RESPONDING TO STABILISATION CHALLENGES IN HOSTILE AND INSECURE ENVIRONMENTS:

LESSONS IDENTIFIED BY THE UK'S STABILISATION UNIT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The lessons set out in this document reflect key ideas arising from the UK's evolving and expanding experience in stabilisation contexts. The lessons are not exhaustive. They are deliberately short; the majority are less than two pages. The intention is to provide policymakers and practitioners with accessible material, which conveys both the breadth and depth of challenges facing the UK and other international partners operating in complex stabilisation environments, and key insights into the pragmatic, practical and flexible approaches underpinning the UK's response.

Beginning at the *strategic level*, the first rule to **Using lessons effectively** is introduced: **approaches to stabilisation should be tailored to address the specific characteristics of the conflict. This requires knowing when and when not to use lessons effectively from other contexts.** Whilst lessons from other conflicts can play a critical role in informing the development of policy and practice and to prevent repetition of less successful initiatives, caution and judgement should be exercised when seeking to transfer lessons across different conflicts as the situations will, generally speaking, be fundamentally quite different.

Politics is at the heart of stabilisation builds upon the reality that **as there is no such thing as an apolitical engagement in a conflict environment, security, economic and development objectives should complement and support efforts to promote a peaceful political process.** This lesson is premised upon the understanding that stabilisation activities are intrinsically affected and driven by multiple political interests - be they of external actors, national or local level actors. An effective response, therefore, requires an understanding of those interests and how they are leveraged to impede or facilitate stabilisation.

The integrated approach is essential. This is undertaken through forming a single multi disciplinary and multi departmental team to take on a task. Integration should improve the flow of information, contribute to a shared understanding of stabilisation challenges and responses, reduce policy and delivery 'silos', and ensure greater effect on the ground

Moving to *operational approaches*, based largely on the UK's experience in Helmand, Afghanistan, ***How we deliver stabilisation activities in hostile and insecure environments matters,*** identifies the requirement to **deliver activities in a way that builds upon local culture, context, and the operating environment**. This approach is critical to facilitating change of the perceptions, relationships and behaviours of local politically significant actors and groups so that conflicts can be managed through non-violent political means.

Monitoring and evaluating stabilisation activities is essential **to ensure that these activities achieve the intended effect, and to reduce unintentional harm**. As stabilisation activities do not readily lend themselves to linear planning, or to conventional monitoring and evaluation, a more flexible and adaptive approach is

required that focuses on impacts and outcomes (effects) - including unintended effects - rather than outputs and inputs.

Community engagement can guide our entire stabilisation mission. This is understood as engagement with different communities and interest groups across a range of cultural, ethnic, religious backgrounds and across genders. The overall purpose of such engagement is to understand how communities are affected by and perpetuate conflict in order to identify and support local solutions for stability, and understand whether stability is improving in the eyes of the population.

In order to undertake any work in hostile and insecure environments, it is critical to ensure that the right people are deployed at the right time. Over the course of the last 5 years, the UK has developed a standby civilian capability, the Civilian Stabilisation Group to assist the UK's efforts in addressing instability in fragile and conflict-affected environments. ***Establishing and managing civilian capability to support stabilisation activities*** identifies a number of key lessons including the need for **rigorous quality assurance from the outset, providing stabilisation and specialist training when necessary, providing a broad range of support to those deployed, and - at all times - being able to respond to evolving demands on the ground.**

Finally, the lessons on *sectoral interventions* highlight two areas where the UK has focused efforts in recent years; governance and security. First, ***There is no such thing as ungoverned space*** recognises that the lack of (internal) political will may strongly impede external efforts to strengthen state-wide governance and peaceful political processes over the short to medium term. **It is all the more necessary to recognise non-state forms of local governance, security, justice and dispute resolution** that are often more effective, familiar and meaningful to most of the population, **and to encourage more effective cooperation between state and non-state systems.**

Second, ***Security can't wait for Security Sector Reform*** highlights an increasingly relevant realisation from fragile and conflict-affected states: that although the establishment of state-wide capable, accountable and responsive security and justice institutions is the only sustainable solution, this requires a stable - but possibly elusive - political settlement as well as substantial long term reform and capacity building. In the meantime, it is critical to respond to security needs now. A t**wo-speed approach is therefore required which stabilises the security situation in the short term - principally through local actors - whilst creating the conditions for longer term security sector reform.**

CHALLENGES TO STABILISATION: SETTING THE CONTEXT

Delivering stabilisation activities in hostile and insecure environments poses a variety of challenges. These challenges are not limited to the logistical and technical challenges of deployment and sustainment. Instead they arise from having to address:
- The broad range of deep-rooted, complex political problems that cause conflict and insecurity;
- The fast-changing environment which makes planning, programme management and monitoring more than usually difficult;
- Multinational and multi-organisational engagement where each organisation is driven by its own mandate, culture and incentives;
- A lack of meaningful cultural and contextual understanding on the part of international actors;
- The need for experienced and expert staff with a range of political, technical, and inter-personal skills willing to deploy to hardship locations; and
- Contracting and funding systems designed for use in more stable contexts.

These challenges are frequently made more complex by the absence of an overall unifying strategic vision, allowing actors to pursue an array of narrow objectives. Failure to prioritise and de-conflict activities results in unclear division of labour and responsibilities. In other cases, the overall strategic 'vision' may be so vague and/or all-encompassing that it fails to adequately guide interventions on the ground, leading to tension at best and the pursuit of contradictory objectives at worse.

Another persistent challenge to working in hostile and insecure environments arises from the political (and resource-driven) imperative to produce results quickly. The challenge of reconciling the scale of international ambition with the reality of limited international resources is faced similarly by UK military forces in Helmand, the EU force in Chad, and the AU-UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur. This pressure can frequently lead to a flawed focus on short term outputs at the expense of outcomes and impact. Stabilisation requires strategic patience and it takes time for delicate peace processes to consolidate into a more secure political settlement. Precipitous exits often lead to a relapse into conflict where the 'new', non-violent political processes and institutions remain too weak to be sustained.

