

Lessons from Liberia

Integrated approaches to peacebuilding in transitional settings

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Introduction

Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in August 2003, Liberia has moved from a state of tenuous post-conflict security to a steady but still fragile peace, with a high degree of collaboration amongst all actors shaping a reconstruction- and development-oriented policy agenda. In January 2006, the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Unity Party-led government replaced the former warlord-comprised National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) and immediately set out to ensure promised reconstruction-oriented deliverables through a four-pillar policy framework of security; economic recovery; governance and rule of law; and infrastructure and basic services. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), comprising one of seven integrated missions presently in operation, have worked to support the new government of Liberia (GoL) in realising these aims.

Despite considerable progress to date in each the pillar areas, commonly assumed to be pillars of peacebuilding in international discourse, it is well recognised that serious conflict challenges persist and deserve specific attention. In particular, one notices a rising lawlessness, a lack of security sector capacity to respond, and an incomplete rehabilitation and reintegration process that has contributed to a tendency among ex-combatants, deactivated soldiers and police, and disgruntled youth, among others, to illegally exploit the still not well-governed or -attended natural-resource-rich areas. In addition, a high state of economic insecurity exists and the ethnic and social divisions can easily ignite. Moreover, a weak state presence is evident countrywide and political spoilers persistently challenge the government's efforts toward reconciliation and building a national vision.¹ Compounding each of these issues and undermining efforts to address them is a profound capacity problem typical of post-conflict settings where war drives so many professionals and intellectuals abroad. A serious

lack of qualified individuals and budgetary constraints exist alongside extreme operational challenges caused in particular by destroyed infrastructure. Overall, the necessity to transform old or build new institutions and the capacity to sustain them are recognised as being paramount. These needs relate in particular to state institutions, given that state institutions drove or perpetuated the very causes of Liberia's war; therefore, building the capacity of new, reformed or transformed institutions will lie at the heart of building a sustained peace (GoL & UNDP Liberia 2006).

Through multiple processes and with growing participation and national ownership, a unique, integrated and strategic process is being created

Over the last two years, the United Nations in Liberia (UNMIL and the UNCT) and the GoL have increasingly focused on identifying the sources and dynamics of conflict and have begun to craft strategic policy and programming responses with conflict and peacebuilding in mind. In response to contextual factors on the ground, thinking has evolved from best practices emerging from other countries and with increasing collaboration with the new United Nations peacebuilding architecture, which includes the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and its support office (PBSO), and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Through

multiple processes within and among the UN and other members of the international community and the GoL and civil society, and with growing participation and national ownership, a unique, integrated and strategic process aimed at strengthening Liberia's ability to sustain its peace is being created. This paper examines these efforts, identifying challenges and opportunities for bringing coherence and fostering greater effectiveness around post-conflict peacebuilding practice.

Through research on the ground in Liberia² and engagement in peacebuilding discussions within the UN at headquarter level, the paper is presented in four main parts. It begins with a review of key conceptual and historical issues and debates surrounding post-conflict peacebuilding and particularly the UN's role. It then explains in detail the process undertaken in



Liberia, describing the interlocking activity areas that have formed the building blocks of an overall strategic approach aimed at strengthening peacebuilding. In the third part, lessons emerging from the Liberia case are assessed and the fourth section contains conclusions and recommendations. The paper, similar to the work it describes in Liberia, takes as its starting point the fact that integrated, strategic processes lie at the heart of effective peacebuilding. Alongside national governments and civil society actors, integrated missions, where they exist, are key players in this process; however, the resources they can bring to bear need to be better understood and utilised in ways that genuinely serve our growing, collective understanding about how to sustain peace.³ As the PBC and other UN partners work to shape consensus around the meaning of peacebuilding and the integrated, strategic processes at the core of its practice, the Liberian case offers rich insights unfolding in one post-conflict setting.

United Nations policy and practice

Conceptual underpinnings

Over the last decade, the discourse on peacebuilding at the conceptual, theoretical and operational levels has been characterised by imprecision, often resting on ideological differences and competing organisational mandates (Smith 2004; McCandless & Doe 2007; Barnett et al 2007). This lack of conceptual clarity, fed and compounded by operational challenges including inadequate and, at times, competing pools of resources, policies and institutional arrangements, has threatened the utility of the concept (Call 2005). Key debates that have divided UN thinking and practice have considered whether peacebuilding applies to all phases of a conflict or only to post-conflict ones; whether the process is primarily political or developmental in nature; whether it should focus primarily on addressing root causes or should engage in institution building and/or changing attitudes and behaviours; and whether and how it relates to conflict prevention (McCandless & Doe 2007:5–6).

During the 1990s, the opinion was widely expressed, especially in the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* (United Nations 1995) and during Security Council debates in that same year, that peacebuilding involves all conflict phases. The mandate of the new PBC, however, to focus on *post-conflict* peacebuilding, reverts to a more cautious approach by states in this regard to limit the reach of the commission. In May 2007, following the creation of the new peacebuilding architecture, the UN, through its policy committee, adopted a system-wide conceptual definition of peacebuilding to guide its work:

Alongside national governments and civil society actors, integrated peacekeeping missions, where they exist, are key players in this process

Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict, to strengthen national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritised, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.

This understanding of peacebuilding reflects the emerging consensus to move beyond a minimalist or 'negative' peace approach towards a more strategic, integrated one that prioritises a consideration of local context and capacities. It highlights a need to stress the building of capacities rather than mere structures for peace, an emphasis that has long been underscored by peacebuilding and development practitioners.

Roles: peacekeeping operations, integrated missions and governments

Throughout the 1990s, international (and especially UN-led) peacebuilding was implemented in a compartmentalised, inventory-like manner whereby each agency, fund and programme had a share of the pie. This approach lacked coherent and strategic objectives and was not sufficiently cognisant of local context (UN Desa 1996). Furthermore, it was underpinned by an uncritical grounding in liberal internationalist principles that diverted attention from the need for robust state institutions to guide peacebuilding and recovery processes (Paris 2004). In addition

to the many strategic limitations, peacebuilding operations were confronted with multiple political, institutional and operational challenges derived from built-in limitations, contradictions and shortcomings and failures of international policies and institutions (Tschirgi 2004). Moreover, the conflict environment of complex emergencies was becoming far more complicated and demanding.

In the late 1990s, the Integrated Mission concept, now increasingly referred to as Integrated Peace Support Operations, was developed to ensure a system-wide UN response to these challenges, reducing duplication and providing a means to identify ways in which different processes link together towards achieving a common objective. This move sought to ensure that processes, mechanisms and structures would be put in place to generate and sustain this common strategic objective among the political, security, development, human rights and, where appropriate, humanitarian

actors of the UN at country level (UN 2006). In practice, it has meant a shifting of objectives from simply maintaining the status quo (as defined, for instance, by a cease-fire agreement) to adhering to a more ambitious programme of managing transitions: assisting in post-conflict reconstruction and, sometimes, state building (Eide et al 2005:11). Furthermore, the interface between the processes, structures and mechanisms of Integrated Mission planning and those that should inform integrated peacebuilding efforts in transitional settings is increasingly being recognised within the UN, and various external studies are assessing how coherence can be strengthened in peacebuilding and Integrated Mission-related efforts (De Coning 2007; Campbell et al 2007).

