Anchoring Peace:  
Reconstructing governance and public administration for peaceful, sustainable development

Aide-Memoire

Introduction: Reconstruction for sustainable development

1. Successful sustainable recovery from violent conflict depends upon rebuilding all sectors of the polity and society, but none so much as re-constituting a viable, trusted State authority. Violent intra-state conflict, especially in developing and transitional countries, has been characterized by internal civil strife, a general breakdown of government, collapse of the formal economy, and massive dislocation of and hardship on civilians. Accordingly, good practice in post-violence reconstruction has generally consisted of several “pillars” of intervention in the realms of: security, justice and reconciliation, social and economic well-being, and governance and participation 1.

2. The international community has conducted much research and continues to accumulate experience in post-conflict assistance in a multitude of settings. To the extent that violent conflict continues to cause havoc that undermines governance and public administration institutions, systems, structures and capacities, more attention is needed on the problematic, fundamental issue of state-building in post-conflict situations. How the reconstruction of the State catalyzes and underpins (or if unattended undermines) all other recovery efforts, and, how to best harness governance institutions and public administration systems as a foundation for peaceful, sustainable national reconstruction, remains a topical problem for development practitioners. How the international community provides development aid and institution-building assistance in post-conflict setting, in terms of its prioritizing, sequencing and implementation, needs to be re-thought as well, since it is also critical to the long-term sustainability of the “re-constructed” State.

3. Countries emerging from conflict face daunting challenges to reconstruct a society that is sustainable, more equitable, and less susceptible to violent conflict. Rebuilding sound governance and public administration systems interfacing appropriately with civil society are key ingredients in ensuring such sustainability. Post-conflict recovery in an environment of trauma, tension and mistrust requires a complex combination of governance and public administration rehabilitation, reconstruction, reform and re-configuration to re-legitimize state authority. Governance interventions that strengthen participation, consolidate systems for representation and institutions for the peaceful management of disputes are essential to ensure sustainability, promote a transition toward democratization, and avoid a return to conflict.

4. Recognizing that the rebuilding of governance and public administration systems and institutions is one of the most critical components of post-conflict recovery, the UN’s Division of Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) is convening a multi-disciplinary Ad Hoc Group of Experts to examine and develop guidance on sustainable post-conflict reconstruction and development. The Expert Group Meeting is scheduled to take

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1 Post-Conflict Reconstruction Task Framework, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Association of the US Army (AUSA), May 2002
place in Yaounde, Cameroon on 14-18 July 2003. It will focus on rebuilding governance institutions and public administrations after violent conflict in ways that create an effective, viable State with sufficient and appropriate mechanisms for representation, participation, reconciliation, conflict management, and national cohesion. Exploring the extent to which this has been done in different settings, or could be conceptualized and operationalized in future circumstances, particularly in deeply divided societies, will elicit principles of good practice that can be shared widely through the UN’s Public Administration Network (UNPAN) and other fora for public administration and peace-building scholars and practitioners.

5. This Expert Group Meeting is organized by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management to broaden understanding of the issues, develop policy recommendations and reinforce the capacities of Member States’ governance systems and institutions. This activity is organized in support of a number of highest priority issues and activities of the UN, enunciated in the Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration of the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development to support Member States’ efforts to reduce poverty, achieve equity, ensure security and prevent armed conflict for all citizens. It is also an outcome of and follow-up to the Division’s 2002 Committee of Experts Meeting, which recognized and reinforced the critical role of governance and public administration in achieving the Millennium Goals.

Background: The Centrality of Governance in Post-Conflict Recovery

6. Re-constituting governance and public administration institutions and systems in a post-conflict environment are more critical than they have been given credit because they link and underpin all other components of reconstruction. They are indispensable (and therefore deserve special attention and investment of resources) not only because they provide the administrative machinery necessary to implement sectoral reconstruction efforts, but also because the process of re-constituting them is integral to creating an environment conducive to participation, democracy, reconciliation, peace and social cohesion -- key requirements for sustainable development.

7. Much of the post-conflict reconstruction literature stresses the rehabilitation of infrastructure and/or the technical components of rebuilding without fully appreciating the strength of the underlying human and institutional architecture needed both to rehabilitate physical loss and reform/redesign institutions, systems, and policies. National and local governments structures are lynchpins for effectively implementing reconstruction efforts. It is essential to get governance institutions and public administration systems ‘up and running’ in order to support the full spectrum of post-conflict needs to:

- Buttress sectoral reconstruction for delivery of basic services,
- Revitalize economic production,
- Provide national and local security, and
- Catalyze longer-term social reconciliation, democratization and sustainable development.

