



Research uptake for employment and stability in postconflict contexts



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Executive Summary

The Working Group Employment for Stability (WG) of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law developed the Employment for Stability research program agenda before the proposal was put out to tender by the Science for Global Development division (WOTRO) of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). Recently, the winning consortia and the details of the programs were announced. Implementation is imminent.

The goal of the study is to offer practical recommendations to the Platform and to choose and optimize strategic directions for research uptake in both the Global North and the Global South.

The study draws lessons from two research programs. One is the IS Academy on Human Security in Fragile States implemented by Wageningen University. The other is the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) program at the UK's Overseas Development Institute (ODI), which has focused on the interplay between research, policy, and practice for more than eleven years. A draft of the recommendations included in this study were discussed and improved at a 20 November 2014 expert meeting chaired by a representative of the International Development Studies Department at the University of Utrecht.

One recommendation is to use the momentum available and prepare a cross-case analysis of awarded research grants for the Employment for Stability program. Such analysis could lead to cooperation based on thematic and geographical overlaps and similarities in research methodologies. This would in turn be an indispensable tool in monitoring and steering uptake processes.

A meeting to include representatives of Platform partners, WG members, and various research consortia as well as related researchers and practitioners is also recommended.

Research uptake, the literature and experience reveal, is as much a responsibility of the research consortia as it is of the institutions on the receiving end. Another recommendation is that the Platform or research consortia persuade target organizations, such as the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), to assign in advance clear responsibilities for planning and strategic communication to ensure that research uptake and knowledge management can take place.

Uptake is about strategic communication: researchers should be able to work as policy entrepreneurs, grasping strategic moments when they arise. At the same time, rigorous choices must be made about aims and efforts, taking into account the relatively short three-year lifespan of each of the projects.

In more difficult environments, such as postconflict countries, timely and contextualized communication is critical. The Platform might, for example, organize a meeting inviting representatives of local research institutes to discuss uptake processes and exchange experiences.

In planning for uptake, distinguishing between the roles of the Platform (Steering Group, Secretariat, Working Group), NWO/WOTRO, and the implementing consortia is critical, as is assigning responsibilities to each body.

Time and budget each limited this study. However, the participants of the November 2014 meeting believe that the recommendations are without question applicable to other research programs, working groups, and platforms.

Introduction

This study was initiated by the Working Group Employment for Stability (WG) and follows up on its discussions and reflections. The WG was established by the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law in the process leading up to the Call on Employment for Stability. The tender resulted in the engagement of three implementing consortia.

Stakeholders agreed that research usability, research uptake, and policy engagement are indispensable ingredients to any project. The WG advocates vigilance as to whether these requirements are respected in practice: when research programs are implemented, sometimes these elements are the first to disappear, whether because of time constraints or other issues. In the words of the WG:

Academics are under a lot of pressure to publish findings rather than engage in “time-consuming” dissemination efforts or going through, what some consider to be, a lengthy process of co-creation. Also, not all have a priori the required process guidance and communication skills. Notwithstanding the fact that much has been accomplished, sometimes “pure” substantive research activities are overvalued at the expense of research uptake¹.

Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law

This study is supported by the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law.² The Platform brings together relevant experts, policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and the business sector on the topic of security and rule of law in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. It stimulates sharing experiences, exchanging lessons learned, and discussing novel insights. It also aims to inform Netherlands development policy and implementation in fragile and conflict-affected settings. In 2012, the Platform set up five working groups: justice, politics, and power; employment for stability; a comprehensive approach to human security; theories of change for postconflict reconstruction; and justice and development in Indonesia. Each group is made up of practitioners, researchers, and scientists.

Working Group Employment for Stability

The WG Employment for Stability has organized various preparatory and networking activities, which have included government, nongovernment, and private sector actors as well as universities and research institutes. The composition of the group and the expertise of its members enabled it to identify relevant research questions. With these in hand, the WG prepared a research agenda that was subsequently developed into a Call for Proposals, launched by NWO/WOTRO.³

The research program on Employment for Stability has two objectives:⁴

- Contributing to new insights and evidence-based knowledge on policies and intervention strategies addressing employment and stability in fragile and conflict-affected environments, and
- Raising awareness and sharing the generated new insights and knowledge with relevant stakeholders to facilitate development of well-informed theories of change connecting employment and stability.

The second objective could be called research uptake and is the subject of this paper. Research uptake requirements are presented in more detail in box 1 below.

