


Working Paper No. 10 Needs Assessments in Post-Conflict Situations	
Country Studies: Summary - Lessons learnt	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH


Enhancing Multilateral Post-Conflict Needs Assessment (PCNA): Lessons learnt from East Timor, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq and Liberia

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HOW TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL POST-CONFLICT NEEDS ASSESSMENT	
Experience from a number of recent post-conflict needs assessments (PCNA) highlights that a limited number of key issues with regard to process and methodology can make the difference between success and failure. The following pointers merit attention for your PCNA approach and management:	
GENERAL ISSUES	
Establish a standing PCNA capacity at World Bank and UN, including lessons learnt capacity.	√
Make use of conflict analysis in order to bring a crisis preventive reconstruction focus into the PCNA work. .	√
VISION AND OBJECTIVE	
Focus the PCNA on a long-term vision with realistic goals. For indicators, use desired GDP/person and social development indicators from MDG or HDI.	√
PROCESS AND TIMEFRAME	
Set up a PCNA secretariat at HQ and country level.	√
Employ a special process manager to keep the process on track, if the PCNA mission is large and the task very complex.	√
Make use of WB watching brief instrument and UN system capacities.	√
SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	
Base the PCNA on conflict, interest and stakeholder analysis in the preparatory and implementation stage	√
Include the assessment of capacity-building of national institutions into each sector analysis.	√
Establish a minimum standard regarding time, security and national ownership. If time frame is too tight, sequence the assessment process: a) preliminary NA for a phase of 12 to 18 months only; b) reassessment after 18 months for 5-10 years period with national leadership.	√
Establish and use a Log Frame based planning format for the proposed sector interventions and their costs.	√
Include cross-cutting issues into the sectoral work through detailed questionnaires, regular meetings or workshops between sector and cross-cutting experts.	√
MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES	
Prepare essential steering instruments such as concept notes, Terms of References for all mission members, codes of conduct and background/ briefing material.	√
In order to guide and synthesise the results of the team, schedule at least one preparatory and one consolidation team-workshop of all members.	√
Prepare at least a desk conflict analysis and provide the results to all mission members before the field phase.	√
PARTICIPATION AND OWNERSHIP	
Include the full range of country interest through stakeholder workshops and validation meetings. This requires enabling conditions in terms of time, capacity and the political will.	√
Integrate national experts within the PCNA team to increase the ownership	√

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I. CONTEXT

The following Lessons learnt are based on case studies in and on recent post-conflict needs assessments (PCNAs) in Liberia, Iraq, Timor Leste, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan undertaken by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).

Countries emerging from violent conflict present particular challenges to needs assessment which have to be considered when planning and managing a multilateral PCNA. While the peace process remains fragile, violence is often still ongoing in parts of the country restricting access. Legitimate national counterparts are often either not yet (re-)installed or have limited capacity to substantially engage in the needs assessment. Humanitarian needs are pressing, while political and economic reconstruction is highly politicised. In addition, the window of opportunity to hold a donor reconstruction conference is often very narrow, which adds huge time pressure to the needs assessment. In consequence, high demands are put on the process of design and implementation of needs assessments. The PCIA itself can contribute to the peace process of the country.

The following lessons learnt from recent PCNAs shall support multilateral agencies in the difficult task of conducting transparent and inclusive needs assessments, leading to nationally owned and technically sound strategies for rebuilding countries after conflict.


II. GENERAL ISSUES

Develop capacity for PCNA

Besides the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) process, PCNAs have become the common response of the international community to emerging post-conflict countries. They should be recognised as such and further institutionalised. This should include the establishment of a standing capacity for managing and supporting PCNAs. Such a capacity should include the following functions:

- *Establishment of interagency co-ordination a) at HQ level and b) in-country;*
- *pool of qualified personnel* for technical and leadership positions in needs assessment missions;
- *standards for PCNA process and management* (e.g. standard Memorandum of Understanding between multilateral agencies and national authorities, guidelines for donor involvement);
- *data management facility* for conflict countries: establishment of linkages to existing early warning and conflict monitoring mechanisms, pooling of data relevant to post-conflict reconstruction between UN and WB as well as utilisation of the WB watching brief instrument;
- *documentation of lessons learnt* and feed-back mechanism for future PCNAs;
- *standardisation of key concepts* and planning procedures for post-conflict needs assessment (e.g. needs, benchmarks, recurrent costs; appropriate levels of reconstruction).

