

**WORKSHOP REPORT**

**“REBUILDING POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES:  
LESSONS FROM A DECADE OF GLOBAL EXPERIENCE”**

New York  
19-21<sup>st</sup> September 2005



## 1. Executive Summary

The New York workshop convened a group of national reformers to discuss their experiences of state-building in post-conflict situations. Their intention, and the intention of the workshop organizers, was to distill from a decade of field experiences some key lessons to enrich the ongoing debate on state-building. Bringing a great variety of experience from widely different contexts, the participants made the following key observations:

- Post-conflict state-building exercises must be rooted in their historical, political and social context. States are not built in a vacuum, but emerge from complex interactions and processes. These include legacies from the pre-conflict period, attributes of the conflict period, and new elements like emerging configurations of political power arising in the post-conflict period. In post-conflict contexts, these factors persist beyond peace agreements, and influence state-building dynamics in the transition period.
- The multiple and inter-related transition processes that unfold simultaneously make post-conflict settings unstable and unpredictable. Consolidating peace and rebuilding states depends, therefore, on the good management of these transitions, including the reconfiguration of politics and society, the consolidation of security and order, and the improvement of human welfare. There is considerable pressure on weak institutions to manage and address these issues effectively.
- All states should fulfill a set of core functions such as providing security, infrastructure and justice for their citizens. The failure of a state to perform core functions can create conditions for conflict or undermine post-conflict transition and recovery. Post-conflict governments should establish their legitimacy on a renewed commitment to fulfill the core functions that their context demands.
- The complexity and fragility of post-conflict situations demand particular qualities of the leadership. National vision, and a leadership committed to its principles, is critical in the early stages of transition. As the situation develops, however, management skills become more important. Leaders also need to be ready to function collectively within a progressively stronger institutional framework.
- Post-conflict countries face a skills gap at a time when human capital is in high demand. Transition authorities must target and strengthen the skills needed to catalyze efforts in critical sectors within a national program from the outset. This will ensure adequate national capacity to undertake state-building, and provide a framework for channeling international support to national priorities and needs.

- The international community contributes most productively to post-conflict state-building when it supports activities within a nationally-defined and owned program. The provision of international support outside a national framework for post-conflict reconstruction creates the risk of establishing parallel bureaucratic structures, duplication of efforts, misguided programming, unbalanced economic incentives and short-term approaches.
- Development actors need to re-orient their approach towards genuine partnerships based on improved risk-sharing within the framework of national state-building strategies and frameworks. The degree, scope and timing of their engagement should match actual requirements to engender true national ownership and responsibility.

In conclusion, participants at the workshop on state-building acknowledged the continued relevance and centrality of state reconstruction in effectively addressing the destructive consequences of crisis and conflict. Discussions on the different dimensions of post-conflict transition and recovery not only provided insights on this question, but also raised a number of key issues and challenges for policy-makers and practitioners that will be critical in future efforts to promote the establishment of viable states and societies.

## **2. Introduction**

The World Bank's EXT Vice Presidency Office in Geneva and the Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) unit, in collaboration with UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), organized a workshop on state-building in post-conflict environments from 19-21 September 2005 in New York. The workshop brought together a group of high-level political and civil society reformers from post-conflict countries to share lessons learned and to discuss the possible elements of a common framework for state-building.

Despite over a decade of sustained international engagement with the issue, post-conflict reconstruction remains a significant global development challenge. Country level experiences indicate that success in building strong and accountable state institutions is critical to sustaining the gains from initial post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building.

The joint World Bank/UNDP Workshop provided a platform for senior practitioners to reflect on post-conflict periods and the critical decisions and dynamics that led to state-building achievements and/or failures. The workshop was informed by a paper on state-building developed by Dr. Ashraf Ghani, Clare Lockhart and Michael Carnahan.

The discussion at the workshop centered on six key themes: 1) the relationship between conflict and state-building; 2) the role and impact of transitions on state-building; 3) the core functions of the state; 4) leadership, management, and political bargains in the post-conflict period; 5) the challenges of capacity building; 6) and the role of the international community in state-building.

The report that follows captures the key insights and recommendations provided by participants. Since the workshop was convened under Chatham House rules, reference to individuals or particular country cases are not included.

### **3. Workshop Report**

#### **Section I. Conflict and State-building**

##### ***States, state-building and conflict are all inter-related.***

The workshop was launched with a question: how had conflict affected the path of state-building in the situations experienced by participants around the table? While most participants agreed that major conflict can cause and/or contribute to the collapse and transformation of states, and that it also has an important impact on the dynamics of state reconstruction, all recognized that this relationship was complex. Participants also noted the important impact of external factors and institutional/structural legacies on conflict dynamics (see section on historical legacies below), as well as the role of social identity and political alignments on state-building.

