

NOREF Policy Brief

Adapting Norwegian Civilian Capacity for the Future: Implications of the Guéhenno Report

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Executive summary

With vacancy rates averaging at 22% in peace operations around the world for the last decade, and at some instances at twice that rate, it is time for reform of how the UN recruits, deploys and manages civilian capacity in peace operations. To this effect, a UN advisory group report containing a range of recommendations on how the UN can improve in this area was issued in May 2011. As a first step, Under-Secretary-General Susana Malcorra, who was charged with the follow-up of the report, suggested the creation of a Civilian Partnership Cell that should connect the needs of the UN with the civilian capacities of rostering organisations and member states through a virtual web-portal. However, for now only the virtual web-portal will be implemented with the existing budget. Member states have already expressed support for the idea of creating a partnership cell during both consultations with the UN Advisory Group and after launching of the report. The Government of Norway and Norwegian rostering and training organisations should, therefore, in cooperation with international partners, keep up the pressure on the UN to implement this initiative, as well as some of the other key reforms suggested in the report.

The new peacekeeping mission in South Sudan – UNMISS – has been identified as a testing ground for new and more flexible partnership modalities, and the Government of Norway and Norwegian rostering and training organisations should make sure to use this opportunity. As the Civilian Partnership Cell now is on hold, it will be even more important that member states, the UN and rostering organisations explore further use of the “Experts on Mission” modality to make sure that capacities are deployed without unnecessary delays. Furthermore, Norway should systematically work to build support for the recommendations of the advisory group report, in particular in cooperation with its partners in the south that have already supported the report. Continuing the close consultations and discussions with the African Union (AU), Indonesia and India that Norway already has embarked on will be particularly important. Brazil is also in the process of setting up a roster, and Norway should consider whether this could be a potential area of cooperation.

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the UN has increasingly become engaged in peacebuilding, aimed at strengthening the ability of war-ridden countries to overcome fragility and enter onto a path to stability and growth. As of May 2011, the UN was engaged in 16 peacekeeping and 12 political missions across the globe,¹ employing a total of 25 490 civilian staff, of which 6 878 international professionals, 16 270 local staff, and 2 342 were UN Volunteers.²

The UN has long been ridden by a system which was originally set up for conference management in New York, while today utilised to staff large, complex and fast-changing peace operations across the globe. As a result, there has been a considerable mismatch between the needs on the ground and the UN system’s ability to deliver, with deployment of staff frequently taking up to a year and up to 50% vacancy rates in several missions.³ The

1 UN DPKO Fact Sheet, <http://bit.ly/heHAfb> and UN DPA Fact Sheet, <http://bit.ly/r8AFBd>, updated 31 May 2011. Both accessed on 11 June, 2011. The author has added the new mission for South Sudan in the DPKO numbers.

2 Ibid. All numbers are as of 31 March, 2011.

3 See e.g. de Coning, Cedric (2010) *Civilian Capacity in United Nations Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Missions*. Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs; and UN (2009) *Audit Report: Human resources management for peacekeeping operations: recruitment, placement and retention of staff*. New York: UN Office of Internal Oversight Services. Available at <http://bit.ly/n1xfnb>. Accessed 11 August 2011.

initiative of the Secretary-General to review UN civilian support to post-conflict countries has been warmly received by member states, regional and sub-regional organisations, civil society and other actors in the south and the north.

As a response to the great challenges the UN is facing in deploying civilian capacities to support countries emerging from conflict, the UN Secretary-General appointed an independent Senior Advisory Group headed by former Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno. Their report was shared with the UN Security Council and General Assembly in May 2010,⁴ and USG Susana Malcorra, head of the UN Department of Field Support, has been charged with taking the recommendations of the report forward.

The Guéhenno Report launches four key principles for deployment of civilian capacities in the aftermath of conflict: Ownership, Partnership, Expertise and Nimbleness. To this effect, the UN should:

- strengthen national ownership by supporting and building up core government functions;
- fully utilise the potential of local, regional and international capacities through flexible and effective partnerships with regional organisations, rostering organisations, and member states;
- identifying the right expertise and maintaining a core of professionals at the UN that can be supported by niche expertise through flexible partnerships within a clear and accountable framework; and lastly
- use the available resources more effectively and efficiently.

