

Civic Update Stabilization

Citizen Participation, Inclusion and Security Team
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Over the past decade, violent conflicts around the world have become longer and more protracted, and are increasingly characterized by the prevalence of non-state actors, which further complicates efforts for peace and political reform. Post-conflict societies often face serious challenges recovering from the political and social upheaval generated by violence, especially in creating long-term prospects for growth and development. In such places, damaged social contracts and fragile governance systems can further fuel violence and insecurity.

Restoring stability in areas prone to violence requires a systems approach that combines various types of support, including humanitarian aid, reconstruction and security. Critically, it also requires establishing legitimate political institutions and processes that are capable of addressing citizen interests and peacefully managing conflict. While conflict is ever present, shifting norms away from the use of violence also means finding new methods to resolve disputes. Advancing the use of democratic practices, such as dialogue and deliberation, can help achieve positive-sum outcomes and set new expectations about how problems are solved. When these practices are open and inclusive, they gain legitimacy and build the resilience needed to avoid violence.



Participants in a workshop on national reconciliation in Iraq take part in an active listening exercise

The Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR), a recent collaboration of the US State Department, Department of Defense and USAID, characterizes stabilization as “an inherently political endeavor” that requires aligning foreign assistance goals towards supporting locally legitimate democratic authorities.¹ Democracy and governance programs can contribute to stabilization, which is strongly influenced by local political dynamics and the credibility of local leadership. These factors necessitate program approaches that directly engage local leaders and emphasize changing how politics works. Such approaches benefit from NDI’s field presence, extensive relationships with diverse political actors and ability to bring people together across political divides. They also benefit from NDI’s experience supporting women’s empowerment, bridging inter-group divisions, conducting research and connecting citizens and public officials.

This issue of the Civic Update examines NDI’s programming during periods of stabilization, drawing examples from Afghanistan, Iraq, Kenya and South Sudan, Libya and the Sahel.

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What is Stabilization?

While definitions of stabilization vary, the term typically refers to a series of concerted steps to create lasting political and social conditions that can prevent and manage conflict in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Stabilization efforts focus on helping local actors build legitimate political settlements in contexts impacted by violence and experiencing a significant breakdown in state-society relations. The SAR reflects an increased awareness among the international donor community that legitimate political settlements are vital for long-term development and preventing the re-emergence of conflict. Stabilization is meant to be a transitional, short-term process (no longer than five years) which lays the foundation for work on a broader set of economic and social development outcomes.²

The goals of stabilization include ensuring civil security, supporting basic service delivery and repairing social contracts. Common political approaches that support these goals are developing credible governance institutions and increasing local leaders' capacity to implement responsive policies. Critical to the stabilization process is supporting institutions that are accountable to all groups, including minority and marginalized communities, and which provide for rule of law and universal human rights protections.³

Iraq: Empowering Women to Participate in the National Reconciliation Process

Iraq's national reconciliation process has been a high priority for the country's stabilization agenda in recent years, particularly in the wake of enduring sectarian conflict and government efforts to battle the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) forces. To assess citizen perspectives on reconciliation and priorities for post-conflict political reform, NDI commissioned nationwide public opinion research from February to April 2017. The results showed that a majority of Iraqis surveyed wanted inclusive democratic institutions to move the reconciliation process forward, and that despite the defeat of ISIS, significant challenges remained. The research also revealed that women hold a degree of legitimacy in Iraqi society that allows them to play a bridging role across sectarian divides. Yet due to patrilineal governance traditions, reconciliation processes remain entirely male-dominated. This presented an opening to support women's roles in national reconciliation initiatives.

Recognizing that women's voices are essential for a durable, broad-based peace, the Institute has been supporting a select group of women activists to articulate reconciliation priorities and advocate for women's inclusion in reconciliation processes. This pro-

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State Fragility

Stabilization and state fragility are often interrelated, as stabilization efforts typically occur in fragile contexts where political institutions and social ties are weak and violence is an enduring factor. State fragility commonly involves two primary dimensions - political and social - although several others, including environmental and economic, are included in OECD's States of Fragility index.⁴ The Index's multi-sectoral framework demonstrates the complex nature of fragility and provides conditions that characterize the places where stabilization efforts may occur:⁵

- Deep fractures along political, ethnic, religious or other identity lines
- Dysfunctional or weak formal and informal institutions that cannot effectively resolve social fractures or constructively manage political competition
- Breakdown in the relationship between citizens and leaders due to ineffective and unaccountable governance
- Lack of inclusion for minority and marginalized communities
- Violence as the primary mechanism of conflict resolution⁶

gram, begun in July 2017 with funding from the Canadian government, is called Her Role: Inclusive Reconciliation, Lasting Peace. It engages 40 women from four provinces previously under occupation by ISIS: Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salahaddin. The goal is to support Iraqi women to make their voices heard at the top levels of government, with eventual inclusion in a national reconciliation framework.

