OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE NOTE: FOLLOWING ON FROM A SECURITY & JUSTICE ASSESSMENT

This is the fourth OGN in the assessment series. It covers the process of finalising and integrating the recommendations of the assessment and serves to a) provide the link between the assessment and subsequent justice and security donor support activities, and b) ensure that the lessons learned during the assessment process can be used constructively in the future. If the assessment is to determine a support programme, then this OGN should be read in conjunction with the ISSAT OGN series on Programme Design.

What was covered in the previous OGN on Conducting the Assessment

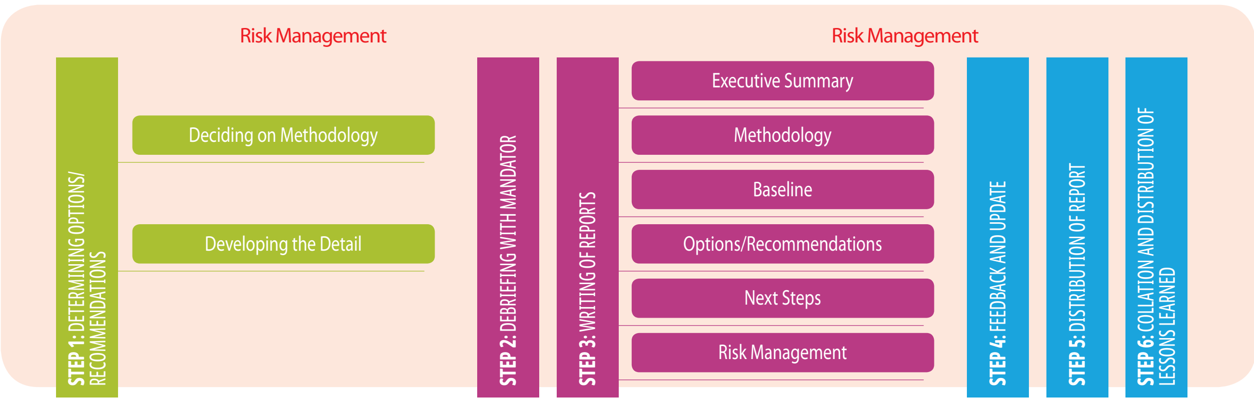
- As complete as possible picture of the area of focus and context
- Knowledge of who provides security and justice services, how and to whom
- Knowledge of the different stakeholders and, where relevant, potential implementers
- Initial ideas on recommendations and options to improve service delivery and who is likely to support what

SUMMARY OF STEPS

STEP 1. CONFIRM RECOMMENDATIONS / OPTIONS
STEP 2. DEBRIEF WITH THE MANDATOR
STEP 3. WRITE THE REPORT
STEP 4. PROVIDE FEEDBACK AND UPDATES
STEP 5. COLLATE LESSONS IDENTIFIED
STEP 6. DISTRIBUTE THE REPORTS

Note – the steps will not always follow in sequence and there will be a degree of moving backwards and forwards between steps as new information or events unfold.

MAP OF THE FOLLOW-ON PROCESS



International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT)

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The practice note "SSR Assessment, M&E and Gender" in the Gender & SSR toolkit provides a useful checklist to ensure a gender perspective is fully adopted (www.dcaf.ch/gssrtoolkit)

In the steps below, examples are shown in yellow boxes and potential risks are shown in red boxes. Definitions and additional explanations are in grey boxes.

STEP 1. DETERMINING OPTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

You will have already started during the 'Conducting' stage to analyse areas where support can improve the delivery of security and justice. In order for these to be useful to the mandator and partner government, these need to be turned into options or recommendations in accordance with what is specified in your ToRs.

Options

These are a series of different processes, projects or activities that the mandator and stakeholders need to choose from. In addition to including details of the activity, cost and possible implementers, they should include a list of pros and cons.

Recommendations

Recommendations should provide the overall decision of the assessment team on whether any action should proceed, in what areas, how, and why. The team should remember that a recommendation can be to take no further action at the present time.

The final conclusions from assessments will include a large degree of subjectivity. This can be mitigated against by drawing together multiple views from sources from outside the team, and using a consultative process to narrow the initial team conclusions into findings that are as objective as possible.

