Peacebuilding in Africa.
Examining Local and Regional capacities for securing peace, reconstruction and development

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Paper presented at
Athena Africana
The Centre for African Studies
University of Leiden
13th October 2005
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I: Introduction

Today, there is a current international momentum to assist countries that are emerging from conflict during their critical phase of the peacebuilding. Great attention is being paid to countries that have recently signed peace agreements including Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, essentially encouraging them to stay the course. This keenness has been demonstrated even in situations of evident threats to such peace. For instance, following the death of John Garang, 30 days into his being sworn in as Sudan’s 1st Vice president, as provided for in a power sharing peace agreement, signed in 2005, there was enormous show of support and encouragement to both the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Sudan government in Khartoum to stay the course of peace. Close neighbours, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) which provided the framework within which the peace was brokered, to South Africa which chairs the reconstruction committee of Sudan, the African Union, as well as the international community led by the Members of the IGAD Partners Forum, all urged Sudan to stay the course of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Similarly in Somalia, great effort has gone into encouraging the various parties to find a common ground as a means of consolidating the capacity of the Transitional Federal Government to operate in that troubled country. However, the opportunity to consolidate peace, and move a country from conflict to long-term development will be lost if intervention is not translated into sustainable local capacity upon which Africa’s regeneration can stand.

Although there is international consensus that local capacity is a main pillar for the consolidation of peace and for guaranteeing sustainable development, experiences from most post-conflict societies indicate a marked disparity between this consensus and the reality. Central to this disparity are three issues. First, the methodologies employed purportedly to build local capacity do not answer to the fundamentals of the core objectives in any reconstruction endeavour, namely long-term sustainability. Indeed, the manner in which capacity is defined and pursued in the context of the reconstruction agenda is neither clear nor is there coherence and common understanding of it among the different actors involved. I argue in this paper that despite statements indicating political commitments (as envisaged in various international forums and declarations,
including the G8 summits), this distinction is particularly stark between Africa and its international development partners, as will be demonstrated later. For this reason key actors are far from generating imaginative frameworks for building local capacity. Second, is the nature of partnerships and relationships emerging between local and international actors. In other words, to what extent do they lead to technology transfer, human resource development and general enhancement of the response capacity in countries emerging from conflict? Third, is the evaluative issue who is being empowered by the reconstruction agenda and for what purpose is this being pursued? In answering these questions, my presentation projects the way forward for African organisations, operating at the community, regional and continental levels, that seek to contribute to post conflict reconstruction efforts on the continent.

Defining Capacity Building

Focus is on capacity building broadly defined to include institutional reforms and restructuring – ability to influence the environment, in this case in terms of enhancing abilities to respond positively to future shocks. Part of the enhancement of this capability focuses on institutional building – to ensure that there are mechanisms and structures that assist and within which communities can respond to any calamities, in this case the threat of resurgence to conflict.

II. Background

The focus on peace, rehabilitation and development, captured in the vision of the African Union as Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) has become increasingly apparent as Africa makes steady progress in assuming greater responsibility for itself in general, and in peace and security in particular. Since the transition from the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU), the continent has progressively put in place mechanisms and institutions at the continental and regional levels to prevent violent conflict and attend to and resolve violent conflicts. Consequently, no conflict has been left unattended, and the sum total of these efforts has been a steady decline in the number of active conflicts and the conclusion of a series of
peace agreements – the most recent being in Somalia which led to the creation of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) which brought an end to Africa’s longest and one of its most brutal civil wars in 2005.

The readiness to deal with conflicts in Africa comes from a number of factors. First is the growing and strengthening consensus within Africa particularly but also shared by actors beyond the continent that the regeneration and development of Africa is dependant on the creation of a secure environment and hence calls to deal with what came to viewed as perennial instability – that manifested itself in entrenched conflict throughout the 1990s. It also comes out of the realisation, expressed by African leadership, that the development of Africa will depend on its internal capability to address its own problems in terms of defining their scope and solutions – giving meaning to the clique “African solutions to African problems.” Furthermore, as more countries emerge from conflicts the urgency to focus on consolidating peace and prevent the relapse into violent conflict takes centre stage – hence the focus specifically on PCRD. Predictions within the AU is that PCRD will become the core business of the continent in the two to three decades.

