

Helpdesk Research Report

Lessons learned from security-related programming in stabilisation and conflict-affected contexts

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Question

This request concerns efforts conducted in contexts where long-term reforms have not necessarily been possible but where there might have been some shorter-term initiatives in the security sector (primarily formal but also informal to a certain extent).

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1. Overview

Security and justice institutions in armed conflict contexts are usually dysfunctional or have collapsed; and where they exist may have become informal or militarised.¹ In addition, they often suffer from legacies of abuse from such institutions and distrust by the local population.² As a result of the higher degree of uncertainty and shifting dynamics, security sector reform, which is a longer-term approach dependent on a stable political situation, is difficult to carry out in active conflict contexts (Anderson, 2014, p. 1).³ This rapid literature review focuses on efforts conducted in stabilisation and conflict-affected contexts where the immediate conditions mean that these long-term security sector reforms are not necessarily possible but shorter-term initiatives in the security sector may be. Such short-term initiatives may include

¹ <http://www.odg.org/events/4255-improving-community-security-active-conflicts> Accessed 7.4.2016

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

community level programmes to improve citizen security and perceptions of security, as well as national level train and equip programmes, amongst others.

The challenging environment that ongoing conflict presents means that evidence based analysis of security sector initiatives is hard to find (Ball and Walker, 2015, p. 3) and the evidence base uncovered by this rapid literature review is small. Interviews with experts suggest that there may be more documented cases and lessons which are not publicly available. The majority of the literature available is grey literature published by organisations working in this area. The information available on initiatives carried out is not detailed and generally rather vague. While some lessons are presented, it is rarely clear what evidence they are based on. The literature considered in this review was largely gender-blind.

Security sector initiatives which have taken place in ongoing conflict and stabilisation contexts include:

Overarching approach:

- **Security sector stabilisation:** a holistic political-security approach, incorporating state and non-state elements, and supporting the primacy of the political process. Activities include train and equip programmes, salary payments of security forces, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, and police mentoring. This has been carried out in a variety of contexts and by a variety of actors.

Country case study initiatives:

- The **Access to Justice and Community Security** programme in moderate opposition parts of Syria: supporting nascent public institutions in delivering increasingly effective, responsive and accountable security and justice services and improving communities' access to them. Activities include training and support to police, developing police accountability to the community, and supporting local staff who provide vital civil documentation and notarial services.
- The **'Complain In Order Not To Lose Your Rights'** campaign in opposition areas of Syria to encourage citizens to express any concerns they may have about the behaviour of armed groups in their areas, and initiate action or dialogue to improve interactions between civilians and armed group members. Activities included putting in place complaints boxes and organising meetings between citizens and armed groups.
- **Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs):** small, joint civilian-military organisations led by the United States and their allies whose mission was to promote governance, security, and reconstruction in Afghanistan. Activities included training, technical assistance, and equipment for the Afghan police; and joint security patrols and backing to the Afghan security forces.
- **'Islands of Stability':** areas that are liberated and secured and where state authority would be restored, education and health provided, and economic prosperity promoted. This approach has been criticised for not dealing with local conflict drivers.

Lessons learned for future security sector initiatives in stabilisation and conflict-affected contexts from these various different initiatives include:

- Working in such contexts is risky and programmes need to be adaptive and responsive.
- There needs to be a thorough understanding of the context.
- Good leadership and willingness to make hard judgement calls, especially about which actors to work with, and what red lines are, is required.

- Political and military efforts need to be approached together, with consensus on the direction taken.
- The long-term goal needs to be kept in mind in order to ensure short-term actions do not undermine it.
- Security sector issues must be treated not as a purely 'technical' issue, but as an integral part of the political process.
- Train and equip programmes carried out in isolation are not sufficient substitutes for developing comprehensive host nation security sector and governance capacity.
- Justice intuitions should be supported alongside support to the police.
- Focus on civilian policing as well as military policing.
- Justice and security initiatives generally require the tolerance of local armed groups to be successful, unless their activities are sufficiently suppressed or risk from them otherwise effectively mitigated.
- Local ownership should be encouraged and where possible security and justice initiatives should build on existing local systems. Efforts should be made to bridge these efforts to the national level.
- Working with the informal or non-state sector can create great opportunities for change, although this should not result in neglect of human rights protections.
- Prevent local participation in security forces being subject to capture by local power brokers.
- Accountability of formal and informal security and justice actors is very important.
- Vulnerable groups should be involved early on in the process and care taken that their engagement does not place them at risk.

