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INTEGRATING THE TCAPF AND ICAF IN YEMEN

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Integrated Managing for Results II

INTEGRATING THE TCAPF AND ICAF IN YEMEN

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Authors: Noel Brehony and Lynn Carter, MSI



Management Systems International
Corporate Offices
600 Water Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

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INTEGRATING THE INTER-AGENCY CONFLICT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (ICAF) AND THE TACTICAL CONFLICT AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK (TCAPF): THE CASE OF YEMEN

I. Background

The MSI team was asked to experiment with the fit between the ICAF and the TCAPF and the integration of ICAF components into the TCAPF to strengthen local level analysis, using the recent case of Yemen as an example. The ICAF was applied in Washington, D.C., by an inter-agency group in a workshop setting over a two day period in September 2009. MSI specialists on Yemen contributed background papers for the workshop and then prepared the assessment report, using ICAF categories. Subsequent to submission of that report, the team was asked to speculate on what a robust TCAPF would look like, in order to diagnose and address more effectively tensions and conflict at local levels.

The purpose of the ICAF is to establish a clear process through which US government agencies can develop a robust analysis and shared understanding of a given conflict environment as “a first step toward a more effective and coordinated response to help states prevent, mitigate and recover from violent conflict”. TCAPF, on the other hand, “should be used to create local stabilisation plans at the tactical level and *provide data for the ICAF* (emphasis is ours) which has a strategic and operational level (country or regional focus).” ICAF is thus strategic and broad brush and TCAPF highly practical and very local. The TCAPF is oriented toward the village level. They are based on similar principles but applied at different levels.

II. The TCAPF framework versus the reality of its application

The TCAPF is set up as a greatly simplified ICAF. It relies heavily on broad consultation with local people but tries to control for or limit overly simplistic assumptions that just because people want a well or school does not mean that digging/building either will have a stabilization impact. However, the cautionary notes in the TCAPF about the fulfilment of wants and needs not necessarily diminishing conflict or reducing grievances notwithstanding, the set of four questions asked of the populations is minimalist and does not do much to illustrate drivers of conflict. It is heavy on grievances and demands and does ask about trusted actors but produces little in the way of the array of actors, their motives, means and alliances – it produces no sense of the political dynamic. It does not examine societal resilience or windows of particular opportunity or threat. It does not examine identities or subsets of the population but seems to assume that a village population is homogeneous.

Key informant interviews are required to fill these gaps but the questions to be asked of key informants (and the specification of who those informants are) is missing. These could be better specified.

One issue that emerged in the review of TCAPF materials is less with its design and more with its application in particular environments. If the Helmand example is representative of current TCAPF applications, then the TCAPF, as applied, collects data on needs/wants and on perceptions of security. The menu cards (four of these on security, rule of law, governance and livelihoods) are a helpful addition in determining issues and needs. However the Helmand example lacks any analysis of actors and their alliances, motives, resources and the like. It does not lay out clear conflict dynamics. Possibly the US military has this information from other sources. However, in Helmand, data collectors abandoned key informant interviews because those interviews took too much time; a larger quantity of responses from citizens to the four questions and the menu card questions was seen as a more reliable barometer. This suggests some confusion in the minds of those applying the TCAPF. One form of data collection is not a substitute for the other. Perception is

important and useful; it tells us something about reality but it does not generally align fully with reality. There are also fundamental issues in relying on polling responses in such dangerous environments and given who is doing the asking.

The TCAPF applications also assume that a village is a complete and isolated unit. As the Yemen example will show, how villages relate to each other and to larger political structures at the district and governorate level is important in understanding conflict dynamics. There is a risk of exacerbating tensions and doing harm in looking at villages in isolation.

The Helmand TCA is missing any examination of windows of opportunity and threat or societal resilience. In its Helmand application, the TCAPF has been reduced to a survey of popular grievances (and it is not entirely clear that those four questions would always illuminate the major grievances; this might depend on the nature of the grievances), what people most desire to improve their communities and the state of security. These facets are monitored as often as monthly and so will reflect incremental change in these phenomena over time. But the TCAF application is missing any sense of local political dynamics. It would seem difficult to position development assistance to maximal affect without understanding something about those dynamics.

III. The Yemen Example

Yemen provided an interesting test of the benefits and shortcomings of the ICAF approach (especially when field work is not an option due to security constraints) and exposed a gap between ICAF and TCAPF that needs to be bridged to integrate the two processes and make them both more effective. This paper, using Yemen as an example, suggests a way of achieving this.

A. Sequencing the ICAF and TCAPF

The TCAPF suggests that the normal sequence of framework applications is to conduct first the Tactical Conflict Assessments which would then provide data for the broader-brush Inter-Agency Conflict Assessments. In the case of Yemen, of course, the order was reversed. The ICAF was applied first and the TCAPF has not yet been applied in any cluster of villages. The experience in Yemen, a high conflict environment with a rebellion in the north, al-Qaeda in the east and growing discontent and violence in the south but without a large complement of US military (the customary users of the TCAPF), suggests some of the advantages of conducting an ICAF first. In Yemen, if the concern is state fragility and not simply al-Qaeda, then there would be no easy way to designate locations in which an application of the TCAPF would be useful in the absence of an ICAF application. The ICAF was essential for pinpointing areas that were a larger and more immediate threat to state stability than the governorates in which al-Qaeda operates in the East.

Neither USAID nor the DOD in Yemen has the wherewithal to apply the TCAPF in numerous villages or localities. The ICAF's prioritization helped set the geographic boundaries within which the TCAPF could usefully be applied. Nor could the ICAF application have made much use of data from several TCAPF applications – it would have been too much micro level data though if there had been data from an adequate sample of villages in a given district and those data had shown similarities or differences in responses, the ICAF could perhaps have made use of the information, had those districts been in governorates of interest.

