



OCGG Security Section

Advice Program
Effective Multilateralism

Governance Area
Postwar Reconstruction

Peacebuilding

Advice to the
the Secretary-General
of the United Nations

by Silke Rusch

MAIN POINTS

Peacebuilding is the key part of postwar reconstruction. A UN Peacebuilding Commission should be established. Recruitment to the field, civil-military cooperation, and partnership with the local population should be improved. Social and psychological aid programs should also be included.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oxford Council on Good Governance presents the following recommendations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in order to improve the UN capacities for peacebuilding:

R1 Establishing A Peacebuilding Commission

To decide on a political plan and the funding for a peacebuilding operation a central peacebuilding commission should be established. Its secretarial support office should be integrated into the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and be linked to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

R2 Improving the Recruitment Policy for Peacebuilding Missions

To create a partnership with the local population that is built on trust, the recruitment policy for peacebuilding should focus on language and inter-cultural communication skills that are specific to the country under consideration. Staff at Headquarter should in addition be selected according to their field experience.

R3 Improving Civil-Military Cooperation

To increase the credibility of humanitarian missions and social programmes, minimalist integrated UN missions should be avoided. Cooperation and communication between military and humanitarian actors is important to gain understanding of the operational environment of the other.

R4 Building a Solid Partnership with the Local Population

Strategic plans between the UN and the country under consideration should emphasize the UN's respect of local traditions. Information campaigns should be organized to explain international action to the population and to get local actors involved.



R5 Offering Social and Psychological Aid Programs

To obtain a solid foundation for a new society, international peacebuilding efforts should include social and psychological aid programs that help members of the local society to maintain a future-oriented perspective and to support the reconstruction process.

INTRODUCTION

Peacebuilding is the final and most complex phase of any peace operation. Its success or failure is not only a question of peace or war it is a matter of confidence in the effectiveness of the United Nations and collective security.

To build long-lasting peace in societies shattered by civil war means to plan a long-term international effort. Understanding the role of every actor in a peacebuilding process and taking decisions that reflect the will of the local population should be the guidelines for UN action at the beginning of each peacebuilding operation. These decisions require a central mechanism flexible enough to coordinate the efforts of mostly broadly working actors operating in a specific environment.

But not only institutions matter. The right decisions can only be taken if competent experienced experts with a thorough knowledge of the country under consideration are responsible. A careful selection of international negotiators and personnel is important to create a network of international and local peace builders that will one day become the basis for a new democratic society stable enough to live in peace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1 ESTABLISHING A PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

To decide on a political plan and the funding for a peacebuilding operation a central peacebuilding commission should be established. It should report to the Security Council and be composed of a reasonable number of members that still guarantee its efficiency. It should also be flexible in its composition depending on the case at hand. The Commission should be advised by experts including social scientists and perform its tasks by respecting the traditions of the country under consideration. Its secretarial support office should be integrated into DPA and be linked to the DPKO. Liaison officers and task forces in the field should be created to establish a widely operating network of communication and cooperation.

In his report of March 2005 (A/59/2005), the Secretary General, adopting the proposals made by the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, recommended the creation of an intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission. The OCGG supports this proposal but recommends taking into account a number of institutional aspects to increase the efficiency of the Commission's work.

COMPOSITION

The Peacebuilding Commission should be a flexible instrument. Membership should be restricted only to those actors that are crucial for the successful planning of a specific operation in a certain country and that can offer concrete measures for a successful peacebuilding process. These should be representatives of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), senior representatives of the World Bank, the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and those regional organizations involved in the country in question. Member states with a strong military presence and donor countries should be invited to participate. Impartial advice should come from experts, all specialists of the region or the country under consideration. UN personnel and representatives of regional and civil-society organizations present in the country should have an advising function and be regularly consulted.

M A N D A T E

Coordinating the efforts of the whole international community will be one of the key tasks of the Commission. To achieve better cooperation information has to be collected from those UN departments and organizations that will get involved in the peacebuilding effort through the Peacebuilding Support Office that will then brief the Commission.

The planning of a peacebuilding process should take the form of a political plan for the specific case at an early stage. It should work out a rule of law reform project and decide over how to best achieve reconciliation and reconstruction of political and legal institutions in regards to the specific historical and cultural background.

