

STRATEGIC PLANNING
RECOMMENDATIONS PAPER



INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, development planners have become more aware of the requirement to acknowledge and incorporate peacebuilding (PB) and statebuilding (SB) into strategic planning in fragile contexts. Significant incremental progress has been made in tuning the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) model to better address PB and SB challenges. New instruments have also been developed and, in some cases, mechanisms agreed to ensure mutual accountability, such as Peacebuilding Frameworks and donor-government compacts. Although this has led to a proliferation of planning instruments, it has also produced useful experience in incorporating conflict and fragility issues and aligning donor support strategies. The time is ripe to reflect on this experience, and where possible, adapt and simplify planning processes to consolidate successes, identify redundancies and address gaps.

A critical weakness in fragile and conflict affected contexts is that current planning processes largely assume the first critical PB and SB goals of building consensus around a political settlement and establishing the legitimate authority of the state have been met. This is rarely the case. Furthermore, evidence shows that these tacit assumptions have led to a disconnect between development plans and political realities. Consequently, over-ambitious and overly-comprehensive developmental agendas reliant upon technocratic and often generic understandings of what constitutes a peaceful settlement and a robust developmental state are produced. Redirecting planning away from a menu of generic best practices towards a process which designs responsive policies that understand and work for the formation of lasting political settlements and legitimate state authority is the key challenge.

National Planning Fundamentals

National planning is not restricted to developmental states. In general, planning systems vary significantly with the nature of the domestic political system. In less plural states, planning is carried out based on technocratic, centralized and non-consensual problem analyses. The Peoples Republic of China, for example, has a tradition of five year plans which contain expansive strategies focused on transformative change around political priorities including conflict, security and SB. Conversely, most liberal democratic states base their multi-year strategic planning on the policy agendas of successive administrations through the implementation of legislation passed by representative bodies. The electoral mandate provides legitimacy, and as such, plans are closely linked to political cycles. In these societies, detailed planning tends not to be strategic but operational and sectoral, and also linked to shorter-term political cycles. Where external funding is sought in these societies, from multilaterals (such as the European Union), a hybrid system has emerged. Legitimacy for these plans is sought from the political commitments made by states through international treaties. Multi-year planning tends to avoid intensely sovereign issues such as national security and focus on less contentious economic and human development priorities (e.g. the Irish National Development Strategy).

National planning for development assistance has evolved in a similar fashion, i.e. with a tacit understanding that some sovereign boundaries may not be crossed, reducing potential for a robust focus on sensitive issues such as mutual accountability¹, prioritisation of resource allocations, and

¹ There are differences in what is meant by 'mutual accountability'. This paper finds DFID's definition (two or more parties have shared development goals, in which each has legitimate claims the other is responsible for fulfilling and where each may be required to explain how they have discharged their responsibilities, and be sanctioned if they fail to deliver) as most useful for the purposes of planning for PB/SB

intervention in political dialogue and national security. This is a key challenge to adapting current planning processes to PB and SB agendas.

PLANNING PROCESSES: EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

Scope of problem analysis

Analysis is based principally on the background paper on strategic planning, peacebuilding and statebuilding prepared for the International Dialogue (including case studies), a literature review, notes from meetings of the working group and consultations with donor and country members. A theme analysis was carried out on the problems identified in the source materials and three core issues were identified:

1. Lack of recognition of the importance of a *national vision* of peace and the state leading to *unresolved tensions* between statebuilding, peacebuilding and development.
2. Inconsistent *donor alignment* behind national planning processes;
3. Lack of realistic risk assessment, prioritisation and sequencing;

The theme analysis corresponds to the problem areas identified by the working group in December 2010. The recommendations stem from a requirement to address these four issues.

Problem 1: Lack of recognition of the importance of a national vision of peace and state

Problem Outline

Current national planning processes do not adequately acknowledge the political and contested nature of fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS) or the requirement to develop a national vision of peace and the state, from which efforts to build stability and legitimacy can flow. Until recently, conflict prevention and management, security, political and governance processes have been perceived as relatively marginal or as cross-cutting issues during planning. Despite recent recognition of their importance in planning processes, the resources allocated to security, political and governance processes remain dwarfed by resource allocations for economic and social development.