Not only has the UN been looking more closely at how the right capacity could be deployed at the right time to the right place. Norway, Denmark and Sweden are among some of the countries that are either in the process or recently have finished a review of the provision of civilian capacity to countries ravaged by natural disasters or political

crises. The African Union has supported the UN reform process⁵ and is in the process of setting up a civilian standby roster that will propose staff for the civilian component of the African Standby Force, mediation and post-conflict reconstruction and development.⁶ The EU has also reviewed its efforts to deploy civilian experts, and has named High Representative Ashton as *primus inter pares* with responsibility to coordinate the work of the organisation in the aftermath of natural disasters and political crises.⁷

Obstacles to reform are many, both within the UN and outside. UN agencies and programmes have been wary of an expansion of the programmatic responsibilities and activities of UN DPKO and DPA. DPKO and DFS seem to resist change in the human resource management, probably due both to reform fatigue among staff and management alike and to concerns for whether additional resources corresponding to the additional workload will be allocated by the General Assembly. Outside the UN system there are concerns about the ability of the UN to become more effective, even if reforms are carried through. In addition there is the danger that this particular reform initiative may fall victim to struggles in the General Assembly between groupings of countries, notwithstanding the support already voiced.

5 The African Union hosted a consultation for the review on civilian capacities in December 2010. The summary stressed the need for partnership with host communities, Member States, regional and sub-regional organisations, civil society and the private sector, and the need for stronger mechanisms to leverage African capacities and to support South-South and triangular cooperation. *Chairman's Summary: Consultation on the Review of Civilian Capacities, 8 December 2010*. Addis Ababa, ACCORD. Available at <http://bit.ly/oXtAyW>. Accessed 11 June 2011.

6 AU (2011) Developing the Mediation and Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development pools of the African Union Peace and Security Department Civilian Standby Roster. Durban: ACCORD. In addition to supporting the development of the African Standby Force civilian capacity roster, Norway has also been supporting the African Civilian Standby Roster for Humanitarian and Peace Building Missions (AFDEM) through the Training for Peace programme. AFDEM facilitates the rapid deployment of trained civilian personnel to United Nations' and African peace support missions.

7 See e.g. <http://bit.ly/ris9Lt>. For more on the goals for civilian capacity, see <http://bit.ly/oacc5d>.

4 Informal briefings were given to the UN General Assembly and Security Council on 11 and 12 May 2011.

Implications for Norway and Norwegian actors

Norway is in the process of reviewing its civilian crisis management response mechanisms.⁸ The Norwegian government secondments some staff through in-house mechanisms at the various ministries, but most secondments are handled by semi-autonomous institutions. The NORCAP-roster, managed by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the largest in Norway and secondments more than 180 persons totalling 1500 man-months per year. The NORDEM roster, managed by the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights secondments 80 persons totalling 300 man-months per year. In addition there are several smaller rosters and secondment mechanisms for e.g. humanitarian, security sector and judicial reform expertise. The proliferation of secondment mechanisms can strengthen the resilience of the Norwegian support for civilian crisis management, but also poses great challenges in terms of cooperation and coordination between the various actors. Several of the seconding institutions have overlapping mandates and there is a need to review the mandates and give clear directions. At the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which funds by far the most secondments, the administrative and financial responsibility is likewise spread among a number of different sections. This necessitates strong coordination also in-house at the MFA, and the responsibility for civilian crisis management should be given to one of the Deputy Ministers to ensure effective and efficient use of resources and accountability.

