

United Nations in Liberia

Integration Retreat

25-26 September 2008

On 25 – 26 September 2008, the UN Country Team and senior managers of UNMIL held a Retreat with the intention to find ways to improve cooperation and integration of the United Nations in Liberia. The specific goals of the Retreat were to: review existing planning tools and previously defined goals of the United Nations, identify mechanisms to increase delivery of results; develop a more integrated mission architecture; and establish mechanisms for UNMIL's drawdown while ensuring continued UN impact in Liberia. Working groups developed specific recommendations during the Retreat that will be worked on in more detail and presented in the coming Strategic Planning Group (SPG) meetings. The participants were committed that ensure speedy implementation of decisions made.

1. OPENING REMARKS BY SRSG ELLEN MARGRETHE LØJ

UNMIL Special Representative for the Secretary-General, Madam Ellen Margrethe Løj, welcomed participants and outlined the purpose of the two-day Retreat which aims at achieving a more integrated UN family in Liberia. She emphasized that Liberia in many ways was already a model country on UN integration with joint programs, joint offices and joint UNDAF working groups, but the aim was to do even better. SRSG Løj also emphasized the need to assure that the Government of Liberia is in the driver's seat and that Liberian ownership is attached to all operational programs launched through the UN. In order to achieve sustainable efforts, SRSG Løj pointed out, Liberian priorities need to be supported and national capacity built. To achieve the purpose of the Retreat, SRSG Løj encouraged focus on key priority areas where the UN family can improve collaborative efforts, identify constraints and challenges, and agree on concrete steps on how to enhance cooperation.

2. WORKING TOGETHER IN LIBERIA, SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES TO DATE, DSRSG and RESIDENT COORDINATOR JORDAN RYAN

Deputy SRSG for Recovery and Governance/Resident Coordinator, Mr. Jordan Ryan, recognized that much has been done to work more effectively together between Agencies within the UN Country Team as well as between UNMIL and the UNCT mentioning among others the success with the County Support Teams, joined-up support to the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and County Development Agendas, Joint Programmes based on joint analysis, Joint Offices, vaccination campaign and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse campaign. Further, he emphasised the success of the UN in setting common goals through frameworks such as the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Consolidation Drawdown and Consolidation (CDW) Benchmarks. Mr. Ryan encouraged an increase in such joint efforts, stating that the UN will only succeed if all Sections and Agencies find ways of bringing

individual contributions together with the purpose of achieving more for the people of Liberia. 'Through innovative partnership, raising the UN flag together, we can achieve more,' DSRSG Ryan concluded.

3. OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS FOR THE RETREAT

After consultation with members of the Mission Leadership Team and Heads of Agencies, the facilitator Paul Clarke from Oxford Change Management presented the following objectives and outputs:

- Have a greater understanding of the situation of UN colleagues in UNCT and UNMIL
- Agree on areas for increased cooperation and integration in UN Liberia activities
- Agree on how cooperation will be achieved, or create a roadmap for reaching agreement
- Identify methods to motivate UN staff to support working together for improved results
- Produce a list of recommendations on how to improve the way the UN works together
- Create a list of concerns regarding recommendations, and create a plan to address these
- Produce a list of actions to build active support for working together

4. REVIEW OF THE UN IN LIBERIA - RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire assessing opinions as to the current status of the UN in Liberia was sent to 43 Retreat participants, of whom 21 responded (see Annex 1). Though not all participants responded to the survey, it was agreed that the results provided a reasonable snapshot of the views of participants.

