

# **Building National Architectures For the Prevention of Mass Atrocities and Genocide**

## **Learning from experience in Africa, Europe and MENA region**

a) What are the challenges today of building national architectures?

- In the case of Uganda, it established the Uganda National Committee for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities in 2012 to bring together experts from government, military, civil society, academia, and religious organizations to comprehensively implement the ICGLR Protocol on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crimes of Genocide, War Crimes, and Crimes against Humanity and All forms of Discrimination. One of the challenges discussed is finding ways to heal the wounds brought about by civil strife, violence and armed conflict that have plagued its history. Thus, the National Committee aims to continue building awareness and a network of support through convening peace forums. Other challenges observed are weak participation of government ministries and lack of funding for preventive activities.
- Even with national preventive structures in place, there is a limit to the efficiency of the bureaucracy. It is important to note that national structures will be implemented by bureaucrats. If there is no strong political will, national structures will not be implemented effectively. In the case of Burundi, it was explained that lack of political will was a determining factor. A national committee has not been formed, which could have made interventions to mitigate, if not prevent, the crisis. Early preventive actions could have prevented the crisis in Burundi from worsening.

b) What have we learned about building national architectures?

- The Uganda National Committee has organized peace dialogue workshops in hot spot areas. These workshops helped prevent the escalation of tribal wars. Moreover, the National Committee has set

up focal point persons who are able to monitor and periodically report to stakeholders, and hold monthly meetings to promote preventive mechanisms.

- National architecture can be buttressed with regional and international support architectures. Regional mechanisms can be utilized to work toward building a community of commitment and practice. The African Union has made progress in setting up a normative framework on preventing mass atrocity crimes. Thus, it would be useful to examine how regional structures can catalyse national actions.
- Having a domestic legal framework or a piece of legislation that speaks to domestic actors is important in promoting preventive activities. In Denmark's experience, a clear government position with respect to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine allowed for an inter-agency effort. Denmark has assigned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a focal point. Hence, the MFA is tasked to sit down with stakeholders and bring together different actors to bring the process forward. Denmark has also formed an informal working group and members of this group have become R2P ambassadors in their respective offices.
- Government has to play a balancing act on the topic of R2P. Promoting R2P requires resources, time and a whole-of-government approach. States have to be smart when discussing R2P. Denmark has put together a national mapping exercise by reaching out to different stakeholders to socialize R2P as a public policy issue.
- Furthermore, states have to consider the added value of R2P vis-a-vis other government efforts in the field of humanitarian assistance, human security and the like. States have to know which tools to apply and which mechanisms to refer to that are R2P specific.
- A comprehensive approach is needed to develop an effective national architecture. The state has primary responsibility along with businesses, social networks, families and individuals. Therefore, everyone is responsible.

- In the case of Syria, communities are the first and continuing line of response and support. Communities may not have the power to prevent but their positive actions can contribute significantly.
- On a state level, there should be a national committee to discuss the different challenges and ways to develop national architectures. Looking for specific threats and opportunities for early warning and early response systems is beneficial at the national level.

c) What could be the contribution of GAAMAC to address these challenges?

- States have different experiences but there are also many overlaps and commonalities. GAAMAC serves as a good venue to share experiences and learn from the each other.

d) Other specific and very relevant issue to be recorded?

- There has to be a mechanism to urge UNSC to refrain from using their vetoes in situations of mass atrocity crimes. Irresponsible use of vetoes hinders the decisive implementation of R2P in the MENA region.
- Some 52 communities in Syria are under siege. There is a UN Resolution on humanitarian aid but nothing significant has been done. Thus, UN member states should be held responsible in implementing UN Resolutions.