EMPLOYMENT FOR STABILITY RESEARCH UPTAKE & REQUIREMENTS

Proposals selected for funding receive a maximum of €443,000 for a maximum duration of three years. The appraisal committees of NWO/WOTRO consist of researchers and practitioners from both the Global South and the Global North with knowledge of postconflict contexts. Three research consortia have been engaged (see annex). Specific requirements include the following:

- One of the two research organizations in each consortium must be based in a low- or middle-income country (LMIC).
 - Each consortium must organize three workshops with broad stakeholder participation, to include a kick-off workshop, a midterm review, and end-of-project workshop.
 - Consortia members are to participate in making the program accessible to nonscientific stakeholders. In the course of a project, the consortium is expected to maintain regular dialogue with practitioner stakeholders to ensure that the project is on track in addressing stakeholder demands.
 - The research must be contextualized—that is, rooted in both a local and a regional context and in socioeconomic conditions. It must show how knowledge-sharing activities will contribute to making the knowledge available, accessible, and applicable in the local environment.
 - A proposal must include a description of how impact will be achieved—what is termed the impact pathway—to include verifiable indicators that distinguish among output, income, and impact.
 - Researchers must produce a policy brief targeted at practitioner organizations.
 - Capacity-building activities on communication and research can be included.
 - The consortia are to participate in the knowledge-sharing activities of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law. One task is to coordinate knowledge-sharing, dissemination, and communication of project results to a broad group of policymakers and relevant practitioners, including the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law.
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Objectives

This study does not address research uptake in general. Instead, it aims to generate recommendations to the Platform at this particular moment—as the implementing consortia begin to put their planning into practice—taking into account prior discussions and choices.

Recommendations are directed to the Platform. Implementation, of course, is not solely, and possibly not even primarily, the responsibility of the Platform. The Platform can, however, be used to reach other stakeholders and these recommendations can be adapted to other Platform research programs.⁵ The goal of the study was to generate practical recommendations rather than in-depth analyses of specific issues of limited importance.

How to put into practice the planned research uptake among policymakers and practitioners is a primary objective. What can the Platform do in this regard? Each consortium has chosen its own research methods, impact pathways, target countries, and scale of work. The role of the Platform is to supervise supporting and steering research uptake.

This study also considers the reception structure of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as a key stakeholder in the Platform.⁶ What could the Platform do to stimulate the reception of research at the MFA? What should the MFA do? Interest among international organizations, aid agencies, and national-level stakeholders, such as governments in fragile states, is also critical. It is clear that research uptake in local settings should be conducted primarily by local research institutes. How can the Platform stimulate local research uptake?

This study is based on a literature review, a few focused interviews, and internal WG discussions.⁷ In particular, it looks in detail at two programs:

- the IS Academy on Human Security in Fragile States (IS Academy HSFS), implemented by Wageningen University,⁸ and
- the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) program of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), which has been studying and supporting processes to maximize the use of research-based evidence in development policy and practice since 2004.

The recommendations were reinforced by an expert discussion on 20 November 2014, chaired by the International Development Studies Department of the University of Utrecht. Attendees included representatives of universities, NWO/WOTRO, ODI, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) and Cordaid, The Broker, the MFA, Clingendael and Double Loop. The heads of IS Academy HSFS and RAPID introduced the session.

Chapter 1

Research Uptake

A great deal of literature addresses knowledge management and research uptake. Many authors have prepared lessons on what works in terms of improving the uptake of research into policy and practice. One general lesson is clear: success is not guaranteed. The IS Academy study titled “Enhancing Learning” asserts that no “magic formula [exists] that will make all academic research relevant for organizations, if only one would follow the guidelines. Too much depends on coincidence and factors that are difficult to influence or alter.”⁹ Put differently, “Uptake is, more often than not, opportunistic and a matter of luck.”¹⁰

Nonetheless, most of the literature points in the same direction. Characteristics of successful research projects include clear demand for research results, links and relationships with key decision-makers, and an effective communication strategy in place from the outset of the project.¹¹

These characteristics have been important from the outset in determining the research agenda, which the WG worked out with its members—who include policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. At certain intervals, the Platform Steering Group offered feedback and direction. The WG held consultations, such as that with the private sector, to identify what interests exist in which types of research. It also commissioned two scoping studies: “Business versus Development Approaches on Employment Creation in Fragile Contexts” and “Theories of Change Linking Employment and Stability in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations.” It organized a training session titled “Private Sector Development for Employment and Stability” that included international stakeholders. The WG has in these ways played an important role in bringing together relevant expertise and gained critical insight into employment for stability and its research niches. This insight shaped its research agenda.

The process of looking at the demand side does not stop here or now. The initial effort identified niches for research that the winning consortia narrowed down during the tendering process to specific research areas. It is now time to take an inventory of these research areas and analyze the demand for them and their niche. Research demand is not static, however. Preparing strategies for both communications and research uptake activities, and in particular for the Platform to play its role, are in order.

