

Lessons Learned from Peacebuilding Strategic Frameworks since the late 1990s

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drivers of conflict through a comprehensive, integrated approach. Multilateral and bilateral donors are recognizing the benefits, in terms of improved performance and sustainability, of reorienting assistance to a conflict-affected society around a shared sense of purpose and responsibility.

I. Introduction

The design and implementation of a coherent approach to peacebuilding sits at the center of the UN Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) mandate. As stated in the UN General Assembly and Security Council founding resolutions, a main purpose of the Commission is "to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery."¹

In February 2007, the PBC initiated the development of integrated strategies for peacebuilding (IPBS) with the Governments of Sierra Leone and Burundi, the first two countries on the Commission's agenda. They aim to provide an agreed framework for the governments' commitments and the international community's support to peacebuilding activities in both countries, ensuring greater coherence and coordination and addressing identified gaps. They are also envisaged as tools for assessing progress and responding to bottlenecks in implementation.

Thus, the IPBS has become a central instrument of engagement for the Peacebuilding Commission. This is not surprising given the UN system's experiences with a variety of innovative peacebuilding strategic frameworks since the late 1990s. Yet, to date, few studies—and none of a comparative nature—have been undertaken to distil practical lessons from these earlier experiences which can be of direct benefit to the PBC.

In support of the Commission's mandate "to provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations [and] to develop best practices,"² this study examines the UN's experience in facilitating peacebuilding strategic frameworks in five cases: Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, and Sudan. It then proposes measures to strengthen these important peacebuilding tools. The paper's three-fold aim is to:

- I) demonstrate the common objectives and key practical features of peacebuilding strategic frameworks while displaying their varied and flexible approaches;
- II) describe lessons from comparative experiences in the design and implementation of peacebuilding strategic frameworks; and
- III) contribute to the strengthening of the methodology and overall preparation of the integrated peacebuilding strategies in Burundi and Sierra Leone, as well as other fTDO Tc(vnDca

II. What are Peacebuilding Strategic Frameworks?

Beginning with the large multi-dimensional peace operations of the early 1990s, the UN advocated coordinated efforts between myriad civilian and military actors. Through the “Strategic Framework” approach adopted in the late 1990s, the activities of distinct political, humanitarian, and development actors in the UN system were coordinated around shared goals in Afghanistan and Somalia, where UN peacekeepers were not deployed at the time. As the testing ground for a new type of UN-led peacebuilding effort within a humanitarian crisis, for example, the 1998 Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (SFA) sought to provide “a more coherent, effective and integrated political strategy and assistance programme” through a “common conceptual tool” that identifies key activities “on the basis of shared principles and activities.”³ In doing so, it aimed to remove “disconnects” between the various aspects of the international response.⁴

Learning from the operational and political challenges of the 1990s, the UN began moving from “coordinated to more integrated” peacebuilding missions. Emblematic of this trend was the introduction of more sophisticated tools to align UN and wider donor community resources with national strategic priorities across inter-related security, governance, and development objectives. The tools differed among themselves, ranging from the Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan to the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s Country Assistance Framework, and from Sudan’s Framework for Sustained Peace, Development, and Poverty Eradication to the Compact mechanisms in Afghanistan and Iraq. Nonetheless, they represent innovative alternatives to the traditional donor-led, bureaucratically rigid, military-centric, and sometimes ill-defined approaches to addressing the underlying causes of protracted armed conflict.

Peacebuilding strategic frameworks can be defined generically as mutually accountable and time-bound agreements, between a government and international partners, for directing scarce foreign and public technical, financial, and political resources toward building national capacities to address the root causes of violent conflict. With varying forms and mandates, these strategic frameworks have been shown to be valuable in helping war-torn countries facilitate political dialogue, enhance coordination of international partners, monitor progress and setbacks, and marshal, align, and sustain donor resources.

By placing the onus for success and failure on both national and international actors, peacebuilding strategic frameworks help to promote a sense of genuine partnership. At the same time, they place

³ Through the SFA, the UN’s overarching goal was to facilitate, “the transition from a state of internal conflict to a just and sustainable peace through mutually reinforcing political and assistance initiatives.” United Nations, “Strategic Framework for Afghanistan: Toward a Principles Approach to Peace and Reconstruction”, 15 September 1998, 1.4. According to Michè

the development of national leadership—whether within or outside government—at the heart of establishing a just and durable peace. In both spirit and actual practice, they are the forerunner to the PBC’s integrated peacebuilding strategies.⁵

Some of the key features of peacebuilding strategic frameworks (that also serve as criteria by which to judge their progress) include:

Consultation/Participation: preparation through a participatory and transparent process between the national government, civil society, and the international community, facilitated by the UN.

Cross-Cutting Commitments: based on rigorous conflict analysis, targeted commitments weave across mutually interconnected areas of security, governance, justice, human rights, and socioeconomic development.

Concrete, Measurable, Time-Bound Indicators: the use of qualitative and quantitative benchmarks and indicators for sequencing priorities and tracking the potential risks of a return to conflict as well as progress toward peace.

