

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 30 and 31, 2000, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives(1) and UNDP's Emergency Response Division(2) co-sponsored a Roundtable entitled, *Community-Based Reintegration and Rehabilitation in Post-Conflict Settings*. The purpose of the Roundtable was to bring together field-based practitioners to explore important issues and to review the use of community-based approaches in post-conflict settings.

During the Roundtable discussions, participants noted the inherent conflict between establishing an overall programmatic framework at the outset—developing a vision, time frame, and exit strategy—and enabling the community to have complete ownership over the process. Participants discussed the concept of community ownership in which “control” of the process is not in the hands of international organizations, but rather in the hands of the local population who direct their own recovery process by deciding on appropriate projects, directing resources, establishing relationships, and determining the timing of the process.

International organizations, on the other hand, have substantial structural requirements and limitations that often impact their ability to formulate and implement community-based programs. They must link the length of their engagement to their mandates and funding limits, and are often under significant pressure to produce tangible results in short timeframes. While international organizations and local populations may share the same goals, the two perspectives are sometimes in conflict. In order to address these constraints, participants outlined the following recommendations:

- **Allow for flexibility within community-based programs.** Participants noted that flexibility is crucial to allow for changes in the political and economic context, as well as the different needs of each community.
- **Define the objectives of community engagement.** Participants discussed the need to define the ultimate objectives of a community-based approach—whether it is reconciliation and political empowerment, or community engagement and project development.
- **Plan for longer-term engagement with communities.** Participants felt that international organizations generally do not allow for sufficient time to engage with local communities. Development specialists should be on staff from the early stages of relief operations to improve relations and hand-off between emergency relief and development actors.
- **Plan for consistent funding and program approaches to post-conflict community programming.** Approaches to engaging local populations in programs that affect their communities often have little similarity. To remedy this, participants called for a more coherent and continuous commitment to using local structures, supporting local capacities, and building on them through advocacy development, training, and capacity building.
- **Recognize the influence of international organizations on the community.** Participants noted that the conscious or unconscious influence from international organizations often subtly dictates the direction of community change.
- **Understand local cultures.** Participants agreed that there is a need for international actors to possess a better understanding of the local cultures in which they work. Participants suggested that international organizations conduct a conflict analysis to include an examination of specific, local issues and relationships prior to, or at the early stage of project design. It was also suggested that practitioners develop a greater understanding of regional politics and influences, as well as a deeper recognition of the root causes of the conflict.

- **Promote better donor coordination.** Participants expressed a desire to create a common, country- or region-wide vision that can help to direct resources, diminish the funding and programmatic gaps, and influence the central/local government.

UNDP/ERD and USAID/OTI have attempted to capture the wide-ranging discussions that took place over the course of the Roundtable, and hope that this document will contribute to increased community involvement in post-conflict reintegration and rehabilitation.

Notes:

1 USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) was established in 1994 to help local partners advance peace and democracy in priority conflict-prone countries. OTI bridges the gap between emergency humanitarian assistance and long-term development assistance by conducting fast and flexible interventions designed to address immediate post-conflict needs and critical threats to democratic reform.

2 UNDP's Emergency Response Division (ERD) is the in-house mechanism set up to provide a quicker and more effective response in UNDP's Country Offices in Countries in Special Development Situations (CSDS) through the provision of services.