In an earlier NWO research program (Conflict and Security), the usefulness of the research for policymakers and NGOs was examined only after the program ended.¹² A subsequent

publication described and assessed the elements of the research. Such an exercise before the fact would likely have been especially useful. It could, for example, have served as a baseline in steering the program and subsequently to identify and create synergies between the research areas. That is, a cross-case analysis might help the Platform steer research uptake and policy engagement. This exercise could be easily done and be straightforward and not hamper progress in any way.

The analysis would provide the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law a bird's eye view on the program. The Platform and the research consortia each have a different reach. Both efforts—of the Platform and of the research consortia—should be coordinated and complement one another.

Chapter 2

Reception Structure

The context in which research is undertaken—the reception structure—is a critical factor. A systematic analysis into the topic is beyond the scope of this study, but insights gleaned from interviews and Working Group members views are both representative and instructive.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

As a funder and a key stakeholder, the MFA is interested in Platform programs and outcomes—whether planned or unexpected—for their bearing in shaping policy. Each of the various MFA subdivisions have a role to play: the Bureau for International Cooperation (BIS), which is responsible overall for knowledge management, the Directorate for Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction (DSH), and the Directorate for Sustainable Economic Development (DDE).

Two lines of interest in the outcomes of the research are apparent.¹³ First, DSH is interested in the peace dividend, loosely defined as basic services and job creation: jobs need to be created to ensure a stable environment. More specific expectations are related to this socioeconomic line of thought. A few are described in the MFA’s policy reaction to Parliament on a Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) study on fragile states.¹⁴

The MFA expects that the Platform, together with civil society partners and knowledge institutes, will work toward more robust theories of change, which will in turn reinforce the basis of MFA policy. The impact of policy in fragile states can thus be enhanced.¹⁵

At the same time, the MFA does not expect one general and unambiguous theory change for all countries and all settings. It expects instead a country-specific approach to be feasible and expects solutions to be grounded in evidence.

Further, the MFA finds it particularly interesting to explore the relationship between employment and stability, as this is also part of the discussion on the effectiveness of peace dividend activities. This refers, among others, to the 2010 South Sudan evaluation, which criticizes the effectiveness of general peace dividend activities: more direct, specific peace-building and conflict resolution activities might be more effective to promote stability.¹⁶

Second, the MFA, through DDE, harbors another line of thought, described in “A World to Gain” (2011) and “Entrepreneurship for Development” (2013).¹⁷ DDE looks at local socioeconomic development as a market-driven process, whether in regular circumstances or in fragile environments. The focus is on external economic actors—who in principle follow their own legitimate business objectives—who could help stabilize a postconflict situation

using market forces. Such an approach would be sustainable because no public funding is needed. International actors, the MFA, and Dutch NGOs are now interpreting the role of international economic players more positively than they were. The minister for foreign trade and development is among the supporters.

Given the failures of some earlier programs to meet expectations, a planning structure seems called for that clearly outlines responsibilities and lines of communication within the ministry. On another level but relatedly, the MFA expects DSH to play a key role in knowledge development within the MFA and the Platform to assist DSH in this regard.¹⁸

International organizations

It is too early to speak about demand for the research among international organizations. In preparing the research agenda, however, the Working Group interacted with organizations such as the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Interest in research on employment for stability was apparent. At the same time, a wait-and-see attitude seems to be in place. Now that the specific research areas have been selected, a closer look at specific interests in these areas to ensure research uptake and communication in the future is possible.

One ingredient of any future research uptake strategy would relate to existing and typically extensive networks of the consortia involved.

Two lines of thought among international organizations are evident. The World Bank looks at the correlation between employment and stability.¹⁹ Can employment lead to stability? If so, under what conditions? Other actors, such as the UN and the OECD, prefer concepts such as livelihood strategies and resilience and treat employment and jobs accordingly. Although policies on economic development in fragile settings and those on peacebuilding are converging, major differences remain in the way about how problems are framed and solutions are proposed. These differences need to be borne in mind when designing uptake strategies.

Local stakeholders

It is also still too early to speak about local stakeholder use of research. Research uptake requires insight into the dynamics of each postconflict context, just as research methodologies need to be conflict sensitive.²⁰ This is the responsibility of the research consortia.

In conflict settings, facts are few and almost all information—on which practitioners must base their programming—is disputed. This translates to different interests, power claims, unsolvable contradictions, and hidden agendas.²¹ According to Georg Frerks, the conflict itself is a “war of meanings/truths.”²² The parties to a conflict revert to framing to spur collective action in pursuit of their own interests. The interpretation of facts is often considered political and a researcher can easily be accused of taking sides; in a highly politicized environment, research can easily become politicized.

Such an environment can be problematic for research activities that go beyond socioeconomic issues and are in any way inherently political, such as those related to stability, peace and conflict. Research in 2013 in Burundi, South Sudan, and Uganda is representative.²³ When outcomes are different from those a government desires, it is not uncommon for them to be ignored. For NGOs operating in the domain of human rights and politics, the response can be harsh.

