



United Nations Development Programme  
Oslo Governance Centre  
Democratic Governance Group

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

Oslo, Norway  
28-29 November 2007





**WORKSHOP ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS:  
CHALLENGES FOR IMPROVING LOCAL DECISION MAKING AND  
SERVICE DELIVERY CAPACITIES**

**REPORT**

**OSLO, NORWAY  
28-29 NOVEMBER 2007**

The workshop was organized by the Democratic Governance Group and hosted by the Oslo Governance Centre. It was implemented with substantial contributions from the Early Recovery Team at the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, and with contributions from several UNDP Country Offices and Regional Centres.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
PROGRAMME.....	6
SESSION 1: OPENING. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS.....	6
SESSION 2.1: CHALLENGES FACED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS: NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES.....	6
SESSION 2.2: CHALLENGES FACED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS: NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES.....	8
SESSION 3: ADDRESSING KEY PRIORITIES, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FOR IMPROVING CAPACITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. WORKING GROUPS.....	9
SESSION 4: UNDP PERSPECTIVES.....	9
SESSION 5: STRENGTHENING UNDP AND NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN POST-CONFLICT.....	10
SESSION 6: KNOWLEDGE PLATFORMS AND TOOLS FOR PROGRAMMING IN SUPPORT OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.....	11
CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	12
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	12
CONCLUSIONS.....	13
SOME RECOMMENDATIONS.....	19
EVALUATION.....	22
ANNEXES.....	23

## LIST OF ANNEXES\*

1. List of Participants / included in this report
2. Workshop Agenda – Overview / included in this report
3. Detailed Agenda / included in this report
4. Paul Jackson and Zoe Scott. Local Government in Post-Conflict Environments. November 2007, UNDP BDP/OGC
5. Presentation by Mr. Paul Jackson
6. Presentation by Mr. Arcangelo Leite. Minister of State Administration and Territorial Ordinance of Timor-Leste
7. Presentation by Mr. Musa Mohamed Oshaik. Director of Development Planning of Kassala, Sudan
8. Presentation by Mr. Aiah Joseph Prescott Lebbie. Director of Local Government of Sierra Leone
9. Presentation by Mr. Besnik Tahiri. Political Advisor to the Prime Minister of the United Nations Administered Territory of Kosovo.
10. Presentation by Mr. Barna Karimi. Director General of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Afghanistan.
11. Presentation by Mr. Fouad Hamra. Mayor of the City of Merjeoun, Lebanon.
12. Presentation by Mr. Radomir Kezunovic. President of the Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Republic of Srpska and Mayor of the City of Istocno Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
13. Presentation by Mr. Onyombo Albert Etchumba. Senior Technical Advisor to the State Minister of the Interior, Decentralization and Security, Democratic Republic of the Congo.
14. Addressing Key Priorities. Challenges and Solutions for Improving Capacities of Local Governments. Working Groups. Conclusions (Original Minutes).
15. Presentation by Ms. Awa Dabo. Transitional Governance Specialist, UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery.
16. Presentation by Mr. Henrik Fredborg Larsen. Policy Advisor, Decentralization and Local Governance: UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia- Pacific Region.
17. Presentation by Ms. Shifa Jayousi, Programme Analyst on Social Capital, UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People.
18. Strengthening UNDP and National Engagement in Local Government in Post Conflict. Working Group of UNDP Staff. Conclusions.
19. Strengthening UNDP and National Engagement in Local Government in Post Conflict. Working Group of National Counterparts. Conclusions.
20. Mr. Monjurul Kabir. Knowledge Management Specialist and Practice Network (DGP-Net) Facilitator, UNDP Bureau for Development Policy.
21. Kathleen Hamill and Zena Ali-Ahmad. Paper Local Government in Post-Conflict Countries: Lebanon Case Study.
22. Knowledge Mapping for Local Government in Post Conflict
23. List of recommended references / included in this report

\* Annexes from 4 to 22 are available at -

- <http://www.undp.org/governance/sl-dlgud.htm>
- [http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/overview/governance\\_conflict\\_prevention.html](http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/overview/governance_conflict_prevention.html)

## INTRODUCTION

Local Government is one of the key institutions for the delivery of services to local communities and for the nurturing of democratic practices around the world. However, local government in many developing and transitional countries tend to be ill equipped and financially not well prepared to perform all the functions and responsibilities assigned to them. In addition, armed conflicts are central elements affecting the capacities of local government as providers of services and as schools of civic behaviour. The recent cases of Afghanistan, Congo, Timor Leste, Liberia, Nepal, Burundi, Sierra Leone or the Balkans have shown that capacities of local government, to deliver, can be seriously affected by crisis created by armed conflict.

The recovery of cities and areas affected by armed conflict is significantly hampered by the low capacities of local government. Often the lack of those capacities is used as a justification for the long-term deployment of national or international NGOs for the delivery of basic services and the organization of reconstruction and recovery initiatives. This is done in most cases without simultaneous and appropriate actions aimed at the recovery and strengthening of capacities of local government. This affects long-term sustainability in the provision of services and undermines legitimacy of local government and local authorities vis a vis NGOs.

In order to improve assistance to post-conflict countries it is necessary to understand better what are the common challenges that local governments in these situations face for the performance of its two basic functions – delivery of services and local decision-making. At the same time it seems relevant to analyse recent experiences in building-up capacities of local government in post-conflict situations and to distil lessons. Particularly with regards to a critical entry point for the development of local governance in post-conflict, in general, the early recovery phase. A systematisation of such knowledge and experience will improve capacities for the provision of effective assistance to strengthen capacities of local government in post-conflict countries by UNDP and UN Country Teams.

