

# Coordinating to build peace?

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Lessons from the UN Peacebuilding Commission's engagement in Burundi

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## The coordination dilemma of UN peacebuilding

Coordination is a key dilemma of contemporary United Nations peace operations. It is a result from the immense complexity of the task at hand: building peace. Over the last 20 years, the international community has—sometimes painfully—learned that peacebuilding must take into account the myriad of political, economic, and security problems any post-conflict society faces. This insight led to an evolution of peacekeeping; narrowly-mandated missions aimed at monitoring cease-fires gave way to multidimensional peace operations. These multifaceted missions aim to integrate the numerous political, military, and development actors necessary to reflect and address the many interrelated challenges of building peace.

Yet, the coordination of the variety of the actors involved in these operations has become a considerable challenge, often preventing them from achieving their full impact. Memoirs, reports, and academic studies cite numerous examples of duplication of efforts, agencies working at cross-purposes, and a lack of cooperation and information sharing. Coordination is not merely a technical exercise, however. Often, peace depends on the proper functioning and effective and efficient delivery of international support. Successful coordination therefore has a direct and positive effect on the lives of those in need—and its absence is painfully clear to those who have to suffer the consequences.

In 2005, UN Member States responded to the coordination dilemma by creating the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to “bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery” and to “provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations.”<sup>1</sup> In a joint resolution, the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly tasked the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), located within the UN Secretariat, to provide analytical and administrative support to the Commission *inter alia* by managing the simultaneously created UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Has the UN Peacebuilding Commission been able to successfully address the coordination dilemma in multilateral peace operations? If so, what accounts for its success; if not, what prevented the PBC from being successful?

Drawing on evidence from the PBC’s early involvement in Burundi, I argue that the Commission has not successfully “resolved” the coordination dilemma of UN peacebuilding. Rather, its involvement in Burundi exemplifies some of the central challenges coordination entails: including all relevant actors in the decision-making process on the country’s peace process, effective leadership of the coordination process, and producing concise and clearly sequenced peacebuilding strategies.

Three interrelated elements exacerbated and intensified the coordination dilemma in the Peacebuilding Commission’s engagement in Burundi:

(Power) Politics. The most powerful actors in terms of development assistance, the World Bank and the IMF, chose not to work through the Commission; conflicts over influence and autonomy among members of the international peacebuilding system created an atmosphere of competition that significantly impeded cooperation. When going it alone pays off better than working together, cooperation becomes extremely difficult.

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/60/180 & S/RES/1645 para. 2.

Scarcity of organizational capacities. The Peacebuilding Support Office lacked both financial and human resources to adequately support the Commission. The Office also struggled with aligning the PBF funding process to the PBC's strategy development, causing confusion and inefficiencies on the ground.

Competing peacebuilding ideas. In Burundi, several documents already outlined peacebuilding or development strategies for the country prior to the PBC's involvement. This obscured the added value of the PBC's integrated peacebuilding strategy, its central peacebuilding document. Peacebuilding actors in Burundi were simply confused over *what* to do *how*.

## **Background - Burundi's civil war and the UN Peacebuilding Commission**

Between 1993 and 2005, Burundi suffered from a brutal civil war in which about 300,000 people died and almost twice as many people were displaced. The roots of this conflict lie in the politicization of ethnic cleavages between Burundi's ethnic Hutu majority (85 % of the population) and the Tutsi minority (15 %), and the country's volatile regional environment.

Both Hutu and Tutsi political leaders repeatedly used ethnicity as basis for political power and justification for interethnic violence after the country's independence in 1962, resulting in massive tensions between the two groups and fueling mutual fear. This social pressure escalated to a full-scale civil war when the Tutsi-controlled army killed Melchior Ndadaye in October 1993. Ndadaye had been Burundi's first elected Hutu president after more than 20 years of Tutsi-dominated rule and had represented the hope for a more democratic future in Burundi. His death sparked violent rebellion by Hutu rebel groups, which soon splintered into many factions, fighting both each other and Tutsi government forces in an increasingly bloody spiral of violence.

