From understanding to promoting change: making better security and justice programming happen

The Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law is organizing an **Interactive Brainstorm**.

Date: Tuesday 10 May, 09:00 – 17:30

Venue: The Hague Institute for Global Justice, Sophialaan 10, The Hague

Participants: Approximately 20-25 experts that are largely familiar with this subject area, including a few change- and program management experts from other walks of life to offer fresh views and inputs. The event aims to include at least government representatives of the Dutch Foreign and Development Ministry, DFID, the Danish Stabilization Unit and the German Development Ministry; NGO representatives of Saferworld, International Alert and Pax for Peace; and think tank/academic representatives of ODI, The Asia Foundation and the Development Leadership Program (University of Birmingham).

Purpose & objectives

This Interactive Brainstorm explores **why the change that is needed for better security/justice programming is not happening despite the weight of evidence that is available and calling for it**. To generate a fruitful discussion in an organic as well as focused manner, three hypotheses will be discussed and (re)developed over the course of the day. The event will canvass these hypotheses as a basis for more in-depth discussion in the near future:

- The domestic nature and focus on tangible results of donor-promoted accountability prevent more flexible forms of program engagement, stakeholder management and monitoring/results-reporting from developing.

- The status-quo power of established bureaucratic procedures and relations prevents the emergence of innovative spaces in which experiential approaches to security/justice programming can be attempted.

- The skills and knowledge of a significant number of development practitioners for initiating and experimenting with more innovative security/justice programming are not adequate.

These are elaborated in more detail below.

The event relates to a broader series of initiatives that have in common that they recognize the fundamental limitations of the classic aid effectiveness agenda - as promoted through the OECD-hosted 'Working Party on Aid Effectiveness' and now the 'Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation', and seek to introduce a greater political focus, more attention for change management and more space for experimentation in development work to bring better results about. Generally speaking, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and Australia's Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) are ahead on this curve and stimulate much of the ongoing conceptual and programmatic experimentation.[1]

The event will also tap into a series of six ODI seminars that took place in 2014-2015 and discussed key conceptual and practical issues related to security and justice programming.[2] These events discussed the meaning of a political approach to security and justice, what it takes to strengthen program accountability and oversight, and how security and justice programming can be improved concretely.

However, fundamental questions remain unaddressed including how some of the insights gained can be translated into concrete improvement initiatives by (smaller) donors, as well as their implementing (such as multilaterals and NGO's) and research (such as think tanks) partners alike. A concerted effort is needed by these three types of organizations that are associated with most security/justice programming to overcome most of the challenges identified. Hence, this event will focus on how insights already developed elsewhere can be operationalized and tailored to each of these three groups of organizations. It also seeks to inform the Dutch MFA's thinking about its Theory of Change in respect of fragility.

Context

A fair number of programs that seek to strengthen security/justice in conflict-prone environments do not deliver well on their stated purpose, be it improving security/justice for citizens or helping develop greater state capabilities to protect residents and/or the state itself.[3] The complexity and high-risk nature of the environments in which such programs

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[1] Such initiatives include *Doing Development Differently*, *Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation*, *Thinking and Working Politically* (these three are essentially different frames used amongst different communities such as ODI and Harvard that call for a more problem-focused, entrepreneurial and experiential approach to programming), *Strategy Testing* (a DFAT sponsored reflective approach to programming in fragile environments by The Asia Foundation), *Theories of Change* thinking (a DFID stimulated alternative design and monitoring concept developed by the Justice and Security Research Program and ODI) and the *Development Leadership Program* (a DFAT sponsored research initiative about the role of leadership in development processes).