In this context, the UNDP Democratic Governance Group and the Oslo Governance Centre from the Bureau for Development Policy organised in November 2007 the workshop on *“Local Government in Post-Conflict Situations: Challenges for Improving Local Decision Making and Service Delivery Capacities”* in Oslo, Norway. The activity was undertaken in coordination and close collaboration with the UNDP Early Recovery Team from the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

Participants to the workshop included 9 national and international UNDP country office programme staff and 8 national counterparts working on local governance and post-conflict reconstruction programmes. In addition, 15 experts and advisors from UNDP Regional Centres, UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, UNDP Democratic Governance Group and UN Capital Development Fund also participated in the workshop. Finally, 3 experts from academia working on local governance issues in post-conflict countries also attended the workshop.

The overall goal of the workshop was to bring together a core group of practitioners for a face-to-face meeting to conduct a review of existing knowledge and experiences

in the subject of local government in post-conflict situations. Specific objectives of the workshop were:

- To provide participants with an opportunity for a face to face interaction and experience sharing and lessons learning between:
  - UNDP Programme staff from Post- Conflict situations; and
  - National and Local Officials in programme countries in post - conflict situations.
- To facilitate the identification, discussion and documentation of challenges faced by UNDP in supporting local government in different post conflict situations
- To facilitate the identification, discussion and documentation of strategies and solutions to address the challenges
- To identify an agenda that UNDP should consider in order to improve the capacities to support local government in post-conflict situations.

The workshop was organised with representation from UNDP staff and official counterparts from:

- Afghanistan,
- Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Democratic Republic of Congo,
- Haiti,
- Iraq,
- The UN Administered Territory of Kosovo,
- Lebanon,
- Palestinian Territory,
- Sierra Leone,
- Somalia,
- Sudan, and
- Timor-Leste.

In addition, UNDP colleagues from the Bangkok Regional Service Centre; the Pacific Regional Centre in Fiji; the Johannesburg Regional Service Centre; the Early Recovery Team in BCPR; the HIV/AIDS Group, the Oslo Governance Centre and the Democratic Governance Group in BDP – New York. A colleague from UNCDF in Timor Leste, and researchers from the Norwegian Institute of Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) and the International Development Department/Institute of Local Government at the University of Birmingham in the UK, also attended the workshop.

## **PROGRAMME**

The two-day programme addressed both challenges in assisting local governments in post-conflict settings and responses to them, combining 11 presentations by national counterparts (8) and UNDP staff (3) with 2 working group sessions and several discussions as well as Q&A sessions in plenary.

**Mr. Bjørne Førde**, Director of the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre (OGC), welcomed all participants to the workshop. He mentioned that UNDP support to post-conflict countries was primarily led by the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery while the thematic support for democratic governance in all contexts was led by the Bureau for Development Policy and more specifically the Democratic Governance Group. He emphasised that the manner in which UNDP supports local governments in post-conflict situation is of the utmost priority for the organisation in that it represented the coming together of various parts of UNDP to support strengthened local governance whilst assisting recovery and conflict prevention efforts. He also indicated that he hoped that the workshop would contribute to improve the ways in which this support is provided. References were made to the previous work of the OGC working with key partners, on the question of governance in post-conflict situations and the importance that the workshop represented in terms of deepening-up UNDP's work on development in these difficulties environments.

### ***Session 1:***

#### ***Opening, Objectives and Expectations***

**Mr. Siphosami Malunga**, and **Mr. Lenni Montiel**, as key organizers of the workshop provided brief introductions about the objectives, the agenda and the expectations on the workshop.

**Mr. Paul Jackson**, Head of the International Development Department at University of Birmingham, closed the session by presenting a review of the state of the art in the academic literature on local government in post-conflict scenarios. He stressed the overall lack of research in the area, with most of the academic work mirroring more general governance and local government literature. He identified key issues for local government in post-conflict settings, such as patronage, relations between central and local authorities, the need for reform or rebuilding, legitimacy and service delivery, among others. Moreover, he pointed out some existing gaps with regard to security, accountability, local councillors, civic education and donors. See Annexes 4 and 5 for details.

### ***Session 2.1:***

#### ***Challenges faced by Local Government in Post Conflict Situations: National Perspectives***

**Mr. Arcangelo Leite**, Minister of State Administration and Territorial Ordinance of Timor-Leste, stated that the challenge in Timor-Leste is about establishing an effective local government system to enhance local level service delivery and strengthen citizens' participation in decision-making. According to Mr. Leite, the

challenge of delivering services has been an ongoing issue since 1999. Following the crisis of 2006, however, new questions surfaced concerning the strategic positioning of the Government in relation to decentralization. He confirmed the will of the current Government to support the decentralization process as a tool for improving local service provision and a mechanism for facilitating local participation in government decision-making. See Annex 6.

**Mr. Musa Mohamed Oshaik**, Director of Development Planning of Kassala, Sudan, outlined that the central state and local government authorities fail to perform efficiently and effectively. He mentioned that mechanisms for coordination, knowledge sharing, and interaction within a multi-actor environment are required. In addition, institutions and mechanisms in conflict management, peace building and natural resource management that build on state indigenous knowledge and experiences should be maintained. Moreover, it is needed to enable institutional and action environment to articulate views in a participatory manner, setting accountability systems. He also emphasized the need to link modern judicial systems and frameworks with customary and traditional systems. See Annex 7.

**Mr. Aiah Joseph Prescott Lebbie**, Director of Local Government of Sierra Leone, began his presentation by pointing out that the steady erosion of local governance from the 1970s to 2003 and the persistent exclusion of many Sierra Leonean from decision-making and development activities are believed to be contributing factors to the ten year civil war. As a means of addressing these anomalies the Government of Sierra Leone embarked upon a local government reform and decentralization programme designed to re-establish and strengthen the local government institutional machinery damaged by the civil war and political abuse and mismanagement. He grouped the challenges in five areas, namely: 1) Policy and legislation; 2) Institutional; 3) Financing; 4) Capacity building; and 5) Coordination. See Annex 8.