2. Security sector stabilisation and lessons learned

Security sector initiatives in stabilisation and conflict-affected contexts range from small scale initiatives, such as 'complaints boxes' to larger scale overarching approaches, such as Security sector stabilisation, which provide lessons for future efforts in stabilisation and conflict-affected contexts. This section looks at the publically documented lessons from the overarching security sector stabilisation approach, while the following section looks at publically documented initiatives which have taken place in specific countries.

Security sector stabilisation

Stabilisation contexts are 'politically messy, violent, challenging and potentially non-permissive environments with either no viable political settlement or one that is contested' (SU, 2014, p. 7). Conflict may be ongoing. Each context may require a differing approach as a result of 'differing issues, histories of intervention and stages of progress in different localities in the affected territory' (SU, 2014, p. 7). Experience has shown that it is critical to respond to immediate security needs in stabilisation contexts, mainly through local actors, while creating the conditions for longer term security sector reform (SU, 2014, p. 9). Failure to do so will usually encourage non-state security and justice providers to fill power vacuums, as has occurred in Iraq for example (Lovelock, 2015; Krieg, 2014, p. 1). Such informal provision is not necessarily negative, although there can be big human rights risks, particularly with women and vulnerable groups accessing security and justice from such informal bodies (expert comment).

The UK government, amongst others, has promoted the concept of Security Sector Stabilisation to take place in environments that are not conducive to security sector reform as a result of 'turbulent politics, persistent political violence and weak organisational and institutional capacity' (SU, 2014, p. 5). Security sector stabilisation is intended to lead to an immediate reduction in violence through its 'holistic political-security approach, incorporating state and non-state elements to improve security and justice and so to improve confidence, facilitate political dialogue and ultimately enable a political settlement' (SU, 2014, p. 5; see also Thruelsen, 2010, p. 4). A two-speed approach is advocated; the first should 'quickly open up some political space, and the second simultaneously aims for longer term political processes that can help deliver conflict resolution' (Lovelock, 2015). Security sector stabilisation can occur in ongoing conflict, although there needs to be 'some form of "ripeness" for progress towards political settlement' (SU, 2014, p. 7). Security sector stabilisation does not take place in isolation of other interventions to promote structural stability (SU, 2014, p. 6). Security sector stabilisation in a non-permissive environment is unlikely to be able to re-establish the state's authority and its monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, but through a long-term strategy may be able to pave the way for a complete Security sector reform programme by promoting political consensus, building capacity for civilian oversight and adopting a sector-wide approach (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 5, 9).

Approaches should include both bottom-up and top-down approaches that respect the primacy of the political process and measure success against that (Lovelock, 2015). Through security sector stabilisation's support of the primacy of the political process, security sector stabilisation should feed into a long-term process aimed at creating the conditions for political stability (SU, 2014, p. 6). Not taking a holistic approach can lead an excessive focus on security for assistance operations, impelled by pressing security needs, rather than looking towards the future (SU, 2014, p. 9). This results in a focus on developing low level (para) military capacity in both police and military structures to the detriment of governance, oversight and sustainability, as occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example (SU, 2014, p. 9). Protecting the political process may lead to the need for difficult short-term compromises in relation to engaging with undesirable individuals, non-state armed groups or the accountability of security structures (SU, 2014, p. 6). The nature of the intervention is limited by the type of mandate and who is implementing it (SU, 2014, p. 8).

The interdependent essentials of security sector stabilisation are described in a guidance note published by the UK's Stabilisation Unit. The guidance was written by experienced practitioners on the basis of lessons learnt in the field as well as from reviews of relevant literature and include (SU, 2014, p. 9):

- **Addressing political power and conflict together through a tightly coordinated approach to both political and security actors.** This requires external actors to have a nuanced understanding of local realities that enable them to help strengthen the political will to resolve fundamental issues. There may also be a need for a temporary shift from a state-centric to a hybrid model of security provision, depending on the context. (SU, 2014, p. 10). In some cases, hybrid state/non-state security and justice systems may be entirely suitable for the particular contexts and in places like Afghanistan or tribal areas of Pakistan, for example, the writ of the central state has always been very limited and the state has never had a monopoly on the use of violence (expert comment).
- **Reducing violence, making people safer and creating space to enable political dialogue.** The focus should be on public security, 'protecting people (including minorities), and key infrastructure and institutions (by adopting a human security perspective and supporting humanitarian action)' (Anderson, 2014, p. 2). External support may be needed to boost local security and justice institutions, although there should be thorough consideration of sustainability issues (SU, 2014, p. 4, 10). Lack of sustainability is a common failing, especially where intervening countries fund hugely expensive security and justice institutions that cannot be maintained in future by the

government (at least without under-funding other essential services) (expert comment). Sustainability should also include planning for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of certain government and pro-government armed groups once a political settlement is reached (expert comment). External support can be valuable where over-sized security structures are needed in the short term (SU, 2014, p. 10).