NDI partnered with organizations that were each based in one of the program's target provinces. Providing safe and functional spaces for women to convene, these organizations support participants to build relationships and establish trust among themselves, a vital and necessary factor to the success of the program. In addition, these organizations provide ongoing support to the women as they conduct local- and national-level outreach and advocacy with citizens, stakeholders and local decision makers.

Between December 2017 and June 2018, NDI conducted a series of workshops focused on different aspects of facilitation and leadership for peacebuilding. These workshops were designed to raise participants' awareness of different types of conflict and contributing causal factors. They also educated participants on opportunities for cross-sectarian reconciliation, outreach tools and techniques to enhance community engagement in reconciliation and policy advocacy skills for influencing decision makers.

Training exercises were also designed to stimulate thought about participants' personal goals and motivations, ways to act as agents for change in their local contexts and the challenges women activists may face in their communities while advocating for inclusion. These workshops have also allowed partici-

Resilience

Stabilization should begin the process of building resilience so that societies do not slide back into violent conflict. A resilient political system is one that can effectively manage the wide range of shocks, stressors and threats associated with political, social and environmental changes. Resilient systems are more flexible, innovative and adaptable in their recovery from crises.⁷ Resilient democracies are characterized by their ability to peacefully manage conflict through formal political and electoral processes, norms of inclusion and adherence to the rule of law.



HER ROLE
Inclusive Reconciliation
LASTING PEACE

The #HerRole program logo, designed to represent unity between Iraq's provinces

pants to draft recommendations for a national reconciliation platform that focuses on six thematic priorities: women's empowerment; safety and security; trust and confidence; education and youth; victims and survivors; and governance and redistribution of resources.

The program has been actively advertised through a media campaign using the hashtag #HerRole and a logo designed to evoke a tapestry and represent unity between the provinces. Participating women activists engaged in outreach to develop grassroots support for their draft national platform, emphasizing the importance of gender inclusion for a legitimate and effective reconciliation process. Activists in each province organized launch events focused on women's roles in reconciliation in the context of addressing their communities' needs and priorities. These provincial launch events have been followed by more

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localized outreach efforts and trainings to build advocacy plans as the women take steps to gain support for their platform. By advancing women's leadership in the reconciliation process, NDI is helping political activists find new avenues to bridge sectarian divides, develop inclusive civic practices and set the conditions for a more resilient Iraqi society.

Sahel: Strengthening Democratic Control and Oversight of the Security Sector

West Africa's Sahel, which includes Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali, faces a number of transnational security challenges. Organized criminal networks and violent extremist organizations operate in the border regions of these countries, which comprise the Liptako-Gourma Region. Government responses to these threats have failed to provide lasting security, potentially undermining citizen trust in political representatives and government institutions. This mistrust damages the relationship between citizens and the state, further contributing to fragility and putting each country's nascent democratic system and political stability at risk. To mitigate these risks and bolster government responses to insecurity, NDI has worked to build members of parliament (MPs) and executive branch representatives' capacity to address citizens' security concerns, and to empower civil society activists to monitor the security sector and advocate for greater citizen inclusion in security decision making.

From 2014 to 2018, NDI supported CSOs, legislators and executive officials in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger to provide greater oversight of the security sector. The program, funded by the Danish and Norwegian governments, aimed to foster effective civilian oversight and productive civil-military interactions, help improve the institutional framework governing the security sector and promote greater understanding of security sector institutions' roles and obligations in a democratic society. Given the transnational nature of security challenges in the Sahel, the program emphasized regional approaches and strengthened cross-border collaboration to foster shared resilience.

Major achievements under the program included the establishment in February 2018 of a regional parliamentary Permanent Consultation Framework and a Subregional Platform of Civil Society Organizations



Sahel program workshop participants reflect on civilian oversight of the security sector

for Democratic Governance of the Security Sector in the Liptako-Gourma Region. NDI also supported the first-ever gathering of staff from the three countries' national strategic security study centers in May 2018. Program participants noted that these regional architectures are uniquely capable of facilitating stronger connections, amplifying the reach of national efforts and addressing regional problems effectively.