8. Rebuilding institutions, systems, structures and other capacities for service delivery: In the short term, restoring the capacity to organize and deliver basic services is a prerequisite for re-establishing normalcy. It is essential not only because of the urgency of the basic needs and services which must be addressed, but also because doing so re-establishes confidence in the
institutions of government. Some of the main post-conflict tasks, e.g. provision of emergency relief; displaced persons protection, maintenance, and resettlement; restoration of essential services; and peace enforcement and overall security may be assumed by outside agencies in the immediate crisis situation. But, they must be turned over to legitimate national authorities at the earliest possible time. Thus, the imperative to re-establish functioning central and local authorities that are equitable and representative, as well as efficient, is primary and overarching.

9. Economic revitalization: Depending upon the degree of disruption, basic macro-economic structures must be, at best, bolstered and, at worse, re-established to support the delivery of the key public services, to ensure fiscal balance and to mitigate inflation. Laying the foundation for economic revitalization is predicated upon restoring the legal and institutional framework for financial management, re-creating and upgrading essential public service staff and institutions, and resuming financial procedures.

10. Security: In a post-conflict environment, the general population’s most basic need is for security involving the re-establishment of public safety and the development of legitimate security institutions to ensure individual safety, collective security, and territorial integrity. Security sector reform is an integral and key component of public sector reconstruction in that it must create secure conditions in which all other aspects of reconstruction can be addressed.

11. Democratization and social reconciliation: Some of the most crucial challenges and pitfalls in post-conflict reconstruction lay within the realm of state reform. There is need not only to re-establish effective administrative machinery, but complementarily, to foster democratization and participation so as to re-create a legitimate basis for the State and a durable societal fabric. Supporting democratization, reconciliation and social cohesion is primarily a process-oriented task requiring participatory, conflict-sensitive methodologies. It entails short-, medium- and long-term needs for restoration of dialogue, preparing the ground for reconciliation, and reaching consensus on foundation issues of constitutional reform, territorial and non-territorial divisions of power, protection and integration of minorities, decentralized governance policies, and building a culture of participation and inclusive, cooperative decision-making and planning. This involves employing appropriate national dialogue and convening mechanisms to bring together representatives of central government, political parties, civil society, local government, private sector and the international community.

12. The challenge is to tailor-make such mechanisms in ways that are inclusive and participatory, both vertically and horizontally. They must provide avenues for participation and expression across regions, ethnicities, religion, gender, class and interest. And, they must collaboratively elicit inputs from local level stakeholder consultations that can be fed into and connect with broader national convening processes. Clearly, these critical processes must eschew any semblance of exclusivity, exclusion, marginalization, blame/retribution or victor/vanquished mentality. Equally, the process of designing them and implementing them must emerge from a legitimate participatory process which earns the confidence and buy-in of all interlocutors. In sum, there must be, as underlying premise and overarching rationale, the creation of a common vision of shared future. Short of such a process, subsequent actions, decisions, and commitments will inevitably be built on an unstable foundation that will undermine the sustainability of reconstruction efforts in all domains.

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Rationale: Re-configuring public administration for sustainable reconstruction

13. Prerequisite to successful, sustainable post-conflict recovery is a transition that is above all participatory and conflict sensitive. Post-conflict reconstruction involves several related and sequential phases of relief, rehabilitation, reform and reconfiguration. Total reconfiguration and transformation of a country’s systems and institutions immediately after violence are impossible given the wounds, divisions and emergency issues facing a post-conflict society. Thus, hoped for reforms must be incremental, phased, and tailored to the specific nature of the conflict, the characteristics of the destruction, and the needs of different segments of the society. Despite the trauma and competing demands of survival needs, for recovery to be truly sustainable, it needs at each of the stages to aim beyond rehabilitation and be focused on, infused with, and build upon a foundation of participatory governance and peaceful dispute resolution.