Yemen is of course an unusual example in that it has many lines of conflict so prioritization of conflicts and regions was essential. In some environments, there may be one prominent conflict and the areas of TCAPF application may be clearer and more delimited, perhaps rendering the need for an ICAF application first less imperative.

B. The Gap between the ICAF and the TCAF

The ICAF application diagnoses existing state fragility and dissects conflicts and tensions. It takes into account, in the case of Yemen, a regime based on military and security forces, key tribal alliances and a network of patronage that has often sought to remain in power by dividing and ruling groups within the country, often exacerbating rather than mitigating conflict. It examines at a national level the core grievances, mostly centred on the government's failure to diversify the economy, provide jobs and develop accountable and well-performing institutions – political, economic and for service delivery. These are set against the social resilience of a society that still largely functions through local organisations, tribal, district and family, and the institutional resilience of a state that has for decades has successfully dealt with serious challenges (e.g., attempted secession by forces in the south in 1994) and has generally done an excellent job of balancing competing forces in a highly factionalized society.

The ICAF process examined four significant conflicts: the rebellion of the Huthis in Sa'ada in the north; increasing demands for secession in the old PDRY (the south); the threat of Al-Qa'eda (particularly in Marib, Al-Jauf and Shabwa); and the endemic though usually containable conflicts between the regime and tribes and between tribes. The ICAF identified the drivers of such conflicts and the mitigating factors and looked at the windows of opportunity for increasing or decreasing conflict.

In allocating priority for intervention by USAID, the process took into account the following:

- The extent of the conflict and its impact on the stability of Yemen.
- Urgency – given the current level of violence, the expected trajectory of the conflict dynamics and particularly noting windows of opportunity for mitigating or exacerbating the conflict.
- Physical access: can USAID work in the conflict areas safely.
- Likely attitude of the Yemeni government and other key stakeholders such as Saudi Arabia to such intervention.

It did not take into account the work of other donors and international agencies, though this will obviously have some bearing on USAID action. Until now, USAID has been a relatively minor player among the many donors and international bodies working on Yemen, some of whom have been engaged for a long period.

The inter-agency group conducting the conflict assessment concluded that:

- While Transnational Salafi Jihadists in the form of al-Qaeda in the Arabia Peninsula are a growing issue in Yemen and an understandable cause of concern to the US government, Al-Qa'eda in Yemen poses a comparatively low threat to the stability of the regime. It was present mostly in locations where the central government's reach was weak and where the Al-Qa'eda leaders had or could develop support from local tribes.
- The Al-Huthi conflict poses an existential threat to the regime. It is now in its sixth round of fighting in what is a small scale civil war, which neither side seems capable of winning. It is spreading into neighbouring governorates and weakening the regime's power and prestige. Urgent work is needed to stabilize the areas into which the conflict is spreading but only subsequent to the achievement of a reliable ceasefire.
- The secessionist movement in the south (Hiraak) is a grass roots movement that lacks a recognised or effective overall leadership. If the movement collects momentum and evolves a more coherent leadership, it would pose an existential threat to the regime and could lead to the break up of Yemen. Yet there is sufficient resilience and also enough mitigating factors to suggest that there is scope now for remedial action to reduce grievances and shore up southern support for solutions within a united Yemen.

The first-order recommendation was thus to focus development assistance resources on the southern but to balance those resources with work elsewhere so that one region would not seem favored. This paper then focuses on the south. The ICAF application was able to determine at a broad level some differences in issues, grievances, political actors etc at the governorate level but lacked the data to assess ground realities at

the district level and certainly did not have data for villages. A field based ICAF application would presumably have visited governorates/districts and would have gained more abundant and nuanced data at this level but there would still have been a need to conduct additional data collection and analysis in areas pinpointed for development assistance in order to put together a project design.

With the ICAF and TCAPF as available tools, the USG is likely to end up with a strong national level assessment and enough information about governorates to develop 1) a priority short list of sub-national regions; and b) a short list of grievances and needs. This was what happened in the Yemen instance. Detailed and nuanced information to permit weighing districts was missing. The ICAF of course has no ability to look at villages or clusters of villages; that would be the work of those implementing the TCAPF.

This “missing middle” however makes it difficult to select villages for the TCAPF except in a random or somewhat haphazard fashion. Once villages are selected and the TCAPF applied the “missing middle” means that it would also be nearly impossible to fit TCAPF village level findings into the larger political and economic context of tribe/clan territory, district and governorate. How the village relates to surrounding areas is important to understand in order to avoid generating additional conflict or to meet the intended purposes of reducing opposition to the regime, support for terrorists or insurgents and the like.

The “missing middle” level might also suggest viable interventions that are not village based but that are more cost-effective for the resources invested. For example, it will seldom be possible to support improved vocational training at the village level but a district focus on technical education could draw youth from several villages and provide a partial solution to the employment problem that affects Yemen as well as many of the countries in which both an ICAF and TCAPF might be applied. The TCAPF assumes that every village will obtain development assistance because it is generally applied in a “kinetic” environment where there are frequent US military patrols; this is unlikely to be the case in Yemen where resources are more constrained. Kicking the level of analysis up a notch may help with targeting. It may then make most sense to apply an adjusted TCAPF at the district level to a sample of villages.

Yemen is a society that is rife with social, clan and tribal divisions; its degree of factionalization and fragmentation dictates that planning for stabilization efforts take into account district political dynamics and in some cases trans-district dynamics where district boundaries split tribes or clans. It is also essential to understand what the government and security forces are doing at the provincial level and in key districts. Examples of this issue appear in the discussion of particular Yemeni governorates and districts below.