The UK has committed significant resources to extracting lessons from stabilisation experience in a range of contexts and crises. These lessons are a modest contribution to this growing field of understanding.

The lessons set out in this document reflect the UK's evolving experience in stabilisation contexts. The lessons are not exhaustive, they are deliberately short; the majority are less than two pages. The intention is to provide policymakers and practitioners with accessible material – based on practical experience - which conveys both the breadth and depth of challenges facing the UK and other international partners operating in complex stabilisation environments. The lessons reflect the increasingly practical, pragmatic and flexible approaches that the UK has

been applying on the ground in places like Helmand. Our increasing experience in contexts other than Helmand indicates that these generic lessons are relevant to other conflict environments. Although the lessons can be read separately, they will be most useful when read together to reinforce each other. They are divided into three categories: the strategic level, operational approaches and sectoral level. The intent is to revise and update these lessons on a periodic basis to ensure that they reflect developing UK experience in this fast-changing area.

USING LESSONS EFFECTIVELY: ALL CONFLICTS ARE DIFFERENT

The Lesson: Approaches to stabilisation should be tailored to address the specific characteristics of the conflict. This requires knowing when and when not to apply lessons derived from other contexts.

Experience from the field suggests that generic approaches and 'lessons' drawn from other conflicts have been incorporated into responses to current conflicts. Past experience can provide a vast range of lessons relating to responses to conflict-affected environments at both the bilateral and multilateral level. Lessons from other conflicts can be an essential element to be drawn upon and it is critical to learn from them. If framed appropriately, some lessons can be transferred and adapted to other environments where they can be harnessed to best effect to inform policy and practice and to prevent repetition of less successful initiatives.

Nevertheless, not all lessons are applicable or transferable because no two conflicts are the same. Conflicts can often have similar structural characteristics, displaying - amongst others - weak political legitimacy and governance, a shadow economy, high levels of violence and external resource dependency. However, the root causes, conflict drivers and broader dynamics do vary from conflict to conflict. In particular, the motivation, greed, and grievances of conflict actors will always be particular to the specific time, place and environment. Consequently the political interests of external, national and local actors will reflect the specific context, thereby affecting the level of resources and political will leveraged to impede or strengthen stabilisation. Moreover, when analysing the relevant application of a lesson it is important to be aware of potential 'negative' as well as 'positive' aspects to ensure that any negative implications of its application are understood and mitigated against. These factors, and others, suggest that caution and judgement be exercised when seeking to transfer lessons across different conflicts.

Approaches to stabilisation should therefore be tailored to address the specific characteristics of the conflict. This approach should balance past experience - in the form of lessons and good practice tested against the specifics of the current conflict - with appropriate stabilisation methodology.

How to Ensure that Stabilisation Activities Address the Specific Characteristics of the Conflict?

- <u>Use the current conflict as the starting point.</u> Understand the context, culture and operating environment.
- <u>Test lessons against the specific context.</u> Which part of this lesson (if any) is relevant to the current conflict?
- <u>Adapt approaches</u> to reflect actual local dynamics.
- <u>Be aware of standardised templates;</u> this is potentially inappropriate and ineffective.
- <u>Address current instability</u> i.e. do not fight the last war.

Case Study: Balkans and Afghanistan, 2005

The conflicts in the Balkans and Afghanistan are fundamentally different. Experience and 'lessons' drawn from the approach to infrastructure reconstruction in the Balkans were transferred to Afghanistan. This resulted in the reconstruction of buildings such as schools. Notwithstanding the positive output of reconstructed buildings, the lesson from the Balkans experience was not framed appropriately to reflect the Afghan context. Specifically, the construction of physical infrastructure assumes the existence of a level of indigenous capacity to administer and maintain that infrastructure. This was not the case prevailing in the early stages of infrastructure rehabilitation in Afghanistan. Failing to understand the Afghan context and, more specifically, failing to recognise that development requires both support to institutional capacity building, and concurrent reconstruction efforts, meant that application of the Balkans lesson had negative as well as positive implications in Afghanistan.

Case Study: Iraq and Afghanistan, 2007-2010

Iraq and Afghanistan are fundamentally different contexts. Iraq is a developed state, with natural resources and considerable infrastructure. Afghanistan is a developing country, based around an agricultural sector with minimal government presence in the provinces. Nevertheless, there has been a tendency for international actors to utilise their experience and 'lessons' from Iraq in Afghanistan without fully assessing the relevance of the Iraqi experience to the Afghan context. For instance, funding the 'Sons of Iraq' may have worked in Anbar Province, but arming militias may prove highly counterproductive in Afghanistan.

POLITICS IS AT THE HEART OF STABILISATION

The Lesson: There is no such thing as an apolitical engagement in a conflict environment. Security, economic or development objectives should therefore complement and support efforts to promote a peaceful political process.

Stabilisation activities are affected by multiple political interests:
- The domestic and geo-political interests of those engaged in the intervention.
- National (host country) political conflict dynamics, where powerful actors may be more interested in manoeuvring for power and influence than in sustainable peace.
- Local level politics between individuals/groups competing for power or resources or between belligerents/insurgents and the state.

Experience from the field has highlighted that:
- Stabilisation activities that are driven solely by the domestic and/or geo-political interests of external actors, which do not address the local drivers of instability, will not be successful.
- We need to understand the interests of powerful national level political actors, who can facilitate or impede transformation to a more peaceful polity and factor this understanding into support to the state.
- Stabilisation at the local level should endeavour to reduce violent political contest between individuals/groups and/or between belligerents/insurgents and the state. Development, security or economic interventions will have an impact on local political dynamics. All interventions should be consciously aimed at reducing the political tensions which foster violence, as well as more technical security, economic or development objectives.

How to Ensure that Stabilisation Activities Incorporate Politics?

- <u>We should make every effort to address domestic and geo-political interests and local conflict drivers</u>. Where this is not possible, the risks of favouring domestic or geo-political concerns must be acknowledged and risks mitigated.

