

The Impact of Train and Equip initiatives on Security Sector Reform: A Brief Literature Review

November 2016

Background

This paper was commissioned by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) in the framework of the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) to inform the CSDN policy meeting *EU conflict prevention after the Global Strategy: A look at mediation and security sector reform* to be held in Helsinki, Finland, on 10 November 2016. It is a brief literature review by Laura Davis, PhD. It draws on grey and academic literature. The bibliography, which is not comprehensive, is presented in annex. It is envisaged that it informs future CSDN events.

Civil Society Dialogue Network

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Instrument for Stability) and managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in co-operation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS).

For more information about the CSDN, please visit the [EPLO website](#).



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of EPLO and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

A note on terms: Security sector reform (SSR) and Train and Equip (T&E)

The first finding to emerge from the literature review is the lack of clarity around terminology. *Security sector reform* will usually include the justice sector as well as the security services (usually limited to the army, police and border services; intelligence services, for example, are rarely, if ever, publically included in SSR projects). Some donors and practitioners therefore use security and justice sector reform or SJSR, or security and justice reform, SJS (e.g. the Department for International Development (DFID)). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) uses *system* instead of *sector* to highlight the connections between different security (and justice) actors, including non-state actors (e.g. militia), and oversight bodies (OECD, 2007). This may also be described as *orthodox* or *first generation* SSR (Vandemoortele, 2016). Some practitioners question the use of *reform* and prefer alternatives such as *transformation* (Bryden & Olonisakin, 2010). *Security Sector Stabilisation (SSS)* is also increasingly used in relation to more fragile environments. The use of different terms to cover similar activities, and different meanings ascribed to the same terms underlines the need for conceptual clarity.

There are similar problems in defining *train and equip*. or: train, build and equip (van den Boogaard, 2016) even if the term may appear to be more self-explanatory than SSR. A challenge that emerges from this literature review is that training, for example, covers a wide range of activities, from training in specific combat techniques to training compliance with standards and norms. To complicate matters further, some analysts refer to *hardware* (infrastructure and equipment) and *software* which includes oversight and management, political dialogue and advocacy, capacity building, education and training (Fitz-Gerald, 2012). T&E is sometimes also referred to as capacity building. a term also inadequately defined in the literature (DFID, 2015). EU institutions adopted *Capacity building in support of security and development* (CBSD) instead of *T&E* CBSD may be a more *consensual* term than T&E (Tardy, 2015), or it may obfuscate the dilemmas around using development aid to provide equipment that may be used abusively, or fall into the hands of non-state actors.¹ It may also suggest that T&E activities are part of a broader SSR project, when they are, to the contrary, isolated. In any event, *capacity building* does not bring clarity.

Some authors point out that the capacity of an organisation includes training, infrastructure and equipment and also its conceptual framework, vision and/or mission, and its culture (Ubels, 2010). However, enhancing one aspect (e.g. human and material resources) through T&E does not necessarily reinforce these other key components of capacity (van den Boogaard, 2016).

T&E is also used to refer to direct military, or security, assistance for certain groups in counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency and in armed conflict, such as the US-led Georgia Train and Equip Program as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, (U.S Department of State Archive, 2003) the Syria Train and Equip Program and Timber Sycamore, both US-led initiatives intended to train and equip rebels fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the Syrian civil war (Mazzetti & Apuzzo, 2016; Ferdinando, 2015).

Connecting T&E to broader SSR initiatives

Developing democratic governance of the security sector does not, in itself, guarantee safety: security forces need to be able to carry out their constitutionally-mandated tasks effectively and professionally (Ball, 2004). However, Ball clearly states that although there may be *overlap* between some T&E and security governance initiatives, the supply of *weapons, materials and other equipment* may improve operational effectiveness but not constitute SSR (Ball, 2004, p. 3 emphasis added). In this, Ball differs from Wulf, writing on

¹ The EU explicitly rules out the provision of lethal weapons to third states (European Commission and High Representative, 2015).

peacekeepers in the same volume, who argues that T&E is an integral part of SSR. (Wulf, 2004).

Isolated T&E programmes should not be considered sufficient substitutes for comprehensive national security sector and governance capacity (Rohwerder, 2016). The SSR tool of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs identifies five entry points for SSR, one of which is Professionalism which emphasises oversight and accountability, and includes assessing whether or not security agents have adequate financial, training and materiel resources to do their jobs (Ball, Bouta, & van de Goor, 2003).

Linking T&E initiatives to efforts to strengthen accountability

In the context of SSR programming, accountability can be understood in different ways. The first use refers to the government control and civilian oversight mechanisms, including the legal framework governing the legitimate use of force (Mayer-Rieckh & Duthie, 2009) and including effective delivery of security and justice, or as a measure for challenging impunity and taking responsibility for human rights violations (Cutter Patel, 2009). T&E also has implications for internal donor accountability.