It is important to address how to fill the gap between the village and national or provincial/major region assessments. The mandate of the ICAF could be expanded to address dynamics in priority sub-regions to a greater extent but this might require a two-phased process, with province/governorate and perhaps district follow up once there was agreement on the priority problems and the regions that corresponded to those problems. It would also be possible to incorporate at least district level assessment into a TCAPF but this requires a greater alteration of the framework.

C. The Governorate Level in the South of Yemen

The south is an area of over 118,000 square miles with a population of 4.7 million and clearly further analysis is required on which parts USAID intervention should focus. The ICAF would normally have been applied via field research in Yemen and been able to draw on a much wider information and expertise than was possible given the current US travel advisories. It could thus only make tentative conclusions. These suggested that further research was required to lay out conflict/political dynamics in the key governorates and then in relevant districts.

1. Highest Priority Governorates

The inter-agency conflict assessment workshop found two governorates to be of highest and roughly equal priority, Dhala and Lahij:

Dhala. This region has historically been one of the most intractable for any Yemeni government. Its terrain is difficult but lies across key routes between the north and the south and the Yemeni government has deployed security forces to keep these routes open. Dhala, Lahij and Abyan were the heart of the old PDRY, and Sana'a keeps a strong security presence in each and in the 1990s worked quite hard to extend government services to these regions in a vain attempt to enhance its popularity – but it did not sustain the effort and people perceive that they were much better serviced under PDRY. Dhala is where grievances concerning the (non-)payment of military pensions and the lack of jobs is most acute and where the Hiraak movement started. Nasser al-Nouba, the most prominent leader of the retired officers, and the most uncompromising, is from Dhala. Militancy is growing and militias are forming. There have been violent demonstrations forcing the ostentatious deployment of Yemeni military units. There is a tradition of insurgency going back to the 1960s and of hostility to Saleh and his regime in the days of PDRY and afterwards. The utopian view of the old PDRY is most evident here. Action is needed to remove some of the causes of grievances: improving access to education, providing jobs, enhancing service delivery – though little can be done by USAID to ensure the payment of pensions.

Lahij. The government keeps strong presence in the main towns and to keep vital routes open. The government cannot afford to lose control of Lahij, a much more important governorate in economic terms than Dhala. The problems and grievances are similar to those of Dhala, but with the district of Radfan, in particular, showing an even higher level of militancy than Dhala. The uprising against the British started in Radfan and the name has symbolic rallying importance throughout the south. The bulk of the former PDRY armed forces came from this region. The Yafa'i tribe, the largest in the south and the one with the best external connections, is mostly based in Lahij. In Lahij's Yafa'i tribal areas, the state can seem absent except for its military and security apparatus. It might be worth investigating if any of the external Yafa'i charitable organisations could provide possible partners for USAID. There are particular problems of land ownership in Lahij linked to the sequestrations and return of land at around the time of unity. USAID might undertake the same program as in Dhala with additional focus on action to improve agricultural production. As Lahij (like parts of Abyan) has been a prime area of agricultural development in the south since the late 1930s.

2. Secondary Priorities:

Abyan. Abyan was seen as the third priority in the south. It has long been an important agricultural region close to Aden. The government has deployed a large security presence to this area. Tarik al-Fadhli, a leading political actor in the district, has a base within the Fadhli tribal area of Abyan (centred in Zingibar), only a few miles from Aden. He is a scion of the former ruling house and a leader with appeal to Islamicists and a track record in insurgency from his youth in Afghanistan. His defection from the regime and to the southern cause was a coup for the Hiraak. Action is needed to limit the appeal of al-Fadhli by removing some of the causes of grievances, which are similar to those in Lahij.

The governorate is not however politically uniform. It is uncertain how far al-Fadhli's appeal extends into more northern areas of Abyan, where there is traditional hostility towards the Fadhli tribe. Ali Nasser Muhammad, for example, the most important of the southern exiled leaders, is from Dathina in northern Abyan as is the current Yemeni Vice President, Abd al-Rub Mansour Hadi. Both Dathina and the Fadhli areas have benefited from a greater level of government spending and services than other parts of Abyan (or Dhala and Lahij) because of the influence of Ali Nasser, Abd al Rub and until his defection of Tarek al Fadhli. Despite this, government statistics show that Abyan is much less well served than the heartland of the regime around Sana'a.

In the PDRY era – and earlier – there were also intense rivalries between Abyan and Lahij/Dhala (in the 1994 civil war, units from Abyan sided with the north). It would be politic for USAID to be seen to be active in supporting development in the two rivals; choosing one side would exacerbate tensions. Any assistance programmes should seek to cover parts of Dhala, Lahij and Abyan. Further work at district level can help determine where best to focus such effort in each governorate. This larger point about regional rivalries is an important point relative to the TCAPF, because the latter does not seem set up to glean such information.

Aden. Grievances are expressed through neighbourhood committees demanding jobs for the young and fed by a feeling of neglect by Sana'a and disparagement of Aden and Adenis by a regime that suspects their loyalty. There is a strong secessionist movement in the streets but is balanced by businessmen and others with a vested interest in the status quo; the latter argue in favour of decentralisation or a federal system. At the center of all specific grievances is a hard core of hatred for the northerners who have taken land and plundered Aden. There is little that can be done by donors that will affect this sentiment, but well targeted projects can help strengthen the position of those calling for governance reforms within the context of unity. The focus must be on creating jobs and helping to restore a sustainable local economy – and create the conditions within which Yemenis in exile will invest. One key will be to encourage the implementation of existing plans for the exploitation of Aden's natural advantages as a port in order to turn into a major international or region hub with a good level of support industries and services. It is much easier to work in Aden and there will be fewer objections from Sana'a to action here compared with other, dicier parts of the south. The regime has kept a strong security presence in Aden since 1994 and is determined never to lose control of this vital port.

