

Steering group reflection on the action plan of the

Working group

Reconstruction Tender

The Hague, April 25

The Hague, 23 April 2013

The Steering Group wants to thank the Working Group Reconstruction Tender for their efforts and commitment reflected in the action plan and expresses its appreciation for the ability to cover the broad spectrum of the reconstruction tender. The Steering Group is happy to see the willingness shown by the participants of the network group. We hope you will take our reflection as a starting point for a constructive dialogue. Each action plan is reflected upon by the Steering Group individually, according to the following principles:

* Content (scope and relevance)
* Knowledge Platform principles
  + Southern partners perspective taken into account from the start
  + Focus on countries and FCAS
  + Multidisciplinary, problem driven, demand driven
  + Types of research, projects and activities and usability of the results
  + Getting the knowledge available and effectively shared
* General project principles
  + Smart description of goals, arguments and actions
  + Clear focus and realistic within money and time constraints

General reflection on Content

* The Steering Group considers inclusion of the southern perspective of vital importance for our efforts to create usable and relevant knowledge. The Steering Group therefore strongly advices you to work with (qualified) southern partners as soon as possible i.e. while still in the design phase, and fully involve southern partners in elaborating on the most pertinent research questions and activities.
* The Steering Group notes that by means of organizing parallel meetings in Bujumbura and Juba the southern perspectives will be integrated in the analysis of effect and impact. The Steering Group however would like to see a strategy on how to integrate the Southern perspective in the formulation of questions and activities from the beginning already, and not only in the follow-up phase. As such the network will ensure to operate problem or demand driven.
* The Steering Group supports the goals of the Dutch MFA & this working group, namely to improve security for citizens (human security), to help build a legitimate government with sufficient capacity, and to create peace dividend. These objectives are shared by 29 reconstruction programs. The network activities of this group stimulate valuable knowledge creation opportunities.
* The Steering Group therefore fully supports the initiative to use the platform for networking and learning, but wants to stress that if there are specific issues that should require further research, we can see if they might fit - or be included - in the research oriented working group plans.

Mapping exercise and database

* The Steering Group is positive about the mapping exercise. It turned out to be an inspiration for other groups in the Knowledge Platform. The Steering Group agrees that the Secretariat should support this exercise not only for this group, but for all groups and network members. Such mapping exercises should have a clear goal and ideally address general/key questions in the field of security and rule of law.
* An online mapping project as such should be up to date and adhere to a set of key principles such as usability before it goes online. The Steering Group considers that this project should be seen as supportive to the process (not as an end in itself) and should be coordinated centrally by the Secretariat, yet in agreement and close cooperation with the members of the network. By doing so, it is clear who is responsible for keeping the database up to date, thus making sure that the tool is effective and usable and for the whole network to benefit from. It is important to keep the costs low.

Coordination and cooperation

* The Steering Group would like to inspire the network group by taking the plan of linking projects of the different organizations a step further by focusing on ‘integrating activities’, where possible. This would result in immediate knowledge exchange in the field and in turn more knowledge exchange deriving from it. The Secretariat can help with exploring the possibilities of ‘integrating activities’.
* The coordination proposed in the plan (action point 2) is not yet linked to a clear thematic goal nor is it formulated in a smart manner. This activity should be used to keep track of one another, as a form of mutual responsibility. The Steering Group agrees with the focus on a small number of countries, i.e. Burundi and South-Sudan.

Multidisciplinary, problem and demand driven

* The action plan appears to be very policy driven and therefore the Steering Group suggests a more structural interaction with scientists and practitioners from the field, and the incorporation of their perspectives in the activities of the group accordingly. In short, the issues of problem / demand driven, as well as the issue of multidisciplinary, and usability of the results and knowledge require further elaboration.
* The Steering Group underlines the relevance of testing theories of change and underlying assumptions about reconstruction and peace. The idea of creating an evidence base is interesting and a first step could be to start a small project in close coordination with the Secretariat. Again, it is of utmost importance to involve southern partners/researchers in this project.

Monitoring and Evaluation

* One of the goals of this network, namely getting everyone on board and exchange experience seems to work out well. The Steering Group is particularly interested in further developing the linkages between networking and evaluating. Moreover, it could be the basis for an atmosphere of trust between organizations in which openness, sharing experiences and willingness to learn are paramount. The Steering Group suggests the network group to write a strategy plan (A4) on this approach in a more structural manner, in which the group clarifies their view on how to share the available knowledge of this group in an effective way.
* The Steering Group considers the development of clear and relevant indicators to measure the progress and implementation of the projects an important action point for both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the beneficiaries of the Reconstruction Tender themselves.
* This does not mean that the networking should replace external evaluation. The organizations should commission and respect an external evaluation that is to be conducted on all 29 programs using a similar and comparable methodology which is to be designed by an external evaluator based on input of the organizations. Furthermore, the publication of these evaluations will lead to reliable and comparable information.

Action Plan Enforcing International Law

* The Steering Group discussed this plan and is not convinced whether this topic fits in the working group on justice reform, power and politics.
* The outline is very broad, making it difficult to identify the main questions addressed and the added value of the topic.