14. In this vein, the reconstitution of governance systems requires conflict-sensitive constitutional and electoral mechanisms for addressing and accommodating issues of ethnicity, education, language, culture, religion and minority groups. This must include appropriate mechanisms for power sharing and sufficient outlets for conflict resolution that satisfy various groups’ interest articulation. Often conflict prevention strategies are consistent with democratization strategies, but sometimes they are not. As what may appear rigorously democratic, in ethnically divided societies, can produce exclusion and marginalization and, therefore, be counterproductive to sustainable peace. The difference in the aims of these disciplines is a point of tension between public administration, democratization and conflict transformation practitioners. It is one that needs to be discussed, examined, and exposed to a wider audience in order for better solutions, alternatives, and paradigms of operating to emerge.

15. As part of such governance reform, the reconstitution of post-conflict administrative systems must be consciously conflict sensitive so as to promote reconciliation and engender social cohesion. A conflict-sensitive public sector would require a consciously diverse and representative public service in terms of composition (equitable hiring, promotion and placement procedures) as well as in terms of its policymaking and delivery of services. Moreover, the public sector would be sensitive to the possible different impacts (intentional or unintentional) of policies and programmes on diverse groups within its divided communities. This can only be accomplished by embedding awareness of conflict prevention principles and practices within the public service staff so that they can integrate it into: (1) the formulation of governance strategies, (2) the design of new or reformulated governance mechanisms, and (3) the processes for ensuring inclusiveness and participation at all levels of decision-making.

16. Much post-reconstruction experience, theory and practice stresses the empowerment of civil society. While strengthening civil society is critical, perhaps too little attention has been placed on the equivalent strengthening of counterpart State institutions needed to nurture the interface between society and the State and solidly ground participatory governance. This interface can be supported by greater interaction between public administration specialists, who traditionally work with government structures, and peacebuilding/conflict transformation practitioners, who generally focus their practice on civil society. A knowledge and practice

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gap exists in how to generate synergy between these fields of endeavor, their two professional cadres, and their respective clients on collaboration for sustainability in the critical post-conflict setting.

17. How governance and government institutions are reconstituted after conflict, and their “peace or conflict impact” on sustainable recovery, is part of a larger discourse on the peace/development linkage, one in which UNDESA is actively engaged. While axiomatic prescriptions on this linkage are widely accepted in theory, the policy implications are still evolving. The further operationalization of this linkage within emergency and post-conflict reconstruction practice is even more nascent and, therefore, in need of examination.

18. Given the current state of knowledge, operationalizing the peace-development link within the public administration sector and incorporating conflict prevention in the reconstruction of the State, is far from being explicit, widely developed or reducible to formulas. Further dialogue among experts in the post-conflict community can help elicit and elaborate principles and strategies for reconstructing governance and public sector institutions with conscious attention to their impact on the peace/conflict environment and greater impact on post-conflict stability.

19. Some of the many concerns and questions at the nexus of post-conflict recovery with public administration and conflict prevention are enumerated below. These will be some of the topics addressed in background documents and in the Expert Group Meeting.

- What are the public sector capacity requirements (staffing, training, institutional) to optimize post-conflict recovery, ensure conflict sensitivity and participation, and maximize its contribution to sustainable recovery?

- What are the institutional capacities vis a vis rule of law and justice institutions that facilitate sustainable recovery on a foundation of participatory governance and peaceful dispute resolution?

- How to best utilize decentralization and diversity management as instruments for participatory governance and conflict management in post-conflict situations?

- What are the constraints and challenges for international humanitarian and development agencies in supporting public administration and governance reform for sustainable post-conflict recovery?

Objectives:

20. The above points are raised to illustrate and advocate for several items. First, that among the many tasks of post-conflict reconstruction, more attention (conceptually, financially and programmatically) is needed on bolstering State structures. Second, that reconstructing governance and public administration systems (whether in the emergency relief phase, the mid-term rehabilitation period, or the long-term reconfiguration process after conflict) must, to the degree possible, be built upon strategies and policies that are genuinely participatory and conflict sensitive. These are essential to ensure institutional sustainability and national cohesion. Conversely, it is equally vital to avoid creating or reinforcing situations, structures or systems that (inadvertently or otherwise) exacerbate fear, mistrust, grievance or
marginalization, all of which undermine sustainability and serve to re-ignite violence. Therefore, the following are the major objectives of the Ad hoc Expert Group meeting:

21. **To collect, present, discuss and agree on models, approaches and methodologies for reconstructing governance and public administration institutions and systems in post-violent conflict countries:** The meeting will examine how to optimize the re-building of public administration and governance systems in post-conflict situations in ways that take the above into account in order to achieve and maximize sustainable national recovery. To do this, DESA will bring together practitioners from the two distinctive disciplines of public administration and conflict transformation for a cross-sectoral and crosscutting discussion on their respective, yet linked and mutually reinforcing roles in anchoring peace in post-violent conflict societies. The Expert Group meeting will draw experts from a wide array of expertise and experience in a variety of post-conflict settings, from different world regions, where contrasting types of post-conflict interventions have been employed. The theoretical discussion will be complemented by a critical analysis of the models -- theoretical and practical -- for rehabilitation, redesign and transformation of the public service and the extent to which they have succeeded in being participatory, conflict-sensitive, violence-mitigating and peace-catalyzing in process, content and outcome.

22. **To provide a forum through which convergences and synergies can be reached between practitioners in governance and public administration and conflict transformation experts:** The aim is to explore and forge closer linkages between the disciplines so as to develop a clearer understanding on, and practical applications of, an integration of their respective principles and methodologies. It is hoped that this will give public administration practitioners working in post-conflict settings greater fluency with conflict management principles so as to better incorporate them into their post-conflict work. And, conversely it aims to give peace-building/conflict transformation practitioners more understanding and appreciation of public administration and governance systems so that they can better contribute to state-building and more productive State/civil society interactions. Finally, it is hoped that stimulating an inter-disciplinary dialogue will create new precedents for collaboration between the two disciplines in current and future post-conflict settings.

23. **To take stock of and critically assess successful practices in post-conflict reconstruction of governance and public administration:** A number of surveys, critical reviews and analyses of post-conflict interventions, strategies, successes and failures have been produced. An analysis and discussion of concrete examples on how this has been done well or poorly in diverse models of interventions (e.g. Angola, Cambodia, East Timor, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, et al.) will aim to inform policy and provide a rich source of lessons learned in order to give guidance to policy-makers and practitioners facing future post-conflict reconstruction challenges.

**Outputs**

24. The Expert Group meeting will provide a venue for inter-disciplinary dialogue and exchange. This will serve to deepen participants’ understanding and expand the knowledge base on approaches, processes and methodologies for reconstructing public administration in post-conflict countries that will be made available to post-conflict aid workers, and public administration and conflict transformation specialists.
25. Background papers will be solicited from the invited participants to establish the foundation for the ensuing discussion. The group discussion will build upon the papers and provide the input for a report of the meeting that will inform current theory, policy and practice in public administration and peace-building. An interim report will be the subject of a panel discussion at the subsequent IIAS meeting on “Shared Governance: Combating Poverty and Exclusion” which will also include a presentation of the background documentation and meeting conclusions and recommendations. The final report will be posted on the UNPAN website and disseminated widely to relevant individual specialists and organizational entities.

26. The Expert Group Meeting will also contribute to policy formulation and practice regarding how to optimize the international community’s use of their emergency, relief and development aid to reconstruct the State in ways that assist post-conflict transition toward democratic practice and away from destructive violence. This will focus on the major operational challenges of aid delivery to governance reconstruction in the post-conflict context, i.e.: (1) delineating the specific public administration and governance challenges within the peace/development nexus; (2) how to provide aid and resources in ways that reinforce social cohesion rather than division; and (3) how to best support state structures and sustain governance processes that will engender participatory, peace-building, sustainable outcomes over the long term.

Participants

27. The Ad Hoc Expert meeting will bring together 15-20 practitioners from diverse regions of the world with experience in post-conflict trauma, recovery, and reconstruction. There will be a combination of those with expertise in public administration reform, post-conflict reconstruction methodologies, peace-building, and conflict transformation processes and related disciplines.

Venue and Dates

28. The Ad Hoc Expert meeting will be held 14-18 July 2003 in Yaounde, Cameroon, in collaboration and coinciding with IIAS’s second international regional conference on “Shared Governance: Combating Poverty and Exclusion.”

Language

29. The meeting languages will be English. Simultaneous interpretation into French will be provided.

For further information:

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Website

Information about the expert group meeting will be posted and disseminated through UNPAN (United Nations Network in Public Administration) at www.unpan.org.