

## The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform 2010 Annual Forum

### **Innovating to build lasting peace: Is Interim Stabilisation a promising approach to Effective Peacebuilding?**

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Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Auditorium Sergio Vieira di Mello

#### **Introduction**

Conflicts do not end with the signing of a peace agreement. Political, military and societal actors in post-war context need to undergo a process of gradual adjustment to be able to embark on long-term national reconciliation and reconstruction. Yet, in many post-conflict countries, national actors are encouraged to undertake ambitious peacebuilding and state-building programmes aiming at transforming radically domestic institutions and political practices in a very short timeframe, and in a period where most of the pre-conditions necessary to the successful implementations of reforms are not ripe.

The discrepancy between international strategies and local dynamics is a critical challenge to peace processes. Traditional security promotion activities, such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), or Security Sector Reform (SSR), constitute possibly the area where this mismatch is most salient. Although these interventions lie at the heart of the politics of peace, as they aim to recalibrate power relations and monopoly over the means of coercion, they all too often continue to be designed as purely technical activities without much attention being paid to local contextual factors and political dynamics.

However, security promotion activities, like any peacebuilding and early recovery programmes, are likely to do more harm than good if their design does not include space for continued dialogue over contending political agendas and pressing demands, for confidence-building among affected communities, and for the preparation of combatants to a new political situation where power is to be sought and acquired through other means than military ones.

In recent years, peace mediators and practitioners have crafted a range of innovative and experimental activities to address the tensions and dilemmas that the implementation of ambitious security promotion programmes do not fail to generate on the ground. These innovations, known as interim stabilisation measures or “second generation” DDR are designed to create space for dialogue and buy time for an environment conducive to social and economic reintegration to emerge. They accompany conventional security promotion and form part of a broader transitional integration process that seeks to balance adequate security with necessary development. Community-owned, and explicitly derived from local cultural norms, these activities seek to create and sustain “holding patterns” to prepare

institutions, communities and combatants for long-term peacebuilding and reintegration efforts.

On 4 November 2010, the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform brought together international experts and practitioners from the humanitarian, development, security and peacebuilding communities to discuss the practical and conceptual implications of interim stabilisation measures. This paper is a summary of the experiences and opinions shared on the day.



**First Panel** from left to right: H.E. Ms Lena SUNDH, Ambassador at Large for Conflict Management, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden, Prof. Keith KRAUSE, Chair of the Panel and Director, Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding and Ms Ayaka SUZUKI, Chief, DDR section, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations

### **What's in a name? Conceptual Underpinnings and Limitations of Interim Stabilisation**

Peace agreements do not guarantee peace. They simply provide the opportunity for peace to develop and take root in society. In understanding the concept of Interim Stabilisation, international actors must ask how they can support this peace in its early stages. Theoretically, Interim Stabilisation activities enable peace to survive the first, most challenging years.

The concept of Interim Stabilisation can be defined as a combination of measures in the early recovery phase which, provide immediate support to create security for the civilian population as a foundation for development to take place. Placing greater emphasis on the individual context of each intervention, Interim Stabilisation provides a good argument for donors to make funding adaptable according to the specific requirements of each context. It is often an over emphasis on the processes of DDR and SSR rather than on social, political and economic conditions that has hindered the effectiveness of previous projects.

Creating economic, social and political stability, establishing accountable governance structures and security forces takes time. Furthermore, when implementing such programmes, the regional as well as national context must be taken into account. When such conditions are not ripe, DDR and SSR initiatives are ineffective and can even place the peace accord in jeopardy. One could compare Interim Stabilisation with stabilising a patient in intensive care before conducting an operation to cure the disease. In post-conflict settings, Interim Stabilisation helps create the necessary societal and environmental preconditions so that effective DDR, SSR and long term economic recovery plans can be implemented.

It is clear that a 'one size fits all' approach fails to acknowledge the complexities of each individual case. Yet, recent programs have failed to design projects based on contextual analyses. For example, in Afghanistan, an emphasis was placed on rural over urban livelihoods programs despite the settlement of the majority of former combatants in cities. Interim Stabilisation offers an opportunity to be creative with formal DDR and SSR programmes while having a sharper focus on the needs and protection of civilians.