Burundi's volatile regional position significantly exacerbated the conflict: neighboring Rwanda suffered from similar ethnic tensions and civil war, culminating in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which Hutu forces killed more than 500,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu. These events intensified fear in Burundi and further hardened the already firm positions of the conflict parties. In addition, the Congolese civil wars—themselves ramifications from the instability in Rwanda—further destabilized the region and, in turn, Burundi.

Although the international community engaged in peace efforts soon after the outbreak of violence through track I diplomacy by then Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere and Nelson Mandela, and unofficial track II diplomacy facilitated by Sant' Egidio in Rome, it was not before the beginning of the 2000s that progress became visible: only in December 2002, the largest Hutu rebel group CNDD-FDD<sup>2</sup> signed a cease-fire agreement with the transitional government of Burundi (and largely stuck to it in the following years), while it took until 2006 for the second-largest Hutu rebel group, the Palipehutu-FNL to sign a similar agreement.

The United Nations supported the peace process from early on; the many setbacks and recurring outbreaks of violence in the process significantly delayed the deployment of a peacekeeping force, however. Only in 2004, the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a 5,660-strong peacekeeping operation (United Nations Operation in Burundi, ONUB) which was replaced in 2005 by the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB)—a political

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<sup>2</sup> National Council for the Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy.

office tasked with supporting Burundi's still fragile peace process. On 23 June 2006, after referral from the Security Council, the PBC's Organizational Committee placed Burundi together with Sierra Leone as one of the two first countries on its agenda and established a Burundi country-specific configuration (CSC) of the PBC,<sup>3</sup> which—in line with the PBC's mandate—was tasked with developing an Integrated Peacebuilding Strategy (IPBS) for the country. The country-specific configuration for Burundi presented the IPBS for Burundi, titled "Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi," on 20 June 2007.

The PBC took up Burundi in a critical phase: In 2006, a fragile peace was in place; the government had signed cease-fire agreements with the major rebel groups, while efforts to disarm and reintegrate the rebels only slowly gained momentum and were overshadowed by occasional outbreaks of violence. And although both the major political parties and Burundi's population were war-weary and settled on a largely non-violent *modus operandi*, mutual mistrust between the Hutu and Tutsi still loomed large (and was complicated by power struggles and splits within the groups). At the same time, international support for Burundi's post-conflict reconstruction process began to increase. Official Development Assistance for Burundi skyrocketed from \$93 million in 2000 to \$631 million in 2010. Roughly half of this money was disbursed by a rising number of multilateral agencies that became active, or increased their activities, in the country. To ensure these actors would act in concert to support Burundi's peace process, coordination became increasingly important.

Yet, the PBC's early engagement in Burundi exemplified the dilemmas of coordination in international peacebuilding. The PBC aims at strategic coordination, i.e. the harmonization of strategies and conceptual approaches to peacebuilding of all actors involved, rather than the micromanagement of the day-to-day activities of actors on the ground (=field level coordination). Consequently, its tasks were threefold: (1) bringing together all relevant actors to (2) devise specific strategies that align the peacebuilding strategies of all actors involved by (3) actively guiding the decision-making process for this strategy through facilitative leadership. With the exemption of providing leadership, however, the PBC severely struggled to fulfill these tasks.

## **Key actors, leadership, and the integrated strategic framework – results of the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement in Burundi**

The Commission experienced difficulties in providing a platform for all relevant actors to Burundi's peace process—especially considering the *way* the PBC brought the stakeholders to the table. Initially, signs were positive, particularly regarding the inclusion of civil society: the Government of Burundi (GoB) and PBC members actively sought the input from Burundian civil society to determine peacebuilding priorities for the country; the Peacebuilding Commission invited Burundian civil society organizations to New York headquarters and organized field trips to the country. In these ways, civil society organizations could raise specific concerns (such as the need for an economic peace dividend in the form of job creation; the fight against corruption; and education for peace, reconciliation, and citizenship) that other participants to the negotiations had neglected.

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<sup>3</sup> The Peacebuilding Commission does the bulk of its work in its country-specific configurations (CSCs), consisting of the 31 regular PBC members as well as other relevant stakeholders to the country's peace process. The PBC's Organizational Committee establishes a CSC after a country has been placed on its agenda.