Nationally Led Monitoring: the establishment of a high-level coordination and monitoring mechanism, as well as associated working groups involving civil society, to propose timely responses to shortcomings in implementation and to hold the government and international community mutually accountable for their commitments.

Building on Existing Frameworks: linkages to other types of national planning frameworks and instruments to coordinate peacebuilding, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and Post-Conflict Needs Assessment (PCNA) as described in the accompanying note on *Key Instruments Related to Peacebuilding Strategic Frameworks*.

Aid Effectiveness: staunch support for rationalizing foreign aid and adhering to the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*.

As already noted, the five case studies reviewed for this paper differ significantly in nature. Moreover, they are all works-in-progress. Nonetheless, important lessons are beginning to emerge from their application in different contexts.⁶

Figure 1: Key Features of Peacebuilding Strategic Frameworks in select countries

| | Consultations/ Participation | Cross-Cutting Commitments | Concrete, Time-bound Indicators | Nationally-Led Monitoring | Builds on existing Frameworks | Facilitates Aid Effectiveness |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| Afghanistan Compact | Limited duration, yet followed by broad National Development Strategy consultations | Yes, integrated approach to meeting security, governance/justice, and development goals | Yes, but some are not specific enough and, therefore, difficult to measure (some deadlines are unrealistic) | Yes, with international support but more ownership & capacity across gov't needed | Yes, builds on past frameworks (eg, Securing Afghanistan's Future) and lays the basis for PRSP | Yes, the Gov't shows increased capacity for spending aid aligned behind nat'l priorities |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo Country Assistance Framework | Yes, multiple stakeholders from gov't, civil society, and the int'l partners consulted | All major sectors are covered, though difficult to see priorities and linkages | CAF commitments and activities are concrete, time-bound, and measurable | Monitoring is led by the gov't (especially the Ministries of Planning and Finance) | Yes, builds on various frameworks and monitoring is done within the PRSP framework | Yes, designed to increase aid effectiveness and equitable distrib. (too early to assess results) |
| International Compact with Iraq | Limited mainly to the gov't, UN, and IFIs, with support from several donors and some civil society inputs on social issues | Yes, priorities across all sectors and linkages identified | Most indicators are concrete but deadlines vary in terms of specificity | Yes, gov't-led with support from UN and IFIs; Gov't monitors petroleum account | Yes, builds on national planning and aid coord. mechanisms; reinforces the gov't National Reconciliation Plan | Aim is more to build national consensus than serve as a tool for aid effectiveness; however, it has led to some debt forgiveness |

**Kosovo Standards
Implementation Plan**

(succeeded by the
European Partnership

III. Lessons Learned from Five Case Studies and the Way Ahead

The lessons presented in this section derive from the detailed analysis of the five case studies which are summarized in Annex 1. A full report

demonstrate, consultations can, for example, take the form of sectoral working groups involving key line ministries and relevant international counterparts (Kosovo) or be more broad-based (DRC). In the case of Afghanistan, although some criticized the consultative process around the development of the Afghanistan Compact as too limited, it was soon followed by an unprecedented level of outreach to citizens around the country in connection with the formulation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy—which builds directly on the Compact’s structure and priorities.

A participatory approach can also engender new ideas and contribute to improved performance. This stems from the view that non-state actors, such as the media, private sector, and community-based organizations, have proven their value as respected and influential partners. For instance, in

reform the ways we deliver and manage aid” as part of the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*.¹⁰ Besides seeking to achieve broader development goals, aid effectiveness is viewed as fundamental to supporting partner country efforts to strengthen governance.

Emphasizing aid effectiveness aims to minimize the adverse effects that fluctuating aid volumes and poor coordination can have on initiatives to reconcile tensions and build peace. The International Compact with Iraq, for example, calls on the national legislature to strengthen its oversight role and for the government to improve the monitoring and coordination of foreign aid, even when it is channelled outside of government. Similarly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s Country Assistance Framework aims to increase transparency and harmonize official development assistance, thereby reducing transaction costs on the government. And the Afghanistan Compact seeks to promote national capacities to enable an increasing proportion of foreign aid to be channelled directly through the government’s budget. Each of these steps reflects central principles of the 2005 Paris Declaration.

IV. Final Observations

Given the relative novelty of the peacebuilding strategic frameworks studied here, it is **too early to evaluate** to what extent they will be able to influence the fragile and fluid environments within which peacebuilding necessarily takes place. It would therefore be useful for the PBC to continue to observe international peacebuilding efforts in the five cases covered, alongside the two countries under its consideration. A comparative review of peacebuilding progress in all eight cases—where the international community has undertaken to pursue a deliberate strategic approach to peacebuilding—would provide invaluable insights into how peace can best be consolidated. These lessons would, in turn, generate additional knowledge for the next generation of strategic frameworks in other countries.

One concern related to the effectiveness of peacebuilding strategic frameworks is the capacity of the international community to develop risk management strategies that can lead to decisive and enforceable actions when gaps are identified. Peacebuilding strategic frameworks do not—in themselves—provide the mechanisms for robust response to emerging threats to peace, which will require inevitably the exercise of **effective political will**. Thus, the international community needs to develop its response capacities to correspond more closely to the advances in strategic planning, analysis, and monitoring incorporated into the strategic frameworks.

