



Helpdesk Research Report

Institutions, approaches and lessons for coherent and integrated conflict analysis

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14.10.2019

Question

(1) What institutional structures and approaches do donors use to ensure their conflict prevention and peacebuilding analysis is coherent and integrated across their agency and across their government?

(2) What lessons and innovations are there from the conduct and application of conflict prevention and peacebuilding analysis? Include information on financial costs, where available.

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1. Overview

This rapid literature review explores the new institutional structures and approaches that have emerged to ensure that conflict analysis and action in fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS) is coherent and integrated across the many actors that now engage in this broadened field of work. This query focuses on the institutions and approaches of, and lessons from, six bilateral donors: the UK, Canada, Denmark, US, Netherlands and France.

The literature base on this issue is mostly drawn from the donors' grey literature, and independent evaluations funded by the donors. There was substantial information about the UK, some literature about Canada and the US, and much less about the other donors. Key findings include:

Types of new institutional structures and approaches

Since the 1990s, the remit of bilateral aid and development work has expanded in line with the expanding international development agenda, moving from a predominant focus on aid and poverty to also include peacebuilding and state-building, fragile states, conflict prevention, stabilisation and, more recently, radicalisation and extremism. Conflict analysis toolkits and processes institutions have been developed to reflect these broadened and integrated approaches. Increased collaboration and joined-up approaches across government departments have also necessitated changes to institutions and approaches – e.g. with the creation of cross-departmental entities at the headquarters or local levels. This has shifted the processes for overall strategic priority setting, strategic priority setting in specific contexts, developing and sharing analysis, designing operational plans, designing programming, funding mechanisms, for implementation, and for monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

These new approaches and institutions are often referred to as integrated or comprehensive approaches. The experiences of the donors in this rapid review varies significantly between those pursuing a highly integrated and standardised approach (the UK), to those pursuing informal and ad hoc structures designed specifically for each crisis (France). It also varies between those highly engaged in the military side of activities (the US) to those engaged in a much smaller way through less-military means (the Netherlands).

Conflict, or context, analysis does not stand alone from programming and policy decisions, implementation, or M&E in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, or stabilisation work. Quite the opposite – to support a coherent and integrated approach, conflict analysis and M&E should be included at all stages of work to provide continuous and iterative feedback loops.

Lessons, structures and approaches used by donors ¹

UK

The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) (established 2015) is one of the UK Government's main funding mechanisms for tackling conflict and instability. It implements National Security Council (NSC) strategies, and funds the Stabilisation Unit (a centre of expertise leading on conflict analysis). The CSSF aligns with partner country government agendas, where possible and appropriate, and participates in multilateral, multi-donor and international initiatives. Lessons:

¹ Also see Pedersen (et al. 2019, pp.15-17) for a useful table comparing donor approaches to stabilisation (including Canada, US, UK, Denmark, Netherlands, EU and Australia).

- The Conflict Pool did not have an overarching strategy until 2011, thus the three participating government departments tended to divide the resources between them, rather than work together (ICAI, 2012). The CSSF has improved on the Conflict Pool's record, and shows good cooperation across departments, significant progress on programme coherence, yet still has many disparate and poorly joined-up projects (ICAI, 2018).
- The CSSF's programmes are well informed on conflict dynamics, are relatively sensitive to how their interventions affect conflict dynamics, and are able to adapt and stay relevant in volatile contexts (ICAI, 2018). Some limitations include: a loss of knowledge and expertise in 2015; drawing on academic literature in its conflict analysis, but not so much for its policy and programming choices; and some guidance materials are at an early stage of development (ICAI, 2018). Gender-sensitive conflict analysis and strategic objectives are high on the CSSF's agenda.
- NSC strategies emerge from cross-departmental dialogue and in-country analysis (ICAI, 2018).
- Conflict analysis, which identified shared views of the drivers of conflict and how to address them, has, on occasions, prompted better alignment with the host country's priorities (ICAI, 2018).
- Most of the CSSF programmes reviewed by ICAI (2018) showed design or implementation flaws, and the CSSF does not capture, use, share or disseminate its learning from its own experiences enough, especially not beyond individual projects and country portfolios (ICAI, 2018).

Canada

The Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs) is a centre of expertise, and the Government of Canada's principal platform for conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacebuilding. PSOPs leads on: setting policies and providing guidance for programming; on supporting coordinated responses; and on designing and delivering stabilisation initiatives. Prior to PSOPs, and its predecessor START (Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force), policy and programming in FCAS were fragmented between different government departments. Lessons:

- An evaluation of the START programme found: a poor alignment between government priorities and the FCAS agenda, causing programming only tangentially related to START's specific mandate; and a lack of detailed country-level conflict analyses and risk management frameworks (Government of Canada, 2016).
- The previously developed momentum and investments in FCAS were "either squandered or forgotten" as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) shifted emphasis from support to civil society to state building, critique Carment and Samy (2016).
- Canada's approaches to state fragility tend to be ad hoc, unstructured, and unsystematic, e.g. as FCAS policies are usually not informed by regular analyses (Carment & Samy, 2016).

