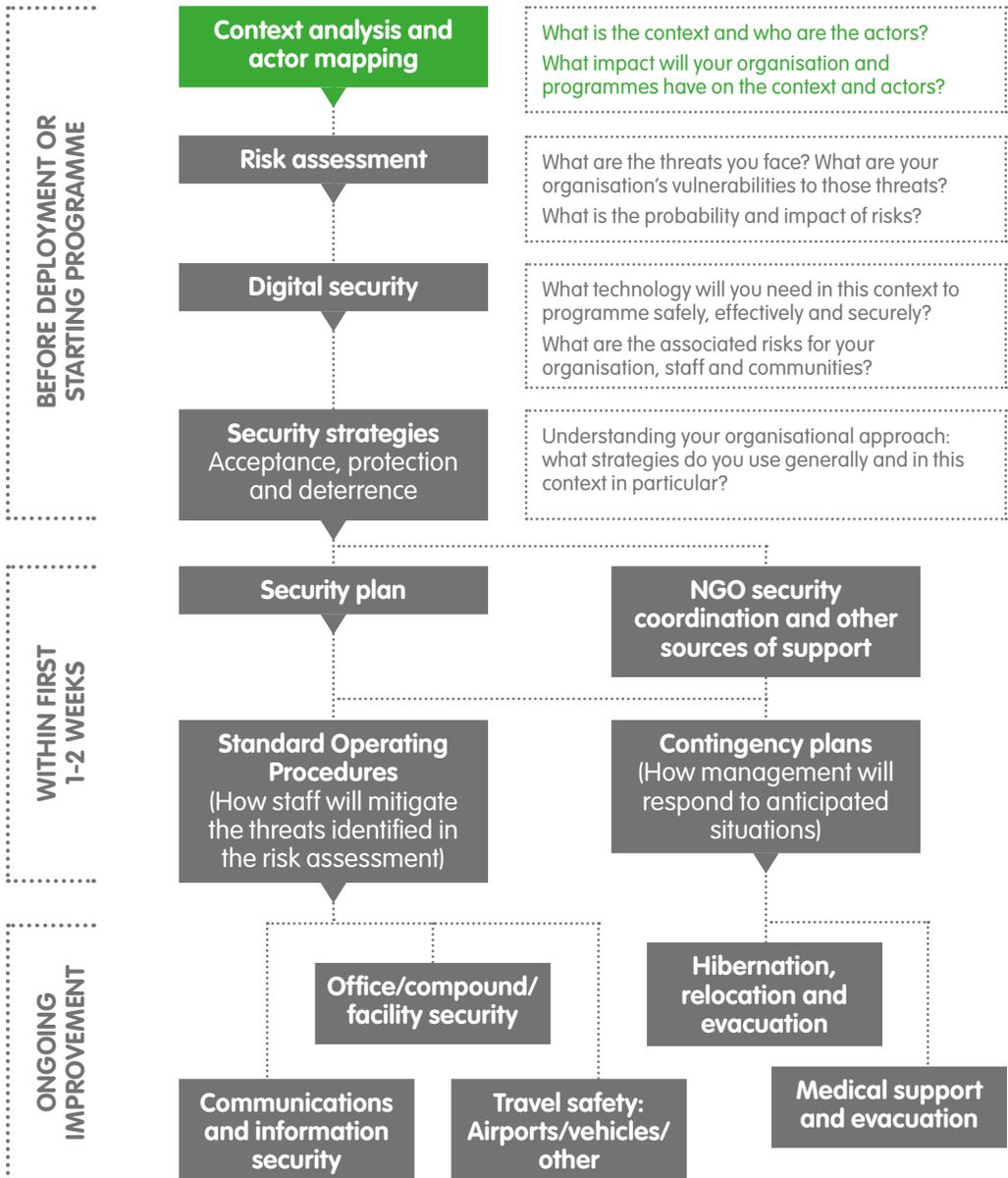


2

Actor mapping and context analysis



Mapping the different actors in the operating environment and analysing the context are both key activities for organisations moving into a new country/area/region, or starting a new programme or project. It is also essential when a major disruption to the status quo has happened in a familiar operational context.

In recent years, NGOs have been ordered out of countries, or their staff sentenced or imprisoned, despite the state's urgent humanitarian needs, because someone made a simple social mistake, offended a host government, or started work without properly gaining acceptance by both formal and informal leadership structures. It is strongly advised to start an actor mapping and context analysis as early as possible and continue the process throughout the programme duration.



Who are the key individuals, groups, organisations, state institutions and other stakeholders that can affect your security and operations? What is their political and/or social position, power, background and relation to or interest in the organisation?

