Quick reading guide to the event: ‘Making better security & justice programming happen’

The four readings below intend to provide you with a rapid introduction into the problems surrounding security and justice programming, cues as to why the change that is needed for better programming is not happening and concrete ideas for improvement.

The first paper by ODI (19 pages) discusses international policy and programming trends relevant to security and justice programming. It demonstrates why change is difficult to realize given the security interests involved in this area, and the complexity of some of the available remedies. The second brief by Clingendael (13 pages) problematizes the neutrality of results based management and in particular the issue of measurement as a healthy warning to much current thinking on programming ‘success’. The third report by the OECD (72 pages; executive summary 7 pages) proposes a number of elements that can be used to upgrade security and justice programming. This offers concrete entry points for actual improvement efforts. The fourth report by The Asia Foundation (29 pages) offers a practical instrument for how program progress can be regularly reviewed against major developments and flexibly adjusted. It offers an example of how programs can remain light and relevant that is already being used.

Enjoy!

Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law, The Hague, 10 May 2016
Synopsis reading 1: S&J trends

Future Directions of Security and Justice: context-relevant, flexible and transitional programming?

Lisa Denney & Pilar Domingo - Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

We know that improvements in Security and Justice (S&J) increase prospects for development and that these improvements benefit the international community, not just direct beneficiaries. At the same time, S&J programming faces challenges of design and implementation. Deficiencies in current modes of support include over-ambition, a lack of clear objectives, a fallback on established but often ineffective programmatic approaches, a focus on quantity rather than quality of results, limited learning and sustainability, as well as insufficient appreciation for the deeply political nature of S&J forms and functions.

According to this report, three trends are changing the international S&J space:

- An increasing recourse to political economy analysis (PEA).
- A heightened focus on problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA) approaches that focus attention on concrete S&J problems, stimulate working from politically feasible entry points, promote adaptive programming that can respond to local opportunities and help reveal evolving locally driven agendas that can guide programmatic efforts.
- A broadening of the S&J agenda to include transnational concerns, including organized crime, people trafficking and terrorism, which have attracted a wider range of donors and introduced new objectives and concerns.

The operationalization of these trends has implications for S&J programming. While PEA and PDIA might be expert-terminology, they also represent important ideas that have emerged from critical examination of the deficiencies of existing programming. If PEA and PDIA are to become meaningful tools to guide programming decisions, they need to be understood as two sides of the same coin. Specifically, this means that the knowledge and understanding gained through PEA efforts should be applied in a problem-focused approach that leverages politically feasible entry-points and builds strategic relationships. PEA and PDIA need to be embedded within programs instead of being add-ons.

A critical view must still be maintained as to how far the PDIA approach can go and whether it is suitable beyond small-scale programming. In addition, while PEA and PDIA focus on the “how” of programming, the “what” should not be forgotten. This requires a strong evidence-base and M&E that is taken seriously as learning process rather than just reporting mechanisms.
Synopsis reading 2: Measuring difficulties for S&J initiatives

Measuring Security Progress: Politics, Challenges and Solutions - Discussions and Findings from an Expert Meeting

Megan Price - Conflict Research Unit (CRU), Clingendael Institute

In light of the mounting wave of attention for data as the SDGs are further specified into targets and indicators, what are the political nuances and operational challenges in designing, applying and interpreting security progress measurements? The idea of objective indicators is a myth; how do security indicators reflect specific priorities and are prone to reinforce a particular security narrative? Which innovative strategies for compiling and conveying security information in challenging data environments can be explored?

- Negotiating what evidence ‘counts’ is part and parcel of determining who is empowered to influence the narrative of ‘progress’, and who is granted the authority - and the resources - to respond. Therefore, indicators have profound political implications.
- Indicators can create incentives for particular behaviors and empower certain actors within a sector; they not only reflect change, but also influence its course.
- Many programmes measure a security or justice context in terms of what it ‘ought to look like’, while missing the reality that people actually experience. Current tools for monitoring and evaluation have generally failed to address this normative tendency.
- Sustainable security and justice is a matter of political progress, yet our current tracking methods focus on technical gains made.
- Data is more likely to stimulate positive reform when it exposes issues in a way that can be managed, and that is presented in a constructive rather than a judgmental tone.
- In some cases, the amount of trust people have in certain information is more relevant than whether the data is from an ‘official source’ or even whether it is accurate.
- There is an inherent tension between endorsing global norms and standards, and simultaneously acknowledging the value of locally derived metrics and nationally driven processes.
Improving Security and Justice Programming in Fragile Situations: Better Political Engagement, More Change Management

Erwin van Veen - International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), OECD

Managing change in the security and justice sector is politically sensitive and incredibly complex: it interferes with the foundations of power, is politically contested at both ends of the development partnership, and potentially challenges the interests of established social and political groupings in partner countries. In consequence, international support for security and justice development programming needs to be designed, organised and delivered in ways that adhere much more closely to the political and operational realities of fragile environments.

The implementation of four critical enablers can help international development actors improve their support for security and justice programmes:

- Enable programmes to engage politically on a daily basis;
- Increase the duration of security and justice programmes to 6-10 years;
- Develop detailed longer-term results as part of the programme;
- Ensure programme implementation is adjustable.

Senior decision makers in donor agencies and multilateral organizations can champion the implementation of these enablers by taking three concrete actions that do not necessarily require new policies, competences or radically different procedures:

1. Authorising a more permissive programming environment so that staff can innovate, design and implement programmes that have more of the above features.
2. Creating higher standards of accountability for programme design and implementation as well as better monitoring functions so that incentives and pressure are created for better programmes.
3. Creating a corporate openness to learning so that these improvements are only the starting point of a longer-term process of maturing and ameliorating the quality of international support for security and justice development programming.
Synopsis reading 4: A practical method to stimulate adaptive (S&J) programming

Strategy Testing: an innovative approach to monitoring highly flexible aid programs

Debra Ladner - The Asia Foundation (TAF)

Traditional monitoring approaches are not suited to highly flexible, adaptive programs that address complex development programmes because it is not possible to identify outcomes and indicators at the outset of the program, and they do not quickly or easily accommodate necessary shifts in program strategy and action. Strategy Testing (ST) aims to fill this gap. The path to reform evolves over time through building relationships, gaining deeper understanding of the problems and interests at play, experimenting, adjusting program strategies as insights emerge, and recognizing and seizing on unexpected opportunities as they arise.

- ST is most suitable for programmes that require a high degree of flexibility.
- Its full benefit can only be realized if institutional and/or donor restrictions provide scope for adjusting programme strategies and outcomes.
- Although good program teams naturally reflect on what they are learning and have critical discussions about program strategy and impact, they often happen in an ad hoc manner. The formal structure of ST enables participation of the whole team, ensures the documentation of key insights and decisions, and trains staff to be good, strategic programme developers.
- ST requires the right staff capacities and institutional culture that are not overly hierarchical or discourage experimentation.
- ST is time and labour intensive and cannot be delegated to M&E officers but requires program teams’ commitment.
- While designed as a monitoring tool, ST is proving to be a useful programme management tool that allows for oversight and structure, without limiting the iterative process involved in finding durable solutions to the challenges being addressed.
- Whether ST leads programmes to take a more iterative approach, or simply provides an opportunity to consolidate, discuss and document strategic changes that teams are already making depends largely on the habits and skills of the programme team. It does provide for a useful structure for discussing and documenting changes in program directions that are aimed at maximizing impact potential.