Programming Tools: Another Way of Keeping External Control of the SSR Process?

By Anthony Welch
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This blog post by Dr. Anthony Welch was originally published on the SSR Resource Centre in June 2015. This article analyzes new tools available for more effective security sector reform programming. The author argues that such SSR programming tools might just be another way of keeping the decision making in external hands and away from the local leaders and communities whose safety and support is the raison d'être for the whole process. The blog post provides a useful critique of new approaches to security and justice reform and has therefore been republished here as a CSG Insight.

In May 2015, the Geneva-based International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT) published a document entitled "Top 10 Programming Tools for Security Sector Reform" The document explains the methodology and benefits of their 10 favourite tools: PESTLES Analysis, RBM, Stakeholder Analysis, Power/Interest Matrix, Conflict Mapping, CIS Framework, Effects Estimate, SWOT Analysis, Organization Mapping and Gap Analysis.

These tools will be familiar to those following the evolution of security sector reform (SSR). They join monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methodologies, such as logical frameworks, which have become standard apparatus in the pursuit of successful SSR. As SSR has grown from its infancy in the 1990s to its present standing as a legitimate device for post-conflict and transitional stabilization, programming and M&E methodologies have become more prolific and complicated. Indeed, an academic industry has grown up around the desire to make sense of, and give structure to, the complex arena of security and justice reform. As SSR has become the process of choice for bringing both democracy and profes-

sionalism to a fundamental basis of state power and control, there have been attempts to envelop reform activities in a cloak of programming and measurement procedures.

It can be argued that this is inevitable; SSR is complicated, expensive to undertake and hard to achieve. Donors and governments need to be reassured that SSR is being correctly carried out, according to logical analysis, programming methodology and agreed aims and objectives. In short, those funding the practice of SSR wish to be confident that not only is their money being well spent, but also that their required aims and objectives are being met. Thus, agencies responsible for the funding of SSR demand regular feedback on the achievement of objectives laid out in a logical framework or some other development programming-based measurement tool. National or orga-

nizational interest will advise these aims; objectives and outcomes dictate, to a large extent, the direction in which reform will be steered.

Of course, such agencies also demand that local ownership of the SSR process be high on the list of requirements. The programming tools need to be embedded in local conditions and agreements. Power and interest matrixes, conflict and organization mapping and gap analysis all feed into understanding and empowering the overarching local ownership of the security sector. M&E frameworks for example insist that objectives are measured and achieved within the mantra of local custodianship of the SSR process. But one might question if this is a realistic and achievable goal: will the move toward categorizing and controlling SSR by what, in essence, are externally provided development procedures, allow for legitimate local involvement and ownership?

The term "local ownership" is commonly used in the development community, but its precise meaning, in the context of conflict transformation processes, is unclear. John Saxby (2003: 7) suggests that the concepts of local ownership and

its implementation rarely signify direction by local actors. Rather it refers to the respective capacities of mainly international stakeholders, including their ability to set, and take responsibility for, a reform agenda and to attract and sustain support for it.

The same lack of definition occurs when theorists attempt to focus on local stakeholders. Discussion has typically focused on the role of external actors within the host state, all the while suggesting that local actors need be involved in the process (perhaps in a "supporting role"). Recent SSR interventions seem to suggest that it would be more accurate to use the term "local inclusion" instead of local ownership, which more accurately denotes local involvement that falls short of ownership.

However, despite the lack of consensus over the term, the emphasis on the role of local actors has, since the mid-1990s, been a common component of the literature on conflict transformation. As conflicts take place within societies, it is within these societies that SSR measures must be rooted. Acknowledging the importance of nurturing civil society,

theoretical literature encourages local actors to manage security transformation processes. Indeed, fostering and supporting local actors with an active interest in building peace are seen as key principles of post-conflict SSR.

Susan Woodward (2003: 300) declares that "the dominance of Western interests over local interests in shaping the demands for security sector reform [...] goes so far as to deny the declared interests of the region's citizens." Post-conflict management initiatives require local ownership of the SSR process, in order to guarantee its effectiveness and sustainability. Involvement by local actors in the SSR process may be desirable, but the reality of such participation carries with it difficulties both for the intervening parties and the local participants in terms of control and design.

Alan Bryden and Heiner Hänggi (2005: 23) observe that a flaw in SSR practice lies in the fact that it is, "externally induced, funded and driven, creating an inherent tension between local ownership and external assistance." He believes that donors and multilateral organizations involved in peace-building activities

have displayed little appreciation of local culture and circumstance, resulting in unfulfilled prospects and disenchanted local actors. Perhaps our love affair with SSR programming tools is just another way of keeping the decision making in external hands and away from the local leaders and communities whose safety and support is the raison d'être for the whole process.

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