Actor mapping

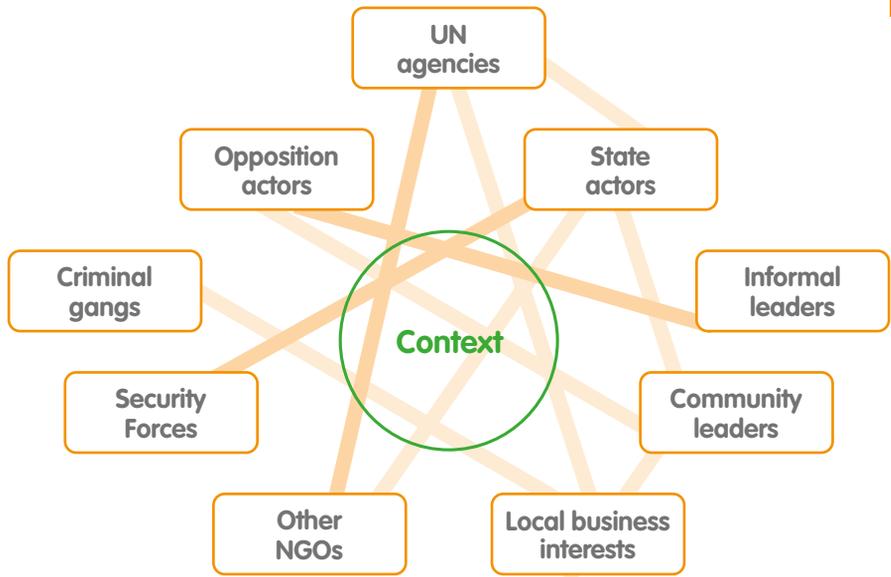
Actor mapping is an exercise to identify all the key individuals, stakeholders or other organisations that will have an effect on the operating environment. They can include:

- Host government ministers, department heads or similar
- Opposition figures, groups or key supporters
- Host government security officials (military, police, other)
- Donors
- UN agencies and their contact points
- Community leaders
- Formal and informal leaders in the operating region
- Other NGOs, both national and international
- Key business individuals who may control local supply and logistics
- Local media
- Beneficiary groups
- Host communities
- Others

Remember, when doing an actor mapping the declared interests of an individual or group may be very different to their actual interests.

Once the key actors are identified, it is important to understand how they link together and where interacting with one may influence relations with another. Think about how they are connected – which actors are allied and which in conflict, for example – as well as how these relationships may be affected by the presence of the organisation and the programmes to be implemented.

Context analysis



The analysis of the context builds on the actor mapping exercise by examining as many factors related to the context as are available. They can include:

- History, both recent and distant
- Cultural and religious traditions that may differ between urban and rural areas
- Racial, tribal or political alliances
- Socio-economic factors
- Infrastructure conditions
- Level of security or insecurity and contributing factors
- Attitudes to foreigners (western, diaspora or regional)
- Attitudes to aid agencies
- Governance issues
- Corruption
- Impact of arriving NGOs, other than programming, on local social, economic and power relationships
- Other factors

In writing a context analysis, you can use the PESTLE format:

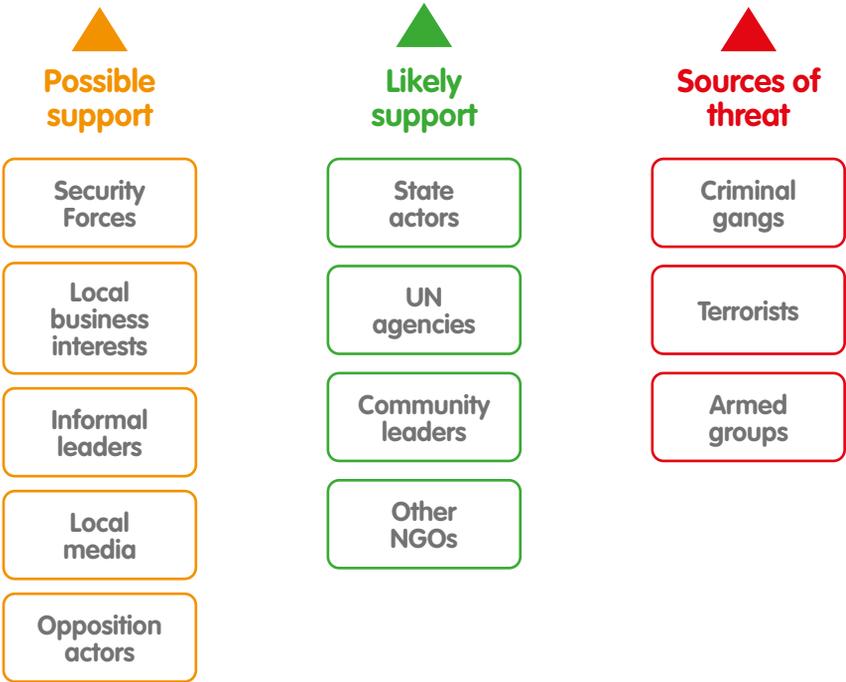
- Politics
- Economics
- Social
- Technological
- Legal
- Environmental

Actor mapping and context analysis may be challenging when responding quickly to a new environment. Identifying all the actors and stakeholders can be difficult enough, without trying to establish power relationships or behind the scenes motivations. It is important to include as many perspectives as possible into the actor mapping and context analysis. Different ethnicities, ages and genders may have distinct understanding of drivers and relationships of the context.



Finding good sources of local knowledge, while being aware of bias, is a good first step, but also research other organisations or individuals who have recently worked in the context and interview them.

Your organisation



In the early stages of a new response, the actor mapping and context analysis should be regularly updated as more information becomes known. The outputs of this process should be maintained as confidentially as possible from a management perspective to avoid upsetting local sensibilities. Also, it is important to not be seen as gathering 'intelligence', so management of the information and how it is employed and shared should be closely monitored.

► *See Module 9 – Communications and information security*