Capacity Development in Post-Conflict Countries

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Acknowledgments

‘Capacity is Development’ is a call to systematically review, capture and discuss key capacity development lessons of the past and to look on to the future. Through distilling key policy and investment choices made over time to motivate forward planning on capacity development, this research paper helped define the content framework of the ‘Capacity is Development’ Global Event. This paper was written by Jago Salmon and Eugenia Piza-Lopez.

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I. Introduction

1. The recent Secretary General’s “Report on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict” warns of the threats posed by the failure to restore state authority to lead the peacebuilding process in early post-conflict situations. This report advocates for coherent and well coordinated early action to support post-conflict governments to build core state capacities that will help to restore legitimacy and effectiveness.

2. This paper lays out a framework for reconsidering the unique challenges post-conflict contexts pose to processes of state capacity development. The purpose is to present framing questions and identify key issues for a conflict-sensitive approach to capacity development of governance in post-conflict contexts.

3. The concept of ‘post-conflict governance capacity development’ is used in this paper to convey the combination of peace building, state capacity building and capacity development required by UNDP to support nationally owned processes of transition in the aftermath of conflict.

- Section II highlights the importance of developing the foundations for resilient, responsive and legitimate governance as a component of the peacebuilding transition;
- Section III presents the ways in which violent conflict affects state institutions and governance capacity development efforts;
- Section IV considers rebuilding capacity in post-conflict environments, outlining UNDP’s mandated role in supporting a recovery of the foundations for state capacities to foster sustainable development;
- Section V explores avenues for enhancing existing efforts in post-conflict contexts through immediate support for post-conflict planning, leadership development and conflict sensitive governance support;
- The paper concludes, in Section VI, with initial findings on ways to improve UNDP’s engagement to build legitimate, resilient, responsive states after conflict.

1 This framework represents an initial result from the Post-Conflict Governance Capacity Development initiative by UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. This initiative examines lessons learned from UNDP’s support capacity development of governance in post-conflict countries, substantial inputs have been made by Eugenia Piza Lopez, Jago Salmon, Tim Sisk, Cleophas Torori, Susanna Campbell, and Peter Morgan.

2 “Too often, capacity development is seen in the context of international exit strategies from post-conflict countries. This is always too late. Inattention to capacity development constrains national actors from taking ownership of their recovery and limits accountability between the State and its people.” p. 7. Para. 19.

3 Ibid., p.7 para 18
I. Background: Governance Capacities in Post-Conflict Contexts

4. The scope and complexity of the contemporary peacebuilding challenges for the UN are considerable. From 1989-2008, there have been 128 armed conflicts, 48 of which have reached the threshold scholars use to describe a conflict as ‘war’. Most of these conflicts (93%) have been internal to states.4

5. Countries emerging from conflict are vulnerable with nearly a quarter of all comprehensive peace agreements failing in the face of a relapse into conflict, and even a higher proportion defined by debilitating crises of governance and high levels of armed violence, including violence against women.

6. Furthermore, many post-conflict countries are not progressing toward the Millennium Development Goals and some of the most severely affected are witnessing declines in human development.5

7. Research shows that most armed conflicts today end in a process of peace-making through negotiated settlement.6 In the wake of such accords, war-affected states and societies undergo complex transitions in several interrelated areas:

- The re-establishment of security, both state security and human and community-security;
- Renewal of the rule of law and the creation of mechanisms of accountability and an end to impunity;
- Reforming, recreating, or building of public governance institutions and processes that are able to reconcile social conflict and pursue collective goals of prosperity and development;
- The establishment of renewed political settlements supported by processes of constitutional change or complex power-sharing frameworks able to garner legitimacy and support from social forces;
- Economic recovery to include the creation of livelihoods and employment, realizing for all the “peace dividend” of invigorated economic growth, managing collectively natural resources and fairly distributing the proceeds of national wealth;7 and


6 The 2007 Human Security Brief reports that “Seventeen conflicts were ended by negotiation between 2000 and 2005, and thus far just two of them—12 percent—have broken down. Over the equivalent period in the previous decade (1990 to 1995), 48 percent of the negotiated settlements had failed. The increased stability of these settlements is very likely the result of the international community’s increased support for post-conflict peacebuilding in recent years.” Andrew Mack. 2007. Human Security Brief 2007 p. 35 (Human Security Centre, Simon Fraser University). Available at: www.humansecuritybrief.info/

• Restoring social cohesion and building ties of civil society connections across lines of conflict to provide the unity of purpose needed for effective governance.

8. The sum of these transitions entails not only a reconstruction of state institutions and core functions, but a transformation of governance, with the objective of enabling more resilient, more responsive and more legitimate states.

9. The scope of these transitions, the diversity of post-conflict contexts and the short-time horizons for delivery present challenges to traditional capacity development approaches.

   a. Impact of Conflict and Fragility on Governance Capacity

**Box 1: The Post-conflict situation in Sudan**

On 9th January 2005, the government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ending a civil war between the Northern government and Southern rebels. On the 9th October 2006, a similar agreement was signed with the Eastern Front, and on the 5 May 2006, a final agreement was signed with one of Darfur’s rebel factions. Despite these agreements, Sudan continues to present a range of conflict and crisis related priorities for UNDP.

Whilst parts of the country, such as Darfur, continue to require complex humanitarian operations in which early recovery operations are underway, in other areas recovery interventions are complicated by local insecurity, natural disasters and political tensions.\(^8\) Even in formally peaceful areas of the country, sporadic violence fuelled by a combination of political tensions, natural resource competition, and the availability of small arms and light weapons regularly interrupts development programming and brings the risk of wider escalations of violent conflict.\(^9\) Inter-linking risks crucial to stability are not readily captured by existing paradigms of ‘transition’ and the geographic overlapping of security, humanitarian and recovery priorities renders the transition from relief to development complex and heterogeneous challenge for UNDP operations.

