RESEARCH REPORT

Survey of key donors and multilateral organisations on monitoring and evaluation of security sector reform: United Kingdom case study

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1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the United Kingdom Government's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating (M&E) the support it provides to security sector reform (SSR). It examines the M&E systems that already exist for similar types of work as well as looking at any specific treatment given to SSR, before also identifying outstanding needs, challenges and any trends and opportunities that exist for improving M&E in this area.

The survey is one of five donor surveys carried out as part of the Saferworld project 'Evaluating for Security: Developing specific guidelines on monitoring and evaluating Security Sector Reform (SSR) interventions'.[1] While the donor surveys unpack the institutional arrangements for M&E within the major SSR donors, they do not provide a detailed analysis of how this is carried out at the country level in particular cases. Instead, five separate country case studies have been carried out to investigate how individual SSR programmes have been monitored and evaluated. Together with a wider desk review, the case studies and donor surveys provide the evidence base from which specific guidance on monitoring and evaluating SSR can be developed.

All involved departments as well as external contractors were interviewed for this report between August and October 2008. Where relevant, information has also been drawn from background documents. This report is divided into four main sections. First a general profile of UK Government departments and their role in delivering SSR support overseas is provided. A second section gives specific information on their M&E arrangements. The remaining two sections cover departmental needs and challenges identified during the research and current trends and opportunities that may prove useful to those seeking to promote better M&E of SSR work in future.

2. Profile

The United Kingdom (UK) is generally seen as a leader in the SSR field, having taken some of the earliest steps among donors countries, such as the adoption of a governance-oriented SSR policy in 2003[2] and prior to that, led the seminal attempt at system-wide SSR in Sierra Leone. Three

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[1] Other donor surveys include the institutional arrangements for M&E of SSR programmes in the US, UK and Dutch Governments and the UN.
[2] SSR Policy Brief, DFID, FCO, MoD, 2003. According to this brief and past ACPP/GCPP strategy documents, for the UK Government, SSR activities consist of analysis and research for policy development, effective institutional reform through advice and technical assistance to partner countries, capacity building through networking and strengthening partner country

main departments are responsible for SSR work by the UK Government, ie Department for International Development, (DFID), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). As will be discussed in more detail below, these departments all carry out SSR or SSR-related work independently of each other at different times. However, over the last five years or so, the UK has established innovative cross-governmental structures to deliver SSR and conflict prevention work overseas in an attempt to encourage joint working and overcome Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending constraints. The most notable of these is probably the Conflict Prevention Pool (CPP), a mixed ODA and non-ODA funding source from which DFID, the FCO and MoD finance assorted forms of conflict prevention work, including SSR.[3] (A separate Stabilisation Aid Fund (SAF) was also created alongside the CPP to ring-fence funds for work in hotter locations where conflict prevention and peace building work is not yet possible, notably Afghanistan and Iraq.)

The CPP, like its predecessors the GCPP and ACPP, is managed at working level by a joint steering team made up of officials from each department which agreed overall priorities for UK conflict prevention work, recommended budget allocation and developed processes for pool management. The pool has eight programmes (strategies), six regional and two thematic: Africa, Americas, Balkans, MENA, Russia/CIS, South Asia, international capacity building and security and small arms which includes SSR (SSAC). A small secretariat provides day-to-day administrative support and is responsible for ensuring implementation, M&E of the strategy; routine policy guidance and advice; and ensuring that guidance is followed and lessons learned. A Cabinet committee oversees the entire CPP and is chaired by the Foreign Secretary with representatives at Director level from the three departments and the Treasury.[4]

SSR activities have typically accounted for a significant proportion of expenditure within the GCPP, ACPP and now CPP (often less than 10 percent of GCPP but up to half of the ACPP if one includes PSO capacity building and other 'train and equip' type activities).[5] Recent overall CPP / SAF expenditure levels have been as follows:

- GCPP: £75 million in 2005 (including £5.15 million for SSR), £94 million in 2006;
- ACPP: £60 million in 2005, £80 million in 2006;
- CPP: £112 million for 2008–9 (£9.5 million specifically for SSR and SALW control);
- SAF: £73 million for 2008–9.

The CPP and its predecessors the ACPP and GCPP have proved influential internationally and have been credited with helping to break down inter-departmental barriers. The pooled funding arrangement has certainly improved cross-departmental working, planning and strategizing, and to a lesser extent M&E. The simple fact of pooling money creates incentives in this direction, though the degree of incentive varies according to the proportion of a department's resources that the CPP represents. For example, the MoD is comparatively resource-rich and runs many high-cost programmes but has few instruments for SSR-type work other than the CPP. Similarly, the FCO relies almost entirely on CPP funds for conflict prevention and SSR-type work and even less programme funds.[6] In contrast, CPP accounts for a small proportion of DFID programme funds (at

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and multilateral agency capabilities and mainstreaming SSR and informing policies and activities of multilateral institutions and other donors.