With regard to the overall coordination issue, on the UN side the UNDGO technical working group on reconstruction planning as well as the UNDGO secretariat have proved themselves

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as effective mechanisms of facilitating the interagency process at headquarters and of co-ordinating and supporting the missions in the field. In-country, substantive guidance of the PCNA needs close cooperation between the permanent multinational in-country structures (e.g. UN resident co-ordinator, World Bank representative, the UN missions, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, SRSG) and the needs assessment co-ordinator. A clear definition of their respective roles and responsibilities in the context of the PCNA could contribute to a stronger in-country leadership of the needs assessment

Ground PCNA in conflict analysis

One of the major challenges of post-conflict reconstruction consists of understanding and overcoming the structures that led to conflict and made protracted violence possible. We therefore suggest basing a standardised PCNA methodology on conflict analysis. Conflict analysis enables directing assistance at the root causes of conflict and promoting the conversion of political and economic systems dominated by violence.

In this sense, conflict analysis should guide the selection and prioritisation of sectors considered in the needs assessment. At the moment sectors tend to be identified by the core group of donors initiating the needs assessment, with additional sectors added at the request of national authorities. As a result, needs assessments frequently cover a relatively large number of sectors, resulting in missions with more than sixty members. Such missions place a large burden on national partners and are difficult to steer towards substantive issues and a clear reconstruction focus.

An alternative can be to focus the (initial) needs assessment on the key sectors relevant to conflict transformation. A later needs assessment benefiting from stronger national capacity can possibly adopt a more comprehensive approach.

Make use of lessons learnt from others


The further institutionalisation of PCNA can additionally benefit from the lessons learnt with the Consolidated Appeal Process by humanitarian agencies.

III. VISION AND OBJECTIVE OF PCNA

From the outset PCNA should be based on a clear vision for a peaceful development of the country. This vision should have strong roots in the aspirations of the people, as they may be laid down in a peace accord or other broad-based political documents. In the absence of this, visioning exercises can be conducted with key stakeholders at the beginning of the needs assessment to define broad parameters.

For the purpose of the PCNA it is important to focus on a long-term vision beyond the participants' immediate political interests. Realistic indicators can help to focus the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the needs assessment and should be developed at the outset by the team. These indicators may be:

- desired GNP/person after x years;

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- basic social development indicators drawn from the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and/or the Human Development Index (HDI), as well as
- qualitative indicators such as aspired level of security.

These indicators can then be operationalised and costed using a results-based planning framework using the Log Frame approach.

Strong leadership and sufficient time are required on the part of the PCNA management to develop this vision with stakeholders, communicate it nationally and internationally and keep the needs assessment focussed.

PCNA as a peace-building tool


Donor reconstruction conferences are usually conducted to provide international recognition and support to emerging peace processes. In this context the PCNA process itself should already be regarded as a contribution to the peace process. This is all the more important as there are also considerable risks involved in post-conflict recovery. The prospect of substantial international assistance coming into the country, for example, can increase the stakes in the peace negotiations and make it more difficult for the parties to the conflict to reach sustainable agreement on future governance structures. Tensions are also likely where post-conflict planning requires firm decisions on future economic and social arrangements that are still under negotiation by the conflict parties. In addition, the international attention to the conflict parties may sideline the legitimate concerns of the wider population, which may not feel represented by either party.

From a *Do No Harm* perspective this situation requires a high degree of conflict sensitivity. Impartiality, inclusiveness and transparency are key to the needs assessment process as are a timing and pace appropriate to the peace process. Under these conditions, PCNA can provide a framework to foster awareness and dialogue between the conflict parties on the long-term challenges awaiting the country. In the best case, agreements on more technical issues in the context of the needs assessment can pave the way for more substantive political agreements.

IV. PROCESS AND TIMEFRAME

Preparatory phase

During the transition from open conflict to post-conflict development, countries usually go through a series of needs assessment and planning processes. At national level these can reach from humanitarian needs assessments and PCNA to assessments for major post-conflict reform projects (e.g. demobilisation, security sector reform) and mainstream development planning such as Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and Common Country Assessment/UN Development Framework (CCA/UNDAF). In the preparatory phase of a PCNA provisions should be made to build institutional and substantive linkages between these assessments. This may include involving the respective lead agencies in the co-ordination mechanisms of the PCNA, ensuring personal continuity and institutional memory of the assessment missions by deploying the same key experts, as well as sharing data, documents and lessons learnt. Such linkages can enhance the coherence and effectiveness of the international response.

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Good timing is essential for the success of PCNA. In contrast to humanitarian needs assessments, political and security minimum conditions need to be in place to allow for substantive recovery planning. Some of these conditions include:

- A peace agreement has been signed or the peace process is very advanced.
- The government is agreeable to embark on a PCNA process.
- Major donors accept the need for and are willing to support recovery programmes for the country.
- The situation is conducive, including politically, for the return and reintegration of refugee and internally displaced populations, if appropriate (UNDG/ECHA 2004).

