



**Workshop on Local Government in Post-Conflict Situations :
Challenges for Improving Local Decision Making and
Service Delivery Capacities**

**ANNEX 14: Addressing Key Priorities. Challenges and Solutions for
Improving Capacities of Local Governments. Working Groups. Conclusions
(Original Minutes)**

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It is increasingly recognized that improving local governments' capacities plays a vital role in enhancing service delivery and thus sustaining peace in post-conflict settings. For example, service delivery can be an entry point for building social cohesion in post-conflict environment, where opposing sides can work together on meeting common needs. However, local governments in post-conflict countries face several challenges including resources, technical assistance, and legal frameworks. With this background, the objective of this working session was to address key priorities and challenges faced by local governments in post-conflict settings and outline solutions for improving service delivery by local governments.

The workshop participants were divided into three groups and each group was asked to present its group discussion points on the following three issues:

- **Improving Decision Making Capacities:** What are the challenges and what can be done by local government, central government, UNDP, and other development partners?
- **Enhancing Service Delivery:** What factors affect it and what strategies can be deployed to improve it?
- **Addressing Capacity Issues:** What are the methods and approaches in assessing and strengthening local government capacities?

After group discussion, each working group reported back to the plenary on key conclusions drawn in the group discussion. The following section provides a summary of key points reported back by all three groups.

On Improving Decision Making:

- The *structure of decision making* is one of the major challenges for improving decision making capabilities. For example, the lack of clarity of existing laws (due to unfinished legislation, unclear legal frameworks, and the failure to implement any legal framework) on roles and functions within and among organizations has an impact on decision making capacities. Thus, there is a need to create legal enabling environment for decision making. In order to do so, the *means of decision making* such as legal frameworks need to be developed and effectively implemented in order to clearly identify and establish relationship among central governments, local governments, and constituencies. The MOU and legitimate electoral process would be helpful in this regard.
- Improvement in decision making process is also closely linked to resource availability. Who controls the resources is an important issue. Moreover, a decrease in financial resources leads to an increase in needed effort to convince donors to support LG in post-conflict countries.
- Two-way information and communication is needed between the central and local levels, and between the local level and community. UNDP can assist in facilitating the adaptation of a variety of innovative communication means.
- Building trust among various stakeholders with UNDP acting as a broker could improve decision making process. UNDP can also use its knowledge and experience to present various options of institutional legal frameworks across different services.

- Strengthening civic education programs and access to information would also strengthen decision making capacities.
- More attention also needs to be paid to the *culture of decision-making*. This issue is closely tied to the question about rebuilding or reforming? It's important to understand both formal and informal rules. Formal rules vest a person/institution with decision making ability, while informal rules determine whether anyone will listen. Thus, the issue of dealing with traditional administration and the issue of devolution vs. deconcentration (e.g., Kosovo and African cases) should be taken into account.
- The political situation (e.g., the perceptions of the international community towards Hamas in Palestine) also has an impact on decision making at the local level.

On Enhancing Service Delivery:

- Country constitutions, laws and regulations are major factors that impact service delivery mechanisms. New constitutional frameworks and polices (e.g., devolution and de-concentration) could help make resources available for LG service delivery by ensuring the provision of adequate financial resources. Moreover, besides and beyond donor contributions, budget allocation by the central government has to be a consideration for financial sustainability. The local development funds could be useful strategies to fund service delivery at the local level.
- New public management systems (e.g., effective procurement & contracting systems) could also enhance service delivery. Thus, to strengthen service delivery at the local level, there is a need to improve contract negotiation capacity and procurement capacity.
- Developing technical capacities for service delivery is very important because most of the post-conflict countries usually have very low absorption capacity. Moreover, aid coordination could be extremely weak in some cases. In these situations, both financial and human resources need to be on the ground to help develop service delivery capacities. Moreover, in a situation where there is low absorption capacity, an effective strategy for enhancing service delivery could be gradually transferring functions and responsibilities from the central government to local governments as capacity is strengthened.
- Ensuring prudent, transparent and accountable use of resources would also enhance service delivery at the local level. Please note that corruption is a cause of poor service delivery. An effective strategy could thus be involving civil society in monitoring projects.
- The working sessions also highlighted that there is a distinction between governance and the production of service delivery. Governments should restrict themselves to the governance of service delivery (e.g., planning and budgeting, regulating, monitoring and providing quality assurance), and use partnerships with private sector and CSOs for producing services.
- The right incentive structures such as public performance evaluation could also help enhance service delivery.

- The inter-municipal service delivery can be useful where there are trans-boundary problems or economies of scale.
- Organization of local public services should be done keeping in mind the needs and situations of the men and women particularly affected by the conflict - Women, children and the elderly; people with disabilities; and minorities and indigenous peoples, when the case applies;. Special attention needs to be put to the programming of services through human rights-based approaches. Important efforts need to focus on the development of gender responsive services and processes. When the case applies early attention needs to be given to the linkages between HIV/AIDS and conflict and consequently appropriate local services need to be put in place to prevent the spread of the epidemic.

On Strengthening Local Government Capacities:

- Capacity development cuts across both decision-making and service delivery, and applies on all three levels: funds, functions, and functionaries.
- There is a need to promote *sustainable* and *institutionalised* capacity development (as opposed to capacity substitution by international consultants).
- It is important to *coordinate and harmonize* the support and assistance from donors/multilateral agencies.
- When strengthening local government capacities, focus should not be only on local *government*, but also on local governance institutions (including civil society, community groups, etc.). Donors should work with grassroots organizations, especially where the government practically does not exist.