Despite moves towards integration in peace operations with increasing recognition around the need for greater collaboration amongst all actors in peacebuilding, some scholars are challenging the utility of a role for peacekeeping missions in peacebuilding. Hazen (2007:323), for example, argues that peacekeeping missions are a 'poor choice for peacebuilding given their limited mandates, capacity, leverage, resources and duration' and that peacebuilding should be the primary task of national governments and their populations. While the role of national governments needing to be central is not debated, the argument that peacekeeping missions do not have an important role to play undermines the very premise of integrated peace support operations that aim to ensure a smooth transition from peace stabilisation to consolidation. The indivisibility of peacekeeping and peacebuilding has been underscored since the UN Secretary-General's 2001 report 'No Exit Without Strategy',⁴ and successively since then. In 2005, the Secretary-General stated that 'security is only one part of the quest for a self-sustaining peace. ... Peacebuilding cannot start upon the conclusion of a peacekeeping operation. It is not an exit strategy for UN peacekeepers, but the guiding principle for our entry' (UN 2005:para 22). Broader mandates reflecting integrated (rather than traditional) peacekeeping operations and actual peacebuilding tasks are now the norm; however, in most cases, mandates do not explicitly reference peacebuilding.⁵ At the same time, much more work is needed to clarify the comparative advantages different actors have in the peacebuilding process, particularly where UN peacekeeping missions are drawing down and national actors, as well as UN agencies, need to take on new responsibilities to ensure a smooth transition.

While drawdown directly responds to achieving a mandate, the more difficult questions concern precise ways in which the stability that peacekeeping efforts bring ultimately create the foundations that will sustain

peace consolidation. This matter ties into scholarly debates that continue to lack consensus around ways in which to measure the success of peace: ultimately, through narrow 'negative' conceptions (the absence of violence or armed conflict) or 'positive' ones (involving a structural transformation towards a socio-political and economic system capable of fostering justice and ensuring a self-sustained peace). While the former are used in conventional security trend analyses, for instance in 'Patterns of Major Armed Conflict' in the yearbook of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the positive peace-oriented conceptions underpin much of the contemporary literature and practice. They also reflect discussions around transition strategies for peacekeeping operations in the late 1990s, which pointed to the need for these strategies to address conflict causes, ensure coordination of actors beyond the life of a mission, and use results-oriented measures to measure progress towards sustaining peace.

The humanitarian-, human security- and human development-oriented activities of UN agencies individually and collectively play a key role in laying foundations for sustained peace. The shift in focus from providing humanitarian assistance to giving a principle support of building national capacities and offering a framework for development programming (United Nations Development Group [UNDG] particularly serves these aims. At the same time, while policy, programme and coordination tools are developed and utilised at some levels,⁶ more work is needed to ensure that these are shared and used effectively and contribute concretely to other peacebuilding efforts, especially with those on the ground. While direct

references to peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity may be found in pockets of work undertaken by different agencies, an overarching awareness and use of these approaches have in many cases not been mainstreamed through UN agency work, particularly at country level, in both programmatic (downstream) and especially strategic (upstream) ways.

It is widely accepted that peace efforts are unlikely to succeed in the long run if they are not rooted in the host society. UN Security Council Resolution 1645 (2005) affirms

the primary responsibility of national and transitional Governments and authorities of countries emerging from conflict or at risk of relapsing into conflict, where they are established, in identifying their priorities and strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding, with a view to ensuring national ownership.

While drawdown directly responds to achieving a mandate, the more difficult questions concern ways to create foundations that will sustain peace consolidation

In particular, some within the UN distinguish between national actors who engage in peacebuilding and international ones who are present to *support* nationally led operations. At the same time, it must be recognised that government preparedness and capacity for and interest in engaging in the peacebuilding enterprise manifest differently in each context. Analysts have drawn attention to the dangers of making 'national ownership' a policy mantra, which can lead to donors' privileging the formal institutions of the state without giving sufficient attention to the informal sector; however, the latter is critical to ensure sustained, societally owned peace (Tschirgi 2006).

Ultimately, many challenges remain in linking up these processes and in defining roles in ways that respond effectively to different contexts and needs for maximum effectiveness.

Integrated policy frameworks and integrated peacebuilding strategies

The central challenge of achieving effective integration with respect to peacebuilding lies in the need for clear agreed-upon integrated peacebuilding strategies (IPBS). Well recognised within the UN for years,⁷ and buttressed by a comprehensive study undertaken by various governments to promote their use (Smith 2004), integrated peacebuilding strategies are now finally being realised after their inclusion in the PBC's mandate. While an official definition has not been adopted, there is an evolving understanding, as outlined in a PBSO 'Draft Concept Note on the Design of Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies' that they should build upon existing frameworks; spell out peacebuilding priorities, gaps in existing efforts and commitments by all stakeholders; define benchmarks to follow progress; and incorporate lessons from other post-conflict situations. Other studies have similarly suggested elements of a peacebuilding strategy; however, they additionally highlight the need to carry out conflict analysis and map initiatives and responses; identify strategies for the sequencing and phasing of efforts; and establish exit strategies (Smith 2004; McCandless & Doe 2007).

A central issue in fostering integration and coherence around peacebuilding in transitional settings is the way in which these strategies will build upon and harmonise with other strategic policy frameworks and processes currently in existence. This process is vital given the plethora of operating frameworks and processes in such settings, which can generate more confusion than coherence. Strategic frameworks were adopted in the 1990s to coordinate political, humanitarian and development actors around shared

goals. Most integrated missions have developed, or are developing, a strategic framework of some form to guide their operations (PBSO 2007). These have been defined by the PBSO 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'. The frameworks adopted in different countries, however, illustrate varied approaches and levels of understanding around conflict and peace issues as understood in the emerging consensus. More analysis is needed to assess the ways in which these strategic frameworks actually can and do reflect peacebuilding strategic frameworks rather than mere donor coordination tools and, moreover, to evaluate successful or unsuccessful methods of furthering peacebuilding aims.

As with the development and application of strategic frameworks, various actors, beyond the PBC, are attempting globally to develop what can be viewed as different forms of IPBS. These attempts often lack integration with other frameworks and fail to demonstrate the linkages and synergies across the various dimensions or sectors of peacebuilding (McCandless & Doe 2007). A key challenge for national governments and the UN will be to ensure that disparate efforts are integrated, behind a collective strategic vision for maximum effectiveness, in ways that maintain a commitment to addressing structural sources of conflict.

Peacebuilding in Liberia: an evolving strategic process

The GoL and the UN have worked individually and together to further peace in Liberia, and they are setting out various strategies to deepen their commitments. The GoL has strongly emphasised development deliverables, many of which overlap with and feed into peacebuilding imperatives. Considerations of conflict and peace have largely been assumed to be critical components of the post-conflict reconstruction project; however, more direct efforts are being made to identify and address conflict causes and peacebuilding, such as those by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the root causes of conflict, and the inclusion of a peacebuilding working group within the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process.

UNMIL's mandate has progressively included key aspects of peacebuilding. With the inauguration of a democratically elected government in January 2006 to end the post-conflict transition, UNMIL entered a peace consolidation phase, which lasted until 31 December 2007, followed by a drawdown phase that

More analysis is needed to assess the ways in which these strategic frameworks reflect peacebuilding strategic frameworks rather than mere donor coordination tools



will last three years. Priority tasks are set out in the tenth progress report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, and they broadly include security, recovery and development imperatives.⁸ Resolution 1712 (2006) further calls upon the Secretary-General to keep the UN Security Council informed about progress in the facilitation of ethnic and political reconciliation. In addition, UN agencies in Liberia carry out many aspects of peacebuilding in their efforts to address the Millennium Development Goals, many of which are deeply intertwined with root causes of conflict (McCandless & Doe 2007:4).

Over the last two years, the UN has increasingly sought to engage the GoL in peacebuilding as it has embarked upon its own internal reflection on its strengths and weaknesses and desired approach to support and strengthen peacebuilding efforts in the country. The following activity areas have formed the building blocks of an overall strategic approach, which continues to evolve, and are aimed at strengthening peacebuilding in Liberia.

Generating awareness about causes of conflict and peacebuilding

Over the last two years, the UN in Liberia (including UNMIL and the UN agencies, or UN 'Country Team') has increasingly focused on building consensus around

a set of conflict factors and security threats to guide their work. This approach emerged with 'second generation' leadership, in particular a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (D/SRSG), who welcomed the new Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Administration into power in January 2006. Before, while an extensive political and security analysis had been undertaken by the mission on an ongoing basis, there was neither a widespread, systematic culture of thinking about conflict causes nor a factoring of that awareness into policymaking and programming at different levels.