[2] Their results can be found here: http://www.odi.org/events/3934-security-justice-seminar-series-2014-2015

[3] Key sources of evidence include: Independent Commission for Aid Impact (2015), *Review of UK Development Assistance for Security and Justice*, Report 42, ICAI: London (on DFID efforts); Van Veen, E.

operate in part explains their generally low rate of return. However, critical consideration must also be given to how such programs are conceptualized, designed and implemented. Consequently, development funds are not put to best use, sources of insecurity/injustice remain in place and seeds for future conflict continue to be sown. There are at least three aspects to this performance problem:

a) **Duplicity in priorities:** A fair number of programs that aim to increase security/justice in conflict-prone societies do not necessarily do so for residents, but rather to address international security priorities in the fight against terrorism and organized crime. Relying heavily on the apparatus of state to deliver on their objectives, such programs tend to promote the status quo over change. As such they often fail to address, or willfully neglect, elite interests and the complicity of state security/justice organizations in the very challenges such programs try to address. Allowing deeper governance problems to persist, ultimately feeds international security challenges like crime, terrorism or piracy;

b) **Inadequate understanding of contexts:** A fair number of programs that aim to improve security/justice in conflict-prone environments are not built upon sufficient awareness of local political dynamics and elite interests that influence the organization of security/justice. This allows programs to continue to assume a linear trajectory of change that gradually works towards a Weberian-ordered, liberal democracy as its desired end-state;

c) **Ineffectual programming:** A fair number of programs that seek to strengthen security/justice in conflict-prone environments continue to be short in duration, top-down, institution- and capacity building focused, and feature fixed objectives and budgets. Such characteristics are likely to render programming ineffectual in politically dynamic, conflict-prone environments that require greater agility and longer engagement.

If all of this sounds familiar it is because it *is* familiar. These aspects have been known for some time now and are supported by abundant evidence. Hence, the underlying question – and problem – they raise is why such insights have not (yet) triggered efforts amongst donor countries to improve their security/justice programming at scale.

Key issues & questions

Existing literature suggests that at least three factors play in role in blocking the change that is necessary to improve the quality of programming in the area of security/justice in conflict-prone environments:

Hypothesis 1: Depending on the purpose of security/justice programs, **the domestic nature and tangible-results-focus of donor-promoted accountability prevent more flexible forms of program engagement, stakeholder management and monitoring/results-reporting from developing**.

If the purpose of a security/justice program is to serve the interests of donor countries,[4] a domestic focus on donor accountability might be in order - although research suggests its effectiveness is likely to remain in doubt.[5] If, however, such a program professes to serve the interests of the government or residents of fragile societies, a focus on donor taxpayers, donor accountability mechanisms (consider auditors and parliaments) and a short-term focus on tangible results will make it difficult to operate according to the dynamics, perceptions and demands prevalent in conflict-prone environments.[6] Questions for discussion here include:

- What mixed forms of accountability are both feasible and strike a better balance between different contextual requirements?
- How can donor accountability and local accountability be better connected?
- What is required to make more incremental, long-term progress stories politically acceptable in donor countries?

Hypothesis 2: **The status-quo power of established bureaucratic procedures and relations prevents the emergence of innovative spaces in which experiential approaches to security/justice programming can be attempted.**

As a result, organizations involved in security/justice programming are likely to continue to use overly linear, rigid and short-term programming guidance, initiate train & equip-oriented efforts, use sometimes ill-suited multilateral organizations or commercial companies for

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[4] A clear-cut example are programs to strengthen justice and prison capabilities in Kenya to trial and imprison Somali pirates. A more oblique example are programs to address organized crime in places like Afghanistan or Colombia that profess a clear developmental purpose, but feature repressive approaches that really aim to reduce international spillover in the short-term without taking long-term local interests and sustainability into account.

[5] World Bank (2011), *Conflict, Security and Development*, World Development Report, Washington D.C.

[6] On this point: Van Veen, E. and Price, M. (2014) *Securing Its Success, Justifying Its Relevance: Mapping a Way Forward for Security Sector Reform,* Clingendael, CRU Policy Brief, The Hague; Denny, L. and P. Domingo (2015), *Future directions of security and justice: Context-relevant, flexible and transnational programming*, ODI, London.

implementation and/or remain caught in a state-centered approach to security/justice.[7] Questions to discuss here include:

- What are key bureaucratic barriers (consider the nature of the working culture, the weight of hierarchy, organizational requirements for strategies, policies and plans and the institutional appetite/acceptance of risk as well as procurement obligations), that block change?
- What tweaks, steps or paradigm shifts can bring positive change about in how these hurdles can be lowered/overcome to the benefit of better programming?
- Where and when have bureaucracies 'overcome themselves', in other words, when have out-of-the-bureaucratic-box approaches enabled entrepreneurship within the organization? Under what conditions is this most likely to happen?