Denmark

The Danish Peace and Stabilisation Fund (PSF) is a cross-government funding pool to support stabilisation and conflict prevention initiatives (Coffey, 2014). The Inter-ministerial Steering Committee is responsible for overall geographic and thematic priorities, monitoring risks of programmes, projects and engagements, and ensuring that lessons are adopted across the programming, among other areas. Lessons:

- Staff with stabilisation expertise are in general short supply in Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, yet having stabilisation advisers in-country adds value, especially to analyse, monitor and report on conflict/stabilisation contexts (Coffey, 2014). E.g. Denmark's stabilisation advisers have supported its coordination and leadership role with international partners.

- The PSF would benefit from more strategic level guidance and oversight, and continuous analysis and M&E (Coffey, 2014).
- Theories of change are not explicitly stated within the documentation, and are not directly linked to supporting evidence (Coffey, 2014).

US

The US does not have one body or mechanism to coordinate its substantial work on stabilisation, which has broadened from a predominant military focus (through the and the Department of Defence (DoD)) to also include civilian agency actions through the Department of State (DoS) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) (in the DoS), and the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) and regional bureaus (in USAID) carry out most of the US' stabilisation work. The former focuses most on data-driven analysis and planning, the latter tends to implement stabilisation programmes. Both the DoS and USAID have extensive staff expertise in stabilisation, regions, and project design and oversight (Robinson, et al., 2018). The DoD was seen as most equipped to provide security, logistics, and intelligence to support its stabilisation work (Robinson, et al., 2018). Lessons:

- Despite the value-add that the DoD can offer with its intelligence knowledge and analytical skills, this role has not yet been institutionalised. Collaboration between the civilian agencies and the DoD are still challenging, especially in the due to the lack of an effective coordinating mechanism (Robinson, et al., 2018).
- Mechanisms to achieve better civil-military coordination and to support civilian-lead agencies are needed. US coordination mechanisms have been insufficient, insufficiently implemented, discontinued, or severely cut back (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.20).

Netherlands

The Netherlands provides limited information about its conflict prevention and peacebuilding institutions. It appears to have two departments within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs working in this area - The Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH), and the Security Policy Department (DVB). The Netherlands' Stability Assessment Framework (SAF) provides the analytical framework for its information management and analysis. It uses National Action Plans (NAPs) to implement the UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Lessons:

- The Government's independent evaluation of its 3D work found the results to be "mixed", with its level of ambition often "at odds with the harsh realities of operating in fragile states" (IOB, 2016). It suggests more attention be devoted to academic insights about state-building and fragile states (IOB, 2016).
- The Fragile States and Peacebuilding Unit (established in 2008) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, played "a key role in knowledge building on fragile states at the Ministry and at Dutch embassies, and became a pivotal entity in international consultations and policymaking" (IOB, 2016).

France

France has many departments engaged in its stabilisation work, mixing security operations and civil-military activities. Its general approach is informal and ad hoc, and when a more formal structure is established, it is on an ad hoc basis (Robinson, et al., 2018). Lessons:

- Formal coordination between the Ministry of Defence and the French Development Agency (AFD) is in its infancy, it is typically ad hoc and limited. While a cross-departmental strategy and a cross-

departmental task force have been developed, they have been “abandoned and replaced” by ad hoc coordination mechanisms (Robinson, et al., 2018).

2. Types of new institutional structures and approaches

Since the 1990s, the remit of bilateral aid and development work has expanded in line with the expanding international development agenda, moving from a predominant focus on aid and poverty to also include peacebuilding and state-building, fragile states, conflict prevention, stabilisation and, more recently, radicalisation and extremism. This increased mandate has made coherence of programming even more important, and even more challenging (Government of Canada, 2016). While many multilateral organisations have traditionally focused on conflict and state reconstruction (e.g. UN, World Bank), this is a more recent trend in bilateral donors’ approaches (Herbert, 2017).

Conflict analysis toolkits have been developed to reflect these integrated approaches. This broader view allows the analysis to cover more aspects of conflict causation and drivers of state fragility, to take better account of potential and actual diplomatic and military interventions on the part of international organisations, and to provide a shared understanding across departments (Barakat & Waldman, 2013). This shift of interests and competencies has altered the fundamental purpose of conflict analysis (which has moved from improving the effectiveness of aid and stability in poorer countries to improving the security of the West) and also the systems for conflict analysis (Herbert, 2017).

Increased collaboration and joined-up approaches across government departments have led to changes in institutions and approaches – e.g. with the creation of new cross-departmental or cross-agency departments and processes. This has led to changes for overall strategic priority setting, for strategic priority setting in specific contexts, for creating and sharing analysis, for designing operational plans, for designing programming, for funding, and for implementation.

These new approaches and institutions are often referred to as providing an “integrated approach”, a “whole of government approach”, a “comprehensive approach”, “multi-dimensionality” or “integrated mission”, or the 3D approach - Diplomacy, Development and Defence (Faleg, 2019). These new institutions tend to share common characteristics: “they consolidate policy leadership, including fragile state and conflict analysis and whole-of-government coordination; maintain sources of funding dedicated to support the work of these offices/organizational structures; have flexible funding authorities to support short-term, rapid responses to crises, as well as longer-term stabilisation goals; and retain the capacity to mobilize civilian experts for deployments from both the public and private sectors to support stabilization work” (Government of Canada, 2016). The UK’s stabilisation programme is often identified as leading international practice and thought through its “conscious conceptual evolution of stabilisation, its support to academic research and its development of policies and guides for stabilisation efforts” (Pedersen, Andersen, Bonnet & Welham, 2019 p.18; Coffey, 2014).