When the need for enhanced understanding in this area was recognised, a conflict analysis workshop was conducted in Monrovia on 24 March 2006, with representatives from UNMIL sections and UN agencies, from both headquarters and the field, and with prominent members of Liberian civil society and academia. The causes of conflict identified during the workshop were extensively deliberated in two fora, and two working groups were consequently formed to take further action in infusing thinking about conflict into UN and GoL work: first, within the interim PRS (iPRS) process, a conflict-sensitive working group involving government and civil society representatives was developed; second, internally, within the UN in Liberia, a similar group was developed within the

Table1: Key Conflict factors in Liberia

Poor leadership and misuse of power	While a new democratically elected leader is in power, governance systems that have historically given disproportionate authority to the executive and that have fuelled patronage, greed, and corruption and have generally marginalised concerns of the majority need to be transformed.
Weak justice systems	The formal justice system is barely operating, with an almost total lack of infrastructure and material resources and an acute shortage of qualified personnel. This condition leads to a lack of confidence in the justice system and a heavy reliance on traditional justice systems, many of which have been corrupted.
Identity-based divisions and lack of shared national vision	Socio-economic inequality along ethnic lines has been a persistent cause of conflict in Liberia. It is most pronounced in the historic divide between American settlers and indigenous Liberians. Conflict among ethnic groups over resources and property is aggravated by contradictory customary, statutory and historical claims and ambiguous land tenure systems.
Poverty and food insecurity	Both drivers and a consequence of conflict, poverty and food insecurity are aggravated by the dramatic disruption of agriculture caused by civil war. The utilisation of food has been negatively affected by the destruction of basic services.
Mismanagement of natural resources	Mismanagement, misuse and illegal exploitation of natural resources have been at the heart of conflict in Liberia and the sub-region. Conflicting laws and ownership titles, a dearth of employment opportunities, and poor security in the counties create conditions for a continued challenge to the GoL to gain control of resource-rich areas.
Pressure on reintegration	Refugees and ex-combatants return as internally displaced persons (IDPs). They face limited shelter and a lack of basic infrastructure and social services. Moreover, they confront a fragile social fabric because family and community support networks were destroyed by war. These factors can serve to exacerbate pre-existing or war-induced tensions.
Regional dimension	Small arms, youth unemployment, large displaced populations and a pool of unemployed ex-combatants all represent risks to peace. These factors exist alongside pervasive poverty and food insecurity, collapsed health and education systems and the spread of HIV/Aids.

Source: United Nations in Liberia 2006

United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process. In both settings, the concept of 'conflict factors' was debated and adopted as that which would be used to guide thinking and action. 'Conflict factors' is a dynamic concept, recognising the challenges of establishing causality presented by other frameworks; in particular, the original root or structural causes of war might, in the post-conflict setting, be transformed into something different. The conflict factors concept may thus include causes of conflict, as well as those consequences that continue to represent possible barriers to stability (World Bank 2005). The conflict factors analysis buttressed a general commitment to 'conflict sensitivity' in the processes and policy frameworks that emerged.

Within the UN's Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the UNDAF, a historical analysis highlighting the confluence of political, economic and socio-cultural conditions underpinning and fuelling Liberia's war was developed and presented alongside a working, flexible typology of conflict factors. Alongside the following (abridged) table it was recognised that conflict factors will inevitably evolve, change, and be interpreted differently by different actors and that ultimately a more comprehensive analysis would need to inform long-term planning.

In emphasising 'several factors that must guide the development of conflict-sensitive policies and programmes to guard against a return to the past', the GoL's iPRS highlighted its conflict factors in areas of

- Returns and resettlement
- Social capital
- Ex-combatants
- Regional dimensions
- Natural resources
- Employment and livelihood opportunities

While these factors broadly reflect those outlined by the CCA and UNDAF, it is noteworthy that no direct reference is made to governance-related issues such as poor leadership and the misuse of power, weak justice systems and lack of shared national vision. Additionally, economic factors are expressed somewhat differently, and capacity building is strongly articulated. Governance factors were, however, considered to be of great importance to the iPRS Working Group on Conflict Sensitivity, which had GoL ministry representation at the deputy minister level and drove the inclusion of these issues in the document.

As information was shared and awareness was raised around the need to be mindful of conflict issues and to factor them into decision making, systematic work was done to support the analysis of conflict in the UN mission, by different sections and with the participation of the GoL. These included the following:

- Joint Mission Analysis Cell (JMAC) threat assessments
- JMAC/Reintegration, Rehabilitation, Recovery (RRR) Section 'hot spot' assessments conducted between September 2005 and April 2007
- Joint Security Assessment Team (J-SAT) analysis, a UN-GoL county-by-county assessment of the state of security in May 2007

These assessments broadly converged and underlined the impact of the UN's conflict factors as potent sources of threats to stability. The J-SATs specifically identified the absence of state control over natural resources; the extremely limited reach of state authority; the weak operational capacity of administrative, security and rule of law structures; the ethnic and land disputes; and the impact of external factors in borders as critical threat factors.

Besides strengthening the understanding of conflict factors and causes and persistent security threats in Liberia, the UN gave lengthy internal thought to building consensus around its own understanding of peacebuilding and the particular roles that the mission and UNCT could play in support of GoL efforts.⁹ It had become apparent that multiple understandings of peacebuilding were informing different approaches and activities of different sections and agencies. A document entitled *Strengthening Peacebuilding Efforts in Liberia* was developed in early 2007 within the Office of the D/SRSG (Recovery and Governance); it sought to clarify and build consensus around the UN in Liberia's understanding of, and approach to, peacebuilding. Widely supported by senior management across the UN, it expressed a commitment to strengthening and integrating peacebuilding efforts to help to ensure that Liberia never returned to war. It recommended that

... [p]eacebuilding be identified as a central element of the work of the entire UN in Liberia. As such it must incorporate efforts to promote reconciliation which is part of the current mandate of UNMIL. Actions are needed to ensure that the efforts of the United Nations are guided by an understanding of peacebuilding that is rooted in best practices and current thinking. This understanding should emphasise the process nature of peacebuilding and the need for targeted actions aimed at removing the sources of conflict and identifying and supporting structures and capacities for peace. (McCandless & Doe 2007:3)

As this publication goes to print, the GoL's PRS is in final draft, illustrating a growing commitment to addressing conflict issues. It recognises six key issue areas that require ongoing attention throughout all components of the PRS to mitigate their potential to generate violent conflict. With some reshaping and

new emphasis, these are land conflicts; the condition of youth, especially with regard to employment; political polarisation; mis-management of natural resources; the relationship between the state and its citizens; and weak and dysfunctional justice systems (2008).

Infusing peacebuilding strategy within policy frameworks

As the thinking about and practice of strengthened peacebuilding evolved in Liberia, one certainty has prevailed: any peacebuilding strategy should be infused within (not simply be linked to) existing policy frameworks. Underscored and further articulated in the UN in Liberia's *Agenda for Peacebuilding* (2007b), this path was chosen in recognition of the plethora of existing policy and programmatic frameworks already in operation countered by the capacity constraints of the GoL to engage them. At the same time, debates ensued about the degree to which peacebuilding strategy could simply be infused within these frameworks given their limits in both substance and process. In the end, a dual-track process was adopted that involved

1. Infusing 'conflict sensitive' concerns within these frameworks
2. Developing an integrated set of programming priorities aimed at specifically addressing the conflict factors.

As it has evolved, this dual track has also sought integration in its approach: the priorities developed to inform integrated peacebuilding programme, which grew into a proposal for the UN PBF, were developed within the iPRS Working Group on Conflict Sensitivity. Ongoing efforts persist to ensure continuity between these two streams, so that overarching policy goals and objectives within the PRS are in tune with programming priorities as they evolve through the efforts of the (GoL-UN) Joint Steering Committee, managing the PBF \$15 million grant (discussed in more detail in Section 3.3 below).

