

Peacebuilding & Human Security in Fragile States

By Toshiya HOSHINO

The civil war (1991-2002) in Sierra Leone, West Africa, was one of the most atrocious in our contemporary history. In this small state with a population of 5.8 million, more than 50,000 people died and more than one million others were displaced during the 11 years through 2002 when a peace agreement was reached. Many civilians were systematically forced to suffer amputation even though they managed to survive the war. The conflict is also well-known for the fact that numerous children were recruited as soldiers. People in Sierra Leone belong to “the Bottom Billion” as described by Paul Collier – the bracket of most impoverished people in the world who live on less than a dollar a day. Even after the peace agreement was struck, Sierra Leone ranked 177th (the lowest) in terms of the United Nations Development Program’s Human Development Index. Originally, Sierra Leone was an “affluent” country rich in precious natural resources such as diamonds. The country’s diamonds later were transformed into bloody “conflict diamonds” that helped intensify violence even further. Today, however, the African country is trying to break with its pathetic past and making untiring efforts to build a hopeful future for a “New Sierra Leone” as President Ernest Koroma put it.

Poverty is not the only cause of conflict. But dire poverty with social inequality can be politically manipulated easily, thus leading to conflict in many cases. Of the Bottom Billion as noted by Collier, 73% were involved in civil wars and 70% live in Africa. Given these facts, we cannot ignore the nexus between poverty and conflict in Africa. To make matters worse, conflict undermines government functions. Weakened governance in turn saps resistance to conflict and gives international terrorists room to take root. In fragile states,

severing the vicious cycle of poverty and conflict is closely related not only to peace and security in the country concerned but also to stability and prosperity in the international community as a whole.

Overcoming Peacebuilding Gaps

It seems extremely paradoxical that conflicts occur in many locations in the fast globalizing world. In fact, globalization is symbolized by transborder traffic of people, money, goods and information. But conflicts often occur among different identity groups within a state in recent years, with only damage and plagues crossing the national border. In fragile states, globalization has made gaps of wealth even wider, exacerbated by added punishment through economic and financial crises, higher food and energy prices, global warming, and infectious diseases.

How then should the international community address those negative moves? One recipe is to lay the foundation for peace toward medium- and long-term reconstruction and development – peacebuilding efforts – in post-conflict countries as well as preventing recurrence of conflict. This is a strategic approach currently drawing strong interest in the international community. Given that conflicts relapse in nearly 50% of post-conflict countries in five to 10 years after a peace agreement is reached, the significance of such an approach can be well understood.

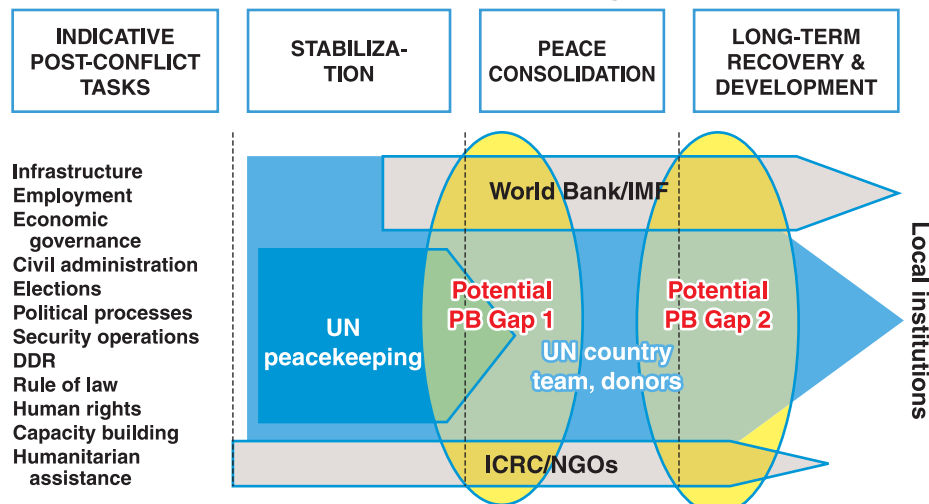
To make a success of sustained peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict countries (in other words, to keep conflicts from recurring), it is necessary to fill several important “gaps.” For that purpose, post-

conflict states need to firmly secure commitment to peace while the international community, for its part, needs to consistently provide the countries concerned with seamless interest, support and resources. To carry through such efforts, conscious, strategic approaches are necessary. In particular, gaps are inclined to emerge during transitional periods from a peacekeeping phase after a peace agreement to a peace-consolidating phase and from a peace-consolidating phase to a longer-term reconstruction and development phase. *Chart 1* shows pattern diagrams of potential peacebuilding gaps. *Chart 2* visualizes the process of UN-led peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone. After the peace agreement was reached, a full-scale UN peacekeeping mission (UNAMSIL) was deployed to the country. The mission

CHART 1

Needs & gap of peacebuilding (PB)

