

Preparing and Mobilizing Civilian Capacity for the Future

Recommendations for Implementing the Guéhenno Report

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Summary

The UN system has been challenged by high vacancy rates and slow rates of deployment of civilian staff to the field. To address this gap, the Secretary-General appointed an independent Senior Advisory Group to undertake a review of the UN's civilian capacity needs. The 2011 Guéhenno Report has formulated four key principles for civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict: Ownership, Partnership, Expertise and Nimbleness.

We support the central recommendation of the Report that international capacity should be the mechanism of last resort. International civilian staff should augment national capacity, not serve as a substitute for it. We also support the recommendation that the UN need not have all types of highly specialized expertise in its own employ. Although approximately 60% of the UN's civilian staff in peace missions are from the South, most rostering and training capacity are in the North. We recommend that Member States take concrete steps to develop national and regional capacities, especially in the South.

We recommend that the training community further intensifies its efforts to harmonize civilian training, and that it develops more rigorous methods of evaluation and certification. We support the recommendation to create a Civilian Partnership Cell that can facilitate and link external and internal UN system capacities. We also support the Report's finding that there is an ongoing need to map existing civilian capacity, identify gaps, and track long-term commitments to fill those gaps.

The Secretary-General's Senior Advisory Group has made bold and innovative recommendations. The question is whether the Member States and the UN system will step up to that challenge.

The Gap

The UN is currently managing 15 peacekeeping operations and 12 special political missions around the globe. They range from peacemaking (as with the office for Somalia), through peacekeeping (as with missions in the DRC, Liberia and Sudan), to peacebuilding (as with the offices in Burundi and Sierra Leone). The UN currently has approximately 23,000 civilian experts deployed in such missions, including 6,500 international staff, of which 2,500 are UN Volunteers.¹ Including national staff, civilians now represent about 20% of the 125,000 military, police and civilian staff deployed in peacekeeping and special political missions worldwide.

With an average vacancy rate of 22%, and with key missions like those in Sudan and Afghanistan affected by vacancy rates twice the average, it is clear that the UN system is finding it difficult to identify, recruit and deploy the required number of civilian experts, with the know-how and at the pace needed, to meet the fast-changing needs of its peace missions.

The current UN human resources system was meant to staff a relatively modest UN Headquarters Secretariat. It was designed to safeguard the interests of the Member States, and to ensure that there would be a fair process in place to assist Member States with filling their quota of UN posts. It was not designed to recruit and deploy experts to field operations according to the time-sensitive needs of these highly dynamic missions. The current UN system is not sufficiently

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all peacekeeping-related statistics are based on the DPKO Fact Sheet, DPI/2429/Rev.10, January 2011, last accessed on 2 March 2011, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/backgroundnote.pdf>, or on correspondence with the DPKO and the PBSO between June 2010 and February 2011.

inter-linked, and it has been unable to tap into the capacities that exist within Member States and regional multilateral institutions.

To address this gap, the UN Secretary-General appointed Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, to head an independent Senior Advisory Group to undertake a review of the UN's civilian capacity needs. The Senior Advisory Group, and a review team hosted in the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), conducted several field visits and regional consultations in 2010, including a meeting with the international training and rostering community in June 2010 in Addis Ababa, in order to study civilian capacity needs in the immediate aftermath of conflict. The Secretary-General released the report of the review on 4 March 2011.²

Recommendations for Closing the Gap

The Guéhenno Report formulates the 'OPEN' formula for civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict: Ownership, Partnership, Expertise and Nimbleness.

The Ownership principle emphasizes the use and support of national capacities. The Report recommends adopting the principle that international capacity is the mechanism of last resort. It calls for a focus on strengthening core government functionality, and reminds the international community to avoid creating incentives for 'brain-drain'. It also calls for UN procurement to be designed in such a way that it impacts positively on the local economy.

The Partnership principle is based on the Report's finding that much of the specialized civilian capacity needed exists outside the UN system, either in the countries emerging out of conflict, or in the private sector, civil society and civil service of Member States. The Report recommends that the UN should not try to have all the specialists it may need in-house. Instead it should develop the mechanisms that will enable it to draw upon the right capacity at the right time.