At the continental level, therefore, PCRD is conceived as a tool that will help achieve the broad objective of sustainable development. Accordingly, it is hoped that it will consolidate peace and prevent relapse of post war countries into violence through addressing the root causes of conflicts, dealing with ravages of war, putting an affected country on the path of sustainable development, providing opportunities for the affected country to modernise; breaking the cycle of violence; ensuring the equity and fair distribution of power and wealth; and privileging gender consideration in all aspects of reconstruction. The above will be attained though the implementation of activities that have been broadly groups into six constitutive elements, namely, security, humanitarian action, socio-economic development, governance and transitional administration, human rights, justice and reconciliation, and gender. In line with these developments, NEPAD, the AU programme for recovery has identified post conflict as a priority area for action,
in view of which the UN system has established a sub-cluster of humanitarian and development agencies in support to the development of integrated post-conflict programmes in Africa.

To deal with what it views as the next strategic challenge - sustainable peace and security – expected to spur development in turn – the AU draws on a robust mandate to lead on PCRD in Africa. The Protocol Establishing the Peace and Security Council of the AU makes specific reference to the role of the PSC in peacebuilding, consolidation of peace and post conflict reconstruction, including elaborating specific activities that need to be undertaken (Articles 3, 6, 13 and 14). This mandate was followed by a decision of the AU Executive, meeting in Sirte, Libya in July 2005 (Decision EX.CL/191(VII), which mandated the development of an AU policy on post conflict reconstruction based on the relevant provisions of the PSC Protocol and experienced gained thus far. These experiences comprised of the AU engagement in a number of peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts. Since the Cairo Declaration of 1999, the OAU took a wide range of measures and initiatives aimed at mediating and resolving conflicts. In some cases, it spearheaded mediation efforts as in the Congo (1993), Comoros (since 1997), Ethiopia/Eritrea (since 1998) and in Burundi (since 1993) to mention a few. In other cases, the OAU supported regional and sub-regional initiatives as in Liberia and Sierra Leone (ECOWAS) and Somalia and Sudan (IGAD). Although not all OAU efforts yielded the expected results, they demonstrated the African determination to carry out its peace and security agenda.

This mandate is further strengthened by the recent efforts by the AU, in particular the decision, in Maputo in July 2003, to establish a Ministerial Committee for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development in Sudan, chaired by South Africa, and the commitment by the AU to turn the continent around.

At the international level, the environment for developing an effective collective security response is marked by threats and opportunities. As Africa moves towards building an elaborate peace and security architecture, donor countries are increasingly appreciating
the importance of building conflict prevention measures into their development assistance programmes. For instance, the United Kingdom has been operating the Conflict Prevention Assessment, which focuses on the impact of their development programmes on peace/conflict. Even the traditional military response to security threats is being retooled and developed in relation to the broader human security response.

Further the pursuit of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) has given a renewed focus to global poverty reduction efforts. For Africa this pursuit takes on a more significant meaning. In the Millenium Declaration, the world committed itself to meeting the special needs of Africa and to support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development (Para 27). In view of this, the meeting resolved to give full support to the political and institutional structures of emerging democracies in Africa; encourage and sustain regional and subregional mechanisms for preventing conflict and promoting political stability, to ensure a reliable flow of resources for peacekeeping operations on the continent and to take special measures to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa, including debt cancellation, improved market access, enhanced Official Development Assistance, and increased flows of Foreign Direct Investments as well as transfers of technology, and to help Africa build its capacity to tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS pandemic and other infectious diseases. (para 28). This commitments have a direct impact on PCRD, and to the extend that they will be achieved, Africa will have reconstructed. However, we know that agreement on the MDGS has yet to induce the sustained financial and political commitment needed to translate targets into practical outcomes – and this is a challenge for the MDGs and it is for the PCRD agenda.

Critical to the envisaged transformation in terms of consolidating peace, preventing relapse into conflict, responding effectively in terms of conflict prevention, management and resolution is capacity building. This is because local capacity encompasses the central participation of affected populations in the determination and actualisation of their
security which endears sustainability. Presumably this ensures timely response, effective, efficient and sustainable response.

