

Peacebuilding Commission Working Group on Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned on Sustainable Reintegration in Post-Conflict Situations

Chair's Summary

Introduction

1. On 28 May 2009, the Peacebuilding Commission's Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) convened a panel discussion on "*Lessons Learned on Sustainable Reintegration in Post-Conflict Situations*". The meeting placed emphasis on the long-term implications of reintegration as an essential element for peacebuilding and for sustainable socio-economic development in post-conflict countries. The discussions extended beyond addressing the reintegration of ex-combatants to include broader efforts to rehabilitate the communities to which they return.

2. The WGLL invited major institutional actors on the ground to draw lessons from country experience with particular focus on benefits of community-based approaches to reintegration. The panelists included Mr. Pierre Bertrand, Director, UNHCR New York, and Mr. Sajjad Malik from UNHCR's Division of Operational Services, Geneva, Ms. Awa Dabo, UNDP/ BCPR early recovery team and Mr. Luca Dall'Oglio, Permanent Observer of the IOM to the United Nations. The Chair also invited Mr. Alejandro Eder, Political Advisor to the High Commissioner for Reintegration, Colombia to brief on key conclusions from the recent International DDR Congress (CIDDR, 4-6 May, 2009 in Cartagena de Indias).

3. In her opening remarks, the chair of the Working Group, Ambassador Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez, Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations, underlined that the work of the PBC to date has highlighted the importance of 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. She emphasized that sustainable reintegration constitutes an essential component of peacebuilding strategies in countries on the agenda of the PBC, such as Burundi and the Central African Republic.

4. During the discussion, panelists and member states, including representatives of countries on the PBC agenda, highlighted some conclusions and lessons based on the presentations and relevant experience by participants.

Lessons concluded from presentations and discussions:

- Sustainable reintegration processes require **national and political will** and **capacity** which reinforce local **ownership**.

- Sustainable reintegration requires a **multi-faceted approach** which incorporates the consideration of rule of law issues, socio-economic revitalization, and the individual needs of returnees. To ensure success of reintegration projects, integration must follow a single, coordinated and comprehensive strategy taking into account humanitarian, security and development concerns.
- The first two years after the end of a conflict provide a critical **window of opportunity**. Consequently, there is a critical need for early mobilization and provision of resources. For example, **compensation to the victims of violence** is an integral part of peace consolidation.
- **Psychological treatment of post-conflict trauma** suffered by refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and ex-combatants is critical the sustainability of reintegration. There is also a need to focus on reconciliation, which is hard to measure, by including concepts like “closure” which open new areas of programming and psycho-social support.
- It is crucial to resolve **land and property issues** at the earliest possible moment so as to mitigate the conflict potential inherent in this issue. Some case studies illustrate that the concept of “integrated villages” for returning IDPs and refugees provide a successful path to sustainable reintegration.
- Reintegration efforts should initially target on ex-combatants in the context of DDR processes. The focus, however, must gradually shift to include vulnerable groups such as IDPs, refugees or victims of violence and in particular expand to families and host communities. The **early involvement of IDPs and refugees** in the peace process is critical for reintegration processes.
- The **host country plays the key role** for the sustainable reintegration of refugees, as it can influence the pace and timing of the refugees’ return. On the one hand, a hasty return can cause difficulties; on the other hand, protracted displacement entails potential risks and difficulties for socio-economic reintegration.
- The **private sector** must be involved in reintegration efforts as part of wider peacebuilding strategies. Possibilities for income generation and livelihood earning constitute important factors conducive to the return of IDPs and refugees. The government and the international community can raise awareness of the need to ensure sustainable livelihoods and opportunities for returnees and former combatants and can explore and promote targeted recruitment of ex-combatants and other groups by the private sector.

*Prepared by PBSO
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