In the area of capacity development and training, the Training for Peace (TfP) programme features most prominently. TfP is a partnership between African training and conflict resolution institutions, and the Norwegian Policy Directorate and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, fully funded by Norway. The programme aims to strengthen the African security architecture, and focuses on training, policy advice and research.⁹ However, there is ample scope in Norway to improve cooperation between rostering and training institutions. About 250 persons are given basic and specialised training every year

and, while cooperation today is scarce, there is sufficient opportunity to improve the integration of the training and establish common standards.¹⁰

Using local and regional expertise and having international experts as a last resort

As UN peace operations have evolved and changed over the last twenty years, the capacity needs have become increasingly focused and specialised. The need for local staff with contextual understanding is even more pressing. The tasks are manifold and diverse, but have in common that they often require specific competencies like natural resource management, traditional and modern justice reform or land-management. Such tasks often require unique expertise that may be singular to a country or a region, or expertise that is rare even on a global scale. The UN cannot be expected, nor can be able to maintain all types of in-house. It should tap into the pools of expertise that exist locally and regionally, and utilise international experts only as a last resort. This has important implications for Norwegian rosters. The NORCAP roster managed by the Norwegian Refugee Council has already a wide mix of nationalities in its register. Other Norwegian rosters should also be encouraged to widen their recruitment base and be able to offer competent staff from the South. Triangular partnerships along the lines of Training for Peace should also be envisioned for rosters.

The new peacekeeping mission in South Sudan – UNMISS – has been identified as a testing ground for new and more flexible partnership modalities, and the Government of Norway and Norwegian rostering and training organisations should make sure to use this opportunity. Notwithstanding the planned Civilian Partnership Cell, member states, the UN and rostering organisations should explore further use of the “Experts on Mission” modality to make sure that capacities are deployed without unnecessary delays.¹¹ Regional expertise that is

8 The author served as a consultant to NOREF during the Norwegian Government’s review process. In the Norwegian context, civilian crisis management refers to staff, including police, seconded to undertake a wide range of tasks (humanitarian, security, political, development) with a multitude of actors – AU, EU, OECD, various UN funds, programmes, and agencies, and UN peacekeeping and special political missions.

9 For more information about TfP, see <http://bit.ly/q6jYDH>.

10 Faret, Tone (2010). *Training of civilians for international deployment*. Oslo, NOREF: p. 10 and 19.

11 This modality makes use of the exception that “The Secretary-General may accept gratis personnel only on an exceptional basis [...] to provide expertise not available within the Organization for very specialized functions, as identified by the Secretary-General, and for a limited and specified period of time.” See UN (1999) *Administrative instruction*. UN doc. ST/AI/1999/6, 28 May. Available at http://www.unescap.org/asd/hrms/odlu/files/Admin_Assistant_Training_materials/HRMS/Staffing_and_development/ST-AI-1999-6.doc. Accessed 11 August 2011.

better suited to support the capacity needs in South Sudan should be identified and seconded. Initial steps have been made through the secondment of about 200 regional experts from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda through IGAD and UNDP, financed by Norway.¹²

Focusing on needs

The Norwegian rosters have evolved to be some of the leading in their field, both in terms of competencies, geographical breadth, and partnering modalities with various UN entities. Going forward, there is a need to revisit what is and will be the core needs of the UN, EU, OSCE, AU and other partners in the future. Staff with strategic planning skills for comprehensive multidimensional peace operations are one identified area of need, as is support for security sector and judicial reform. Rosters should include members from the global south, and more efforts should be made to include members from the specific regions where peace operations are deployed today, to be able to deploy regional capacity that has the requisite contextual knowledge. International capacity should be a last resort.

Triangular cooperation

The Government of Norway should look into how they can strengthen their triangular cooperation with states, regional organisations and NGOs in the south, drawing on the positive experience from cooperation with the AU to establish their civilian standby roster and the cooperation with IGAD mentioned above. The dialogue with the AU, Indonesia and India should be strengthened and lead to concrete cooperation, and further opportunities should be looked into with other states such as Brazil, regional organisations such as ASEAN, and NGOs. Rostering organisations should, with the support of the Government of Norway, follow the example of the Training for Peace programme and look for opportunities to establish triangular cooperation with partners in the south.

¹² The secondment is done with the support of regional organisation IGAD (Inter-governmental Authority on Development), comprising six countries in eastern Africa. For more about the initiative, see <http://bit.ly/r7h8S7>.