- **Developing integrated coordination arrangements and a guiding political framework to support political primacy.** External actors, especially the police and military can provide an important influence on local actors. Even though it may be difficult, integrated coordination arrangements, a guiding political framework for stabilisation activities, and interactions with host country actors should be developed. (SU, 2014, p. 10-11).
- **Understanding and engaging as appropriate with local armed actors.** Although it may be hard to choose which, some non-state armed actors may need to be brought into the political arena. The question of “who chooses”, whether it is the dominant intervening power/s and/or the government also comes into play (expert comment). There are some suggestions that at the end of the day negotiations will take place with most armed groups (expert comment). External military commanders may be able to provide entry points to parties to the conflict. Other non-state armed actors may need to be removed. While this would ideally occur through the justice system, they may have to be contained until this is possible. (SU, 2014, p. 11).
- **Achieving politico-security understanding and cooperation.** When political or security decisions are taken in isolation, they impact negatively on the other, as demonstrated by the deteriorating security situation during the Coalition Provisional Authority administration in Iraq in 2003-2004 when the controversial CPA Order No. 2 disbanded the Iraqi military, security, and intelligence infrastructure of President Saddam Hussein. In 2007-8, political and military efforts were approached together and created a more positive outcome. A shift to internal security provision by the police rather than the military should be encouraged (SU, 2014, p. 12).
- **Identifying opportunities for local capacity building and local ownership.** Early efforts to build local capacity, such as the establishment of a police training college in Kosovo within weeks of the 1999 intervention, are beneficial helping create the conditions for change.
- **Adopting an iterative approach and accepting “good enough” results.** It is better to address the absolute priorities of the political process than trying to address everything. However, the longer-term goals must be born in mind so that the short term focus does not undermine them (see also Thruelsen, 2010, p. 4).

Lessons learned

Various lessons have been gathered in the Stabilisation Unit’s guidance note, the Royal Danish Defence College research paper on security sector stabilisation and a conference report outlining the experience of the British and Danish governments. These lessons, from a variety of different stabilisation contexts include:

Planning and leadership:

- It is important to bear in mind that there are real difficulties of engagement and the prospects for success may not be high (SU, 2014, p. 13). Programmes need to be flexible, adaptive and responsive, with an experimental design (SU, 2014, p. 14; Ball and Walker, 2015, p. 5). Long-term

engagement may be necessary, although the nature of 'standard' programming means this is often challenging (SU, 2014, p. 13; Ball and Walker, 2015, p. 5).

- Planning is important⁴ and a very good understanding of the context is required and better and more conflict and political analysis is needed to enable actors to work more nimbly (SU, 2014, p. 13; Carver, 2015). Programming needs to be prepared to address political constraints proactively (Ball and Walker, 2015, p. 5).
- A clear mandate and strategy which take into account the long-term aims are important and the strategy should be open to adaptation when internal or external preconditions for formulating it change (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 12).
- A unity of purpose and effective leadership is needed at all levels, especially as many of the decisions to be made will be hard judgement calls and require flexibility (SU, 2014, p. 16). The former Head of Security and Justice Group at the Stabilisation Unit also mentioned that it involves 'ultimately trying to pick winners at the political level that can translate settlements into improved peace and stability at the societal level' (Carver, 2015). The key question to be kept in mind is: is this action moving things in the direction of sustainable peace? (SU, 2014, p. 16).
- Danish guidance suggests that a clear lead for the initiative is needed and should be undertaken by an actor who is capable of 'both critical decision-making (political capital) and implementing these tough decisions (resource foundation)' (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 11).
- Planning should include consideration of sustainability and later transition, which is both a highly political and practical challenge (Anderson, 2014, p. 2).

Cooperation:

- There should be good communication with other actors, including international actors, to ensure efforts are not duplicated or contradictory (SU, 2014, p. 14; Dennys et al., 2014, p. 8; Thruelsen, 2010, p. 11). In Northern Syria, joint ownership and work in the field by the United States, Denmark and the United Kingdom has ensured that both their strategic approach and tactical activities in relation to local security and justice programmes have been coordinated (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 9). Thruelsen (2010, p. 11) also suggests that clear command and control structures should be established.

Implementation:

- All security sector stabilisation actions should be supportive of the political process (Anderson, 2014, p. 2).
- Actions at one level or locality should not undermine those at the centre or in another area (SU, 2014, p. 16).
- Security sector stabilisation should focus reducing the drivers and opportunities, incentives and perceptions, which promote, enable or tolerate the use of violence by all armed forces violence (Anderson, 2014, p. 2).
- Security sector stabilisation should focus on managing the informal (security and justice) sector (Anderson, 2014, p. 2). In the early stages, the greatest opportunities for improvement may lie in work with, and support to, the informal or non-state sector, especially in rural areas (SU, 2014, p.