Basing their insights on real-life cases, participants discussed the complexity of this relationship. Conflicts can arise out of a range of inter-related *internal* factors, including racial discrimination, uneven development, resource exploitation, elitist competition over power, and self-determination or from the *external* environment states inhabit. The state, itself, is often involved in causing conflict: whether through suppression of minorities, adoption of economic policies privileging certain population groups, as a ‘competitor’ for resources and power, or through denying genuine representation or rights to population groups. In certain contexts, some participants felt, basic contestation over the nature, identity and control of the state is the focus of the conflict itself.

##### ***Historical legacies are particularly important causes of conflict.***

Analyzing the causes of conflict, some participants felt it important to illustrate the historical context within which state structures were determined. Thus, for example, they discussed the use of organized violence by post-colonial states. They also noted the tendency of states founded on elitist interests to maximize control over political and economic life. Specific historical and structural legacies, they argued, made certain states more ‘conflict-prone’, led to specific conflict trajectories, and were likely to result in state failure and collapse. Participants also noted the important impact of regional relationships and international factors on internal conflict dynamics and their final outcomes.

##### ***The conflict and the nature of its resolution shape the subsequent state-building task.***

Critical for the purposes of this workshop however, was the agreement that political, social, and international forces, *including conflict* (in both its violent and non-violent manifestations) mold the nature of states and statehood. States provide a framework for regulating political and social life through a set of institutions and the relations of political authority that underlie them. Regardless of the causes of tension, large-scale

conflict inevitably shapes subsequent state-building efforts and the resulting contours of reconstituted institutions.

The consequences of conflict are varied, but can involve state failure or state transition (and often transformation) through a negotiated peace. In all cases, however, the destructive impacts of conflict are not clearly distinguishable from its ‘constitutive’ impacts. Clarifying this idea, participants discussed how violence often redistributes power among a set of actors, while its resolution rewrites the rules of the political game. Both factors clearly drive the degree and nature of political participation in transition periods, and ultimately the character of the resulting state: authoritarian, democratic, religious, etc. In this regard, participants cited several examples, including successful liberation movements which saw the need to establish a ‘societal consensus’ on state authority in order to embark on a viable state-building venture, as well as independence struggles that aimed to establish a particular type of state through conflict. Reference was also made to the ‘material’ consequences of conflict (the undermining of institutions, the destruction of economic infrastructure, and displacement and depreciation of human capital), and how they influence post-conflict decision making on state-building.

Participants emphasized that a clear line distinguishing conflict and its consequences cannot be drawn. The dynamics of conflict and political contestation often transform over time, and are not necessarily resolved with a peace agreement. By implication, therefore, state-building must address the underlying patterns of conflict within the affected states if peace and development are to be sustained. In addition, participants noted the conflict-potential inherent in state-building dynamics themselves.

***Conflict prevention is always preferable to conflict resolution.***

There was widespread consensus among participants that the negative and drastic impacts of violent conflict can and should be prevented. Conflict and change are inevitable processes that affect the viability of states and provide explanations for how states change over time. In some cases, violent large-scale conflict can be predicted by identifying and acting upon what are often highly visible and long-standing conflict factors and triggers. In other contexts, however, participants acknowledged that conflict is much harder to predict, particularly where it emerges from a confluence of contingent factors at international, regional and national levels. Where conflict cannot be prevented, participants agreed that international and national actors should bear responsibility for mitigating the impacts of such conflicts, particularly as they affect human welfare.

**Section II. Post-conflict transitions and state-building**

***Transitions are heterogeneous,***

Workshop participants launched their discussion of post-conflict transitions and, in particular, their relevance to state-building, by emphasizing the heterogeneity of transition processes. Transitions may be juridical and be inscribed in peace agreements; or they may be *de facto* progressions from a prior configuration of political and social order or alternatively disorder; or they may embody transitions from collapsed / failed states to viable states (among others). Underlying all conceptions of transition, however,

is the notion of a movement from chaos, insecurity and instability to the establishment of order, regulated interactions and improved human welfare. As such, transitions concern a number of inter-related processes that unfold over a period of time, and should not be conceptualized as a singular event or action. Only in accepting this, and with well-informed strategic management, can actors guide these transitions towards the establishment of effective and stable state institutions.

***but three key common factors are worth noting...***

Participants identified three elements that often characterize and affect the management of transition processes. First: peace accords can provide national and international actors with an agreed roadmap and timeframe for addressing transition issues and requirements. However, some participants noted that they can also obstruct success if either too ambiguous and ambitious or alternatively too narrow in scope. Second, individual transitions do not fall into chronologically-distinct periods, such as emergency, reconstruction and development. Rather these periods may often overlap, interlink and in certain instances conflict with each other. Third, while transition priorities vary greatly according to the particular context, they can usually be thematically clustered in terms of: improving security and human welfare, fostering reconstruction and development, and reconstituting political order and authority.