The Expertise principle recognizes that the UN finds it difficult to deploy the required civilian personnel to time-sensitive missions. The Report makes a number of recommendations, which include adopting a cluster model to improve clarity on roles and division of labour, improving accountability and leadership, and improving the UN's human resources systems, including the introduction of a corporate emergency instrument to empower the Secretary-General to move staff quickly – as was done after the Haiti earthquake

– and take other steps to respond to crisis situations more effectively.

These recommendations also specifically address training and training standards, as well as cooperation between the UN system and the rostering community. The Report notes that the UN needs a 'docking system' to connect to external partners, to be managed by a Civilian Partnership Cell, housed in the Department of Field Support (DFS) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Lastly, the Nimble principle speaks to the need for the UN to be more flexible, so that it can direct capacity to where it is most needed. The Report recommends that heads of mission, who are best placed to assess local needs, should be able to draw on a menu of resources and capacities, not limited to existing UN staff, and need to have the authority to use a percentage of their budgets flexibly, in order to respond to crises and change. Again, the principle is to make use of local capacities and further develop them, rather than assuming that international capacity is needed.

National Capacity

One of the most pressing challenges faced by countries emerging out of conflict is a shortage of the kind of skills needed to manage post-conflict transition. Many people with special skills leave the country during periods of conflict, and it is difficult to attract them back. Many of those who remain work for the UN, aid agencies and NGOs.

We support the central recommendation of the Guéhenno Report that international capacity should be the mechanism of last resort. International civilian staff should augment national capacity, not substitute it. The primary focus of international efforts to assist countries emerging out of conflict should be on strengthening local capacities and empowering local institutions. The aim should be to help societies to develop the resilience necessary to prevent a relapse into conflict, and to sustain their own peace processes.

The recently released World Development Report 2011 makes a further strong argument for developing and empowering the national capacities needed to transform the institutions that deliver citizen confidence through security, justice and jobs.³ Member States and the UN system need to give serious consideration to how these insights can be mainstreamed and operationalized in UN programmes and operations.

2 Guéhenno J.M. et al., *Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict: Independent Report of the Senior Advisory Group*. New York: United Nations, 2011, available on www.civcapreview.org

3 World Bank, 2011, World Development Report. The World Bank Group, Washington D.C.



Increasing Specialization

UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions have evolved at a rapid pace over the last decade, and the civilian capacity needed for these missions has become increasingly specialized. New functional specializations are continuously emerging. Recent examples include competencies like natural resource management, context-specific traditional justice, and local-level land-water-grazing conflict management. Many of these specializations require expertise that may be unique to a country or a region, and is rare on a global scale.

We agree that the UN Secretariat does not need to have all types of highly specialized expertise in its own employ, and that it should rather enter into agreements with other parts of the UN system, as well as capacities outside the UN system that have the required expertise. We also support the recommendation that the UN should build up a professional cadre of staff with generic expertise in managing peace and political missions. There is a need for those that can manage the overall process, and for those that can contribute specialized expertise, but both do not need to be mobilized in the same way.

Source of Civilian Capacity Shifts from North to South

A recent survey showed that approximately half of the experts on the existing UN rosters in the WIDE network are from the South.⁴ And some 60% of all UN civilian staff working in peace missions are now from the Global South. These developments reflect a trend to recruit staff with socio-cultural backgrounds that enable the UN to work more effectively in the diverse cultural contexts where its missions are deployed.⁵ One implication of this shift to the South is that some of the policies originally meant to protect the interests of the South, by restricting the UN's access to external capacities, are now blocking its access to vast emerging capacities in the Global South.

In the recent informal debates on the Report in the General Assembly and the Security Council, many Member States emphasized that the South has the potential to mobilize civilian capacity with appropriate expertise for working in transition societies with similar socio-economic and political contexts.⁶ The g7+ countries, and the African Union, have also called for more flexible and needs-driven civilian capacity arrangements that make more effective use of local

capacities, South–South cooperation and triangular partnerships.⁷

Although the Global South is an increasingly important new source of civilian capacity, there are very few training centres and civilian standby rosters dedicated to developing and mobilizing the civilian capacity of the Global South. This is an obvious gap, and we recommend that the Member States take concrete steps to develop such national or regional capacities. We note that several Member States in the North have expressed an interest in partnering with the South in developing such capacities.⁸

Training, Certification and Rostering Increasing Specialization

The Report suggests that the UN should build on the competencies established in various peacekeeping training centres over the last decade. The training and rostering community is indeed already a vital resource for civilian capacity, and is a show-case for the diversity of global capacity pools today. However, much more needs to be done to develop training and rostering capacity in the Global South. We recommend that the training community further intensify its efforts to harmonize civilian training, and that it should develop more rigorous methods of evaluation and certification.