Some of the policy recommendations emerging from the research on employment for stability will be adopted and put into practice by players in the aid system. Understanding the characteristics of this system enhances the ability to design research communication activities and to promote research uptake.²⁴

The aid structure in a fragile country includes local and national government, the military, embassies, the UN, donors, international organizations, local NGOs, and civil society. Aid practitioners, of course, are also typically in active rather than reflexive mode, given the many urgent humanitarian needs that confront them. Larger organizations, however, may have policy officers it might be possible to engage as agents of recommended change.

In addition, despite the policy recommendations that researchers offer to aid agencies, policies and practices tend to remain the same. A continuing process of strategic analysis, planning, and evaluation is not a given.²⁵ Effective feedback loops are often missing. Direct and strategic communication is critical if uptake is to succeed in such circumstances.

Moreover, actors in the different subsectors sometimes have little contact among themselves. Every subsector has its own dynamics and follows its own logic.²⁶ Agencies that do work in the same area are sometimes unwilling to exchange information and innovations, given competition for funding from donor organizations.

Finally, most aid agencies encounter difficulties in overcoming the different perspectives and interests between headquarters (which focus on accountability and legitimacy) and field offices (which deal with operational issues). This situation clearly has consequences in terms of how to strategically manoeuvre for research uptake, where and with whom to launch a novel policy idea, which topics to focus on.

Consortium partner roles

One requirement of the Employment for Stability research program is to demonstrate how knowledge-sharing activities will contribute to making the knowledge available and accessible to and applicable in the local environment. Another is collaboration between two research organizations, one of which should be based in a low- or middle-income country, ideally a target country.

Each partner, of course, plays a different role. The local environment might, as described, be highly politicized and the researchers or the research be perceived as politicized or partial. Meanwhile, researchers from the partner institute from the Global North may gain only limited insights into local power dynamics. They will also, unlike their counterparts, not personally suffer any consequences from their research.

Meanwhile, in some cases, policymakers have assumed that carrying out research in collaboration with local research institutes will inevitably lead to improved capacity, including on research uptake. This assumption has been widely criticized: “Funding research in low-income countries does not necessarily lead to increased human capital unless effective capacity-building activities are included.”²⁷ At the same time, limitations on time and financing make it necessary to be realistic about what is possible in terms of support for local research uptake. Practical planning and concrete choices are necessary in advance.

Lessons from IS Academy HSFS

The IS Academy on Human Security in Fragile States was established by the Ministry on Foreign Affairs and designed initially to improve collaboration between the MFA and academic institutes, and later also involved development agencies.²⁸ Both mutual learning between practitioners and researchers, and direct involvement of practitioner organizations (among them the MFA) were emphasized. Several mechanisms were in place for learning, such as internships, guiding committees, and PhD researchers working side by side with humanitarian organizations in the field. The overall design promoted an interaction of policy and practice. At the final conference, “Facing Fragilities: People, Aid and Institutions in Socio-Economic Recovery,” held on September 11, 2014, the Directorate for Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction director named the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law “the natural successor of the IS Academy HSFS,” assuring the audience that the MFA continued to value this type of scientific work.

The Employment for Stability proposal, however, should not be compared in terms of objectives and scale with the IS Academy HSFS. The academy is more accurately compared with the entire Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law. The academy also identified capacity-strengthening as an explicit objective. The Employment for Stability research program defines this as an additional benefit.

After an initial phase, and in response to a midterm review, the IS Academy HSFS in 2011 reoriented its approach toward research uptake.

Importance of strategic research communication

From the outset, the IS Academy HSFS paid a great deal of attention to communication. Design and implementation, for example, included a strong focus on interaction between researchers and the practitioner organization. The midterm review, however, noted that the quality of that interaction is as significant as the quantity.

One related recommendation is that research communication needs to be strategic and well facilitated. Factors to take into account include:

- dissemination of the research throughout the organization and across networks,
- workshops linking research to relevant issues in the organization,
- timing in organizational planning cycles (annual and donor reports),
- use of typical communication outputs and materials (newsletters, intranet, and the like),
- involvement of key personnel, and
- appropriate language and well-designed end products for users.

The proposed Employment for Stability research program puts less emphasis on direct interaction between researchers and practitioners than the IS Academy did. Given this difference, the academy lesson is in fact even more relevant: research uptake activities and research communication need to be strategic, prioritized, and well timed, seizing opportunities as they arise and adapting to the practitioner organization.