10. All countries face an array of capacity challenges. However, these challenges are qualitatively different in countries emerging from conflict. For example:

   • The range, complexity and interconnections of capacity issues, for example between security and natural resources management, economic recovery and rule of law;

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\(^8\) For example, recent flooding in Sudan effected 14 out of Sudan’s 26 states and approximately 140,000 people. Cf. IFRC Emergency Appeal August 7, 2007.

\(^9\) For example, throughout 2008 and 2009 serious escalations of violence in South Sudan, Abyei and the attack of Darfurian rebel forces on Khartoum severely impacted on the environment for the delivery of recovery programming.
• The collapse of much of the national educational and knowledge creation systems, such as the university or vocational training services;
• The collapse of an enabling environment for and departure of trained personnel for gender empowerment in administration and government, or technical fields such as economic analysis;
• The effects of psychosocial trauma on interpersonal and community relationships;
• The effects of politics, parallel and informal institutions, and patronage networks on institutions;

11. As a result, post-conflict states are doubly fragile or vulnerable: the root causes of violence often are persistent and the prior experience of conflict and conflict-related legacies (e.g. weapons in the hands of civilians, mobilized groups, fragmented political systems and deep social differences) undermines the endogenous capacity to address these root causes.

12. Post-conflict states vary in the nature and degree of destruction. But in general, all suffer from the collapse not just of assets or skills but of the systems – physical, financial, economic, technical, organizational, political, social – that allowed them to function as states. The challenge for UNDP is to help countries re-establish or reconfigure these systems in ways that can allow the country to begin to move forward.

13. Four aspects seem of particular importance and shape the way such systems can be brought back to life.

• The physical infrastructure: The degree of infrastructural destruction varies. In Rwanda, the infrastructure remained largely intact. In Sierra Leone, the physical losses were mainly in the countryside. In Liberia, the destruction was pervasive including in Monrovia. South Sudan had very little infrastructure to begin with, in part because of the duration of the conflict. Impassable roads and destroyed bridges limit inter-regional movement and communication for months at a time. The destruction of government buildings and the loss of basic office equipment prevent public agencies from being re-established. The loss of educational institutions contributes to the inability of the country to replace skilled citizens who have fled the country or been killed in conflict. Finally, the low or limited capacity of governments to address these deficits undermines their legitimacy with citizens. The state finds it difficult to generate the momentum required to make a real difference.

Box 2: UNDP Infrastructure Reconstruction in Iraq
Two decades of war and sanctions has left Iraq’s infrastructure in a dilapidated and dysfunctional state. In addition, policies in infrastructure rehabilitation need
Institutional and organizational destruction is widespread. Civil servants have been killed or have emigrated to safety. In Liberia, public agencies emerged from the conflict lacking every sort of resource—including buildings, desks, chairs, power and paper. In many cases, the institutional memory disappeared through staff loss and file destruction. The interorganizational relationships that are critical to the functioning of state agencies were disrupted.

Psycho-social trauma is a hidden but important part of the legacy of conflict that affects people at all levels. Research in countries such as Nicaragua and Cambodia suggests profound psychological effects on citizens. The attitude of people to uncertainty, risk, learning, decision making, trust, the future changes. The on-going emotion of fear can affect family life and bureaucratic behavior. This kind of damage is unique in its lack of visibility.

Among UNDP’s interventions in assisting Iraq’s reconstruction and development are the rehabilitation of key infrastructure and the strengthening of access to basic services. 50 sewage pumping stations, and two water treatment plants were repaired. A detailed assessment for the rehabilitation of the Al-Kadhimiya teaching hospital was undertaken, orders for essential equipment placed, and refurbishment of the hospital sewerage system started. A total of 106 diesel generators were purchased for key humanitarian facilities of which 92 were installed. Three mobile substations, four cable-test vans, 218 distribution transformers, 700 km of transmission line conductors, and 200 km of cables were procured and delivered. The repair of the electrical distribution networks of nine key hospitals was completed. 20 engineers from the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity were trained in distribution system data collection techniques, the use and maintenance of Geographical Information System (GIS) databases, and distribution planning and system analysis using modern software packages. Delivery started of safety equipment, tools and test equipment for Ministry of Electricity repair crews. Additionally, a theatre for children and the main Convention Centre in Baghdad were rehabilitated. In Southern Iraq, UNDP is assisting town councils in sewage and water network repairs, civil works for hospital, and electricity distribution installations.

Box 3: Timor-Leste – The Impact of the Conflict on change in the Public Service
“Building a viable Timor-Leste public service has been one of the most difficult aspects of the UN’s mandate (Report of the Secretary General S/2002/432). Institutions and public records were destroyed or removed in 1999, and an estimated...
• Profound changes to relationships – personal, organizational, societal – is an effect of sustained conflict. The level of social capital declines especially outside family or ethnic circles. In particular, the type of functional ties that make complex capabilities work lose effectiveness. Organizations lose coherence as new staff with different educational, social or ideological backgrounds insist on new behaviors. Most importantly, the relationships between the state and its citizens, especially that of legitimacy, needs to be rebuilt, something that can be a complex task if the absence of such legitimacy was a factor behind the conflict in the first place.

14. The extent and nature of these impacts are highly context specific. In the 1994 Rwandan genocide, for example, an estimated one million people were killed, while 3 million Rwandans became refugees, and 4 million were internally displaced. Beyond these grim statistics, the genocide also led to a collapse of the state and the Rwandan economy leaving the government ill-equipped to deal with post-conflict needs. In the case of Timor Leste (see Box 3) the conflict “left a vacuum” in terms of public administration which required a massive investment in institutions for the new state, including building up their human resources and governance systems. In Iraq, the “de-Baathification” policy of the Coalition Provisional Authority had extensive effects on the capacity of the state to govern. On the other hand, South Africa, during its transition from conflict in the early 1990s, has seen a transformation of state structures and public administration in efforts to remake state capacity rather than build it from scratch. Likewise, Ethiopia emerged from conflict in 1991 with a relatively strong government with its central level administrative structure intact.

b. The Challenges of Capacity Development in Post-Conflict Contexts

7,000 Indonesian civil servants fled the territory, leaving a vacuum in all areas of government. The development of East Timorese skills in the areas of administration and governance was limited during the years of Indonesian rule, and the majority of the technical as well as senior and middle-level management positions in government were occupied by Indonesian officials. The human resource base is therefore extremely weak. Training and capacity building to develop a professional and effective public administration remains a major challenge in the coming years.”