- <u>Support to 'state capacity building' should take ongoing political contest into account</u>. In conflict-affected environments, government appointments - and therefore the allocation of control of resources - are often part of a political deal. We need to find an explicit compromise between technocratic, merit-based appointments and the need to satisfy the political ambitions of those who could derail the political process. Building the capacity of weak states should be complemented by support to increasing accountability, legitimacy and responsiveness. Where political compromise risks undermining the state's capacity to govern, we need to make more coordinated use of all forms of political leverage.

- <u>Local level stabilisation should be aimed at changing the perceptions, relationships and behaviours of local politically significant actors and groups.</u> With careful assessment and planning, activities can achieve multiple effects e.g. improved relationships between warring communities, more equitable market access, and improved perceptions of the state and greater local engagement in improving security. Without careful assessment and planning, however, there is a risk that competing tactical objectives will undermine overall strategic impact.

Case Study: Operation 'Panther's Claw', Helmand, Afghanistan, summer 2009

During the kinetic part of Operation 'Panther's Claw' in the summer of 2009, British and Afghan troops cleared insurgent-held territory in central Helmand. Once the kinetic phase was completed, it was important to facilitate the establishment of locally acceptable governance. Imposing a single governance structure on the newly-taken Babaji area was not feasible. Indeed, part of the reason Babaji had earlier fallen to insurgents was precisely because this had been tried. Instead, efforts were made by the Battle Group, Military Support to Stabilisation Team (MSST) and the civilian Stabilisation Adviser to facilitate the Government's engagement with each village and community in whichever way local people considered best. One group selected a single leader, another appointed a committee of elders, while a third opted for a weekly mass meeting with some 150 people – all the men in the village - coming together for a shura on market days. Allowing local people to choose how they wanted to govern themselves enabled the stabilisation process to proceed faster than if a dogmatic approach had been imposed.

THE INTEGRATED APPROACH IS ESSENTIAL

The Lesson: The integrated approach is a more effective use of resources and improves the impact of activities.

What is Integration?

Integration is forming a single multi-disciplinary and multi-departmental team to take on a task. The task may be planning, it may be designing a programme or it may be delivering a project. When asked to work together government departments generally look to liaise or coordinate, to retain their own teams whilst negotiating with other departments. Experience from the field has shown that in the complex, fast moving and highly pressurised environment of conflict this does not work. The transactional costs are too high.

Integration is primarily driven by the process of people from different institutions and different disciplines working side by side at several levels to ensure that their perspectives and activities reinforce each other. Integration requires low-level cooperation and mid-level coordination, supplemented by high-level alignment of overall strategic objectives. Integration should improve the flow of information, contribute to a shared understanding of stabilisation challenges and responses, reduce policy and delivery 'silos', and ensure greater effect on the ground.

What can Integration Bring to Planning?

The core planning phases – assessment of the problem, creation and selection of objectives and the design of measures of effect can all benefit from integration. Integration can reduce institutional misunderstanding and prejudices early in the process. Integration is far more likely to create genuine detailed agreement on the nature of the problem to be addressed - something that different institutions trying to harmonise their own separate plans frequently fail to do - and drive genuine ownership of objectives. Finally, it prevents the attribution of measures of effect becoming 'a blame game'.

Preparing to Integrate

Integration does not work if we do nothing until we need an integrated team. Staff from different backgrounds need to train together, attend common courses and read each other's guidance to promote a basic level of common understanding. If not, they will not think of each other during a crisis and will talk at cross purposes when trying to establish common goals.

In addition, the highest levels of the contributing departments must share incentives and be willing to be accountable for their element of the effort. If not, a well integrated working level team might design an impressive programme only to find that none of the team members can bring their departments with them.

The Risks of Integration

Integration does not mean everyone must be involved in everything all the time. If activity is intelligently planned, diplomatic, development and military staff should not necessarily all be in the same place at the same time. It is also important to avoid the cookie cutter approach. Teams must be flexible and organised for the task at hand. It is unlikely that any two integrated teams will look the same.

Policymakers must also remember that the integrated approach in this context is not the answer for everything. Much core diplomacy, development and defence work still needs to be undertaken separately by FCO, DFID and the MoD. Finally, the more we integrate on one level (cross-government for instance) the more we risk ignoring anything outside our circle of integration. As an example International Organisations and NGOs cannot be integrated (were it to even to be practical it is politically undesirable, they have their own mandates to fulfil) but their views and capabilities have to be considered. Ensure that your integration does not just create another exclusive 'club'.

Case Study: Development of UK Government Strategy on Somalia, 2009

In summer 2009, at FCO request, the Stabilisation Unit Planning Team ran a series of planning workshops attended by a range of UK Government representatives in both London and Nairobi to designe a strategy for UK engagement in Somalia. These workshops highlighted the agencies across the UK Government which had a stake in Somalia; 19 different entities were represented at one of the London workshops. The result of this integrated planning process was a single strategy across government. This strategy went on to form the basis for policy formulation and programme design on Somalia by FCO and DFID in particular. The strategy remained in place for approximately one year before being 'refreshed', again through a cross-government process, for adoption by new Ministers in summer 2010.

HOW WE DELIVER STABILISATION ACTIVITIES IN HOSTILE AND INSECURE ENVIRONMENTS MATTERS

The Lesson: How we deliver stabilisation activities in hostile and insecure environments is critical to ensuring stabilisation outcomes.

Stabilisation can be viewed as a set of visible tangible activities be they kinetic, projects or dialogue. These are aimed at an intangible objective; changes in the perceptions, relationships and behaviours of local politically significant actors and groups so that conflicts are managed through non-violent political means. Changing perceptions, relationships and behaviours requires that **stabilisation activities both respond to evolving circumstances on the ground and can be delivered in a way that builds upon local culture, context, and the operating environment**.

How should Stabilisation Activities be delivered?