One of the challenges NDI and its partners faced was the normative concept of "secret defense": that security issues were primarily the realm of the security services and defense ministries and not an appropriate place for citizen participation. This norm had historically led to the exclusion of civic and civilian government representatives in discussions of security matters. NDI and its partners strove to shift that norm by framing security as a common good in which all community members have an interest. To this end, NDI used approaches designed to begin changing expectations about which voices were important for security decisions.

NDI supported efforts in each country to mobilize civil society to become active participants in security sector processes. The Institute's partners were: *Alliance pour Refonder la Gouvernance en Afrique* (Alliance to Re-Found Governance in Africa, or ARGA) and *Coalition Nationale de la Société Civile pour la Paix et la Lutte contre la Prolifération des Armes Légères* (National Civil Society Coalition for Peace and Fight against Small Arms Proliferation, or CONASCIPAL) in Mali; *Centre pour la Gouvernance Démocratique* (Center for Democratic Governance,

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Members of the Defense and Security Commission of Burkina Faso's National Assembly meet members of the armed forces during a visit to a military base

or CGD) in Burkina Faso; and *Réseau Nigérien pour la Gestion non-violente des conflits* (Nigerien Network for the Non-Violent Management of Conflicts, or GENOVICO).

Each CSO partner received financial and technical assistance to conduct research, advocate for important security sector reforms, improve relationships between citizens and security forces, promote human rights, monitor government security-related activities and report on security incidents. In Mali, ARGA published a report on security and human rights violations that was distributed to key decision makers, including the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection, to encourage reform. ARGA also established digital and physical research centers to compile collections of the laws, regulations and agreements that govern the security sector.

CONASCIPAL's project mobilized Malian CSOs to form citizen watch committees to monitor the security situation, the implementation of the 2015 Accord for Peace and Reconciliation and human rights violations. GENOVICO gathered CSOs to establish the CSO Observatory for Security Sector Governance in Niger to increase civil society expertise in security issues and promote CSO involvement in security reforms. GENOVICO also conducted trainings for CSOs and security services to promote citizenship, civic engagement, open communication and mutual understanding and created an inventory of key legislative and regulatory documents concerning the security sector in Niger.

In Burkina Faso, CGD brought together civil society, security forces and media to discuss the underlying factors that erode citizen trust in security institu-

tions. CGD also documented human rights violations committed by armed forces and was one of the founding members of the *Groupe de Recherche-Action sur la Sécurité Humaine* (Research-Action Group on Human Security, or GRASH). ARGA, CONASCIPAL, the Observatory and GRASH are all members of the regional CSO Platform, which brings civil society from the three countries together to mobilize citizen oversight of the security sector, allowing the groups to exchange information and best practices in the interest of continued collaboration.

To create buy-in within the legislative branch, the program provided support to MPs on the defense and security committees of their respective National Assembly. NDI conducted trainings on how to budget for the defense and security sectors, including gender-sensitive budgeting, and produced a guide on this topic. The program also created opportunities for regional collaboration between the three countries' parliaments. MPs from the National Assemblies of Burkina Faso and Niger, along with civil society representatives, participated in a joint mission to the Burkinabé-Nigerien border region to visit security posts and take part in community fora. These dialogues allowed MPs to hear firsthand about issues facing citizens. Discussions highlighted the importance of direct relationships between citizens and security services to strengthen community resilience.

This regional collaboration resulted in the creation of the Permanent Consultation Framework, a platform designed to link Burkinabé, Malian and Nigerien MPs on security and defense committees for improved communication and legislative coordination. Members participating in the Framework have met with citizens to learn about community concerns and ways in which the government can strengthen security.

NDI hosted a concluding workshop in June 2018 in Ouagadougou that brought together parliamentarian, CSO and executive branch representatives to reflect on the progress made and opportunities for future collaboration. Participants agreed that the program was most effective in bringing together a diverse group of security actors to collaborate and strengthen ties between the three countries on common challenges. They also discussed how they can work with regional organizations like the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Liptako-Gourma Authority in further regional harmonization on security policy.

