. Appendix

List of participants, separate document.

End.