***...which require sophisticated and active management,***

The management of transition processes entails strategic vision and planning that can simultaneously accommodate short, medium and long-term priorities. For example, security vacuums or break-downs in law and order, public administration, and economic regulation should be addressed in a way that both alleviates problems in the short term, and is consistent with requirements for long-term institutional effectiveness and viability. Participants emphasized that in many cases, effective responses entail difficult trade-offs, posing challenges for political leaders and nascent state institutions. Thus communicating transitional strategies effectively and managing public expectations are important aspects of managing transitions. In this respect, a number of participants stressed the power of the media both to inflame as well as to resolve conflict. If used responsibly, the media can support the re-building of social cohesion in the wake of a transition and even promote accountability in new state institutions, including over issues of public expenditures management.

***...as well as technical expertise.***

Frequently, even well thought-out strategies and transition frameworks can be undermined by a lack of attention to the operational requirements and the implementation challenges that exist in post-conflict environments. Underestimating or neglecting these can delay transitions, or even catalyze new sources of tension and conflict, both of which threaten the overall transition and state-building project. For this reason, managers of transitions require not only strategic vision but also the technical knowledge and capacities required to address the operational challenges.

***The main challenges include managing the political transition...***

In the aftermath of conflict, the reconfiguration of politics and of the political system underpins the consolidation of power and authority. This has implications for the provision of security (and the state's ability to consolidate a monopoly over means of violence), as well as the political management of important social questions linked to identity, needs and representation. Key components of a process of political transition include national dialogue, transitional justice, constitutional reform, and reform of the military and police organizations as well as the broader project of developing a new 'social contract'. Taken together, these can help secure the political environment for viable statehood and state institutions.

***...reintegrating ex-combatants into society...***

The social and demographic dislocations caused by conflict include not only internally displaced and refugee populations, but critically the ex-combatants themselves. Their return, resettlement and reintegration into society have significant political, social and economic implications, not to mention costs. If mismanaged, these 3 R's can constitute significant threats to managing an overall process of political transition and state-building. As a result, the return and reintegration of the displaced, as well as the transition of combatants from military to civilian life (through DDR processes) constitute central priorities and are linked in important ways to other political, social and economic transitions.

***...and rebuilding broader social cohesion.***

Participants also discussed at length the importance of strengthening social cohesion more broadly, seeing it as an important transition process in its own right. Social cohesion, they noted, is an important factor in legitimizing political authority, encourages participation in decision-making at all levels, contributes to the proper establishment or reform of institutions, and can shape the development and implementation of social and economic policies. It is also an important element in managing perceptions and ensuring consistent communication between leaders and citizens in often turbulent transition processes. In some cases, the promotion of social cohesion can be linked to longer-term nation-building processes and can contribute to the emergence of universally shared norms and understandings concerning the rules governing political and social behavior.

**Section III. The Functions of the State**

Participants agreed that the modern state has a core set of functions and responsibilities. These include: providing security, managing public finances, establishing control over key national assets, administering justice, providing infrastructure, and investing in human capital. In the immediate aftermath of a conflict, priority state functions include addressing transitional justice, establishing the rule of law, managing a process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, and addressing the needs of internally displaced persons.

***No commonly accepted hierarchy of functions exists...***

Notwithstanding this basic delineation of modern state functions, most participants acknowledged that it is difficult to determine the minimum functional capacities required for viable statehood. Participants also acknowledged that no clear model for prioritizing and sequencing the development of state functions currently exists, stressing that establishing the right priorities depends largely on the specific context in which the transition is taking place. While certain functions may take priority over others during the transition, a number of key functions had to be performed simultaneously and were interdependent. This fact increases the complexity of the planning process and generates important human and capital resource requirements.

***...although there are common weaknesses.***

The lack of appropriate attention to certain important state functions during transition was identified by participants as a common weakness of transition processes. For example, the failure to build the capacity of the judiciary quickly in order to strengthen the rule of law and to address legal issues raised by returning IDP's and refugees was highlighted as a particularly important lesson learned from past experience.

***Ownership of state functions is critical to success.***

Participants stressed that in post-conflict situations it was critical for reformers to establish national ownership of the development process, primarily by setting priorities and building a consensus around them. They argued that developing legitimate and socially-acceptable strategies for restoring state functions was critical. Others added to this point, noting that that it was equally important to delineate clear limitations to the use of international solutions and models, especially in contexts where governments are truly committed to national reconciliation and development, warning against substituting in such contexts international or non-state capacities for national capacities to expedite state-building processes. They continued by advocating the need for government to speak with one voice in its interactions with external actors and donors; while also stressing the need to manage their own people's expectations about what the state could deliver in the short and medium term.

While ownership was critical, reformers also emphasized the need for transparency and accountability on the part of the state, in particular regarding its management of public finance and macro-economic policy. They argued that the wealth of the state must be accounted for and that checks and balances on public expenditure need to be put in place. They further suggested that civil society should be supported and encouraged to provide oversight.

Several participants focused on new security actors and challenges. The majority of participants argued that the security of the people and their properties should be prioritized along with the security of the state. In discussing the provision of security by non-state actors, while a consensus on whether this was to be promoted or discouraged did not emerge, reformers did concur that even when the state "out-sources security", it is still responsible for overseeing and managing the providers of security. In the context of the post 9-11 world, reformers asserted that while the state must be responsible for

countering terrorism, it must guard against introducing an element of mutual guilt e.g., racial, ethnic or religious profiling.