There are also considerable risks associated with providing too much assistance too early. External assistance can make little difference when absorptive capacities are still low. There is rather the risk that it will be appropriated as “spoils” by the conflict parties, who thus find themselves rewarded for engaging in violence. For this reason a two-phased approach is recommended for countries with very low national capacities. While a first needs assessment considers a range of limited reconstruction needs for the immediate transition phase only, a follow-up assessment can hopefully build on a more consolidated government capacity and national ownership.


Where a PCNA can be anticipated some time in advance, it is helpful to establish a preparatory mechanism, possibly based on the World Bank working brief instruments or on UN system capacities such as the UNDP country office. Such a mechanism can assist in gathering basic data, carrying out conflict analysis, identifying relevant stakeholders and developing visions for post-conflict development.

Donors place high expectations on PCNA, while often they set conditions that make it difficult to conduct a satisfactory needs assessment. It is therefore proposed to define and communicate minimum standards and principles for PCNA, including minimum requirements in terms of time, security and national ownership. This can provide the ground for negotiating the objectives and scope of the needs assessment with donors. From experience it seems that at least a 4-5 months period from the official mandate for a PCNA mission up to a donor conference is the minimum time frame necessary for a substantive PCNA that includes at least a medium-term reconstruction perspective. If the given time frame is shorter than this, a two-phased approach should be suggested: a) a preliminary needs assessment for a reconstruction phase of up to 18 months only; b) a reassessment after 18 months for a 5-10 years reconstruction period in which national leadership plays a key role.

Early on in the process the PCNA lead agencies should install inter-agency co-ordination teams at international and local levels. At international level the UNDGO technical working group steering the Iraq needs assessment provides a good example of inter-agency co-ordination that should be built upon. In-country the multilateral management group (MG) consisting of the resident representatives of the multilateral agencies should be further reinforced to facilitate effective co-ordination and communication.

Field phase

To reduce agency influence and enhance the credibility of the exercise, the needs assessment team should be composed of experts chosen on the basis of their personal merit, not institutional affiliation. Participating institutions should nominate experts on the basis of international stature, who might or might not be their own staff. In any case, these experts should work on identifying needs, not potential programmes for their agencies. To

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ensure independent funding for such experts, the feasibility of a PCNA fund should be explored.

A major challenge has been the large size of the needs assessment missions and the relative isolation of sectoral teams from each other. To overcome this problem an inception workshop as well as the co-ordinated, parallel deployment of missions should become mandatory. Regular in-country workshops should help to integrate sectoral and cross-cutting issues.

A HQ as well as an in-country secretariat are both essential to co-ordinate the needs assessment on a day-to-day level and provide logistical support.

Consolidation and reporting phase


During the consolidation phase a small core team supported by conflict and cross-cutting advisers drafts the synthesis needs assessment report based on the sectoral assessments. This critical stage of analysis and strategy building is frequently not given sufficient time and attention. Hence many post-conflict needs assessments lack clear direction and overall strategy. The following measures are recommended to address this issue:

- Formulating a long-term recovery vision and objectives for the immediate post-conflict transition phase early on in the needs assessment.
- Strategic selection of sectors and issues to consider in the needs assessment based on the overall objectives.
- Holding a consolidation workshop at the end of the field phase with high-level participation from multilateral agencies and possibly national counterparts to refine the overall recovery strategy, review sectoral assessments and prioritise assistance needs.
- Providing sufficient time (including time for translation into national languages!) for national authorities/conflict parties to comment on the final draft of the needs assessment report.

Lessons learnt phase

Post-conflict needs assessments have considerably gained in professionalism and substance over the last decade. In both UNDP and the WB, however, institutional learning on post-conflict needs assessment still depends on key personnel with substantive practical experience. No systematic approach has yet been developed to gather the perspectives from different stakeholders and feed lessons into future assessments. This function should be assumed by a standing needs assessment unit created by the multilateral agencies. Lessons learnt activities should include:

- Written debriefing of all mission members using standardised debriefing forms;
- debriefing and lessons learnt meeting, where possible in-country, convening the needs assessment management and key stakeholders;
- follow-up mechanism to ensure inclusion of lessons learnt in future needs assessments.

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V. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Develop a standard methodology for post-conflict needs assessment

A standard methodology is presently under preparation to guide PCNA. The following paragraphs suggest some building blocks for it.

Conflict analysis and priority setting

Conflict analysis and sectoral priority setting can take place at stakeholder workshops. For such workshops analytical and planning instruments such as the UN Conflict-related Development Assistance (CDA), the WB Conflict Assistance Framework (CAF), and Think Tools are available.

Regional dimensions of PCNA

Two regional dimensions have to be taken into consideration within the PCNA:

- Where conflict has a strong regional dimension within a country, it may be more appropriate to base the needs assessment on a regional rather than a sectoral approach, thus combining sectoral experts in regional teams.
- Since most conflicts tend to have larger regional dynamics and repercussions beyond the borders of individual countries, it may be necessary to include the wider regional dimensions of the conflict into the needs assessment in order to develop a comprehensive reconstruction strategy. Preparatory work in the “watching brief mode” can be a good way to deal with these larger complexities, as the case of Afghanistan illustrates.