Hadramaut. In this large province the grievances of the south are slightly mitigated, even though two of the most prominent internal and external leaders, Hassan Ba'um and the Ali Salim al-Bidh, are Hadramis. There are active local welfare and self-help groups – partly financed by remittances and external charities (including rich businessmen of Hadrami origin in Saudi Arabia). This is mostly limited to the bigger cities and there are high levels of poverty outside and in the tribal areas. The main port Mukalla has similarities with Aden. The Yemeni government has been more active in addressing Hadrami grievances, because of the importance of oil and has and fears that Hadramaut, always a semi-detached region, could develop a much stronger movement for freedom from Sana'a. USAID would probably be able to partner with organized local bodies and to attract government support in what Sana'a sees as a strategic area. Development assistance would be easier to provide in this governorate and probably more effective but would have only secondary impacts on stabilization. Government forces are deployed to the main cities on the coast and the Wadi Hadramaut.

Shabwa. There is a case for considering Shabwa as part of the south (it was in the old PDRY) and not solely in conjunction with Marib and al-Jawf in the context of combating Al Qaeda. The Aulaqi tribe played an active role in PDRY politics (siding mostly with Abyan), and one of the leaders of the military pensioner's movement is from this area. It denizens speak the same discourse of neglect as the rest of the south, only intensified by the even poorer level of development and service delivery that characterizes the most marginal desert and tribalized governorates. There may be some potential for focussing assistance in the Aulaqi tribal areas since these are the most influential and important with strong links to the Hiraak leaders elsewhere. Government security presence is relatively light and mostly devoted to protecting oil facilities. .

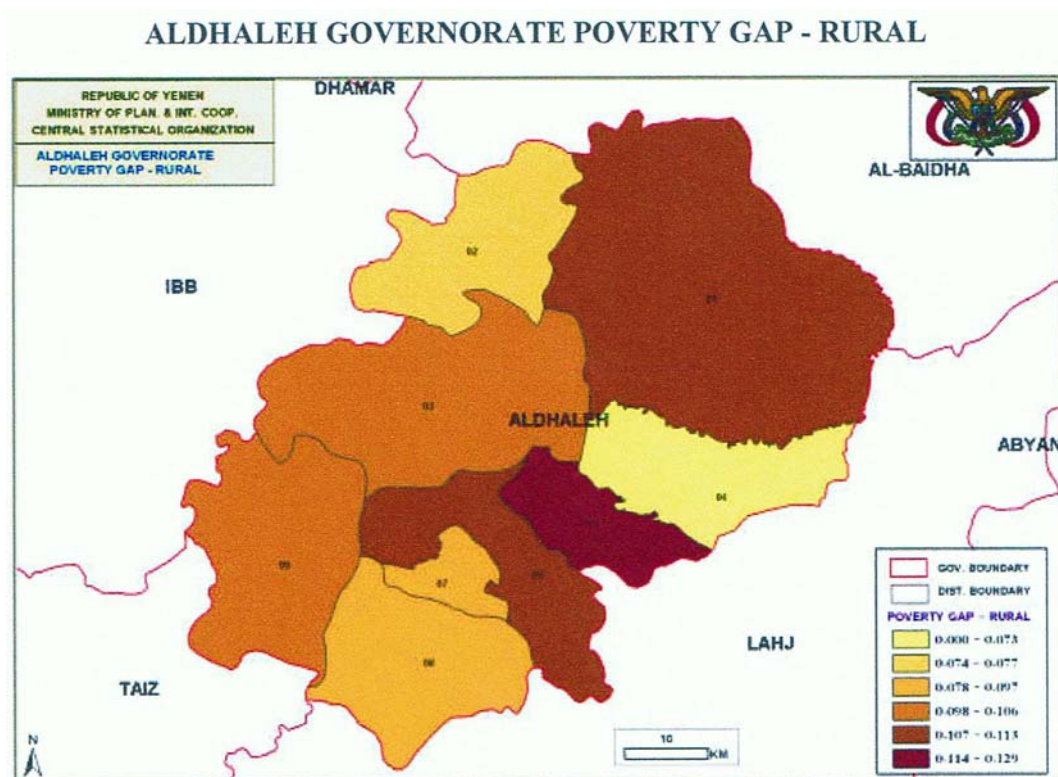
D. Taking the TCAPF Process to the District Level

ICAF gives USAID a reasonable list of priorities with regard to southern governorates (though this was somewhat tentative due to the Washington-focused nature of the assessment; field work would have established a clearer and better-defended list), but this guidance is of limited value in focusing development assistance given that all the governorates are large in area and population. The figures for 2004 were:

Governorate	Population	Area (mi. ²)
Abyan	433,819	6,350
Aden	589,419	290
Dhala'	470,564	1,540
Hadramaut	1,028,556	64,590
Lahij	722,692	4,880
Shabwa	470,635	15,000

The next administrative level down from the governorate is the district. There are government figures available at a district level on service delivery, poverty levels and other criteria which can help establish which districts are relatively well and relatively poorly served by the regime and where need in the broadest sense is

present. The UNDP and Government of Yemen conducted a Poverty Assessment Report in 2007 and published maps showing poverty by governorate and district. Below is an example showing rural poverty gap for Dhala that brings out the considerable differences between districts. All districts are not equal either in objective conditions or perceptions.



What this map fails to show is the perception among a majority of the population in Dhala (which is one of the better off governorates in Yemen) that poverty was much less of a problem in the old PDRY and that the PDRY government was much more active than the current Yemeni government in addressing poverty. In other words, people feel much poorer in the new, combined state – and thus more attracted to the themes of Hiraak. Such factors cannot be found in government or international agency statistics; reinforcing the importance the TCAF's places on polling (though it is not clear that the current questions ask in the TCAF would elicit this particular comparison, which is one that works to the detriment of the current regime).