Current efforts to infuse peacebuilding within existing policy frameworks are primarily focused on the iPRS/PRS and the UNDAF. Nonetheless, as the UN PBSO and other UN bodies consider how to ensure an integrated approach to peacebuilding, it is worth highlighting a number of integrated programme and policy frameworks in Liberia that laid the foundation for, and are therefore integral building blocks of, these larger processes, many of which continue to be of import in ensuring their success.

Integrated strategic programmes and policy frameworks

The UN in Liberia first attempted to develop an integrated peacebuilding strategic framework in

November 2005. The Joint Peace-Building Framework aimed to articulate a measurable framework for action and outline priority areas to support the government. This process did not involve the GoL but fed into the development of its four-pillar policy framework (security, governance and rule of law, economic recovery and infrastructure and basic services) coordinated by the Liberia Reconstruction and Development Committee (LRDC).

The LRDC, chaired by the president, coordinates reconstruction and development activities and oversees the implementation and monitoring of key deliverables, both in the short and in the long term. It acts as a forum that charts the course for the GoL's national development strategy. The iPRS was also developed in line with this framework as it sought to mainstream cross-cutting issues such as gender, environment, youth, HIV/Aids, conflict sensitivity and human rights.

The UN in Liberia simultaneously developed a number of integrated frameworks and projects that have largely sought to respond to, and support, the GoL's approach. The first major attempt, the UN Integrated Mission Priorities and Implementation Plan (IMPIP), was designed to bring together the various objectives and strategic directions laid out in key mission strategic planning documents, including the Integrated Mandate Implementation Plan (IMIP) and the Results-Based Budgeting (RBB) framework. This consolidated, simple framework sought to align with the government's four-pillar framework and UNMIL's benchmarking and drawdown plan. The result represents the UN's mandate and strategic direction, comprising the four pillars, albeit with the broad emphasis reflecting UN priorities, in particular cross-cutting issues. The IMPIP presents an inventory of projects and initiatives according to thematic sector, which can facilitate thinking about gaps and strategic direction. In August 2006, the IMPIP was made a core tool of the revamped Integrated Mission Planning Process (IMPP) in Liberia.

In mid 2006, the first major integrated project involving the peacekeeping mission and the UNCT in Liberia was developed and it aimed to bring the UN together at the county level in building local administrative capacity. The UN County Support Team (CST) mechanism and the project (administered by the UNDP) are supported by a joint steering committee involving the GoL, particularly the Ministry of Internal Affairs; the UN D/SRSG/Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)/Resident Coordinator (RC); and a technical team with representation from UNDP, UNMIL and the Office of the RC. The CST project is practicing and promoting integration within the UN and with the government as it develops a mechanism to harmonise and focus UN actors, and other international ones, in support of government priorities. While UN and



consistent local authority presence across the country have challenged progress in meeting CST aims, the CST mechanism and the project have served to improve coordination around information sharing, assessment, capacity building and institution building of local government, and coordinated development planning at the county level—all of which lay an important state building foundation that will serve efforts to sustain peace.

Poverty Reduction Strategy/Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy and United Nations Development Assistance Framework

Liberia's iPRS, developed in line with the GoL's four-pillars framework, sets out the current strategy for recovery and reconstruction. The Working Group on Conflict Sensitivity was developed within the iPRS process, which led efforts to infuse a conflict-sensitive approach within the iPRS, that is to say a commitment to identifying the root causes of conflict and factoring them into programming and policymaking decisions towards preventing future conflict. The group comprised various GoL ministry officials and UN and civil society representatives.¹⁰ Through ongoing meetings, consensus building, document drafting and revisions, the group ensured that the document recognised an official version of Liberia's conflict factors as well as the need for a 'conflict sensitive poverty reduction strategy' (Author 2006:12). Furthermore, specific policy commitments were made to training the government in conflict-sensitive policy making, to setting up and empowering conflict management structures at county levels and to building an early warning system in line with the ECOWAS mandate.

A conflict-sensitive approach is, however, not comprehensively mainstreamed through the document, primarily because of time and capacity constraints. At the time the iPRS was being developed, the GoL pillars were not fully functional and officials were completely occupied in trying to put together the priorities of each pillar, a task greatly hampered by a lack of data. The cross-cutting working groups were trying to keep up with the process with limited information; they sought to educate themselves about relevant issues while developing methodologies to mainstream them in the document. Cross-cutting groups developed their own chapter, but this was cut in the interests of space and with the government's intention to mainstream the cross-cutting issues into the pillar priorities. In the final analysis, the Gender group probably fared best, partly because it had a Minister of Gender to negotiate at the top level and partly because of the greater recognition awarded to gender as a cross-cutting issue.

Persistent efforts by the Conflict-Sensitive Working Group ensured that commitments would be strengthened through the establishment of an official cross-cutting group on peacebuilding in the PRS process. The PRS Peacebuilding Working Group now has expanded membership and authority to engage more fully in the process. In addition to facilitating the implementation of commitments made in the iPRS, the group is working to mainstream peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive issues in policies and programmes, through the LRDC structure, by raising awareness and giving the relevant training. In its early efforts, the working group sought to ensure a conflict-sensitive approach to the County Development Agenda process, which fed into the national-level drafting, and similarly, to infuse this approach within the PRS poverty diagnostic and other pillar inputs. In an appendix to the final document, peacebuilding, along with the other cross-cutting issues (gender, environment, HIV and Aids, and children and youth) are discussed through 'strategy briefs' where initial reflections on the strategies that will be needed to ensure a peacebuilding conflict-sensitive approach to the PRS are shared. As the document itself recognises, the current capacity of the GoL to develop and implement conflict-sensitive policies is limited and thus a special focus will be placed on developing the necessary skills and knowledge across government ministries and agencies. This will be supported by the PBF projects, illustrating the integration of the dual-track approach.

As the practice of strengthened peacebuilding evolved in Liberia, one certainty has prevailed: a peacebuilding strategy should be infused within existing policy frameworks

The UN in Liberia, with many representatives who participated in the iPRS Working Group, drove a similar commitment to conflict sensitivity within the CCA and the UNDAF, the common strategic framework for UN support at the country level. Effectively realising the

commitments made to a conflict-sensitive approach to programme design, implementation and evaluation, however, depends on the abilities and interests of individual agencies. The commitments nevertheless need to be reflected in agency planning tools, including the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) and the detailed operational plan for the country programme of each agency. More work is needed to ensure that a conflict-sensitive approach is translated into action in the CPAPs.

Addressing sources of conflict

Along with other international and local actors, the GoL and the UN in Liberia are individually and collectively working to address Liberia's conflict factors, including structural causes, dynamics and consequences, through a multiplicity of initiatives, many of which are linked to mandate and peace agreement requirements. Undoubtedly, key building blocks for sustaining peace



have been achieved. Liberia's (2008:12) draft PRS notes the following:

Liberia is on the move. After decades of economic mismanagement and 14 years of brutal civil war, Liberia's national nightmare is over. The country has been at peace since 2003. Two rounds of free and fair elections in 2005 led to the inauguration of a new government in January 2006. The economy is expanding rapidly, with growth accelerating to over 9 percent in 2007. Roads and buildings are being rebuilt, health clinics and schools are re-opening, and agricultural production is increasing. The Government is introducing a broad set of policies to foster peace, accelerate reconstruction and development, and build strong systems of governance.

The following matrix, an abridged version of that developed by the UN in Liberia, is a representative illustration of efforts that align with outlined conflict factors to date.

While the range of initiatives on the part of the GoL and UN and civil society is clearly commendable, the collective and, in many cases, individual impact of these initiatives has not been examined. Peace practitioners and researchers have established that multiple peace initiatives do not simply 'add up' to peace 'writ large' (Anderson & Olsen 2003:89).

Current efforts to address the causes of conflict will be realised through two further fora. The first is in the form of recommendations that emerge from the TRC process. The TRC has been charged with 'the responsibility of investigating the root causes of the conflict in Liberia, amplifying historical truths and thereby undermining falsehoods that have over time assumed the status of historical truths' (TRC 2008). This process and the extensive taking of statement from victims informing the commission will take at least another year to conclude, and the GoL will be bound to implement the recommendations as articulated in the statute of the TRC that was enacted by parliament. How these processes will be undertaken and which bodies will be held to account are questions that are, however, less well articulated.