A closer look at the *way* civil society was included, however, reveals severe shortcomings. A major problem for many civil society organizations was the burdensome nature of their engagement with the PBC. Only a few organizations could follow the labor- and time-intensive schedule of the negotiations within Burundi's country-specific configuration. There was usually no funding available to reimburse civil society representatives for their efforts to participate or, at least, to enable financially ill-equipped CSOs to participate in the first place. Another problem was the PBC's and the GoB's concentration on mainly capital-based civil society organizations. Rural-based organizations, which would have brought a crucial perspective to the peacebuilding process, were often unable to attend meetings, both in-country and even more so in New York. The parallel engagement of the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Commission put additional strain on financially ill-equipped civil society organizations that wanted to participate in both processes.

The PBC had problems with regional and international stakeholders as well. NYU's Center on International Cooperation found that the inclusion of regional actors in the PBC's country-specific configuration did not extend much beyond formal participation, "highlighting the fact that international coordination mechanisms on the ground are still dominated by Western donors and overly focused on programmatic discussions. [...] This is all the more important in Burundi, where regional actors have led the peace process since its inception."<sup>4</sup>

The PBC's engagement with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the context of the Burundi configuration has been equally difficult. Although both institutions participated in the country-specific configuration for Burundi, "the overall relationship [of the PBC, F.H.] with the [International Financial Institutions] does not appear to be more than simply information sharing. [...] The World Bank continues to view its role in the PBC as an observer, not as a full partner, and has little New York-level CSC interaction. [...]".<sup>5</sup> Similarly, in a statement to the Burundi CSC from 12 December 2006, the IMF representative remained extremely vague on the Fund's role in the peace process.

The Norwegian leadership of the Burundi CSC, in contrast, leaves a somewhat better impression. On the one hand, Norway's management of the process leading to the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi clearly had its shortcomings, too; for example, the extremely tight schedule of PBC meetings proved especially difficult for Member States with relatively small delegations, while ill-prepared participants to videoconferences posed another challenge.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, on the other hand, the Norwegian chairmanship also had visibly positive effects, especially considering the PBC's relationship with the IMF and World Bank:

In June 2007, the IMF signaled its intention to delay completion of the Sixth Review of the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility for Burundi, citing concerns over economic governance and allegations of corruption. This triggered a freeze on World Bank disbursements of budget support and led to an acute budgetary crisis [in Burundi, F.H.], risking widespread discontent and social tensions. After Norway raised the budgetary issue in the CSC, intense discussions with the IMF ensued, within the PBC and informally between PBC members and IMF representatives in New York and Washington. The PBC

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<sup>4</sup> Forman, Sorensen and Chandran 2010: 7

<sup>5</sup> Forman, Sorensen and Chandran 2010: 6–7

<sup>6</sup> CIC and IPI 2008: 18.

negotiated a recommendation that the Government of Burundi take steps to address economic governance issues, and alerted the IFIs and donors to the potential for renewed violence [...]. The discussions helped to defuse tensions. The IMF concluded in November that the government had taken appropriate measures to tackle a serious corruption case, allowing the release of the pledged budgetary support.<sup>7</sup>

Norway also tried to mitigate the PBC's shortcomings by providing support for resource-strained Burundian CSOs so they could participate in meetings with the government. Through an international NGO, Norway funded a post for a CSO liaison officer who facilitated the access of local women organizations to the PBC process.

In contrast, the PBC's integrated peacebuilding strategy for Burundi had more severe problems. Although the 2007 Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi represents an important consensus on the peacebuilding priorities in Burundi, it nevertheless fails to provide *specific* guidelines for national and international peacebuilding actors in Burundi—yet the strategy's specificity is of paramount importance: since the Commission's integrated peacebuilding strategies are not legally binding, the Strategic Framework is more likely to guide peacebuilding actors' behavior if it's specific, uncontested, and its provisions are widely shared.

The Burundi Strategic Framework identifies eight peacebuilding priorities: good governance; a comprehensive ceasefire agreement with the Palipehutu-FNL; security sector reform; justice, promotion of human rights, and action to combat impunity; the land issue and socio-economic recovery; mobilization of international assistance; the sub-regional dimension (of the conflict); and gender.