(Vong, John, Resident Project Adviser, UNDP Project Capacity Development for HRM in the Civil Service, Integrating Civil Service Reform into Sustainable Capacity Development Framework in Timor Leste)
15. On top of the scope of the capacity development demands created by violent conflict, designing and delivering capacity development support in post-conflict contexts is challenging.

**Box 4: UNDP Somalia – Supporting Capacity Remotely**

Capacity development remains the core and strategic mandate of UNDP in Somalia. However, ongoing insecurity presents a dilemma for international efforts to develop national and local capacity. UNDP and others must continue to engage to support the conditions by which a credible state may develop — leadership with legitimacy and basic governance capacities, a trained administrative cadre of professionals who can organize governance and service delivery — with extremely fluid and constrained access.

UNDP’s capacity development work has taken the form of an ambitious and creative local governance program with a focus on local reconciliation process and building up on societal strengths. For example, in Somaliland, the programming has been conducted under the United Nations Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery (JPLG). UNDP has also supported election and selection of local and regional representatives in South Central Somalia in the context of participation in the Djibouti peace talks and the agreement that created the Transitional Federal Parliament. Second, UNDP has focused on the full spectrum of local activities such as capacities for local development and livelihoods planning, service delivery, and accountability institutions and processes (such as local-NGO monitoring) for early recovery; UNDP
16. Post-conflict countries present “hyper-polarized” environments in which low levels of trust make engagement with partners highly sensitive.

17. In many cases state institutions and elites may have been compromised by human rights violations or have been affiliated with the root causes of the conflict. These histories of conflict raise questions about the feasibility of building on existing systems as a means of promoting sustainable peacebuilding and democracy.

18. Furthermore, post-conflict transitions require filling gaps in human resources, reforming public administrations and a shift of state resources away from a primarily security logic to a logic of state delivery and management. Capacity development in such environments is not neutral, but entails potentially conflictive processes creating both ‘winners’ and ‘losers’.

19. More directly, insecurity can continue to impact UNDP’s ability to deliver services, foster partnerships, provide technical assistance and offer sustained training long after a formal cessation of hostilities, due either to a chronic breakdown of law and order, or to a presence of spoiler groups resisting reintegration into the state. Continuing sporadic violent conflict or armed violence, by increasing uncertainty and risk, can dramatically limit the willingness of donors to fund capacity development in a context in which gains can easily be swept away. Operating in these contexts requires innovation and flexibility (see box 4).

20. Finally faced with meeting the short-term needs of populations whilst simultaneously investing in medium-term priorities for reconstruction, post-conflict states and international partners face enormous challenges in prioritizing capacity development objectives in the face of needs for immediate delivery of services and relief.

21. Despite these challenges, post-conflict transitions represent – as the Secretary General’s peacebuilding report also argues – a window of opportunity for important transformations, with considerable and indeed unique opportunities for the reform and scaling-up of
societal, organizational and individual capacities to address the security and service delivery imperatives that a more sustainable peace requires.

II. Rebuilding Capacity: Overcoming the Challenges

22. Recognising this window of opportunity, UNDP is providing governance support to many post-conflict countries, and has adapted its operational modalities to adjust to the diversity of conflict contexts. From the development of an extensive field office structure in Sudan, to working remotely in Iraq and Somalia and through involvement in integrated missions in Burundi, UNDP has demonstrated its own capacity to deliver in highly challenging environments.

23. The breadth of UNDP’s programming activities in these contexts is extensive, often integrating conflict-sensitivity with transitional programming emphasizing developmental objectives. For example, UNDP has been engaged in southern Lebanon in efforts to recycle the rubble from the 2006 conflict, both literally in terms of recycling concrete debris and in repairing the social relationships among communities in the conflict-affected areas. In another example, in Sierra Leone, UNDP’s small arms and light weapons collection project directly engages community-level authorities and offers development aid commensurate with the number of arms collected by such local governments.

Box 5: Definitions of Capacity Development

Capacity development processes focus on technical or functional capacities, organizational change, leadership and social cohesion, or shifts in policies or other aspects of the enabling environment which can facilitate more effective use of capacity. For example, UNDP directly supports technical and professional mentoring in the Office of the President in Sierra Leone; in Lebanon, a project is directed at parliamentary strengthening. Work on capacity development includes helping countries to diagnose capacity assets and constraints and cost and support capacity development strategies.10

Functional capacities are necessary for the successful creation and management of policies, legislations, strategies and programmes. Key functional capacities include situation analysis; policy design and strategy formulation; resources and budget allocation; implementation; and monitoring, evaluation and learning. In post-conflict contexts other critical functional capacities may include the capacity to lead multi-stakeholder processes; engage in dialogue; mediate and build consensus; and develop and use non-competitive

models of change. 

System capacity is the overall ability of an organization or system to perform and make a contribution - Capacity emerges from the interactions among individual competencies, collective capabilities and the context but with no one of them being an automatic indication of capacity. Capacity includes combining and integrating competencies and capabilities into a functioning system. Some aspects of such a ‘capacitated’ system are legitimacy, relevance, accomplishment of mandates, resilience and sustainability.

24. In the longer-run, UNDP’s strategic approach in post-conflict states recognizes that enabling state capacities is necessary to sustain peace.