***The context must define the relationship between the nation and the state.***

A final key theme that was addressed in this part of the workshop was the relationship between state-building and nation-building, which goes to the heart of the issue of how societal consensus for a state-building project can be obtained and maintained through time. Drawing on their country experiences, some reformers pointed to cases where the state had preceded the nation or existed in the absence of a nation, others to where the state and the nation had developed simultaneously, and others still to where the nation had preceded the state.

Participants from Africa were particularly adamant in arguing that for stability to emerge over the long run, it was essential to accompany state-building with nation-building. For these participants nation-building was a concrete task with high priority. However, this view was not shared by all participants. Some argued that states could function effectively and peacefully without the creation of an overarching national vision or unified national identity. Moreover, while inclusive national identities might constitute a basis for citizenship and citizen rights, participants pointed out the potential dangers in the use of national identities by elites to legitimize authoritarian states and of imposing exclusive national identities.

**Section IV. Leadership, Management and Political Bargains in the Post-Conflict Period**

According to the group of policy-makers convened, leaders are central to state-building projects: they bear the responsibility to envision a new future for their people, as well as to manage the day to day process of reconstructing shattered economies and restoring social cohesion. In this context, it is important to acknowledge important political, social and institutional constraints on the exercise of leadership in state-building contexts, as well as the political bargains and hard trade-offs necessary to advance state-building agendas. Effective leadership and management is moreover not a generic and abstract quality, but is dependent on a number of contextual variables, including personal qualities, ideology, and constituency-building.

***Leaders must balance principles with pragmatism.***

All participants stressed that the immediate post-conflict period is very challenging: uncertainty pervades all aspects of life, society is fragmented, the level of trust within groups and between society and the governing elites is low. Furthermore, the list of recovery and reconstruction tasks far exceeds the capacities and resources available.

To be able to deal with this chaotic environment, leaders require several key attributes, notably the ability to: a) consult with key constituents, including civil society; b) demonstrate a large degree of flexibility while being steadfast on decisions reached after consultations; c) identify necessary resources, including those which need to be provided from abroad; d) transcend particularistic interests and take unpopular, at times risky

measures that serve the general public good; and e) convince their population to make choices that may have high short-run costs but long-term benefits. As a famous state-builder once said: “to cross the river you have to go on a crocodile’s back.” It was also stressed that leaders need to be strategic thinkers with the ability to understand the costs and implications of the trade-offs that they make. For instance, a leader must recognize that a decision to allow people to keep their guns for self-protection until the transition is over may have stabilizing effects in the short term, but will be extremely destabilizing in the long run.

A majority of the participants pointed to the need for leaders to have a good understanding of the general global context within which they are operating. Good leaders, they argued, have to understand and assess the (global) macro-political environment in order to initiate a process of change. For example, the end of colonialism and the cold war produced challenges but also gave rise to new opportunities which could be exploited by savvy leaders. In today’s world, in order to ensure continued peace, leaders must be able to recognize and take advantage of similarly shifting power balances among both regional and international actors and ensure that they promote rather than destabilize the state-building process.

***Collective leadership can improve the chances of success.***

Leadership, the policy-makers concurred, is not only about individuals. Collective leadership can create strong coalitions that bring together different constituencies’ interests. Several policy-makers gave examples of how in their countries a leadership team coalesced before the conflict had come to an end to develop a transition strategy and decided on a platform for negotiating peace. One participant noted that the complexities of state-building require that such teams be identified and operate throughout the different levels and parts of the state. This statement was echoed by other discussants.

***Leadership must ensure that legitimacy shifts from individuals to institutions.***

A great deal of attention was devoted to the question of legitimacy. On this issue, participants argued that a leader’s status and role within a war-torn society is precarious and depends on his/her ability to establish and maintain society’s belief in the legitimacy of the post-conflict state, and the state-building process itself. In the immediate aftermath of a conflict, legitimacy is personalized: the legitimacy of the state is conflated with the perceived legitimacy of the leadership. It rests on the (formal or tacit) popular consent and consensus among the political elite. However, if the state-building process is to move from crisis to transition and reconstruction, the leadership must ensure that legitimacy shifts from individuals to institutions.

***...and leaders must stay on top of shifting requirements as the transition develops...***

Throughout the transition the main function of leadership, according to participants, is to mobilize different constituents within the population, including all warring factions. A key element of such mobilization efforts is building confidence and trust. Leaders can assist in forging this trust by initiating processes of reconciliation, committing the state to non-retaliation through issuing amnesties, and integrating ex-combatants from opposing sides into the security forces, the civil service or civilian life.

