

Albany's delivery methodology and programme cycle is based on the following eight steps: Engage, Understand, Theory of change, Plans and protocols, Mobilise, Manage, Mainstreaming, Review. This response will set out how we operationalise the eight principles, and then discuss in greater detail the particular tools that our professional, prudent and effective programme management is based on.



The following key tools set out below are ones Albany uses to ensure that the cycle is respected and its integrity remains intact throughout a project's lifespan, whatever the challenges that may arise. An example in Libya for the UNDP in 2014/15 demonstrated why this was important – when the outbreak conflict in Tripoli necessitated the decamp of operations to Tunis, our project documentation and review mechanisms with the client helped to ensure that objectives continued to be addressed despite upheaval. Furthermore, greater contextualisation is provided below on how Albany has employed these tools in practice.

Theory of change

In essence, a Theory of change describes how change is assumed to come about through intervention in a prevailing situation, and demonstrates the theory behind the change Albany aims to make through its programme. When designing Albany interventions, the inception and understand phase maps out the ToC, thereby allowing the opportunity to test assumptions, obliging the user to think logically, balance the evidence of the intervention through situational and theoretical analysis. This results in the creation of a foundational document which also feeds into the logframe, M&E plan, and results framework. For example, in a recent Albany project in Yemen, the ToC was used to map risk and conflict sensitivity issues, and created buy-in to the intervention across multiple stakeholders. In other words, the more partners contribute, the stronger and more robust the intervention will be, and the more appropriate and realistic it will be. Although often, the paucity of data available in FCAS can cause issues, it is normal to make assumptions at the outset of a project, and theories of change can take this into account.

Working in FCAS, it is evident how a full assessment of the environment is essential – not least from the perspective of conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm principles. ToCs are increasingly required for all interventions, especially as they provide an programme with organisation and structure when operating in fluid environment, which are potentially subject to rapid and potentially harmful change due to our interventions or other external factors. This demonstrates the need for a ToC to be a 'live' document: as situations can change, so the need to revisit them become apparent. Furthermore, an intervention's MEL – say at midline stage – can determine clearly the need to update a ToC. Aspects of the programme cycle which might be improved by the presence of a robust theory of change include monitoring and evaluation, conflict sensitivity, gender sensitivity, or results management and value for money. Within Albany, internal processes such as director level review, weekly operations meetings, regular client updates, and cross-project and cross-donor MEL lead by Albany's Research and Innovation Hub help to ensure this takes place.

Monitoring and evaluation leaning (MEL)

Albany keeps an MEL advisory capacity on hand to help ensure that programme outputs are maximised. Furthermore, in-house, we have practitioners with long experience of building MEL into project design. Typical tools include data disaggregation, key informant interviews, focus groups, surveying or other kinds of target audience analyses. The outcomes of using these is to assess efficiency, effectiveness, intended and unintended impact, and sustainability, and they can also track changes in perception, attitudes and relationships. For qualitative measurement, baseline, midline and endlines are taken through polling and focus grouping. Then, it is possible to discern and capture changes in awareness and attitude among the target audiences that were identified during the target audience analysis stage.

In a current Ukraine campaigning project for the EU, for example, the MEL regime ensures that the objectives of the project are set out clearly with the appropriate M&E tools in place to function – in this case, TAA done through sample surveying and focus grouping. These are aligned with the client, and for TV broadcast sections of the campaigns, acceptable gross rating points levels and social media hit rates are agreed. Achieving this is also linked to the payment schedule, so this ensures that MEL is a fundamental part of the cycle. The feedback it provides, whether real-time or post-project, helps to judge programme effectiveness, achievement of intended effects or reliability of approaches, and ultimately value for money. Therefore, it greatly facilitates the processes of results management, not only within the individual project's scope, but more widely across funder policy areas, enhancing accountability.

Risk management

Within the context of programme management, analysing and mapping risks is (or should be) a standard part of the foundational phase. Then, keeping a risk matrix as a live document throughout a project's lifespan is important (through monthly director level review, weekly operations meetings, and regular client updates) because naturally evolving environments change *sui generis*, and they change also in response to our interactions with them.