25. UNDP’s has several key strengths in enabling post-conflict state capacities:
   - UNDP is mandated to work on different governance domains: crisis prevention and recovery, democratic governance, area-based development and support of national human development strategies and poverty alleviation;
   - UNDP works directly as a partner with governments and helps coordinate with non-governmental organizations, furthermore, it has the capabilities to manage multi-donor trust funds and coordinate donor interventions;
   - Finally, in most contexts, the most critical variable for determining UNDP’s role and profile is its perceived neutrality.

26. Several tentative directions of increased support for post-conflict governance could be identified to support UNDP’s capacity development programming becoming increasingly conflict-sensitive.

a. Laying Foundations for Recovery

27. A key factor in laying effective foundations for resilient, responsive and legitimate governance in the immediate aftermath of conflict seems to be early support for the capacity of state institutions to lead conflict-sensitive recovery planning. This requires a focus beyond the national or federal level, and a provision of support to the extension and recovery of the state’s

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**Box 6: UNDP’s Approach to Capacity Development**

*Capacity development is the overarching UNDP contribution, consistent with the principles of national ownership, effectiveness, effective aid management, and South-South cooperation.* For UNDP, capacity development is seen as “the how” of making development work better. It is a process through which individuals, organizations and societies strengthen and maintain their capabilities to address their own development priorities.
representative apparatus and the fostering of inclusive and responsive sub-national governance.

28. There are first order capacities which are required in pursuit of this process:
   - **Building capacity to deliver peace dividends and early recovery.** This includes managing finances and procurement of services and ensuring availability of funding for partners structured towards supporting programming during transitions from humanitarian to development aid;
   - **Strengthening systems of local governance extension.** In this area, UNDP has engaged in supporting re-staffing local government offices; fast-tracking support for communication capabilities through information networks/radio, providing training on strategic communication and supporting coordination between local and central government on key messaging;
   - **Strengthening systems of local level security and stabilization beyond conflict as well as strengthening systems of community conflict management and prevention.** In this domain, UNDP has supported the development of a conflict management architecture/peace infrastructure linking traditional or informal systems of conflict management, with state institutions and international peace keeping forces;
   - **Building capacity of civil society and local authorities to mediate and plan for recovery.** In this domain UNDP can help governments to connect to citizens by supporting conflict sensitive, transparent, participatory planning processes early in post-conflict context. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and other such exercises can help create the connections that begin to rebuild some trust.

b. Laying the Foundations for Transformative Processes:

29. Beyond immediate post-conflict capacities, UNDP has a central role in laying the foundations for medium-term processes of governance transformation towards more inclusive, democratic systems.

1. **Strengthening Mediation Skills and Consensus Building Leadership**

30. Capacity development is not simply an exercise in developing formal organizations. It is also an effort to improve the collective action which lies at the heart of capacity itself. Helping to improve human exchanges and connections is a key contributor to institutional development.

31. UNDP can help to mediate on-going tensions in an effort to maintain political stability. It can help to support these mediation capabilities within a society as part of an overall effort to improve the national level of social capital. It can help to develop country organizations
especially in civil society that focus on making connections and building relationships. The UNDP can use its special niche in partner countries to create spaces for discussion and conflict reduction. And it can buffer and protect those individuals, groups and organizations that are trying to help the country re-connect to itself.

Box 7: Supporting Leadership Capacities in Nepal

In the last three years, Nepal has undergone tremendous political changes that continue to shape the national governance systems. The 2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) between the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) ended a decade-long civil war and paved the way for the conduct of the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections.

Delivering a new constitution and successfully implementing the CPA will require Nepal’s leadership to develop a range of new strategic planning, management and conflict transformation skills. Building the capacities of leaders across different sectors—political parties; government; business; labor; and media—to constructively lead Nepal’s transition; successfully negotiate differences; and develop and implement the reform measures necessary to building a more inclusive and responsive state, especially with regard to civil service reform and the delivery of basic services.

BCPR is assisting UNDP-Nepal in partnering with the National Planning Commission and other relevant government institutions in the development and implementation of a multi-year programme aimed at assisting national leaders from across the key sectors—political parties; government; civil society—in acquiring and applying capacities for leadership; constructive negotiation; the planning and implementation of development programmes in a manner that recognizes the country’s diversity and demand for inclusion in public processes by emerging groups; and the reform of the civil service and other state institutions to reflect the empowerment of previously marginalized groups, and to enable the delivery of basic services in an effective and inclusive manner.

32. A focus on leadership is a key part of this overall attention to improving human connections and relationships. Formal organizations can only sustain their capacity on the basis on some sort of political consensus or accommodation. It is thus crucial that leaders or the leadership system develop their own capabilities for collective action, for mediation, for consensus and relationship building. Box 7 outlines the contribution of the UNDP to the development of leadership capacities in Nepal. This kind of intervention can hopefully serve to enhance political dialogue as part of a broader effort to improve state building and governance.
2. Encouraging Sustainable Peace and Statebuilding

33. As a second order priority UNDP and partners face a task of genuine difficulty in encouraging positive state building through supporting state institutions undertaking transformative processes. The surviving elites in countries coming out of conflict may not be fully persuaded that state building as so perceived is in their interest. Social and political fragmentation may still be impossible to overcome. Frustrated and insecure citizens may give up on the potential of governments to make any real difference in their lives. And the influence of the informal sector and the continuation of patrimonial politics may undermine the effectiveness of formal institutions such as constitutions or parliaments. What can be done under such circumstances?

a. **UNDP in coordination with other aid agencies can make a long-term commitment to supporting capacity development.** Commitments to capacity development in post-conflict environments are frequently limited to building individual competencies as opposed to the development of a robust national capacity development architecture.