Conflict, or context, analysis does not stand alone from programming and policy decisions, implementation, or monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, or stabilisation work (Stabilisation Unit, 2014). Quite the opposite – to support a coherent and integrated approach, conflict analysis and M&E (evaluating how programmes engage in the context) should be included in all stages to provide continuous and iterative feedback loops (Stabilisation Unit, 2014; FEWER (Forum for Early Warning and Early Response), International Alert & Saferworld, 2004; Herbert, 2017).

3. Lessons, structures and approaches used by donors

UK

The UK's stabilisation agenda emerged after the Cold War as a greater emphasis was placed on "state building and post-conflict reconstruction to develop the capacity of the state to both consolidate formal peace agreements and prevent any recurrence of conflict" (Mark Bryson-Richardson in Stabilisation Unit, 2019, p.7). This occurred in response to more conflicts being intra-state, in response to the perceived limitations of UN-led interventions in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia, and due to the UK government's experiences of peacebuilding in Bosnia (Mark Bryson-Richardson in Stabilisation Unit, 2019, p.7). Military-led stabilisation operations in Iraq and Afghanistan were underpinned by this approach, but made "little or no progress" due to the scale, intensity and enduring nature of those conflicts; in addition, the military-led operations failed to address local politics (Mark Bryson-Richardson in Stabilisation Unit, 2019, p.8).

The initial focus on a comprehensive approach across the UK government led to the establishment of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (in 2004), which was renamed the Stabilisation Unit (in 2007). The three primary government departments involved in those bodies were the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Department for International Development (DFID) (UK Parliament, 2010).

The UK Government established a National Security Council (NSC) to bring together decisions about foreign policy, security, defence and development in a strategic fashion, as well as improve the integration of activities into wider government objectives through more effective partnerships, such as the Comprehensive Approach (UK Parliament, 2010). The NSC "is responsible for overseeing all issues related to national security, intelligence coordination and defence strategy. It sets the overall strategic direction for the Fund, oversees its activities and agrees its annual budget" (The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI), 2019). The NSC decides on UK Government strategies, while the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) is responsible for security and justice programming (this shifted to the CSSF from DFID in 2015) (ICAI, 2018).

The CSSF (established 2015) is one of the UK Government's main funding mechanisms for tackling conflict and instability. It implements the NSC strategies and combines Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA (ICAI, 2018).² The CSSF aims to: provide the scope for timely and sustained investments in conflict prevention; to encourage the three departments to work together, combining their expertise in diplomacy, defence and development (ICAI, 2012). The CSSF is the latest in a series of cross-government conflict prevention funds - the first were the African Conflict Prevention Pool and the Global Conflict Prevention Pool (established in 2001); these were merged into the Conflict Prevention Pool (in 2007-08), this was then renamed the Conflict Pool (in 2009), and was subsequently replaced by the CSSF (in 2015) (ICAI, 2018). The CSSF has a strong focus on gender sensitivity and furthering the role of women in peace and security initiatives. For example, it provides training sessions on gender issues and has gender experts to advise country teams (ICAI, 2018). The CSSF takes "a more strategic approach" than the Conflict Pool, and it brings together all relevant government departments (e.g. also those with expertise on counter-terrorism and organised crime) (ICAI, 2018). The CSSF is the largest of the UK's cross-government ODA funds, and in 2016-17 it funded 97 programmes supporting the implementation of NSC strategies across 70 countries (ICAI, 2018).

² ICAI is the independent body responsible for scrutinising UK aid

The Stabilisation Unit is a centre of expertise that supports the UK Government departments working on stabilisation; it is funded through the CSSF (ICAI, 2018). The Joint Programme Hub is an inter-departmental team based in the FCO that provides: overall coordination; technical and programme management support; written guidance; a technical assistance network; and organises learning events (ICAI, 2018).

The CSSF aligns with the conflict management and peacebuilding agendas of partner country governments, where possible, although some of its work is done without engaging the national government (e.g. on media plurality and civil society support). The CSSF also uses its programming to build relationships with national actors and to influence national policies.

The CSSF participates in multilateral, multi-donor and international conflict management initiatives. It uses its ODA funding to get a 'seat at the table' and its technical expertise to help shape them (ICAI, 2018). However, an evaluation by the independent ICAI (2018) found there to be "no practice of bringing together implementers active in similar areas to share experiences" and that the CSSF does "not generally share knowledge with external partners" (ICAI, 2018).

The CSSF's initial annual budget of £1 billion is set to rise to £1.3 billion by 2020-21 (ICAI, 2018). The CSSF is designed with the flexibility to reallocate funding during a financial year – e.g. £22 million was released for additional work on irregular migration in 2016-17. The CSSF also has access to an additional £50 million of ODA from the ODA crisis reserve, to fund short urgent interventions of less than 12 months (ICAI, 2018).