Beyond this formal consensus on broad peacebuilding priorities, however, the strategy's main provisions remained vague. It puts forward effectively empty stipulations such as (own emphasis):

- “[the GoB] will [...] *create conditions conducive* to the effective implementation of the September 2006 Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement between the Government and Palipehutu-FNL” (p. 13)
- “[the PBC] will [...] *encourage the effective coordination* of United Nations and other actors” (p. 14)
- “Women’s organizations are *encouraged to [r]esume innovative actions* by women for community reconciliation, peaceful coexistence and combating poverty” (p. 15)<sup>8</sup>

The document does not provide any explanation of what it actually means by “create conducive conditions,” “encourage effective coordination,” and “encourage innovative action.” Neither does the Strategy contain any provisions of the sequencing of its eight peacebuilding priorities. What is more, even though the Strategic Framework does have operative clauses that are directed both at the United Nations System and “Multilateral and Bilateral Partners” (p. 16), it doesn't identify specific agencies and/or programmes within the UN system (besides BINUB), nor specific international “partners.” While it is true that a too detailed strategy would limit the peacebuilding actors' flexibility, the lack of at least a basic recommendation of tasks to both UN bodies and bilateral partners, however, is likely to lead to misunderstandings about responsibilities among UN agencies and international donor countries.

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<sup>7</sup> Scott 2008: 15.

<sup>8</sup> PBC/1/BDI/4.

In sum, the PBC's ability to ensure strategic coordination among the stakeholders in Burundi's peace process was limited. The Commission showed severe problems with bringing the relevant actors to the table of its CSC: formal inclusion falls short of its full potential if the PBC is not able to equip overburdened civil society organizations with the capacities to participate in its decision-making processes, to fully incorporate regional actors, and to draw upon the expertise and the financial resources of the World Bank and the IMF. The PBC's leadership of this process has been better, with evidence pointing to the positive management role of Norway as the chair of the Burundi CSC. Finally, the Strategic Framework suffers from vague language and lacks a clear sequence of tasks.

## **Accounting for the Commission's performance**

What accounts for this outcome? The coordination dilemma doesn't manifest itself in a political vacuum; it is the result of three largely structural reasons, which were also present in the case of the PBC's engagement in Burundi: power politics, lack of organizational capacity of the Peacebuilding Support Office, and competing peacebuilding ideas.

Power politics negatively affected the Peacebuilding Commission's involvement in Burundi in two ways: first, the most powerful peacebuilding actors in Burundi, the World Bank and the IMF, chose not to act through the Commission. Second, a constant struggle over scarce monetary resources among peacebuilding actors caused (and still causes) a lack of incentives for members of the peacebuilding system to cooperate.

International organizations can sometimes be the instruments of the most powerful—power understood as control over resources—or they are not relevant at all. In the case of the PBC's engagement with Burundi, the latter seems to have been the case. With more than \$100 million of Official Development Assistance, the World Bank was Burundi's largest donor in 2006 when the Strategic Framework was developed. However, the Bank's involvement with the Commission remained marginal. The same is true for the IMF (with about \$21 million, the third-largest ODA donor to Burundi after the EU), which even worked at cross-purposes to Burundi's peace process—to the extent that Norway had to persuade the Fund to disburse credit in order to avoid a major political crisis in the country. No actor—be it a state, an international organization, or even a non-governmental organization—is likely to work within an institutional framework such as the Peacebuilding Commission, if this institution restricts its autonomy to act independently and its influence to change the behavior of others to one's own benefit. Involvement with the PBC could have given the Bank and the Fund a venue to influence other key peacebuilding actors to align their policy with Bank/Fund preferences. But this potential benefit apparently did not outweigh the costs for the Bank and the Fund, since that would have required them to align their policies—at least to a certain extent—with the preferences of other peacebuilding actors in the PBC. The World Bank and the IMF chose not to engage with the Commission and thus deprived it of potentially important financial and political support.