[3] Formerly the Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP) covering sub-Saharan Africa and the Global Conflict Prevention Pool (GCPP) covering the rest of the world. These were combined in April 2008. The pools also contain subsidiary sub-strategies for particular work lines such as SSR which provide high level objectives and set out regional funding commitments. See for example, GCPP SSR Strategy 2004–2005, DFID, FCO, MoD. The 2008 strategy for SSR also now includes small arms and light weapons (SALW) control work (SSAC – Security Sector and Arms Control).

[4] Sub-Committee on Overseas and Defence of the Ministerial Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development (NSID (OD)).

[5] Interview, White, 18 September 2008; correspondence, Hollis, November 2008.

[6] Following a recent review the FCO now has four overarching strategic priorities: low carbon, high growth world economy; terrorism and WMD; conflict prevention and resolution; strengthened international system. Minutes of a meeting with the FCO Conflict Group on changes in the Conflict Prevention Pool, 14 January 2008.

the last count, DFID's bilateral security and justice spend was around £220m a year, significantly larger than the CPP).

It is also important to recognize that SSR-related activities are not only funded by the CPP, but also to a degree by the SAF, and more importantly, through the bilateral support of the MoD[7], FCO and DFID and to a lesser extent by other entities listed below. A recent review of UK SSR expenditure found it impossible to identify precisely the amount the UK spends on SSR at present, but it is generally reported that bilateral funding outstrips that from pooled sources.[8]

The CPP's past successes and international reputation should not however be allowed to overshadow a number of important problems, particularly in relation to incoherence between different UK Government departments. Past reviews of the ACPP and GCPP have highlighted disconnects, overlaps and confusion among departments at country level and return frequently to questions of joint strategizing or lack of it: with a few exceptions, cross-departmental strategies for SSR or conflict prevention activities have not tended to exist at country level. In truth the UK has an unwieldy number of elements in play which it has yet to piece together into a coherent policy and implementation structure for support to SSR overseas. A list of these would include:

- SSDAT (a pool of some 15 specialists, mainly but not exclusively on defence issues, available for short-term assessment and advisory assignments to partner governments);
- GFN-SSR (Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform): This is a research/outreach/help-desk facility set up to work on SSR issues providing training and capacity building;
- Stabilisation Unit (formerly Post-conflict Reconstruction Unit), focused on immediate post-conflict or crisis settings, in particular Afghanistan and Iraq);
- CENTREX/NPIA (National Police Improvement Agency): This provides police and intelligence training;
- The Scottish National Police college and any number of UK police services (there are 43 in total), who may deploy officers overseas (eg, for counter-terrorism or police reform projects) at their own initiative;
- The British Council which has recently begun to deliver police reform programmes for DFID;
- DFID (with a traditional preference for justice programming executed independently of other departments);
- MoD (has pre-existing resources and commitments to defence diplomacy, education and cooperation: the Royal College of Defence Studies, Advanced Command and Staff Course, British Military Advisory and Training Teams, plus contingents of military police who are deployed at times through the FCO for Peace Support Operations with an SSR or police reform component (eg EULEX, Kosovo));
- FCO: which has the lead on preventative counter-terrorism work that may include technical support and secondment of security personnel overseas but also has small amounts of bilateral funding (eg Strategic Programme Fund) and a long-standing interest in overseas police deployment and some rule of law work;
- A sizeable number of private, quasi- and former-governmental, and non-governmental contractors, who implement, evaluate and design SSR programmes and even to a degree, SSR policy on behalf of the UK Government.

While the UK has led most other donor countries in thinking and practice on SSR for a number of years, its house is not yet fully in order. For the present UK SSR practice and arguably policy (and thinking) remains somewhat disparate, with different departments, field offices and funding structures often taking their own approaches to SSR and related issues, particularly policing. Past

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[7] The MoD's SSR contribution is generally training, defence education or defence diplomacy. Defence Attache's working within Embassies work using a Defence-Related Assistance Plan (DRAP) in which they will for example bid for a UK training team to visit a country, or for a civil-military relations project. But this work is now funded primarily via the CPP given reductions in the traditional funding line, the Defence Assistance Fund (DAF) which is now worth some £1m a year.