Operationally, risk assessments are an important part of the MEL of a project, and Albany's own media monitoring and tracking of significant threat activity can also assist the evaluation of risk. Monitoring risk forms part of weekly project updating processes among the delivery team, or on an ad hoc basis if a particular incident arises of threat level becomes apparent to the team. Risks – whether categorised political, operational or security in particular – are often subject to very rapid change in FCAS. Depending on circumstance, risk assessors can be used. In Somalia for example, we have regularly used the services of a Mogadishu-based international agency which has a solid track record in providing security, risk management and life support to international companies across Africa.

We do not submit any proposals for work without a risk matrix. Typically, we organise the types of risk in to three broad categories: i) political, such as understanding the political context of the intervention, which is linked to conflict sensitivity etc. or the prevalence of polarising narratives, ii) operational, such as considering impact of staff conduct, effectiveness of platform, implementing gender sensitivity concerns, ensuring target audiences is addressed, etc; iii) security, such as threats to the safety staff, which is fairly normal consideration to make in FCAS), or iv) financial, such as threats to the integrity of funds through corruption.

We numerate each risk, assess probability, potential impact, set out mitigating action, then assess probability after mitigation, impact after mitigation, and who the risk owner might be. Risk owner is more than just 'Albany' or 'client' – this goes deeper to a named individual or post, such as 'security manager' or 'project manager', so there can be no confusion if any risk materialises and needs action. If a risk is evaluated as being better managed by government or the funder, then Albany will highlight this and pass it on as appropriate. Finally, a robust risk matrix is part of the project documentation which helps with the overall results management of the programme itself, and more broadly at the funder's policy level. As with the other documents described in this response, the risk matrix is a live document which should be monitored as we go through a project.

Financial Reporting

Albany works closely with the client to ensure agreed budgets are constructed, tracked, adjusted and reallocated in a way which reflects the clients agreed needs. We use the activity based budget format (or similar, depending on the funder's norms) to ensure compliance with the company's and CSSF's (or other funder's) financial reporting requirements.

Beyond this, the ABB is a tool which helps to ensure that resourcing is linked to activity in a timely way so that the (non-)availability of funds is not an obstacle to the running of activities. In many FCAS, the movement of funds can be challenging, and so adequate forecasting is essential. For example, a recent CSSF funded project in Sudan required reliable forecasting as currently there are no international bank transfers possible, and so funds needed to be brought in place in other ways. This is balanced against the security and paper trail of funds. Oversight of finance is done through monthly project finance meetings, with Account Managers required to update and present the project finances accordingly.

As a minimum, financial reporting to the client is relevant, timely and accurate reflecting the spend to date, how this compares to the initial budget and a report on the variances and explanations as to why. This report will also be in line with the activity based budget noted above. This function is inseparable from the other principles discussed in this document.

Gender sensitivity

As a UK company, we are fully aware of the Gender Equality Act 2014, and when it comes to project and intervention design, the Development Assistance Committee's gender equality policy marker is a useful tool. Projects without proper approaches to gender risk do harm by reinforcing gender inequality. As such, our projects take a gender sensitive approach, and are also cognisant of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, on Women, Peace and Security. In accordance with the UK's National Action Plan (NAP), the consortium supports promoting the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence and the promotion of participation of women at all levels of decision-making in institutions and in mechanisms for preventing, managing and resolving conflict in peace negotiations and peace operations. We note also the new NAP in women, peace and security 2018 to 2022, published in January 2018, and it informs our regular updating of procedures and policies.

In designing and delivering programmes and outputs, we recognise and programme in at the earliest stage the importance of tailoring our activities to the needs of particular social groups, keeping in mind gender sensitivities and cultural norms. Gender risk is therefore an important component in building our strategies and guides our delivery throughout the project. For any given context, we may consider the following:

- Gender-based violence and impunity (e.g. sexual violence, honour crimes, forced and early marriage);
- Radicalisation and recruitment of women into extremist organisations / domination in areas where they control;
- Lack of physical and mental health care, including reproductive health care;
- Unequal nationality rights for women and their children;
- Obstacles to free and equal education;
- Lack of women's participation in peace negotiations.

