

PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION
WORKING GROUP ON LESSONS LEARNED

Comparative Experiences in Developing National Capacities after Conflict

Trusteeship Council Chamber
15 December 2008

Concept Note

Introduction

Sustainable peacebuilding depends on national ownership. However, countries emerging

15 December, these will be supplemented by presentations on country experiences by national actors from post-conflict countries.

What Do We Know About National Capacity Development?

In line with their circumstances, countries have pursued various capacity development strategies at the individual, institutional and societal levels. In states weakened by conflict, timely and carefully targeted capacity development programs can make a difference between sliding back into turmoil or moving towards strengthening the foundations of the state. Indeed, early investments in building state capacities are recognized as essential in certain key areas. These include:

- State capacities to provide core functions, including security, basic service delivery, and budgeting;
- Public administration reform, including “contracting in” to support critical government functions;
- Management of aid and donor relations.

Another area which requires special attention is salary reforms which can contribute to building public sector capacity by enabling the government to motivate retain and attract competent staff.

Many governments adopt ad hoc or piecemeal approaches to fill immediate gaps. Their ability to design and implement capacity development strategies are hindered by the shortage of qualified staff within the government. For example, at the end of its conflict in 1992, the government of Mozambique faced severe capacity shortages at the middle management level due to earlier lack of investment in higher education and the low level of public sector pay. Between 1994 and 1999, the government invested in strengthening and streamlining the central government and launching its decentralization process. Yet, by 2001, and according to a report by the African Capacity Building Foundation, the state administration capacity in Mozambique was still extremely weak due to continuing shortage of educated and qualified personnel.²

In many post-conflict societies, the competition between the government, the private sector and international organizations for the limited supply of qualified staff leads to an overall inflation of salaries and heightened incentives for corruption. One important strategy to overcome shortages in the public sector has been the adoption of national salary reform or salary supplementation schemes. In Cambodia, for example, the Priority Missions Groups (PMGs) of selected civil s

It is increasingly recognized that an early assessment of existing capacities and needs is useful as the basis for a national capacity development strategy. Following the Bonn Agreement, for example, the government of Afghanistan undertook a comprehensive review of its capacities both at the national and sub-national levels, and developed six key capacity development strategies between 2001 and 2006. These included: aid effectiveness and integrated planning; training and leadership development; incentive systems; institutional reform and change management; public engagement capacities and mentoring. Yet, their implementation has run into significant problems, partly due to the lack of an integrated and systemic approach to capacity development.⁴

Comparative findings from other national efforts to date provide useful lessons:

- Targeted capacity development that takes account of conflict dynamics and aims to transform rather than just to rebuild is crucial for sustainable peacebuilding.
- In cases where social cleavages have been at the heart of the conflict, efforts to remedy

works and what does not work in national capacity development is a particularly promising area of post-conflict peacebuilding.

Key Issues for Consideration

Based on the experiences of selected post-conflict countries, this session will examine the specific challenges faced by different countries as well as innovative approaches they employed to overcome capacity deficiencies in the early phases of national recovery. Key questions for panelists include:

1. What were the most serious deficits in national capacities (both in the public and private sectors) immediately after the war? How were these needs identified?
2. How did the national government deal with these deficits in the short, medium and longer term?
3. What were the priority areas of capacity development in the early phase of transitioning from conflict to recovery?
4. Did the government have a national capacity development strategy?
5. What concrete strategies were used to strengthen public or private sector capacities?
6. In what ways did international support help or hinder domestic efforts to strengthen national capacities?

Format and Structure

This open meeting will be held from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm. in the UN Trusteeship Council Chamber. It will be in the form of a panel discussion.

Chair:

H.E. Mrs. Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez, Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations

Panelists

- Mr. Toga McIntosh, former Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs of Liberia
- Ambassador Gert Rosenthal, Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the UN,
- Ambassador Filipe Chidumo, Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the UN.

Outcome

Following the meeting the Secretariat will prepare a Chair's Summary of relevant lessons for national capacity development in post-conflict countries. The document will be distributed to PBC Chair and the Chairs of the various country-specific configurations.

Selected Resources

The African Capacity Building Foundation, Studies in Reconstruction and Capacity Building in Post-conflict countries in Africa: Some Lessons of experience from Mozambique, Revised Report December 2003.

<http://www.acbf-pact.org/knowledge/documents/KM-Post%20Conflict%20Study%20Report%20on%20Mozambique.doc>

Government of Liberia & UNDP, [National Human Development Report for Liberia: Mobilizing Capacity for Reconstruction and Development](#) (2006)

Johnson-Sirleaf, Ellen, [Challenges for New Leadership Teams in Fragile States](#), (World Bank Institute, Capacity Development Briefs, Issue No. 21, March 2007)

Ponzio, Richard, Capacity Development in Afghanistan 2001 – 2006 (UNDP, 2006)