

**PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION  
WORKING GROUP ON LESSONS LEARNED**

**Learning from a Regional DDR Approach in the Great Lakes Region of Africa**

**24 November 2008**

**Concept Note**

**Introduction**

1. On 8 June 2007, the Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) held a session on regional approaches to peacebuilding which examined conflict dynamics in Africa and Central America and identified innovative approaches to addressing regional peacebuilding challenges. The session confirmed the importance of regional approaches as a valuable strategy in dealing with cross-border problems or interlocking conflicts within a region. Member states underscored the need to strengthen regional mechanisms to address sources of conflict that cannot be resolved exclusively at the country level. They recommended that the PBC give further consideration to regional approaches to peacebuilding in the countries on the PBC's agenda. The issue was also raised in the country-specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission, specifically in relation to the role of regional and sub-regional mechanisms, including the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

2. In reality, the international community's experience with regional approaches to peacebuilding is relatively limited in nature. Although the promise of regional approaches to peacebuilding is increasingly recognized, research also confirms their severe limitations. On the positive side, regional peacebuilding approaches can, among other things:

- serve as important confidence building measures;
- contribute to consensus building, cooperation and enhanced dialogue among neighbouring countries;
- promote pooling of resources to address common problems;
- contain the spill-in or spill-out effects of conflicts;
- encourage harmonization of responses and policies across countries;
- persuade donors to support long-term, multi-country programming;
- provide a forum for information-sharing and cross-country learning.<sup>1</sup>

3. Yet, regional approaches also have serious limitations which, among others, include:

- the lack of alignment between national and regional agendas and priorities;
- absence of organizational structures and processes to operationalize regional programming;

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<sup>1</sup> These insights are drawn from a research project titled "Lessons Learned from Regional Approaches to Peacebuilding" which was undertaken for PBSO by a team of researchers at SciencesPo, L'Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris in 2008. The research team consisted of Ariel Higgins-Steele, Elianna Konialis, Midori Ota, Sumedh Rao and Ivy Wong, under the supervision of Hitomi Kubo.

- lack of appropriate tools and expertise;
- the inherent complexity of regional programming and the fair distribution of benefits;
- scarcity of regional funding mechanisms;
- lack of political will or commitment on the part of relevant actors;
- weak national and regional capacities, including within regional institutions.

4. Thus, despite the recognized benefits of regional approaches to peacebuilding, in practice, examples of sustained, long-term and effective regional peacebuilding programs and initiatives are relatively few in number. In this light, the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) in the Great Lakes Region which has been ongoing since 2002 merits special attention, both in terms of its contributions to DDR as a central peacebuilding challenge in post-conflict countries and in its ambitious regional scope.

### **Rationale and Objectives of the Meeting**

5. This session of the Working Group on Lessons Learned will examine the **Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP)** in the Great Lakes Region with a view to understanding its concrete contributions to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in individual participating countries as well as its broader impacts and ramifications from a regional peacebuilding perspective. The main objectives of the session are:

- to identify the unique features of MDRP in approaching DDR from a multi-country, regional perspective and
- to extract appropriate lessons from this experience for countries and sub-regions that confront similar problems in DDR or related peacebuilding challenges.

6. MDRP was established in 2002 by over forty governments for the purposes of creating a basket of resource support for DDR in the Great Lakes region. The largest program of its kind in the world, MDRP has targeted 450,000 ex-combatants in seven countries: Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, DRC, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. MDRP is financed by the World Bank and 11 donors and involves some 30 partner organizations, including several UN agencies. It is financed through two separate but complementary sources: World Bank/IDA funds for national programs, and a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) which supports a range of other programs, including multi-country cross-border initiatives. Alongside the national programs administered by each country, the MDRP is managed through a Secretariat based at the World Bank, with additional staff in Burundi, DRC and Rwanda. While the MDRP program will continue its activities, the Trust Fund will come to an end and the Secretariat is anticipated to be closed in June 2009.

7. Through its multi-faceted programs, MDRP has sought to address an issue that is essential for breaking the cycle of conflict in the greater Great Lakes region and contributing to longer term social, economic and political recovery. Although its national programs are country-specific, MDRP has been instrumental in providing standard approaches to DDR, coordinating partner initiatives, providing financial and technical assistance and facilitating cross-country learning and experience. Thus, it offers useful

lessons in terms of the benefits as well as the limitations of multi-country programming at the regional level.

8. The level and type of cooperation between the World Bank/MDRP and UN presences (usually a peacekeeping operation and/or UNDP) varied greatly from one country to another. In the DRC, where one of the largest DDR programmes has been taking place, the peacekeeping mission, MONUC, played a relatively small operational role in the area of disarmament while it played a key political role. In Burundi, during the most intensive phase of the DDR programme following the signing of the ceasefire agreement, ONUB played a key role in supporting the DDR programme. Since the MDRP aims at supporting Governments' capacity to conduct DDR, the role of a UN peacekeeping operation or UNDP is determined by each specific situation.

### **Key Issues for Consideration**

- What is the added value of a regional approach to DDR under MDRP and what are its main elements?
- What are the main accomplishments of MDRP in the participating countries? In what ways did the MDRP approach impact the design and application of DDR programming in individual countries? What are its regional ramifications?
- What lessons can be learned from the MDRP program for regional approaches to DDR in other regions, including West Africa, the Horn, etc.? What are its strengths as well as any shortcomings? Can it be replicated elsewhere?
- What are the main links between mechanisms such as the MDRP and other parts of a peacebuilding process, (e.g. the political process) at a regional and national level? What can be done to ensure that they are mutually supportive?
- How can the role of regional organizations such as the AU, SADC, ECOWAS, IGAAD be strengthened to pursue regional peacebuilding approaches, including through the use of the MDTF? What lessons learned from the MDRP experience can be applied to other types of regional peacebuilding activities?
- Should there be regional projects funded from the Peacebuilding Fund, and if so, who should be the main implementing partner?

### **Format and Structure**

9. This open meeting will be held on Monday, 24 November 2008, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. in Conference Room 4. It will be in the form of a panel discussion.

### **Chair:**

10. H.E. Ms. Carmen Hernandez Gallardo, Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations.

## **Panelists**

- Bernard Harborne, Lead Conflict Adviser and Acting Program Manager, MDRP, World Bank
- Mbaye Faye, Chief, SSR/SA, BINUB (Burundi)
- Representative of the Burundi national demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration programme (**TBC**)
- Ould Sidi Zahibi, Chief, DDR, ONUCI (Côte d'Ivoire)
- DPKO/OROLSI
- UNDP/BCPR

## **Outcome**

11. Following the meeting, the Secretariat will prepare a Chair's Summary highlighting key lessons that could guide further work in the context of (multi-country and) regional approaches) to DDR in post-conflict countries. The document will be distributed to PBC Chair and the Chairs of the various country-specific configurations.

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