The second key forum for addressing conflict issues is the Liberia Peacebuilding Fund Joint Steering Committee (JSC) established to oversee and coordinate the operations of the PBF grant for Liberia. As discussed above, the priority areas of the envisaged programme emerged from the work of the iPRS Conflict-Sensitive Working Group and the pursuant discussions between

the UN and the GoL around critical peacebuilding priorities. The \$15 million grant will focus on the following areas:

- Fostering national reconciliation and managing conflict
- Conducting critical interventions to promote peace and resolve conflict
- Strengthening state capacity for peace consolidation

The first programme area is designed to facilitate a national dialogue in support of reconciliation. This involves strengthening the efforts of the TRC to strategically engage different segments of society and working to ensure that structures and processes of national reconciliation and conflict management are institutionalised beyond the TRC's mandate at all levels. The critical interventions highlight a resilient conflict factor throughout the sub-region: war-affected youth, including former combatants, who remain unemployed and engaged in illegal activities in resource-rich areas. A joint GoL-UN strategy to engage these at-risk individuals is being developed in short-term employment in community-building projects and through a range of psycho-social care, education and health-related projects. The last area focuses on key issues of infrastructure and the state's ability, particularly at local levels, to expand and deliver services. It encompasses the setting-up of structures and the building of capacity for GoL officials to engage in conflict-sensitive policymaking and programming.

As highlighted in the UN in Liberia's own analysis (McCandless & Doe 2007:18), addressing peacebuilding in a comprehensive and integrated strategic manner will require a strategic effort to identify gaps and to examine the interactions and synergies of these various initiatives, together with their potential adverse effects on each other and on conflict factors. Ensuring that they are addressed effectively, and at a structural level, raises another set of formidable challenges. In particular, these relate to human and institutional capacity on the part of the post-conflict government (as discussed in the benchmarking sections below), and to the resources required on an ongoing basis to sustain peacebuilding efforts as donor investment wanes. On the part of the international community, ensuring quality integration and coordination perhaps presents the greatest challenge: this means efforts are made without an excessive duplication and waste of resources, in a manner that ultimately does more good than harm and actually builds national capacities, and processes and structures continue to critically address the conflict factors beyond the exit of an international peace operation.

Ensuring quality integration and coordination perhaps presents the greatest challenge of an international peace operation



Table 2: Initiatives addressing conflict factors

	Government	United Nations
Poor leadership and misuse of power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established an autonomous governance reform commission Established a national anti-corruption strategy and supporting legislation Planned a review of the national constitution Restructured Liberia's security architecture Facilitated the transfer of Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone Improved tax revenue collection systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitored the implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP) Initiated public information programmes on the activities of government support to the restoration/consolidation of state authority and enhancement of good governance practices Created a County Support Team mechanism and project to build capacity of local administration Strengthened political institutions
Weak justice systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reformed and restructured the Liberian National Police Established the Independent National Commission on Human Rights Reviewed the dual justice system, abolishing tribal law elements such as trial by ordeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gave training on human rights and legal education Gave support to establish a law reform commission Gave support to develop a national legal framework and judicial and correctional institutions
Identity-based divisions and lack of shared national vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established accounts of violations in the war, with the aim of building a new shared history upon which to establish national unity and breaking the cycle of impunity Elaborated on a national visioning strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gave ongoing support to the TRC Supported research on traditional forms of reconciliation in Liberia Mediated inter-ethnic, religious and community conflicts and land and property disputes
Poverty and food insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed the Liberia Emergency Employment Programme and Liberia Employment Action Programme Distributed seeds and tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiated programmes on the distribution of seeds and tools Initiated the National Crop and Food Supply Assessment and gave assistance to the GoL to develop a national food security strategy
Mismanagement of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established the Forestry Reform Legislation and Monitoring Committee Established a national diamond task force to implement the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gave support on various natural resource task forces Developed and implemented Kimberly process mechanisms
Pressure on reintegration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed the National Commission for Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDRR) to lead the process from the GoL's side Recruited hundreds of ex-combatants in labour-intensive jobs around the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported NCDDRR Established county resource centres and developed shelter/housing skills Improved access to and quality of education across the country Focused on the demobilisation of child soldiers and reintegration support
Regional dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Played a role in the Mano River Union regional, economic and political security initiatives Drafted a national youth policy for Liberia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported the development of an HIV/Aids prevention strategy Supported capacity building for youth leadership training

Source: McCandless & Doe 2007

Benchmarking: thinking beyond the drawdown of the mission

Ultimately, moving from war to lasting peace requires evaluation and assessment, leading to the drawdown of the mission. UNMIL's plan for its consolidation, drawdown and withdrawal (CDW) has evolved into an integrated assessment tool with conceptual and increasingly practical links to other strategic frameworks such as the IMPIP and the government's four-pillar framework. As stated in the UN in Liberia's *Agenda for Peacebuilding* (2007b),

It is designed to ensure the smooth, orderly handover of security responsibilities and the cessation of capacity building tasks to allow for the eventual withdrawal of the Mission. The benchmarks that guide the CDW plan are based on an understanding of the conflict factors and other security threat assessments undertaken by the Mission, in collaboration with GoL and the UNCT.

In June 2007, as UNMIL developed indicative benchmarks for the 2008–2011 drawdown phase, efforts were made to understand the conceptual and practical linkages of UNMIL's mandate vis-à-vis longer-term peacebuilding aims. The CDW plan now distinguishes between 'core' and 'contextual' benchmarks as follows:

- *Core benchmarks* are defined as markers designed to gauge the progress of the mission against the mandate and those essentials that must be fulfilled to ensure a steady state of security during drawdown
- *Contextual benchmarks* are factors related to context, which could potentially reignite or exacerbate conflict or interact with core benchmarks to undermine security

The CDW plan serves as an analytical tool that can provide a means for ensuring a smooth transition between the more security-oriented stabilising aspects of peace interventions and the longer-term aspects of peacebuilding requiring attention by a range of actors, especially the GoL.

In Liberia, the process opened up considerably since its inception in 2006 when discussions were held primarily between the SRSG's office and elements of the UN's security sector. By 2007, as other strategic policy processes engaged different sectors and agencies, it became clear that the benchmarking process, too, would benefit from the participation of persons with expertise in certain and particularly civilian-led benchmark areas. Today, the GoL is consulted and

it views drafts of reports and CDW plans; however, CDW planning remains a UN-driven process and its contributions to a nationally driven peacebuilding process are therefore limited.

Despite transition strategy discussions of the late 1990s within the UN reflecting concern about linking peacekeeping and sustaining peace with an emphasis on results-based measures of success tied to causes of conflict, drawdown assessments remain focused on national security. In Liberia, a June 2007 technical assessment mission (TAM), led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), recommended to the Secretary-General that the pace of drawdown process would be linked to *core* security-oriented benchmarks¹¹ rather than other key aspects of the mandate, such as the facilitation of ethnic and political reconciliation. Thus, while the analytical distinction between *core* and *contextual* is highly useful, it could support a practical division between *keeping* and *consolidating* and *sustaining* peace.

Learning from Liberia's experience

In a post-conflict setting where tensions persist amongst different actors, processes that foster joint decision making and ownership contribute to peacebuilding

Participatory processes, government ownership and capacity gaps

Government ownership presumes sufficient *awareness of and belief in a peacebuilding approach*, as well as the *political will and capacity* to undertake and prioritise peacebuilding processes and concerns. This is a sweeping assumption in a post-conflict setting where a wealth of competing priorities and interests exist: a likely reality in all cases.