b. **UNDP can provide support to both non-executive and non-state actors.** Post-conflict environments are characterized by extreme fragmentation of social groups and organizations. Rebuilding legitimacy and social cohesion in such contexts requires engaging a broader range of actors in processes of reform and transition than is required in ‘normal’ contexts.

c. **UNDP can support the reengagement of society with state institutions.** Citizens need to be connected to the state organizations that are being developed to serve their interests. Post-conflict states thus need assistance in development communications in a variety of forms and through support to the development and extension of representative and participatory forums supporting state delivery mechanisms.

d. **UNDP can provide support for building resilient institutions:** supporting public administration reform, fast-tracking training for increasing excluded or minority representation in civil service and identifying existing social structures which can effectively interface between state institutions and communities.
Box 8. Liberia’s Experience in Post-Conflict Capacity Development

The civil war in Liberia claimed the lives of an estimated 250,000 and led to a complete breakdown of law and order.\textsuperscript{11} Nearly one million Liberians – one third of the population – were displaced, including some 300,000 who fled to neighbouring countries.\textsuperscript{12} Fourteen years of civil war transformed Liberia from a relatively wealthy country to one of the poorest countries in the world. GDP fell 90 percent between 1987 and 1995, one of the largest economic collapses ever recorded. In the mid 2000s, average income in Liberia was just one-quarter of what it had been in 1987, and just one-sixth of its level in 1979,\textsuperscript{13} and the external debt stood at USD4.8 billion – 800 percent of GDP.\textsuperscript{14} Per capita GDP is estimated at US$190, some 63.8 percent of the population is below the national poverty line, and 47.9 percent live in extreme poverty.

As Liberia consolidates its transition from conflict to peace, stability and development, there are opportunities to develop and bring about effective leadership and change management capacities especially in the public sector. However, the enormity of the recovery and reconstruction challenge coupled with the exceedingly high expectations from the public continues to impose a huge burden on the government.

The pervasive and systemic capacity deprivation brought about by years of conflict and bad governance complicates the equation. Lack of requisite capacity undermines state effectiveness, impedes revenue collection, compromises delivery of basic social services such as healthcare and education, and promotes corruption. In the absence of strong and coordinated efforts in capacity development, the efficacy of ongoing and future reform initiatives would remain in danger of reversal. In short, the pervasive capacity gaps present a threat to ownership, scaling up and sustainability of efforts and results.

Cognizant of this, the Government of Liberia, with support from its international partners has implemented urgent measures to address the capacity problem as a critical post-transition priority. The approach adopted is three-pronged:

- **addressing short term capacity needs** through the infusion of skilled expertise, both national and international, with incentives and systems to support them;
- **support to the formulation of long-term capacity development strategy** that integrates technical expertise with capacities to plan, manage and deliver, as well as the ‘soft’ skills that promote dialogue, trust and long-term consensus-building;
- **the pursuance of a conflict-sensitive CD strategy** that promotes horizontal equity, gender equality, regional balance, to consolidate conflict prevention as Liberia moves out of the

\textsuperscript{11} ibid paras 24 and 26
\textsuperscript{12} ibid para 30
\textsuperscript{13} Republic of Liberia  (2008) Poverty Reduction Strategy p15
\textsuperscript{14} Op cit p16
emergency into development mode characterized by peace consolidation.

2.1 Emergency “quick-wins” Responses
A number of critical and innovative measures have been implemented to resuscitate the public sector. These include a wide array of public sector reforms, civil service reorganization, institutional re-organisation, recapacitation programmes as well as management reviews.

- Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP), the government has introduced a system of internal controls, overhauled financial management procedures as well as instituted measures aimed at fighting corruption.
- Liberia Emergency Capacity Building Support project (LECBS) to support the placement of high-profile Liberian officials in the public service to support the speedy service delivery.
- Senior Executive Service (SES), a powerful cadre of staff, some 100 of them, whose employment in high executive positions is intended to reinvigorate the public sector by restoring technical and operational efficiency, bringing new ideas, experiences and professionalism to support the reform initiatives.
- “Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) qualified expatriate Liberian professionals residing overseas (including physicians, medical doctors, economists, engineers and management specialists) continue to be brought back for short periods of time to share the skills they have gained during their residence abroad.

2.3 Long-Term CD Strategy: The Liberia National Capacity Development Strategy
Short-term capacity development inputs are not anchored on a structured, holistic and cohesive platform that guarantees their long-term sustainability and the linkage between ‘quick-wins’ and an overall capacity development strategy.

Cognizant of this, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs with support from UNDP, embarked on a project to develop a long-term (10-Year) National Capacity Development Strategy (NCDS). As a basis for the NCDS, considerable diagnostics work has been undertaken over the last one and half years focusing on capacity needs, assets and gaps in the public sector and to some extent in the private sector and civil society entities. The findings resulting from this exercise revealed the nature, extent and dimensions of the capacity constraints at individual, organizational as well as the enabling environment.

The NCDS aims to provide a cohesive framework through which multiple capacity development initiatives may be effectively coordinated. Covering all sectors (public, civil service, private, community-based) and adopting a 10-year planning horizon, it the NCDS is advanced through a
III. Enhancing the UNDP approach to capacity development

34. UNDP is heavily involved in promoting capacity development for resilient, responsive and legitimate post-conflict governance in many countries. UNDP plays a leading role in promoting nationally owned capacity development strategies as the route from conflict to sustained development and peace.

35. The central conclusion of this paper is that the special challenges inherent in post-conflict states may require UNDP to think and act differently when supporting post-conflict governance capacity development. This final section highlights key issues for UNDP’s practice in post-conflict counties.

a. Understanding Context

36. The effects of contextual factors are hugely influential in post-conflict states. In more established countries, donor interventions can be designed at the outset – usually the ‘best’ choice based on development need - and then adjusted to address contextual constraints.