**Second Panel** from left to right: Ms Betty BIGOMBE, Senior Fellow, U.S. Institute of Peace, Uganda, former Chief mediator between the LRA and the Government of Uganda, Lt General Lazarus SUMBEIYWO (Rtd.), Chief Executive of the Moi Africa Institute, former IGAD Special Envoy to the Sudan peace process, Dr Caty CLEMENT, Chair of the Panel and Head of the Conflict and Peacebuilding Programme, GCSP and Mr William DENG DENG, Chairperson, Southern Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SSDDRC), Sudan

Holding patterns not only help bridge the gap between demobilisation, reinsertion and reintegration, but also provide a space for nurturing new and unconventional ideas on peacekeeping forces, environmental and disaster management bodies, social enterprise and micro-financing etc. Un-armed security forces such as those promoted by International Peace Brigades, for example, engage the local population in the process, cost less to the donor and don't require a Security Council resolution to operate.

However, this is also a highly political process, which requires greater understanding among the international community. Factors such as national ownership and inclusion of women play a crucial part in strengthening the peace. Donors must place greater value on longer term initiatives which, in reality may only bear fruit years after they have begun. One must also be aware of the far reaching implications of such interventions and take responsibility by carefully planning both transitional and exit strategies before embarking on new programmes.

While the concept of Interim Stabilisation merits discussion and debate one must be aware of the danger of trying to solve problems by creating new concepts instead of addressing them on the ground. Ultimately this is not a theoretical debate, but an opportunity to revise current ways of working and adapting programmes to the specific context of the conflict. It is therefore imperative that Interim Stabilisation interventions are conducted within a wider peacebuilding framework which aims at creating far reaching, sustainable peace.



**H.E. Mr Jean-François R. ZINSOU**, Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations in New York, Vice-Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, delivering the keynote speech during lunch

## Best Practices and Lessons Learned

### **Case Study: The Labora Farm Experiment**

*Account given by Betty Begombe*

The Labora Farm experiment in Uganda is often cited as a positive example of Interim Stabilisation and holding patterns. The innovative DDR project which was initiated during the second round of peace talks provided around 200 participants with 100 acres of government land for agriculture. It aimed to teach former combatants a different way of making a livelihood and attaining food other than using force. Former rebel commanders became leaders and participants would provide labour while food, transport, seeds and tools would be supplied. The project provided an incentive to those still fighting, as those who came out of hiding would benefit from an amnesty.

However, the project began to encounter a number of problems quite quickly. The leaders found it difficult to adapt to their new role. Betty Begombe observed 'While in the bush they were worshiped. They could decide your fate, whether you would die or live, whether you could eat that day or you should be beaten up...When they came out they were treated as equals.' There was no external supervision provided while the participants were out in the fields allowing the leaders to use women, children and young men as slaves. They took care of their own families and did not share the proceeds from the crops. Instead, they began hiring more labour from the local villages. This created much resentment among the local community. Locals felt perpetrators of past violence were being rewarded while IDPs continued to wait in camps for assistance from the World Food Programme.

While the initial project held great potential, it was ultimately unsuccessful due to a lack of supportive initiatives. In the absence of marketing and sales strategies, participants could not sell enough goods to make a sustainable livelihood. It was perceived by those still in the bush as a form of forced labour and as a result, did not represent an incentive for putting down weapons. It also failed to acknowledge the reality of relations between local civilians and former combatants, overlooking the need for reconciliation.

Employment is an essential conduit for peace and sustainability. A minister from Sierra Leone said 'Peace is about a job, which allows for enough to eat and a place to sleep'. Without opportunities for employment, there can be no peace. The International Labour Organisation is currently implementing a three pronged approach to such programs which involve livelihoods stabilisation, local economic recovery, long term employment and economic growth. These represent an integrated approach with effective linkages between short and long term employment initiatives.

At the local level it is often preferable to maximise the impact of existing programs rather than diluting resources and straining capacity. Instead of conducting blanket vocational or training programs, relevant jobs must be created. Comprehensive assessments must be

carried out to establish where the greatest need is and what resources are already available. It is also important to consider the absorptive capacity of receptor communities before attempting reintegration of former combatants or returning IDPs. Is there a well-established private sector to draw upon or will services and job opportunities be further diluted? The private sector provides opportunities for entrepreneurial development of initial pilot projects within the stabilisation phase.