Guidelines for policy-relevant research

More broadly, certain recommendations on conducting policy-relevant research for the practitioner organization are particularly important:

- Choose a research topic not subject to trends.
- Ensure the commitment of all parties during crucial stages, such as developing the research plan, establishing a communication strategy, and outlining learning objectives.
- Ensure a structure that integrates the research into the daily work of the organization and encourages mutual learning: 1) assign a facilitator within the organization; 2) plan joint field visits where relevant; 3) schedule regular meetings for staff and management; 4) organize events for sharing information and exchanging ideas; and 5) ensure that researchers experience the practice so that the practice can feed into the research.
- Facilitate dialogue and communication between researchers and the organization: 1) ensure the translation of findings and results; 2) generate a communication strategy that indicates who is to be informed, when, and in what way; and 3) match as much as possible the presentation of results or interim findings with the organization's decision-making schedule.
- Ensure that stakeholders are aware of and understand all stages of the process.
- Aim for a wide range of results in the research and the collaboration, both direct and indirect, whether findings are used in policy development or network opportunities, for example.

Other lessons are that policy relevance requires a sustained commitment—not only a written commitment in a research proposal—from the stakeholders involved in the research, that is, research institutes and practitioner organizations. Relatedly, effective research uptake requires that research communication, such as the timing of events and making the most of opportunities, be facilitated. That the Platform is paying attention to coordination would in itself have a positive effect.

Beyond research

Aside from the direct impacts of substantive research on policy and practice, the IS Academy example underscored other values:

- Interaction with academic work and participation in research meetings help policymakers and practitioners reflect on their roles and issues beyond the topics of research.
- Organizations become part of a larger network of knowledge institutes and agencies.
- For researchers and other participants alike, the IS Academy can serve as a venue in which to gather information and test ideas.

Involved organizations are challenged to closely review their learning strategy. In the case of the Platform, it is already trying to resolve shortcomings in the exchange of practical knowledge and experience between organizations active in the field and to bring together relevant experts, policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and the business sector to discuss security and rule of law in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Chapter 3

Lessons from the RAPID program

The Overseas Development Institute's RAPID program began in 2004, building on the practical experiences of ODI staff in research communications, knowledge management, and action research to develop an outcome mapping approach known as ROMA (RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach).²⁹ Early work resulted in the development of a framework to better understand how, when, and why research influences policy, called the Context Evidence Links Framework. Based on more than fifty summary and four detailed case studies, it was clear that the uptake and use of research-based evidence in policy did not depend on the quality of the evidence alone, but also on three other factors: political context, linkages, and external environment within which the research took place (see box 2 below).

SUMMARY OF ODI'S RAPID PROGRAM

- **Political context.** Political and economic structures and processes, culture, institutional pressures, incremental vs. radical change
- **Evidence.** Credibility, the degree it challenges received wisdom, research approaches and methodology, simplicity of message, how is it packaged?
- **Links.** Policy and research, community ties, networks, relationships, power, competing discourses, trust knowledge
- **External environment.** Socioeconomic and cultural influences, donor policies that affect what research is done and its likelihood of traction

This led to the concept of *policy entrepreneurship* that researchers or their organizations need to do much more than simply produce and disseminate knowledge. They must also directly engage with policymakers from the earliest stages of research to influence political and policy decisions.

The RAPID program focuses on the relationships between research, policy, and practice. It investigates how research can result in evidence-informed policymaking. These insights have been used to develop practical tools that have recently been encapsulated in a publication and an online guide for researchers, research funders, practitioners, and other users. The goal is to help such individuals and groups make sure that more effective research is commissioned and in a way likely to maximize its use.

ROMA starts from the position that policymaking is a political process, that unless researchers understand this it is unlikely their research will be of interest to policymakers, and that policy engagement is a much broader process than simple research uptake. ROMA provides a comprehensive approach to improving policy engagement processes to influence change. It includes an overall approach and tools any organization can use at any stage in a policy engagement process. Steps include establishing clarity of objectives, understanding of context, a coherent theory of change, a strategic policy engagement strategy/communication plan, systematic monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and evidence of both progress and interim results.

The ROMA guide may be particularly useful in policy engagement activities the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law and the consortia undertake.

Developing a monitoring and learning plan

ROMA includes both monitoring and learning from policy engagement processes, breaking its approach into six categories:

- Strategy and direction (are you doing the right things?)
- Management and governance (are you implementing the plan accurately and efficiently?)
- Outputs (are the outputs up to standard?)
- Uptake (are people aware of your work?)
- Outcomes and impacts (are you having any impact?)
- Context (how does the changing political, economic, and organizational climate affect your plans?)

For each category, result areas are described. ROMA makes visible a range of choices in terms of what to monitor and helps with thinking through the consequences of choices.