⁴ General stabilisation guidance on planning can be found in the 'Planning for Conflict and Stabilisation Interventions: What Works Series' published in 2014 by the Stabilisation Unit and available here: <http://goo.gl/VtURTs>

16). It is important to work with those who can provide security on a day to day basis and hybrid security models may be appropriate (SU, 2014, p. 17). This should not result in a neglect of human rights protections or collusion in violence (SU, 2014, p. 17).

- The programme could benefit from the allocation of large numbers of specialised trainers and mentors (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 25).
- Both short-term and long-term capacities for various different types of policing (including community policing and gendarmes) should be developed simultaneously and keep ahead of developments on the ground, ready to be put in place when needed (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 17). The division of labour between army and police duties should be clear (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 17)
- Actions to deal with short-term imperatives need to consider whether they undermine long-term goals (SU, 2014, p. 17). Forces built to deliver security and local policing should have appropriate governance structures built in. There needs to be serious consideration around building large forces that future governments cannot afford and will have to downsize. In addition, the absorption of armed groups into the security forces can create problems, as well as solving them (SU, 2014, p. 18). The creation of local private security companies risks creating well-armed rent seeking militias and spurring the conflict economy (SU, 2014, p. 18).
- It should be noted that, 'solutions that are designed to create a minimum level of security in a given area during the security sector stabilisation phase are not always the same solutions that should be implemented when the situation becomes more stable and sustainability is the objective' (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 18). For example, robust police units may not be the best unit for providing traditional policing once an area is more secure (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 18).
- Vetting structures may have to be put in place to prevent infiltration by local power brokers into the new security forces (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 18). Considerations of ethnic balance should also have a high priority in any recruitment strategy (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 18). External mentors may be able to help these new forces avoid becoming a part of local rivalries or acting to repress certain ethnic groups (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 18).
- Working with local militias may be the only viable option but carries the risk of conferring status and credibility on those who may not subsequently be integrated (SU, 2014, p. 18). It is important to find entry points that are conflict sensitive (Carver, 2015).

Programming:

- Security sector issues must be treated not as a purely 'technical' issue, but as an integral part of the political process' (Bryden and Brickhill, 2010, p. 239). Evidence from Somalia indicates that the bias towards military support and standard train and equip programmes as a result of the ongoing armed conflict has meant there has been a failure to consider how to develop Somali governance capacity (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 10-11). Direct assistance to re-establish state security capacities, without the 'critically important stage of building consensus and confidence through joint responsibility and management for security' has been problematic (Bryden and Brickhill, 2010, p. 241).
- Train and equip programmes carried out in isolation are not sufficient substitutes for developing comprehensive host nation security sector and governance capacity (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 11). This is illustrated by the fragility of the Iraqi security apparatus in the face of Da'esh aggression as a result of lack of support from the Iraqi Sunni population, due in part to the failure to ensure the participation and representation of Iraq's Sunni elites and general population in Maliki's government (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 15-16; Krieg, 2014).

- Dennys et al. (2014, p. 9) also criticise the international community for assuming the role of the Somali Ministry of Defence to the extent of paying salaries to the security forces through stipends, through the creation of defence and police working groups. A similar situation occurred in Afghanistan with the funding of police and uniformed corrections staff by the UNDP-managed LOTFA (Law and Order Trust Fund Afghanistan) programme (expert comment). This is unsustainable in the long term and contributes to delegitimising the host nation government if their capacity is not developed (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 9).
- Experiences from **Afghanistan and Somalia** indicates that ‘premature attempts to impose disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes were destabilising and allowed local powerbrokers to manipulate the process in order to gain personal advantage in highly localised disputes and conflicts’ (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 10; see also Bryden and Brickhill, 2010, p. 240). In contrast to externally-driven initiatives, Somali-led disarmament initiatives in Somaliland and Puntland, based on ‘painstaking consultation, negotiation and confidence-building between the parties—however imperfect or incomplete—have achieved tangible and enduring successes’ (Bryden and Brickhill, 2010, p. 241). DDR processes in Afghanistan are criticised for prioritising security over justice and for their lack of links to other security sector reform initiatives (Gossman, 2009, p. 1, 4). For instance, the opportunity for former combatants to join the Afghan security forces did not include any vetting on human rights grounds, which resulted in former fighters responsible for past abuses or war crimes being reappointed to security posts (Gossman, 2009, p. 2).
- The Danish model of police mentoring in **Afghanistan** involved co-locating, which was very beneficial and allowed more focus on the full range of policing activities rather than being wholly security-centric and paramilitary in nature (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 10). However, it should also be noted that the Afghan security and justice sector had limited absorptive capacity for mentoring (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 10). This resulted in Afghan senior police officers frequently having multiple international (military) mentors leading to confusion and mixed messages (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 10). Similar issues occurred at the strategic level too, with for example, many (mainly US) mentors working with the Afghan Ministry of Interior (expert comment).
- The European gendarmerie forces (e.g the Italian Carabinieri and the French Gendarmerie), which operated in Afghanistan, had the advantage of having capabilities in both civilian policing and paramilitary operations which provides a unique capability for deploying police to hostile environments (Coffey International Development, 2010, p. 48-49).

