

Breakthrough Media has a proven track record of establishing an operational presence to deliver strategic communications and civil society engagement activities in fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS). Over the past five-years we have engaged local staff and actively managed relationships with stakeholders to set-up successful projects in four 'high fragility' states (Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Somalia) and one 'moderate fragility' state (Bangladesh).

1. Establishing a presence

We adapt our operating model to meet the demands of each FCAS region, engaging local staff/organisations and putting in place the necessary logistics, operational platform, accommodation and equipment to deliver safe, secure and successful projects.

Engaging local staff: We use a range of strategies to engage and recruit the best local talent onto our projects, including: ♦ advertising to our 12,000 LinkedIn followers and their local networks ♦ accessing 65,000 CVs via *developmentaid.org* (a media platform for the global development community) ♦ and engaging CSOs such as Leaping Boundaries in Bangladesh to access their local networks. Over the past five-years we have recruited 50+ local staff onto our projects in FCAS regions, including 4 local translators.

Example: We produced a film for our US Department of State project, *Watatu*, in Kenya. The purpose was to undermine the ability of violent extremist organisations exploiting sectarian grievances in local communities. We used our Nairobi-based production partner, *Arias AR9*, to engage and recruit local staff for our core operating team. Within four-weeks, we successfully recruited a Project Director, Campaign Manager, Editor and Film Producer, who developed and produced the film through a series of workshops with young people. The film won four international film festival prizes including in Rome and Brussels.

Duty of Care (DoC) planning is a key feature of our approach to establishing a safe operating presence for local staff. Led by our dedicated Risk Manager and locally-embedded Account Directors, this includes: ♦ pre-recruitment risk assessments ♦ pre-deployment refresher assessments ♦ providing appropriate equipment for the environment (e.g. trauma / first aid kits and protective equipment) ♦ and onboarding to make local staff aware of our standard operating procedures, roles and responsibilities and the local risk environment.

Engaging local organisations: During project-planning we undertake an in-depth stakeholder mapping exercise to identify local organisations we need to engage. Where we have a previous or existing project presence, we involve our local teams to ensure their insights are captured into this planning. We work with policy makers and undertake in-house and/or employ external research providers (e.g. *Assaye Risk*) to conduct robust due diligence, analysing each organisation's: ♦ values to ensure alignment to Breakthrough and project-specific objectives ♦ track record of delivering similar project deliverables ♦ and links to hostile state actors/proxies. We require all local partners to sign an NDA prior to detailed discussion of the project and, once selected, establish a MoU to detail the purpose of engagement, project deliverables and associated timeframes.

Example: In Tunisia, we worked with local organisation, *BWS*, to: ♦ source extras and actors ♦ hire transport for the team ♦ secure film sets and filming locations ♦ identify production staff ♦ support our film permit applications from relevant authorities ♦ and source and procure equipment via trusted local providers. We co-located and shared facilities with *BWS* to support a collaborative partnership approach.

Logistical and operational set-up: We engage local legal counsel and financial advice to understand and take steps to comply with local logistical/operational set-up requirements including: ♦ employment laws ♦ tax laws and social care charges ♦ registering with relevant authorities (e.g. to obtain film permits) ♦ and establishing a legal entity if required. We also use local contacts (such as *worldfixers.com*) to procure accommodation, material, services and equipment.

Example: In Somalia we established a safe, secure operating base in Mogadishu beyond the perimeter of the African Union base at the international airport. The site included robust security measures including: ♦ HESCO® perimeter security ♦ a chicane security checkpoint ♦ safe rooms ♦ multiple exit points ♦ and a 24/7 security detail.

This also facilitated **active stakeholder engagement** by enabling us to meet local government officials and agencies and local stakeholders such as community activists and journalists in a secure location.

We also recognise that in FCAS regions, the operating environment can shift rapidly. We constantly monitor events and make rapid logistical and operational changes to our delivery infrastructure in response

to emerging crises, instability and specific threats of violence / terrorism. For example, in response to a direct and credible threat made against our staff in Somalia by the terrorist organisation, al-Shabaab, we mobilised our pre-prepared contingency plan to move staff to a new, more secure location within a guarded complex in less than 48-hours. This ensured the safety of our staff whilst also enabling continued and seamless delivery of the project.

2. Active relationship management

Working in FCAS regions involves engaging, managing and influencing within a complex network of local political stakeholders. We build close relationships with multiple actors, including donors, local stakeholders, foreign governments and their agencies, and other ‘facilitators’ (e.g. local officials and law enforcement) whose buy-in is essential to successful project delivery.

Key elements of our active relationship management approach include: ♦ hiring local staff at a senior level (e.g. Account Directors) to ensure we understand the social, political and economic landscape and manage relationships ♦ holding regular face-to-face and telephone conferences with key stakeholders (e.g. Account Director with local civil society organisations (CSOs)) ♦ and co-locating with stakeholders to embed a partnership approach (e.g. with the Government of Iraq).

Example: We deliver an FCO-funded project to establish new digital communications for the Government of Iraq (GoI). The GoI were initially sceptical about the importance and impact strategic communications could play in Iraq. We recruited an Account Management Team, including an Iraqi national, to drive our active engagement with the GoI.

We held a pre-deployment workshop in London to design persuasive materials to gain GoI buy-in for the project. This culminated in the ‘*For a New Iraq*’ campaign, incorporating a range of online communication channels to showcase the GoI’s vision for Iraq and recapture the online audience share from Daesh.

Our ‘*For a New Iraq*’ strategic communications campaign has achieved more than 306,000,000 million views since 2016.

3. Adapting concepts and materials to local needs and audiences

We place gender and conflict sensitivity at the heart of everything we do, adapting our approach to the local needs and audience in each FCAS region in which we deliver.

Gender-sensitivity: Most often, our projects deal with broad-based social and cultural issues such as democratic participation, inter-community tensions or violent extremism. Gender equality is vital to achieving our goals on these issues and we adapt concepts and materials to mainstream gender into our projects. These projects focus on improving governance and community cohesion and reducing violence, and directly or indirectly support poverty reduction consistent with the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014.

Example: In Somalia our research revealed that a relative paucity of positive male role models in many communities (due to war, famine and displacement) was leaving young men less equipped to think critically about extremist narratives. We adapted our approach to encourage women to take on non-traditional and more prominent roles in public / economic life. This empowered local women, giving them the skills and status to show young men how they could make a positive contribution to society and steer them away from extremist views.

Conflict-sensitivity: We deliver strategic communications to influence attitudes / behaviours among specific local audiences across the globe to reduce conflict and promote peace. During project planning we analyse all factors that are driving conflict and violence (e.g. poor governance, high youth unemployment, and social division) to enable us to adapt concepts and materials that not only avoids harmful impact but actively works to reduce those drivers.

Example: We deliver the ‘*Building Credible Voices*’ project in Pakistan on behalf of the US State Department. The project involves building, training and mentoring a network of local CSOs to promote peace and stability across the region. We embedded conflict-sensitivity into our robust due diligence checks (e.g. identifying and scrutinising political group and organisational affiliations) to ensure the suitability of CSO in achieving these aims. This enabled us to reject two groups representing strongly sectarian interests, with whom a partnership could have further entrenched community grievances.