Interim Stabilisation represents a short transitional intervention to deliver the ex-combatant 'package'. The way in which these packages are provided must be carefully coordinated in order to avoid giving false hope to communities or excluding people based on their role in the conflict rather than on need. Women are often excluded from DDR as they don't meet the description of 'former combatants' despite playing important roles in both the conflict and the potential for peace. The Brassage process in Juba, Sudan involved the militia, women associated with armed forces, child soldiers and veterans creating a more inclusive further reaching programme.



***A question from an attendee***

The international community should be encouraged to accept that people outside the narrow categorisation of former combatants may require similar services. Ultimately, to exclude them is to the detriment of the wider community. Furthermore, many DDR projects are implemented even though the context is not ripe for such interventions. One example is that of the Cote d'Ivoire, where DDR was implemented at the request of donors despite the fact that people were not ready or willing to disarm. Before combatants become willing to

engage in disarmament and reintegration, they must trust in the peace process and believe there is a peace to protect.

Meaningful engagement of stakeholders which enhances commitment and support is essential for the stability of the programme. Donors, host countries, communities, beneficiaries and relevant third party organisations should be engaged in sharing pertinent information and included in programme design, prioritisation of projects and the monitoring and evaluation of programmes. Interagency coordination is crucial in ensuring complimentary processes and preventing duplication of services while others go overlooked.

To this end, IOM relies on in-country information and coordinates with UNHCR, UNDP and ILO during the Interim Stabilisation phase. Aiming to provide a holistic approach of both short and long term initiatives IOM's work is guided by the principles of national ownership, capacity building at the central level, donor coordination and the promotion of justice and reconciliation.

While a 'one size fits all' approach is clearly both ineffective and undesirable, it is helpful to look at some examples of good practices and reasons why programs fail. Before engaging in stabilisation efforts we must have an exit strategy in place bearing in mind the ultimate goal of stabilisation, which is to ensure national capacity building to prevent the need for further intervention.



**Fourth Panel** from left to right: Mr Scott WEBER, Chair of the Panel and Director-General, Interpeace and Dr David HARLAND, Director for the Review of Civilian Capacities in the Peacebuilding Support Office

## **Conclusion: Interim Stabilisation through a peacebuilding lens.**

A peace agreement does not necessarily mark a definitive change and move away from armed violence. Peacebuilding is the process of strengthening the capacities of a society to manage its own conflicts in non-violent ways or without use of force. At the end of a peacebuilding program one must ask, is the society more capable of managing conflict and preventing an escalation of violence? There is little understanding of the long term contribution of our efforts in creating sustainable peace. Is peace demonstrated by a functioning democracy, a growing economy, strong institutions or an inclusive peace agreement? The World Bank's World Development Report maintains that institutions and economic growth are the best indicators of a peaceful society. Yet, it is difficult to say whether these are symptoms or causes of peace.

Larger institutions including the UN propagate concepts such as peacebuilding, peace-making and early recovery. However, these concepts largely represent the same set of activities: DDR; SSR; achieving mass public employment; micro finance and cash transfers; mass education; strengthening core government functionalities and civil service; budget support; and engagement with private sector. In truth, the debate and development of theoretical concepts is more for our own benefit than for those living in conflict and post-conflict settings. The concept of Interim Stabilisation demonstrates a deeper understanding among the international community of the need for non-prescriptive, measured intervention strategies. However, greater attention must be given to exploring effectiveness rather than creating new concepts.

We have seen many examples of how imposing western ideas of governance, security, and constitutionality on conflict affected regions have hindered the pursuit of sustainable peace. As demonstrated in the cases above, a failure to conduct extensive contextual analyses and to adapt programmes accordingly can have a detrimental effect on local communities and the wider peace. The nature of the peace agreement and how the conflict itself came to an end should play a significant role in determining what Interim Stabilisation measures are implemented. Perceptions of exclusivity and preferential treatment, or that further conflict is an inevitability must be dispelled through careful trust building and confidence measures. The role of women and youth must also be considered if an inclusive, sustainable peace is to be achieved.

Yet, we have heard such precautionary recommendations before. Whether Interim Stabilisation represents a new and improved mode of programme implementation remains to be seen. While the rethinking and rebranding of concepts can often be a frustrating and seemingly futile process, the opportunity to reassess how we work on ground must not be overlooked. Interim Stabilisation encourages policy makers and practitioners to move away from prescriptive, 'one-size fits all' approaches and design intervention strategies based on the specific contextual needs of each situation. By taking time to enhance the social, political and economic conditions, there is a far greater chance of achieving sustainable peace.