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By supporting civil society and civilian branches of government to exert influence and increase accountability for security services, the program helped strengthen regional frameworks for addressing shared fragility challenges. By supporting stronger relations between citizens, their representative institutions and security services, NDI sought to bolster trust both within and between different sectors in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali for more effective responses to the serious stability challenges in the Sahel.

Kenya and South Sudan: Developing Indicators of Citizen Inclusion in Transitional Processes

The period following conflict offers a critical opportunity for democratic systems to build legitimacy and establish the foundations for inclusive politics. In Kenya, electoral and ethnic violence in 2007 killed more than 1,500 people and displaced over 250,000, eventually leading to governance reform that offered citizens a greater role in decision-making. However, citizens continue to face obstacles to full participation in political processes, including a lack of access to information. In South Sudan, following independence from Sudan in July 2011, weak institutional capacity undermined government promises of citizen security and cross-ethnic power-sharing. Deteriorating relationships amongst the political elite started a prolonged period of inter-ethnic violence in December 2013 that has been the subject of ongoing negotiations ever since. In both Kenya and South Sudan, citizen voices have remained outside of these transitional political processes.

To help understand and amplify those citizen voices, NDI is working with the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in South Africa (EISA) and the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights to research Kenyan and South Sudanese citizens' views on inclusion, peace and how transitional processes affect people's daily lives. NDI and its partners selected two local research firms to carry out focus group discussions and key informant interviews with respondents varying in age, gender and ethnic identification. This project seeks to develop indicators of citizen inclusion and confidence, aggregated from focus group and interview responses, that can be shared with policymakers, international organizations, donors and regional bodies. These indicators can then inform transitional processes that better reflect citizens' perspectives and help determine gaps between government policy and citizen needs. This information can

help political leaders craft more responsive policies that build citizen trust, thereby contributing to greater resilience and stability.

Responses varied between each country, and researchers used an iterative process to modify the phrasing of questions and subsequent categorization. Respondents in South Sudan, where ongoing political conflict has touched all aspects of life, characterized peace in different ways from Kenyan respondents. For example, some South Sudanese pointed to freedom of mobility and the ability to work without fear of violence, while others cited freedom of speech and fair treatment in the eyes of the government. Respondents also characterized inclusion in varying ways, such as greater tribal and youth representation in state governments, equal participation on national sports teams and uniform service delivery. NDI and its partners used citizens' own descriptions of peace, inclusion and their daily experiences to create word count reports that categorized commonly-cited responses. Building on those reports, NDI and its partners created a framework for classifying various citizen-determined indicators of peace and inclusion with four main themes: governance; development; identity; and peace and security.

Moving forward, NDI, EISA and the Oslo Center plan to further validate the results with local policy experts and academics. Once validated, NDI and its partners will distribute the findings to key stakeholders working on transitions in fragile states, who can then use the information to design inclusive processes that reflect citizens' needs. Policymakers and practitioners working at the national level in Kenya and South Sudan will be able to utilize these indicators to monitor inclusionary efforts and hold governments accountable. These indicators may also be used to examine future political transitions in other countries.

Libya: Making Space for Marginalized Populations

Libya has been fractured by conflict and violent extremism in the years since the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi's regime. Despite early efforts in 2012 by the National Transitional Council to implement a roadmap for political transition, the country remains split between two different governments operating in the east and west, both of which claim political legitimacy. Libya's fragility has presented barriers for the inclusion of a number of underrepresented popula-

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tions, including, women, young people and marginalized ethnic groups.

Certain ethnic groups that live along the country's porous southern border, including the Amazigh, Tebu and Tuareg, occupy territories that are potential entry points for weapons, migrants, fighters and drugs. These groups have historically been excluded from any decision-making roles, and under the Gaddafi regime were subject to repression of their non-Arab identities. This involved a ban on groups teaching their own languages in schools. This adverse relationship has led these ethnic groups to create their own militias and operate independently from higher authorities.



Participants assembled at the Libya Underrepresented Groups Conference

One facet of NDI's long-term work with CEPPS to support elections and governance in Libya has involved assisting marginalized ethnic communities to develop the necessary advocacy skills to influence decision-making. This approach reflects a broader effort to ensure access to political participation by all social groups as a means of providing a peaceful avenue for these communities to defend their interests. This helps bolster government legitimacy and improve state-society relations, thereby contributing to the resilience of state institutions and the prevention of future conflict.