37. Many post-conflict contexts are defined, however, by highly heterogeneous impacts of conflict. The information base required to effectively plan in such a context is often lacking, with statistical information missing or fragmented between sources. In many post-conflict states entire regions or sectors may lack the requisite baseline data for effective planning towards developmental targets.

15 The NCDS is driven by five strategic objectives, which constitute priority investments in capacity development over the 10-year period based on assessment of readiness, impact and feasibility and linked to Liberia’s growth and development. These are i) matching supply of capacity to current and emerging needs; ii) supporting institutions charged with developing capacity; iii) strengthening capacity for service delivery; iv) strengthening capacity for leadership, youth empowerment and civic engagement, and v) building state capacity for effective

16 "The greatest challenge is appreciating and managing the political, social and financial reality within which this project is being implemented" quote from the Diaspora Support Project in Sierra Leone

17 A number of people in Sierra Leone expressed the opinion that donors still do not understand or accept the implications of the context in that country.
38. Furthermore, developmental information may not be directly relevant to conflict causes, nor to conflict sensitive programming. Much data may not be disaggregated geographically, making patterns of marginalization difficult to identify, and trends in insecurity may not be sufficiently disaggregated to allow for a genuine analysis of the causes of local conflict.

39. The collection of baseline information is a priority for many international and national partners, however, such collection is resource intensive and requires lengthy collection times. More immediate systems for developing context sensitivity may be required as an interim measure.

40. UNDP faces a choice about developing its own capacities for working in post-conflict states. Doing so could require consideration of the following:
   - UNDP needs a better sense of which contextual analysis is essential from the outset and which is simply good to have available. How much is needed to start? Which can be added through experience and operational learning?
   - Tools and frameworks are already available that can help UNDP address the contextual issues. The issue is not so much their availability as it is making them accessible and useful to a range of practitioners including those in country governments.
   - External and country research institutions can be engaged to work on selected topics. Each programming area could have a work program of research subjects relevant for program design and management.

41. Key Issue: In many post-conflict countries, it may make more sense to start with the context in an effort to come up with a deeper understanding of how and why the ‘system’ in question works and behaves the way it does. What are the strengths? What are the traps? Where is there evidence of commitment and motivation? What changes are already underway? What can the system likely absorb or accept? In addition to development need, what is likely to be feasible in the short and medium term? Are best choices likely to fail? Will second or even third best options have a better chance to make progress if they are less complex to implement?

   b. Understanding political economy and political settlements

42. State-building is an internally driven process. The most appropriate role for UNDP and other international aid agencies is to facilitate and support capacity development programming that directly contributes to the creation of stable, resilient and responsive states. To be effective, these concepts and policies need to be matched with a change in the

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implementation of projects founded upon a more nuanced understanding of the political and institutional context of the recipient country.

43. The issues of political will and legitimacy are key challenges for capacity development, strengthening them through activities addressing underlying challenges may lay the foundations for the transformation of institutions and governance processes.19 For example, in many post conflict environments the successes of political agreements are undermined by the lack of leadership.

44. **Key Issue: We need to understand better the rules of the game and the limits of the possible within post-conflict environments, both sectorally and systemically, through an analysis of the way in which elite coalitions function, the incentives motivating them, and the constraints implicit within the process of state reconstruction.**

45. **c. Expanding the variety of CD interventions**

46. Capacity development, however, can be ‘indirect’, designed to support national partners in the creation of conditions and relationships needed to foster incentives for outcomes, or ‘direct’ support for the achievement of outcomes (see table 1). Creating enabling conditions may require developing new roles and approaches to such issues as brokering, mediation and partnership.

47. There are some strategic choices to be made here. Too much indirect support can result in slow progress on the development of the logistical and organizational capabilities that country organizations need to deliver services or manage public policies. But too much attention to direct capacity development for formal organizations can lead to interventions that are not sustainable or that have no legitimacy or public credibility. This balance is hard to find particularly with senior officials in post-conflict governments that may be skeptical of indirect activities and are keen to see tangible results.

48. We need to keep in mind a long-term evolutionary view of capacity development. Capacity in the form of the emergence of sustainable organizations and institutions is essentially the outcome of bargaining.20 These societal processes can take place over generations as in the case of the rise of the modern welfare state. Or it can emerge out of revolution as in the...

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19 PCNA Review, Annex...page 6
case of France or Iran or the USA. Capacity development from this perspective is partly an intrinsic outcome of deeper social and political change over the long term.21 It is not solely something that is institutionally engineered in the short term.

49. **Key Issue: Post-conflict states are characterized by a wide range of capacity needs ranging from indirect interventions such as mediation and conflict management at one end of the spectrum to technical interventions to do with, for example, information management in a finance ministry or a central bank.** Capacity development must balance the needs for output focused capacity and inputs seeking to effect incentive structures for outputs.

**d. Operating in an environment with multiple actors: Dealing with the growth of parallel systems**

50. There is a need for a **coordinated vision** for post-conflict capacity development. Support is often stove-piped in sectoral approaches and is highly heterogeneous, both geographically and across sectors defined by supply driven interventions. The absence of a visioning and planning system that sequences immediate inputs with longer-term capacity development and links interventions across programming sectors leads to ad-hoc, piece meal and fragmented inputs which can form obstacles for medium and long term strategies for ensuring sustainability.

51. Stovepiped interventions, often translate into parallel systems often with large components of Technical Assistance (TA). Most of the ‘macro’ capacity development issues discussed in this paper, e.g. contextual analysis, systems approaches, a wide range of possible strategies, or the short and the long term – fade into the background at the project or program level.

52. Much of this capacity tends to be located in project implementation units (PIUs) that are oriented towards getting work done. The challenge is to shift the positioning of TA over time towards supporting country systems.