**Mr. Besnik Tahiri**, Political Advisor to the Prime Minister of the United Nations Administered Territory of Kosovo, spoke about the politics of decentralization and its role as a tool for conflict transformation in the UN Administered Territory of Kosovo. He argued that inter-ethnic relations have been the driving force behind the introduction of decentralization as a policy issue. The comprehensive decentralization architecture proposed in the Ahtisaari plan contributes, he argued, to building a peaceful, multi-ethnic Kosovo. He indicated weaknesses and challenges of decentralization as it is perceived today in Kosovo. This includes: 1) Its focus on ethnic minority rights; 2) the international policy driven – still in theory, not in practice; 3) the lack of fiscal decentralization policies and proper guidelines; 4) the lack of reliable demographic data; 5) the need for wider citizen understanding of benefits and strengths of decentralization; 6) the need to clarify which functions need to be decentralised and the role of local governments in providing services, and; 7) the difficulty to decentralise and devolve central power in Kosovo, prior to the consolidation of power at the central level. See Annex 9.

**Mr. Olav Kjørven**, Director of the UNDP Bureau for Policy Development, while in visit in Oslo made a brief visit to the workshop at the end of the first morning. He briefly appreciated the efforts of all participants of the workshop. He highlighted the importance that the sharing of experiences and knowledge management have for UNDP and pointed out the potential benefits that this workshop will have in improving the services that central and regional units of UNDP will provide to Country

Programmes. References were made to the importance of the challenges posed today by climate change processes and the role of national and local governments in adapting to new conditions. This was mentioned within the framework of the launch of the 2007-2008 UNDP Human Development Report on Climate Change.

**Session 2.2:**  
**Challenges faced by Local Government in Post Conflict Situations:**  
**National Perspectives**

**Mr. Barna Karimi**, Director General of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Afghanistan, presented challenges faced by local governments in Afghanistan. More specifically, he commented on the current structure of local governance in Afghanistan, indicating some of its inherent problems, such as the fact that local governance entities have meagre revenues of their own, the practically absolute absence of private participation and lack of significant authority and power at subnational level, the absence of real peace and negative perceptions about the very word “state”. Important actions to address these challenges do require to pay special attention to provinces where security situation is volatile; to carry out immediate actions to regain trust and confidence of the people; to monitor governance situation in the provinces, districts, municipalities and villages against benchmarks and governance indicators; and involve tribal leaders in decision making and consult religious leaders, among other actions. See Annex 10.

**Mr. Fouad Hamra**, Mayor of the city of Merjeoun, Lebanon, commented on the July 2006 Lebanon war, its impact and the multiple challenges that represented for municipalities in terms of human lives, infrastructure, health, and economic enterprises, among other aspects. A major role of municipalities was to provide support to the local community by showing commitment and willingness to overcome obstacles and restore their lives and livelihoods. He stressed the role of UNDP after the 2006 war in supporting municipalities for quick fixes and rehabilitations in infrastructure and municipal services to aid the return of the displaced. Finally, he highlighted the main constraints facing municipalities, such as lack of flexibility in decision-making and resources, the absence of technical expertise and master planning and the need of capacity building on issues such as participatory approaches, strategic planning, management and technical issues, among others. See Annex 11.

**Mr. Radomir Kezunovic**, President of the Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Republic of Srpska and Mayor of the City of Istocno Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He commented on the state of local governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on the work done by the association of municipalities and cities of the federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the one hand; and by the association of municipalities and towns of the Republic of Srpska, on the other. He outlined current UNDP partnerships with more than 50 municipalities in strengthening capacities for democratic governance and social inclusion, mentioning some of the challenges, namely, the need for customized approach and on-the-job training, mitigation of possibly insufficient commitment/ownership of stakeholders, and weak civil society. Despite existing contradictory perceptions of the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he concluded that local self-government has made significant contributions to the normalisation of life and may in itself justify a certain degree of optimism. See Annex 12.

**Mr. Onyombo Albert Etchumba**, Senior Technical Advisor to the State Minister of the Interior, Decentralization and Security, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), presented the challenges of managing local government within constitutional limits in societies emerging from armed conflict. Two documents have provided critical political orientation in DRC, namely, the Strategic Document for Growth and Reduction of Poverty and the Strategic Document on Decentralization and Local Development. The decentralization plan is aimed at establishing a political system with a government and parliament at the national, provincial and local levels. Decentralization in DRC is multiple, including political, administrative, fiscal, sector and civic service initiatives at all the levels. See Annex 13.

**Session 3:**  
**Addressing Key Priorities, Challenges and Solutions**  
**for Improving Capacities of Local Governments.**  
**Working Groups**

Participants organised themselves in three working groups to address the analysis of challenges and strategies in decision making, service delivery and capacities of local governments. With regard to improving decision making, the main conclusions presented in plenary were coincident in highlighting the need to develop and implement with priority appropriate legal frameworks to regulate the relationship between central, regional and local institutions of the State. As for enhancing service delivery, adequate financial resources, technical skills and accountability were identified as critical elements. Finally, effective capacity development requires above all coordinated and harmonized actions from donors and multilateral agencies along the lines of respect for national ownership. See Annex 14.