Currently planning documents acknowledge peacebuilding and statebuilding as those processes which aim to construct reciprocal relationships between a state that delivers services for its people and social and political groups who constructively engage with their state (Wyeth and Sisk, 2009). There is little acknowledgement of less constructive relationships, where the enhancement of state institutions or services may impact negatively upon efforts to construct a political settlement (particularly in contested areas such as sub-national governance or security)². Similarly mechanisms for public

² For example, in DRC, both the Program du Government and the Document de la Stratégie de Croissance et de Réduction de la Pauvreté link PB to state strengthening but fail to acknowledge that the strengthening of core institutions such as the army or police may adjust the regional balance of power and incite conflict where political settlement between the state, militia groups and Rwanda remains illusive.

financial management and the delivery of the economic and social development may undermine efforts to build peace and legitimise the state if not carefully thought out.

Key Lessons

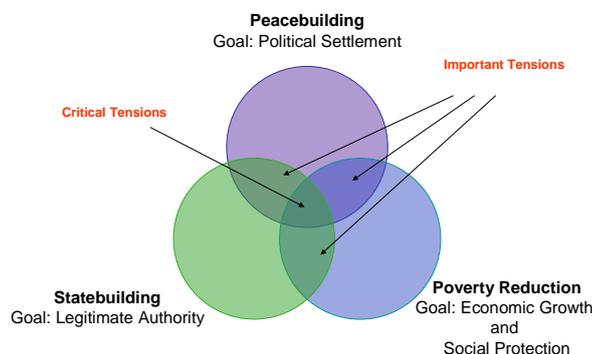
- Planning should flow from a peace process rather than supersede it. Political dialogue requires time and space to build legitimacy before comprehensive donor-driven decision-making exercises and development plans are embarked upon.
- Rather than implementing a given set of best practice institutions, a planning process that reflects practices embedded in the historical legacies, current characteristics and future needs of the national context, even where this challenges prevailing international practice, will probably be preferable.
- If institutions engaged in political dialogue are not the same as institutions engaged in planning, the two processes are likely to fail to mesh properly and critical emerging risks to stability and opportunities for strengthening the state could be overlooked.
- In a negotiated settlement, if government is broadly representative of the parties to conflict statebuilding processes are more likely to support peacebuilding. If not, political dialogue is urgently required. Peacebuilding should be linked to commitments arrived at through political dialogue and the SB agenda subservient to the commitments made during this process.
- While explicit cooperation between relevant actors will reduce unintended duplication of competences and an engagement vacuum (Werther-Pietsch & Roithner, 2011), there needs to be careful consideration of the inherent tensions between the two processes at the outset of planning design.
- Development decision-making needs to be informed by the priorities for enhancing political settlement and building legitimate authority. Peace and stability is required for development to take hold. In cases where there are tensions between statebuilding and development, trade offs should be made in favour of stability.
- If the quality of political dialogue is high, peacebuilding and statebuilding objectives are more likely to be clearly articulated, coherent with planning and less likely to be conflicting. If the quality of political dialogue is poor, a disconnect between PB and SB is likely to emerge.

Problem 2: Inconsistent donor alignment behind national planning processes

Problem Outline

Mutually accountable oversight of planning processes which create incentives for donor alignment and action on more sensitive or contentious issues is currently lacking. Organisations with political mandates (both donor states and broader alliances) which could create pressure for the inclusion of political dialogue where required, and ensure both donor and host government commitments are met, are not involved enough in planning processes.