The same logic of autonomy-seeking negatively affects the incentive structures of the other, potentially less resource-equipped peacebuilding network members to cooperate—and did so, too, in the case of Burundi. Within the UN, departments, agencies, and programmes are usually funded on a voluntary basis by Member States governments (and, to a lesser extent, by private donors), which causes these institutions to struggle over limited resources. In turn, each peacebuilding actor has an incentive to increase its autonomy from other actors to demonstrate that it is indispensable for the tasks at hand and is the best target for donors' funding. This

incentive structure makes the UN system chronically prone to coordination problems—and makes coordination even harder in a high-profile area such as peacebuilding.

In addition, the Peacebuilding Support Office's (PBSO) limited organizational capacity prevented the Peacebuilding Commission from reaching its full potential in Burundi. At first glance, this seems puzzling given PBSO's substantial competences to support the PBC's work through policy analysis, the preparation of PBC/CSC meetings, and the management of the Peacebuilding Fund.

But Member States and UN agencies did not match these competences with corresponding resources. Member States were reluctant to equip PBSO with additional funding and required the Secretary-General to establish the PBSO from "within existing resources."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the bulk of the PBSO's staff is comprised of personnel seconded from other (usually similarly resource-strained) departments within the Secretariat or other UN bodies. This proved to be especially problematic during the first years of the PBC's work, including the first meetings of the country-specific configuration for Burundi:

the PBSO does not appear to have adequate support and capacity to both play its internal role as facilitator to UN family coordination vis-à-vis the Secretariat and other UN agencies, and to support PBC efforts. Given these limitations, in the case of Burundi, the Chairmanship and DPKO/BINUB have tasked themselves with preparing agendas and background material for CSCs [...]. While it remains important that PBSO not be asked or expected to provide in-country coordination functions, [...] a minimum ability to support the CSC is necessary.<sup>10</sup>

The PBSO's struggle to provide adequate support to BINUB and the UN Country Team in Burundi is particularly striking. Although the PBSO was designed to reduce the workload on the UN's country presence, in fact, BINUB and the UN Country Team provided *support to the PBSO and the CSCs*, putting additional strains on their already limited capacities. As another observer put it bluntly: "The BINUB staff [...] that [has] been tasked to liaise with the PBSO and country-level actors [has] been doing a tremendous job to support the PBC process, but they too have full-time jobs."<sup>11</sup>

Aside from staffing problems, the PBSO's management of the Peacebuilding Fund in Burundi proved especially problematic. The poor sequencing between PBC and PBF activities in Burundi resulted in disbursing money for peacebuilding projects before the country-specific configuration could develop an overarching strategic framework for peacebuilding.

Indeed, this sequencing error "fostered an operational, project-based approach that detracted from the strategic focus of PBC engagement. When attention later shifted to strategic priorities, it seemed the cart had been put before the horse."<sup>12</sup> The parallel engagement of the Commission (to develop the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi) and the PBF (which initially aimed at developing a strategy for peacebuilding projects, a process which is different from the PBC's development of the integrated peacebuilding strategy) was particularly problematic for including local civil society. The parallel engagement of both PBC and PBF in Burundi exacerbated the problems of financially weak CSOs that sought to participate in both

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<sup>9</sup> A/RES/60/180, para. 23.

<sup>10</sup>Forman, Sorensen and Chandran 2010: 6.

<sup>11</sup>CIC and IPI 2008: 18.

<sup>12</sup> Scott 2008: 10.



PBF and PBC meetings. It also put additional strain on the Government of Burundi and BINUB, which were actively involved in both the PBC and the PBF process—and could not get much support from the poorly equipped PBSO.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, too many competing country strategies for Burundi confused peacebuilding actors, creating overlaps and duplications. For a large part of the negotiations, PBC members couldn't see the added value of yet another country strategy, which ultimately caused strategy fatigue.