Local ownership:

- While establishing a satisfactory degree of local ownership is challenging, it is important in the long run (SU, 2014, p. 17). Danish and British experiences with security and justice activities in Afghanistan also found that, ‘where possible security and justice programmes should building on existing informal local community based systems to ensure that they are sustainable and culturally compatible’ (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 10-11). Even if it is limited initially, local ownership should increase in line with increased political space and confidence; increased capacity of local security forces; and increased service provision and community projects (SU, 2014, p. 17). A ‘plan for national ownership and lead should be developed early on, together with local institutional and technocratic capacity building (Thruelsen, 2010, p. 25).
- It is important to bridge the gaps between the national, provincial, and local levels, as without the buy-in from the national level, creating sustainable results on the provincial and local levels is very difficult (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 10).

Accountability

- There should be early efforts to develop accountability, including locally appropriate accountability, to support a transition to long-term security and justice programming. This should be across the formal and informal sectors. The combined accountability efforts across the different security actors can 'contribute to a satisfactory level of accountability in terms of local perceptions. A web of accountability (e.g. through an effective chain of command, professional standards, free media, civil society etc.) can help support the legitimacy of state institutions in the longer term (Anderson, 2014, p. 2; SU, 2014, p. 17).

Vulnerable groups:

- Women and other vulnerable groups need to be engaged early in the process but care needs to be taken to make sure that vulnerable groups engaged in the process are protected from harm (Anderson, 2014, p. 3; expert comment). In Somalia, the Mogadishu Women for Peace Movement, for example, played a key role in helping to build a broadly popular consensus-based disarmament process during the period of security brought by the rise of the Council of Somali Islamic Courts (CSIC) (Bryden and Brickhill, 2010, p. 256).

3. Security sector initiatives in conflict-affected contexts and lessons learned

The literature also provides some examples of security sector initiatives in specific conflict-affected countries. There is some overlap in the types of initiatives carried out in these countries, which are often also stabilisation contexts, and those under the overarching approach of security sector stabilisation. Selected examples include:

3.1 Justice and security initiatives in Syria

Access to Justice and Community Security (AJACS) programme

The Access to Justice and Community Security (AJACS) programme in parts of Syria, held by the moderate opposition, works to support nascent public institutions, such as the Free Syrian Police, in delivering increasingly effective, responsive and accountable security and justice services and improving communities' access to them.⁵ AJACS is funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, US State Department and the Danish and Dutch governments. External actors experience in Syria has been complicated as a result of access being very problematic and there are 'little or no means of directly verifying the situation, context, activity and impact of the security and justice programme' (Dennys et al., 2014, p. 10).

The programme supports the Free Syrian Police in delivering a more standardised and effective set of civic security services and focuses on non-contentious policing. This is done by backing the Free Syrian Police's strategic and organisational development in coordination with the Free Syrian Police's command; delivering training in and outside Syria in a range of basic and specialist policing skills, leadership and communications; and providing equipment and stipends to stations and officers.⁶ The force is made up of defected police officers and new recruits so is not being built completely from scratch, although new

⁵ <http://www.adamsmithinternational.com/explore-our-work/middle-east-north-africa/syria/increasing-syrian-communities-access-to-accountable-and-effective-security/> Accessed 7.4.16

⁶ <http://www.adamsmithinternational.com/explore-our-work/middle-east-north-africa/syria/increasing-syrian-communities-access-to-accountable-and-effective-security/> Accessed 7.4.16

institutions are needed (expert comment). Experience from the programme suggests that these police provide a level of structure and a sense for citizens that their world has not completely disintegrated (expert comment). Some anecdotal evidence suggests that an unexpected outcome of this support to the police is that they usually remain in place during security incidents in which other residents flee, preventing looting, and creating a sense of security for local people when they return (expert comment).

