
Helping the United Nations Integrate Peacebuilding, Humanitarian, and Development Work in Post-Conflict Countries

December, 2009 CBI Reports - Winter 2009 Within the UN system, creating and maintaining a shared strategic vision of the UN's role in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a major challenge. In August, CBI Managing Director [David Fairman](#) helped plan and [facilitate](#) a senior management workshop to begin developing that shared vision and strategy.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a fragile central government seeks to consolidate peace and begin recovery, while still facing serious armed conflict in several eastern provinces. For the government and people of the DRC, the United Nations system is a critical partner as well as an independent actor in peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and recovery. Its personnel and offices include peacekeepers, high-ranking diplomats, political officers, emergency relief and civilian protection agencies, human rights monitors and advocates, as well as development organizations for health, education, children, gender, governance and livelihoods. This extensive group of leaders and organizations form an extraordinarily complex structure of strategies, programs, initiatives, and quick-response activities.

Within the UN system, creating and maintaining a shared strategic vision of the UN's role in the DRC is a major challenge. In August, CBI Managing Director [David Fairman](#) helped plan and [facilitate](#) a senior management workshop to begin developing that shared vision and strategy.

The workshop was the first ever to bring together all of the most senior UN officials in the DRC, representing the entire UN system, for a strategic planning exercise. It was also CBI's latest engagement in our growing portfolio of capacity building and facilitation [support for UN](#) strategic planning around the world.

The UN's Global Integration Challenges: The DRC workshop was part of the UN's ongoing effort to more effectively integrate its peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts with its humanitarian, recovery and development commitments.

To resolve civil wars and other forms of intra-state conflict, the UN Security Council can authorize UN political or peacekeeping “missions.” These missions currently operate in 18 countries and are led by Special Representatives of the Secretary General (SRSG), with time-limited mandates given by the Security Council. They focus primarily on conflict resolution and consolidation of peace.

Whenever a mission enters a country, it needs to integrate its efforts with the UN's pre-existing humanitarian, recovery and development agencies. In most cases, 10-20 agencies will already be present in the country on a long-term basis, by agreement with the national government. The SRSG oversees all UN activities in the country, but does not have authority to direct the work of the humanitarian and development agencies. This separation of function and authority drives the need for collaborative strategic planning.

When the UN's political and peacekeeping efforts are well coordinated with its humanitarian and development work, the UN can help transitional governments implement their goals. They allow governments to restore health, education, law-enforcement and legal systems more quickly, transparently and effectively; to accelerate the reintegration of former combatants and refugees; and to address conflict hot spots by combining peacekeeping and diplomacy with targeted emergency relief and quick-recovery efforts. When the efforts are not well coordinated, the UN risks its ability to be an effective partner in the peacebuilding and recovery process. It also risks its credibility and legitimacy with key national and international actors and with the citizens whose protection and welfare is the UN's ultimate concern.

CBI's capacity building work with UN strategic planners: For the past two years, CBI has been increasingly involved in the UN effort to improve coordination among its actors in countries with UN missions. This effort is known within the UN system as “integrated mission planning.” Our engagement with the UN on this effort is a natural evolution of CBI's previous work in facilitating UN strategic planning on development issues in more than 20 countries, including several countries with UN missions (Sudan, East Timor, Lebanon, Kosovo, and Afghanistan).

Building on its positive experience with CBI in these countries, the UN Development Operations

Coordination Office (DOCO) asked CBI to work jointly with DOCO and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to support integrated mission planning. DOCO, DPKO and CBI have been collaborating to design and deliver global and regional workshops for country-based strategic planners from UN agencies and missions, as well as counterparts from UN Headquarters.

We have currently delivered three workshops with global audiences, and have regional workshops planned for Africa and the Middle East. Drawing directly from [field experience](#), we have developed highly interactive cases that bring out critical issues in the planning process; worked with UN resource management to dovetail presentations on policy and procedure with real case examples; and facilitated the workshops to maximize peer-to-peer learning while reinforcing key policy messages.

The workshops have also provided planners in the field with a means of giving feedback to Headquarters. The feedback ranged from topics such as how to provide advice to the UN Security Council on humanitarian and development issues to the difficulties of creating shared email and intranet systems to link peacekeeping missions and development agencies.

CBI's facilitation of national workshops: The DRC workshop was our first effort to work at the national level with the full range of UN actors involved in an integrated mission. The workshop presented a number of challenges and opportunities unique to the DRC, along with many challenges that virtually all integrated missions face. Most notable in the DRC is the mandate for the UN to focus its peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts primarily in the eastern part of the country while simultaneously working with the government and armed forces across the entire country to strengthen capacity, transparency and accountability. Violent conflict remains a serious problem in the eastern part of the country and there are difficult questions about the role of the DRC government and armed forces in the conflict.

CBI's role in facilitating the workshop was appreciated both by national participants and by headquarters counterparts. There may be future opportunities for CBI to facilitate strategic planning at the national level in other countries as the UN continues to support integrated mission planning.

Reflections and Lessons on External Capacity Building and Facilitation of Integrated

Mission Planning: The context for UN integrated missions is among the most complex CBI has ever encountered. The UN stakeholders represent an enormously diverse set of mandates, capacities and perspectives. Tensions can be deeply embedded in situations where the UN mission must function independently with regard to a transitional government while some UN agencies are simultaneously deeply engaged with that government. The UN's development agencies must work in partnership with the country's government while the UN's humanitarian agencies must maintain a near-complete separation from government in order to assert the primacy of human rights and protection of civilians in a neutral "humanitarian space."

Given this diversity and these challenges, it is not surprising that there are sometimes divergent views within the UN system about the intentions and capacities of national actors, the most appropriate strategies or approaches for engaging those actors, and the roles and responsibilities of different UN actors for carrying out those strategies.

For capacity building, the strongest demand from strategic planners has not been for technical skills in analysis or programming. It has been for skills in [process design](#), facilitation, coordination, negotiation and [consensus building](#). CBI has been able to combine our expertise in those skills with our direct exposure to the field situations in which the strategic planners are working. We have been both peers and resource people, and both roles have been very valuable in developing and delivering capacity building workshops. However, our direct exposure is a very small fraction of the insight that a group of strategic planners can bring jointly to their conversation. In design and facilitation, we have been committed to making sure that the planners can learn from each other as well as from us.

For facilitators of a national UN strategic planning exercise, the challenge is threefold: to ensure clarity about the goals of the exercise itself; clarity about the most important questions that the UN needs to address in the exercise in order to create a shared vision and strategy; and clarity about roles, responsibilities and decision rules within the exercise. We have seen that an external facilitator can play an integral role by helping to name difficult issues and facilitating the conversation needed to address them without bringing an agenda of its own to the dialogue.

Along with facilitating the substantive conversation, it has been very important to promote clarity about roles and responsibilities as well as decision rules for the exercise. Not all UN system decisions can be made by consensus, and some of the most important decisions will be made at the most senior levels of the UN Headquarters. An external facilitator can minimize the risk of frustrated expectations and maximize the likelihood that points of agreement in a consultative dialogue will be taken forward for consideration at decision making levels.

Our involvement with UN integrated mission planning has reinforced our sense that even on very sensitive issues with very high stakes, external capacity building on process design, facilitation and negotiation skills, as well as external facilitation of challenging conversations, can help advance important organizational and international goals. Above all, we have been grateful for the opportunity to play a modest role in the UN's ongoing and often extraordinary efforts to save lives, make peace and rebuild countries in the aftermath of war.