

Terms of reference for policy-supporting research

Comprehensive approach to risk analysis and management for Niger

1. Context

The interdepartmental strategic note on the comprehensive approach adopted on July 20, 2017 lays down the principle of “a foreign policy build on a common analysis of risks and context, as well as underpinned by jointly defined strategic objectives, would also make it possible, once these objectives have been transposed in a coherent manner into the range of instruments available to the various departments, and where appropriate to the institutions and organizations concerned, to strengthen them in the performance of their respective missions”.

The methodology of the comprehensive approach provides for the creation of “task forces” serving as consultation platform for a variety of objectives, which may include : 1) exchange of information; 2) synergies at the European or international level; 3) the development of common context and risk analysis and the exploration of common crosscutting objectives.

Exchange of views within the Strategic Committee for the Comprehensive Approach, which is composed of members of the department of foreign affairs, the federal police and defence, demonstrated that risk analysis is an issue for all participants. However, the methodologies used in each institution are different. Analysis often takes place at different levels (context, institution, fiduciary, sectorial, reputational...) and diverges depending on the needs and the actors working with each government institution. The acceptable and accepted levels of risk vary according to the actors and the objectives identified. There is a common interest in conducting a qualitative and continuous analysis of contextual risks in the countries where external actions are carried out. There is both an opportunity and a need to harmonize the analyses carried out and to strengthen the collaboration among the actors involved.

2. Defining the problem and identifying the fields of activity

In order for the actions undertaken by the Belgian development cooperation to be more effective, it is essential that they are based on continuous risk analysis and management relating to the operational context. The consequence of the lack of shared views during the elaboration of the risk analysis and of a common approach on risk management, results in an efficiency deficit, waste of time and resources, both financial and human.

Any operational activity in fragile environments is risky by nature taking into account that there is limited control on the achievement of the expected outcomes. The occurrence of risks cannot be excluded, it is even probable. This often leads to

risk aversion rather than its management. However, not engaging in certain contexts can become the cause of greater risks for the country concerned and also for the international community.

The prevention of risks, and the importance of adapting Belgian operational activities to its context, make it crucial to implement a comprehensive, in-depth and systematic approach to risk analysis and management.

The desired approach in order to move towards a shared view of risk analysis and management is to promote a gradual process of dissemination of a new and more multisectoral way of working using the tool "FRAME" (*Fragility Resilience Assessment Management Exercise*) as a "means" and not as an end in itself involving all Belgian actors and taking into account their analyses and targeted outcomes. The FRAME tool and its user guide are available on our website diplomatie.belgium.be through the following link :

- https://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/politique/cooperation_au_developpement/li_brairie_multimedia/apercu_des_notes_strategiques

In 2019, a Short term Policy Supporting research was conducted using the tool FRAME for risk analysis and management in Mali. The Ad Hoc Working Group on the Comprehensive Approach to Risk Analysis and Management had identified the following elements :

- Analyses are currently carried out by each of the actors according to their respective interests defined in the context ("where our interests lie") ;
- It has been observed that our interventions take place in increasingly fragile contexts;
- Given the importance of the information collected by the different actors in the different interventions, and depending on the partnerships implemented, everyone would benefit from greater collaboration ;
- The terminology used by institutions is not always the same, and can sometimes be confusing. Awareness raising for a better mutual knowledge between the actors appears important, such as briefings at headquarters before leaving for the field for defence or police missions, or participation in joint training in order to move towards a common language or at least a shared culture.
- The needs are different at the operational level but there is a shared interest in conducting a continuous analysis of contextual risks.

It appears that it is first and foremost in the field that possible collaborations can be deepened, by reinforcing concrete exchanges between stakeholders, by promoting the development of informal networks in this area of risk management.