L I N K A G E S T O O T H E R U N D E P A R T M E N T S

The Commission should report to the Security Council, as this is the most direct link to the central decision-making body for peace operations.

To integrate the commission into existing UN structures, a Peacebuilding Support Office as the secretarial support for the Peacebuilding Commission should be integrated into the Department of Political Affairs and act in close cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The office should act in close cooperation with DPKO's Situation Centre in order to be informed at an early stage on all developments in a certain country.

Peacebuilding liaison officers should be deployed to the UN departments, programmes, agencies and funds involved in the Peacebuilding effort, like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to ensure a high degree of communication, coordination and common assessment.

C O N T A C T T O T H E F I E L D

Regular communication between the Headquarter and the actors in the field is important to recommend practicable action. A consultation process should take place with formal or informal task forces in the field. While a Peacebuilding Commission would meet at the intergovernmental level and establish the long term goals of given peacebuilding operations, a close coordination of the actors in the field requires the establishment of a more detailed, flexible structure.

It is therefore recommended to establish Peacebuilding Task Forces, composed of representatives of the military, different UN departments and programs, regional organizations and civil society organizations in the country. Their main task would be to improve their cooperation by reporting on their situation in the field, discussing how their work affects the success of the Peacebuilding mission as a whole and how they are perceived by the local population. The task forces should meet on a regular basis at least every four weeks and report to the Peacebuilding Commission.

Where informal task forces already exist these should also be allowed to report to the Commission. They should designate a member to be in charge of informing the Peacebuilding Commission on their activities.

RECOMMENDATION 2

IMPROVING THE RECRUITMENT POLICY FOR PEACEBUILDING MISSIONS

To create a partnership with the local population that is built on trust, the recruitment policy for peacebuilding should focus on language and inter-cultural communication skills that are specific to the country under consideration. Staff at Headquarters should in addition be selected according to their field experience. The choice of the SRSG is crucial for a mission's success. His or her personality will make a difference in the field.

As peacebuilding is a question of credibility and of competence, the recruitment of all staff members at political, management or technical level should be carried out according to the following criteria:

First, all staff members including key military and police officers should be trained to communicate efficiently in the official language of the country they are deployed to. Member States should standardize foreign language training within their military academies. Once in the field all staff should receive weekly language training by a native speaker.

Second, social and humanitarian workers should have an excellent understanding of the countries' customs, traditions and gender issues. Intercultural communication skills and the historic and cultural background of the country should be taught to those who are lacking sufficient knowledge. This can take place in the field, in completion of the language training proposed above.

Third, the Peacebuilding Support Office, in order to perform its secretarial tasks with a maximum of flexibility and cooperation oversight needs to be staffed with highly qualified UN personnel with field experience.



Fourth, the UN needs enthusiastic and credible individuals in the key positions in the country at hand. The UNDP Resident Representative should have outstanding communication and organizational skills to coordinate the efforts of UN development policy. The post of SRSG is a key to a mission's success. He or she should not only have excellent knowledge of the country, the region and UN diplomacy but also possess the necessary personal skills and authority to negotiate with all political actors and to be accepted by the local population. His or her appearance and action is a key to the mission's success.

RECOMMENDATION 3 IMPROVING CIVIL - MILITARY COOPERATION

To increase the credibility of humanitarian missions and social programs, minimalist integrated UN missions should be avoided. Cooperation and communication between military and humanitarian actors is important to gain understanding of the operational environment of the other.

The presence of military and civilian components in a UN peacebuilding mission requires particular attention when it comes to attributing the different tasks to the actors in the field.

Military forces are present to deal with spoilers and to deter aggressions. However it is essential for humanitarian actors not to be associated with the military component of a mission. While this is sometimes unavoidable when aid work needs to be protected in hostile environments, the general perception of a civilian component should be dissociated from the military.

“Minimalist” integrated UN mission structures like UNOCI (United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire) where the UN Humanitarian Coordinator is the Deputy of the SRSG who in turn also manages the military contingents, should be avoided. If they are employed, a humanitarian liaison officer should be designated to coordinate the actions of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the office of the SRSG in the field. This can contribute to the credibility of UN social and humanitarian aid workers.

To reach a better understanding between military and humanitarian actors communication in the field is key. This can be achieved through the peacebuilding task forces recommended above.