**III: State of the Art: What is the current situation on the continent?**

In spite of the commitments and efforts made thus far, peace in most of African countries remains fragile. A combination of local, regional and international factors creates numerous obstacles to the attainment of sustainable peace and successful reconstruction. The risk of resumption of conflict in many situations is high and peace processes remain vulnerable. Among the critical obstacles to the consolidation of peace is the lack of capacity to ensure the desired (and sustained engagement) for the envisaged comprehensive reconstruction efforts.

The ratification of the Protocol Establishing the AU Peace and Security Council in December 2003, and the subsequent launch of the AU Peace and Security Council in May 2004, offers an unprecedented opportunity for Africa to build sustainable peace and security. However, this opportunity is threatened by the immense pressure for the continent to respond (with success) to ongoing crises or risk losing credibility. The AU finds itself under particular pressure from post-conflict and transitional situations, which are multiplying following successful peace negotiations across the continent, and issues linked to the fragility of such situations particularly where resources have been intricately linked to war. This pressure compounds the stress on the limited capacity within continent as well as regional mechanisms to deal effectively with the dual challenge of responding to conflict situations and developing normative and policy frameworks. This reality has forced the AU to look critically to the question of enhancing its capacity to undertake the dual task of responding to current crises on the continent while at the same time to develop a normative framework to guide the pursuance of a much robust mandate in line with the Constitutie Act of the African Union which privileges involvement rather than indifference in what would have previously been viewed as the internal affairs of another country.

Currently, the AU is in the process of developing a policy framework on PCRD. The value of such a policy is manifold. It is supposed to be adaptable to the context of
countries emerging from conflict, and hence would provide an opportunity for a country emerging from conflict to have a checklist that can guide its transition from war to peace, in line with the general vision of the continent. At the continental level, it is envisaged as a strategic to enhance complementarity and coordination among diverse actors engaged in PCRD processes in the continent. For it to work effectively would require development partners to acknowledge the leadership of the AU in view of its mandate for PCRD and to align their strategic objectives to its aspirations, as defined and elaborated in this framework. Such coherence would enhance the capacity of the AU and diminish any chance of confusion and incomplete reconstruction efforts.

IV: What are some of the difficulties in building local capacity?
Challenges emerge out of three fundamental issues – what is peacebuilding and PCRD? The methodology by which it is being pursued i.e. How has it been pursued so far? and for whom it is being pursued?

1. Defining peace-building and post conflict reconstruction
There is a disparity in the conceptualization of PCRD between the AU and Africa’s development partners, and this is likely to negatively impact the definition of, and methodologies used for, building capacity PCRD. The emerging defining of PCRD within the AU process encompasses short, medium and long-term programmes and activities that address the needs of affected populations, prevent escalation of violence and relapse into conflict, address root causes of conflict and emphasis peace-building and consolidation of sustainable peace. This comprehensive definition ranges from issues of relief, to socio-economic development, governance, human rights, security, gender equity etc. that require long-term and sustained engagement - hence the emphasis on building capacity are a core principle for any PCRD endeavour.

Most of the key development partners are currently creating units for reconstruction to guide activities in post war countries. Curiously, these are being created outside development arms of government. For instance, the United Kingdom has created the Post
Conflict Reconstruction Unit, and the USA has created the Office for the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilisation within the State Department. One thing that is shared by these units is their limited definition of reconstruction – in terms of stabilization of situations before the long term development begins. The UK PCRU uses the term post conflict to refer to “the phase after a conflict, where there is a need for recovery and stabilization to restore essential services and structures, and to put in the groundwork for long term stability.” While it is noteworthy that the UK PCRU has as one of its principles the need for local interests to guide operations and the need for local participation, the methodology for achieving these noble intentions that relate to local capacity building is not elaborated upon. Instead what emerges as the main concern is how these governments, can operate in an arena crowded by other donors, NGOs and the private sector.

The intended output of the UK PCRU is “stabilization” which means, “The process by which underlying tensions that might lead to resurgence in violence and a breakdown in law and order are managed and reduced, whilst efforts are made to support preconditions for successful longer-term development.” In all causes the focus on root causes which lies at the heart of the AU vision is hardly if addressed at all.