The Mali exercise confirmed the added value of using the FRAME tool. The FRAME tool is, context-specific, it is systematic and holistic, it has the ability of bringing substantially different actors around the table. Once trained to FRAME and sharing a common conceptual approach and terminology, different actors can more effectively engage in an informed discussion on contextual risks. If FRAME results in a joint and validated analysis (responsibilities and procedures have to be decided), it can evolve into a reference document that can notably support the information sharing between the different actors in a more systematic way. Once it becomes a reference document, it can facilitate further cooperation between the different stakeholders in the future. FRAME can also help identify 'blind spots' i.e. risks for which there is insufficient information available to correctly assess their impact within the context and the various stakeholders.

In order to continue promoting gradual dissemination of a new way of working using FRAME, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Comprehensive Approach to Risk Analysis and Management decided that it would be pertinent to apply the FRAME tool to another fragile context. The lessons learned from the PSR for Mali taught us that « developing a first FRAME for a particular country has an entry cost. It requires an investment in time, training and expertise. » In the absence of knowledgeable colleagues, expert based support is therefore required for a new complete risk analysis in a new context. Enriched by this first experience, our local Embassy should then be able to update it and by extension in time and place , in new countries or assignments.

Niger, a fragile state in the security hotspot of the Sahel and one of the 14 partner countries of the Belgian Development Cooperation, was mentioned as an interesting second case due to the number of actors/ institutions already present. In addition to this, Enabel will be using the FRAME tool in Niger to analyse the risks related to the implementation of a new EU funded project in the security sector.

This *Policy Supporting Research (PSR)* aims to finance the use of an academic expert for a duration of maximum 25 working days spread over three months. During that period, it will be the responsibility of the academic expert to find an efficient way to provide support to our embassy to implement a risk analysis, prepare it by means of FRAME for Niger, and to coach/train our staff in Niamey to the use of FRAME to realize the analysis and the management of the contextual risks in Niger.

Because actors at headquarters have been trained and sensitized to the importance of risk analysis and the FRAME tool during the PSR concerning Mali, it is suggested

that this PSR focuses solely on the field context analysis and training of staff in Niger.

3. Expected results of policy support for Belgian Development Cooperation

The mission of the academic expert ideally starts in the first semester of 2021, taking into account the best availability of the embassy staff in Niger, and by means of webtools for virtual meetings when appropriate.

1) Find an effective way for the Development Cooperation in its capacity as chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Comprehensive Approach for Risk Analysis and Management and/or by extension the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support Embassies in the future to conduct contextual risk analysis using FRAME.

To this means, the expert will write an operational proposal for effective further application of the "FRAME" tool in new contexts. This blue print should help the Development Cooperation to repeat the joint exercise in other Belgian embassies without the need of external coordinators.

2) Test it by supporting the Belgian Embassy in Niger to conduct a Risk analysis using FRAME.

With approval of the relevant decision making bodies of DGD and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, after consultation on the timing and under the general coordination of the Ambassador, the expert will test his/her operational plan proposal by supporting the Belgian Embassy in Niger to conduct a context analysis using FRAME under the. The analysis should be the result of a joint exercise of all Belgian actors present in Niger.

3) Train Staff in Niger on how to use FRAME (virtually)..

The Staff in Niger should be trained on how to use FRAME as a joint tool for risk analysis enabling them to review the risk analysis independently in the future.

4) Write recommendations on the most effective way to apply FRAME to new contexts.

Based on the "lessons learned" from the mission, the expert will adapt the operational plan for future risk analysis using FRAME in new contexts and provide recommendations on how the Belgian Development Cooperation can best disseminate this new and more multisectoral way of working using FRAME and help embassies to conduct an initial contextual risk analysis.

4. Follow-up and monitoring of the expected products described in the ToR

The follow-up of this PSR will be done by the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Comprehensive Approach to Risk Analysis and Management. This group is chaired by the unit D5.2 Transitional Development and Governance and will meet as required. The Ad Hoc Working Group will also ensure the continuation of the process after the duration of this PSR. The Ad Hoc Working Group informs the Strategic Committee of the Comprehensive Approach about its activities and the results obtained.

The D5.2 unit is the focal point for the academic expert for punctual and practical questions.