Figure 1. Mapping tensions between peacebuilding, statebuilding and development objectives



Key Lessons

- Treaty-type compacts, drawn up in support of political dialogue, peace processes and agreements, are more likely to engage and hold leaders to account. This is likely to help leaders articulate a national vision for PB and SB priorities (including national security issues) in FCAS contexts.
- The stronger and more legalistic the underpinnings of Peacebuilding Frameworks and Partnership Compacts, the better they can address sovereign and overtly political issues.
- Compacts and PBFs are not a panacea. As yet, they too have proven difficult to translate into concrete actions and still do not include adequate measures to hold donors accountable for delivery of timely and well aligned assistance. Measures to further strengthen mutual accountability³ need to focus on improving the relative importance of these partnerships vis-à-vis more technocratic and volutaristic planning processes such as PCNAs and PRSPs.
- The absence of diplomatic input into planning processes can promote more technocratic and theoretical models of statebuilding. If those models are allowed to take precedence over the political dialogue, planning will likely be disconnected from political realities.

³ Whether stronger mutually accountable “treaties” are feasible is moot – they probably have more potential in FCAS where donor-state relationships are historically close. Yet they are almost certainly required if development planning is to more effectively cross the traditionally sovereign Rubicon of national security. Nevertheless, given both the alignment weaknesses of PCNAs and PRSPs, formalising a partnership agreement as the development assistance “treaty” underpinning aid in fragile and conflict affected states is critical not only for better accountability, but also to ensure that planning remains engaged with evolving political and security realities.

Problem 3: Lack of realistic risk assessment, prioritization and sequencing

Problem Outline

Evidence in FCAS suggests that the best of plans soon founder if not delivered quickly and the most pressing demand on government is to fulfil promises made during political dialogue and peace processes to prove its credibility. The case studies showed that planning has tended to be overly ambitious and comprehensive. This is understandable - as the NDP for Timor L'este noted '(the country) needs virtually everything', yet more emphasis should be given to the art of the planning the possible.

Figure 2. Planning hierarchy: deciding what is possible



Key Lessons

- An overarching vision for peace and state is better complemented by a realistic and prioritised plan, grounded in a thorough and realistic risk assessment. Placing risk assessment up front enables the real risks of failure of chosen strategies to be evaluated against the importance of the issue for building peace and legitimacy.
- Strategic planning should also be sufficiently flexible to change course as new issues emerge. The two stage process used in the Sudanese JAM and in the NDP in Timor L'este should be adapted to ensure that low-risk, quick impact projects are the focus when political settlement and state legitimacy are low – possibly less transformative but with more tangible short-term results.
- There should be ongoing analysis to ensure that the political settlement is sufficiently robust to warrant a long-term planning process such as the PRSP. The issue of debt relief should be linked to progress on political settlement and state legitimacy rather than the completion of PRSPs. Measures of public financial capacity should be assessed independent of PRSPs.
- A key weakness is that centralized long-term planning processes prioritize on the basis of importance of issues for transformative development rather than the shorter-term impact on political settlement or state legitimacy. The risks of failure to deliver substantive change in realistic timescales (and especially the risks to peace and legitimacy) are poorly assessed,

and opportunities for less risky, context-driven interventions in the most pressing areas are not adequately explored.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS: STRATEGIC PLANNING

Theme: Ground Planning in a National Vision

Recommendation 1: Ensure the primacy of political dialogue.

Progress in development is dependent upon political stability, and peacebuilding and statebuilding are prerequisites. Political process should drive prioritization and must, at minimum, ensure the timely delivery of commitments made during political dialogue. Planning must flow from dialogue at all levels:

- Political dialogue on *what needs to be done* with political actors,
- Strategy dialogue on *how, when and who it will do it* with stakeholders, and
- Operational dialogue to ensure the *efficiency and effectiveness of delivery* with practitioners.