As to the role of the Platform, the ROMA guide stresses the need for a systematic monitoring and learning strategy, the presentation of evidence of progress and interim results, and the importance of knowledge brokering. Before this, however, a systematic overview of the different pieces of research—that is, a cross-case analysis—is needed as a basis for the monitoring and knowledge brokering.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

Research uptake

- Some research programs evaluate the societal and political relevance of the research after the fact. An evaluation of the research elements beforehand could enable the Platform the bird's eye view needed for it to steer the program and activities more effectively.
- A cross-case analysis could provide information on which to base a division of tasks between the Platform and the research consortia in research uptake. Efforts should be coordinated and complement each other.
- Research uptake among policymakers and practitioners requires planning, sustained attention, and discipline. Making the most of ad hoc opportunities for research communication requires an enterprising attitude, that is, what amounts to being a policy entrepreneur.
- Planning and activities for communication and uptake should start immediately with the launch of the program itself.

Research uptake reception structure

- The MFA expects Platform activities to lead to improved policies for interventions through more robust theories of change. Specific to this Call, private sector employment strategies in postconflict environments are deemed a contribution to peace dividend.
- A proactive MFA attitude is needed for optimal use of the research program. This would entail planning uptake, organizing activities, anticipating when and where research is needed, and coordinating with the Platform and the research consortia.

Research uptake—international

- International organizations are very much engaged in employment for stability, focusing on what type of jobs lead to stability or looking at jobs and employment as part of wider livelihood strategies. The rapprochement between stabilization and peace policies and economic development policies is progressing.

Research uptake—local

- Governments in fragile countries are often unable or unwilling to put certain policy recommendations into practice.

- International and local NGOs working in fragile states may not be receptive to research uptake.
- Well-established long-term relationships and contextualized communications are needed for uptake to succeed among national stakeholders. At the same time, limited finances and time make it necessary to be realistic from the outset about what can be achieved.

Capacity for research uptake and research institution role

- Funding research in low-income countries does not necessarily lead to increased human capital unless effective capacity-building activities are included.
- Both adequate capacity and a clear perception of the roles of both LMIC and Global North research institutes are important for uptake purposes.
- Limitations on financing and time make realistic expectations about what can be achieved necessary. Such limitations also entail practical planning and making concrete choices.

Chapter 5

Recommendations

Systematically stimulate and plan for research uptake

The Platform and stakeholders should as soon as possible prepare a light-touch cross-case analysis of the planned research. Such a review would include the following elements:

- methodologies, geographic and thematic overlaps, political context mappings, impact pathways, scales;
- a summary of combined knowledge management activities (workshops, publications, meetings);
- linking the individual research elements to the original tender documents;
- suggesting cross-connections between implementing consortia and pointing out existing points of cooperation; and
- predicting possible outcomes of the research in relation to expectations.

This analysis could be the basis for a Platform monitoring and learning plan. A seminar might be organized for the implementing consortia, the Platform, and other parties interested in discussing the analysis. Such an event would include the following steps:

- Invite the research consortia to analyze and reflect on demand for their research findings.
- Define possible roles (complementary, stimulating, initiating) for the Platform (Steering Group, Secretariat, Working Groups), the research consortia, NWO/WOTRO and supra-Platform-level organizations (Dutch Knowledge Platforms for Global Development).³⁰
- Plan subsequent cross-case analyses (both midterm and afterward) and seminars, including a preliminary agenda.
- Define jointly a monitoring strategy for the collection of evidence of uptake and the production of communication products.

Other recommendations are as follows

- Because research uptake is also a matter of using momentum, finances should be set aside and time reserved for ad hoc events.
- The cross-case analysis and seminar might be interesting for other research programs outside the Platform.
- The Platform might consider a cross-case analysis for (all) its other research programs.

Analyze and reinforce the reception structure

Recommendations for the Platform

- Follow the dynamics in the reception structure of the MFA and others.
- Prepare for research communication and uptake strategies differentiating between the roles of the Platform, NWO/WOTRO, and implementing consortia.
- Facilitate linking to and relationships with key decision-makers, matching practitioners and researchers on the basis of mutual interests.
- Make available knowledge to and share interim research results at opportune moments (such as during annual planning) and gather evidence that the research is used following the monitoring plan.
- Recommendations for the Platform to make to the MFA:
- Continue to participate proactively to stimulate research uptake and to grasp key moments when they present themselves.
- Prepare for systematic research communication and uptake strategies from the beginning.
- Coordinate within BIS in relation to general knowledge management aspects within the ministry.
- Make explicit what is expected from the Platform in terms of its role as a more general knowledge broker to the ministry.
- Assign specific responsibilities for external and internal coordination, for translating uptake opportunities into practice, for communicating strategically within the MFA, for planning research uptake activities, and for facilitating practical encounters between researchers and policy officers.