This focus on stabilization is a major concern to Africa because it would translate in serving the interests of donors rather than affected communities. Experience from the development project indicates that when the problem as well as the parameters of intervention were defined from outside, these intervention never became owned locally and suffered a critical from a legitimacy crisis – making them impossible to sustain.

- **What is the experience with capacity building this far?**
  
  d) **at the normative level** – attempts to learn from past experiences, to draw from African experts as a basis for crafting definitions that reflect African realities – e.g.

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1 See Post Conflict Stabilisation: Improving the United Kingdom’s Contribution. Consultation on UK strategy and practise and establishmen tof apost conflict reconstruction Unit., unpublished, pg.2
in Security Sector Reform – issue of right sizing but also in DDR – inclusion of issues of child soldiers, girl child needs etc.
e) Focus on the operationalisation of key APSA priorities – (8) but focus has been adhoc and in some favoured priorities – hence lacking in one of the core priorities, coherence.
  • For instance, Africa has been under immense pressure to create a rapid response capability – in the form of ASF –
  • framed almost in non-African terms without a determination of the threat levels etc.; is defence and security oriented and makes little reference so far to issues of civilian capacities including relief and humanitarian capacity –
  • the USA has trained some 10,000 troops under ACRI and the EU pledged $300 million to establish regional ASF brigades but this capacity can only work with the operationalisation of other PSC organs
likely to set the ASF for failure unless it is multidimensional in capabilities, and the complementary structures of the PSC are created e.g. the Early warning Mechanisms, the Panel of the Wise. Otherwise there is a chance that if we end up with only a hammer every problem will tend to look like a nail….!!

f) At the national level.
The pressure in PCRD situations is to do pressure remains for doing business as usual. Keen to deliver peace dividends or to demonstrate a quick turn around, the attraction becomes to contract state responsibilities e.g. in Afghanistan, DR Congo, – usually there is a skew between international and local officers running the government bureaucracy – which works in the short term:
  • but is unsustainable because it is expensive
  • can be counter productive to the peace process – because of undermining state authority.
  • It can endear a policy the deliberately develops state dependence on foreign subcontractors – be it agencies, NGOs or private firms.
  • In the extreme case it also creates parallel structures as in Afghanistan.
The use of expertise in the reconstruction (Burundi, DR-Congo, ) without any apprenticeship programmes that allow for technology or human resource capacity transfer. The most glaring impact has been creation of favoured structures/ministries e.g. of planning, justice staffed by international experts and receiving international packages of payment – basically insubordinating the local structures and government. There is a particular difficult in the non-governmental sectors particularly because actors do not define the threshold of intervention and continue to entrench themselves rather than exit.

g) At the community level, community based initiatives have been key to reconstruction. But these have been limited in impact and given the interrelationship of conflict systems, failure to have national and regional mechanisms backstop them means their sustainability is not guaranteed. For instance in the Somalia Cluster (Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia) attacks and counter attacks in spite of enormous local efforts towards peacebuilding. Furthermore, such initiatives are not connected to the policy developments at national, regional or continental levels. It is critical that such initiatives inform the development of the Continental Early Warning Mechanism etc.

3. **Reconstruction for whom?** If reconstruction is coached in an empowerment language – then the purpose for which it is being sought is critical to defining how capacity is going to be build. One of the major critiques of the development project as prescribed to the African continent in particular by the International Financial Institutions, is that it accelerated the collapse of weak states causing greater misery and an attendant crisis industry. In seeking the purposes for which reconstruction is being purused are critical issues of accountability – to whom are actors accountable to? Most development actors, as well non-governmental organisations operating in Africa do not consider themselves accountable to the beneficiaries on the ground. Subsequently, their operations are crowded with lack of transparency and a sense of honestly. The emerging practice of involving affected countries and parties in an initial assessment mission that determines their needs and strategies for their pursuit, as done in Sudan is hailed as novel
but the effective participation of affected people in such assessments would add great value in terms of injecting a sense of ownership of the entire reconstruction agenda.

