

## Regional Governors Presentation, Villavicencio, 12 November 2015:

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Colombia is close to a historic peace agreement that will transform its prospects and hopefully set it on the road to fulfilling its full potential.

Colombia is in a privileged position of having the institutions, legal frameworks, financial and human resources and experience necessary to build sustainable peace. Coordination will be key: the complexities of the socio-economic situation, the terrain, the varying levels of state presence and the variable number of armed groups in each vicinity indicate that a highly flexible and adaptive approach will need to be implemented in each location, and will require effective horizontal and vertical coordination within Government.

I believe that 'how' you deliver stabilisation or peacebuilding activity is as important, if not more important, as 'what' you do. Unfortunately, we too often focus on what we can 'do', rather than what needs to be done, and pay even less attention to 'how' we do it. It is for this reason that there remains such a significant gap between policy and implementation.

Here are seven principles for 'how' to identify, plan, undertake, and communicate the stabilisation activities deemed most appropriate for your particular region, accompanied by practical examples to illustrate the thinking behind each one.

Stabilisation uses a combination of integrated civilian and military actions to reduce violence, re-establish security and prepare for longer term recovery, all whilst ensuring that the activities undertaken build an enabling environment for structural stability. The stabilisation approach is built around the 3P's:

- Protect political actors, the political system and the population;
- Promote, consolidate and strengthen political processes;
- Prepare for longer term recovery.

The first principle is to **work politically**. Without due consideration of the national or regional political economy in which interventions are taking place, the activities are unlikely to succeed, and indeed could do harm. Experience from the field suggests that activities driven solely by external actors and which do not address the local drivers of instability will not be successful. All work therefore should be preceded and guided by an appropriate conflict analysis. Further, stabilisation interventions will have an impact on local political dynamics, and inevitably there will be losers to whom stability presents a threat. Understanding that impact (whether intended or unintended) is key, as is managing the political benefits and opposition it may engender. The Niger Delta Amnesty process was an excellent example of how intelligent analysis undertaken at national and local level shaped a demand driven process that met the needs of all stakeholders.

The second principle, **ensure local ownership**, relies on the political understanding outlined in the first principle. Any drivers of instability will play out in local dynamics and relationships, often between the elites, the population and their interaction with the state. The interventions need to find ways of supporting more constructive relationships between these actors to build the foundations for longer-term stability.

Interventions that focus exclusively on central government and formal structures reduce their ability to achieve impact for the population. Often the best way is to combine engaging with formal and

informal actors to ensure both understand each other's roles through activity. HMG's support to the Government of KPK in Pakistan is a good example of building trust through cooperation between state and non-state security and justice actors. There will be judgement calls that need to be made about which non-state actors to engage. Some may not be politically feasible, others might be spoilers. However in many cases they will need to be engaged, not with a view to bolstering them, but to influence, harness or reform them. Experience has demonstrated that ignoring spoilers does not work.

Having conducted analysis of the political context, the next three principles focus on **flexible and responsive engagement**. The third principle is **plan iteratively**. Planning is critical. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Planning for stabilisation requires joint analysis, agreed goals, and clear benchmarks of progress. It also means building flexibility into plans and using monitoring to assess progress, ideally through setting a clear baseline before the activities commence. From the outset consideration should be given to how ownership will be later transferred to local stakeholders.

A key planning assumption in the Colombian context will be that once an agreement is signed, the population will expect to see rapid visible presence and progress on the ground. This will require careful planning and investment ahead of the final agreement in areas such as the recruitment, training and posting of personnel, the letting of contracts, agreements on the respective roles and responsibilities of state and non-state providers etc. There is a risk attached to this of course, but such investment continues to increase confidence that an agreement will be sustained, as well as increasing perceptions of the Government at local level.

The fourth principle is **analyse continually**. Sound analysis is the cornerstone of a successful approach and all stakeholders should be engaged from the outset. Initial analysis should focus on the critical drivers and dynamics present in any situation. Regular checks on how those drivers/factors are progressing can then help recalibrate what objectives and approaches are needed. Without a common understanding of the stabilisation threat and context, integrated and meaningful action will be difficult to implement. The analysis should provide a shared understanding of conflict dynamics and inform a prioritised approach that can adapt to changing circumstances. Good analysis identifies what we think we know, and gaps in our analysis. It is the understanding of subtle, contextual issues that will determine whether we make a positive impact or exacerbate the problem. Finally, analysis needs to inform the approach to monitoring as it will reveal the critical success factors (e.g. changing perceptions of local groups or key individuals). The DDR intervention in Tumatu, Liberia was an excellent example of how targeted analysis of ex-combatants and the communities they were due to reintegrate into generated a high success rate. Such analysis was expensive, but the cost of failing to understand the requirement is costlier still.

