

Albany has established sizeable projects from scratch in places such as Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia, e.g. under a major UN contract for the African Mission to Somalia, we planned, built and operated a forward base and secure compound (in Mogadishu) with all supporting infrastructure for up to 60 people, including accommodation, ICT systems, security, offices, mess facilities and attendant subcontractors. The following pages detail some of the key considerations and processes necessary when establishing a presence in an FCAS. One of the key points is in recruitment: we identify and recruit local individuals and/or partner organisations with an intimate understanding of the cultural, political and security environment and with practical and operational delivery networks in the country of operation in order to inform and shape our operational plan and deployment and to provide ground-truth and situational awareness. This extends to making government level contacts and relationships, in addition to any which the client may provide us.

Establishing the facts of the operating environment

Using our networks, we ensure that we properly understand local governance regimes and administrative protocols and how these impact on our ability to operate and deliver; e.g. in Darfur, we are conscious that we work under the scrutiny of the national security services of Sudan. Managing these constraints requires careful finessing through sensitive communications and social interaction with key host government officials and interlocutors. Given the paramount importance of security, we contracted local and international security experts to assess and report on the security environment during the planning phase, and to make on-going recommendations for the security of team members and the safest possible conduct of operations. This team also contributes to our broader operational research and analysis conducted both from London and on the ground, and is configured to keep the operational situation and environment under constant review so that progress can be continuously evaluated.

Managing operations

All processes are closely overseen and managed throughout by the responsible Albany Board member, Operations Director and designated project manager, underpinned by the backstopping function of Albany London. We have extensive and familiar networks of both core operational staff, and niche suppliers and subject matter experts. Getting the team balance right allows for political awareness, expertise and sensitivity in FCAS and forms the bedrock of a coherent capability. Some key features of centralised management include:

- Meeting deadlines and milestones – all projects involve this; apart from HMG, we currently received funding from EU, DoS and the UN;
- Being cost-effective and transparent, which applies to all projects and FCAS countries, with particular care and focus in places with less developed receipting and paper trail norms, such as payments made in Somalia or Sudan;
- Constantly measuring effect with dynamic monitoring and evaluation in order to review, measure and demonstrate programme effectiveness, drive constant improvement, and shows value for money – such as in Central where the British embassies Albany works with are closely involved at all stages of the cycle;
- Engagement and outreach plan, such as a current Yemen project which involved outreach across three governorates to encourage buy-in to the peace process;
- Remaining flexible and striving for innovation, which is how a recent CVE workshop delivered in Uganda developed based on Albany directions into a mobile CVE app for use by CSOs
- Balancing logistics oversight and reliance on partners, for example in an WEU-funded project in Ukraine where a team of 15 in Kyiv carry out the activities, but under Albany's oversight through weekly calls /

Financial integrity

Financial integrity is an important part of setting up a platform. Albany takes fraud and corruption very seriously, and we follow government guidelines on these issues. For example, all our contracts for both internal and external staff contain reference to the Bribery Act 2010 (England & Wales). Beyond this, we:

- Have a 'zero tolerance' policy towards fraud, bribery and corruption, and would always seek to take disciplinary and /or legal action against those found to have perpetrated fraud.
- Are committed to developing an anti-fraud culture and keeping the opportunities for fraud, bribery and corruption to the absolute minimum.
- Assess the risks of fraud, bribery and corruption, establish processes and controls to minimise these risks, and regularly review the effectiveness of our control systems.
- Require all staff to immediately report any incidents or suspicions of fraud, bribery or corruption to an appropriate manager or another person named in Raising Concerns. We would not penalise anyone for raising a concern in good faith.
- Will take all reports of fraud, bribery and corruption seriously, and investigate proportionately and appropriately as set out in the Fraud Response Plan.

This flows down in to other contracted partners, agents or suppliers. For example, a recent partner in Sudan was assessed and contracted following a long process in which aims and values of the organisation were evaluated, and it was peer reviewed through past partners and donors. Given the field of CVE in Sudan, the choice of partner was double-checked with the Embassy, who ran their own suitability check. In terms of financial and operational compliance to the contracted terms of reference, close management near daily check-in calls ensured this ran according to agreement and expectations.