NB: Accountability could be considered a bureaucratic hurdle, but is better understood as an external requirement imposed on a bureaucracy that is subsequently translated into internal targets, a mindset and procedures.

Hypothesis 3: **The skills and knowledge of a significant number of development practitioners for initiating and experimenting with more innovative security/justice programming are not adequate.**

This is naturally a sensitive point to discuss amongst the same practitioners, but the assertion here is that running security/justice programming is a complex task that requires a well-developed skillset including political astuteness, extensive program management experience, some organizational/operational experience and highly developed diplomatic skills. This is a rare combination that is neither consciously nurtured by most organizations active in this area, nor readily available.

An additional complication is that a number of insights, approaches and tools that are presently available to help improve programming have so far only seen limited operational translation into donor practice, which suggests novelty, a lack of usability or a knowledge acquisition deficit on the part of development organizations.[8]

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[7] More general reflections on the stilting effect bureaucracy can have on the design, management and results of development efforts: Natsios, A. (2010), *The Clash of the Counter-Bureaucracy and Development*, Center for Global Development: Washington D.C.; Dasandi, N., *The politics-bureaucracy interface: Impact on development reform*, Development Leadership Program, State of the Art Paper No. 2, Birmingham. For more specific reflections in the area of security and justice: Van Veen (2016), *op.cit.*; insights from the 2014-2015 ODI seminar series, which can be found here: http://www.odi.org/events/3934-security-justice-seminar-series-2014-2015 (accessed 10 March 2016).

[8] Consider for example the 'theories of change' approach: Valters, C. (2014), *Theories of Change in International Development: Communication, Learning or Accountability?*, JSRP Paper No. 17, Justice and

Questions to discuss here include:

- Can more security/justice expert-oriented career paths be developed inside of development organizations? If not, how is such expertise best obtained?
- How can a better understanding and/or gauge be created for assessing external program managers employed by for example multilateral organizations, NGO's or commercial companies?
- What would enable more general 'upskilling' of good programming practice amongst policy-makers and program staff so that this happens faster and at greater scale?

Format

The event will combine three methods to get a useful conversation about these hypotheses going:

- **Deliberative reflection**: This is a conversation technique that invites imaginative listening and constructive layering (or reframing) to build a conversation. It tries to avoid stand-alone critiques, disagreement or unproductive 'but' and 'if's'. Critical thought is welcome and the invitation is to frame it positively to progress a conversation;
- **Breakout groups with a task to produce**: This is a focused work method to produce new ideas, content or process. Break out groups receive a concrete task with a given amount of time and other resources with which to complete it. It is an invitation to participants to take responsibility for the event and to make a hands-on contribution.
- **Prototyping:** This is an iterative modelling approach that will be used throughout the day by each participant individually (or collectively if you wish to team up) to develop a realistic yet imaginary program throughout the day on the basis of what you hear. At the end of the day, each participant will be invited to present this to stimulate peer learning.

Security Research Programme (JSRP): London; 'outcome mapping': Earl, S., F. Carden and T. Smutylo (2001), *Outcome Mapping: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*, IDRC: Ottawa; 'strategy testing': Ladner, D. (2015), *Strategy testing: An innovative approach to monitoring highly flexible aid programs*, The Asia Foundation, Working Politically in Practice Series, Case study No. 3, San Francisco; and the use of 'problem diaries': http://www.laserdev.org/media/1138/laser-guidance-note-annexes-4-12-15_final-draft.pdf (annex D - accessed 10 March 2016).

More information

Interactive Brainstorms are initiated and executed by the Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law with the aim to further the knowledge agenda of the Platform. The Secretariat of the Platform is run jointly by The Hague Institute for Global Justice and the Conflict Research Unit of the Clingendael Institute.

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