The results indicated a generally positive outcome in a number of important areas:

- A feeling that overall UN progress in Liberia in 2008 had generally been good
- A common understanding of the direction the UN is going in
- An understanding of respective roles and responsibilities
- Overall progress in 2008, despite the challenges and difficulties of working in Liberia

Results were less positive – although they were still not bad - in other areas, indicating:

- A lack of agreement on what the UN's priorities (within the overall direction) should be
- A lack of confidence in the mechanisms established for the design and implementation of projects and programs
- Relatively weak cohesion in the making of decisions
- A deficiency of information sharing

On the basis of the survey, respondents identified the following areas which need to be addressed in order to improve the impact of the UN:

- Capacity and will of civil society
- Capacity and will of GoL
- UN coordination mechanisms

- UN staff – motivation to cooperate
- UNMIL / UNCT relationship
- UN's priorities in Liberia

There were differences in responses from participants representing the UN in the various Pillars, indicating the spectrum of concerns and challenges being faced. Respondents working on Economic revitalization tended to focus on prioritization and strengthening civil society, while those working on rule of law tended to focus on strengthening government capacities. This is something to take into account when considering how to move forward as a group. There seems to be agreement on the big picture but less clarity on how achievements will be made together. According to the facilitators this was not an unusual situation, but probably a reflection of a sequential dynamic where groups first agree on the overall principles and then move to more detailed levels.

Whilst recognizing the importance of all of these issues, the retreat had been designed to focus on 'internal' UN coordination issues.

5. ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW: THE EXPERIENCE OF UN INTEGRATION IN BURUNDI

Vincent Kayijuka, Strategic Planning Advisor with the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) presented the Burundi experience, focusing on why the UN decided to act in an integrated manner, the levels at which integration was implemented, and the lessons so far (see Annex 2). Integration was effected at three levels:

- Strategic integration**

Consideration was given to key elements of the peace process: the Peace Accord itself, the PRS, and the Security Council Resolution. On another level, integration was undertaken in the development of the UN Integrated Peace and Consolidation Support Strategy (based on UNDAF). This Strategy formed the basis for core joint programming and was also used as a basis for the RBB. The Peace Building priority plan was an additional tool, developed to enable solicitation of funds from the PBF.

- Programmatic integration**

Core joint programs were developed around the three SC Resolution priorities.

- Integrated leadership and structures**

Three levels of senior management coordination existed before. These groups were merged into the UN Integrated Management Team, creating one mechanism for senior management coordination. Staff from different sections and agencies came together under the core joint programs.

Following the presentation, discussions highlighted the following issues:

- Committed leadership seemed to be a great contributing factor to success
- A crisis situation may be a catalyst for change, motivating people to take risks
- Existing rules and procedures do not discount seeking new approaches
- The larger size of the UN in Liberia (compared to Burundi) should not bar integration, it might actually create more opportunity for larger impact
- There was as much of a need in Burundi as in Liberia for peace to become irreversible
- Integration is an ongoing process

6. IMPROVING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Before the retreat, the retreat planning group, in consultation with a cross section of UNMIL and UNCT managers, had elaborated a list of issues that may need to be addressed at national level in order to improve UN's collaborative efforts in Liberia. This list was presented to the entire group, who made some changes and then formed five groups; each group was to formulate recommendations on one of the topics. It was agreed that recommendations should be concrete, doable and address real constraints. Based on the group work, recommendations were discussed in plenary with additional time provided for concerns and suggestions for improvements. All five groups were advised to meet again after the Retreat to incorporate raised concerns into their drafts and solidify the recommendations for final discussion in the SPG on 6 and 20 October.

Group 1: The role, potential and procedures of the pillar /theme groups.

Recommendations

1. UNDAF Outcome Groups to agree on common work processes by end-October and draft a joint work-plan by end December.
2. Clarify the accountability framework for the pillar/outcome groups with a mechanism for performance review.
3. Create two integrated teams of staff, one functional and one substantial (à la Burundi) (possible areas include M & E / Communication / Governance / Food Security) all working under one supervisor.