A review of SSR and the role of the UN's Peacebuilding Fund in SSR found that investments in institutional governance or oversight remain very low (if not non-existent) in comparison with the investment in train and equip priorities which led the review to question whether the investment in hardware had any impact on broader SSR and peacebuilding goals (Fitz-Gerald, 2012). The political nature of these reforms and the challenge they may pose to vested political interests - may often be overlooked (Davis, 2014; DFID, 2015). However, there are examples where training, in particular, may be linked directly with accountability.

In the first case, numerous training components of broader SSR programmes include elements to enhance civilian oversight, and internal discipline, often including civil society organisations or members of the community. For example, a project on policing in Kenya identified the importance of promoting an internal culture of accountability, and supported training of police on standards and ethics as well as training community members on the accountability mechanisms available (Njuguna, Ndung'u, & Achilles, undated).

Addressing impunity for human rights violations may be a central concern for developing robust public institutions that uphold and enforce the rule of law within a norm-governed political order (Snyder & Vinjamuri, 2004, p. 6) in the aftermath of violent conflict. Spoilers within key public institutions may well be able to block post-conflict efforts to realize justice (de Greiff, 2007). Justice-sensitive SSR aims to make the justice and security institutions accountable to the population and become protectors rather than abusers of all citizens' rights, the safety of citizens, especially vulnerable populations, and communities (Davis, 2014; Mayer-Rieckh & Duthie, 2009). Vetting, or screening, is a way to contribute to this, by excluding from institutions officials who do not meet certain criteria (Mayer-Rieckh & de Greiff, 2007). Some technical/military training courses may be designed to exclude people who have failed a human rights (or other) screening process, as in Mali (Davis, 2015).

The challenge of donor accountability to the host government and populations is well-documented in the literature, particularly the risk of elite capture. The United States' experience of increased T&E programming is perhaps salutary in regards to a donor's internal accountability processes. These projects have been largely managed by the Department for Defence rather than the State Department or USAID, and are usually implemented by private contractors. Several of these corporations have been accused of gross human rights violations and may also operate under vague and non-transparent agreements that should be subject to regular audits and oversight (Cohen & Gingerich, 2009).

The impact of T&E

A key challenge in considering the impact of any SSR effort, including components such as T&E is that most of the literature is normative, with little empirical evidence, and there is little rigorous evaluation of the effects of SSR on security and justice provision. Key donors, such as DFID, lack strong theories of change to link the components of SSR programmes to the overall objectives of SSR (Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2015). The link between capacity building and improved security outcomes is weak, although there are serious methodological challenges given the lack of empirical evidence (DFID, 2015). This would support Ball's argument (Ball, 2004) and suggests that the overlap between T&E, SSR and peacebuilding has to be consciously planned rather than assumed. The problem of assessing the contribution of T&E to SSR is further compounded by the lack of common definition on what T&E entails (discussed above). Information on training that promotes accountability, for example, may not be readily identifiable, and concerns for confidentiality (amongst others) may limit the information available about screening processes.

Sierra Leone is generally . and often . cited as an example of successful SSR and included a T&E component; whereas in places like Mali, DRC, Afghanistan SSR efforts including T&E are more often cited as contributing to escalating conflict (Hatzigeorgopoulos, 2016) including through enabling security forces and local militia to be more abusive towards the population (Davis, 2014; Goldstein, 2015). There is increasing focus on tackling violence against women and girls through SSR, including T&E (Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2015), although the extent to which this focus is translated into sustainable change in how security actors reduce violence against women and girls remains unclear.

T&E may often be understood as demand-driven, particularly by ministries of defence. It can reduce the likelihood for donors to work to together on a broader governance-oriented reform agenda (Boshoff, More, Vircoulon, & Hendrickson, 2010).

There is however considerable concern amongst commentators and practitioners that strengthening security services may increase their capacities to violate human rights or to otherwise escalate or prolong conflict (Stabilisation Unit, 2014), including by reinforcing vested political interests within the security system. T&E that focuses on combat operations need to include monitoring and mentoring to avoid becoming an obstacle to future reforms, and to tackle some forms of corruption if the forces are to be seen as legitimate by the communities they serve (Thruelsen, 2010). The UK government, for example, has developed a tool to help its projects avoid this risk² but it remains to be seen how successful this is in practice (Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2015).

In fragile situations where the infrastructure is poor, the risk may be to build rather than reform the security sector, deprioritising democratisation (EPLO, 2011) and that too often the problem is identified as a capacity deficit to be addressed through T&E rather than dysfunction created by political incentive to be addressed through reform (DFID, 2015).