Most participants also stressed the importance of recognizing the changing needs and functions of leadership during different phases of a transition. Leaders must manage a shift in perspective, orientations, and management style. They must transition from providing revolutionary leadership to managing state-building processes and governance. They may further need to change their constituencies and revisit and readjust their priorities.

One participant captured this changing role by arguing that whereas in the immediate aftermath of a conflict, when opposing parties come to the table to agree on the terms of the peace, good leadership is 80% vision and 20% management skills; when the environment stabilizes and the state takes on the tasks of recovery and reconstruction, the balance must change: good leadership is now 20% vision and 80% robust management skills. Thus good leaders must be able to shift from their role as architects of change to managers of change, though it was also acknowledged that effective war-time leaders don't necessarily make good peace-time leaders.

***...while maintaining buy-in.***

According to participants, an important attribute of good leadership is being able to ensure that society owns the transition. Leaders must be able to set development priorities and forge partnerships with the international community who can assist them in achieving their goals. The group stressed, however, that national leaders must as much as possible maintain autonomy over the decision-making process.

Preserving some degree of continuity in leadership throughout the transition process is critical. This is important both in order to retain a certain degree of institutional capacity (in the form of knowledgeable managers from previous regimes, for instance), as well as to maintain linkages to networks and constituencies (thus consolidating political cohesion and reconciliation). However, participants stressed, in order to ensure that state-building progresses, the leadership must ensure that continuity does not lead to stagnation: they must be open to considering new agendas while state institutions must remain open to new actors. Establishing open, transparent and orderly processes for succession and rotation throughout the leadership and state structures is thus essential. Several participants warned that relying on patronage structures to make government appointments may lead to corruption and would ultimately undermine the legitimacy of the new leadership.

***A human resources strategy can yield important returns.***

To overcome the 'brain drain' and the resulting dearth of qualified professionals symptomatic of many post-conflict situations, the leadership must invest in human resources. This means ensuring that a plan is adopted to educate and train a new cadre of professionals who can assist in managing both the private and public sectors. Several participants noted that in their countries, plans and steps to train new professionals and civil servants were drawn up even before the end of the conflict. Other participants supported this, pointing to problems arising from a failure to have this foresight in their situations.

Participants also described how policy-makers in their countries pursued strategies for attracting technical elites from the diaspora to assist in the early years of the transition. Attracting skilled personnel from abroad would complement the training of professionals within the country. However, it was also noted that such a strategy could lead to certain new political tensions if the newly returned technical elites failed to share the same views and aspirations of the political leadership.

## **Section V. The Challenges of Capacity Building**

### ***Demands for capacity invariably outpace supply – so manage early and well.***

Workshop participants agreed that capacity in a state-building context refers primarily to the ability of national actors to resolve transition problems and deliver results to meet needs. In most post-conflict contexts, capacity demands are likely to be great while available resources vary significantly. In addition, capacity needs not only vary over time but also across transition processes. This places a premium on the *management* of both the development of overall capacity (to ensure that it is oriented and prioritized properly) and of specific capacities to address specific transition objectives.

The speed and volatility of post-conflict transition processes make early planning of human resource, policy and institutional capacity development an important challenge. Experiences from various countries showed that strategies for capacity development need to be defined as early as possible in order to ensure that the right supply of skills for state-building is available during transition, and that the most urgent needs are given the highest priority.

### ***The strategy should identify the priority skills and sectors...***

The capacities required for post-conflict transition include a broad range of up-stream (policy, institutional, technical) but also down-stream (operational, human, infrastructural) skills, competencies and resources. Capacity-building strategies and early planning therefore need to focus on the strengthening of both technical and vocational capabilities as well as managerial, process and policy development skills, combining an emphasis on technical knowledge with strategic thinking. Accountants, engineers, lawyers, and economists are as important as managerial staff, academics, and entrepreneurs.

Strategies also need to consider that human resource requirements differ by sector or reform initiatives; civil service reform, infrastructure improvements, and private sector development for instance all demand very different skills. Strategies also need to take into account needs at different levels in organizations. The scarcity of resources in most post-conflict environments will inevitably lead to trade-offs in how capacity development is prioritized. Trade-offs, participants stressed, must be closely aligned with the overall management of the post-conflict state-building process in order to ensure a close fit between the development and the deployment of capacities to attain state-building and transition objectives.

***International efforts can sometimes undermine capacity...***

Technical assistance for capacity building in specific areas should be planned in such a way as to eventually minimize the need for outside assistance.. Part of this challenge is to ensure that there are incentives in place to keep skills in the country and that qualified people get hired for the right jobs by setting clear rules and regulations for employment. This often requires civil service reform. Competition from international organizations can inhibit the development of a functioning civil service, so aid agencies also need to consider this issue in their own recruitment and management of local staff. Key to simplifying and improving development and technical assistance programs is to build on existing capacities and to involve, as much as possible, local experts. This is not only more efficient, but also more effective in developing local skills and capacities in the long run.