On the other hand, district boundaries were drawn mostly during the PDRY period when it was pursuing a policy of reducing the influence of tribalism. As a result, boundaries often divided larger tribes or pushed rival tribes into the same district. The Yafa'i tribe, for example, the largest in the old south – covers at least two districts in Lahij and one in Abyan, while the district boundaries in Abyan were drawn to reduce the influence of formerly militant tribes such as the Audhali. Since 1994 the Sana'a regime has pursued policies aimed at encouraging people to revert to tribal loyalties by providing support through traditional tribal leaders and by playing its usual game of dividing and ruling. The result has been to break down the PDRY system of building loyalties to the nation and Yemeni Socialist Party through strong local government and party organisation. The result is today that there are often quite important differences in attitude to the Hiraak and the Yemeni government – within districts based on tribal identities. Whilst government statistics will identify general levels of need, further study is essential within districts to determine the areas where USAID should direct its assistance. Government and other statistics can point to districts that might require special attention but are not themselves a reliable guide and need further research to apply the ICAF principles at district levels and/or below.

The following is an attempt to apply TCAF/ICAF principles on the basis of recent open source reporting, conversations with people who know the old PDRY, and the consultants' own knowledge. In the case of some districts, that knowledge is very limited.

1. Dhala Districts.

Dhala has nine districts varying in population size from 22,000 to 90,000. It was carved out of part of the PDRY Lahij Governorate and included the addition of two Northern districts, Qatabah (population 90,000) and Damt (population 51,000), which were atypical of the rest of Dhala (and can be ignored for the current purposes). Open source reporting shows that:

The four districts of Dhala (which contains 80,000 people and includes the key town of Dhala), Shu'aib (population 38,000), Azraq (population 37,000) and Hajaf (population 23,000) are the most affected by the Hiraak since many of the former PDRY's military were recruited from these districts. Visitors say that PDRY flags have been painted onto buildings, rocks and along routes of these districts. Foreigners are now asked to avoid roads running through these districts because of attacks on cars that are obviously from districts in north Yemen. Yemeni army units have been deployed to keep routes open and intimidate the population from further protest.

Shu'aib and Dhala were major centres of dissidence in the British times. The tribal groups in Shu'aib are unruly. People from these same districts, particularly Shu'aib, had important roles in the PDRY government and its ruling party, especially in the latter days of the PDRY regime. The strongest resistance put forth by PDRY forces in the 1994 civil war came from these same four districts. Secessionist feeling is very high.

There is an effective local leadership for the Hiraak in the city of Dhala.

These factors might suggest that USAID intervention is most required in Dhala and Shu'aib. On the other hand, it could be argued that support for the Hiraak is so widespread and deep in these two governorates that it is too late for development interventions to reduce resentment and that it might be better to focus on other districts of Dhala where militancy is less evident. This is a hypothesis that could be tested with some polling; however, it needs to be kept in mind that the more recent cause of opposition to the regime here is the government's failure to pay pensions and recruit sufficient local people to the army and security services. Development assistance cannot address these problems, although alternate (good) job opportunities could perhaps replace the desire to join the military, though this too is a notion that would need to be tested in polling.

2. Lahij Districts.

Lahij has 15 districts ranging in population size from 27,000 to 94,000. The districts of Lahij that are most clearly affected by Hiraak are:

- Radfan (population 43,000). As previously noted, Radfan resonates with many South Yemenis because it was the first place to revolt against the British. It has an important local leader in Nasser al-Khalbi, who has the prestige to become a national leader. There are very high levels of poverty in Radfan, and tribal cohesion is high, potentially solving the collective action problem that would allow effective opposition to the regime.
- Yafa'a (population 75,000). Media reports and recent visits note the presence of old PDRY flags almost everywhere. The district's grinding poverty has been exacerbated by drought over the last several years. Here too there is strong tribal cohesion, and the tribe possesses important and useful links to external organizations. There is also an effective local leader, Awadh al-Salahi, who appears to enjoy widespread popularity in Yafa'i and in neighbouring districts, including Maflahi district (population 38,000).
- There are reports that security forces and government service centres have been removed from two districts -- Tur al Baha (population 47,000) and Ras al Arah (population 37,000) -- because of tribal unrest following the government's killing of a well-known and respected figure. This would affect security for outsiders trying to work in the area. The lack of a government presence will relieve the

aggravation of government repression but will also give local political forces space to organize. It may also create resentment at the loss of what few services were being provided.

- In Sabar (population 30,000), the Azibiah tribe has set up its own check points to try to block traffic. There have been attacks on North Yemeni vehicles in this district by militant groups inspired by the Hiraak.

On the other hand, there is a strong security presence in al Hawtah (population 25,000), which is the administrative center of the governorate, and neighbouring Tuban district (population 83,000) – this presence restrains protest and violence but certainly exacerbates resentment.

This information, as sketchy as it is for some districts, suggests that there should be a focus on Radfan. As in the case of Dhala, it may already be too late for development interventions to be effective. The situation in Yafa'a is more promising, and the Yafa'i tribe has an importance influence because of its size and spread both in Lahij and Abyan. Successful USAID intervention in one part of the Yafa'i homeland might well moderate overall tribal opposition to the regime and create an interest in other parts in receiving assistance.

3. Abyan Districts.

Abyan, which contains 11 districts ranging in population size from 15,000 to 109,000, is much more diverse. The capital Zingibar (population 25,000), where Tarek al-Fadhli is based, is very tense as is Ja'ar, the capital of the neighbouring and surrounding Khanfar district (population 109,000). These are main centres of the Hiraak movement.