² *Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA): Human Rights Guidance*, HM Government, February 2014 update, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-security-and-justice-assistance-osja-guidance>

Main findings and recommendations

The literature reviewed presents the following main findings and recommendations for future T&E initiatives:

1. **Clarity of terms:** SSR, SSS, T&E, and capacity building are all fluid concepts, given different meanings by different actors. Precise language will reduce confusion and provide conceptual clarity.
2. **Evidence base:** the empirical evidence of the contribution of T&E to broader SSR interventions and to security and justice outcomes for the target populations is weak. Interventions should have a much clearer monitoring and evaluation processes and stronger design (see below).
3. **SSR is a political, not technical process:** All aspects of SSR must be treated as political, rather than technical. This suggests that interventions are informed by and rooted in robust political economy analysis of the context, they are understood and are monitored as an integral part of a longer term political process, which may take the form of a national dialogue. The political (and military) interests invested in the security system and threatened by reform must be identified and mitigating strategies developed. Local participation is important, and should be accompanied by measures to prevent elite capture.
4. **Both SSR and T&E need stronger design:**
 - a. SRR interventions and their component parts (e.g. T&E when there is one) need stronger theories of change to design the overlap between T&E and SSR, and to avoid that T&E undermines broader reform efforts.
 - b. Political and military efforts need to be designed together, with agreement on the overall direction and goal
 - c. Short-term initiatives must be designed to meet longer-term objectives. Isolated T&E exercises cannot substitute broader reform processes but may become an obstacle to reform unless their design includes the possibility of future reform.
 - d. T&E must do no harm, and be rigorously monitored to ensure this is the case.
 - e. Managing transparent and accountable procurement processes may pose a particular challenge, and may require particular attention to safeguard the credibility of the project and to protect it from corruption/elite capture.
5. **Accountability** . governance, delivery and countering impunity . is fundamental for developing the professionalism and legitimacy of security actors, particularly from the point of view of the populations they serve.
 - a. Investment in hardware should **follow** investment in software to increase accountability, not vice versa. This requires a significant increase in investment in software as this is currently disproportionately low compared to investment in hardware
 - b. Investment in hardware may be conditioned on progress in adopting new software
 - c. Training security actors in standards and norms as part of developing an internal culture of accountability should be complemented by training communities and NGOs in accountability mechanisms.
 - d. Donors should avoid using private contractors for T&E where possible. Where these are used, donors must ensure that private contractors are subject to rigorous civilian oversight, including in financial management and in adhering to international humanitarian norms and standards.

6. The overwhelming majority of the documents reviewed here are ***gender blind***. Although some note progress in including tackling violence against women and girls in programming, gender blindness in the literature demonstrates the urgent need to integrate gender equality into SSR analysis and programming.

Bibliography

- Ball, N. (2004). Response to "Security Sector Reform in Developing and Transitional Countries" In C. McCartney, M. Fischer, & O. Wils, *Security Sector Reform - Potentials and Challenges for Conflict Transformation Handbook Dialogue Series No.2*. Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management.
- Ball, N., Bouta, T., & van de Goor, L. (2003). *Enhancing Democratic Governance of the Security Sector: An insitutional assessment framework*. Clingendael Institute. The Hague: Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs/The Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'.
- Boshoff, H., More, S., Vircoulon, T., & Hendrickson, D. (2010). *Supporting SSR in the DRC: between a Rock and a Hard Place*. The Hague: Clingendael.
- Bryden, A., & Olonisakin, '. (2010). *Security Sector Transformation in Africa* . Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). Geneva: LIT Verlag.
- Cohen, M. J., & Gingerich, T. R. (2009). *Protect and serve or train and equip? US security assistance and protection of civilians*. Boston: Oxfam Amercia .
- Cutter Patel, A. (2009). Transitional Justice, DDR and Security Sector Reform. In A. Cutter Patel, P. de Greiff, & L. Waldorf, *Disarming the Past: Transitional Justice and Ex-combatants* . New York : Social Science Research Council .
- Davis, L. (2014). *EU foreign policy, transitional justice, and mediation: Principle, policy, and practice* . Routledge.
- Davis, L. (2015). Reform or Business as Usual? EU Security Provision in Complex Contexts: Mali. *Global Society* .
- de Greiff, P. (2007). Vetting and transitional justice. In A. Mayer-Rieckh, & P. de Greiff, *Justice as prevention: Vetting public employees in transitional societies*. New York: Social Research Council.
- DFID. (2015). *Evidence Synthesis: Security Sector Reform and Organisational Capacity Building Rapid Evidence Assessment November 2015*. London: Department for International Development.
- Duthie, R. (2007). Introduction. In A. Mayer-Rieckh, & P. de Greiff, *Justice as prevention: Vetting public employees in transitional societies*. New York: Social Science Research Council.
- EPLO. (2011, March 15). *CSDN Policy Meeting: EU Support for Security Sector Reform: Learning from the EU CSDP Missions and other EU Support in Guinea-Bissau and DRC*. Accessed October 31, 2016, from European Peacebuilding Liaison Office : http://www.eplo.org/assets/files/2.%20Activities/Civil%20Society%20Dialogue%20Network/Policy%20Meetings/EU%20Support%20for%20Security%20Sector%20Reform/EPLO_Outcome_Document_CSDN_Meeting_EU_support_for_SSR.pdf
- European Commission and High Representative. (2015). *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council Capacity building in support of security and development - enabling partners to prevent and manage crises*. Brussels.
- European Commission. (2006). *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament A Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform SEC(2006) 658. 2006*. Brussels.
- Ferdinando, L. (2015, October 9). *Pentagon Shifts Focus in Syria*. Accessed November 1, 2016, from US Department of Defense : <http://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/622663/pentagon-pauses-moderate-syrian-train-and-equip-mission>