**Session 4:**  
**UNDP Perspectives**

**Ms. Awa Dabo**, Transitional Governance Specialist, UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery; discussed the relationship between governance and early recovery, understanding the latter as the use of developmental principles to work in crisis situations. She defined governance in early recovery as a bottom up approach to governance by rebuilding or strengthening of decentralized government structures, and support to other governance structures to allow for (i) the re-establishment of government through support to increased visibility and credibility; (ii) basic service delivery to local populations; (iii) development of strategies that influence national processes; (iv) re-establishment of security and engagement on social cohesion issues and (v) coordination responsibilities. Such approach allows for clarity in UNDP interventions, identifiable within a recognised framework and ensures maximisation of resources for more effective actions. When it comes to early recovery at the local level, governments are expected to create an enabling environment, coordinating basic service delivery and supporting peace-building initiatives. See Annex 15.

**Mr. Henrik Fredborg Larsen**, Policy Advisor, Decentralization and Local Governance: UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia- Pacific Region; offered an overview of the situation of local governance in post-conflict settings in Asia and UNDP's role. In a region with countries recovering from armed conflict (e.g. Afghanistan, Nepal,

Timor Leste) or where 'implementation' of peace agreements/settlements is ongoing (e.g. Bourgainville, Papua, Maluku, Sulawesi, Aceh, CHT, Mindanao), local representational arrangements are often exceptional to the wider local governance systems and this is often combined with a higher (asymmetric) degree of devolution to the local level. In this context, UNDP is playing an important role in decentralization and local governance, with a major focus on countries in post-conflict situations. With regard to UNDP support, some key issues are sequencing, the existence of parallel mechanisms, harmonization of donor support, and the achievement of a comprehensive strategy for local service delivery. See Annex 16.

**Ms. Shifa Jayousi**, Programme Analyst Social Capital, UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, made a presentation on experiences from the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People with regard to local governance. Acknowledging the several challenges to improve decision making capacities at the local level (e.g. level of delegated authority, available resources and capacities, geographical discontinuity), UNDP intervention has focused on actively support leadership and management, increase the options for revenue generation for Local Authorities, and enhance participatory approach in planning and decision making. She stressed that service delivery has been affected by a wide range of political, regulatory, technical and financial factors. See Annex 17.

### **Session 5: Strengthening UNDP and National Engagement in Local Government in Post Conflict**

This break-out session provided participants with an opportunity to discuss ways to improve UNDP interventions to strengthen local government in post-conflict settings. See Annexes 18 and 19.

On the one hand, national counterparts grouped challenges and obstacles in engaging with UNDP Programme Support in four categories, namely: resource mobilization (e.g. limited resources, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and demand driven, among others), coordination of support and assistance (e.g. need to consider if assistance should be targeted at local or national level limitations of performance assessments), relationships (e.g. the role of individuals, the need to build trust among stakeholders, and synchronization of UNDP and central government) and capacity development (e.g. the need to use local resources, and long-term assistance in capacity development both at national and local level). See Annex 18.

On the other hand, UNDP staff identified some key challenges at three distinctive levels, namely: government (lack of baseline information at the local level, corruption, and the absence of leadership in government, among others), interagency (e.g. poor coordination between UN agencies, particularly with DPKO given its short-term mission perspective, and different other administrative systems among UN agencies), and internal-UNDP (e.g. poor analytical review and risk assessment, horizontal networking with poor connectivity, and resource mobilization and delivery concerns which can undermine local democratic processes). In order to address these challenges UNDP staff highlighted the need to implement a coherent and uniform UN strategy, supporting the government as the lead agency and stimulating vertical knowledge networking. It was suggested that Country Offices need to be

more vocal presenting to headquarters constraints and difficulties,. With regard to procurement, it was pointed out that UNDP should improve this area of services.

**Session 6:**  
***Knowledge Platforms and Tools for Programming in Support of  
Capacity Development of Local Government***

**Mr. Monjurul Kabir**, Knowledge Management Specialist and Practice Network (DGP-Net) Facilitator, UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, introduced relevant UNDP knowledge management products and services, highlighting current trends in local governance knowledge. See Annex 20.

As part of BDP/DGG Knowledge Management initiative, a knowledge mapping exercise was also conducted during the workshop. Knowledge mapping is an important practice consisting of survey, audit, and synthesis. It also aims to track the acquisition and loss of information and knowledge. However, in workshop setting like this, the host (UNDP) brings together experts and practitioners of a field, and asks them to list their best knowledge sources -knowledge collection. This is a kind of good practice selection process (snapshot), resulting in better understanding of the most relevant and important stuff - knowledge building. Most of the workshop participants shared views on their knowledge on Local Government in post-conflict setting. They raised a number of issues to be discussed and/or explored further as thematic follow-up to the workshop. They also reinforced the need for a knowledge management strategy with a strong policy-oriented research agenda and a dissemination plan. See Annex 22.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

### *General considerations*

After two days of exchange of experiences presented by national and local authorities as well as UNDP colleagues coming from countries and territories in conflict and post-conflict situations, a series of general conclusions were highlighted.

The basic framework provided by the review of the literature on local government in post-conflict was considered a key input for the debates during the workshop. Then participants had the opportunity to present their own cases and experiences through panels. Several working group sessions were held to ensure more detailed interactive consideration of issues and the identification of ideas and recommendations.

The key set of concepts agreed upon during the workshop can be synthesized as follows:

- Local governments have increasingly been identified as an important institution in post-conflict situations given their potential roles in post conflict reconstruction, in the re-establishment of the State in the regions, in the provision of sustainable services, and as a natural promoter and facilitator of local economic development.
- The conflict mitigation potential of local governments is also usually highlighted as important. Particularly, because their greater ability to interact with communities and traditional authorities, compared with national institutions and in terms of their ability to foster political inclusion in post-conflict processes.
- A critical entry point for the development of local government in post conflict context is within the early recovery phase. This allows for the early engagement with governments and other governance structures, development partners and relevant stakeholders and importantly, humanitarian partners well within the response to the crisis. An early response to local governance needs within the onset of a crisis paves the way for longer term and sustained response to governance needs at the local level.
- Development of Local Government is of high importance in post conflict environments, although it has been an area of systematic neglect by newly established national governments and international cooperation agencies providing development assistance.
- State building strategies focusing attention only on national institutions have proven to be inappropriate in the long term. Strategies to support the strengthening of local government capacities in post conflict situations require that capacities should be established at national level, at the same time.
- Efforts to built or reform local government systems shall be conducted through strong functional relations with wider sets of national strategies and reforms.