-   <u>Be responsive: ensure speed, flexibility and adaptability.</u> Fast moving environments require stabilisation efforts to deliver progress quickly so that people can see and experience progress. Responses need to be flexible so that they respond to the situation on the ground. Adaptability is critical to respond to changing priorities, evolving circumstances on the ground and also to reflect changes resulting from flawed initial planning assumptions. Significantly, the way in which activities are managed can also help foster better relations amongst individuals and groups and, more broadly, across the local population and external actors.

-   <u>Empower local counterparts</u>. Empowering local counterparts through formal capacity building activities or informal mentoring, increasing trust with local partners, creating inclusive local networks, as well as understanding, respecting and supporting indigenous means of local governance, is essential to delivering more sustainable stabilisation outcomes.

-   <u>Understand local culture and context.</u> Understanding the history, socio-economics and political economy of a country or region, as well as the culture and how to engage with the local population, provides invaluable direction to developing stabilisation activities that are both relevant and responsive to the needs on the ground as well as avoiding unintended harm.

-   <u>Establish transparent contracting and funding procedures.</u> Delivering activities quickly in hostile and insecure environments necessitates greater flexibility in contracting and funding procedures than in more benign contexts. Yet, tendering processes and the accounting of resources must remain transparent. This is particularly so in stabilisation contexts where the reality, or indeed perception, of corruption can significantly undermine local trust in the state. A more creative approach to contracting and funding is required, which whilst reducing programme complexity, maintains and demonstrates transparency.

- Devolve delivery to the lowest levels. Devolving decision-making to the lowest levels allows those with most contextual understanding to decide which specific projects (governance, security, justice, infrastructure etc) will help to deliver stability in their area. These decisions should result from local priorities identified through extensive local consultations.

Case Study: Empowering Afghan counterparts, 2009-2010

Effective mentoring of District Governors and the Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP) is welcomed by local counterparts as particularly important. Good stabilisation practice involves working through local executive shuras linked to higher-level structures. Afghans are empowered through effective support to key local institutions - such as providing, supporting and mentoring a secretariat for the District Governor.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING STABILISATION ACTIVITIES IS ESSENTIAL

The Lesson: We need to monitor the impact of stabilisation activities in order to ensure they achieve their intended effects and reduce the impact of the negative unintended consequences.

In the past, we have struggled to monitor and evaluate stabilisation effectively. Measuring activities and outputs is relatively straightforward, but we - like many of our international partners - have found it considerably more difficult to measure and to understand what the outcomes and impact of those activities has been and the extent to which they (individually or collectively) contribute to our overall objectives, or lead to unintended consequences.

Monitoring and evaluating is essential for three primary reasons. Firstly, it helps to track and assess the outcome of activities and whether they are contributing to the strategic objectives of the intervention. This is critical to guide programming, both to ensure that plans remain on track and that resources are being allocated in the most effective way (or to correct them and reallocate resources if not), and to reduce the likelihood of doing harm. Secondly, it is vital to correct for the inevitable gaps and flaws in initial stabilisation plans, and to allow for understanding to be increased as the intervention unfolds. This is particularly important in stabilisation environments because of the complexity and volatility of the environment, and is compounded by speed of response commonly demanded. Third, monitoring and evaluating helps to draw lessons over the longer-term which may be applicable to the specific intervention/programme, or to other future interventions.

How should Stabilisation Activities be Monitored and Evaluated?

Stabilisation activities do not readily lend themselves to linear planning, or to conventional monitoring and evaluation based on a straightforward causal logic between inputs, outputs, and anticipated outcomes. A more flexible and adaptive approach is required. Emerging good practice on monitoring and evaluation of stabilisation activities includes:

- <u>Build in a monitoring and evaluation mechanism at the outset of the planning process which is aligned to the strategic objectives and allows the 'theory of change' to be tested</u>. This helps clarify and align expectations and assumptions.

- <u>Focus on impacts and outcomes (effects), rather than outputs and inputs</u>, but regularly review the contribution that different stabilisation activities are making to the outcomes and overall impact of the intervention (including negative and unintended consequences).

- Use mixture of quantitative data, including proxy measures, and qualitative analysis, including capturing changes in perceptions, relationships and behaviours, to ensure deeper and broader understanding of impact and build up a picture over time.

- Capture unintended consequences and second and third order effects (while recognising that this is very difficult), as well as interdependencies between different strands of intervention.

- Adjust expectations of what is 'good enough' data, due to challenges of data collection and interpretation in insecure environments (including risks to the local population).

- Use monitoring and evaluation as a strategic tool for regular review and adaptation of plans.

Case Study: Approaches to monitoring and evaluating in Afghanistan, 2010

In summer 2010, the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) put in place a monitoring and evaluation system for its programmes, with a strong focus on changes in attitudes, perceptions and behaviours. Although still developing, it represents a useful attempt to assess, on a regular basis and over time, the changes brought about by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community's stabilisation efforts, it also facilitates more rigorous review and adaptation of plans than had previously been feasible. Other PRTs are adopting similar approaches; Uruzgan and recently Kandahar have also drawn heavily on social and political analysis by non-governmental organisations to 'baseline' the situation and drivers of conflict in areas where they are operating. These approaches, particularly when used in concert, can provide a good foundation for increasing understanding over time of the consequences and impact of stabilisation activities.

<u>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CAN GUIDE OUR ENTIRE STABILISATION MISSION</u>

The Lesson: Community engagement can guide our entire stabilisation mission. When undertaken well, it enables us to understand the interests of groups across a range of cultural, ethnic, religious backgrounds and across genders and use this understanding to inform our responses.

The capacity to engage with communities has been one of the most significant gaps in UK stabilisation efforts over the last 10 years. The term is often disparaged as politically correct or naïve, but it is at the heart of successful stabilisation. Community engagement means the capacity to communicate with communities, establish the services and opportunities they need to achieve stability and then provide the framework in which they can build those services and opportunities. It is a task for which military forces are largely unsuitable and, because it is focused on delivery of local services one for which civilians trained and developed in central government often do not have the experience. Despite this, it is often the only level of government much of the population experience and without investment in this area no efforts to improve security can be sustainable.