Concerns and suggested improvements

There is a need to see how to best implement based on existing TORs and address any shortcomings. There is still room to improve the functionality of the pillar group meetings and establish how to distribute the workload. There is also a need to find ways to hold those, who do not fulfill obligations, accountable. To improve results, expertise from different Agencies/Sections of UNMIL should be brought together when implementing projects. In addition, to achieve more consolidated work within and between the pillars of the UNDAF, communication between UNMIL and the UNCT needs to improve. The working group was requested to incorporate a strategy for this into the final recommendations.

Group 2: Communicating: With the outside world as well as internally

Recommendations

1. **Communications Plan:** There is a need to create a strategic communications plan for the entire United Nations in Liberia. SPG would approve the yearly plan to be reviewed quarterly. The plan should include 3-4 key messages, for example on reconciliation; rule of law; resourcing joint programs (messages for the donors in terms resource allocation). **Internal Communication:** There still exists a lot of skepticism on how close UNMIL and agencies work together. Internally, staff need to receive more information.

External Communication: Donors; GoL; NGOs. Experience tells that NGOs want to be consulted more. We need to ensure a consistent approach to NGOs and all other partners.

2. Form an ICT common platform for (presentation of) the entire UN family.

Group 3: Making best use of resources and capacity

There is a need to make best use of resources. The current situation shows that there are a lot of resources out there but that we don't know what they are. We know our own, but don't know what is there in other agencies and sections. Resources include people, money, equipment, as well as capacities.

Recommendation

1. Map out resources through a joint catalogue, including capabilities by January 2009. This way, when a new project is desired, we will have a clear understanding of who can bring what to the table and also avoid duplications. It also helps us in identifying gaps when we approach donors.

Concerns and suggested improvements

Nil

Group 4: Prioritizing work together and changing plans together

Recommendations

1. UN Focus - prioritize joined-up response to 2-3 issues within the PRS and UNDAF ("flagships initiatives").
2. Joint UN strategy to tackle the need to increase national capacity and ownership, particularly within the area of RoL. This includes looking at issues of integrity, willingness and accountability. Finding ways to motivate the decision-making process in order to move forward.
3. There needs to be more joined-up efforts on M&E with strengthened support to GoL.

Concerns and suggested improvements

Questions were asked about the relationship between recommendation #1 and the already existing priorities in the UNDAF and the CDW and it was noted that the GoL should be part of the process if 2-3 'UN' priorities should be identified within the PRS.

GoL is developing a 10 year strategy on capacity development that needs to be reflected. There is also a need to look at internal capacity.

Group 5: Maintaining impact during / after UNMIL drawdown

Recommendation

1. An Integrated Transition Design Team (ITDT) is to be established with an aim at maintaining UN's impact while UNMIL draws down.

Members of ITDT would be UNDAF groups, four functional teams, military and mission support.

ToR would include: transition design on what needs to be done during the draw down and after; functions to be determined as to 'who does what'; steps needed for further integration; required capacity to be identified; timeline to be set.

Concerns and suggested improvements

Link the 'capacity catalogue' from group 3 with the ITPT plan. With the military and police drawing down, specific focus needs to be placed on the impact this may have and, as a result, where Agencies will need to step up their individual efforts. Suggestion study lessons learned from countries like Sierra Leone and Burundi.

7. UN FIELD STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT

The Field Structure Working Group has been studying the present UN structure, including the County Support Team (CST) mechanism and recommended the following measures to enhance the effectiveness of UN field presence as a whole (see Annex 3).

1. Develop joint county based work plan
2. Organize regular UN coordination meeting in counties
3. Consolidated reporting requirements (initially on a weekly basis)
4. Establishment Head of Field Office (HoFO), to include CST facilitator responsibilities
5. HoFO to have staff supervision responsibilities
6. Maintain a one-level field office structure
7. Strengthen field support structure at HQ level
8. Organize regular "face-to-face" HoFO meetings

The proposed field structure is intended to allow for a more consolidated UN intervention at the county level, and more effective communication between county and HQ. One objective is to get away from the mentality of sections having 'their people' in the field, especially within UNMIL.