Research uptake—international

- Assess, using the cross-case analysis, which research outcomes might be of particular interest to international organizations.
- Analyze and monitor the research demand of international organizations, identify possible momentum for research uptake, and foster links with relevant players.
- Jointly (Platform and research consortia) design the uptake strategy, making use of channels for research uptake of the research consortia among international organizations; MFA contacts and interests; and channels of other organizations interested, including of the WG members.

Research uptake—local

Recommendations for the Platform to make to the research consortia

- Prioritize strategically where research uptake is crucial, based on the agenda of the research and the availability of opportunities (such as influencing policies of international organizations, NGOs, national governments, or civil society organizations).
- Involve local government in a constructive way, especially if it is a crucial stakeholder. Develop long-term relationship and tailored communications to pave the way for successful uptake. Governments of fragile countries are often unable or unwilling to put

certain policy recommendations into practice. Individual policymakers in fragile settings sometimes lack adequate capacity, incentives, and processes.

- Follow uptake strategies based on insights into aid structure dynamics because the aid structure in fragile states is not always particularly receptive to research uptake and learning.

Capacity for research uptake and research institution role

Recommendations for the Platform

- Assess the capacity development efforts of the research consortia to improve research uptake for research institutes, including those in LMICs, and look at the different roles, interests and positioning of the consortium members.
- Organize a meeting inviting the LMIC research institutes to discuss whether additional capacity development efforts are needed regarding research uptake and exchange of successful practices.
- Share these insights and experiences with other working groups and platforms.

Recommendations for the Platform to make to consortium members

- Contextualize, monitor, and support the uptake efforts of LMIC research institutes in the local settings.
- Because of financial and time limitations, be realistic about what can be achieved in terms of capacity development of the LMIC research institutes. This requires concrete planning and practical choices.
- Use the 5-C model for capacity assessment. The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) adaptations of the model might be useful.³¹

Chapter 6

Annex | 3 new strategic research projects on employment for stability

NWO/WOTRO recently awarded three research proposals for the Security & Rule of Law Strategic Research Fund. The projects are centered around the theme of “Employment for Stability.” Their goal is to contribute to insight in the correlation between employment and stability, or into the key drivers and challenges determining employment strategies of the private sector in fragile and conflict affected settings.

The proposals are the strategic projects that are awarded within the research program Security & Rule of Law in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings. This program is an activity of NWO/WOTRO in close collaboration with the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law.

The projects will be executed by consortia of research institutes and organizations involved in policymaking for, or implementation of security and rule of law reform programs in the targeted countries. The projects will start within the next few months and last at most three years.

Awarded projects

- Entrepreneurship, Employment and Social Stability in Rwanda
Prof. E.H. Bulte, Wageningen University. Consortium member is University of Rwanda. Private sector development and tackling youth unemployment are key components of transforming Rwanda into a stable and prosperous country. This project facilitates a business training at secondary schools and universities, and examines the impact of such training on the propensity to successfully start a business, demand for labor, and attitudes toward cooperation, reciprocity, and violence.
- Conflict Sensitive Employment under Construction: Peace and Stability Strategies for the Private Sector in Afghanistan
Prof. C.S. Schetter, BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion) Consortium members are: The Liaison Office and International Alert. In this project, insight in drivers and challenges of conflict-sensitive employment (CSE) strategies and investment in the labor intensive construction, infrastructure, and transport (CIT)-sector will be developed in Afghanistan. Empirical research will be combined with the implementation of pilot schemes and the research will also include cross-border and regional interactions with regard to employment strategies.

Does Opportunity Reduce Instability? A Meta-Analysis of Skills and Employment Interventions in LMICs

Prof. T. Brück, SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute). Consortium members are: UNU-Merit, INES-Ruhengeri, The Hague Institute for Global Justice and Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

This project will improve our understanding of how economic variables and stability are interrelated and how aid interventions may improve both development and stability. The focus will be on the impacts of two types of employment intervention, those focusing on job creation and those boosting employment training, across Africa and in Afghanistan and Yemen.

Source: NWO/WOTRO

Notes

Johan te Velde is senior adviser at Double Loop and facilitator of the Working Group Employment for Stability. He would like to thank Thea Hilhorst, John Young, Willem van Genugten, Judith de Kroon and Fia van der Klugt for commenting on draft versions. Thanks also go to Agnese Macaluso and Anna Gouwenberg for their extensive comments and for coordination and facilitation. Finally, thanks to Roo Griffiths for her contribution in the final stages of the study.

¹ Working Group Employment for Stability, “Research Agenda of the Working Group Employment for Stability,” draft document, November 7, 2014, p. 5.

² See the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, <http://www.kpsrl.org>.

³ “Call for Full Proposals for Strategic Research on Employment for Stability: Strategic Research Fund,” a subsidy scheme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, The Hague, May 2014.

⁴ The Employment for Stability research program is part of the Security & Rule of Law in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings Research Program.