V: What should be done in terms of CB? At the various levels?
At the continental, regional and national levels:

1. Bolst the capacity towards African normative framework on PCRD
   a) Engage in the development of the normative framework through support for the political consensus building processes as well as the technical level that elaborates on standards, benchmarks and indicators to measure performance of countries emerging from conflict. Key to both processes is expertise that can facilitate political consensus building to generate a comprehensive common African position on PCRD. This key because of the narrow definitions that other actor are generating.

   b) Engage in processes that generate knowledge, identify the fault points and major flashpoints that may threaten the peace, and use this to inform the policy making process. This is key because most conditions in Africa are presumed understood. For instance most conflicts on the continent are viewed and understood within the prism of the dangerous belief that they are fundamentally about ethnic identity, yet intense consultations in most of them indicate flashpoints to include tensions over land rights, the roles of traditional and non-traditional authority structures, access to government services, lack of economic opportunities and breakdown in law enforcement mechanisms.

   c) Establishment of appropriate institutional frameworks. For instance at the AU level, the PSC provides for the establishment of committees as required for the advancement of the peace and security agenda. This provision offers an opportunity to create specialised machnisms to facilitate the PCRD agenda. One such structure could be a standing inter-departmental/ commission task force tha tincludes AU liaison and regional offices, with a mandate to review development on PCRD regularly.
2. **Build state capacity**

The state is a core actor in PCRD – and the major here is that conflicts often weaken or destroy state capacity – if the state is to lead in the PCRD, there is need to contemplate building or reconstituting state architecture – which refers to the construction of the state within the defined elements of juridical statehood such as defined territory or homeland, which confers resources and hence raises the question of access and distribution of such resources; broadly distribution of power and ability of state institutions to operate. The reconstitution of a state is particularly challenging in situations marked by a legacy of weak state and fragmented power because the building of a modern democratic and accountable state is a long term process – that goes beyond the notions of stabilisation.

What would building state capacity entail?

a) It has to provide basic conditions for reconstruction to proceed (security; a basis for national visioning, regulate the access to and management of resources; deliver some peace dividends; and ability to begin to address the causes of the conflict).

a) The critical challenge in the wake of the political processes ending overt conflict is to adopt policies, procedures and interventions that would make peace sustainable, lead to an environment of mutual trust and solidarity and build the state as the organised power of society. It is therefore critical to facilitate the development of policies and operational guidelines, including standards, benchmarks and indicators to measure performance. In could entail using the AU framework to benchmark performance.

b) Institutionalisation of governance as a basis to restore and expand trust in the state – through the vitalisation and reform of processes of governance, with particular attention to security, administration, rule of law and basic services. Creation of parallel institutions to the state, whether through the UN or bilateral agencies, can undermine this necessary focus on the state.

c) Ensure adequate public finances – restoration of the functions of government requires the state have resources at its disposal. Aid flows are a significant part of
these resources in the initial phase, but domestic revenue mobilisation through activities that can yield major resources should be at the forefront of attention.

d) Use regulatory function of the estate to protect residents and build trust. National programmes directors particular toward the urban and rural poor are an instrument for creating a sense of citizenship and using resources effectively.

e) The critical challenge in the wake of the political processes ending overt conflict is to adopt policies, procedures and interventions that would make peace sustainable, lead to an environment of mutual trust and solidarity and build the state as the organised power of society.

f) Build the capacity of key actors particularly at the local level to effectively implement multi-year processes and program activities that deal with various aspects of PCRD.

3. Regional level:

Linked closely to state capacity is the need for regional capacity. Within the AU peace and security architecture, regions are conceived as the building blocks of Africa’s peace and security, and have increasingly become the first reactors to conflicts in their backyard. The value of RECs lies in their capability to adapt the AU framework to the regional contexts as a basis for guiding state action. Boosting the capacity of RECs or other regional formation is critical because it anchors peacebuilding more firmly in the regional context by creating an institutional form for cooperation between affected states and their neighbours. This is key because

- Conflicts in Africa tend to have regional characterisations in line with the theorisation of regional conflict formation. Therefore, focus on the reconstruction of one country may displace conflicts to a neighbouring country.

- Need to leverage regional actors – more interests and likely to bear the brunt consequence of relapse into conflict (Kenya’s involvement with the Somalia peace process)

- Have been experiencing success in mediation among parties e.g the African led mediation in the Great Lakes Region in 2004 and in the Sudan leading up to 2005.