In any case, the geographical scope of the needs assessment has to be consistent with its objectives.

Paying attention to institutional capacity

Most PCNAs do not pay sufficient attention to the issues of capacity building and institutionalisation. The needs assessment exercise itself is often overwhelming for nascent national authorities emerging from a long period of civil war. The proposed programmes tend to exceed the existing national co-ordination and implementation capacities, while only a fraction of the overall budget is allocated to building national capacity. An assessment of national institutional capacities and capacity building needs should therefore be part of each sectoral analysis.

Integrating cross-cutting issues

Cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights, environment and security are often key to addressing the root causes of conflict. Frequently, however, they “get lost” in the final needs assessment report. This can be avoided by developing a clear strategy for including cross-sectoral issues in sectoral approaches. Providing sector teams with clear and detailed questionnaires on cross-cutting issues, individual sessions between sector managers and cross-sectoral experts as well as integrative workshops can enhance the quality and status of their assessment.

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VI. MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS

Strengthen leadership of PCNA

Good process management is of primary importance for the success of PCNA. This requires strong leadership, which can draw on appropriate support from HQ and in-country. Substantive leadership should be vested in an overall co-ordinator with a clear supervisory mandate. This person will also be the key interlocutor for high-level national and international officials.

For large and complex team structures, an additional process manager can enhance efficiency and effectiveness.


Good preparation is essential for the effective implementation of the PCNA in the country. The following steering instruments should be prepared and established well in advance of the deployment of sectoral teams:

- Concept note outlining the overall purpose and scope of the needs assessment as well as the roles and responsibilities of the co-ordination team members;
- General terms of reference for all mission members detailing general requirements (objectives, data quality and sources, in-country consultation, reporting format, deadlines) and essential issues to consider (e.g. conflict and security analysis, institutional analysis and capacity building).
- Terms for individual sectors should be drafted, communicated and discussed between the teams prior to the in-country mission. They should include a clear definition of working principles, such as participation, cross-cutting issues to consider as well as outline the linkages between sectors.
- Code of conduct for the team process (e.g. relationship between international and national mission members) and in-country work.
- Background paper listing and explaining key technical concepts to be used by all sector teams (e.g. needs, cost items, benchmarks).
- Secretariat and standardised communication structures.

VII. PARTICIPATION AND OWNERSHIP

Strengthen involvement of national stakeholders

As PCNA produces a document of national importance, it should be owned by national stakeholders as far as possible. National ownership will also increase the likelihood of the integration of the PCNA's main goals into national policymaking and the implementation of respective programmes. Building ownership, however, requires enabling conditions in terms of time, capacity (skills, resources) and the political will to consult. Moreover, national stakeholders are likely to be politically divided and to lack the capacity to engage. Therefore, a general written agreement between the international agencies responsible for PCNA and the conflicting parties at national level about the purpose, scope, general process and local

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involvement regarding the needs assessment before its implementation should be developed.

The following instruments can enhance the involvement of national stakeholders in the PCNA and build ownership: The PCNA needs to be transparent so that actors can know when and how they can get involved. This holds particularly true for the conflict parties, who should gain a clear idea of what kind of contributions are expected. Moreover, clear entry points within the PCNA process should be defined for governmental and non-governmental actors. Where possible, a counterpart system for each sector team and the entire team co-ordination should be established.

As mentioned above, the conflict parties rarely represent the full range of interests present in the country. Therefore, it is essential to involve broader sections of the society through stakeholder workshops and validation meetings such as tested in Timor Leste and Sri Lanka. They require careful planning, time, and attention to hierarchy and gender issues, but have the potential to greatly enhance the overall quality of the assessment.


Strengthen involvement of bilateral donors and NGOs

Bilateral donors and international NGOs can bring additional country and sectoral expertise and perspectives to the needs assessment. Early involvement and support by donors enhances the likelihood of funding for the PCNA and the coherence of the overall international response. In this sense the potential of PCNA as an instrument of donor co-ordination should be further explored.

Donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) require clear entry-points and mechanisms for soliciting their contributions.

VIII. FOLLOW-UP

PCNAs provide a baseline for monitoring progress on donor engagement and peace-building within the country. This opportunity should be used by establishing a monitoring mechanism of aid disbursements and progress against the goals set out in the needs assessment.

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X. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAF	Country Assistance Framework
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CDA	Conflict-related Development Assistance
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German technical cooperation)
HDI	Human Development Index
MDG	Millenium Development Goals
MG	Multilateral Management Group
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PCNA	Post-Conflict Needs Assessment
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	World Bank