The fifth principle is **deliver contextually**. Implementation of activities need to be moulded to each unique context. This will be particularly important in a country such as Colombia, where there will be multiple contexts requiring different stabilisation activities. For example, security challenges will remain throughout the country, particularly in rural areas where state presence has been limited, and where primacy of security provision may be disputed between not only the Government and the FARC, but also with other armed groups. Each context will need to be analysed carefully and responses tailored to the findings. It will be important that unintended security vacuums are not created inadvertently. Delivering contextually mean not designing activities solely based on models from elsewhere or our inherent assumptions. Delivery mechanisms and modalities should be developed in a manner appropriate to the context in which they are being implemented, and not imported straight from other environments or operations.

The final two principles relate to **relationship management**. It is important to recognise that the reason stabilisation interventions are necessary in the first place is because the political structures for managing competing relationships non-violently have broken down. Interventions therefore require operating outside normal channels and thinking about how to engage constructively with those outside more formal structures. It is necessary to think critically about power, and how it is distributed and manifested. Engaging with influential individuals or non-state groups, and promoting the participation of marginalised groups, often such as women, or youth, is likely to be needed to create the foundations upon which stability can be built. Stabilisation environments are often plagued by misinformation and rumour, which can often inhibit activities and undermine their intended impact. Thus, we need to be explicitly cognisant of how the wider population – outside elite groupings – perceive developments and ensure those stakeholders are aware of activities being undertaken and the rationale behind them.

Principle six therefore is **engage broadly**. In supporting the political processes and agreements that underpin the foundations for local stability this is vital. Activities aimed at creating stability may deliberately or inadvertently exclude potential spoilers or marginalised groups and this will reduce the likelihood of success. Therefore the interventions need to identify how and when such groups can be constructively involved in maintaining stability through political dialogue.

The number of stakeholders involved may be relatively few within a region or district. However, despite being few in number, the stakeholders may be diverse in origin and may include government officials, security service personnel, non-state armed groups, community elders, business leaders, youth groups, women's organisations, trade unions or faith groups. Some of these groups may have been historically marginalised and may need support to be involved in any process.

The final principle is **communicate coherently**. Stabilisation contexts are characterised by a breakdown of the relationships between the various groups that occupy it, and the state. The population therefore has a critical role to play – success will largely be determined by their perception of whether the situation has improved, and the confidence in the actors delivering the interventions. Effective communication is therefore part of the political dialogue that will determine the impact of stabilisation activities, not least because stability is achieved when perceptions of key actors change. If parties to conflict – whether political or population, military or civilian do not perceive changes in the conditions that created political upheaval, they will not feel compelled to change themselves. This will be particularly important in an environment like Colombia, where the length and legacy of the conflict, will make it difficult to sustain confidence in the current process across Colombian society.

Effective communication in such environments requires an understanding of whose perceptions need to change and how. This should be developed during the analysis and refined during the planning phases. Communication must be accessible in terms of language and medium and must be driven by how interventions resonate locally. This is particularly important for military actors, given the ways in which they can be perceived by the population. Success should be highlighted carefully. A success story at a national level may look very different to those on the ground. However, if framed correctly, locally relevant success stories, if disseminated effectively, can improve local perceptions of the activities being undertaken. Window dressing needs to be guarded against carefully however, perceptions will only change if communication is based on reality. If actual change has not taken place as a result of the activities, then communications interventions themselves will not change perceptions. Expectations also need to be managed carefully and any form of strategic communications campaign should include a feedback mechanism in order to

capture public perceptions and enable responses to address speculation, correct misperception and reduce rumour.

Finally, it is important to target appropriate channels. The range of audience is significant and the forms of communication people use may be very different to those with which we may be familiar or comfortable. Engaging with both formal and informal media (including word of mouth) in the right languages, and with the right audiences, is essential. For example, in some contexts women are often the main source of information and influencers of opinion. In other contexts, on specific issues, teachers may be important actors through their relationships with their pupils, or religious leaders given their status in the community. Knowing the audience, as with any type of campaign or business strategy, is fundamental to effective communications.

So to conclude, may I congratulate you all on the progress you have made to date, but you don't need me to tell you that significant challenges remain. To bring lasting peace, as you are all aware more than I, there will be a need to bring security, justice, jobs and public services to the regions, in order to convince those inhabitants of the merits of lasting stability through a peace dividend. You will all know better than me 'what' must be done to secure a lasting peace, but I hope these principles provide you with some food for thought in terms of 'how' you might deliver them.