However, as suggested previously, Abyan is best looked at not on the basis of its administrative districts but of its historic regions:

- The Fadhli tribe dominates the town of Zingibar and the district of Khanfar. Tariq al-Fadhli draws the majority of his support from his own tribe and seems able to mobilise significant support in the streets. He also appears to possess an incipient militia.
- The Yafa'i tribal areas, which extend from Lahij into parts of Abyan, notably the districts of Sabah (population 16,000), Rusad (population 55,000) and Sirar (population 15,000), are anti-regime and pro-secession, but there are long standing rivalries between the Yafa'i and Fadhli that create tensions between the leaderships and are potentially exploitable by the regime, which has considerable expertise in the application of "divide and rule" tactics.
- The Dathina region (Wadea district with a population of 23,000 and parts of Mudia district with a total population of 35,000) is the homeland of two figures who do not support secession. The former PDRY president Ali Nasser Muhammad remains in exile but continues to call for a settlement within a unified state, while Abd al-Rub is Yemen's Vice President. The latter has used his position to ensure that his tribal area has been relatively well cared for by the regime, dampening dissent. Donor efforts here would be perceived by others as playing into the regime's patronage system and would produce little in terms of stabilization gains.
- The Audhali tribal area of Mudia district is the homeland of Muhammad Al Ahmad, the exiled leader most feared by the Yemeni government because of his past reputation as an effective organiser. This tribe probably numbers around 50,000.
- The most northern parts of Abyan, adjoining Shabwa, is an area where Al-Qa'eda may still have a presence.

Thus Abyan is a potentially divided governorate where there are likely to be quite different levels of support for the Hiraak between different districts and sub-districts. This suggests that a refined knowledge of governorate, district and tribal dynamics is required to position assistance effectively in Abyan. The risk is not simply of not producing impact but of exacerbating tensions and resistance and undermining stabilization objectives. Abyan is an example of why the "missing middle" matters and how going right down to the village level could create problems – problems for USAID, for the conflict dynamic, for local governance structures and/or for the regime.

An agricultural specialist who works in Abyan reports that in the Yafa'i areas of Abyan (and Lahij), the main grievance concerns the lack of government assistance in dealing with on-going drought in the coffee growing areas.¹ There is a feeling that the government does not care about the people and is absent except for the army. Older residents remember the PDRY fondly and gloss over its many imperfections, while the young see no hope for the future. The latter cannot migrate except to Aden or Sana'a, and such a move will do little for their prospects in life. They see the regime as distant and hostile. This appears to be typical of much the Yafa'i region but suggests that positive USAID intervention could help reduce grievances. It would be critical to ensure (if possible) that the regime gets credit for interventions to build the regime's legitimacy with this southern population; however, the government's institutional presence is limited and it may be difficult to work out how to do this in a manner that is plausible.

E. Conclusions on the ICAF

The Yemen conflict assessment conducted using the ICAF provides a broad, insufficiently nuanced and not wholly reliable guide to USAID in selecting districts or regions within governorates to which to direct development assistance interventions. It provides some information on grievances, tribes and major political actors but too little is known about the array of actors, their resources, how they are positioning relative to the regime and each other and the like. Field work in Yemen, as would normally be conducted in an inter-agency conflict assessment, would have provided more abundant and recent data as well as a wider range of views concerning levels and types of risk and appropriate redress. Even had travel out of Sana'a been limited by security concerns, a field team would still have gained access to a range of government and international agencies and experts. Many of these agencies have worked in these three priority southern governorates, and it should have been possible to acquire the results of their studies and talk to people who have worked on the ground recently. A start on district data collection could have been made by talking to UNDP, DfID, the Germans and the Dutch, as well as the Social Fund for Development. There are also a number of Yemeni NGOs and CSOs operating at national and local levels, and these would have been useful interlocutors. Thus a more typical interagency conflict assessment using the ICAF might have produced more confident guidance for USAID. It should have been possible to narrow the list of prospective governorates/districts further and to prioritize in a more confident manner. However, the lack of direct interviewing of political actors and residents in a short list of governorates or districts does leave a team and the USG reliant on the views and interpretations of others. It is akin to relying on secondary sources rather than primary ones.

But even if the ICAF can identify governorates, districts or regions for USAID assistance, these are still far too large a geographic space to be of real value. This is particularly the case where social and political life is fragmented and conflictual, and there is high variability on the ground. Another tool is needed. Either a second stage, modified ICAF or an adapted TCAPF can provide such a tool.

1. The next step – using a modified TCAPF.

We can determine from the application of the ICAF the broad areas of need as these tend to be the same in most places in Yemen and relate to the delivery (or not) of government services to communities and generally to the lack of employment and local economic development. USAID can do very little to deal directly with the potent grievances in the three priority southern governorates over pensions and the behavior of the army, though it should note these problems and consider what action could be taken by the US government to persuade the Yemeni authorities to address them. All USAID can do is to mitigate to some extent the more general causes of alienation in an effort to improve the stability of the country. Without regime reform, however, local development interventions may neither last nor be sufficient in and of themselves to deter opposition.

We know that in Dhala, Lahij and Abyan, the main needs are:

- Employment and local economic development.

¹ Recent personal communications with Noel Brehony.

- Education. These districts are relatively well served for schools but the quality of education in those schools is poor.
- Health – more clinics and qualified staff are needed
- Water - some parts of the south suffer badly from over exploitation of limited water resources and others have been hit hard by drought.
- Agriculture extension and other critical services are limited in amount and quality.

The next step, given this menu, would be to do some reality checking in key districts in the priority provinces – and given Yemeni dynamics to explore what the impact on neighboring districts or governorates might be of a significant presence in some. The ICAF is a much more useful tool for doing this; the TCAF might need to be modified substantially for a district level focus. The process might start with documentary research, consultation with the Yemeni government and international organizations (including especially SFD) based in Yemen. This would be followed up by interviews conducted in the district with government officials, community leaders, and local NGOs where they exist.