Lessons

The Conflict Pool did not have an overarching strategy (until the 2011 Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS)), and thus coherence in its approach was left to emerge incrementally, with the result that the tendency was for the three departments to divide the resources between them, rather than work together (ICAI, 2012). The ICAI (2012) evaluation finds few examples of activities that were genuinely multidisciplinary.

The CSSF shows "good cooperation across departments and cross-fertilisation with wider UK government efforts" (ICAI, 2018). This is an improvement on the Conflict Pool, which the ICAI (2012) evaluation found to have high transaction costs due to the inter-departmental nature of the fund, and it identified "considerable scope for simplifying the structure". Collaboration has improved at headquarters level, within embassies and, sometimes, regionally, despite the increase in the number of participating government departments in the body (ICAI, 2018).

Yet while the CSSF has made "significant progress in programme coherence", compared to the Conflict Pool, half the programmes evaluated "still consisted of disparate and poorly joined-up projects" (ICAI, 2018). "Within the same programme, projects often focused on different issues in different areas, and implementers did not engage with each other (or even know of each other's existence). Often their grouping into one programme was a form of window-dressing: adhering in form, but not substance, to the requirement of defragmenting programming portfolios. Even in the case of programmes that did seem to be internally coherent, we have not seen examples of theories of change that provide a plausible causal link with the end goal of peace, stability and security... Sometimes, other parts of programme documentation came closer to outlining the link between end results and the means of achieving them, and the various assumptions that must hold for the causal link to be plausible" (ICAI, 2018).

The CSSF's programmes are well informed on conflict dynamics, are "relatively sensitive" to how their interventions affect conflict dynamics, and are able to adapt and stay relevant in volatile contexts (ICAI,

2018). This occurs as: conflict sensitivity analysis is mandatory for all CSSF programmes; as the CSSF has substantial conflict advisory support, it produces (or co-produces) good quality conflict, stability and security assessments; and as the CSSF provides conflict sensitivity support to key implementers (ICAI, 2018). “While the written analysis is not always up to date, we found CSSF staff to be well informed. The country portfolios are guided by the available analysis, and able to respond in real time to changes in context and conflict dynamics” (ICAI, 2018). ICAI (2018) found the CSSF’s conflict analysis to be “ahead of many other international stakeholders”, e.g. those of multi-donor initiatives, but that there is “significant scope” to strengthen such analyses.

Some limitations of the CSSF’s conflict sensitive approach include: there appeared to be a loss of knowledge and expertise when security and justice programming shifted from DFID to the CSSF in 2015; the CSSF draws on academic literature in its conflict analysis, but not so much for its policy and programming choices; and guidance material for some major areas of programming (e.g. serious organised crime), are at an early stage (ICAI, 2018). Notably, the CSSF’s focus is not on the most marginalised and vulnerable, even if that is a potential driver of conflict, as the aim is stabilisation (ICAI, 2018).

Conducting a human rights assessment (“Overseas Security and Justice Assessment” (OSJA)) is mandatory for all CSSF programmes to ensure risk and mitigation measures are identified (ICAI, 2018). However, ICAI (2018) raises some concerns about the implementation of these: several OSJAs were produced after programming had begun; some OSJAs were incomplete or of low quality (e.g. with stronger analysis on UK reputational risks rather than human rights violations); some OSJAs had not been carried out; and the OSJAs in the ICAI evaluation’s small sample always approved the proposed activity, without requiring design modifications (ICAI, 2018).

Gender-sensitive conflict analysis and strategic objectives “are high on the CSSF’s central agenda”. For example, all recent NSC strategies include gender-relevant strategic objectives; there is specific guidance on gender sensitivity; gender experts advise on country operations; and the Stabilisation Unit organises gender training sessions. The 2016 CSSF gender audit for every programme in sub-Saharan Africa found gender issues to feature prominently in the templates of reports, annual reviews, and the CSSF’s first annual report (ICAI, 2018).

NSC strategies emerge from cross-departmental dialogue and in-country analysis, according to ICAI’s (2018) interviewees. ICAI (2018) finds the CSSF is aligned to the high-level objectives and policies of the UK aid strategy, and to NSC country and regional strategies. It notes that while these were “were initially retrofitted to existing CSSF portfolios”, they are now becoming “more effective frameworks to guide programming” (ICAI, 2018). The Stabilisation Unit (2018) highlights the need for a process of analysis which consults at multiple levels - e.g. with local and national authorities on the ground, with local populations, and with other international actors (locally, and at the senior level in the international headquarters). This is to ensure that activities begin from “an understanding of what is truly needed in the given context to achieve stabilisation objectives” (Stabilisation Unit, 2018).

Most of the CSSF programmes reviewed by ICAI (2018) showed design or implementation flaws, with “inadequate” results management practices, and some approaches were contrary to the available evidence of what works. FCAS face specific challenges that complicate this – e.g. insecurity can reduce access to local beneficiaries, limit data and baselines, and contexts can change rapidly. Thus, there may be limited time to think strategically, or to develop a theory of change from the context analysis and the planning processes (Stabilisation Unit, 2014).