In 2006, there existed five country strategies for Burundi: the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the African Development Bank Group's Interim Country Strategy Paper, the European Commission's European Development Framework, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union's strategy paper for Burundi. Each of these documents put forward ideas and concrete steps how the international community could help Burundi's political, economic, and social development. But they also clouded the concrete contribution the PBC's integrated peacebuilding strategy could make, since each document already tackled the problem of Burundi's peacebuilding process in one way or the other. PBC members and the Government of Burundi agreed that the IPBS should reflect the country's peacebuilding priorities—but against the backdrop of the already existing strategies, peacebuilding actors didn't really feel a need to identify which peacebuilding tasks could (and should) be best carried out by which agency, member state, or international organization, since they felt these questions were already accounted for in the existing country strategies. The result was the imprecise and superficial Strategic Framework that the PBC ultimately put forward in 2007.

## **Lessons learned? Transforming the coordination dilemma of UN peacebuilding**

What can we learn from the PBC's early engagement in Burundi? First, the case illustrates the dilemma of achieving strategic coordination when politics, resources, and strategies significantly obstruct the task. This is a dilemma that is common to almost all peacebuilding endeavors, regardless of their size. Second, coordination can't simply be assumed to emerge when needed. It is a fundamentally political task that requires negotiations, resources, and careful planning. Finally, the PBC case also highlights several critical questions that can help policy-makers and peacebuilders to address and alleviate, if not ultimately resolve, the coordination dilemma:

1. *What is the specific coordination challenge?* Policy planners and peacebuilders must assess the need for coordination from early on. Although all peacebuilding tends to be a complex endeavor, and thus includes many different actors, not all interventions require the same level of coordination in all policy fields. In some policy areas, an immediate need for alignment can take priority over coordination in other fields. The example of the PBC's engagement with the IMF is a case in point for short-term and need-based (rather than supply-based) prioritizing of coordination in the area of fiscal policy to prevent renewed outbreak of violence.

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<sup>13</sup> This does not indicate that the PBSO staff did a poor job, rather the opposite. Given the enormous resource constraints they were facing, they achieved astonishingly much with remarkably little resources.

2. *Who needs to be coordinated? And how can relevant actors be included in an empowering rather than burdensome way?* The case study exemplifies that local actors, i.e. civil society groups alongside national government representatives, need to be involved at every stage of the peacebuilding process. Without local ownership, peace won't prevail, not matter how integrated and coordinated the international assistance is. Yet, the PBC case also illustrates the challenges of properly designing the inclusion process in a way that does not overwhelm local actors with limited resources, especially civil society organizations. The international community must structure the coordination process respecting local strengths and needs, for instance by providing funding for rural-based civil society organizations, moving consultations closer to the people, rather than holding strategic meetings only in New York.
3. *How to overcome the political, organizational, and strategic challenges to coordination when—as the saying goes—“everybody likes to coordinate, but nobody wants to be coordinated”?* The PBC case study highlights two principles that apply to coordination endeavors beyond the PBC environment: creating incentives and structures to meet political obstacles, and ensuring resources for organizing and planning the coordination process.

### **Meeting the political challenges of peacebuilding coordination: financial rewards, a culture of coordination, and formal and informal leadership**

Politically, the biggest challenge lies in getting all peacebuilding actors to actually *want* coordination. The non-hierarchical network form of the international peacebuilding system is one of its strengths; specialization ensures the system's flexibility. But the PBC's Burundi configuration shows that this structure doesn't automatically create incentives to coordinate. Being accountable only to their respective governing boards and donors systematically drives peacebuilding actors to emphasize their own performance over working for joint peacebuilding success (that is usually much harder to attribute to a single actor). Also, the budgets of the World Bank, the IMF, regional organizations, and bilateral development agencies often dwarf the UN's financial resources which makes it very unlikely for them to adhere to outside coordination rules.

Achieving coordination in the absence of a clear hierarchy therefore requires creating material and non-material incentives that motivate peacebuilding actors to coordinate their activities. Although the Peacebuilding Fund's early engagement in Burundi inhibited the PBC to achieve its full coordination potential, the Fund's later performance points to ways in which it can be used to create material incentives for coordination. Especially in narrowly defined subject areas, such as Security Sector Reform, the PBF has been able to successfully bring together UN agencies and local partners to carry out specific peacebuilding activities. Peacebuilding practitioners and decision-makers should therefore seek to implement similar financial rewards for inter-agency and local government coordination.