In general, the participants welcomed the efforts to improve collaboration at county level and agreed with the eight overall recommendations. During the plenary discussion a number of concerns and suggestions were raised in relation to some of the sub-recommendations, especially regarding work planning procedures and division of responsibilities. Some issues were clarified

at the retreat but it was also agreed that a smaller working group should be established to address remaining questions. During the discussions, particularly positive feedback came from representatives of UN Agencies. The final recommendations will be discussed in the SPG.

The next step will be for the follow-up working group to take the feedback from the retreat and the counties into account. The SRSG also explained that the proposal would be implemented as soon as possible, with the understanding that the SPG will have a chance to discuss possible adjustments after the first few months.

8. ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

Whilst it is important to ensure that mechanisms for coordination and collaboration exist, these mechanisms are a necessary, but not a sufficient, requirement for improved collaborative work. In addition, UN staff at all levels need to be motivated to work together. This requires, in some cases, changes in behaviour and attitudes.

Research shows that we behave based on assumptions, thus it is especially important to check those assumptions. UNMIL and Country Team (UNCT) members within each group discussed assumptions, feelings, expectations, and preconceptions they have of the other.

Changing behaviour is not easy. Research shows that 70% of change efforts fail: generally because people fail to act in new ways. There are three main reasons why these ‘negative’ feelings are created by change processes:

1. **Rational:** People might believe the change is a bad idea
2. **Personal:** People might resist the change because it is threatening to them personally (and particularly to their needs for control or stability)
3. **Values:** People might resist the change because they feel that it threatens their values and those of their organization.

Weaving in certain elements into the change effort helps to increase the likelihood that people will support the change, and ultimately change their behaviour. Generally, successful change projects:

- Are seen as necessary
- Have a clear and compelling vision
- Are ‘joined up’
- Have a clear action plan to reach the vision
- Are guided by a cross-functional team
- Engage staff from the outset
- (Over) communicate
- Are supported by senior / influential managers

If the UN in Liberia intends to make changes to structures and responsibilities at the field and ‘pillar’ levels; to increase prioritization, and, generally, to work in a more integrated way, then it would be wise for the working groups to include this thinking into their proposals.

Groups rated how well the UN in Liberia is doing at the moment in these areas. Based on the results, it was concluded that within the UN system in Liberia, we are clear about ‘why’ we are doing things, clear about ‘where we are going’, but that the elements of being ‘joined up’ and communication need work.

The retreat itself is an important step towards “joining-up”. The SPG group is a good cross functional team, and can push the idea of working together by being open to debate, disagreement and discussion. At the same time, staff have to see UN activities as synergistic and ‘joined up’ (communication is important) and it would be worth instituting some form of ‘reward’ or recognition for work which demonstrates high levels of collaboration.

On communications: Group 2 will make concrete proposals to the SPG which will include approaches to internal communication.

9. EVALUATION OF RETREAT

A group evaluation was conducted that assessed the objectives and outputs during the two-day Retreat. The overall perception of the Retreat was that the foreseen outputs had been achieved. There was consensus that more work was needed on identifying methods to motivate UN staff to work together for improved results. The Retreat was widely viewed as a positive experience.

10. CLOSING REMARKS BY SRSG ELLEN MARGRETHE LØJ

Thanking the facilitators and participants, SRSG Løj expressed her sincere appreciation for the high level of commitment shown towards finding ways to work better together in the future as one UN. Madam Løj underlined the need for working groups to polish on their individual recommendations in order to ensure speedy implementation of joint decisions. While a roadmap is not yet there, the SRSG said, we have clarified where we are heading and should not lose momentum but maintain the enthusiasm generated through the active participation during the Retreat. This will improve our collaborative efforts towards achieving our goal in making a better life for Liberians. Focus needs to be put on implementation of what has been sketched out during the Retreat, and means to engage staff at all levels.