RECOMMENDATION 4 BUILDING A SOLID PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LOCAL POPULATION

A partnership with the local population that is based on confidence increases the credibility of the United Nations in a peacebuilding process. A strategic plan should be worked out between the UN and the country under consideration that emphasizes the respect of local traditions by the UN. Information campaigns should be organized to explain international action to the population and get local actors involved.

Insufficient information and knowledge about local conditions is one of the causes for difficulties encountered by the UN and other international actors during their peacebuilding efforts in a war-torn country.

A partnership based on trust is one of the keys to build new democratic institutions and sustainable peace together with the local population. Two aspects of local conditions have to be taken into consideration from the earliest stages of international engagement: identifying the role that local actors can play and managing the effect of the presence and action of international actors.

LOCAL OWNERSHIP OF THE PEACE PROCESS

Every war-torn society needs new political and societal institutions, but it also needs a sense of continuity with its history and the affirmation of its own cultural traditions.

Ownership should be the key of UN-led action. The peacebuilding-process should be seen as supporting the efforts of the population more than imposing a certain political process and way of reconciliation. At the beginning of any international peacebuilding effort a strategic plan should be worked out by the UN and the relevant local actors involved

in the reconstruction process. This plan should emphasize the responsibilities of the UN including the respect of those local traditions that are in accordance with international human rights standards.

The hiring of qualified locals should be maximised, and UN staff who do not speak the official language of the country should receive language training and be made familiar with local customs through training courses, shortly before their deployment and also during their assignment in the field. The UN should try to assign at least one native speaker or local personnel to every team within the mission to advise the team on the local perceptions of the measures taken.

C R E D I B I L I T Y T H R O U G H I N F O R M A T I O N

In recent peace operations as in Congo or Côte d'Ivoire the UN's impartiality has been questioned by local populations which led to aggressions against UN personnel and massive dangers for other international actors.

The UN should increase its credibility by organizing information campaigns to avoid misunderstandings of the UN's role in the processes of peacebuilding and democratization. These information campaigns should start early but take place at any stage of an operation and inform on how local social groups can participate in the reconstruction process. Such campaigns should be organized by the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) in cooperation with the Department of Public Information and be backed by the UN Security Council.

RECOMMENDATION 5 OFFERING SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AID PROGRAMS

To obtain a solid foundation for a new society, international peacebuilding efforts should include social and psychological aid programs that help members of the local society to see a perspective and to support the reconstruction process. Psychological support for former combatants and for women and children should be central tasks of social aid programs, initiated by the Peacebuilding Commission.

When planning a peacebuilding operation, attention has to be paid to the multiple social dimensions of reconstruction. Transition is a way to redefine the relation with the state, the relation with a given community and the relation between different generations. Working with these transformations is a way to admit that peacebuilding is also a social process.

As one of the key tasks of a peace operation, the process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) should focus on the social importance of being armed. Any DDR program should contain a psychological approach to offer aid and perspectives to men who, by losing their guns, are also losing their social status. The same consideration has to be put forward regarding reconciliation. The local perception of a reconciliation process has to be thoroughly analysed with particular attention attributed to the role of silence and the perception of impunity.

In a society emerging from war, the role of women in reconstructing a society is particularly important. In addition to gender mainstreaming within UN structures, gender programs should receive central focus and funding.

The planning and allocation of resources for these programs should be one of the earliest tasks to be undertaken by the Peacebuilding Commission when working out its political country plan.

CONCLUSION

While institutional changes like a peacebuilding commission can contribute to enhance communication and cooperation efforts, the contribution of each member participating in a peacebuilding process matters. Local population and international personnel have to receive the necessary tools to build a partnership based on confidence and understanding of each other. Lasting credibility of the international community can only be achieved if institutions are working efficiently. Restricted membership to the Peacebuilding commission and diligently selected UN representatives are conditions for this efficiency.

The recommendations in this paper can only be realized if sufficient funding will be allocated, for the commission, for social aid programs and for the recruitment of qualified personnel. Member States should keep in mind that peacebuilding is an investment into the future. If it fails all efforts from military intervention to humanitarian aid to peacekeeping that have preceded it would have failed. To avoid this, long-term thinking should influence the decision-making process in the UN Security Council and peacebuilders should be given the opportunity to make a difference, for the UN as an organization and for those countries that are still in urgent need for international help.

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