In Liberia, the extremely strained capacity at all levels of the GoL has been widely recognised as one of Liberia's greatest recovery challenges. A lack of technical capacity was a major factor in merely producing the iPRS, and hence adding yet another demand for highly capacitated individuals to drive a peacebuilding strategy process was believed to be problematic. In addition to suffering from capacity constraints, no ministry had a clear mandate for undertaking peacebuilding. In hindsight, this lack probably helped to bring about an integrated participatory process not overly owned by one ministry. In a post-conflict setting where tensions inevitably persist amongst different actors and interests comprised by a new government, processes that foster joint decision making and ownership contribute to peacebuilding.

Given these circumstances, the approach in Liberia has been one of building capacity and, hence, enhancing the *ability of government to own the*

peacebuilding process. This was first brought about through the existing framework of the iPRS whereby the members of the conflict-sensitive working group were trained in a variety of peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive approaches. Incentives were created, as well as the means for participants to remain engaged in issues, through joint programme proposals that evolved into the successful PBF application which, in turn, promises involvement for many of their organisations and ministries. (It is now being done through bidding.)

The UN globally still lacks a full awareness of peacebuilding and the capacity to undertake peacebuilding in an integrated and strategic manner. Serious institutional and human resources gaps require support both in Liberia and in other peace operations if the UN is to contribute substantively and strategically to peacebuilding.

Working within existing frameworks

One needs to take certain advantages and disadvantages into account when deciding whether a peacebuilding strategy should stand alone or should be integrated into an existing framework such as the iPRS or the UNDAF. Considerations that should guide decision making following an analysis of the Liberia case include the following:

- Whether existing frameworks offer sufficient entry points
- Whether they offer enough flexibility to incorporate new issues, given that processes and structures are already developed
- Whether development-focused integrated frameworks offer enough space for peacebuilding concerns
- Whether political caution and the ideological direction of the actors involved will prohibit movement

Considering whether existing frameworks offer sufficient entry points, one finds that the GoL's four-pillar approach reflects what are widely understood to be fundamental pillars of peacebuilding; however, an integrating mechanism with elements considered necessary for peacebuilding strategy does not exist. The GoL's pillars are led by particular ministries with their unique sectoral concerns, demands and capacity constraints. As discussed earlier, the iPRS process was undertaken in a rushed manner, at a time when institutional and human resources capacities were extremely challenged and many competing priorities and demands arose as the new government was establishing itself. In such a setting, existing frameworks are not likely to offer sufficient entry points unless commitment is evident at the highest levels. Nevertheless, Liberia illustrated how interest and buy-in can be incrementally built.

A closely connected question is whether existing frameworks offer enough flexibility to incorporate new issues given that their processes and structures are already developed. This issue has been a challenge for both the iPRS/PRS and the UNDAF; however, the UNDAF went further than the iPRS in committing itself to a conflict-sensitive approach to planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The PRS is illustrating a deepened commitment to placing peacebuilding and conflict sensitive concerns on its agenda. This commitment, however, will have to be matched with both the capacity to drive this process and the political will to make the changes that result from the analysis.

In general, developing a PRS, like most policy-making processes, is fundamentally a political one. The degree to which these issues will be fully supported in meaningful ways will depend on how well the case for peacebuilding is made and supported in an ongoing manner, which depends largely on the skill and financial resources available to allow it to compete with other processes and priorities on the table. Inevitably, there will be concerns that new suggestions offered by a peacebuilding approach may challenge plans already agreed to through at times extensive negotiation processes. Even within the UN, consensus will be challenged by UN agency mandates, human resources capacities, funding challenges and long-term programmatic commitments that may not be adequately targeted or shaped to address post-conflict contexts.

A third consideration is the following: despite obvious advantages to having an integrated peacebuilding and development strategy, both the iPRS and the UNDAF are economic-/development-focused, and this emphasis risks crowding out other peacebuilding concerns. In a PRS, for example, the focus could easily be driven by an overarching concern for economic growth at the expense of pro-poor development strategies and other needed programmes that should underpin peacebuilding in post-conflict countries. In the case of Liberia, the iPRS and UNDAF do contain security and governance and rule-of-law pillars and related policy goals. The key challenge, however, remains the actual *integrated treatment* of these issues and application to the planning of a conflict-sensitive lens, both of which are yet to be fully achieved in the framework.

A final consideration involves ways in which political caution and ideological direction can affect the choices of working within existing frameworks. Ultimately, how peacebuilding is addressed is likely to reflect the preferences of lead ministries and/or the outcomes of trade-offs and last-minute lobbying efforts. In Liberia, as noted before, a number of inputs in the participatory analysis and reflections of the iPRS Working Group, with deputy minister-level representation from various ministries, were not reflected in the final analysis

of conflict in the iPRS. This omission reinforces a well-documented trend in policy and programmatic frameworks developed with or by governments in post-conflict countries: root causes of conflict might not be fully addressed for fear of the potentially destabilising consequences of openness or the threats posed to particular interests (Rose 2006). This matter raises difficult questions for the UN and other actors when they consider ways in which to support government efforts to drive the process, particularly with a mandate of ensuring sustained peace.

Developing integrated approaches to peacebuilding

Working within existing strategic frameworks to realise a peacebuilding strategy, with full knowledge of the above challenges, inevitably requires creative thinking and action. Efforts in Liberia have actualised as a set of layered and interwoven processes, and the hope is that these efforts will bring about peace and conflict-sensitive reconstruction and a development strategic framework. At the same time, engagement with the Peacebuilding Fund has been sought to ensure there is financial support to concretely address conflict and peacebuilding priorities in an integrated manner by addressing these priorities that are derived from and built upon those outlined in other processes and frameworks.

While Liberia's four pillars reflect a parallel effort to address important sectoral issues within the same agenda, the degree to which security, development and other issues are addressed in a truly integrated manner is less clear. This challenge of integration presented to the GoL is not substantially different from the integration challenges facing the UN in its efforts to pursue integrated peacebuilding, or any other, strategies. Government ministries (and pillars), like UN agencies, each have their own mandates and focus and the capacity constraints to merely accomplish them, and the move to integrated planning and implementation remains a challenge. However, it is expected that a good process will eventually create the platform to address these challenges.

While various efforts have been made to date to develop integrated policy and programme frameworks in Liberia, the UNDAF and the iPRS/PRS remain the most elaborated frameworks and they have also given the most attention to process. Each of these frameworks outline embedded objectives and programmatic areas that are essential parts of peacebuilding; these activity areas have yet, however, to be fully mapped through the type of process outlined above, one that is designed to ensure the strategic enhancement of peacebuilding efforts overall.

The degree to which Liberia's approach of infusing peacebuilding within existing integrated strategies will ultimately serve notions of integrated peacebuilding will arguably depend on the ways in which these existing peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive development frameworks can act in both preventive and ameliorative ways to address conflict factors. In regard to prevention, the PRS will need to lay out an operational framework indicating how policy choices will be made and programmes will have to be implemented in ways that will ensure conflict sensitivity. This action is arguably vital in the area of economic policy given the need to ensure that increased growth actually translates into means to address the pervasive historical horizontal inequalities and widespread poverty and lack of opportunity that could undermine peace. In terms of amelioration, while none of the frameworks offer a clear mechanism for addressing persistent sources and actual manifestations of conflict in an intentional way, the securing of PBF support for agreed peacebuilding priorities and the work of the TRC to identify root causes of conflict and to

recommend means of addressing them become vital complements of ensuring a more promising overall integrated approach to peacebuilding.

Conclusion: fostering coherence with integrated peacebuilding

Despite the many challenges facing post-conflict Liberia, considerable progress has been made in advancing an integrated and strategic peacebuilding agenda to address the conflict issues that persistently threaten Liberia's still fragile peace. The case of Liberia illustrates the norm that should serve as a practical planning guide: if they are developed

on the ground and in the light of on-the-ground realities, post-conflict peacebuilding processes are more likely than not going to materialise as multi-dimensional and undoubtedly messy processes. This conclusion coincides to a great degree with that of a recent Norwegian study on integrated mission and peacebuilding (De Coning 2007:7), which argues that coherence cannot be fully attained in dynamic, non-linear systems. Rather, coherence is about degree, not end states; trade-offs are inevitable and, more often than not, peacebuilding agents have to settle for 'partially coherent' solutions. As the Liberia case illustrates, the challenge therefore lies in harnessing the different processes and building a participatory dialogue and set of practices among them.