The programme also seeks to embed the Free Syrian Police within a system of local government and accountability, helping councils and communities take greater ownership of security and justice service provision. Communities are carefully selected and supported to set up a community security working group consisting of the local council, Free Syrian Police and influential stakeholders. Communities are then supported to identify security needs that will feed into Free Syrian Police plans and activities. They have included the installation of sniper curtains, setting up street lights, and road and shelter rehabilitation.⁷ There has been mixed success with this concept to date as it is a new concept for the context (expert comment).

To help ensure access to justice, AJACS also supports local staff who provide vital civil documentation and notarial services, with stipends, training and operational costs, and has established a multi-stakeholder registry system that includes local registry centres and provincial-level management bodies. A national-level oversight office, the National Documentation Office (NDO), oversees and manages civil documentation in northern Syria.⁸ The justice side of the policing equation has been found to be more challenging in the absence of formal justice (expert comment). A programme challenge in this area has been that the different donors involved have different red lines as to who to work with that they have been unable to resolve (expert comment). An expert working for one of the donor organisations involved suggested that if getting involved in policing efforts, you need to be at least clear in the justice aspect of what you are prepared to do as there are significant risks involved (expert comment).

‘Complain In Order Not To Lose Your Rights’ campaign

Another initiative in Syria which has worked on citizen security is the ‘Complain In Order Not To Lose Your Rights’ campaign, carried out by The Day After organisation (TDA), in collaboration with local councils, civil society organisations, and military councils.⁹ The campaign was designed to hold the Free Syrian Army and others to account for any abuses carried out and to break the fear barrier around ‘moderate’ armed groups. The campaign draws together local stakeholders and involved citizens and some armed fighters from various different groups having meetings and encouraging the sending of complaints, which many were still reluctant to do.¹⁰ ‘Complaints boxes’ were set up in several communities to encourage citizens to express any concerns they may have about the behaviour of armed groups in their areas, and initiate action or dialogue to improve interactions between civilians and armed group members.¹¹ This seems to have worked to improve citizen perceptions of security in their area (expert comment). However, if there is no response to complaints this could be problematic for people’s perceptions of security (expert comment).

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ <http://goo.gl/WZUIX2> Accessed 8.4.16

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ <http://tda-sy.org/complain/?lang=en> Accessed 8.4.16

Risks of engagement

A seminar looking at security and justice assistance in active conflict, and based on experience as third party monitors of a community security programme in opposition-controlled northern Syria, outlined various risks of engagement in security programming, including:¹²

- Capacities that are built through programmes cannot be sustained or dissipate as there are too few officers working in a dysfunctional system to affect change, for example.
- Capacities that are built through programmes are abused in combat situations or when police become or join an armed group, for example
- Capacities built through programmes cannot be used, for example when armed groups take the role of policing off the police, as occurred in Libya.
- Capacities built through programmes are wrong for the context.

As a result programming should allow for frequent revisions in order to adapt to new circumstances.¹³

Lessons learned:

The presenters at the seminar looking at security and justice assistance in active conflict also suggested that conflict-sensitive security and justice programming should:¹⁴

- 'Be continuously reassessed and adapted to the changing circumstances.
- Set modest and short term goals in order to allow space for adaptation.
- Start with realities not ideal futures and use best fit approaches rather than best practice approaches, based on community needs, resources and realities and move from there.'
- Be about empowering armed groups to do security and justice a little better than more abusive actors. Ways to do this include: building police units within armed groups and separating military from policing functions; make police identifiable; strengthen their institutional culture and identity; attach policing with emergency response functions; gendarmerie style policing; identifying the 'least bad' existing approaches; supporting mobile courts; and codifying the procedures being used.

There may also be very good reasons for not engaging in security and justice programming which should be well assessed before beginning any programme in the knowledge that the programme is likely to engage with highly problematic actors.¹⁵ The international community uses human rights due diligence and risk assessment approaches as an important part of their decision making in these circumstances (expert comment). For example, the FCO Overseas Security and Justice Assistance Guidance¹⁶ is a tool to help British government officials make these difficult decisions and ensure their security and justice assistance meets their human rights obligations and values.

¹² <http://www.odi.org/events/4255-improving-community-security-active-conflicts> Accessed 7.4.16

¹³ <http://www.odi.org/events/4255-improving-community-security-active-conflicts> Accessed 7.4.16

¹⁴ <http://www.odi.org/events/4255-improving-community-security-active-conflicts> Accessed 7.4.16

¹⁵ <http://www.odi.org/events/4255-improving-community-security-active-conflicts> Accessed 7.4.16

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-security-and-justice-assistance-osja-guidance>

Research carried out by Integrity Research and Consultancy looking at justice and policing initiatives in opposition-controlled Syria found other key lessons, including:

- Justice and security initiatives require the tolerance of local armed groups to be successful (Integrity Research and Consultancy, 2014, p. 8). Experience from other contexts suggests that security and justice initiatives can operate without such tolerance if the activities of the (anti-regime) armed groups are sufficiently suppressed or the risk from them is otherwise effectively mitigated, which was the case in parts of Afghanistan (expert comment).
- The selection of police officers needs to be done with significant care to ensure they have local credentials and legitimacy and thus can navigate the complex political geography of an area, with the support of local stakeholders (Integrity Research and Consultancy, 2014, p. 8). The seminar findings also indicated that police officers working in their home communities have been able to build better relationships with the people they serve because of their pre-existing close ties with them which help overcome previous trust deficits associated with the Syrian regime's police.¹⁷
- Attention also needs to be paid to the legitimacy of the structures being supported both in terms of formal legal foundations and also in terms of community support (expert comment).
- Security and justice programmes should be linked with nascent governance organisations to enable future institutionalisation (Integrity Research and Consultancy, 2014, p. 9). Attention should also be paid to the pre-existing legal structure and substantive law, especially if there was a reasonably strong or well developed structure (expert comment).
- Local administrations can play a stronger role in security and justice initiatives (Integrity Research and Consultancy, 2014, p. 9). Evidence suggests that in the few places where effective Governorate Councils and local administrative councils exist in Syria, they have been ideal partners for the daily implementation challenges of local justice and policing initiatives (Integrity Research and Consultancy, 2014, p. 9). This could encourage the practice of elected civilian oversight of police and courts, as well as reinforce the legitimacy of local governance institutions (Integrity Research and Consultancy, 2014, p. 9). However, attempts have sometimes been halted by lack of funding or tensions over appointments, such as in Aleppo (Integrity Research and Consultancy, 2014, p. 6). In addition, care must be taken to preserve the independence of the judiciary (expert comment).
- Building capacity through intensive training is critical for both defected police officers and new recruits (Integrity Research and Consultancy, 2014, p. 9).
- There should be support for a professional judicial partner to the police force (Integrity Research and Consultancy, 2014, p. 9). Integrity Research and Consultancy (2014, p. 9) suggest supporting judges and lawyers who remain in Syria through salary payments for example.

3.2 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and policing assistance in Afghanistan

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were small, joint civilian-military organisations whose mission was to promote governance, security, and reconstruction in Afghanistan (Perito, 2005, p. 1). Early lessons gathered from extensive interviews suggested that '[d]espite their restrictive mandate and practical limitations, PRTs played a positive role in providing a security presence and in helping to improve the

¹⁷ <http://www.odi.org/events/4255-improving-community-security-active-conflicts> Accessed 7.4.16

security environment' (Perito, 2005, p. 8). A helpful security related contribution of PRTs was suggested to be the training, technical assistance, and equipment provided to the Afghan police (Perito, 2005, p. 9). The PRT Military Police teams provided training and moral support to local police, which was 'critical to creating a properly functioning judicial sector' (Perito, 2005, p. 9). The construction of police stations, courthouses, jails and border checkpoints was also an important contribution (Perito, 2005, p. 9). PRTs also patrolled with and provided backing to Afghan security services which helped empower the Afghan security services and build their capacity (Perito, 2005, p. 9). In addition, the more intensive process of local consultation which took place during the surge and better understanding of the local context 'appears to have been instrumental in reducing violence, at least in the short term, and laying the foundation for long-term sustainability', although it requires a large commitment of resources to make a difference (Viehe et al, 2015, p. 39).

However, later assessments suggested that while PRTs provided some short-term security gains, they rarely provided long-term gains and there has been an increase in Afghans reporting 'always, often, or sometimes fearing for their safety or security or that of their family' (65.4 per cent in 2014) (Viehe et al, 2015, p. 31-32).

Policing assistance in Afghanistan

Various different actors in Afghanistan are engaged in training and capacity-building for the Afghan National Police (ANP). The mix of different actors meant that support provided was not always coherent and involved a mix of various models, shaped by competing interests (HPG and ECHO, 2012, p. 8). There is a 'growing acknowledgement within NATO and among its member states of the drawbacks of the militarised model of policing pursued to date, which has prioritised *military* (i.e. counter-insurgency) objectives over *civilian* policing' (HPG and ECHO, 2012, p. 7). However, in some major cities, such as Kabul, civilian policing elements were also rolled out, while in other areas elements of a gendarmerie model were applied (Coffey International Development, 2010, p. 5). The expenditure levels on Afghanistan police and justice institutions have been judged to be unsustainable (Coffey International Development, 2010, p. 5).