Retreat participants



List of Participants (in alphabetical order)

UNMIL

1.	Afriyie, Yorke	OIC, Integrated Security Section
2.	Aly, Moustafa	Chief Medical Officer
3.	Badejo, Babafemi A.	Head of Political Policy Planning
4.	Callaghan, Marjo	Head, Corrections Advisory Unit
5.	Crouch, Melva	Chief, Integrated Support Services
6.	Doucet, Carole	Senior Gender Adviser
7.	Egunsola Paul	Chief of Staff, Office of the SRSG
8.	Gutman, Alan	Acting Senior Legal Adviser
9.	Kai-Kai, Francis	Chief, Civil Affairs
10.	Lavender, Charles	Chief, Joint Mission Analysis Cell
11.	Lieberman, Stephen	Director of Mission Support
12.	Løj, Ellen Margrethe	SRSG
13.	Lynch, Maura	Chief, Humanitarian Coordination Section
14.	Masinde, Damianus Pius	OIC, Conduct and Discipline Unit
15.	Mensa-Bonsu, Henrietta	DSRSG, Rule of Law
16.	Modey, Carl	Acting Force Commander
17.	Muriithi, James Mugo	Deputy to the Senior Gender Adviser
18.	Nindorera, Eugene	Chief, Human Rights & Protection Section
19.	Nyasulu, Kamudoni	Director, Legal & Judicial System
20.	Quist, Emmanuel	Chief of Staff/Military
21.	Ragibommanahally, Manohar	Resident Auditor
22.	Rwandekeye, Charles	Environment & Natural Resources Officer
23.	Ryan, Jordan	DSRSG, Recovery & Governance
24.	Scheer, Stephani	Chief Administrative Services
25.	Shindano, Musumali	Acting HIV/Aids Policy Adviser
26.	Somerwill, George	Chief, Public Information Office
27.	Stiernblad, Henrik	Police Commissioner
28.	Tamagnini, Andrea	Director, Reintegration, Rehabilitation & Recovery

UN Country Team

29.	Assefaw, Tewolde	Chair, Operations Management Team (OMT)
30.	Perkins, Agnes	Assistant Representative, FAO
31.	Chorlton, Rozanne	Representative, UNICEF
32.	Dubini, Renata	Representative, UNHCR
33.	Favier, Oriane	Officer in Charge, UNOPS
34.	Ferej, Ahmed	Officer in Charge, UNESCO
35.	Fiadzo, Emmanuel	OIC, World Bank
36.	Gakuba, Rose	Representative, UNFPA
37.	Hall, Peter Armstrong	Chief Technical Adviser, ILO
38.	Imbleau, Louis	Representative, WFP
39.	Keating, Maria-Threase	Chair, Monitoring & Evaluation Team (M&E), UNDP
40.	Ngongi, Susan	Chair, Inter-Agency Programming Team (IAPT)
41.	Paredes, Ferdinand	Programme Manager, IOM
42.	Sam, Dominic	Country Director, UNDP
43.	Uwishaka, Cardinal	Officer-in-Charge, UNIFEM

Support Staff

44.	Andrews, Jonathan	Special Assistant to DSRSG (R&G)
45.	Barley, Catherine	Special Assistant to DSRSG (RoL)
46.	Bredesen, Harald	Coordination Analyst, RCO
47.	Chester, Elizabeth	Office of the DSRSG (R&G)
48.	Chidambaram, Renuka	Senior Political Adviser to the DSRSG (RoL)
49.	Fabiansson, Catarina	Office of the DSRSG (R&G)
50.	Gaitho, Esther	Administrative Assistant to the DSRSG (R&G)
51.	Friborg, Anders	Special Advisor to the SRSG
52.	Herwig, Malin	Special Assistant to the RC
53.	Pieries, Charmaine	Administrative Assistant to the COS
54.	Popovic, Maja	Administrative Assistant to the DSRSG (RoL)
55.	Wang, Yang	Special Assistant to the DMS