[8] N. Ball and L. Van de Goor, Promoting conflict prevention through Security Sector Reform, Review of spending on security sector reform through the Conflict Prevention Pools, April 2008, Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

reviews of the conflict prevention pools' SSR activities have tended to recommend a more strategic and joined-up approach to SSR by different arms of the UK Government.[9] Progress on this point has been too slow to date, but there are some signs that the recent OECD DAC guidance on SSR, in which the UK (led by DFID) has invested considerable effort, has encouraged greater coherence in the thinking and practice of different parts of government.[10] More recently the UK has made a cross-departmental commitment to further improve its policy and infrastructure for SSR delivery. Commitments made include adoption of a cross-Whitehall policy on SSR and the introduction of bespoke M&E arrangements and/or guidance for this type of work when supported via the CPP.[11] In addition, other long-standing arrangements including the SSDAT, GFN, and HMG's relationship with private and third-sector SSR contractors are under scrutiny or review.

3.   Current monitoring and evaluation arrangements

3.1   The Conflict Prevention Pool

3.1.1 Reviews / Evaluations

In the months since its establishment the DFID-hosted CPP secretariat has been developing common processes, templates and guidelines for all its programmes. There is strong awareness now of the need for better lesson learning within the CPP, partly because evidence is wanted to improve strategies and help influence others. Accordingly the new guidelines will cover all aspects of the planning cycle including M&E and apply to SSR work along with other activities. An attempt is being made to compare experiences and learn from both ACPP and GCPP in this, though no standard M&E arrangements applied to either of those funds. Having been established in April 2008, the CPP has not yet been evaluated. However, in its previous incarnation as ACPP/GCPP, all CPP-funded SSR work has been evaluated at the strategic level as part of broader evaluations of all work carried out through the two pools (SSR has received specific coverage in only three cases). Given the lack of guidance for M&E of the pools, past reviews, even the larger comparative studies, have been freer in terms of method but also perhaps more subjective than the ideal.

The CPP runs on an annual funding cycle, so strategy managers must have updated strategies in time to bid for funds each year (eg Sept 08 most recently). With this timeline in mind, the new guidance issued by the DFID Secretariat requires the pools' strategy managers to set three year objectives with subsidiary one-year outputs and output indicators for each objective. Internal mid-term reviews are now scheduled (every six months) and will involve strategy managers interviewing staff to gather perceptions of impact and quality of relationships rather than a 'tick box' exercise as in the past. Little additional guidance or requirements exist for CPP staff (other than to file an end of project report), with the Secretariat attempting to maintain a light touch. End-of-year reviews are also planned and will be made public (end-of-year ACPP and GCPP reviews have previously proved key when it comes to allocating funds for subsequent years and inspiring learning between the three government departments). As in the past, broader reviews and evaluations will be carried out at the initiative of strategy managers or senior staff.

3.1.2 Monitoring

Among the Secretariat's responsibilities is to compile overall assessments of programmes' progress, based on periodic monitoring findings supplied by posts. After consultations with Programme Managers this information is then supplied to Directors of Departments. Risk

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[9] Ball and Van de Goor, *op cit*; N. Ball, P. Biesheuvel, T. Hamilton Baillie, and F. Olonisakin, Security and Justice Sector Reform programming in Africa, Evaluation working paper no. 23, DFID, April 2007; N. Ball, Evaluation of the Conflict Prevention Pools, the Security Sector Reform strategy, Evaluation report EV 247, DFID, March 2004.
[10] Security System Reform and Governance: Policy and Good Practice, OECD Policy Brief, 2004; The OECD-DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting security and justice, OECD, 2007.
[11] Ball and Van de Goor, *op cit.*

management is at project level. Each project has its own risk matrix and individual programme managers are responsible for managing it. The CPP Secretariat also maintains a risk register but this is of threats to the pool itself, sourced from all manner of locations.

3.2 Department for International Development

3.2.1 Reviews / Evaluations

DFID has a well established internal project planning, management and M&E system which links with a computer system known as ARIES (formerly PRISM – Performance Related Information System for Management) in which reviews and evaluations are logged and interventions rated for their degree of success on a scale of one to five points. The requirements of the system are set out in DFID's internal handbook ('Blue Book') and backed-up by guidance on M&E and on the use of logframes and standard indicators (see below) for certain issues.[12]

Internal procedures require that all interventions costing £1m or above are reviewed annually and at their mid-point (ie Mid Term Review, also known as Output to Purpose Review (OPR)). Follow-on funding cannot be accessed otherwise. All interventions are subject to an end-of-project evaluation and Project Completion Report (PCR). Although logframes are only compulsory for projects of £1m per annum or above, all projects tend to be planned using the Logical Framework Approach and agreed logframes are later used as the reference point for reviews and evaluations.