- There are also examples where national government is failing and where local government effectively becomes the only form of government in terms of representation and service delivery. In such circumstances, local government can be the critical engine of post-conflict recovery. Palestine is a reference to the case where central government is failing and local government is effectively the only functioning arm of the state.
- UNDP specifically, the United Nations and the donor community in general need to improve the way they do work in supporting national governments, but also local authorities, in the development of national local government systems as part of integrated post-conflict national reconstruction strategies. This should include careful consideration of the roles and responsibilities of central and local government in relation to decentralization and deconcentration, including fiscal decentralization.

### **Conclusions**

A detailed set of conclusions were drawn from the discussions during the workshop in the following four areas:

- I. Post-conflict situations. Unclear definitions require flexible approaches
- II. Development of Local Government is of high importance in Post-Conflict environments
- III. Key thematic issues for supporting Local Governance in Post Conflict contexts
- IV. Key considerations for the provision of assistance to Local Governance in Post Conflict contexts

#### **I.**

##### ***Post-conflict situations. Unclear definitions require flexible approaches***

- 'Post-conflict' is a term that can be applied to environments that have experienced recent and severe outbreaks of violence but may be demonstrating clear signs of transitioning towards higher levels of peace.
- At the same time, there are also complications about the 'staged' approach to post-conflict. For example when does 'conflict' become 'post-conflict' and when does this turn into a 'development' phase, and what are the policy implications for these transitions and associated activities. This has been an issue in Rwanda where there have been clashes over different types of programmes for different development 'stages'.
- Post-conflict countries are not a homogenous group. It is not easy often to establish when a conflict starts or finishes, or whether the end of the conflict is sustainable. It is perfectly possible for a country to be in conflict and post-conflict at the same time. Iraq and Afghanistan would be good examples of this.

- Just as conflict is complex and multifarious, all post conflict contexts are different and it is misleading to assume that they should be treated identically.

## ***II.***

### ***Development of Local Government is of high importance in Post Conflict environments***

- The strengthening of local government and the development of local level governance in situations of insecurity is of paramount importance. Focusing on developing sub-national institutions for mitigating conflict and violence is critical, especially when conflict is related to intra-state violence.
- State building strategies focusing attention only on national institutions have proven to be inappropriate in the long term. The assumption of 'trickle down' effects from central to provinces, or local governments is insufficient, especially if in parallel no efforts are made to strengthen the capacities of sub-national institutions. At the same time focusing only on local government at the expense of national level strategies is inappropriate and undermines overall state recovery processes.
- Local governments have increasingly been identified as an important institution in post-conflict situations given their potential roles in post conflict reconstruction, the re-establishment of the State in the regions, in the provision of sustainable services and as a natural promoter and facilitator of local economic development. The conflict mitigation potential of local Governments is also usually highlighted as important, particularly, because their greater ability to interact with communities and traditional authorities, compared with national institutions.
- Previous decades of development theory and practice have advocated using non-state providers for the delivery of basic services in countries with extremely weak state capacity or ruined infrastructure, from years of conflict. However, there is a growing consensus that state service delivery has a role to play in building the capacity and legitimacy of the state and so should be prioritised. The role of local government in delivering services in post conflict or fragile environments and the how to strengthen those capacities require more attention and analysis from international cooperation agencies.
- It is precisely in the regions and in localities outside capital cities that legitimacy and capacity of the state are weaker, requiring at the same time more attention and conscious efforts. Difficulties in reaching the regions (including security factors) and avoidance of their difficult development challenges have been highlighted as reasons to help understand the reluctant approach of national governments and international agencies to support systematic strategies for sub-national development in post conflict environments.
- The overwhelming majority of intra-state wars in conflict zones such as Sub-Saharan Africa are rural in nature and origin. Further building up national, urban-based governments may lead to more conflict. Local government provides a vehicle for the inclusion of alienated groups at local level in the countryside and therefore a positive path to peaceful resolution of disputes.

**III.**

***Key thematic issues for the strengthening of local government  
in post conflict environments***

- **Political context.** Development of local government is essentially about where to locate power and decision-making – it is therefore a highly political issue. When considering local government in post conflict contexts it is even more important to pay attention to the underlying political economy as post conflict environments are generally characterised by weak formal institutions, but extremely strong informal institutions.
- Development of local government in post conflict environments requires good understanding of the political context. Political analysis should be approached as a way of understanding why traditional technical solutions to the strengthening of local government do not always pay sustainable and unquestionable dividends.
- **Central - local government relations are important.** They are often characterised by misunderstanding, miscommunication and mistrust. In most instances there are not appropriate legal frameworks regulating these relationships. The politics of centre-periphery requires special attention to rebuild the state in post conflict contexts. One irony of decentralization has been its requirement for better central government to undertake oversight and strategy rather than processing. Decentralization is not just about strengthening local government.
- **Rebuild or reform?** The decision on whether to rebuild or redesign local government systems in post conflict situations is a major one, and it should not be taken without grave consideration of the conflict dynamics and the political economy of the local context. Realistically, the decision is also influenced by several issues, including culture and values, availability of skilled personnel, ideology or visions of leaders and their personal interests, the degree of political stability and often the nature of external assistance and funding.
- **Sequence and the how-to.** The sequence of local government reform, the how-to design the system and develop its institutional structures in PC contexts is also an area where little consensus does exist. Generally, governance reforms, either of central or local systems, are seen as a non-priority in emergency or conflict situations where issues of humanitarian assistance and security take immediate precedence. The normative assumption is that economic growth should come first and democratic institutions and 'governance' later. However significant evidence exists highlighting the need to start building local government capacities as early as possible in the post-conflict period.
- **Legitimacy needs to be built.** Post conflict states generally do not enjoy strong legitimacy throughout their territories. This is often a result of decades of weak governance and a lack of a 'social contract' between state and citizens due to corruption, low taxation, poor political representation and also the abuse of military power. What is local level legitimacy built upon? How can de jure local authorities improve their legitimacy? How can they reduce the legitimacy of other

actors? How can central government support and regulate new local governments? These are issues that do not have clear answer yet.