⁵ We do not imply that the Platform should implement all recommendations. Tasks should be dispersed among the stakeholders involved: the Platform Secretariat, the Steering Group, the WG, implementing consortia, NWO/WOTRO, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁶ This study emphasizes the MFA in a representative way. It does not imply or suggest that the Platform has or should have a sole focus on this actor.

⁷ Interviews were held in autumn 2014 with Judith de Kroon and Han van Dijk of NWO/WOTRO on September 10, Patricia van Delft of the International Cooperation Academy on Human Security in Fragile States on September 22, Anna Gouwenberg and Manon Tiessink of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law on September 24, Willem van Genugten of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law on October 30, and Fia van der Klugt of the MFA Directorate for Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction on November 10.

⁸ The scale of the IS Academy in terms of finances is larger than that of the Call on Employment for Stability, and more comparable with that of the Platform.

⁹ Patrica Van Delft and Dorothea Hilhorst, “Enhancing Learning in the IS Academies,” research brief no. 7 (Wageningen: IS Academies, 2013), p. 8.

¹⁰ Enrique Mendizabal, “Research Uptake: What Is It and Can It Be Measured?” *On Think Tanks*, January 21, 2013, <http://onthinktanks.org/2013/01/21/research-uptake-what-is-it-and-can-it-be-measured/>.

¹¹ Department for International Development, “What Is the Evidence on the Impact of Research on International Development?” (London: DFID, 2014), p. 37.

¹² Maarten Evenblij, “NWO-programma Conflict & Veiligheid 2007–2011,” 2014.

¹³ Anette Hoffmann, “Policy Review: International and Dutch Policies in the Field of Socio-Economic Development in Fragile Settings,” occasional paper no. 10 (IS Academy HSFS, 2014).

- ¹⁴ *Investeren in stabiliteit: het Nederlandse fragiele statenbeleid doorgelicht*, IOB Evaluation no. 379 (The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, October 14, 2013), <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2013/04/01/iob-investeren-in-stabiliteit-het-nederlandse-fragiele-statenbeleid-doorgelicht.html>.
- ¹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, "IOB Evaluation Newsletter #13 08. Mixed Results for Dutch Policy in Fragile States".
- ¹⁶ Jon Bennett, Sara Pantuliano, Wendy Fenton, Anthony Vaux, Chris Barnett, and Emery Brusset, "Aiding the Peace: A Multi-Donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan 2005–2010" (London: ITAD, 2010).
- ¹⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, "A World to Gain, A New Agenda for Aid Trade and Investment," April 2013, and "Entrepreneurship for Development: Investing in Sustainable and Inclusive Growth," September 30, 2013.
- ¹⁸ *Investeren in stabiliteit*.
- ¹⁹ World Bank, *Conflict Security and Development: World Development Report 2011* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2011).
- ²⁰ "Call for Full Proposals," p. 8.
- ²¹ Gemma Van der Haar, Annelies Heijmans, and Dorothea Hilhorst, "Interactive Research and the Construction of Knowledge in Conflict-Affected Settings," *Disasters* no. 37, Suppl. 1: S23.
- ²² Georg Frerks, "Discourses on War, Peace and Peace Building in Sri Lanka," in *Disaster, Conflict and Society in Crises*, ed. Dorothea Hilhorst (London: Zed Books, 2013), p. 19.
- ²³ Georg Frerks and Pyt Douma, "Fragility by Choice? A Scoping Mission in Burundi, South Sudan and Uganda" (The Hague: Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation, 2013).
- ²⁴ This draws mainly on Anneke Maarse, Johan te Velde, and Hafeez Wani, "Against All Odds, Inter-Organisational Learning in Fragile South Sudan," January 20, 2013, <http://www.capacity.org/capacity/opencms/en/topics/learning/interorganisational-learning-in-fragile-south-sudan.html>.
- ²⁵ This might also be true for other organizations within or outside the aid structure. That this hampers uptake was established for aid projects is established. See Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding, "Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together" (Oslo: Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004).
- ²⁶ Frans Bieckmann, *Soedan, het sinistere spel om macht, rijkdom en olie* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2012).
- ²⁷ Department for International Development, "What Is the Evidence on the Impact of Research on International Development?" (London: DFID, 2014), p. 27.
- ²⁸ Van Delft and Hilhorst, "Enhancing Learning in the IS Academies."
- ²⁹ John Young, Louise Shaxson, Harry Jones, Simon Hearn, Ajoy Datta, and Caroline Cassidy, "ROMA, A Guide to Policy Engagement and Influence" (London: ODI, 2014).
- ³⁰ See Dutch Knowledge Platforms for Global Development, <http://www.knowledgeplatforms.nl>.
- ³¹ As suggested at the November 2014 seminar. See the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, <http://www.securelivelihoods.org>.



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