Community engagement therefore requires that civilian and military actors engage with communities and triangulate analysis to inform planning and programming. This will develop understanding of how communities interact with conflict and inform stabilisation responses. Community engagement can be applied to a range of stabilisation activity from peace building to counter insurgency; the approaches applied will differ depending on the activity, needs, culture, context, and the operating environment. Engagement requires calibration of a variety of community-based approaches for working in areas where reduced access to particular groups and volatile insecurity limit situational understanding and impede normal working relationships.

Why is Community Engagement necessary for Stabilisation Activities?

Experience has shown that a purely top-down structural approach to security and governance does not provide the tailored interventions that communities want. The aim of engagement is to identify and support local solutions for stability, implement effective stabilisation support and understand whether stability is improving in the eyes of the population. This can have the effect of supporting resolution of local grievances between individuals and groups and between individuals/groups and the state, strengthening the accountability and responsiveness of institutions to the people and, most importantly, reducing the chances of unintended harm. When under-prioritised, there are high risks of key interlocutors being wrongly identified, critical perceptions ignored, communities isolated or caught between warring parties and decisions made on the basis of incorrect assumptions about stakeholder interests.

How is Community Engagement undertaken?

While engagement is everybody's responsibility, it takes many years to develop understanding of different engagement strategies and adapt approaches to particular cultural contexts and communities. It is therefore important that teams and individuals are selected for their experience of working with communities as well as for their technical expertise. Engagement strategies are strongest when they:

- <u>Recognise diversity of perspective</u> between communities as well as mutual interests.
- <u>Understand and support relationships between groups</u>, not purely their relationships with external actors.
- <u>Consider how women as well as men are affected by conflict</u> and support their capacity to contribute to stability.
- <u>Be aware of implicit barriers</u> as well as explicit discrimination and persecution that inhibit communities from addressing conflict tensions.
- <u>Recognise the limits of our own knowledge and engagement</u> and therefore draw on analysis from international organisations, NGOs and academia to correlate with understanding gained from community based approaches in the field.

Case Study: Darfur, Sudan, 2008-2009

In 2008, the Stabilisation Unit seconded four community engagement advisers to Darfur to support the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) with a community consultation programme. Following the subsequent collapse of the Darfur Peace Agreement, the advisors focused on understanding the perspectives of a range of interest groups on key aspects of the conflict. This process focussed firstly on building confidence within groups and thereafter began to bring different groups together to discuss issues across stakeholders, gradually leading to the development of a platform for sharing political and technical local solutions. A year and a half later, in July 2009, representatives of these different groups explained to the African Union Special Panel series of hearings in Darfur that that as a result of the earlier consultations they were now able to articulate their views confidently in a room with others they shared grievances with. A "Technical Workshop on Darfur Peace" was held in Doha, Qatar, in October 2009, enabling civil society to further inform the peace process by convening with Movement and Government representatives. This gradual approach of building support for groups to articulate their views, taking more than two years, has helped to overcome some resistance and achieve greater participation in the peace process: the Doha talks endorsed proposals for women to constitute at least 25% of participants in future peace talks. Though the peace process still has a long way to go, creating a process for different groups - beyond the warring parties - to contribute solutions at the negotiating table is a positive outcome which continues to move forward.

Establishing, Managing and Deploying Civilian Capability to Support Stabilisation Activities

The UK Government has established the Civilian Stabilisation Group (CSG) to assist the Government in addressing instability in fragile and conflict-affected countries. The CSG is comprised of over 200 civil servants from across Government and over 800 Deployable Civilian Experts (consultants) who are specialists in a wide range of technical areas. The following lessons are drawn from the UK's experience over the past couple of years to establish, manage and deploy civilian capability to undertake stabilisation-related tasks in hostile and insecure environments.

Establishing the Capability

1. **Take your time to identify the roles and skill-sets required**

Once the capability is established, it can be challenging to amend its focus, structure, and processes. It is therefore important to think critically upfront about the kinds of roles, skills and people that may be required, where and into what contexts they might be deployed, how many may be required, and where they might be found. In practice this means:
   - Wide consultation with a number of likely future clients across Government (and, where applicable, more broadly to include, for instance, international organisations) to understand their current and likely future role requirements, in line with the national security strategy, where available.
   - Identification of the likely locations and lengths of deployments.
   - Development and agreement of role profiles and skills matrices that define the types of people to be recruited, preferably in line with the profiles and terminology used by likely future clients.
   - Concurrency planning: how many engagements and at what scale are thought likely?
   - Making assumptions regarding the likely availability of members of a standby capability (1 in 5 is often used).
   - Acceptance that designing a capability system is not a science. The capability will need to be refined iteratively to ensure that it is flexible and responsive to changing demand.

2. **Introduce rigorous quality assurance from the outset to ensure the right people**

It is important to ensure that the best people with the required skills and abilities are included in the capability from the outset. Once the initial capability is established, entry requirements can be further raised so that subsequent people incorporated into the capability serve to improve the overall quality.. This means putting in place a robust recruitment process to ensure that only people meeting a pre-determined standard qualify as members of the capability. Such a process enables confidence in the overall quality and credibility of the capability. In practice this means:
   - All candidates are required to complete a detailed application form (not just CVs). This should provide a wide range of information (including, for instance,

geographic and hardship preferences, to allow scrutiny of the contents of the capability once established.
- Applications should be reviewed against role profiles.
- Where the candidate meets the role profile, the candidate should be interviewed, normally in person, by a panel composed of technical experts as well as those understanding inter-personal and behavioural skills.
- Only when the interview panel is satisfied that the candidate has the right experience and technical, behavioural and inter-personal skills is the candidate accepted on to the capability.
- The candidate is then required to apply for specific posts and will be reviewed and interviewed against the specific post's terms of reference.