- Fitz-Gerald, A. M. (2012). *SSR and Peacebuilding: Thematic Review of Security Sector Reform (SSR) to Peacebuilding and the Role of the Peacebuilding Fund*. New York: United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office.
- Goldstein, J. (2015, March 17). Afghan Militia Leaders, Empowered by U.S. to Fight Taliban, Inspire Fear in Villages. *New York Times*.
- Hatzigeorgopoulos, M. (2016). *L'assistance militaire: quel rôle dans la prévention des conflits en Afrique?*. Brussel: Institut Royal Supérieur de Défense .
- Independent Commission for Aid Impact. (2015). *Review of UK Development Assistance for Security and Justice Report 42 March 2015*. Accessed October 31, 2016, from <http://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/ICAI-Report-UK-Development-Assistance-for-Security-and-Justice..pdf>
- Mayer-Rieckh, A., & de Greiff, P. (2007). *Justice as prevention: Vetting public employees in transitional societies*. New York: Social Research Council.
- Mayer-Rieckh, A., & Duthie, R. (2009). Enhancing Justice and Development through Justice-Sensitive Security Sector Reform. In P. de Greiff, & R. Duthie, *Development and Justice*. New York: Social Science Research Council.
- Mazzetti, M., & Apuzzo, M. (2016, January 23). *U.S. Relies Heavily on Saudi Money to Support Syrian Rebels*. Accessed November 1, 2016 , from New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/24/world/middleeast/us-relies-heavily-on-saudi-money-to-support-syrian-rebels.html>
- Njuguna, E., Ndung'u, J., & Achilles, K. (undated). *Institutionalising police reforms in Kenya: lessons from 2012-2015*. Saferworld.
- OECD. (2007). *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting security and justice*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- Rohwerder, B. (2016, April 12). *Lessons learnt from security-related programming in stabilisation and conflict-related contexts*. Accessed October 31, 2016, from GSDRC : <http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/HDQ1353.pdf>
- Snyder, J., & Vinjamuri, L. (2004). Trials and Errors: Principle and Pragmatism in Strategies of International Justice. *International Security* , 28 (3).
- Stabilisation Unit. (2014). *Policing the Context: Principles and guidance to inform international policing assistance* . Stabilisation Unit.
- Tardy, T. (2015). *Enabling partners to manage crises : From 'train and equip' to capacity-building*. Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS).
- Thruelsen, P. D. (2010). *Security Sector Stabilisation in a non-permissive environment*. Forsvarsakademiet. Copenhagen: Forsvarsakademiets Forlag.
- U.S Department of State Archive. (2003, February 1). *Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP)*. Available at U.S. Department of State Archive: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ei/pix/b/eur/18737.htm>
- Ubels, J. (2010). *Capacity building in practice*. London: Earthscan.
- van den Boogaard, A. (2016, October 13). *Train, build and equip, a sustainable approach?* Accessed October 27, 2016, from DCAF ISSAT: <http://issat.dcaf.ch/Share/Blogs/ISSAT-Blog/Train-build-and-equip-a-sustainable-approach>
- Vandemoortele, A. (2016, September 30). *Exploring the transition from first to second generation SSR in conflict-affected countries*. Accessed October 27, 2016, from Security Sector Reform Resource Centre : <http://www.ssrresourcecentre.org/2016/09/30/exploring-the-transition-from-first-to-second-generation-ssr-in-conflict-affected-societies/>

Wulf, H. (2004). Security Sector Reform in Developing and Transitional Countries. In C. McCartney, M. Fischer, & O. Wils, *Security Sector Reform - Potentials and Challenges for Conflict Transformation*.