***...but add value where appropriately deployed.***

Within the context of post-conflict transition and state-building, international technical assistance is a vital complement to national efforts. Appropriate technical assistance should aim to transfer to the recipient institutions global best-practice, expertise and knowledge, and should not be constrained to simple analysis and subsequent information dissemination and training alone. Such assistance should serve as an instrument to deepen international engagement with stakeholders and facilitate consensus building and decision-making by mediating in discussions over policy design and implementation. International technical assistance should be conflict sensitive and build on a strong understanding of the sociopolitical context. Above all, it should aim to facilitate transfer of knowledge to national actors and institutions, and progressively empower the latter in decision-making and implementation.

***Smooth transitions may require 'pragmatic' appointment of unskilled former combatants to key positions...***

During conflict, opposing sides may deliberately have targeted each others' capacity to govern, while peace will usually entail a commitment of opposing sides to work together within a new governance framework. In the aftermath of a conflict, those loyal to the winning coalition may have expectations that they will gain government employment. In some instances, this belief plays an important role in encouraging former combatants to demobilize. Leaders for their part, in the interests of consolidating a fragile peace, fostering reconciliation, and establishing inclusive political arrangements, may be tempted to assign important roles to individuals or groups who are not necessarily most qualified for these tasks but who played significant roles in the previous struggle or who retain important constituencies. Participants discussed the need to weigh the potentially negative impact such a policy can have on capacity development against the political benefits that such a strategy may provide. Ultimately, choices and trade-offs need to be made on the basis of a calculation as to their contribution to the sustainability of the state-building and transition processes. Achieving such a balance will entail some degree of prioritization between geographical areas and ethnic groups, between different types of services and sectors of activity, as well as in the training and employment of different groups of people.

***...so civilian leadership skills training should be prioritized.***

Following conflict, countries often have a well-developed political and military cadre in place with strong management skills, but lack people with administrative and technical skills. An immediate priority in many cases is therefore to train former leaders of armed struggle in these broader skills and enable them to effectively assume new roles as civilian leaders and leaders of a national army in peacetime. Such leadership training may also help to facilitate the transition from personality based leadership towards institutional governance, by working directly with the leadership group to strengthen decision-making and reinforce a positive coalition dynamics.

***Returning exiles present both opportunities and risks.***

Groups of exiles, who have acquired technical expertise abroad, may present an important potential resource for transitional governments, but often require that special concerns and needs are met before they fully reintegrate into national structures. While some participants noted that groups of exiles have political views and identities that are supportive of transition and may help to ensure political stability, others argued that this was not always the case, and tensions may develop between newly arrived technical experts on one side and military and political leaders on the other. Technical assistance may help to provide a framework for these groups to come together and supplement their existing skill sets.

***In general, capacity development should be balanced with management of expectations.***

A rapid strengthening of government capacity in the aftermath of conflict may be important as a signal that political stability is returning and that the government's ability to deliver public services is being rehabilitated and strengthened. However, it may not always be possible to meet the high expectations, and frustration may lead to renewed tensions. Capacity building strategies therefore need to be realistic, and they need to include mechanisms for communicating plans and results effectively to stakeholders.

## **Section VI. The Role of the International Community**

***A strong message to the international community:***

Despite very different national experiences, participants at the workshop conveyed a common message to the international community in the context of state-building. According to participants, a fundamental re-adjustment is required in the definition, scope and delivery of support by international actors, and in the terms of their engagement and relationship with national actors. This reconstituted relationship might be characterized as “a partnership of equals”. The complexity and diversity of state-building processes pose different short, medium and long-term challenges and require adaptable and dynamic management and provision of support. The role and scope of international assistance, together with the capacity of international actors to deliver, needs to be assessed and evaluated in relation to those changing state-building needs. Adaptability needs to be coupled with universal improvements in the consistency, coordination, and coherence of international support, as well as with increased international accountability.

***While the international community plays many roles...***

The international community has played many roles in many different post-conflict countries - and with varying degrees of success. In some instances, the international community has assumed direct executive and administrative control of states, both with negative and positive results. In others, the international community has assumed the role of broker, exercising a degree of executive decision-making power in contexts when there is no consensus among the political elite on how to move forward. In still other situations, the international community has assumed the role of “adviser and referee” (for instances in peace negotiations, and in monitoring implementation of peace agreements). In many contexts, however, the role of international actors is to ‘catalyze’ the development and implementation of transition strategies, usually through supporting capacity development or direct implementation of state-building measures. However, whatever the international community’s role, according to one participant, international actors should, as a general rule, seek to help develop a nationally driven strategy and not seek to dominate it.

***...any role it plays should respect the sovereign’s terms...***

As much as possible, participants felt that the terms of international involvement must be defined by the national leadership of that country. Their experience in this regard was mixed, however, and they had different views on the degree of influence that international actors should exert. While some participants maintained that the international community had actually strengthened the state in certain countries by imposing laws despite resistance from sectarian policy-makers still supporting war-time objectives, or successfully helped mediate peace processes and support implementation efforts, others claimed that international actors had seriously undermined state-building efforts by ignoring national government priorities. At the same time, participants generally agreed that established modalities of international assistance should be revisited and reviewed at different stages in the state-building process, so as to reflect available resources and to be able to respond to short, medium, and long-term needs.