Once districts have been prioritized and selected, it should be possible with the acquiescence or approval of the Yemeni Government to conduct a field survey in a sample of villages in selected districts of these governorates using the TCAF questions as guidance on local priorities. One local organization with survey research skills is The Yemeni Polling Centre which has experience of such surveys (www.yemenpolling.org). Conducting polling that selects a sample of villagers in a random sample of villages would not be particularly useful in village selection but would give a stronger feeling for the district as a whole and the similarities in grievances and needs. Key informant interviews at the district level could however be conducted first and used to prioritize villages, and polling could be conducted specifically in those higher priority villages, with the sample size adequate to permit drawing conclusions about that village.

Below are given some broad categories of questions that could be included in such a survey drawing on TCAPF but with some additions based on the ICAF results and the applicability of the questions to a much larger area/community than that devised for TCAF. These are only intended as a guide not as a template.

The ICAF should be used to assist in tailoring the questions to broad political realities. Some of the questions below are important in understanding Yemeni local dynamics but would have little relevance in other settings. What is proposed below 1) requires proper polling; and 2) is certainly more extensive data collection than the current TCAPF mandates. However, if a polling firm is sending data collectors out anyway and those costs are fixed, it makes sense to collect (and then to analyze) additional data. The data analysis chore does become more burdensome and may require more expertise than can be mustered by the military but at least in a Yemen, such surveying should only be done at 12-24 month intervals. It should be understood that year-on-year changes in polling results may not exceed the margin of error, especially in non kinetic environments. When the intervals between surveys are too brief, fewer questions may not be an advantage (especially in less volatile environments than Afghanistan) since it will reduce the opportunity to catch subtle change as it is occurring.

2. Broad range of questions

What is the nature of the district or region? (requires data from primary and secondary sources, key informant interviews and polling)

- If relevant, what is the tribal make up? Does one tribe dominate? Do the tribes have tribal links to neighbouring districts? Are there recognized and influential tribal leaders?
- Are there any significant towns?
- What is the image of PDRY in people's minds?
- Is there a history of conflict with other tribes/groups in the district or neighbouring districts?
- How is it administered? What government departments are present? What is the presence of the security forces?
- Are there historical issues linked to land ownership (i.e., a problem in Lahej and Abyan)?

What has changed in the district in the last twelve months? (data from polling, key informant interviews and government statistics)

- Have there been changes in the population, either in the form of emigration or immigration?
- Have the levels of conflict (demonstrations, road blocks, appearance of PDRY flags increased or decreased? This information may need to be collected from the media or by talking to international agencies, the Special Fund for Development or NGOs working in the district.
- Have there been any changes in the people administering the districts? Are they from the district itself, the governorate, the south or the north?
- Has the level of military and security deployment changed?
- Have there any recent natural events – droughts, floods etc – that have exacerbated (or might exacerbate) local problems – and expose the failure of government agencies to respond?
- Any arrests/actions linked to counter-terrorism?

What are the main problems facing people in the area? (data from polling and key informant interviews)

- What are the core grievances at this level? Possibly this could be configured as the current TCAPF question is: what are the greatest problems facing the village? However, problems may not always equal core grievances.
- Where possible, polling and expert interviews should ask specific questions related to employment opportunities, availability and quality of education and health services? What government support is available for agricultural development or other forms of development?
- Are there local variations in problems or service provision? (This is a question analysis of data would answer)
- Which problems and grievances can be mitigated by USAID development assistance and which cannot? (The answer will be largely the result of data analysis).
- What are the mitigating factors for conflict, such as apathy, links to patronage networks, and the like?
- What are the national or regional factors exacerbating the situation?

Who is trusted to resolve the problems?

This may indicate which local government figures are trusted (district commissioners, for example, are often from the district)? It may also show which government and international agencies are most effective? It will show the influence if any of tribal and religious leaders and the “official” village heads. It will not indicate who has the power to block the resolution of problems – this can come from key informant interviews.

Are there other key players who could influence the situation? (data may come more from key informant interviews)

- Does the Hiraak have effective local leadership and organization in this locality?
- Is there someone from the region with a senior position in the regime or a link to patronage networks? How do local people get personal grievances addressed?
- Is there an influential religious figure in the region? What role does he play?
- Are there links to wealthy migrants in the Gulf or elsewhere? Is there a history of such migrants investing in the region or trying to relieve hardship?

What are peoples’ needs in order of priority as they see them?

This should seek to find out what local people want done and in what order of priority. It will be important to frame the questions so that any answers have to be given in the context of a united Yemen.

These questions are all based on TCAPF guidance and can be expanded as necessary. They will be influenced very much by the previous period of research and consultation. Though this is acknowledged in the TCAPF paper it needs to be emphasised and clearly made the first step in the process.

This of course is becoming a more complex data collection and analysis process and the “carrying capacity” may not exist to handle it. Still, it is risky to make the challenge seem simpler than it is.

3. Analysis and evaluation

The analysis and evaluation can be based on the ICAF and TCAPF process as they are in this framework beginning to meet. ICAF seems to look at the historical and political data in a more systematic fashion than TCAPF but the TCAPF papers notes that “data...(from the survey)... is combined with input from other staff sections and other sources of information—such as intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and private sector entities.. “The process incorporates the ICAF principles through focusing on key leaders, in trying to understand historical and tribal influences which may affect local attitudes, and looking at how the regime patronage system is at work (or not) and affects that district. The two processes will bring in other factors such as land ownership and access to water that affect grievances and means of resolving them.