3. Prioritise behavioural competences and inter-personal skills within the capability

Whilst technical skills are important, experience from the field has highlighted that the personal attributes of people deployed to complex and hostile environments and the way in which they approach their work are often (at least) equally important. These environments, in particular, call for people who excel at communicating and influencing varied audiences. These environments require people who can work well in a team in highly stressful situations and who are also self-sufficient. Flexibility, adaptability, innovation, team-working and resilience are key attributes of successfully deployed personnel. In practice this means:
- The recruitment process - in particular the interview - should assess people's behavioural competences and interpersonal, as well as technical, skills.
- Ongoing assessment of the capability, for example through feedback on people's performance on exercises or training courses, should be instituted where possible to help build as rich a picture as possible of each individual's abilities.

4. Ensure breadth of skills and experience within the capability

In order to respond to the complex challenges of stabilisation environments, the capability should incorporate a broad range of relevant skills and experience. The UK has found the breadth required through utilisation of both civil servants, who understand the machinery of government and the political dimension, and those outside the civil service, Deployable Civilian Experts (DCEs), many of whom have extensive experience and expertise on a range of stabilisation issues on the ground. In practice this means ensuring that there is a balance between recruitment to the CSG of civil servants and DCEs, as well as breadth of experience and expertise within these groups.

5. Ensure your people are able to work with and alongside the military

In order to respond to current demand in Afghanistan and other stabilisation environments in which civilians are deployed alongside the military, it is essential that the capability incorporate a high proportion of people who understand the

military, their language and culture, their ways of working, and who are able to operate at the military pace. In practice this means:
- Selecting staff into the capability who have worked well previously with the military.
- Strengthening civ-mil interoperability through joint training and exercising, whether in the classroom, on exercise or in pre-deployment preparation.
- Building closer operational linkages between the CSG and its military counterpart, the Military Stabilisation Support Group, to ensure effective delivery on the ground.

6. Set up 'standby' over 'standing' capability: invest in preparation

It is preferable to maintain a 'standby' capability, where people are paid when deployed, and not a 'standing' capability, where people are paid regardless of whether they are deployed or not. The standby approach has two main advantages: first, the 'pay per use' principle offers best value for money; second, it enables a larger number of people to be included in the capability than would be possible if required to pay for them full-time. Having a larger number of people to select from is important as it allows the capability to have breadth as well as depth. The risks of the standby approach include the unavailability of people for deployment, particularly at short notice, as well as having to manage people and their expectations. These risks can be mitigated by developing 'talent pools' of the most deployable people. In practice this means:
- Identifying those people most deployable in terms of skills and availability.
- Engaging most closely with those individuals, including by putting them on exercises, etc.
- Pre-training and pre-clearing those people to ensure an appropriate level of readiness.

Managing the Capability

7. Actively manage the capability to keep your people interested and engaged

A capability is more than just a database or a telephone directory. It is a network or community of civilian experts with skills and experience relevant to stabilisation. To be effective, the capability - which is, after all, human - should be kept enthused and engaged to avoid losing interest. This is challenging, not least with a pool of over 1,000 people and in a resource-constrained environment. In practice this means:
- Providing every member of the CSG with a point of contact within the Stabilisation Unit whom they can approach with questions or requests for advice. This also enables us to get to know our people better.
- Identifying high-quality but low-cost training opportunities to keep CSG members engaged, including through holding seminars in which returning CSG deployees showcase their experience to spread good practice and provide an idea of what a potential future deployment might hold in store.

- Creating a private, password-protected web portal where CSG members can access job opportunities, blogs, photographs and other stabilisation-relevant material.

8. Keep educating, training and preparing your people in order to constantly develop the quality of the capability

In addition to the civ-mil training courses and exercises, it is essential to keep educating, training and preparing the capability so that members will be able to respond effectively to complex and evolving stabilisation challenges. Although the capability is not a career development vehicle, if someone we have trained is subsequently deployed by someone else – the UN, say, or an NGO – they will operate in a way that is more coherent and consistent with a British government approach. Inevitably, not everyone receiving our training will be deployed, but efforts should be made to correlate those being trained with those likely to deploy by, for instance, prioritising core training for those members with skills in high demand and who are most likely to deploy. In practice this means:
- Participation on the Stabilisation 1 course which provides an overview of the UK's understanding and practice of stabilisation.
- Participation in the Hostile Environment Awareness Training, a pre-requisite for deployment. This intensive training puts people in realistic, scenario-based situations to enhance their ability to cope in the event they are confronted with similar situations in reality.
- Other specialist training courses, organised by the UK Government or other organisations.

9. **Advertise posts widely and transparently. Follow the recruitment process.**

It is strongly advisable to advertise all posts across the entire capability. This is important for three main reasons: first, because experience has shown that open competition is the most efficient and effective way of identifying the most suitably qualified (and available) candidate for the job. Second, because it promotes transparency and commitment to a merit-based recruitment process. And, third, because it provides capability members with an indication of the current demand of skill-sets, thereby helping to shape their expectations of possible deployment. In practice this means:
- Maintaining an open and fair application and recruitment processes so that CSG members can themselves decide to apply according to their willingness, availability, suitability and whether they meet the selection criteria.
- Adherence to the application and recruitment process - even in 'urgent' situations. A short deadline, a truncated application form, a speedy sift and interview can mean advertisement of a post and identification and deployment of an individual within a matter of days.

Deploying the capability

10. Recognise the impact of operating in hostile and insecure environments: actively manage people's performance on deployment

Experience from the field has highlighted that it is not the risks and dangers inherent in operating in hostile environments that most affect an individual's performance. Rather, it is the issues commonplace to a normal working environment - whether poor communications within the team, unclear objectives, or uncertainty over line management chains - that most affect an individual's performance. It is critical to recognise and understand that a hostile and insecure environment magnifies the impact of these - usually manageable - issues. Extreme circumstances can bring out extreme behaviours; and so active performance management is all the more important. In practice this means:
- Taking the time in-country to set up and manage a performance framework, including making the time to set objectives, monitor staff's achievements or shortcomings, and hold regular performance discussions.
- Ensuring the individual has a proper management chain and that someone is overseeing their work, performance and personal welfare on a regular basis.
- Ensuring full performance appraisals at the end of deployment. This serves a number of objectives: for the individual as it helps to identify strengths and areas for development; for the home department or employer as it recognises achievements and areas requiring development; and for those managing the capability as they can take account of past performance for future deployments - an important indicator of likely future success.