Stakeholder engagement

In the case of a CSSF programme, communications with the Contracting Authority are typically based around a regular reporting schedule, complemented by ad hoc updates as the situation requires. Our regular reports (frequency decided in consultation) normally include an assessment of the activities conducted and a description of arrangements for upcoming events. Quarterly reports will detail progress against project objectives and will include measurements of outputs, using the agreed results framework as the key reporting tool. Ad hoc communications will focus on unforeseen challenges or changes in the operating environment which have a direct impact on delivery and the achievement of set milestones. Where necessary, meetings will be organised with representatives of the CSSF team to discuss perceived opportunities or setbacks. Where appropriate, success stories and examples of clear impact will be shared, thereby contributing to wider knowledge management around effective interventions and implementation methods.

The table below is an example representation of what we suggest the Authority's interests might be, and the proposed liaison arrangements, on how therefore to best meet those interests.

Stakeholder	Needs and interests	Liaison arrangements
Foreign & Commonwealth Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stability and security of country X / NSC strategy compliance• Increasingly transparent and accountable institutions• Promoting inclusive societies• Ensuring effective and successful delivery of project strategy• Ensuring value for money (VFM)• Ensuring proper monitoring and evaluation of project impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agreement on the project plan, results framework, gender and conflict sensitivity and risk register prior to implementation• Weekly activity-based reports• Quarterly reporting against the results framework• Ad hoc liaison to discuss challenges and unforeseen circumstances• Project completion report

One recent example has been managing the relationship between the FCO, ourselves as implementers, our sub-contractors, and a UN Special Envoy's Office. The key tool was the establishment of a Steering Committee, and accompanying Terms of Reference which were developed with all four parties in agreement and signatories. This applies pre-agreed parameters to activities, and makes them time-bound. A further example of political stakeholder management is Sudan, on a recent civil society capacity building project. We notified the local authorities, the Humanitarian Affairs Commission, of the intention to conduct training activities, and extended an invitation to them. This ensured the event went off smoothly, as to attempt to conduct activities without their knowledge would have been unwise and could have been very disruptive to the entire programme.

Contingency planning

The Albany project management team typically maintains regular communication with all deployed staff in order to review progress on project delivery and determine resource and capacity needs. This approach is aimed at ensuring that managers can apply the organisation's cross-discipline experience with a view to extracting added value wherever possible. On-ground resource and capacity are utilised to optimal effect to maximise value for the client in project implementation without compromising operational delivery. Recommendations are made to the client and captured in project reporting. In order to measure performance, all staff are asked to maintain project timesheets. Albany has enacted many contingencies to maintain business continuity against a wide range of risks including:

- Unexpected staff absence due to illness;
- Movement restrictions for internationals due to threat;
- Access restrictions for local staff due to curfew, due to real or perceived threats;
- Risks to local staff including physical attack, threats and intimidation;
- Prolonged interruption of flights due to threat and adverse weather; and
- Prolonged outage of internet services due to technical interruption.

Security and in-country administration

In terms of security and in-country administration, the best way of describing this is through an example of how Albany became established and continues to operate in Somalia, beginning in 2009. This was achieved through networks, due diligence and professional service providers. Later in 2016, this system was tried and tested again successfully when we set up to operate in Afghanistan for a project for the US Embassy in Kabul. If a lock-down situation arises, it is accepted that certain activities will have to be frozen for the duration of the emergency, as this is normally set out in the risk assessment. However, it may still be possible to maintain a work routine, even if this is on a limited basis. Conflict can break out during projects which changes the context and dynamics of delivery, and in Libya in 2014/15 for a UNDP project, for example, we were obliged to relocate to Tunisia and establish an operational platform there, which was achieved. We were able to use refugee and diaspora communities to support communications and activities with and among Libyans who had remained in Libya.