The CSSF does not capture, use, share or disseminate its learning from its own experiences enough, especially not beyond individual projects and country portfolios (ICAI, 2018). While the “CSSF is strong in the academic literature of conflict analysis” it is not used to guide policy, “therefore there is a need to strengthen internal learning processes and share annual reviews” (Pedersen, et al., 2019, p.117). As CSSF programming, and FCAS contexts, are very diverse, more detailed findings are available at the case study level, however they may not be representative of the CSSF’s wider portfolio (ICAI, 2018). One country case study example is provided below. Furthermore, ICAI (2018) highlights that, given its size – as one of the largest ODA funds of its type in the world, it does not fill global evidence gaps enough.

Conflict analysis, which identified shared views of the drivers of conflict and how to address them, has, on occasions, prompted better alignment with the host country’s priorities (ICAI, 2018). This occurred in Jordan, for example, in regards to refugee camp stability, and municipal infrastructure and service delivery to benefit refugees and host communities (ICAI, 2018)

Example – CSSF work in Iraq

Reflections on the CSSF’s work in Iraq provides some useful insights (ICAI, 2018):

- The CSSF team in Iraq gave an unclassified version of the UK’s conflict analysis to other international stakeholders.
- The team will assess all project options against a set of commonly agreed criteria, including whether they are consistent with the findings of the CSSF’s conflict analysis.
- The team has embedded a range of processes and principles in its decision-making and its day-to-day work to ensure conflict sensitivity.
- It is unclear how the CSSF’s key implementer in Iraq – UNDP – uses conflict analysis to guide its project design and implementation. Key elements of its work appear to be conflict-insensitive. The UNDP’s mandate - to work in support of government authorities only – may drive UNDP to priorities that are not always conflict-sensitive or conflict-focused. The extent to which UNDP is mitigating these risks is unclear. The CSSF is attempting to mitigate these risks by providing a conflict sensitivity mapping exercise for UNDP, and by funding the recruitment of additional advisory staff and local conflict analyses.

Canada

The Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs) is a centre of expertise, and the Government of Canada’s principal platform for conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacebuilding in FCAS. PSOPs leads on: setting policies and providing guidance for peace and stabilisation programming within Global Affairs Canada; on supporting coordinated responses by the Government of Canada to conflicts and crises abroad; and on designing and delivering stabilization initiatives. As part of this, PSOPs works to strengthen Global Affairs Canada’s procedures and practices related to conflict analysis. PSOPs is the successor to the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START), replacing both START and the Global Peace and Security Fund (GPSF) in 2016 (Government of Canada, 2016).³

³ See the PSOPs webpages - https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/response_conflict-reponse_conflits/psop.aspx?lang=eng and <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2016/08/backgrounder-peace-and-stabilization-operations-program.html>

PSOPs coordinates Canada’s whole-of-government responses to natural disasters and complex political crises abroad. For political crises, PSOPs serves as the central actor for information sharing, joint analysis and the coordination of diplomatic, military, security and development efforts to ensure that they are mutually reinforcing and are coherent with and supportive of broader, collective efforts of the international community.⁴

Prior to PSOPs, and its predecessor START (Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force), policy and programming in FCAS were fragmented between different government departments and agencies. “This deficit called for the development of a standing capacity to monitor crisis situations, plan for and rapidly deliver integrated policy and programming responses, drawing upon the collective and coordinated contributions of government departments” (Government of Canada, 2016).

START was managed by a Director General of the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force Bureau (IRD), policy coherence and avoidance of duplication was accrued out by various inter and intradepartmental committees, that informed and guided emerging priority-setting exercises and implemented Cabinet mandated priorities (Government of Canada, 2016). Within IRD, there were four divisions (Government of Canada, 2016):

- Stabilization and Reconstruction Programs Division (IRG): Conducted programming along the main geographic regions and thematic priorities.
- Peace Operations and Fragile States Policy Division (IRP): Developed and coordinated policy around fragile states, conflict management, international peacekeeping and peacebuilding.
- Deployment and Coordination Division (IRC): Provided advice, guidance and direction for the IRD in business processes, risk and performance management; conducted an independent review of all projects; and coordinated and managed the whole-of-government expert civilian deployments.
- Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Response Division (IRH): Developed, coordinated and implemented policy on international humanitarian affairs, and responses to humanitarian crises.

There is not an evaluation of the 2016 established PSOPs so this subsection draws on an evaluation of START and other texts that critique START and the general Canadian approach.

Lessons

There is a poor alignment of FCAS work with government priorities. An evaluation of the START programme finds that, while START’s policies, programs and initiatives are consistent with and supportive of the government’s priorities and strategic outcomes, this has sometimes led START to programme in areas only tangentially related to its specific mandate (Government of Canada, 2016). For example, START implemented projects in some countries that have not been in conflict or at risk of conflict or considered fragile. There are also concerns that START projects could be perceived as humanitarian aid and potentially undermine the political neutrality of humanitarian initiatives (Government of Canada, 2016).

There is a lack of detailed country-level conflict analyses and risk management frameworks. While START had developed a risk management framework, its use was inconsistent. This was exacerbated by the limited technical capacity within START to identify risks and the lack of START officer field presence. In 2015, a special “Risk Map” and “Risk Monitor” tool was developed, however “except for a “Burma Conflict and

⁴ See the PSOPs webpage - <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2016/08/background-peace-and-stabilization-operations-program.html>

Fragility Assessment” paper, no other evidence was found of detailed country-level conflict analysis” (Government of Canada, 2016).