Core business of multi-dimensional UN peacekeeping operations

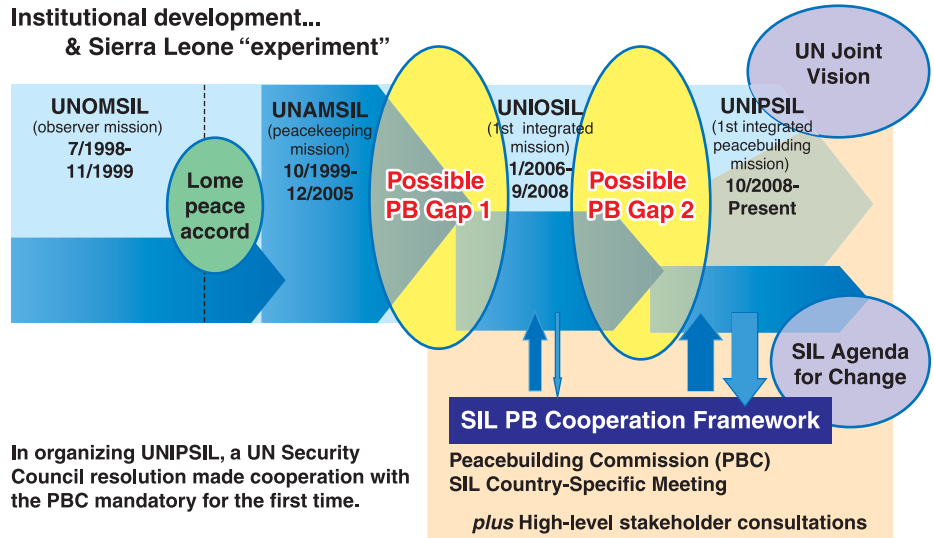


Source: Adapted from *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines* (2008), p.23.

CHART 2

Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone & PBC

Institutional development...
& Sierra Leone “experiment”



Source: Compiled by author

played an indispensable role. But what followed was a risk of potential gap that could gape a hole as the United Nations drew down the mission, replacing it with a much smaller integrated mission (UNIOSIL), followed by a still smaller integrated peacebuilding office (UNIPSIL). It was at these transitional moments that UN members, in full consultation with Sierra Leone officials and civil society representatives as well as with the World Bank/IMF, the African Union, the European Union and other key stakeholders, worked out an integrated peacebuilding strategy through the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and sought to keep possible gaps from manifesting themselves so that it will be able to secure coordinated assistance for peacebuilding. (Actually, the United Nations helped Sierra Leone successfully carry out presidential and parliamentary elections, make clear priority tasks for peacebuilding and arrange for intensive support from the region and the broader international community.) *Chart 2* also shows the United Nations striving to build a system designed to ensure a seamless and self-sustaining commitment from both local Sierra Leone stakeholders and the international community with an eye toward advancing into a phase of longer-term reconstruction and development.

Peacebuilding with Human Face

Peacebuilding efforts to be made after the end of conflict tend to focus on institutional aspects such as the establishment of a new state's constitution and the reorganization of its executive and legislative branches as well as reforming its security and judicial sectors in addition to the restoration of civil order, disarmament and recovery/reconstruction. To firmly establish peace in the true sense, however, it is essential to listen to the voice of people and make them feel from the bottom of their hearts that peace has come. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the government and people requested energy assistance. Some may wonder whether it is reasonable to extend energy assistance, which will rather be considered appropriate if it is to be provided for development assistance. It is no surprise, however, that those ordinary citizens whose daily lives were messed up by the civil war seek a visible “peace dividend” such as employment opportunities and the availability of electricity and other key life-line services. They can feel in the true sense that they live peacefully only after obtaining such dividends. With this in mind, the PBC prioritized youth employment and empowerment and the energy sector as well in the integrated peacebuilding strategy for Sierra Leone, on top of advancing good governance and security and judicial sector reforms. Japan, for its part, is financing a project to supply electric power in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown through official development assistance (ODA).

It is encouraging to see the view becoming increasingly prevalent that peace should be considered from a comprehensive viewpoint by

including a variety of factors such as development and human rights, not defined simply by the absence of conflict. Based on the prevailing viewpoint, “peacebuilding with a human face” should be pushed forward. On that score, it is important to carefully incorporate the idea of human security into peacebuilding processes in fragile, post-conflict states.

Human security is defined as “the protection of the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedom and fulfillment.” In other words, it means the viewpoint of directly addressing the problems that make people feel serious “insecurity.” Hence, it is significant to figure out what makes people in post-conflict countries feel insecurity (or peace) and take concrete action so as to sustain peace both physically and spiritually.

From Central Asia to Africa

From the viewpoint of facilitating peacebuilding efforts and human security in fragile states, Japan has been promoting active assistance in wide geographic areas ranging from Afghanistan in Central Asia to African countries. The reconstruction and stabilization of war-torn Afghanistan have the effect of spurring efforts to eradicate terrorism, while bringing peace to chaotic Somalia is inseparably related to a fundamental solution to the question of rampant piracy off the African country as well as to regional stability. For all regions of Africa, Japan has been actively implementing a program to double ODA provision and investment through the TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) process.

It is no exaggeration to say promoting development, reducing poverty and establishing peace and stability in fragile states are the challenges that should be addressed not only by the countries concerned but by the entire world. Today, the international community needs to help remove what people in fragile countries consider insecurity and reinforce international solidarity so those people will be able to foster hope for tomorrow and display their potential abilities.

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