Deciding the Methodology

The way in which the options/recommendations will be determined should take into account: a) the purpose of the assessment; b) the political sensitivity of the assessment mission; c) guidance and constraints given by the mandator; d) the role and relationship with the host country; and e) environmental factors. Depending on these factors, the options/recommendations will be determined by: a) just the team; b) the team and the mandator (either at capital/HQ level, field level or both), or c) the team, mandator and national actors (including some or all of: the government, state institutions, traditional institutions, civil society, and the wider population through e.g. town-hall meetings). The following questions should guide your decisions on how options or recommendations are determined:

- Are there any specific forums, agencies or management bodies in the host country that should be involved in the development of recommendations (for example, SSR coordination committees, ministry departments, or civil society networks)?
- Are there any linked processes or sectors that need to be reviewed in more depth? Is there the necessary expertise on the team or are any follow-on activities required?
- Have the resources or political constraints of the donor or partner country changed from the earlier stages?
- Are there any other donors that have activities that could be linked or coordinated?

Developing the Detail

While it can be tempting to do a shopping list of all the various needs discovered during an assessment, when developing options/recommendations, you need to ensure that the end result will be useful for the decision-making. You should take into account the following when drafting options or recommendations:

- Focus – The number of options or recommendations should be limited in number (4-5), be listed, prioritised and have clear links to donor activities to be undertaken.
- Feasibility – The options or recommendations should correspond to the political realities both within the mandator's country as well as the partner country.
- Preconditions – Certain options or recommendations may depend on other factors being in place, for example perceived political will, or the timeliness of other development activities.
- Time – What is the life-span of the relevance of the options or recommendations? What changes might occur that could erode that relevance?
- Cost – Is the cost of the option or recommendation commensurate with the expected outcome?
- Actions – What actions will need to be done, by whom and by when? Does additional capacity need to be built? If so, how and by whom?
- Spin-offs – What, if any, ancillary and follow-on support activities can be associated with the options or recommendations for the mandator or other partners? What synergies can be generated?
- Political impact – Who is likely to gain/lose if the options or recommendations are implemented? How could power relations change as a consequence?
- Prioritisation – What criteria have you used for prioritising options? You should make this explicit in your report. These should have been included in your initial ToRs, or clarified during the process with the mandator/partner government.

> Recommendations and options often represent a snap-shot of a certain time in a country's security and justice efforts, which might already be outdated by the time the mandator starts the process of programme design. It is therefore important that appropriate mechanisms are developed to assure that the assessment is continuously updated and relevant.

STEP 2. DEBRIEFING WITH THE MANDATOR

It is possible that the assumptions on which the objectives of the assessment are based (as detailed in the ToRs) have shifted, either due to new information gathered during the assessment, or because of changes in the environment since the start of the assessment process. For example, some of the objectives may no longer be relevant or practicable. Likewise, circumstances or priorities within the mandator's country/organisation may also have changed since the beginning of the assessment. You should aim for a face-to-face meeting between the assessment team and the mandator, including where possible relevant people from different departments at the capital/HQ and the field, to discuss potential differences between the original intentions of the mandator and your findings. You should also consider how to incorporate any new findings (for example, additional entry points or programme points that might not be covered in the original ToRs).

During this meeting you should discuss your initial options or recommendations (see suggested question areas above) and the process to develop them further, as well as details on the distribution of the information. Points to clarify with the mandator (and, where applicable, the partner government) include:

- How many versions of the reports are needed for distribution (e.g. the mandator, other donors, the partner government, wider audiences)? More details on the factors you should take into account are covered under Step 5. Distribution of the Report.
- Will initial recommendations be presented formally or informally to any groups in the country and what is the procedure for integrating results from this process?
- How long will the mandator's decision-making process take to act on the information contained in the options or recommendations? What sort of process is feasible to keep the information up to date?

STEP 3. WRITING THE REPORT

The report writing stage is where all the elements are put together into a coherent document that should be written in such a way as to ensure it is easy to use by the primary and any secondary audiences. You should make certain that all the team members are clear on the exact areas they will lead on within the report, as well as the various deadlines. It is important that all the team members are involved in the process. Whilst it is the team leader's responsibility to deliver the finalised document, all team members should, beyond writing their own parts, sign off on the final consolidated product.

While the content of the report depends on the specific tasks given by the mandator, certain broad guidelines can be used. The following is not template or an exclusive list of 'chapters', but rather suggestions that you should consider.

Executive Summary

As the target audience is likely to encompass individuals with various needs for detail (programme design teams and desk officers who need specific, detailed information, and potentially higher level executives that are responsible for decision making), you should ensure there is a concise and precise executive summary.

Methodology

The inclusion of the methodology used is still rare in assessment reports. This is, however, a vital element that will:

- Give credibility to the report;
- Inform subsequent evaluations of any follow-on action taken from the assessment;
- Assist in coordination with other actors (areas or gaps that require further research can be more easily identified); and
- Provide inputs to lessons learned about the process.

You should include sufficient information regarding your methodology to allow any subsequent evaluation team to replicate your procedures.