***...which means it must also be able to adapt to locally-driven changes in circumstances.***

Several country cases seemed to show that the international community had failed to recognize the necessity to adapt its role to circumstances at different stages in the transition and, as a consequence, was incapable of responding to actual needs once engaged in the country. Therefore, a decision to assign roles and decision-making powers to international actors must be considered carefully in the context of longer term implications for the development of nationally led decision-making processes. One participant supported that view, saying that international actors had been too concerned about the decisions themselves, rather than establishing the processes through which decisions were made. This is significant because such processes are critical to ensuring that national actors do not develop an unhealthy dependence on international support.

***International involvement must be based on a sensitive appreciation of context...***

Virtually all participants stressed that it was imperative for international actors to understand the specific dynamics of state-building in a given country, and to integrate the broader social and political context in program design. This presupposes their familiarity with the dynamics and impacts of conflict, the variety of national actors involved in state-building, the existing institutional capacities, and the requirements during the various phases in the transition. In order to support effective state-building, international support should balance local knowledge and experience with international ‘best practice.’ Some participants also noted the need for international support to be ‘conflict sensitive.’ International development actors should, for example, assess what the potential social impact of economic policy reforms might be on local communities, especially given the fragile conditions found in many post-conflict societies.

***...and must strive towards relationships based on genuine partnership, dialogue and trust,***

Cooperative and constructive relationships between national actors and the international community are vital for effective state-building. In this respect, communication between foreign donors and the national leadership must reflect the vocabulary and conduct of a genuine partnership in order to be effective. Breaking with long-established “patron-client” views of government-donor relations, participants stressed, is one of the most challenging tasks in recasting the role of the international community in national state-building exercises.

A majority of participants felt that behavioral problems were often a major cause for concern in the relations between international actors and national leaders, with some pointing out that the former tended to be too prescriptive in their approach and impose too many unrealistic conditions based on a one-size-fits-all model. “Inflexibility,” one participant commented, “inhibits true dialogue and, with all the grand strategizing, moves out of sight the small but critical issues on the ground.” Another asserted that while in his country technical support from the World Bank and other international organizations was extremely useful, their reluctance to provide resources and finances before all tasks had been defined in detail was part of the problem. In some instances, he added, even when tasks had been defined in detail, no money was disbursed, which did not bode well for developing a relationship based on mutual trust.

An innovative and potentially more constructive approach to the “relationship challenge” could mean, as one participant suggested, redefining cooperation between national governments and the international community in terms of a genuine investment partnership. It would be based on shared risks and shared accountabilities, and it would follow a commonly agreed agenda. Such an ownership-driven arrangement would allow each side to hold equity, exposing them to equally high levels of risk and reward. Recasting relationships in these terms might also lead to revising policies on conditionality, including giving greater responsibility in defining conditions to the national governments, as well as new ways by which to manage and resolve disputes between national and international actors.

***while also integrating within comprehensive national state-building strategies.***

Although international actors are involved in many sectors of post-conflict or transition activity in a given country, too often they lack a holistic and comprehensive support strategy that defines the scope of their engagement and that establishes aid coordination systems. This, participants felt, undermines both the effectiveness of international support for state-building, and the efforts of national actors to manage complex and fragile processes.

Instead of being driven by external or donor agendas, participants argued, the scope of international support should be defined on the basis of national priorities and national frameworks for peace building and reconstruction. Moreover, the phasing and sequencing of this support should reflect the requirements and priorities inherent in specific transition processes, as well as inter-linkages and required trade-offs between processes. The development of comprehensive, integrated international support strategies is the only viable way to address the multiple and overlapping dimensions and processes of state-building. This requires making institutional procedures more flexible and streamlined, putting in place a single system that different donors can use, reducing the number of project implementation units, and adapting tools and instruments used by development actors to the conditions prevalent in post-conflict transition.

***To be effective, international actors should get in earlier and stay longer,***

In terms of the chronological scope of international engagement in post-conflict state-building, recent experiences reveal that international actors often intervene too late and depart too early. One participant noted that transitions could not be successful without commitments by the UN and other key international actors that were longer than currently the norm. Specifically, he argued that international commitment in the order of 10 to 20 years is essential to build viable and sustainable institutions. He also argued that international actors need to take into account the shifting needs of post-conflict situations by responding with more flexible intervention strategies (e.g. greater direct administration, technical support, training, etc.).

The early engagement of the international community was also seen as critical. Pre-planning, capacity development, and joint needs-assessments (that leverage the goodwill and knowledge won by country teams thanks to their long-term presence) are all seen as areas that would benefit from a more rapid deployment post-conflict. Just as important to success, participants noted, is the international community's decision not to withdraw immediately following achievement of (usually self-defined) short-term goals. Withdrawals at this point fail to recognize the longer-term nature and requirements of transition processes, thus undermining overall national efforts.