Finally, while this study underscores the benefits of more robust, coherent and strategic approaches for improved international peacebuilding efforts, it also recognizes the **risks of a proliferation of tools and instruments** that can add unnecessary complexity and additional burdens on national authorities and local actors. Thus, the paper strongly recommends that the next generation of peacebuilding strategic frameworks be more explicitly and organically linked

¹⁰ “Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonisation, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability”, March 2, 2005.

to other relevant tools and instruments which are described in the accompanying note on *Key Instruments Related to Peacebuilding Strategic Frameworks*.

Annex I

Summary of Peacebuilding Strategic Frameworks reviewed for this study¹¹

Afghanistan: Covering the period 2006-2010, the Afghanistan Compact was endorsed by 61 countries and international organizations, on 31 January 2006, at the London Conference on Afghanistan. The five-year political agreement and strategy outlines specific, measurable, time-bound targets in the areas of security, governance (including justice and human rights), and development. Developed through consultations with assistance from the United Nations, the Afghanistan Compact has established an innovative, high-level coordination and monitoring mechanism (the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board), as well as associated sectoral working groups, to hold the government and international community mutually accountable for their commitments. The Afghanistan Compact's legitimacy stems, in part, from its endorsement by the UN Security Council, first in Resolution 1659 and, subsequently, in Resolutions 1162 and 1746 (following updates on Afghanistan Compact implementation). The "three pillar structure" and priority areas of the Afghanistan Compact are further elaborated (including through sub-national consultations and a costing exercise) in the development of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Covering the period 2007-2010, the Country Assistance Framework (CAF) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo commits the country's twenty multilateral and bilateral development agencies to a common strategic approach, in accordance with the government-led Programme d' Actions Prioritaires (PAP) which encompasses the DRC's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). With over 16,000 peacekeepers and 3,000 civilian staff, the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and wider UN system have joined with other international partners through the CAF to: i) ensure a shared diagnosis of the country's main problems; ii) to improve aid harmonization around key national priorities; and iii) to reduce the bureaucratic transaction costs incurred by the DRC government. As a light and pragmatic approach to building consensus among donors behind national goals, the CAF seeks to help the Congolese people build on the momentum generated by last year's successful elections—the first since 1960 where the government, parliament, and local authorities were all selected democratically.

Iraq: partnership with the international community, the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) is an initiative of the Government of Iraq. It seeks to achieve a National Vision for Iraq to facilitate, for the period 2007-2012, the consolidation of peace and the pursuit of political, economic, and social development. Domestically, the ICI aims to build a national Compact around the government's political and economic program and to restore the Iraqi people's trust in the state and its ability to protect them and meet their basic needs. Internationally, the Compact establishes a framework of mutual commitments to support Iraq and strengthen its resolve to address critical reforms. The ICI is premised on the belief that peacebuilding and economic prosperity maintain a symbiotic relationship. Developed in close partnership with the United Nations and World Bank—as well as other international partners—the International

¹¹ Please note that detailed analysis has been undertaken for each of these five country cases in the preparation of this study and can be made available upon request to the PBSO.

Compact with Iraq builds on and aims to enhance existing national planning and aid coordination mechanisms, such as the National Development Strategy for Iraq, Sectoral Working Groups, and Cluster Teams. In direct support of Iraqi Government-led reform efforts, the Compact establishes a schedule for the proposed actions of international partners, including tangible financial commitments.

Kosovo: Finalized on 31 March 2004 by the Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan (KSIP) sets out the actions and policies to reach the goals set out in the document “Standards for Kosovo”, concluded on 10 December 2003 and later endorsed by the UN Security Council. The Standards are a set of targets that Kosovo must meet in order for the talks about the future political status of Kosovo to begin. They are based on the principle that Kosovo should maintain: functioning democratic institutions; the rule of law; freedom of movement; sustainable returns of internally displaced persons; community rights; a well-functioning economy; property and cultural heritage rights; dialogue with Belgrade; and a Kosovo Protection Corps operating within its agreed mandate and the law. Besides describing the concrete actions needed to meet the Standards, the KSIP clearly defines which national and international actors are responsible for each action and the time-frame in which they should be performed. In October 2005, the KSIP was incorporated within the European Partnership Action Plan, a strategy for Kosovo’s long-term integration into the European Union.

Sudan: Completed in March 2005 in direct collaboration with the international community, Sudan’s Framework for Sustained Peace, Development and Poverty Eradication seeks to support the signing of the country’s historic Comprehensive Peace Agreement (January 2005). The Framework is the culmination of a fifteen month Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) process, co-coordinated by the UN Development Programme and World Bank. It seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict and underdevelopment during the twenty-two year civil war, as well as to provide a vision and concrete plan for reconstruction and recovery through 2010. The Framework provides a budgeted strategy in eight thematic areas: capacity-building and institutional development; governance and the rule of law; economic policy; productive sectors; basic social services; infrastructure; livelihoods and social protection; and information and the media. It is unique in that one of the Framework’s key partners, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (which formed the new Government of South Sudan), had no previous governing experience.