Baseline

Based on all the quantitative and qualitative information collected, the assessment provides a current picture of the situation in the recipient country prior to an assistance programme being launched. In this sense, the assessment report is a de facto baseline from which future programmatic activities can be evaluated. As a result, you should present the assessment information in a way that can be readily used as a baseline.

Options and/or Recommendations

Details on what you should include in this section are covered under Step 1: Determining Options/ Recommendations.

Next Steps

A next steps section helps clarify how the process can move from diagnosis to action. Are any of the recommendations and options time sensitive? How should the results of the report be carried forward within the mandator's organisation? The implementation of certain recommendations might also depend on activities carried out by other actors that are not within the control of the mandator or the proposed programme (e.g. adoption of relevant legislation or construction of key infrastructure), so how is this factored in?

Risk Management

You should also include a detailed risk management matrix. Options and recommendations can have the potential of carrying consequences for others, such as the need to cover recurrent costs of one-off investments, or possible changes to personnel structures. Does the option or recommendation indirectly impose costs on the partner Government? If a recommended intervention fails or partly fails, will it threaten stability? You should include in your risk management matrix proposals for mitigating actions, such as suggestions for coordination or quick-win projects to bring in disgruntled groups.

STEP 4. FEEDBACK AND UPDATE

Although your findings are based on triangulation of information gathered through different sources in the field, you should still take steps to verify the conclusions before the final report is distributed. Obtaining and internalising feedback from stakeholders in the partner country will increase the validity of the options or recommendations and facilitate further support programme planning, strengthen national ownership, and enhance international harmonisation. Depending on the scale of the report and its perceived sensitivity as discussed with the mandator, you can get feedback through bilateral discussions with key stakeholders on some or all of the findings. Ideally, however, you should aim to do this through open discussion at a workshop in the partner country. Such a workshop has the benefits of increasing transparency and accountability, however great care should be taken in order to manage expectations.

Presenting recommendations in the recipient country can easily be interpreted as if these have already been endorsed and financing secured by the donor, while the final course of action of the mandator might only be to choose some or even none of the recommendations. Caution must be taken in developing the message as to why the feedback is needed and what it does and does not do.

STEP 5. DISTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT

Distribution of the report is a politically sensitive process and should be done with great care. While your assessment may just be seen as taking a snapshot of the given situation, the release of a report can alter the balance of power within the host/recipient country. There can be disagreements on the analysis, conclusions and recommendations (especially as security and justice development is such a political issue, with winners and losers). You should consider to what extent the report itself poses a high risk of affecting the environment. For example, there may be certain aspects (i.e. elements of political analysis or specific recommendations) that the mandator would prefer to keep internal.

While transparency can be problematic due to political constraints, you should try to maximise the dissemination of the assessment and its conclusions to enhance national ownership, future programmatic coherence, and donor harmonisation. However, you should acknowledge the risks from this and take steps to mitigate against any potentially negative effects.

However, as the assessment hopefully generated a wealth of information that can be used by other stakeholders as well, you should try to keep the amount of classified information to the absolute minimum and encourage the mandator to allow the report to be shared with all interested partners. This is also important in the interest of transparency and encouraging national ownership. In addition, other organisations supporting security and justice (or linked development activities) in the partner country may also benefit from the report.

Although the easiest solution often seems to be keeping the report restricted, the choices made regarding the distribution of the report can impact relationships that may be critical for the next steps. The assessment team will have benefited from interlocutors being open and sharing information, and it is easy to undermine trust if those interlocutors see the information flow as just being one-way. This can create difficulties for a follow-on programme design or implementation team.

STEP 6. COLLATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF LESSONS LEARNED

Although this is listed as the final step, you should try and collect lessons throughout the whole of the assessment process. It is important to gather information from as many groups as possible: the team, the mandator, the government, etc, as well as from as many of the phases as possible: processing the proposal, planning, conducting, and the follow-on. In order to make this easier, it is worth keeping a running record of lessons as they are observed throughout the process.

ISSAT OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE NOTES (OGNs) ONLINE

ISSAT Operational Guidance Notes (OGNs) are operational tools designed to assist security and justice reform practitioners. The OGNs are designed to be living documents and therefore your input on the use of OGNs is greatly encouraged. To provide feedback please register on the ISSAT website at **http://issat.dcaf.ch**

The point of contact for the ISSAT OGNs on programme implemmentation is Victoria Walker. To contact ISSAT please e-mail **issat@dcaf.ch.** Other OGNs are available at **www.issat.dcaf.ch/toolsandresources**

NOTES

The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)

The International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT)

SUPPORTING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S SSR CAPACITY

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