A culture of coordination that institutionally locks in cooperative behavior despite disincentives is more difficult, but not impossible. The PBSO's exchange of staff members with institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations-World Bank Partnership Framework for Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations signed in October 2008 are examples for steps in that very direction. Broader and deeper inter-agency engagement is needed, however, to consolidate this culture.

But coordination won't be successful through incentives alone. Often, leadership is key, both formal and informal. Given that the Peacebuilding Commission does not have the formal authority to make binding resolutions, its informal leadership role is crucial. Norway's leading role in dealing with the IMF and Burundi's fiscal crisis is a case in point. This form of leadership can be decisive in other coordination contexts, e.g. Groups of Friends. It is most effective if all actors can agree on one country/institution to take the lead in coordinating. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) has often played an important role in that regard.

Nevertheless, formal authority can be essential, too. Since in the multilateral environment, formal authority usually stems from Member States' mandates, a closer engagement by the Security Council could enhance the PBC's authority, especially in coordinating among Member States and could strengthen the PBSO's authority in coordinating the UN system on peacebuilding issues. Peacebuilders need to make sure, though, that informal and formal coordination mechanism aren't add odds with each other.

### **Strategies and resources for successful peacebuilding coordination**

Overcoming political obstacles is not enough; successful coordination is also based on sufficient resources and a common strategy. The case study highlights the consequences of mandating PBSO with supporting the coordination process while providing the Office with very limited resources to do so. Consequently, if peacebuilding actors need to make sure they follow up their mandates with the resources necessary to fulfill the task. This does not require pouring large amounts of money into the UN peacebuilding architecture. Rather, it points to supporting specific but essential tasks of the PBSO, such as promoting organizational learning, training and adaptability to constantly changing environments on the ground.

Finally, the case study emphasizes the role of a common strategic understanding of the peacebuilding situation. It is crucial for peacebuilding actors to agree on a common assessment that reflects the peacebuilding priorities of the local population. Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies (or Integrated Strategic Frameworks) are an increasingly common tool to do this; if the context allows or even requires it, the PBC can also incorporate its integrated strategy in a different guidance document, such as the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers—especially if that ensures the buy-in of such a relevant actor as the Bank. A starting point for creating a common strategy for international peacebuilders and local partners is to start information sharing early on and engage in early joint analysis and planning sessions. Electronic tools such as the UN Peacemaker and DPKO's lessons learned intranet can contribute to this endeavor; yet they cannot replace the experience of personal exchange and learning.

*ca. 5100 words (including footnotes)*

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## Learning Tools for Practitioners

### 10 Essential Planning Questions for Successful Peacebuilding Coordination

1. What is the specific coordination need? Are there different needs in different policy areas?
2. Who needs to be coordinated?
3. How can the relevant actors be included?
4. Are there material incentives in place that reward coordination? If not, can we create them?
5. Is there a "culture of coordination", i.e. regular exchange of personnel and ideas on all organizational levels?
6. Who is taking over informal coordination leadership? If there is no one (yet), who would be the best person/agency/country to do the job?
7. Did we exhaust all ways of formal coordination, e.g. through Security Council mandates and organizational policy? Do formal leadership/coordination arrangements contradict informal ones?
8. Do the organizations that are mandated to support the coordination process have sufficient resources to do so?
9. Do the coordination support organizations have sufficient capacities for analysis, learning, and adaptation to new and unforeseen circumstances?
10. Is there a common peacebuilding strategy in place to which all local and international peacebuilders can subscribe?

*[Hint: If the peacebuilders' answer to most of the questions is "we don't know" or "no", the coordination process is likely to fail and needs revision.]*

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## Web Resources

- <http://www.ipinst.org/programs/coping-with-crisis/details/11/31.html>, The International Peace Institute's peacebuilding program
- <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/>, The Peacebuilding Commission's newly launched website
- <http://www.usip.org/programs/centers/center-post-conflict-peace-and-stability-operations>, The United States Institute of Peace's Center for Post-Conflict Peace and Stability Operations
- <http://cips.uottawa.ca/publication/thematic-series/future-of-the-un-peacebuilding-commission/>, Future of the UN Peacebuilding Commission Working Paper Series at the University of Ottawa

## The Author

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