11. Provide ongoing support to those deployed

Deploying personnel to hostile and insecure environments - sometimes alone to a remote location - requires the provision of extensive support to ensure they can securely and effectively carry out their functions. Support should cover logistical, administrative and welfare back up as well as the provision of substantive specialist advice. In practice this means:
- Organising theatre-, culture- and language-specific briefings, training and preparation before the individual deploys.
- Facilitating medical check-ups, vaccinations and psychological assessments before, during and after deployments.
- Providing the appropriate kit to do the job - from body armour to laptop to satphone.
- Advising on insurance options and providing access for those deployed - and their families - to a telephone welfare line.
- Ensuring appropriate Duty of Care, welfare and allowance arrangements to protect and support those deployed.
- Provision of a reach-back facility into the Unit: a 24/7 duty officer on call in case of emergency; and access to specialist expertise, lessons and good practice on the delivery of stabilisation on the ground.

12. Understand and respond to client's current demands: try to predict future demands

In order to ensure that the capability is utilised effectively, it must respond to clients' demands. At the same time, clients' demands are never static. Given the evolving nature of challenges faced in stabilisation environments and the lead time required to develop new areas of capability, it is necessary to keep one eye focused ahead on the evolution of future demand in order to be able to respond to it if - and when - it arises. Whilst it will not always be possible to foresee every demand (for instance, French-speaking prisons experts in the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake), the breadth, depth and quality of the capability should ensure that the majority of demands are met. In practice this means:
- An effective feedback loop between clients and capability managers.
- Regular monitoring of how requirements are developing and how the capability is being used in order to ensure the capability can continue to meet clients' requirements.
- Keeping the capability flexible and adaptable so that it can be refined to meet emerging or evolving demand (e.g. creation of a new role profile for community engagement advisers).

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS UNGOVERNED SPACE

The Lessons: Recognise that non-state forms of local governance, security, justice and dispute resolution may make a meaningful contribution to stabilisation.
Assess the strengths and weaknesses of state and non-state forms of governance, security, justice and dispute resolution; exploit 'whatever works'; mitigate weaknesses; and encourage more effective cooperation between state and non-state systems.

Why Promote Effective Cooperation between State and Non-State Systems?

Almost by definition, conflict-affected environments are characterised by governments that have weak capacity, low levels of accountability, weak or highly contested legitimacy; some will have little to no interest in the provision of security, peace and justice to the population as a whole. Politically significant actors may be more interested in competing with one another than in governance for the benefit of all sectors of the population. Popular experience of the state is often characterised by neglect, corruption and predation: this experience fosters anti-state sentiments which can in turn lead to insurgency and civil war.

Experience from the field indicates that external efforts to reduce the risk of violent conflict by 'strengthening' a chronically weak state may be over-ambitious, and impracticable within timeframes measured in years rather than decades. At the same time, there is often a need to address governance, security, justice and dispute resolution now and at the local level in order to prevent or reduce the risk of relapse into violent conflict.

In many environments, there are strong often functional non-state forms of governance, security, justice and dispute resolution; these may be more effective, familiar and meaningful to most of the population. **Efforts to stabilise a conflict-affected environment should exploit these strengths, pending the development of state-wide political will, capacity, accountability and responsiveness.**

What might Governance look like in the Short to Medium Term in Stabilisation Contexts?

A more realistic objective over the short to medium term might be to enable development of:
- Increasingly stable central government that reflects a developing political settlement between competing individuals and factions.
- Technically 'good enough' central government, that can manage external relations and border security, a limited central government budget and a small number of functioning central government institutions.
- Sub-national government that can mediate a cooperative, working relationship between state and non-state forms of governance, security, justice and dispute resolution.
- Non-state delivery of local security, governance, justice and dispute resolution and other services.

How can more Effective Cooperation between State and Non-State Systems be supported?

In order to define the art of the possible, it is critical to:

- Understand the interests, intentions and capabilities of politically significant state actors at national and sub-national levels, in order to make a realistic assessment of the limits of state governance over the short to medium term.

- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of local non-state forms of governance, security, justice and dispute resolution, with particular attention to how women, juveniles or other excluded groups are treated.

- Investigate local communities' priorities and perceptions about what they need, what works, what doesn't work and why.

- Identify opportunities for strengthening what works for people in both the state and non-state sectors, and for creating constructive linkages between state and non-state structures.

- Be aware of the risks associated with external efforts to strengthen traditional forms of governance, security, justice and dispute resolution which may backfire if not handled with care: the effectiveness of local security providers often depends on the extent to which they depend on and are accountable to those they protect. External interventions (e.g. paying local militias) remove this interdependency and can create more problems than they solve.

Case Study: Supporting Prisoner Review Shuras and Community Council Justice Committees in Helmand, Afghanistan, 2009-2010

The provision of justice/dispute resolution has been at the forefront of the struggle between the Afghan state and insurgent Taliban in the struggle for the loyalty of the local population. Addressing the complex obstacles to an efficient state justice system will take generations, given the chronic lack of education, a confused legal framework and variable political commitment to eradicate corruption. In Helmand, the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) encouraged the development of 'prisoner review shuras'. These shuras include representatives of the state - District Governor, Chief of Police, local Commander of the Afghan National Army, local head of the National Directorate of Security (intelligence) – and, where possible, the Chair of the Community Council Justice Committee. The purpose of these shuras is to ensure that arrest and detentions are based on actual evidence and to reduce pre-trial detentions so that they do not extend beyond the 72 hour limit. If there is evidence and it is deemed to be a minor offence, then the case is referred to either the local Elders or the Community Council Justice Committee for mediation and resolution. More serious cases are referred to the state system. The Community Council Justice Committees support non-state dispute resolution by respected tribal elders, whilst ensuring that these traditional mechanisms respect the rights of all members of the community, including women and juveniles. This pragmatic response both enables the speedy delivery of a key service and helps reduce the traditional distrust between local elders and religious leaders and the state. External monitoring ensures that decisions are in line with human rights obligations, whilst remaining acceptable to local norms and expectations.