Further contextualization can be provided as follows. A recent CSSF-funded project in Yemen aimed at improving the environment for dialogue and inclusivity in peace talks, and in order to promote women's engagement throughout the project, we developed a three-pronged strategy:

1. Sensitising target communities to the importance of women's inclusion in dialogue processes;
2. Providing clear female role models throughout project implementation; and
3. Ensuring a minimum of 30% women's inclusion throughout all project activities, including in areas of implementation that are either highly tribal or conservative in nature.

Our gender plan for the project was designed among project partners, and then submitted to the FCO for approval and compliance reasons. In other projects or funders where the requirement for gender considerations may not be as explicit or vocal as in the CSSF, it is something we offer as standard. For example, though project documentation for a UN-funded radio drama in Darfur has no minimum gender stipulations, through our project, one of our two chief scriptwriters has become the most prolific female radio scriptwriter in Sudan. Within Albany itself, 9 out of 20 staff are female.

Conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm

In line with the HMG's understanding and the tools it uses (such as those provided by the OECD and Development Assistance Committee), we take on board the definition of conflict sensitivity as "acting with the understanding that any initiative conducted in a conflict-affected environment will interact with that conflict and that such interaction will have consequences that may have positive or negative effects." This is programmed in at the design stage, and along with the theory of change, helps to create a robust and responsive intervention. For example, a recent project working with communications and outreach to people who are within the orbit of influence of al Shabaab required very careful planning and understanding of the complex tribal and clan dynamics. Therefore, we deliberately and systematically seek to understand and minimise the risks of our activities, while maximising the positive effects through the use of desk research, M&E tools such as focus grouping / in-depth interviewing, and the use of local staff.

In designing any project, we apply Do No Harm principles at each stage, and make every endeavour to assess in advance any impact on things that divide and create tension among communities. Albany subscribes to the OECD's Do No Harm definition, as described in the "International Support for State-building" white paper (2010): "[International actors] can inadvertently do harm when the resources they deliver or the policy reforms they advocate exacerbate rather than mitigate the conditions for violent conflict, or they weaken rather than strengthen the state as a site of decision making and policy formation over the deployment of public resources". For example, in the UN-funded radio drama in Darfur mentioned above, we are careful even with the choice of incidental music that appears in the drama: if we use instruments too frequently that are associated with one group of tribes, then it is possible that the groups of tribes with whom these instruments are not associated begin to question the balance – and therefore effectiveness – of the drama. In its work in Somalia, Albany has regularly adapted implementation plans to reflect changes in the political and security situation without losing overall momentum or damaging key stakeholder relationships. It accepts this process of recalibration as an operational necessity which requires flexibility and resilience across its implementation team.

Monitoring the effects of our interactions

On the ground, we employ broad network of various stakeholders (CSOs, INGOS etc.) across any particular context to provide highly localised data on conflict dynamics. This wide information base contributes to our nuanced understanding of the implementing environment. Our informed conflict analysis is then incorporated into programme management to adapt implementation to changing contexts. Conflict context data from the local and national level is monitored by programme leadership, with Director-level oversight. All of our staff receive conflict sensitivity capacity-building training for relevant project in conflict zones. A recent example of contextualising the above is a CSSF-funded project in Yemen. The project aim was to encourage greater buy-in to a nationally-led peace process by working at the grassroots levels to create common ground among communities who have been split by conflict. The potential to do harm through inadvertent effects was great, and so it was important the project's foundational documents were very robust. This meant that the key documents: theory of change, results framework, risk matrix, M&E, and gender action plan were either all agreed at proposal stage or delivered along with the inception report. These documents were agreed in a tri-partite way: Albany as Prime, sub-contractor as local experts, and FCO as the Contracting Authority.