

Contributing to Peace Consolidation in Afghanistan (CPCA)

Contributing to Peace Consolidation in Afghanistan (CPCA): A Joint Romanian-Afghan Effort



The ***Contributing to Peace Consolidation in Afghanistan*** project represents a one year joint Romanian-Afghan endeavour, having as aim the highlight and analysis of peace consolidation related capacity building gaps, challenges, achievements, lessons identified, and “best-fit” solutions in Afghanistan on the eve of the 2014 transition process and the 2015 MDG mark. As an integral part of Romania’s Official Development Assistance policy, the implementation of the project was made possible with the financial assistance of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the Official Development Assistance budget, in partnership with UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre, and is being implemented by the ***Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR)*** in partnership with the Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) from Afghanistan.

The CPCA project was developed as a result of a series of consultations with various Afghan and international organisations engaged in peace consolidation and sustainable development activities, which have highlighted the need i) to enhance Afghan ownership over peacebuilding and peace consolidation capacities required by a peaceful transition process; ii) to highlight the link between the nationally and locally owned peacebuilding and peace consolidation programmes and the successful engagement with the MDG targets; iii) to boost national, local and community based capacities to reach the MDG targets in the post-2014 transition period through the use of peacebuilding and peace consolidation skills and knowledge; iv) to place a central role on the traditional Afghan peacebuilding and peace consolidation practices; v) to strengthen the role of Afghan civil society in development of such capacities for national and local use.

In order to reply to these needs, the project had foreseen the development and implementation of a series of activities with multi-stakeholder character, in two phases: a needs assessment phase and a capacity building phase. The target group chosen for the project included key government/ state actors, policy and decision makers dealing with development, peacebuilding and peace consolidation in Afghanistan, key civil society/ non-state actors active in the same or adjacent domains, staff of UN agencies and peacekeeping missions and EUPOL personnel.



The first phase of the project was made up of a four months long capacity building needs assessment process, containing a comprehensive desk review process of relevant Afghan and international reports and resource materials on the status of peacebuilding, peace consolidation and sustainable development capacities and programmes existent within the country. Coupled with this, the assessment team had undertaken a multi-stakeholder interview and survey process, involving representatives of the before-mentioned target

group. After having overviewed more than two hundred online and hard-copy documents, more than thirty five online interviews and lectures, and having conducted more than sixty interviews and surveys, the seven-member assessment team had drawn a series of conclusions and presented

relevant recommendations regarding the link between peace consolidation and development, peace consolidation and development related capacity building needs on the ground and existing strengths on which to build further efforts. The second phase of the project involved a four-day capacity building programme entitled “Collaborative Efforts for Building National Capacities for Peace Consolidation and Sustainable Development in Afghanistan”, bringing together fifteen Afghan practitioners engaged in peacebuilding, peace consolidation and sustainable development.

The findings of the project show that “defining and contributing to the process of peace consolidation in the 2014’s Afghanistan proves to be a challenging undertaking, due to the narrow connotation such a concept has received in the light of the impending security transition: that of general peace-making” (Observation made by UNDP Afghanistan staff of Afghan nationality). Basing strategy and action on the principles of systemic engagement, multi-stakeholder approach, national ownership and legitimacy, cumulative impact creation and evidence-based / demand-driven engagement aids in expanding and creating an integrated understanding of the concept itself, towards constructive and sustainable results. As such, peace consolidation needs to be understood from the perspective of positive peace creation, in which, based on the absence of direct violence, equitable and integrated outputs and outcomes are developed in the spheres of economy, social services, politics, justice, human relations, and constructive conflict resolution. Essentially, successful peace consolidation may be achieved only through the interrelated cycle of peacebuilding/ peacemaking/ peacekeeping, sustainable development, and nationally owned capacities (Kacsó et al. 2014).”

Further on, the assessment team concluded that there is a series of historical and contextual factors impacting and being impacted by the lack of proper capacity, among which the general state-building project, the military and human security situation, the socio-economic and cultural realities and the available resources. The customization of international capacity building programmes to the particularities of Afghanistan’s culture and context is quite scarce, which is coupled with a low level of local and national ownership of capacities and capacity building programmes serving peace consolidation and development. Due to a siloed work practice among the different actors, the cumulative impact of the capacity building programmes is minimal, especially when most of the programmes provided follow a supply- and donor-driven approach and little integration of previous lessons learned and local capacities.

The appraisal of existing capacity building strengths in Afghanistan has highlighted a series of principles aiding the consolidation of capacity building. Among these we may find a strive towards unitary planning and strategizing based on comprehensive situation analysis, country-led processes, the respect of dialogic principles in capacity building processes, and several others. The high awareness level of the interconnectedness between peace, conflict and development is coupled with gradually strengthened cooperation mechanisms between actors, both contributing to the decrease of dependency on foreign peace consolidation and sustainable development capacities. In order to contribute to the sustainable development of Afghanistan, the majority of actors attempt to link to a more or lesser degree with national peace consolidation and sustainable development objectives, traditional Afghan peace mechanisms, and the Afghan National Development Strategy in particular. The project, which is scheduled to end in December 2014, has managed to link closely not only with the existing MDG agenda, but also with the upcoming post-2015 UN Development one. Tackling the link between development and peace and security concerns, the project was developed and implemented closely in line with the UN System Task Team’s “Peace and Security” Thematic Think Piece, offering a set of recommendations in the direction of systemic peacebuilding strategy development and implementation, and related capacity building requirements.

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