

## **Coordinating “Badges, Boots, Suits and Sandals” Whole-of-Government Approaches – Lessons Learned from the field of SSR**

*Input into: Workshop Perspectives on a National Framework for Action: Whole-of-Government Approach, Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik, Berlin, 19 May 2015*

Establishing whole-of-government approaches to supporting security sector reform (SSR) processes is increasingly recognized as a key element to the effectiveness and efficiency in of the support to SSR, rather than simply a good practice or even a time and resource consuming luxury. ISSAT has recently finished a report for the UK on ‘International Good Practices in SSR’ and one of the key findings of that report is that policy by itself does not lead to better coordination. In fact it was found that policy has little influence over field level programming, and that it is national coordination structures that have a more significant role to play in this regard.

Overall there is little consistency between nations on whole-of-government approaches. Coordination within SSR has often been described as the challenge of coordinating – “badges, boots, suits and sandals”, often different institutional cultures, language, objectives, approach along with different administrative and financing mechanisms.

There are also often different management and coordination structures in place that range from permanent strategic levels SSR coordination (the National Security Council in the UK, State Secretaries monthly assessment of Sweden’s conflict management contributions in Sweden), to permanent country level assistance coordination (Australian whole-of-government coordination for Papua New Guinea and Indonesia) or temporary issues/country based coordinating (Canadian Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan) – including working level coordination and information (current German system) sharing as a distinct form of management.

What is clear is that cross government coordination takes effort, and Nations with more empowered coordination structures (including control over resource allocation, decision making, and information) are better able to deliver comprehensive approaches.

Challenges to taking a whole-of-government approach including:

- The fact that departments/agencies have independent mandates, some of which are primarily domestic.
- Coordination of financial and human resource is often a strain, at least initially.
- Staff turnover is a problem , where SSR is not integrated into the broader institutional culture.
- Many initiatives are created without joint planning at the highest level, no joint assessment of the specific context, no flexible common budget, and no joint or parallel departmental taskforces with whom to engage.

## **POLICY COHERENCE**

The common stumbling block to effective whole-of-government approaches is the lack of shared understanding of what SSR entails, common terminology, what approach is effective and even what are the roles and contributions of various actors. There is often a confusion that whole-of-government approaches lead to a merging of mandates rather than clarity on what is the particular added-value—in terms of resources, expertise or approach—that one or other government department or agencies bring to a specific problem.

In SSR terms, this is often exemplified by the different interpretations of what SSR is “is it about governance?, is “train and equip” SSR?, is it a stabilisation activity? Thus, a starting point to developing an effective whole-of-government approach is an inclusive and wide sensitisation on SSR at all levels of government (political and technical). **It is important that all the actors speak the same language and have a shared approach towards supporting SSR.** It is difficult to coordinate if there is no joint understanding of the concept of SSR, or if this can also refer to other areas as well.

Developing policy/guidance/strategy is an important step towards coordination, but these documents are only **impactful if they are intended to be operational in nature.** Lessons identified from policy:

- **Ownership of the SSR policy** - although one Ministry should be clearly identified and empowered as leading the coordination of effort, a single Ministry cannot support the implementation of SSR alone. Communication and dissemination of policy is critical – need staff to be aware of it.
- Need to outline the relationship between the **domestic agenda and the development/diplomacy objectives.** Government departments/agencies tend not to work together if they see that their goals (or motivations) are starkly different or are seen even as impeding on goals. Differences in domestic and development agendas cannot be reconciled at technical levels but rather need senior political clarifications.
- Common agreement on the added value and the comparative advantage of individual agencies/departments/Ministries in supporting different areas of justice and security sector reform.

## **ASSESSMENTS, JOINT ANALYSIS FACILITATES BOTH COHERENCE AND COORDINATION**

There are an increasing number of examples of joint assessments as a basis for whole of Government decision making on SSR programming. Assessments are commonly becoming the **entry point for improved coordination, both at a national and international level.** Joint assessments ensure that from the onset the Government has an agreed and common

understanding of the priority needs and challenges in the sector, and the assessment itself is more robust because it employs a wider diversity of skill sets (from developmental, diplomatic, to technical) and organisational cultures.

In certain instances, the joint teams themselves have enabled more sector wide approaches (eg. criminal justice chain) and led to greater cross government cooperation/collaboration in programme implementation. The strength of the joint teams is also in the sense that it ensures there is a balance in expertise covering the essentials of SSR: the politics of SSR (MFA), developmental approach to sustainability and governance (Development Agency), and technical experts (MoD, MoI or MoJ).

### **JOINT IMPLEMENTATION**

Joint programming is often difficult because different ministries and departments have different budget lines, different reporting mechanisms, and even different timelines. The UK, Canada, and Denmark have, as a result, created common funding pools to ensure that there are no parallel administrative procedures, or that funding is no longer an obstacle to improved collaboration (with certain ministries not being able to engage because of financing).

Similarly, the success of any SSR support programmes ultimately hinges on the quality of personnel chosen to implement the programme. UK, Netherlands, Canada, Australia, Norway and others have moved towards pooling expertise through dedicated JSSR rosters.

SSR also needs to be better integrated with other public sector reform efforts – public finance management, decentralization, civil service reform, etc. This requires that government-wide approaches **interact or include Ministries of Finance** and Local Government. Without including these actors we often forget to engage in critical areas of SSR.