- **Lack of finance continues to be a major issue.** A common complaint in local government in post conflict environments is a severe lack of financial resources. Finance as a major cause of tension in local-central relations and the lack of finance can be linked with lack of local government legitimacy and efficiency. Critically, fiscal decentralization is frequently the single most important obstacle to good central-local government relations.
- **Participation to be encouraged, but there are many barriers to it.** Local government is generally regarded to be a pivotal vehicle for widespread popular political participation. Engaging civil society in local government business is critical for success, but there are significant barriers to participation in PC contexts. These include social fragmentation, psychological fracturing and physical devastation. In addition, once and again people's focus on immediate needs overshadows the necessity for civil society participation.
- **Security and Crime.** Post conflict states are generally full of pockets of resistance and armed militia. These groups are typically based outside the capital, in regions where government control is weak and they can continue with minimal interference from the central authorities. Local government therefore clearly has a key role to play in bringing security in these regions, and yet this dimension is almost totally overlooked in the practice. Due to weaknesses in governance, organised crime is rife in post conflict contexts. Criminal activity gives rise to significant resource flows that underpin the control of warlords and strong men. Organized crime, drug and human trafficking, extortion, corruption, sexual violence, among others, are problems to which capable local government can contribute tackling. The Sierra Leone example clearly shows the advantages of building local security committees into a national security structure as a conflict prevention tool.
- **'One-size-fits-all' policy prescriptions do not work**, in general, and particularly in PC contexts. The international community must 'tread carefully' in post conflict contexts, and tailor their interventions to the local social, political and economic context, taking note of informal and traditional institutions as well as the formal. Generalizations on how to work on local government in post conflict contexts need to be analysed with caution. The specificity of local conditions should constantly be a reminder to think about how much can we really generalize? Or how much can we really successfully adapt other experiences to specific cases? There is a need to avoid being misled into thinking post conflict means there's a 'clean slate'. Even when there's a dramatic regime change (for example in Iraq) past economic, social, cultural and political circumstances must be taken into consideration.

#### **IV.**

#### ***Key considerations for the provision of assistance to Local Government in Post Conflict contexts***

- **A critical entry point for the development of local government in post conflict context is within the early recovery phase.** This allows for the early engagement with governments and other governance structures, development

partners and relevant stakeholders and importantly, humanitarian partners well within the response to the crisis. An early response to local governance needs within the onset of a crisis paves the way for longer term and sustained response to governance needs at the local level. This response entails addressing capacity needs of government to take on their responsibilities and in doing so contribute to the quick move from dependency on humanitarian assistance.

- **Engagement in strengthening local governance should commence with the onset of the crisis where possible, linking government officials, humanitarian and development workers.** Early engagement with humanitarian workers would encourage humanitarian assistance to have a more developmental approach to longer term and sustained interventions that may impact on local government. This includes encouraging humanitarian actors to engage and coordinate their response with local government and local governance structures and to look to building of national capacities to foster national ownership.
- **Best practices on international assistance to local government in non-conflict environments are suited to work on PC cases, they need to be adapted and tailored.** Conflict tends to exacerbate the sort of governance problems that are typically found in non-conflict, developing countries, for example lack of finance, patronage, weak capacity. This means that much of the established best practice regarding local government reform and strengthening can be applied, with caution and some tailoring to the local context, to post conflict situations.
- **Attention of donors and external actors should be focused in the development of nationally-owned solutions.** International assistance to local government in post conflict contexts is generally affected by the same processes and concerns that apply to any form of external state-building assistance. In this sense, the role of external actors is inherently limited; and locally owned, endogenous interventions are preferable. Key focus is on the problem of how to ensure that donor interventions build, rather than undermine, local ownership. Creating ownership is particularly difficult in post conflict countries where participation is likely to be weak (see section on participation, above) and trust of external actors may be extremely low.
- **Local government reform in post conflict contexts is not just a technical exercise.** Conflict usually centres on competition for access to power. Local government reform is all about the location of power and so is a highly political, controversial and potentially conflict-exacerbating exercise. Local government reform needs to be functionally integrated into wider sets of reform – public administration, fiscal policies, service delivery, anti-corruption strategies, among others.
- **Balancing the act on decentralization.** Decentralization may bring benefits but it can also bring great problems and should not be seen as an easy solution or a way of bypassing the strengthening of central government. The rationale for and the driving forces behind decentralization are often questioned locally. There are many factors affecting significantly the design of decentralization reforms in post conflict environments. Thus the processes should be reviewed thoroughly and

with a strong political analysis as a background. In PC situations decentralization is commonly identified as donor-driven and this often complicates the local political contexts further. In several cases there is evidence that decentralization has been used by political forces to promote disintegration of national states and consequently it has been in itself a cause for intra-state conflict. A careful approach is required.