The IRP was responsible for ensuring policy and programming coherence for START’s security programmes, and it established a Security Coherence Secretariat to do so, but its role was limited. The Secretariat aggregated information and provided analytical papers to support senior level decision making. However, the Secretariat’s ability to ensure coherence was limited by: it not having a clearly articulated mandate, shared with the rest of the branch; by high staff turnover; and its coordination of branch business products (e.g. tracking commitments, coordinating talking points and speeches, and corporate planning and reporting) (Government of Canada, 2016). In terms of coherence and communication on the ground, the Government of Canada (2016) evaluation did not find evidence of much collaboration between security and development programmes, except for in Ukraine and Jordan. The evaluation notes that this collaboration “is still nascent and in need of a major cultural change and understanding of the common goals of the amalgamated department” (Government of Canada, 2016). The new PSOPs is expected to improve coherence and integration.

Canada’s approaches to state fragility tend to be ad hoc, unstructured, and unsystematic. Carment and Samy (2016) critique the Canadian approach in FCAS, they find that:

- FCAS policies are usually not informed by regular situation analyses, but are often one-off or external exercises, and do not reflect local perspectives.
- The impact of prevention activities has been reduced because of the lack of coordination and strategy from the Harper government (this government ran from 2006 to 2015).
- Key actors (e.g. NGOs, governments, multilateral organizations, and civil society groups) frequently operate in isolation and do not properly coordinate activities across sectors. This often results from a lack of common analysis and the lack of multi-agency planning forums for the development of joint prevention strategies.
- The government has failed to mainstream effective early warning and early response properly into the policy domains of government agencies
- Pockets of expertise are largely dwindling in the government, and there remains limited synergy and sharing. Most of the support to the development of fragile states initiatives has been picked up by other donors.

The previously developed momentum and investments in FCAS were “either squandered or forgotten” as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) shifted emphasis from support to civil society (1994–2002) to state building (2003–14) (Carment & Samy, 2016). One factor contributing to this failure was the move away from using the academic, humanitarian, and NGO community for analytical support for its policy developments (Carment & Samy, 2016). Another factor was the rise in unstructured information reaching the public, and policy being influenced by the resultant public sentiment (Carment & Samy, 2016). Another factor was that rather than leading the development and application of FCAS analytical tools and policies, the Canadian government followed the lead of other development actors, and did not then fully incorporate the available analytical tools and networks developed by others (Carment & Samy, 2016). Another was that the former development agency CIDA was merged into the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) in 2013, and prior to that, they “seldom worked well together” (Carment & Samy, 2016).

Denmark

The Danish Peace and Stabilisation Fund (PSF) (established under the 2010-2014 Danish Defence Agreement) is a cross-government funding pool to support stabilisation and conflict prevention initiatives (Coffey, 2014). Its Whole-of-Government approach is set out in its “Guidelines for the Peace and Stabilisation Fund” document, which aims to facilitate coherence and integration of stabilisation initiatives across authorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark & Ministry of Defence of Denmark, 2018). The principal decision-making body of the Fund is the Inter-ministerial Steering Committee, and is supported by the Whole-of-Government Secretariat, which among other tasks, provides strategic advice and quality assurance support to the stabilisation programmes (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark & Ministry of Defence of Denmark, 2018). The Steering Committee is responsible for (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark & Ministry of Defence of Denmark, 2018):

- Outlining overall geographic and thematic priorities of the PSF
- Approval of programme concepts, programmes and project appropriations.
- Ensuring activities undertaken by the Fund are aligned with overall Danish policy priorities, in particular foreign, defence and development policy.
- Ensuring the coherence of policies and strategies affecting the Danish peace and stabilisation agenda.
- General Fund oversight including monitoring overall progress and performance of programmes, projects and engagements through regular reporting to the Steering Committee.
- Monitoring risks of programmes, projects and engagements.
- Ensuring that regular and timely evaluations are conducted.
- Ensuring that lessons learned are adopted across the Fund’s programming.

Denmark’s integrated approach to stabilisation is explained in two strategy documents - the “Peace and Stabilisation, Denmark’s Policy towards Fragile States” and “Denmark’s Integrated Stabilisation Engagement in Fragile and Conflict-affected Areas of the World.” The PSF co-exists with other funding channels to FCAS including: the development budget (country budgets, regional budgets, humanitarian assistance budget), and the military budget (Coffey, 2014). Thus, coherence is important.

Lessons

Staff with stabilisation expertise are in general short supply in Denmark’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, yet having stabilisation advisers in-country adds value. “A stabilisation adviser should have the ability to analyse, monitor and report on conflict/stabilisation contexts and to understand the role of, and engagement with, a wide variety of stakeholders at the international, national and local levels” (Coffey, 2014). Horn of Africa programme’s experience suggests that risks need to be constantly identified, prioritised and actively managed to support stabilisation efforts (by identifying and responding to windows of opportunity; to act as a central point for cross-government conversations; to engage with international and local counterparts; to bring in the political dimension; and to act as a point for lesson learning (Coffey, 2014).