In February 2017, NDI organized an Underrepresented Groups Conference that was attended by activists from the Amazigh and Tebu communities. This event focused on identifying areas of mutual interest between these groups in order to promote cooperation and communication and avoid future conflict between them. Both the Amazigh and Tebu communities suggested that language education, important to both groups given the repression of

minority languages, was a possible area of cooperation. The Amazigh community, having successfully campaigned for teaching the Tamazight language in schools, offered to assist the Tebu community in advocacy efforts to promote Tebu-language education. In October 2017, the Amazigh Supreme Council funded and hosted a language and advocacy workshop to help Tebu civil society activists develop Tudaga language textbooks for use in schools throughout the Tebu regions of Libya. The workshop included advocacy training by NDI and Amazigh activists, as well as a presentation from a member of the Basque language school system. In December 2017, the Amazigh and Tebu groups in Tripoli invited NDI to discuss their ongoing collaboration on advocacy efforts, textbook preparations and teacher trainings. The Tebu group presented a finalized first grade textbook in February 2018, which represented the product of cross-cultural collaboration between the two ethnic communities.

Social inclusion efforts have also included bringing representatives of these minority groups together to share experiences. In May 2017, NDI co-hosted a Libya 2020 conference, bringing together 55 participants from across sectors of Libyan society. The conference focused on identifying objectives to establishing peace through developing common ground and opportunities for action, drawing on the example of Northern Ireland as a way of restoring stability to Libya.

Afghanistan: Normalizing Democratic Practices to Promote Peace

In the years since the downfall of the Taliban, Afghanistan has faced a number of challenges in sustaining democratic practices. Limitations on citizen engagement and few options for political dialogue prevent many Afghans from participating in democratic spaces. Moreover, the historic use of violence as a means of conflict resolution has contributed to broadly negative views of political actors in Afghanistan. Political parties often lack effective formal structures, weakening their ability to draw grassroots support for non-violent political action. These factors illustrate the fragility of democratic norms and institutions in the country, which was compounded by the high risk of conflict following the 2014 presidential election. The National Unity Government (NUG), which pledged to address citizen priorities and promote meaningful electoral reform has taken some

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Participants in a monthly cross-party dialogue discuss political developments in Afghanistan

steps towards political and electoral reform, but the slow pace of reforms has engendered public disillusionment about the political process and the state of Afghan democracy.

From 2013 to 2016, NDI implemented the Strengthening Political Entities and Civil Society (SPECS) program with support from USAID. The program sought to deepen the practice of democracy as a means of promoting governmental stability and resilience. NDI supported political parties, candidates and civic organizations in countering negative narratives of political actors through engaging partisan and non-partisan actors in political dialogue. By encouraging parties and candidates to focus on dialogue and deliberation as a means of consulting citizens and contesting decisions, NDI worked to strengthen non-violent political pathways and contribute to democratic resilience.

From July to October 2013, NDI met with the leadership of sixteen parties who signed a Memorandum of Understanding pledging to engage actively in political and electoral processes, ensure inclusion of women and youth and normalize constructive political dialogue. In order to encourage dialogue between political entities, NDI then hosted 112 monthly discussions in eight provinces over the next two years. Male and female participants spanned the political spectrum and included representatives from political parties and civil society. NDI determined discussion topics in consultation with participants and arranged for guest speakers to present on an ongoing basis. Topics included: the peaceful transfer of power during elections; the role of political parties in local politics; coordination and collaboration between political parties; measures to promote peaceful elections and prevent electoral violence; and challenges and obstacles for political party development. These dialogues

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attracted thousands of participants and encouraged them to speak more openly about peacebuilding issues in Afghanistan.

Following the 2014 Provincial Council elections, NDI conducted a discussion with 123 unsuccessful female candidates about constructive ways to continue their political involvement. NDI encouraged participants to become engaged in civil society activities and advocacy efforts and reflect on using their campaign experience for future political endeavors. In May 2015, NDI provided resources on presidential transitions to the campaign teams of then-presidential candidates Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, as well as to the incumbent government to prepare the candidates and incumbent administration to develop a transition plan to facilitate the transfer of power, and to assist the incoming government in assuming responsibility for all aspects of executive branch leadership. In the same month, NDI organized a roundtable discussion in Washington, DC with participants in leadership transition teams from the US and abroad. This roundtable included discussions of establishing executive offices, working with other branches of government and promoting inclusion and diversity in the new government. Ghani, Abdullah and their teams received a recording of the roundtable to inform their approach to Afghanistan's political transition.

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