- **General difficulties and criticism affecting international assistance in general also do affect assistance to local government in post conflict contexts.** From the experiences discussed, one can generalize that the same criticism and challenges that apply to development assistance in general, also do apply in the area of assistance to local government in post conflict environments. Donors are repeatedly criticised for having unrealistically ambitious agendas, given their timescales and resource allocation. There is often tension over comprehensiveness and balancing ambitiousness with appropriateness. The short-term planning of international donors is also a repeated source of criticism. (donors and the international community want quick results) This creates problems in environments with serious political, social and institutional difficulties where a long-term perspective and commitment is required. Coordination is another common criticism, both between donors and between different groups of international actors but also between government agencies and donors. Aid flows are typically unpredictable in post conflict environments. Short time horizons are inappropriate for donor interventions in post conflict states. They increase the risks of relying on inappropriate existing power structures to gain quick results. Usually donors are criticized for not allocating enough resources to the reform of local government. At the same time an emphasis on local government at the expense of national government can mean different municipalities or districts doing radically different things with different donors, so efforts and results may become incompatible- Uganda has been pointed out as an example of the last situation.

## SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

Local government is a stabilising or exacerbating factor in post conflict contexts. The donor community in general must recognise the significance of local government and begin to engage systematically in its development and support in post conflict environments. UNDP has a very important role to play in this front. How to rebuild or reform the system of local government in post conflict environments shall be an important area of work in the years to come. In that sense, a series of suggestions were presented and they are described below. They are relevant for the programming of conflict prevention and post-conflict strategies.

### General Considerations

**UNDP shall highlight within the donor community that assistance to post conflict peace building efforts should avoid focusing exclusively on central government.** Working with local government presents many additional challenges, but ultimately the strength of the central is dependent on the strength of the local, and vice versa.

**Promotion and observation of the principles of the Paris Declaration 2005 on Aid Harmonization and Coordination shall be of paramount importance in the provision of assistance in post conflict situations.** This is a response to the fact that participants systematically highlighted situations and challenges that refer basically to questions of national ownership, lack of donor coordination, project oriented and short term perspectives of interventions. This is particularly important in the case of assistance to local government, where donors usually compete for access and influence on specific “easy or visible localities”.

**Learning resources and opportunities for exchange of experiences need to be made available, with more frequency and in bigger quantities to national officials and UNDP/UNCTs staff working in post conflict situations.** After conflict, national and local capacities are limited. UN staff can be subject to high levels of turnover. Therefore it is difficult to built up a critical mass of experienced individuals that in the long run will be able to address timely and appropriately all the challenges emerging from the reconstruction or reform of the local government systems. Participants were very surprised by the fact that the workshop in Oslo was the first effort within UNDP to provide a forum for the exchange of experiences of individuals in post conflict contexts working on local government and decentralization.

**A knowledge management strategy supported with a strong policy-oriented research agenda and a dissemination plan shall be put in place to support local government in post conflict environments.** This will facilitate the exploration of many of the policy issues identified as unclear or still subject to discussion and controversy during the workshop. More evidence is required to strengthen the nature and strategies of assistance provided by international agencies. This will also increase a systematic response from UNDP to field colleagues and national counterparts.

**The community of practices on Democratic Governance and on Crisis Prevention and Recovery for UNDP staff in post-conflict context, including project staff should increase its interaction and exchanges.** Challenges and situations faced in post-conflict situations do get aggravated by the lack of access to relevant, updated and diverse sources of information and experiences. This could be facilitated by increasing access to the use of the existing learning and knowledge management facilities and capabilities available within UNDP and beyond, including the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) hosted at the International Development Department of the University of Birmingham and the Institute for Development Studies of Sussex University, with DFID's sponsorship.

**Efforts need to be made to promote timely the incorporation in programming activities of key areas for the strengthening of local government in post conflict,** such as: integrity and anti-corruption, accountability and participation, gender equality and women's empowerment, prevention of gender-based violence against women, protection of rights and provision of services for minorities, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities.

### Specific proposals

**Basic learning initiatives are to be promoted and facilitated systematically in countries and territories in post conflict,** to assist national counterparts, UNDP staff, and UNCTs in the following areas:

- Local government systems
- Strengthening of local government
- Local government finance
- Local economic development
- Organization of municipal services
- Participatory budgeting

Furthermore, all capacity development strategies in these areas must integrate a conflict prevention perspective highlighting post conflict challenges and enhancing the prospects for durable peace through conflict-sensitive interventions.

**Administrative-territorial reform of local government systems.** During the workshop a very specific need was identified referring to the challenges that UNDP colleagues in the Palestinian Territories, in Sudan and in several Balkan countries and territories are facing in relation to prospects of "administrative-territorial reform of local government systems" and their capacities to respond to national demands for assistance in these areas. Either through amalgamation or through division, the number of municipalities or local governments may be expected to change, positively or negatively, with all the political, administrative, financial and social consequences. A strategy to respond to this set of emerging needs in terms of knowledge, best practices, and expertise available will have to be developed to provide an effective corporate response to this collective demand.

**Local economic development and social inclusion.** Several participants highlighted the fact that without local economic development strategies being able to boost local communities, the challenges of promoting social inclusion at the local level tend to be unrealistic or just short-term oriented solutions. Progress in the front

of social integration, the respect of minorities and indigenous peoples (when appropriate) require a very strong injection of economic activity, in parallel. Opportunities for UNDP and UNCDF work in this area were highlighted.

## EVALUATION

Based on the feedback received in the evaluation forms and discussions with participants, overall, the workshop fulfilled the expectations of the attendees. The workshop average grade based on the 19 evaluation forms handed back is 7,23 [0 (lowest) to 10 (highest) grading scale]. In addition, the two working group sessions were identified as the most useful sessions, grading 8,03 each.

In their comments, participants emphasised that future workshops on this area should last for more than two days, giving speakers more time for their presentations.