4. Areas for specific action

The outcome of the two exercises should be to identify a number of relatively small areas where USAID action would contribute to stabilisation. Two approaches could emerge:

- **Functional.** The conclusion that USAID should focus on one type of action – say the improvement of technical education – across a whole district or districts. It may not matter too much which villages or areas were selected since the need is universal and the resentment is everywhere.
- **Location.** USAID targets particular key communities and seeks to enhance the quality of life through action to improve a range of services/needs. It chooses those communities that are critical to reducing the possibility that Hiraak might develop a true head of steam. It could decide to work whether Hiraak is already strongest and grievances most severe or it could decide to focus on communities that might be the next to swing support to Hiraak.

The simplest way forward would be to apply the approach outlined above to the next level down but in this case there would need to be a closer involvement of the key stakeholders as described in the TCAPF paper:

“The second step of collection involves conducting targeted interviews with key local stakeholders, such traditional leaders, government officials, business leaders, and prominent citizens. These interviews serve two purposes. First, targeted interviews act as a control mechanism in the collection effort. If the answers provided by key stakeholders match the responses from the local populace, it is likely the individual understands the causes of instability and may be relied upon to support the assessment effort. However, if the answers do not match those of the local populace, that individual may be either an uninformed stakeholder or possibly part of the problem. Second, targeted interviews provide more detail on the causes of instability while helping determine how best to address those causes and measure progress toward that end.”

The process can then segue into the design stage of the TCAPF. This would probably be done in two parts.

Part A would be an internal USAID section that follows the TCAF process: After identifying the causes of instability and sources of resiliency, a program of activities is designed to address them. Three key factors guide program design, which ensures program activities:

- Increase support for the host-nation government.
- Decrease support for antigovernment forces.
- Build host-nation capacity across each of the stabilization sectors.

Part B would be one shared with the Yemeni authorities but written in a way that avoided or addressed GoY sensitivities and ensured as far as possible its support.

The evaluation and subsequent process would follow the rest of the TCAPF.

5. Further comments

We have suggested conducting the data collection at two levels, but it may be necessary to do so at three levels as there is a variable gap between work at the district/sub district level and at community level. However, the same principles can be applied.

As noted earlier, the conflicts in Yemen are quite different. TCAPF seems better adapted for the type of activity likely to be required in the area where Al-Qaeda is operating since – in general – there will be much more limited support for Al-Qaeda in most of those areas and at least formally the government shares the USG objective of eliminating Al-Qaeda. The government is thus likely to be more co-operative. There are also likely to be other US government activities that would provide more resources and tools for addressing grievances. The population will have a long list of grievances, and it may well conclude that it can build on the US government presence to induce the Yemeni authorities to do more. In sum, as this juncture tribal people in the main AQ areas could be well disposed to USG assistance.

In southern Yemen, the majority of the population probably no longer wants to be part of a united Yemen. The problem in this region may not be resistance to USAID assistance from the local population (which is likely to welcome anything that can make their lives better) but from the YAR central government, which may suspect the motives of USAID and while appearing to help may well place obstacles in the way. The same situation could apply in the north to areas affected by the Huthi rebellion.

6. Can ICAF and TCAPF be integrated?

The Yemen example shows that the two frameworks can be integrated. ICAF clearly works at strategic level. It identified the main conflicts, the causes, key players etc and provides an excellent basis for further research by defining the key issues and narrowing the regional focus.

The TCAF helps in identifying village level needs and changes but seemingly delves insufficiently into local political dynamics and the context in which the village operates.

The two frameworks ask some similar questions but as currently structured to do not link up because there is no specified path that takes the ICAF conclusions down to a level where TCAPF principles can be applied. However, the example from Yemen shows that:

- ICAF can be used to identify the key regions (governorates) where USAID intervention is needed and is practical.
- ICAF can in very broad terms also be used to make a tentative identification of district or regions/tribal areas where USAID can be focussed.
- An adapted form of the TCAPF model (or the ICAF) can be used to collect information at this district or regional level and analyze it to produce a plan for further action either by focussing on a particular need across a region or identifying communities for action
- In some countries – and almost certainly in Yemen – there may need to be a further refinement of this to get down to groups of communities that should be targeted.
- Once these have been identified, the TCAF can be applied in communities both to identify what can be done and where – and probably also what should not be done and where.

7. Recommendations

The next step might be to produce a single document that incorporates ICAF, an adapted TCAPF for regional and sub regional levels, and the current TCAF more or less as drafted but with specific questions about actors and conflict added to the key informant interviews section. This might start by stating the principles on what both are based, using ICAF to identify the conflicts which USAID would seek to stabilise and the main geographic zones for action. There then needs to be new sections describing how the process can be taken down to progressively lower levels until it becomes possible to identify which communities should be targeted for action. In this document users could be given greater guidance on the need to assemble as much information as possible before carrying out interviews – from open sources, other

agencies, academics and the like – and using this to frame tailored questions that will help clarify the issues to be addressed and the communities that seem to require the closest attention. A series of interviews would then take place with people involved in government, NGOs and so on and a sample of local people to try to identify where possible communities where USAID should be directed (and at what). Once specific target communities are identified, the TCAF process could be applied in the form of those four questions, except that probably at this level the questions need to be broadened to take into account historical, political and other factors. However, it is less clear that polling needs to happen in individual target villages once the “missing middle” has been filled. It might at that stage be possible to use Participatory Rapid Appraisal techniques with groups of villages as that juncture – it would be faster, cheaper and have the benefit in engaging villagers in working collaboratively.

Finally the paper should emphasise that these analytical processes are interlinked and dynamic with the results of TCAPF and ICAF feeding each other. Just as the TCAPF would be applied periodically, so should ICAF updates be done, though perhaps not with the same degree of frequency.