Setting up the Civilian Partnership Cell

The Civilian Partnership Cell is the most tangible proposal of the Guéhenno report. The virtual web portal where the supply from rosters can meet with the demand from the field should be developed in close consultation with rostering organisations, to make sure that the web portal is easy to dock into and does not create unnecessary bureaucracy. The web portal should not replicate existing systems or create a bottleneck by acting as a central gatekeeper, but should serve as a hub facilitating direct interaction civilian capacity providers and end-users. Taking into consideration that the planned Civilian Partnership Cell may now have been put on hold, member states, the UN and rostering organisations should explore further use of the “Experts on Mission” and other modalities to make sure that capacities are deployed without unnecessary delays.

Norway and Norwegian rosters should continue the deployment of expert teams and also look into how they can further triangular cooperation in this area. The Guéhenno report discusses the possibility of deploying expert teams (civilian support packages). Norwegian rosters are also able to provide experts for either a secondment direct hire (pre-trained and pre-screened) basis into the DFS roster system, or to support DFS with ad-hoc recruitment. To make progress on some of these initiatives, it is however necessary to revisit the interpretation of the ‘gratis personnel’ resolutions and to ensure that the SG has the ability to use seconded experts for assignments of longer than 12 months when this expertise not is readily available in-house in the UN.

Training and certification

The UN can build on the competencies established through various peacekeeping training centres. The training and rostering community is a vital resource for civilian capacity and reflect the diversity of global capacity pools today. The review suggests that a certification mechanism should be established to certify programmes and trainers, led by the UN DPKO Integrated Training Service. There is a need for harmonising training and developing more rigorous methods of certification, but the training and rostering community are important reservoirs of competence in this area and should be closely

consulted. An ad-hoc working group including the training and rostering community should take stock of existing standards and set minimum training standards and benchmarks for quality control, certification and accreditation. The Norwegian training and rostering community should also make sure they are involved in the process of developing a Civilian Staff Curriculum, also under the leadership of the UN DPKO Integrated Training Services.

In Norway, Norwegian rostering and training organisations should establish common training and certification standards, and the Norwegian government should consider establishing a common pre-deployment course for secondees that would replace the individual pre-deployment trainings existing today. This would ensure that all personnel have received adequate basic training ahead of their deployment and because of the participation from a wide range of categories of personnel, the secondees will also develop a more comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional character of the work that they will partake in when deployed. The individual seconding organisations could then add on specialised training according to the needs of the individual staff.

To ensure more cooperation between Norwegian seconding organisations, a network should be established. The network could meet on a regular basis and exchange information about secondments, training and other activities. The network should also establish mechanisms to record best practices from returning secondees and identify gaps where more substantive research is needed.

The way forward

Peace operations today are drastically different from those only ten years ago. While the international community has recognised that the period in the immediate aftermath of conflict is key to stabilise conflict-affected countries, the evolving rhetoric around peacebuilding has not been matched by the requisite changes in the peacekeeping and peacebuilding architecture. In this respect, the report and its recommendations, if implemented, will represent a great step forward in the capacity of the international community to support and rebuild countries emerging from conflict.

The Senior Advisory Group has consulted widely, and the endorsement by African Member States, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, and African civil society organisations that were consulted by the Senior Advisory Group in Addis Ababa in December was particularly important.¹³ These endorsements suggest that the core recommendations enjoy wide support, a sign that should encourage the Secretary-General to take action and implement the most tangible recommendations of the report.

The focus should be on setting up a coordination mechanism at UNDFS that can facilitate the exchange of information between capacity providers and users, put in place Memorandums of Understanding with key capacity providers and define the time horizon for use of seconded personnel to be 24 to 36 months after the end of conflict and/or a peace agreement. These steps will drastically improve the ability of the organisation to put capacity on the ground in a timely fashion.

In a time of financial austerity, it also a significant plus that the recommendations are cost efficient. If the UN succeeds in keeping a lean core staff and attaching niche capacity according to needs, and as long as this is paralleled by tapping into global and diverse pools of capacity for shorter durations, efforts to improve the current system for deployment of civilian staff will have a real chance of success. Some of the recommendations may spark a number of turf battles. Nevertheless, change will not come easily and Norway should display their strong support to the Secretary-General to make sure that progress is made on this issue.

¹³ Ibid.