53. **Key issue: The existence of multiple actors involved in post-conflict capacity development requires a planning and coordination capacity that can manage the integration of diverse capacity development processes and ensure genuine transitions to nationally led governance processes.**

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**Box 9: Technical Advisory in East Timor**

Following the violence in 1999, about 7,000 Indonesian civil servants fled Timor-Leste,
e. Understanding and responding to the state of country capacities

54. Post-conflict peacebuilding must begin with an assessment of existing capacities in both the formal state institutions and in society. In this respect, early recovery efforts undertaken during the humanitarian phase are particularly important and it is essential that planning and information management systems are in place to capture lessons and information throughout the early recovery phase. Endogenous capacities to meet such demands are often destabilized, weakened or chased away during crisis resulting in substantial information gaps on areas essential for post-conflict reconstruction. Given this context, it is imperative that the capacity assessment approach is adapted and calibrated to take fully into account the drivers of fragility characteristic of post-conflict contexts.

55. As conditions of conflict vary widely, assessments of assets and needs must be contextualized for each occasion and include the specific drivers and dynamics of conflict as well as what capacity assets and deficits are left in its wake.

56. UNDP is not just dealing with formal organizations that are outdated or inefficient. Many of the formal structures in both countries collapsed or stopped functioning. Earlier efforts at capacity development in post-conflict states such as Germany and Japan could build on traditions and national memories of effective public institutions. Capacity development in
these countries was partly an exercise in recreating previous practices and structures that had achieved some degree of legitimacy and performance. Similarly in other post-conflict countries, reconstruction of the state requires detailed understanding of what exists and works in a country prior to a conflict.

57. **Key Issue:** It is critical to have a better understanding of what state governance capacities have been in the past, how they are affected by conflict, and the implications of such assessments for addressing state fragility.

d. **Supporting country ownership**

58. A clear challenge in post-conflict or fragile states is how to ensure ‘effective’ ownership in contexts with fragile institutions, weak civil societies, and divided populations. Absent a clear consensus on the rules of the game, post-conflict polities raise the question of ownership by whom, for what reasons and for how long?

59. The axiom that local ownership is paramount raises an important tension in post-conflict contexts. The UN is charged with upholding and promoting international norms, at the same time as the institutional expression of the partnership between member states. Local ownership works well when the norms and ideals of the UN are supported by the state institutions with which they partner. Unfortunately, post-conflict institutions are rarely able to uphold liberal international norms and standards, not because the state and society emerging from conflict disagree with the norms and rights that the UN promotes, but because their institutions have been ravaged by war and are not yet able to uphold these norms and rights.

60. A declared outcome of capacity building in post-conflict contexts should be to catalyze the development of national institutions that can lead processes of reform supporting the progressive meeting of international norms. This goal may require recognizing ‘good enough’ governance as a first order priority. What matters are the interrelationships of the national and international ownerships and the way they act together to generate development effectiveness.

61. **Key issue:** Focusing only on international norms and rights, and not on the contextual challenges national institutions face, can result in institutions which are functional in principle but not in reality. Activities in post-conflict societies could use instruments and processes that help to manage the tension between contextual and normative priorities to support progressive reform.

22 The Director of the Liberian Institute of Public Administration estimated that no adult in Liberia under 40 who did not join the Diaspora has had any real experience of working in a functioning, effective organization.
e. Systems Approach to Post-Conflict Capacities

62. Section III above pointed to the need for complex ‘systems’ reconstruction at a time when a country has a limited capacity to carry out such a task. But implementing a ‘systems’ approach in a post-conflict state comes with a set of challenges. Some of the more daunting are the following:

- Capacity ‘systems’ come with many dilemmas and traps. Efforts at organizational improvement, for example, bump up against underlying structures and incentives and get stuck. Efforts at improvement in one area make things worse in another. Optimal solutions cannot be implemented despite their technical potential and ‘second-best’ or ‘good enough’ interventions have to be tried.
- System approaches must address the nature of emergent change which cannot be predicted or controlled. Conventional strategic planning breaks down in the face of complexity and uncertainty. Performance management systems that focus on targeting can make things worse by the lack of flexibility and inattention to unintended consequences. Stove pipe interventions risk resolving output oriented problems but miss the systemic challenges.
- A systems ‘design’ of capacity development interventions could pay attention to a much wider range of actors and trends given the complex interrelationships involved. Technical interventions need to pay attention to political considerations. ‘Hard’ structural change must come with a ‘soft’ attention to values, ideas and identities. The dynamics of the short and the long-term need to be connected.

63. Capacity development in a post-conflict state must, of course, focus on improving the skills and competencies of individuals. Governments themselves can be seen as informal networks of individuals and institutions. In practice, all the actors make up a complex system whose behavior, is shaped by the interrelationships amongst those actors or agents. The behavior of such systems cannot necessarily be understood by breaking up such a diverse system and ‘fixing’ the parts. Most of the capacity interventions that countries and donors now support are intended to improve the capacity and performance of complex systems.

64. Key Issue: UNDP needs a macro-systems view of capacity development in post-conflict states, a variant on the ‘think globally-act locally’ slogan. Every aspect of rebuilding complex capacity cannot be tackled at once. But some overall image of the capacity puzzle and its many aspects needs to be kept in mind as the work proceeds.

f. Addressing the Trade-offs between Short-Term Gains and Long-Term Sustainability
65. One of the most challenging aspects of capacity development in post-conflict contexts is managing the inherent tension between doing and building the capacity to do. In many post-conflict environments, humanitarian imperatives do not cease, and the UN is held accountable simultaneously for meeting the short-term needs of populations and building the long-term sustainability of institutions.

66. Unfortunately, capacity building efforts often prioritize delivering results over building capacity, reducing the likelihood that they will achieve their desired long-term outcomes. The effect is cyclical: the more that delivery of results eclipses capacity building, the longer dependency on the international community to deliver results is likely to persist.

67. External help and even control may be crucial at the beginning of post-conflict operations to stabilize the situation and make citizens believe that something is being done to make their lives better. But the effort over time can undermine the very capacity that is needed to make any kind of sustainable difference.