Proposed Actions

1. *Engage political leadership* in planning by ensuring that national plans are the product of policy dialogue and political process. At minimum ensure that plans flow from commitments made during peace processes or the manifestos of representative and legitimate governments.
2. *Policy dialogue* between development partners and states needs to take place with political leadership not only bureaucratic partners.
3. *Implementation strategy* needs to be developed through stakeholder dialogue not by transplanting practices that have worked well in other contexts.
4. *Operational planning* should engage all institutions likely to be required to deliver outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Design a planning process that speaks to the national context

Political systems and societal norms and constraints vary from nation to nation. In fragile contexts delivery of political settlement and state legitimacy will be dependent upon a timely response which goes with the grain. Planning processes must be designed upon a clear mutual understanding of:

- Short-term political constraints to achieving settlement and legitimacy. In particular the obligations and commitments of leaderships to supporters and the political processes in place to negotiate these hurdles;

- The medium-term organizational constraints. An assessment of which organizations are most representative, legitimate and capable of planning and delivering change, including those already engaged in planning, and those of all parties to political settlement with a current role in delivery - government, opposition groups and non state actors, and;
- Longer-term institutional constraints. An evaluation of strategies required to engage with deep seated social and political institutions to ensure success, even if the ultimate aim of planning is to transform these institutions. In particular politics that are grounded in patron-client relationships, social hierarchies and religious and cultural ethics.

Proposed Actions

1. Use dialogue (perhaps supported by a rapid political economy analysis) to understand the constraints and incentives for effective planning and delivery at the political, organizational and institutional levels;
2. Avoid the creation of new planning or delivery organizations and ensure that planning is conducted by those organizations which already have capacity and a stake in delivery – this may involve devolved planning (see recommendation 9);
3. Design a process that has traction with societal norms and ethics rather than international best practice.
4. Link planning to political cycles. Seek ratification for plans through national political processes. Either formal processes if these are in place – parliaments or peace processes – or informal, through nationally legitimate methods for broad-based political dialogue.

Recommendation 3: Reduce tensions between statebuilding, peacebuilding and development objectives.

Strategic planning needs to be informed by the priorities for enhancing political settlement and building legitimate authority. It should be clearly understood by planners that peace and stability is required for development to take hold. Trade offs should be made in favour of peace and stability where there are tensions between peacebuilding, statebuilding and development. Tensions must be understood in advance of planning, and frame decisions made on national policy, implementation strategy, operational prioritization and sequencing.

Proposed Actions

1. Map consensus. Plan to the levels of consensus achieved over specific policies and implementation strategies. Where consensus is low, further dialogue or alternative strategies will be required before planning is possible.
2. Evaluate alternative strategies. Tensions are often focused around implementation strategy rather than broad policy goals. Seek less permanent or transformative alternatives if they offer short-term gain while dialogue is ongoing.

Theme: Improve Mutual Accountability

Recommendation 4: Ground development assistance in a partnership framework agreement or treaty.

The more legally robust the partnership agreement, the better suited it will be to addressing sensitive and traditionally sovereign issues such as the allocation and disbursement of development assistance by development partners and the design of national security and sub-national governance strategy by recipient states. Peacebuilding frameworks or development compacts need to be expanded to underpin a national vision for peacebuilding, statebuilding and development.

Proposed Actions

1. G7+ to design new mutual accountability model, building upon the success of peacebuilding frameworks and development compacts;
2. Consider developing internationally binding legal arrangements to underpin mutual accountability agreements (incorporating development assistance into international law);
3. Partnership frameworks should be informed and negotiated by the same national leaderships and organizations engaged in political dialogue (both in development partner countries and fragile and conflict affected states);
4. Equity in these mutual accountability frameworks needs to reflect actual financial and political commitment of development partners;
5. Attempt to make the agreement as specific and legally binding as possible.

Recommendation 5: Create a joint management board to monitor and adjust plan

Situations are fast moving in fragile and conflict affected environments, at minimum annual reviews of partnership agreements and plans are required to ensure they continue to reflect reality.

Proposed Actions

1. Design a joint management process into the mutual accountability framework;
2. A steering group comprised of representatives of national political leaders and high-commitment development partners should manage the board and hold powers of veto during negotiations;
3. Ensure that agreements include independent outcome monitoring arrangements, and are forfeit if these are not implemented;
4. Ensure that outcome monitoring is light touch and regular – at least annual – and that goals are renegotiated in the light of these reviews;
5. A stronger legal framework will allow funding to be committed in short-term annual tranches through national budgets and on the basis of estimates rather than detailed plans. These funding commitments should be sufficiently flexible to enable changes in strategy to be rapidly resourced once agreed by the management board.

