



The 3D Project on Learning from Complex Crisis



FRONTIER DESIGN
GROUP

Context

Two important, related trends have emerged over the last decade:

- An increasing share of the work performed by the U.S. Government's diplomatic, defense and development (3D) institutions and its partners involves response to complex crises in fragile and conflict environments.
- The 3D communities are working together more regularly and intensively in policy-making, strategy development, and program implementation globally.

Problem

Even while the number, magnitude and duration of complex crises has continued to expand, there has been no systematic effort to review and assess the success of and gaps in the US government's strategic and operational investments in conflict and crisis countries/regions, nor has there been an in-depth reflection on the effectiveness of increased interaction among 3D communities.

There is an urgent need to examine the effectiveness of organizational structures, programmatic approaches, and operational cultures that support coordination between and active collaboration among 3D institutions that are dealing with complex crises.

This project will respond to the question, "**What did the United States government do that contributed to prevention or successful management of different types of complex crises, and how did defense, diplomatic, and development (3D) institutions work together to do it?**"

Further: What have we learned that can inform future operations? What are the challenges and opportunities that shape how the 3D community engages with complex crises? What are successful models for operating in this complex environment? How can we continue to learn and use the findings of reflection and study to inform preparation of our workforce through education and training?

The forthcoming change in leadership across all departments offers a time-sensitive opportunity to learn from recent experience, develop operational and programmatic lessons as the basis for enhancing work, and build a cadre of government leaders and experts better able to succeed in today's operating environments.

Why USIP

USIP is uniquely positioned to independently investigate what 3D partners have done in recent complex crises, convene senior leaders across the interagency to explore lessons, and promote greater opportunities for success among agencies and departments involved in crises.

Approach, Year One:

I. Development of 3 Case Studies + 1 meta literature review:

- Non-violent transition mission – **Burma**
- Rapid onset complex crisis mission - **Ebola**
- Resilience mission in a "buffer state" – **Jordan**
- Stabilization/post-conflict governance mission – **Afghanistan** (literature review to support ongoing work)

II. Data Collection

- **Case-specific literature reviews** on 3D responses to an initial set of 4 complex crises, to include academic studies; US government documents, articles, and other sources;
- **Interviews/Workshops:** Individual and group interviews with recent principal actors at the strategic and operational levels, as relevant to 3 case studies; scoping sessions with key external and internal agency partners;
- **Review of of Decision Making Structures:** Number, type, purpose, & interconnectedness of standing structures (working groups, IPCs, PCs, DCs, Special Envoys, etc.);

III. Reflection and Analysis

- **Senior-level Advisory Group composed of a bipartisan set of senior leaders / experts** to validate research results and develop recommendations for enhancing policy, program and learning;
- **Publication of Case Studies and Lessons Briefs** of 5-7 pages for leaders in the new Administration by theme or type of crisis/mission conveying lessons based on the case study development and data;
- **Advisory Group Recommendation Memo** to new Administration and Congress on honing the approach to collaboration and engagement in different complex crises.