From the above analysis the following areas are identified as deserving attention in post-conflict countries, as well as at headquarters, to serve integrated peacebuilding.

Despite many challenges facing post-conflict Liberia, considerable progress has been made in advancing an integrated and strategic peacebuilding agenda to address conflict issues



Building consensus around conflict factors

Building consensus around the root causes of conflict or conflict factors in any country, while difficult, is imperative. Although all actors are unlikely to agree, some degree of consensus should be achieved to provide a framework for action. Ideally both ameliorative and preventive, structures and processes should be developed to directly address the structural sources that caused war in the first place and the ongoing or new sources of security threat. Efforts to have agreed assessment about conflict should clearly be undertaken in the planning stage of a mission. While IMPP guidelines suggest an inter-agency team in the planning process, an independent conflict specialist should accompany the team, a task the PBSO could likely manage. Similarly, conflict specialists should be included in the Post-Conflict Needs Assessment teams when a common shared strategy for recovery and development in post-conflict settings is developed. Critically, the findings should not remain in selectively seen reports but should be repackaged in different forms so that they are useful to actors on the ground at all levels, serving as a basis to inform action.

Furthermore, conflict analysis should be undertaken on an ongoing basis, in a methodical way, across UN peace operations and with government and civil society. An integrated mission maintains the invaluable asset of highly capable individuals countrywide, a human resources strength that should be used to the fullest during supporting data collection to serve peacebuilding. Missions tend to suffer from too many poorly coordinated reporting instruments which provide invaluable information that is shared vertically rather than horizontally, where it could arguably have much greater impact. The PBSO could work to generate conflict analysis tools and mechanisms that can draw upon and consolidate some of this information for ongoing conflict analysis purposes. This could serve to strengthen awareness of, and build consensus around, the conflict factors in a particular country where the UN is engaged. Considering ways in which this can be done in conjunction with government actors, building their capacity to conduct research and analysis, should be paramount.

Infusing conflict sensitivity within policy frameworks and clarifying the role and relationship of integrated peacebuilding strategies

Addressing sources of conflict necessitates the decentralisation of tasks and responsibilities under the leadership of different actors, which could quite possibly

cause unintentional harm. Care needs to be taken to ensure that peacebuilding is not compartmentalised into many small programmes with different sectors and that integrated projects and programmes are genuinely undertaken by the UN and government agencies targeted specifically at addressing widely agreed-on sources of conflict.

IPBS being undertaken in PBC countries need to go beyond focusing efforts on a few key projects that have been collectively determined as priorities, even if this has been done through a comprehensive process of gap analysis and stakeholder coordination. To ensure that these strategies contribute to sustained peacebuilding in fragile post-conflict settings, it is vital that emphasis is placed on the setting up of processes and mechanisms for ongoing conflict analysis, management and prevention. Moreover, IPBS should be linked to and harmonized with other transition and peace consolidation planning and assessment tools.

While integration alone presents considerable challenges, it is not enough to simply integrate the activities of the UN; integration needs to be informed by a peace and conflict-sensitive lens. A recent Norwegian study on integrated missions (Campbell et al 2007) usefully highlights areas where integration should occur, namely the policy, strategic, programmatic and administrative fields, and underscores the role of integration in peacebuilding. Yet it does not practically suggest how integration will occur in a conflict-sensitive manner. Considerable awareness raising and capacity building is needed among the UN's missions, specialised agencies, funds and programmes, and member states, and

also within transitional civil societies, around the meaning and practice of peacebuilding and ways in which to undertake conflict-sensitive approaches to programming. The PBC and PBSO have an important role to play in this regard, both in terms of developing and sharing strategies for integration generally and in thinking through how these aims are achieved in ways that actually promote peacebuilding. Moreover, thought needs to be given to ways in which IPBS will interface with other strategic policy frameworks. The PBSO should assess progress with respect to the employment of IPBS in the first two PBC case countries, Burundi and Sierra Leone, and work to articulate the costs and benefits of separate strategies versus those merged with existing frameworks, as in the case of Liberia.

Resources need to be put concretely behind rhetorical commitment. If peacebuilding is not translated into operational plans with funding, commitments to these issues, in the iPRS and UNDAF for example, will

An integrated mission maintains the invaluable asset of highly capable individuals, a strength that should be used during data collection to serve peacebuilding

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE PEACEBUILDING

1. BUILD CONSENSUS AROUND CONFLICT FACTORS AT THE PLANNING STAGES OF A MISSION AND ON AN ONGOING BASIS IN POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS

- Include an independent conflict specialist on the mission planning team and on PCNA teams when developing a common, shared strategy for recovery and development in post-conflict settings (PBSO)
- Share and repackage findings from these and other conflict analyses in different forms so that they become useful to actors on the ground at all levels, serving as a basis to inform action (PBSO)
- Share ongoing UN mission data collected in the field related to conflict factors more widely, that is with governments and civil society actors on the ground where there is poor capacity for data collection, particularly in an immediate post-conflict setting (DPKO)
- Generate and share conflict analysis tools and mechanisms that can deepen and therefore build consensus around conflict factors. Perform these actions in conjunction with government actors, building their capacity to conduct research and analysis (PBSO)

2. INFUSE CONFLICT SENSITIVITY WITHIN POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND CLARIFY THE ROLE AND RELATIONSHIP OF INTEGRATED PEACEBUILDING STRATEGIES

- Develop methodologies to infuse conflict-sensitive approaches within policymaking and programming, and overarching strategic policy frameworks (PBSO; UNDP)
- Raise awareness and build capacity within UN missions, specialised agencies, funds and programmes, and amongst member states, around the meaning and practice of peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive approaches generally, and IPBS in particular (PBSO)
- Assess the progress of IPBS in Burundi and Sierra Leone and begin to outline possible relationships of IPBS with other strategic frameworks (PBSO)
- Back commitments with resources; peacebuilding must be translated into operational plans with funding (UN agencies, special funds and programmes; member states)

3. ENHANCE BENCHMARKING AS A PEACEBUILDING ASSESSMENT TOOL

- Benchmarking processes should be developed to contribute to analysis beyond the military drawdown of a UN mission. Benchmarking tools can contribute to the assessment of peace sustainability by increased incorporation of civilian dimensions, by being squarely linked to capacity analysis of government bodies, by clearly articulating the phases of transition and benchmarks within them, and by ensuring conceptual and practical linkages to a wider strategic analysis involving other actors required for sustaining peace (DPKO, PBSO)
- Benchmarking assessment, especially when one addresses issues beyond traditional security benchmark areas, benefits from wider participation. Methodologies to support this need are to be developed and practiced across missions (DPKO)
- Increased efforts are needed to ensure benchmarking tools are consistent with other existing strategic policy frameworks being used by governments and those guiding a peace operation's activities (DPKO; UNDP)
- Benchmarks should be clearly linked to the ability of a government to sustain the results anticipated by the benchmarks

4. CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS TO GUIDE PLANNING FOR PEACEBUILDING

- Capacity to develop and steer a peacebuilding process on the part of national governments cannot be assumed; training and capacity building of different actors on the meaning and process/strategy of peacebuilding is undoubtedly required (PBSO)
- Capacity analysis tools are needed; they link a peace operation's withdrawal or transition in certain areas to a substantive analysis of a government's institutional capacity to take over certain responsibilities or simply be able to respond to new issues as they relate to conflict factors (UNDP; DPKO; PBSO)
- Capacity analysis is needed of UN agencies when and where they may be required to take over certain previously mission-held tasks. More work is needed to ensure effective coordination through transitional processes as phases (DPKO; UNDP, PBSO)
- M&E frameworks and tools to assess the capacities of all actors to sustain peace need to be consistently adopted and shared in such settings (PBSO; UNDP)

exist in intention, without a means to carry this commitment forward.

