

## 9.2 Capacity and Institution Building

Just as difficult as establishing an atmosphere of reconciliation, is the next stage of human rights capacity and institution building. Like reconciliation, building a human rights 'friendly' environment and enhancing the capacity of national players to work effectively within it, is relatively easy to sketch out and incredibly difficult to effect.

The title *capacity and institution building* can give the false impression that this is a mechanistic process where the UN and other outsiders can put money into creating or strengthening institutions, and then teach government and civil society the skills to use them. This structural approach tends to obscure the essential need for behavioural changes, and behaviour changes can take generations.

Even though an HRO will be in a country for a very short time, it must understand its role in that long term human rights evolution. Inter alia, an HRO must consciously involve local human rights actors, and gradually hand most HRO human rights functions back to local society.<sup>198</sup> In addition, an HRO must recognize that its field presence is also extremely short reference other parts of the UN, and thus should work closely with those UN actors and other international organizations or agencies present in the country. For example, MINUGUA has evolved a joint human rights institutional strengthening project with UNDP. MINUGUA recognizes that UNDP will be in country long after it has departed, and has encouraged UNDP to expand its traditional role in Guatemala. They have sent up a joint MINUGUA/UNDP Support Unit "to promote technical and financial cooperation programmes in the human rights protection area, to promote coordinated approaches between all 'actors' and avoid duplication and overlap in programme activities."<sup>199</sup>

### *Recommendation #57*

**It is recommended that HROs have a human rights institution and capacity building program premised upon local input and planned handover to local control of relevant HRO functions. As a corollary, HROs should encourage and facilitate human rights programming by other UN agencies that will remain in country long term.**

Human rights reconstruction and the building of a human rights environment, is inherently the final responsibility of local society. International involvement, always a moral responsibility and often a legal responsibility, does however raise legitimate expectations on the part of that local society. While an HRO's presence might be relatively transitory, it is important that the UN provide long term support for long term reconstruction. This requires ongoing moral, political, and financial commitment.

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<sup>198</sup> See section 5.10 for an expanded discussion on the role of local national human rights partners

<sup>199</sup> p.5 para 6, *Summary of Programme Activities and Financial Needs of The Trust Fund for Support to the Guatemalan Peace Process*, MINUGUA, Guatemala City, June 1995.