“Denmark has played a positive coordination and leadership role among international partners in relation to PSF funded issues”, finds the evaluation by Coffey (2014). E.g. by having a stabilisation adviser in country it has helped Denmark engage on a policy level with the major donors through policy dialogues and acting as a liaison between development partners (Coffey, 2014).

The PSF would benefit from more strategic level guidance and oversight, and continuous analysis and M&E (Coffey, 2014). Again, stabilisation advisers have played an important role in generating an understanding of the context and in identifying programming opportunities to respond to emerging needs or changing conditions. The three-year policy cycle and policy and programme documents often only present a snapshot of the context (Coffey, 2014).

Theories of change and their assumptions are not stated explicitly within the documentation, and are not directly linked to supporting evidence (Coffey, 2014). However, the evaluation found that the programmes for the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan/Pakistan and the Sahel did have clearly articulated hierarchies of objectives, representing implicit theories of change (Coffey, 2014). It also found that headquarter and embassy staff were generally able to articulate the theories of change behind their programmes (Coffey, 2014).

US

The US does not have one body or mechanism to coordinate across all relevant government departments and units working on stabilisation, conflict prevention, or peacebuilding (Robinson, et al., 2018). While the US's stabilisation approach was originally mostly military, it is now much broader and the relevant actors are fragmented across the Department of State (DoS), US Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Defence (DoD), with other niche contributions from other departments (e.g. Department of Justice, Treasury, and US Customs and Border Protection) (Robinson, et al., 2018). Also, within the DoS, and USAID, various bureaus contribute to stabilisation activities (Robinson, et al., 2018).

The DoS bureau that works most on stabilisation is the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) (established in 2011) (formerly known as Office of Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS)). Its creation is seen as an "evolution" in US stabilisation policy towards a more civilian approach, and away from large state-building interventions (Robinson, et al., 2018). The DoS, particularly the CSO, has supported stabilisation policy developments, planning for specific initiatives, and coordination with international partners (Robinson, et al., 2018). The CSO currently focuses more on data-driven analysis and planning,⁵ and less on operations and implementation, than it did before. Both the DoS and USAID have extensive staff expertise in stabilisation, regions, and project design and oversight (Robinson, et al., 2018).

The USAID bureaus working most on stabilisation are the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), and the regional bureaus. USAID tends to implement stabilisation programmes, particularly the aspects related to humanitarian assistance, economic stability, governance, and rule of law (Robinson, et al., 2018). USAID programmes include M&E.

The DoD was seen as most equipped to provide its US civilian agency counterparts with security, logistics, and intelligence to support its stabilisation work, in interviews by Robinson, et al. (2018).

Lessons

Despite the value-add that the DoD can add with its intelligence knowledge and analytical skills, this role has not yet been institutionalised (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.40). A good example of the role the DoD can play in intelligence sharing and analysis is through the Combined Joint Inter-Agency Task Force – Shafafiyat in Afghanistan, where intelligence analysts, civilian law enforcement, and other interagency personnel

⁵ See - <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-civilian-security-democracy-and-human-rights/bureau-of-conflict-and-stabilization-operations/>

made up the task force (Robinson, et al., 2018). Yet, most commonly, the military “will focus its collection and analysis on enemy forces, terrain, and other combat-related considerations, even during stability operations. Although this may be appropriate in some cases, civilian agencies, as a rule, do not possess adequate or similar capabilities and may benefit from this assistance” (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.63).

Collaboration between the civilian agencies and the DoD are still challenging, especially in the due to the lack of an effective coordinating mechanism (Robinson, et al., 2018). One factor that has undermined this is the reduction in use of the Integrated Conflict Assessment Framework, as this process previously helped to generate shared understandings of the context and collaboration (Robinson, et al., 2018). However, new planning processes can fill this gap – e.g. the integrated country strategies (Robinson, et al., 2018). Also the innovative provincial reconstruction teams (e.g. in Iraq) may provide a model for civilian-military coordination in the field (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.20).

Mechanisms to achieve better civil-military coordination and to support civilian lead agencies are needed, US coordination mechanisms have been insufficient, insufficiently implemented, discontinued, or severely cut back, indicate US Department of Defence assessments (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.20). E.g. experts appointed as “war czars” to specific conflicts in the White House were in competition with the special envoy or ambassadors and generals in those countries (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.20). And deployable civilian staff, an interagency planning system, and an assessment framework were designed but not fully implemented, “because of inadequate funding by Congress and bureaucratic rivalries within DoS and with USAID” (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.20). The CSO has experienced staff cuts.

Netherlands

The Netherlands provides limited information about its conflict prevention and peacebuilding institutions, and there is no evaluation of the Netherlands’ Government recent work in this area. There is a summary of an evaluation carried out on the Netherlands’ work in fragile states from 2005 to 2011 (IOB, 2013).

The Netherlands’ appears to have two departments within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs working in this area. The Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) promotes stability through supporting: humanitarian assistance and reconstruction and promote peace and security, rule of law and good governance; before, during and after crisis situations.⁶ It focuses on “crisis situations, (post) conflict countries and fragile states and apply a context specific and flexible approach, which is conflict- and gender sensitive”.⁷ It takes “an integrated approach in addressing conflict situations, combining security, development and diplomatic efforts into one coherent package”, with its partners, within and outside government, on a national and international level.⁸ The Netherlands Government (2013) also foresaw the Security and Rule of Law Knowledge Platform to play a key role in knowledge development at the Ministry.