SECURITY CAN'T WAIT FOR SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

The Lessons:
- **Our top priority should be the protection of populations.**
- **Responsibility for security should be as local as possible, as soon as possible.**
- **The provision of basic security usually requires cooperation between civilian, military and policing actors.**
- **Activities to establish basic security should:**
    - › **Protect people, key infrastructure and institutions.**
    - › **Reduce drivers and opportunities for state security forces to continue insecurity.**
    - › **Increase the risks associated with violent pursuit of political, economic or criminal objectives.**
    - › **Address the incentives and perceptions which promote, enable or tolerate violence.**

Why is it important to establish basic security as soon as possible?
Establishing basic security is the most urgent priority in stabilisation environments, as violence and insecurity breed further violence and insecurity. Protecting people, key infrastructure and institutions is essential. Ongoing insecurity impedes efforts to address other conflict drivers by restricting access and movement, especially of civilians, and undermines the trust and confidence required to develop a peace process.

However, there are complex obstacles to the (re)establishment of security, including:
- Weak state security provision. This can arise from state security forces being as much a threat to security as they are providers of a security service; political (and sometimes violent) competition for control of a complex array of 'power' ministries and organisations, and; lack of political will to support delivery of security to the population as a whole.
- Proliferation of non-state armed groups including armed insurgents, armed 'self-defence' militias (of varying hues), sophisticated criminal networks and low level armed criminals.
- Lack of local political will or insufficient external political leverage to promote reform of state security institutions or disarmament of illegal armed groups.

Although the establishment of state-wide capable, accountable, legitamate and responsive security and justice institutions is the only sustainable solution, this requires a stable - but possibly elusive - political settlement as well as substantial long term reform and capacity building. Activities to (re)establish security now and at the local level should consciously help create the conditions for longer term security sector reform.

Adopt a Two-Speed Approach to Stabilise the Security Situation in the Short Term, whilst Creating the Conditions for Longer Term Security Sector Reform

In order to establish immediate local security:
- <u>Remember that security is political</u>: developing the best political approach is more important than delivering technical assistance.
- <u>Engage with local communities</u> and create some form of local security forum, including security actors, trusted community leaders.

- <u>Together assess the diverse range of threats to local security</u>. Who are the various actors? What drives different groups' engagement in violent pursuit of their objectives? What options are there for reducing these threats? What are the risks of unintended consequences?
- <u>Devise plans to decrease drivers and local grievances</u>; increase the risks associated with further violence; provide opportunities and incentives for non-violent pursuit of objectives, recognising that these may be different for different groups.
- <u>Establish mechanisms for monitoring whether interventions are effective</u> and adapt as new evidence emerges; monitor outcomes and effects, not numbers trained or inputs.
- <u>Aim for quick wins not quick fixes:</u> quick wins will help create popular and political support for actions to establish basic security, but should not undermine prospects for more comprehensive reform.
- <u>Exercise judgment as to how far to engage with non-state security and justice processes</u>. These may be more effective, familiar and trusted by local populations, but there may be concerns over 'means', decisions and discriminatory treatment of women, juveniles or other excluded groups.

A stabilised environment should help to foster the conditions required for longer-term security sector reform (SSR). SSR should be initiated as soon as there is sufficient political will to ensure that technical support to the security forces (military, para-military, police) and the security institutions (Ministries of Defence, Interior, Intelligence Agencies) will have the intended effect. The OECD DAC Handbook to Security Sector Reform outlines the steps to security sector reform. Key issues to keep in mind when initiating SSR in a stabilisation environment are:

- Political will can be partial, temporary and unstable. There will be a need for careful political judgement as to when and where there is sufficient political will to support even partial SSR.
- The security sector may be crowded: a broad range of international, regional and local organisations may be involved and may have a broad range of understandings and interests. In the absence of a strong local or internationally legitimate lead, effective coordination will be the product of good will and much lobbying. This requires explicit investment.
- Failure to recognise the complex obstacles to effective state security forces has often led to quick fix approaches, focused on 'training and equipping' large numbers of military, para-military or police. Ignoring other critical obstacles has often led to establishment of large, but still corrupt or predatory security forces. These often do more harm than good. Financial affordability should also be taken into account.
- Crime is often as great a threat to security as more politically motivated violence. (Re)establishment of a functioning criminal justice system is a lengthy and complex process requiring attention to the legal framework, reform of a number of institutions, judicial processes, training, capacity building and basic public administration capacity. Given the inter-linkages (between e.g. police, prosecutions, justice, corrections), partial interventions may have little effect. On the other hand, wholesale reform is a daunting prospect and there are advantages to exploiting windows of opportunity. Supporting legal aid may help reduce pursuit of unwinnable prosecutions and/or reduce pre-trial detentions.

CONCLUSIONS

The lessons identified here are based on ideas that have been developing across Government and on our deepening understanding of what works and what doesn't work on the ground. They will hopefully be of use to policymakers, practitioners and programme managers working in and on conflict-affected environments.

The complexity of the challenges in stabilisation environments require integrated solutions at multiple levels. Rather than re-inventing our responses to each new crisis, we need to identify relevant lessons from past experience, learn from these, and adapt them to the specific requirements of each new environment.

The identification of lessons remains just the first step. We need to ensure that the lessons are actually 'learned'. This requires a genuine commitment at all levels to learning from the past, the dedication of resources (human and financial) to support the learning process, and the development of systems to feed lessons back into policy, planning and practice. The lessons learning process should be a continuous cycle.

Finally, given that stabilisation environments demand effective multinational cooperation, these lessons should contribute to the growing international discussion on stabilisation practice. It is essential that the UK benefit from the experience of international partners. Similarly, the sharing of UK experience should provide a significant vehicle through which to influence policy development at the international level, as well as to deliver more sustainable stabilisation outcomes at the local levels.

FURTHER READING

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