There have been reports that 'rampant corruption, deep-seated factionalisation and operational incompetence' characterise the police force, as well as some predatory behaviour (Baraket et al, 2008, p. 41). Perceptions of security, justice and policing varies across the county, with some areas reluctant to use the police and others having respect for them (Coffey International Development, 2010, p. 5). Problems with police reform have been attributed to lack of initial investment in the rank-and-file, as well as issues with oversight by the Ministry of Interior (Baraket et al, 2008, p. 41-42). It was recommended that there should be a refocus of policing efforts on 'core policing', i.e. general duties and investigations; which would provide a mechanism linking Afghan citizens to their government (Coffey International Development, 2010, p. 6). In addition, it was considered important that police reform efforts are integrated with prosecution, court and corrections and other justice reform efforts (Coffey International Development, 2010, p. 6). In addition, support should be provided to engagement between the state and community-based justice and security mechanisms, which meets citizen's needs and encourages compliance with Afghan constitutional protections and international human rights law (Coffey International Development, 2010, p. 6).

In order to respond to the changing conditions at sub-district level, it was recommended that the ANP developed the capacity to move quickly to provide core policing services in order to ensure community trust in the police and government (Coffey International Development, 2010, p. 6). Failure to deploy police or deploying police who lack basic core policing skills or who are not responsive or fair could undermine this community trust (Coffey International Development, 2010, p. 6).

The delegation of increased authority over the ANP to provincial governments resulted in some cases of capture by local power brokers, and associated misuse of policing resources (expert comment). In addition, the way in which efforts to ensure that the Afghan local police were representative of their communities and involved people who understood the context is suggested to have unfortunately resulted creating a divisive environment in some areas and deterioration in security for some identity groups (expert comment). As a result, efforts in similarly mixed communities should consider the inclusiveness of the local representation they promote (expert comment).

3.3 'Islands of stability'¹⁸ in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

Between 2012 and 2015 MONUSCO's (the Mission des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation du Congo) stabilisation strategy began to place more focus on local drivers of the conflict and relations between communities and the state, with community dialogue becoming the cornerstone of the strategy (de Vries, 2016, p. 2). This was supposed to result in security activities focusing on building rapport between locally deployed soldiers and communities and patrolling on the basis of jointly identified priorities (de Vries, 2016, p. 2). In addition support was given to community security and community-driven reintegration projects for ex-combatants (de Vries, 2016, p. 2). However, de Vries (2016, p. 3) suggests that MONUSCO seems to have committed only half-heartedly to this new stabilisation strategy.

The main focus was on the so-called Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), which was given the authority to take action against non-state armed groups in 2013 (de Vries, 2016, p. 3; Vogel, 2014, p. 1). Together with the national army it helped defeat the rebel group M23, although further momentum against other armed groups has been lost (Vogel, 2014, p. 1; de Vries, 2016, p. 3). In addition, the overall security situation did not visibly improve and 'overlapping and hybrid, non-state governance arrangements and disaggregated, negotiated oligopolies of violence' were thought to be likely to emerge (Vogel, 2014, p. 2).

MONUSCO aimed to establish 'Islands of Stability' in areas freed from armed groups, either by force or negotiation (Vogel, 2014, p. 5). The idea was to 'liberate and secure some geographic areas, where state authority would further be restored, education and health provided and economic prosperity promoted' (Barrera, 2015, p. 4). However, the approach 'neither contributes to the national reforms nor includes local conflict resolution approaches' (Barrera, 2015, p. 8). In addition, the 'islands of stability' approach, is criticised for being unable to deal with the instability factor relating to land-tenure and thus jeopardises any successes (Barrera, 2015, p. 6). Vogel also highlighted a risk of this policy, pointing out that it suggests a segregation of priorities between areas, which could seriously jeopardise MONUSCO's perception in those areas which are not prioritised (Vogel, 2014, p. 5). De Vries (2016, p. 3) suggests that in practice, MONUSCO deployed staff to cleared areas to accompany returning authorities and provided funds for quick impact projects to rehabilitate roads and buildings, and to undertake manual labour works, rather than addressing local drivers of conflict in a comprehensive manner.

4. References

¹⁸ 'Islands of stability' are similar to the 'ink spot' – 'shape-clear-hold-build' theory in counter-insurgency (COIN), an approach which was also used in Afghanistan (expert comment). It has had a problematic track record there, with NATO forces struggling to consolidate on security gains and extend the control of the Afghan government (Ucko, 2013). Ucko suggests this is partly due to an inadequate understanding of the complexity of the situation and the local structures, capabilities, aspirations and fears which play into the ability to hold and build an area. He suggests that 'implementation must be suffused with an understanding of the political economy of armed conflict: the patronage networks, the functions of violence, and the distribution of privilege and power, both at the local and state levels' (Ucko, 2013).

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