Enhancing benchmarking as a peacebuilding assessment tool

Benchmarking is a critical tool to ensure a strategic approach to sustaining peace. The CDW process in Liberia has developed an analytical framework that facilitates a conceptual means for distinguishing between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and it can be further developed and shared. In addition, UNMIL's rich experience in process should also be shared: benchmarking assessment benefits from wider ownership and participation. This idea supports thinking about democratic participation in matters

of security. In the main, planning for a transition from peace keeping to peace building means paying attention to not only *process* but also *results* to ensure ownership and capacity building, and this learning occurs along the way.

As for substantive issues, a disconnect arguably remains with respect to the overarching goal of sustaining peace and the current approach of withdrawing troops when primarily security sector indicators have been met. Increased attention and commitment to a *results* rather than an *output* orientation will contribute to thinking in this regard.

Benchmarking tools should be conceptually linked to other existing strategic policy frameworks guiding a

peace operation's activities. While the UN in Liberia has much to share in this regard, efforts should be made to share the relevant mechanisms at headquarter level. Additionally, the process and outcomes will undoubtedly benefit if they are initiated at the inception of a UN peace operation.

Capacity assessments to guide planning for peacebuilding

Demands for nationally driven processes without resources and capacity to back them up will only serve to frustrate and undermine peacebuilding. Tools for capacity analysis need to be developed and shared. They should link a peace operation's withdrawal or transition in certain areas to a substantive analysis of a government's institutional capacity to take over certain responsibilities or to simply be able to respond to new issues. Benchmarks should be clearly linked to the ability of a government to sustain the results that the benchmarks anticipate. Local institutions must have the capacity to sustain results, and assessment tools are needed to facilitate this knowledge to inform effective benchmarking analysis. In addition, capacity analysis is needed of UN agencies when and where they may be required to take over certain previously mission-held tasks. Effective coordination in assessing capacity needs, gaps and assets and acting to address these issues are vital foundations for sustained peace.

The UN should strive to develop and share tools to assess the capacities of all actors to sustain peace. This knowledge would provide a vital foundation for peacebuilding in terms of creating enhanced awareness within and among organisations, clarifying the added value and comparative advantage of each and ultimately bringing about more effective integration in the overarching pursuit of peace. The weakness on the ground in terms of capacity assessment likely has much to do with a lack of capacity to undertake such appraisals. M&E skills are generally vital tools for peacebuilding, and while much work has been done in the area of peace and conflict evaluation tools and impact assessments, a lack of consensus and widespread use of these tools in transitional settings persists.

Liberia illustrates ways in which a wide array of actors from all levels are coming together to deal with the profound challenges involved in ensuring that a fragile post-conflict country has a good chance to sustain its hard-earned peace. Yet much remains to be learned, both within and from Liberia, about advancing peacebuilding in a strategic, coherent and integrated manner.

The momentum gained internationally to recognise and undertake peacebuilding in a concerted manner must not be lost. Cases should be studied, lessons should be learned and practices should be put in

place at all levels to encapsulate this learning. This will undoubtedly ensure greater results in realising global efforts to build and sustain peace.

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Notes

1 Summarised from the fifteenth progress report of the Secretary General on UNMIL (ref S/2007/479, United Nations Security Council, August 2007) as well as an analysis of conflict factors as set out in Liberia's 2007 UNDAF.

2 This analysis is based on my own research and experiences working with UNMIL for three years (2004 to 2007), where I was centrally engaged with many UN, GoL and civil society colleagues. The analysis and recommendations, where not attributed to other sources, are my own; however, many insightful and committed people have worked, and continue to work, to strengthen peacebuilding efforts in Liberia. I would like to thank several of them whose work and/or contributions to this paper have been critical: Jordan Ryan, Comfort Ero, Sam Doe, Malin Herwig, Kamil Kamaluddeen, Ademola Araoye, Wilfred Gray Johnson,

Jonathan Andrews, Asith Bhattacharjee, Natty B Davis, Lawrence Clarke and Debee Sayndee.

3 The role of Integrated Missions must be considered within the wider context of integrated peacebuilding efforts by all actors in intrinsically complex transitional settings. De Coning (2007:5) has similarly argued that the UN Integrated Missions concept must be contextualised within the broader international system that pursues coherence aimed at promoting harmonisation among external actors and alignment between the internal and external actors in any given country or regional conflict system. Similarly, in their study on integrated missions, Campbell et al (2007:1) note: 'Integration aims to establish the structures, policies, and procedures to better align the peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding approaches that make up today's multidimensional peace operations.' The Department of Peacekeeping Operations' 'Capstone Document' (DPKO 2008) also underscores the range of partnerships with multiple actors required in the UN's engagement in transitional planning with respect to peacebuilding.

4 The Secretary-General report argued that sustaining peace involves helping warring parties move their struggles from the battlefield to an 'institutional framework' capable of resolving present and future political disputes (para 10). The Security Council further underlined the value of including peacebuilding elements in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and stressed the need for a comprehensive and integrated strategy to preserve the results achieved and to prevent the recurrence of conflict (Security Council addresses comprehensive approach 2001. Security Council 4278th Meeting, SC/7014, 21 February).

5 However 'Integrated Peacebuilding Offices', which do not have a military contingent, exist in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), Burundi (BINUB) and East Timor (UNIAET). The first two of these are also residing in countries are official cases of the PBC.

6 Post-Conflict Needs Assessments (PCNAs), for example, are multilateral exercises undertaken by the UNDG and the World Bank in collaboration with donor countries and are increasingly used as entry points for conceptualising, negotiating and financing a common, shared strategy for recovery and development in post-conflict settings (UNDG).

7 Following the SG's (2001) report 'No Exit without Strategy' and ensuing discussions in the Security Council, a major study (Smith 2004) conducted by the Evaluation Departments of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development was undertaken with a view to advancing thinking around strategic peacebuilding frameworks.

8 These include maintaining a stable and secure environment; assisting the government in completing the reintegration and rehabilitation programme for ex-combatants; facilitating the completion of the return and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons; assisting the government in security sector



reform and in the consolidation and building of capacity of state authority and judicial institutions countrywide; assisting in the meeting of conditions for the lifting of diamond and timber sanctions; assisting the government in rebuilding the culture of respect for human rights and the rule of law; and implementing various initiatives to ensure national revenues are captured and utilised for the public good.

- 9 The Office of the D/SRSG (Recovery and Governance) drew up a discussion paper, 'Strengthening Peacebuilding in Liberia', in the first quarter of 2007 and shared it with the leadership of the mission and the UNCT. A UN, Liberia, document, 'Agenda for Peacebuilding', was subsequently written and an approach was outlined emphasising integrated strategies, specifically by working through existing mechanisms and frameworks (particularly the PRS and the UNDAF) to strengthen the overall approach to peacebuilding.

- 10 The Office of the D/SRSG (Recovery and Governance) supported this group administratively and, with sponsorship from UNDP, provided for an array of capacity building and training activities to create awareness around the issues. On the GoL's side, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the Governance Reform Commission (GRC) and the Liberian Institute for Public Administration (LIPA) were particularly active at deputy minister levels. The Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation (KAICT) at the University of Liberia, along with several leading NGOs, actively represented civil society.
- 11 An example of core benchmarks include the completion of basic training of 3 500 personnel of the Liberia National Police by July 2007 and the finalisation of the national security strategy and architecture and its implementation countrywide by December 2008.

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About this paper

Through research on the ground in Liberia and engagement in peacebuilding discussions within the UN at headquarter level, the paper begins with a review of key conceptual and historical issues and debates surrounding postconflict peacebuilding and particularly the UN's role. It explains in detail the process undertaken in Liberia, describing the interlocking activity areas that have formed the building blocks of an overall strategic approach aimed at strengthening peacebuilding. Subsequently, lessons emerging from the Liberia case are assessed and finally conclusions and recommendations are presented.

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