

# **PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION WORKING GROUP ON LESSONS LEARNED**

## **Lessons Learned on Sustainable Reintegration in Post-Conflict Situations**

**Conference Room 6  
28 May 2009**

### **I. Introduction, Objectives & Rationale for the Meeting**

The work of the Peacebuilding Commission to date has highlighted the importance of the international community's provision of coordinated support and resources to the sustainable community-based reintegration of demobilized former combatants, refugees and internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups affected by the war in post-conflict countries. Sustainable reintegration also constitutes an essential component for the wider peacebuilding strategies in countries such as Burundi and the Central African Republic, which are on the agenda of the PBC. Support for sustainable reintegration of groups and individuals is crucial for the recovery of post-conflict countries and to prevent their relapse into conflict. Typically, sustained reintegration efforts involve a wide range of actors at the global, regional, national, and local levels.

In November 2008, a thematic session of the Working Group on Lessons Learned focused on the topic of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) with a particular emphasis on "*regional approaches to DDR in the Great Lakes Region of Africa*". The forthcoming meeting of the Working Group will build on that effort but with a special focus on the long-term implications of reintegration for the peacebuilding process and the socio-economic development in post-conflict countries. Therefore, it would approach reintegration as means for community recovery and, thus, extend beyond reintegration of ex-combatants to include broader efforts to rehabilitate the communities to which they return, understanding that reintegration of ex-combatants takes place "in a wider context" that includes the return of refugees and displaced people.

### **II. A broader approach to reintegration in post-conflict situations**

Reintegration is essentially a social, economic, legal and political process with an open time-frame. Socio-economic reintegration primarily takes place at the community level. While constituting part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, it often necessitates long-term external assistance. In this regard, reintegration involves the provision of basic services (education, health, water/ sanitation), livelihood opportunities (e.g. vocational training, employment opportunities), support for the reconciliation process, improving physical security and human rights and local capacity- building.

The potential advantages of this approach include strengthening of national/local ownership of the process, enabling communities to organize themselves, promoting equal access to social and financial services.

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In addition and given that after conflict refugees and displaced persons often return to their countries and home communities to find themselves living side-by-side with those they only recently confronted as enemies, reintegration must include efforts to enhance coexistence opportunities among divided communities, for example through projects which may bring diversified groups (i.e. former combatants and civil society, members of diverse cultural, ethnic or religious groups, etc.) together to work on a common goal.

Of the three main components of a DDR process and wider peacebuilding processes, the reintegration phase is usually the most difficult given that the required level of institutional, economic, political and social capabilities are usually lacking in countries emerging from a conflict situation.

Major institutional donors and implementing agencies on the ground include the **UNDP, UNHCR, IOM and the World Bank**. Drawing on the experience of these operational entities and using concrete case studies from countries which have undergone comprehensive reintegration, the meeting of the Working Group will focus on community recovery and community-based strategies as part of the wider peacebuilding efforts. It will further seek to promote the strengthening of an integrated approach to reintegration amongst the lead actors, emphasising the link between humanitarian, transition and development phases with joint programming and planning. This is crucial to ensure coordination between complementary efforts, as isolated approaches risk exacerbating local tensions. Coordination between UN departments and agencies, international organizations and financial institutions is particularly essential, to ensure for example that premature return and reintegration in the absence of minimum conditions for physical security and livelihood opportunities does not undermine peacebuilding efforts.

Finally, the meeting will seek to explore the benefits of enhanced regional coordination on reintegration issues, particularly as it relates to the return and reintegration of refugees. Given that many host states feel that they are unfairly burdened with the great majority of the world's refugees, failure to consider the needs and interests of host states as part of broader peacebuilding efforts could exacerbate the concerns of countries of asylum, leading to additional restrictions on asylum and a push for early forced repatriation.<sup>1</sup>

### **III. Key issues for consideration**

- What lessons can be learned from experience in designing and implementing reintegration/community recovery strategies in various post-conflict situations?
- What must be done to improve the planning and design of initiatives, projects with a view to better addressing the special needs of vulnerable groups? How can social cohesion be promoted amongst diverse groups in reintegration processes?

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<sup>1</sup> Policy Brief: Protracted Refugee Situations and Peacebuilding, UNU (2007).  
<http://www.unu.edu/publications/briefs/policy-briefs/2007/PB01-07.pdf>

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- Which efforts were most successful/ less successful in coordinating the engagement of different actors, especially in strengthening the link between humanitarian, transition and development phases?
- Which changes should lead actors undertake in their policies in order to increase the impact of their reintegration programs?
- What are the main links between sustainable reintegration, community recovery and other parts of a peacebuilding process (e.g. the political process) at the regional, national and local levels? How can the PBC promote regional cooperation on return and reintegration issues?
- How can the PBC and PBF support community recovery efforts as part of the peacebuilding processes?
- What are the critical long-term funding challenges facing national and international efforts for successful and sustainable reintegration?

In addition, the Working Group will be briefed by the organizers of the international DDR conference, recently held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.

### **VI. Format and Structure**

This open meeting will be held from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. (Conference Room 6).

#### **Chair:**

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

#### **Panelists:**

Mr. Pierre Bertrand, Director, UNHCR, New York Office

Ms. Awa Dabo, Early Recovery Team, UNDP/ BCPR, Geneva

Mr. Luca Dall'Oglio, Permanent Observer of the International Organization for Migration to the United Nations, New York

Mr. Alejandro Eder, Office of the High Commissioner for Reintegration, Colombia

#### **Outcome**

Following the meeting the PBSO will prepare a Chair's Summary of relevant lessons drawn from the presentations and discussions. The document will be distributed to the PBC Chair and the chairs of the various country configurations.