Member States, the international training and rostering community, and the UN system should work together to find better ways of linking their respective resources and capacities to ensure more efficient and effective utilization of the existing civilian capacities. In this regard, we support the Report's recommendation that the Secretariat create a Civilian Partnership Cell that can facilitate and link external and internal UN system capacities.

We also support the Report's finding that there is an ongoing need to map existing civilian capacity, iden-

4 The Web of Information for Development (WIDE) roster platform is managed by the UN's Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, see <http://ssc.undp.org/>.

5 Cedric de Coning, *Civilian Capacity in United Nations Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Missions*, Policy Brief 4/2010, Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2010.

6 UN General Assembly informal debate on civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict, 11 May 2011 and UN Security Council briefing on civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict, 12 May 2011.

7 g7+ (2010), *The Dili Declaration: A New Vision for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding*, Paris, International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, OECD. The g7+ is an open group of countries and regions experiencing conflict and fragility. It was established in 2008 and includes Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Liberia, Nepal, the Solomon Islands, Sierra Leone, Southern Sudan and Timor-Leste. See also African Union (2010) *Chairman's Summary: Consultation on the Review of Civilian Capacities*, 8 December 2010. Addis Ababa, ACCORD. The African Union hosted a consultation for the review on civilian capacities in December 2010. The summary stressed the need for partnership with host communities, Member States, regional and sub-regional organisations, civil society and the private sector, and the need for stronger mechanisms to leverage African capacities and to support South–South and triangular cooperation.

8 The Norwegian funded Training for Peace in Africa programme is an example of the kind of triangular cooperation that has worked well in this field. See www.trainingforpeace.org.

tify gaps, track long-term commitments to filling those gaps, and to facilitate system-wide coherence to accomplish this, without undue overlap or confusion. We encourage the Secretary-General to establish the Civilian Partnership Cell as soon as possible. We call on Member States, rosters, training centres and all other stakeholders to cooperate with the Secretariat in undertaking the mapping initiative. The information generated in the process will be very useful to those investing in preparing and mobilizing civilian capacity, and will enable them to adjust their activities to address new gaps and opportunities.

Conclusion

The Guéhenno Report represents a significant opportunity for the international community to focus on civilian capacity, and to improve the support it can mobilize to assist countries emerging from conflict. The Security Council and the General Assembly deliberations on the Report to date have encouraged the Secretary-General to present a roadmap for implementing the report to the General Assembly in September. The roadmap should contain specific recommendations on how the Report can best be implemented, and should present those steps that can be taken immediately by the Secretariat, as well as those that need to be presented to Member States for further consideration. In order to meet expectations, the Secretary-General's recommendations will need to contain suggestions that can result in significantly improving the ability of the UN system to mobilize civilian capacity when and where it is needed.

However, Member States do not have to wait for the Secretary-General's roadmap, nor focus all their efforts within the UN. We recommend that member states and civil society seize the momentum and interest generated by the Report to initiate new national and regional efforts to prepare and mobilize civilian capacity, including through South–South cooperation and triangular partnerships.

The Secretary-General's Senior Advisory Group has made bold and innovative recommendations. The question is now whether the Member States and UN system will honour that challenge. Member States and the agencies of the UN system will have to generate enough political will to overcome the traditional inertia that has undermined the implementation of similar Reports in the past. Member States will have to recognize the major changes that have occurred over the last decade and adapt to the new realities and challenges. UN departments, funds, agencies and programmes need to look beyond their own narrow and short-term interests, work together as one UN system, and adopt a demand driven field focus.

The Guéhenno Report provides us with an opportunity to make significant improvements in the way the UN mobilizes civilian capacity. This opportunity is unlikely to be repeated in the next decade. Are we going to deal with some of these key challenges now – or will we let the moment pass, and see the same challenges presented to us again a decade from now?

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