But,
• international action has not been supportive to these capacities. In Darfur the African Union sought a strong mandate to send in forces to protect civilians and to monitor a widely ignored ceasefire. This would have been the most effective international response. Yet by August 2004, when the killings were still at a very high level, there were fewer than 300 soldiers in place to guard an estimated 1.5 million Darfurians driven from their homes by the government backed militias. By mid 2005, the African Union had increased to 3,000 forces – this to monitor a region the size of France. Although donor have increased pledges to the AU, these fall far short of requests. But it is considering disarming the militias in DR congo and to intervene in Somalia. Both operations that are likely to be more risky and costly.

• RECs are currently very weak to provide the regional coherence required – this requires boosting their human and technical capacity. For instance the CT in the Horn of Africa and IGAD’s role.

3. **Address the fundamentals relating to the partnership between Africa and development partners – looking at the Aid structure:**

Experience from most PCRD countries indicates that aid structure does not speak to the long term objectives of PCRD are elaborated above.

a) generally aid to fragile states is twice as volatile as aid to stable countries. For governments with a weak revenue base, this is likely to be highly destabilising and to erode already weak capacity. Of course, there is immense challenges facing donors wanting to disburse aid in post-conflict environments. But it is important that allocation decisions be made on the basis of carefully considered and transparent judgements. The pattern has been skewed in Africa. Per capita spending in the two-year period after conclusion of a peace agreement ranges from $245 in Bosnia and Herzegovina to $40 in Afghanistan and $31 in Liberia. In Rwanda the per capita fell to $5 three years after the genocide.

b) Address issue of sequencing of activities: Research suggests that the optimal period for absorbing increased aid is about six years after a peace agreement, by which time donor interests have moved on. Immediately after conflicts, the
immediate priority should be to develop institutional capacity and accountability to local populations – when donors work off budget and create parallel structures, they undermine development of institutional structures on which future peace and security depend.

c) Deal with poor coordination – leading to duplication, wastage of resources and confusion – Problem of institutional coordination and policy coherence are magnified in post-conflict situations. At the operational level, policy ambiguity undermines chains of authority and command. The best solution is to bring political process in line with development assistance – which was referred to as peacebuilding in the 1990s. It is, therefore, imperative for the government and donors to reach an agreement on priorities within the framework of a coherent strategy, agree on a division of labour and strive to create modalities of coordination and cooperation.

d) Define threshold of intervention – which should include defining capacity building in empowerment terms – what is the level of empowerment that should have been achieved by the time of phasing out of international actors?

e) Insist on accountability of interveners to the beneficiaries – need to use transparency to counter the obscurity and power that characterises resource transfer process. The transfer of resources from the donors to the beneficiaries is characterised by long conads of networks of power and actors, all seeking to exercise power, patronage and control (juma 2002: 181).

VI: Conclusion
Peace settlements are moments of great opportunity – and great vulnerability (UNDP:175) – moving a country from this fragile situation to normalcy and beyond calls for decisive action to seize opportunities that peace creates by providing security, rebuilding institutions and supporting social and economic recovery.

1. In Sierra Leone, the UK has committed to providing a 15-25 year “over the horizon” security guarantee – helps create national institutions and address some of the
perennial challenges in other situations e.g. DDR in Liberia – where the challenge is to create security conditions for reconstruction.

2. Beyond security is the restoration and rebuilding of institutions that are capable of overseeing long-term peace and development – which poses great challenges. The challenge is to create a state that provide basic services and create secure conditions for development - beyond transitional administration.

3. PCRD is complex and requires sustained engagement. To be successful it must address the underlying causes of conflicts and develop institutions perceived as legitimate by all sides. While there are no blueprints, one key factor that causes failure is the lack of strategic and institutional clarity allied to the inability or unwillingness of the international community to make long-term commitments to state-building. (UNDP:177).

4. PCRD requires focusing on two core objectives: ensuring the safety and security of civilians, and providing adequate finance for both rapid response and long-term commitments – key of which is capacity building. If this is not achieved then successful reconstruction and by extension sustainable peace and stability will remain illusive.