## ANNEX 1: PARTICIPANTS LIST

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## **ANNEX 2: WORKSHOP AGENDA - OVERVIEW**

### **Wednesday, 28 November 2007**

<b>Session 1</b>	Opening. Objectives and Expectations
<b>Session 2.1</b>	Challenges faced by Local Government in Post Conflict Situations: National Perspectives
<b>Session 2.2</b>	Challenges faced by Local Government in Post Conflict Situations: National Perspectives
<b>Session 3</b>	Addressing Key Priorities, Challenges and Solutions for Improving Capacities for Local Governments

### **Thursday, 29 November 2007**

<b>Session 4</b>	UNDP Perspectives
<b>Session 5</b>	Strengthening UNDP/National Engagement in Local Government in Post Conflict
<b>Session 6</b>	Knowledge Platforms and Tools for Programming in Support of Local Governance
<b>Session 7</b>	Plenary Discussion and Wrap Up

### ANNEX 3: DETAILED AGENDA

Tuesday 27 November 2007	
	Arrival in Oslo
19:00-21:00	<b>Opening reception hosted by UNDP Oslo Governance Centre</b>
Wednesday 28 November 2007	
09:00-09:15	<b>Welcoming Address</b> Mr. Bjoern Foerde, Director, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Opening. Objectives and Expectations</b>
09:15-09:25	<b>Introductions and Workshop Objectives</b>  Mr. Siphosami Malunga, Governance and Conflict Advisor, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre  Mr. Lenni Montiel, Senior Policy Adviser, UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, Democratic Governance Group
09:25-09:50	<b>Setting the Context: Local Government in Post-Conflict – What do we know about it?</b> Mr. Paul Jackson, Head International Development Department, University of Birmingham, UK
09:50-10:20	Discussion
10:20-10:50	Coffee/Tea break
<b>Session 2.1</b>	<b>Challenges faced by Local Government in Post Conflict Situations : National Perspectives</b>
10:50-11:40	Plenary: Panel  Mr. Arcangelo Leite; Minister of Local Government; Timor Leste  Mr. Musa Mohamed Oshaik; Director of Development Planning, Kassala, Government of Sudan  Mr. Aiah Joseph Prescott Lebbie; Director of Local Government, Sierra Leone  Mr. Besnik Tahiri, Political Advisor to the Prime Minister of UN Administered Territory of Kosovo
11:40– 12:55	Discussion
13:00–14:00	Lunch
<b>Session 2.2</b>	<b>Challenges faced by Local Government in Post Conflict Situations : National Perspectives</b>
14:00–14:40	Plenary: Panel  Mr. Barna Karimi; Deputy Director General, Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Afghanistan Mr. Fouad Hamra; Mayor of Merjeoun, Lebanon Mr. Radomir Kezunovic, President, Association of Municipalities and Cities of Republic of Srpska/ Mayor of the City of Istocno Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina Mr. Onyombo Albert Etchumba, Senior Technical Advisor to the State Minister of the Interior, Decentralization and Security DRC
14:40-15:15	Discussion
15:15-15:45	Coffee/Tea break

<b>Session 3</b>		<b>Addressing Key Priorities, Challenges and Solutions for Improving Capacities for Local Governments</b>
15:45-17:00	Working Groups	<p><b>Issue 1: Improving Decision Making Capacities:</b> <i>What are the challenges and what can be done: by local government? Central government; UNDP and other development partners</i></p> <p><b>Issue 2: Enhancing Service Delivery:</b> <i>What factors affect it and what strategies can be deployed to improve it?</i></p> <p><b>Issue 3: Addressing Capacity Issues :</b> <i>Assessing and Strengthening Local Government Capacities: Methods and Approaches</i></p>
17:00-17:30	<b>Report Back from Group discussions in Plenary</b>	

**Thursday 29 November 2007**

<b>Session 4</b>		<b>UNDP Perspectives</b>
09:00-09:40	Panel	<p><b>Presentation: From Crisis/Conflict to Early Recovery: The Role of Local Government</b></p> <p>Ms. Awa Dabo, Transitional Governance Specialist, UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery</p> <p><b>Asia-Pacific Regional Perspectives of Local Government in Post Conflict</b></p> <p>Mr. Henrik Fredborg Larsen, Policy Advisor, Decentralization and Local Governance: UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia- Pacific Region</p> <p><b>UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People</b></p> <p>Ms. Shifa Jayousi, Programme Analyst Social Capital, UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People</p>
09:40- 10:15	Discussion	
10:15-10:45	Coffee/tea break	
<b>Session 5</b>		<b>Strengthening UNDP/National Engagement in Local Government in Post Conflict</b>
10:45- 12:00	Working Groups	<p><b>Group 1: National Counterparts):</b> <i>Challenges and obstacles in engaging with UNDP programme support and strategies to Improve Local Government in Post Conflict Situations</i></p> <p><b>Groups 2 and 3: UNDP Staff):</b> <i>Institutional Challenges and obstacles in engaging and supporting national/local authorities on Local Governance in Post Conflict</i></p>
12:00-13:00	<b>Report Back from Group discussions in Plenary</b>	
13:00-14:00	Lunch	
<b>Session 6:</b>		<b>Knowledge Platforms and Tools for Programming in Support of Local Governance</b>
14:00-14:30	Mr. Monjurul Kabir, Knowledge Management Specialist and Practice Network (DGP-Net) Facilitator, UNDP Bureau for Development Policy	
<b>Session 7</b>		<b>Plenary Discussion and Wrap Up</b>
14:30-15:15	Group Discussion – Lessons learned and next steps	
15:15-15:25	<b>Wrap Up</b>	
15:25-15:30	<b>Closing</b>	Mr. Bjørn Førde, Director, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre

## **ANNEX 23: LIST OF RECOMMENDED REFERENCES**

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