Time horizons also matter from an efficiency point of view. Lengthy administrative and planning procedures too often obstruct timely responses to crisis. A lack of long-term commitment precludes predictability in the international community's support to state-building. Providing effective support and delivering results are key operational challenges, but they require a long-term commitment from international donors and

development actors if they are to have the type of impact needed for a process of successful state-building and long-term development.

*...but should also coordinate their efforts and mobilize national resources and capacities.*

Post-conflict state-building gives rise to set of processes that are heavily dependent on a wide range of human, institutional and material capacities which, depending on the context, exist at varying levels. The international community has a critical role to play in supporting and catalyzing the development of such capacities, but has often been obstructed due to both a lack of understanding of capacity requirements, high transaction costs involved in providing capacity development support, and the lack of coordinated support delivery. As a result, national actors are usually required to develop highly-specialized forms of capacity (e.g. decentralized local administration and governance institutions) from their own resources, while at the same time wasting precious resources coordinating ill-devised, competing and duplicating offers of international assistance.

Coordination was identified by participants as one of the most critical elements in post-conflict transition, not only in terms of operations and logistics, but also in terms of the messages that different international actors convey. A former government official said at the workshop that countries were often ill-informed about the expertise and different mandates that international actors have and are too often faced with overly complex, sometimes conflicting and contradictory messages. Another participant noted that “too many donors, too many conditions, and too many actors on the ground necessitate much greater coordination.”

In order to support national actors in meeting state-building capacity requirements, the international community should first focus on assisting our national partners to identify their capacity gaps, and in particular those that the international community has the capacity to fill. One of the major concerns voiced by participants was the risk of creating parallel administrative structures, which stand in competition with national bureaucracies and create complex and inefficient modes of delivery that fail to develop national capacity. The provision of assistance must therefore focus primarily on mobilizing national resources, including on preventing or reversing ‘brain drains.’ Some participants added that international actors must do a better job in encouraging involvement from the private sector and diaspora communities, strengthening existing capacities, and leaving the substitution by the international community of capacities as a measure of last resort. Finally, international actors should give greater attention to the basic ‘building-blocks’ of training and skill development as much as possible defined by the country, so that national capacity is created for long-term and sustainable development beyond the transition from conflict to peace.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In an era of increasing globalization, the experiences of societies emerging from crisis and conflict highlights the importance of statehood and state institutions as frameworks for promoting human security, welfare and the rule of law. Participants at the workshop

on state-building acknowledged this continued relevance, and underscored the centrality of state reconstruction in effectively addressing the destructive consequences of crisis and conflict. Discussions on the different dimensions of post-conflict transition and recovery not only provided insights on this question, but also raised a number of key issues and challenges for policy-makers, practitioners and the international development community that will be critical in future efforts to promote the establishment of viable states and societies. These issues included:

- Determining both how to prevent potential conflicts before they occur and how to prevent their recurrence (i.e. by helping shore up fragile states).
- Building an understanding of how conflict (both in violent and non-violent forms) affects state institutions and their political, economic, and social foundations. This would contribute to the mapping of institutional weaknesses and corresponding capacity requirements at the start of the state-building process, while clarifying how conflict legacies affect post-conflict state-building processes.
- Examining how the inter-linkages and chronological phasing of the various transition processes (political, security, economic and social) can be better articulated in post-conflict reconstruction planning, and how national management capacity can be strengthened for this purpose.
- Further clarifying how state functions are defined and prioritized in a transition period and how these are linked to broader questions of state structure and identity, systems of governance and decision-making processes.
- Improving our understanding of how the effectiveness of state functions (and likewise the capacity of relevant state institutions in this regard) can be measured, and how 'state viability' can be defined within the framework of post-conflict reconstruction.
- Considering how peace processes and agreements (and associated international support for peace building) can better reflect national transitional processes and priorities, and contribute to comprehensive long-term national frameworks for state-building.
- Further elucidating how national leadership can best transition between the varying requirements of 'peacemaking' and 'state-building' and the role of international support in this regard.
- Deepening our knowledge of how power and authority can progressively transition from individual leadership to institutionalized leadership in a manner that promotes inclusive politics and favors the viability of long-term state-building.
- Determining the most effective way to map capacity requirements for post-conflict state-building and then prioritizing capacity development during the transition process. Also, determining where capacity *gaps* can and should be filled temporarily by the international community.
- Discussing how international efforts can better support, and not undermine, national capacity development (this at both strategic and technical levels), including the

implications of this for UN peace support operations (both their role and the functions they undertake).

- Improving our understanding of how international support can be made more context-sensitive and adaptable to dynamic and changing environments, while at the same time being provided on the basis of a single framework for coordination and implementation of the various actors involved.
- Determining how an appropriate balance can be struck between supporting national ownership through catalytic support and the need for more robust international engagement in contexts of weak or fragmented governance and institutional capacity (e.g. failed states).