The second department – the Security Policy Department (DVB) – works on counterterrorism, and national and international peace and security though inputting into NATO, the EU, the IAEA, the Geneva

⁶ See the summary webpage at - <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/organisational-structure/policy-theme-departments>

⁷ <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/organisational-structure/policy-theme-departments>

⁸ <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/organisational-structure/policy-theme-departments>

disarmament conference, the United Nations, the OSCE and the OPCW. Policy is also formed by working together with other countries. The DVB comprises:⁹

- Conflict Prevention, Peace Operations and Military and Civil Cooperation Division (DVB/CV)
- Non-Proliferation, Disarmament, Arms Control and Export Control Policy Division (DVB/NW)
- Security and Defence Policy Division (DVB/VD)
- Counterterrorism and National Security Division (DVB/TN)

From 2005 to 2011, the Netherlands’ employed the 3D approach (defence, diplomacy and development), though it did not necessarily use all three elements all the time, instead it made choices based on the country needs and domestic and international political considerations (IOB, 2016).

The Netherlands’ Stability Assessment Framework (SAF) provides the analytical framework for its information management and analysis, policy identification, and prioritisation into the development of an overall stabilisation promotion strategy for a particular country or region (Pedersen, et al. 2019).

The Netherlands uses National Action Plans (NAPs) to implement the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The NAPs are not policy frameworks, but a starting point for more integrated and coordinated cooperation between the Netherlands government, civil society and knowledge institutes on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. “At the core of the NAP-I is an analysis of the multifaceted roles of women in conflict and peace” (Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) (2015).

Lessons

The Government’s independent evaluation of its 3D work found the results to be “mixed”, with its level of ambition often “at odds with the harsh realities of operating in fragile states” (IOB, 2016). It suggests more attention be devoted to academic insights about state-building and fragile states (IOB, 2016). The evaluation identifies that policy implementation is “often built on best practices and characterised by pragmatism and common sense” (IOB, 2016). The Netherlands Government (2013) response to the evaluation agreed that while a thorough understanding of the local, national and regional context is an established part of its policy, “the depth of this understanding and the degree to which it found its way into policy varied”, e.g. it was applied too superficially in Somalia and Chad. The integrated approach means working with other donor countries and international organisations (IOB, 2016).

The Fragile States and Peacebuilding Unit (established in 2008) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, played “a key role in knowledge building on fragile states at the Ministry and at Dutch embassies, and became a pivotal entity in international consultations and policymaking” (IOB, 2016). Context-specific and conflict-sensitive analyses were used in consultation with partners in the international community to set priorities and identify themes for each country (Netherlands Government, 2013). The IOB’s (2016) evaluation shows that “insights into the local, national and regional context of fragile states have been incorporated into Dutch policy, but that the extent to which this occurred differed by country. The IOB concludes that there was no explicit theory of change to guide interventions in and support to fragile states” (IOB, 2016). The Netherlands Government (2013) response to the evaluation is that the Dutch policy is based on a country-

⁹ <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/organisational-structure/policy-theme-departments>

specific approach (specifically through the Dutch missions' Multi-Annual Strategic Plans (MASPs), which are based on a thorough analysis of the local situation).

France

France has many departments engaged in its stabilisation work, mixing security operations and civil-military activities. Its general approach is informal and ad hoc, and when a more formal structure is established it is on an ad hoc basis (e.g. the Afghanistan-Pakistan cell) (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.95). Key actors engaged in its stabilisation work include (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.95):

- The Ministry of Defence – as a military force, and through the Joint Center for Actions on the Environment (CIAE) (providing the military with information on the human terrain), and the Military Intelligence Directorate (providing the military with intelligence).
- The French Development Agency (AFD) - as an implementing agency and a development bank.
- The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Development (MAEDI) – through the Directorate of Security and Defence Cooperation (DCSD) (in charge of institutional cooperation for stabilisation); and the Crisis and Support Center's Mission for Stabilization (providing rapid expertise and funding quick-impact projects).
- Expertise France - as an implementing agency, and managing MAEDI's pool of experts on governance and development.

Lessons

Formal coordination between the Ministry of Defence and AFD is in its infancy, it is typically ad hoc and limited (Robinson, et al., 2018). While a cross-departmental strategy and a cross-departmental task force was developed in 2009, they were “abandoned and replaced” by ad hoc coordination mechanisms separate for each crisis – e.g. in Afghanistan-Pakistan, Central Africa Republic, and Burundi (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.95). AFD and the Ministry of Defence signed a framework agreement in 2016 to formalise information exchange, training, and operational cooperation (Robinson, et al., 2018). However, Robinson, et al. (2018) note that “in spite of talks about the need to embrace a comprehensive approach, the French approach is characterised by limited ambitions and a large dose of realism about what can effectively be achieved” (Robinson, et al., 2018, p.95).

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Suggested citation

Herbert, S. (2019). *Institutions, approaches and lessons for coherent and integrated conflict analysis*. (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

About this report

This report is based on 11 days of desk-based research. It was prepared for the Australian Government, © Australian Government 2019. The views expressed in this report are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of GSDRC, its partner agencies or the Australian Government.

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