68. Many fragile countries are still dealing with the transition from short-term rescue to longer-term capacity development of post-conflict transitions. In some cases, transitional structures can draw resources away from the regular structures of Government just as the latter are trying to re-establish themselves after the conflict.

69. These transitions place particular pressures on post-conflict states around key deliverable outputs. For example, the move to elections can shut down windows of opportunities for reform of public sector organizations.

70. **Key Issue:** Capacity development in a post-conflict state must focus on improving the skills and competencies of individuals for delivery, but the vision of capacity development needs to identifying mechanisms and processes for balancing the trade-offs between short term gains and long-term sustainability. In this process, the establishment of ad-hoc structures addressing immediate needs may need to be integrated into longer term plans for capacity development aimed at developing sustainability.

   j. **Shifting to more incremental and emergent approaches to capacity development**

71. To better manage the tensions outlined above, the UN may have to adapt its systems and routines to enable a different type of programming. The natural inclination is to try to implement ‘planned change’. Capacity development from this perspective takes on the form of project or program management. Most of the functional systems in development
cooperation have been designed to support the idea and practice of planned change. This involves project design, the selection of TA personnel, the structure of contracts and the methodologies of results-based management and monitoring and evaluation.

72. **Key issue:** Planned change as an approach to capacity development is important. Indeed, in some situations, it may remain the only way to proceed. But in the complex, shifting world of post-conflict states, it risks losing traction as a methodology. In the immediate aftermath of conflict change can be guided and influenced but perhaps not ‘planned’.

**VI. A final point**

73. UNDP is involved in groundbreaking work in developing the capacities for governance in post-conflict countries. Working with national partners, UNDP offices are providing support to the development of core capacities in legitimacy and effectiveness, as well as supporting key governance transitions (for example constitution drafting and elections), and service delivery. The case studies in this paper make evident that innovation and evolution are central components of the development and delivery of capacity development support.

74. The contextual challenges and diversity of post-conflict countries, however, suggest that we may need to think differently about capacity development ‘strategies’ in immediate post-conflict situations. A good deal of the written analysis is based on traditional notions of strategy as a detailed plan including specific objectives and timelines. What may be more useful in immediate post-conflict environments are plans which depend on scenario planning, learning, adaptation and intent rather than targeting. Such forms of planning would build into UNDP’s programs an appreciation of the behavior of complex systems, facilitating the difficult challenge of balancing between the short and the long term. Recognising this non-linearity also requires commitments from donors to effective partnerships and an adaptive learning approach as well as continued engagement (even during setbacks) which can help build trust.

75. As a result, post-conflict capacity development should, perhaps, be accepted as a fundamentally experimental endeavour. One cannot know how unforeseen external events will influence responses. Consequently, UNDP must be able to adapt implementation strategies and desired outcomes in response to feedback information. It must build the capacity of its staff to achieve the desired outcomes by understanding and strengthening its partners. It must evaluate programs based on the actions of these partners, not only on the activities delivered by the UN.
76. Beyond simply stressing the need to better understand context, these adaptations require refinement of assessment methodologies to better capture how governance is affected by conflict, and the implications of such assessments for addressing state fragility. Information management during early recovery operations needs to be improved and data collection needs to be coordinated to ensure that all actors work from a shared information platform for the planning of recovery of resilient, responsive and legitimate governance.

77. This requires recognizing the multiplicity of actors involved in post-conflict capacity development and recognizing how conflict prevention activities can be integrated into post-conflict governance capacity development;

78. Developing UNDP capacity undertaking these tasks requires UNDP to develop its own capacity, to become a more flexible, responsive organization able to manage the short time horizons, and contextual needs required by fragile states.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of capacity Intervention</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Way forward</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIRECT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing with Diaspora</td>
<td>● Skills with particular commitment to the country&lt;br&gt;● Can come with support system in the country&lt;br&gt;● Can give access to other assets in USA, Canada, Ghana.</td>
<td>● Resentment of citizens who stayed during the conflict&lt;br&gt;● Expectation of Diaspora to be given high positions in government&lt;br&gt;● Can also be expensive and demanding of donor funding</td>
<td>● More attention to strategic management of this resource including better placement in country public sector.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conventional technical assistance</td>
<td>● Can be useful in getting short-term tasks done and stabilizing the immediate post-conflict situation.</td>
<td>● Difficult to get long-term commitment in post-conflict environment.&lt;br&gt;● Usually do not have CD skills&lt;br&gt;● Costly in terms of salary and benefits&lt;br&gt;● Tends to focus on gaps and weaknesses at the expense of country strengths and opportunities</td>
<td>● Much more awareness of the limitations of TA that are now familiar to many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program management units (PMUs)</td>
<td>● Can by-pass dysfunctional country systems in the short term.&lt;br&gt;● Can get critical tasks accomplished in period after cessation of conflict&lt;br&gt;● Can better attract professional staff</td>
<td>● Can drain resources out of the public system including skilled staff&lt;br&gt;● Can create reporting and control relationships to the donor and not the country</td>
<td>Much more attention to strategy of transition for shifting functions back to the Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>● Useful when lack of understanding and knowledge is the key constraint. Issue long debated in development cooperation&lt;br&gt;● Training is easily supplied by both country and by UNDP</td>
<td>● Usually necessary but almost never sufficient for an effective process of capacity development.&lt;br&gt;● Training usually delivered by people who lack key skills and knowledge of the subject or the country</td>
<td>● Make use of decades of experience about how to make knowledge transfer effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIRECT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect CD such as conflict mediation, space creation, buffering, mediation</td>
<td>May be essential to create the enabling conditions for formal CD</td>
<td>Governments may not be persuaded of the value of the indirect</td>
<td>More explanation of the potential value of such interventions</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Difficult to trace the impact of such interventions</td>
<td>Can be labor-intensive</td>
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