Recommendation 6: Carefully select and strengthen lead international organisations

Organisations engaged in leading planning processes, particularly the UN system, IMF and World Bank Group; need to have sufficient institutional muscle to address sensitive issues in fragile contexts.

Proposed Actions

1. Consideration needs to be given to incorporating the upholding of mutual partnership frameworks into the constitutional underpinnings of these institutions.
2. Where proven, regional economic communities in which fragile or conflict affected states have a legal commitment, such the African Union, ECOWAS or EU, could play a stronger role in leading international support for national planning.

Recommendation 7: Adjust ODA criteria

Adjust ODA criteria to make them more appropriate to funding of peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions.

Proposed Actions

1. OECD G7+ to review constraints set by ODA criteria, particularly the funding of security sector institutions.
2. Consider adjusting criteria to enable uniformed security organisations to be funded where the intervention contributes to realising peacebuilding commitments made through political dialogue.

Theme: Improve Risk Assessment, Prioritization and Sequencing

Recommendation 8: Consolidate the current plethora of planning instruments into two clearly defined and linked processes.

- A short-term peacebuilding-statebuilding focussed National Policy Framework; The National Policy Framework should be embarked upon as soon as possible and incorporate prioritised and sequenced short-term peacebuilding, statebuilding and development goals. It should only include actions endorsed during political dialogue or through national political processes, and be supported by a government-development partner mutual accountability compact; and
- A medium- term development focussed Strategy Paper, developed once the political settlement is sufficiently mature to enable transformative reforms with long term planning windows to take hold.

Proposed Actions

1. States should design their National Policy Framework (NPF) to incorporate and supersede existing peacebuilding frameworks, development compacts and post-conflict needs assessments.

2. The instrument should prioritize actions that lead to short term progress in peacebuilding and statebuilding and deliver commitments made during political dialogue.
3. The NPF should be developed in advance of, and provide the context for, a mutual accountability agreement with donor partners.
4. An ongoing assessment of the potential for longer term planning needs to be made. Where consensus is achievable longer-term and more transformative strategies can be proposed by the NPF. Proposals for longer term planning windows need to emerge from political dialogue.
5. Development Partners should decouple decisions on funding from the PRSP process. Pressing decisions on grant and loan funding and decisions on debt-relief in HIPC's should be taken through conditionality grounded in commitment to political settlement and improved state legitimacy in addition to pro-poor reforms and improved transparency in public financial management.

Recommendation 9: Prioritize goals and delivery strategies.

Prioritization should be informed by the risks of failing to deliver i) commitments made during political dialogue (current and potential), ii) other issues identified through shared diagnostic analysis which could undermine the short-term maintenance of peace and legitimacy (e.g. issues such as employment identified through strategic conflict analyses). An overarching vision for peace and the state is better complemented by a realistic and prioritized plan, grounded in a thorough risk assessment. Placing risk assessment up front enables the real potential for the failure of chosen strategies to be evaluated against the importance of the issue for building peace and legitimacy.

Proposed Actions

1. Prioritize those policy goals that must be met to ensure peace and stability in the short-term, including commitments made during dialogue;
2. Design and sequence delivery strategies on the basis of a risk assessment of the likelihood of success within the required timescale.
3. While overall goals and strategic direction needs to be agreed as part of a National Policy Framework, operational planning should be devolved to selected delivery agencies, to be developed through stakeholder dialogue within agreed timescales.
4. Alternative lower-risk, reversible and shorter-term *emergency* intervention strategies need to be developed where consensus is low and tensions remain high. These could be less transformative but will enable plans to deliver impact in critical areas. These emergency measures should be sequenced before longer term reforms.
5. Only move toward goals and strategies that require substantial adjustment to political or social institutions and norms when dialogue and analysis suggests that consensus is achievable

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