### **FIELD LEVEL COORDINATION**

Coordination structures at the headquarters levels are not always replicated at field level, or vice versa. What is required is a dedicated capacity, which is of sufficient seniority, to coordinate the various programmes. The US Security Governance Initiative (SGI) programme deploys SSR officers to oversee the various projects, Canada uses programme managers in Embassies (Afghanistan and Columbia) to coordinate programmes implemented by other agencies, while Norway deploys NORAD development specialists to periodically support the technical advisory teams deployed by the Ministry of Justice.

The Embassy needs to play a prominent role in implementation – especially in regards to tracking what is being supported bilaterally but also in political dialogue. This approach also ensures that all bilateral support is integrated into joint political dialogue.

## **LEARNING AND EVALUATION**

The key issue in this domain is the lack of consistency in reporting and evaluation between development-funded JSSR activities and military-led JSSR activities. Without a common approach to assessment and the sharing of evaluations, it is impossible to ensure that the different agencies are actually acting to deliver a coordinated and coherent set of programmes, and that the programmes are achieving the required effects. ISSAT recommends that the military- (and police-) led SSR programmes be required to report according to the same DAC principles as the development programmes, and with the same level of independent and transparent evaluation of outcomes and impacts.

It is common that in any given host country, large donors and bilaterals have a multitude of programmes that have complementary goals. Yet collectively the programmes are not reinforcing or having a multiplier effect largely because the programmes are implemented by different agencies and thus use different reporting, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and lesson learning. It is important that common lesson learning processes are established which can help to understand weaknesses in the sector that could potentially have ripple effects on the overall reform efforts. Agencies working even on opposite ends of the criminal justice chain spectrum should be keen to stay informed on what is happening by programmes throughout the sector, as this impacts on the quality of their own work. Commonly this includes progress in capacity building of one institution (e.g. police) while limited progress in another (e.g. judiciary) leading to an overall worsening of the situation (e.g. rise in pre-trial detention with more cases investigated but no matching capacity to handle cases by the courts).

The lesson learning process should then feed back into the programming decision making processes, with a view that the whole Government has a clear picture of what is working, approaches that are effective in the given context, and where the priority gaps are across the sector. Such information can serve as an entry point or inspiration for one agency to provide support or for others to reflect on their own approach.

## **BETTER COORDINATION OF GERMAN EFFORTS – SOME RECOMMENDATIONS**

Even with the scale of German efforts, both in financial terms and in the number of country programmes and efforts, it is not clear that an empowered coordination structure exists currently to manage the interactions and work towards common effects.

For SSR— which required both political and technical inputs that cut across mandates and expertise within different government departments— a move to create a dedicated MFA unit is a sensible step, but clarifying its ability to call on financial and expertise resources from the other agencies will be critical to its ability to successfully coordinate German efforts.

1. **Consider the creation of a cross-government capacity for joint analysis and planning** to implement joint assessments and programme design in key contexts. A

strong whole-of-government approach may not be appropriate in all circumstances, but without joint assessment it is unlikely that opportunities will be identified when they arise. Consider how joint assessments occur can occur by removing bureaucratic or institution barriers.

2. **Country sectoral-assessments should be conducted jointly and shared widely across Government** – especially when a dedicated cross-government assessment capacity is not available, and even in cases where the scope and ambitions of the subsequent programme are limited by resources. All assessment teams should include development as well as technical experts to ensure JSSR principles are applied.
3. **Cross post specialists from other government ministries into operational level or technical programmes** which are implemented directly by a single ministry; i.e. MoD, MoJ or MoI should periodically engage development specialists to provide guidance on indicators, results frameworks and developing institutional change models. Similarly, development programmes should periodically engage MoD, MoJ, MoI in advisory capacities on technical matters of JSSR.
4. **Pool resources and approaches to M&E, lesson learning and political dialogue**, especially in countries where there is more than one agency providing support. This can include SSR coordinators embedded in embassies.
5. **Reinforce joint or pooled funding** (that includes both Overseas Development Aid (ODA) and non-ODA)— this is both for national and international coordination— that can act as an incentive and which can break down administrative challenges to a more joined-up approach.
6. **Seek whole-of-government opportunities exist for joint training and capacity development.** Germany has a strong knowledge base for good development practice in GIZ, but that capability could be better utilised to build departmental SSR expertise. Look also at the stability and incentives of staff within the SSR elements of each ministry, to ensure that such roles are supported and integrated into the available career paths.
7. **Create incentives for whole-of-government approaches at headquarters and the field.** Virtually all frameworks encounter resistance, prior to their utility being proven. Examples of incentives include performance indicators, promotions opportunities, and cross postings.
8. **Monitor, transparently and independently evaluate, and then disseminate lessons (both positive and negative).** The value of making the effort to take a whole-of-

government approach will only be acknowledged if the ‘demonstrations effects’ are made clear across government, and staff have access to valid evidence of what has worked previously.

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Useful links

**SSR in a Nutshell: Manual for Introductory Training on Security Sector Reform**

<http://www.issat.ch/Learn/Resource-Library/Tools/SSR-Level-1-Training-Manual>

*This manual complements ISSAT’s Introductory Level 1 Security Sector Reform Training Course. It aims to provide a basic overview of Security Sector Reform (SSR) policy and practice based on collective experience in supporting security and justice reform efforts.*

**CoP/E-learning flyer**

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B9HZULk4n2efdVBCMkdSekVDQUE&authuser=0>

*Discover the fundamental concepts behind Security and Justice Sector Reform, from the evolving definitions and understanding of the term, to its core principles, objectives and dimensions, all available online. This flyer introduces you to ISSAT/DCAF’s free e-learning courses available as well as how to become a member and get started on ISSAT’s Community of Practice.*