- Annual reviews are usually internal, involving the DFID project manager and the main project stakeholders. The focus is on checking progress against the logframe, rating the likelihood of achieving the designated purpose, and checking how risks may be developing.

- Output to Purpose Reviews are usually – but not always – carried out mid-way through projects. Like annual reviews they measure and report on performance to date and indicate necessary adjustments. The scope for adjustment would normally range up to the output level of the logframe but no higher since this may affect contractual arrangements.

- *Ex-post* evaluations happen at the end of an intervention and inform the PCRs which are needed to close down a project via the computer system. *Ex-post* evaluations focus on the five OECD DAC development evaluation criteria (these are used less consistently in the case of reviews). However, in line with the aid effectiveness agenda, impact assessments that focus on the intended and unintended, positive and negative outcomes and impacts of interventions are becoming more common.

Despite its fairly rigorous review system, DFID has no overall policy on evaluation. The International Development Select Committee, the parliamentary body that oversees DFID, has recently questioned DFID's handling of evaluation. In particular, it has questioned whether DFID's Evaluation Department has the mandate and tasking that it needs to properly safeguard the independence of evaluations carried out by the organisation.

In early 2008, an Independent Advisory Committee on Development Impact (IACDI) was founded to advise DFID's evaluation department on some of these issues. The committee is composed of former development economists and evaluators with experience in impact evaluation. The backdrop to its creation is one of rising aid budgets, international concern about aid effectiveness and some concerns and criticisms about the independence of self-evaluations within DFID, which particularly at the country and project level, are almost entirely handled by country teams without guidance or quality assurance from the Evaluation Department. Despite rising aid budgets, the

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[12] Essential Guide to Rules and Tools: the Blue Book, DFID, available from, http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/blue-book.pdf, p B4; Guidance on Evaluation and Review for DFID Staff, Evaluation Department, July 2005. Available from, http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/performance/files/guidance-evaluation.pdf; Guidance on using the revised Logical Framework , How to note, A DFID practice paper, February 2009.

administrative budget for evaluations has actually been declining within DFID, which often leaves staff without the time and resources to cater properly for these issues.[13]

There have also been concerns about the reporting arrangements for the head of DFID's Evaluation Department which do not comply with international standards and reportedly do not allow the head of department enough visibility or clout.[14] Other issues flagged by the committee in its initial meetings include the need for clear written protocols for unimpeded access to information in DFID, rules of engagement with DFID staff in discussing draft reports, guidance and safeguards on avoiding conflicts of interest and a written policy on disclosure of reports. Much of this is to be covered in the department's new policy.

Concerns related to country programme evaluations (CPEs) raised by the committee included the need to:

- Adopt a tailored approach to different contexts (eg fragile states and smaller programmes);
- Improve monitoring and baseline data in order to obtain more reliable information on impact, particularly poverty reduction, and linked to this the need to instil among country staff the fact that evaluation and data collection are priorities;
- Balance CPEs – which are comparatively time consuming and costly but hold country directors to account – with other forms of synthesis reports and thematic evaluations;
- Improve ownership and management of CPEs by country teams, most obviously by building them into country management arrangements and budgets while also building in external safeguards.
- Improve national ownership of CPEs by amending ToRs and reporting arrangements to make it clear that partner governments, and in some cases other donors, will also benefit from the evaluations;
- Carry out a review of CPE methodology.[15]

According to one seasoned evaluator who has carried out a large number of DFID bilateral reviews of justice and security sector projects, DFID's decentralized approach to project level reviews and evaluations leaves too much to the discretion of country managers. Every aspect of a review, from TOR content to cost, duration, criteria, logistical support then depends on the degree of interest at post.[16] In many cases the support, preparation and thought behind review processes is adequate or excellent, but given the that staff may change, levels of interest in particularly projects may vary but reviews must be carried out regardless, some reviews have the feeling of 'box ticking'.

Another work-stream that the evaluation department is taking up at the behest of the committee is that of improving impact evaluation, including better defining and measuring impact. The thinking on this at present is along the lines of World Bank impact evaluations in which evaluations are carried out on a large scale using statistically valid sampling, counterfactual hypotheses and working to bolster national evaluation systems.

3.2.2 Monitoring

DFID provides little by way of advice on monitoring other than that contained in its standard guidance document on review and evaluation to the effect that:

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[13] Unlike other government departments, DFID is also receiving every growing levels of funding in line with the UK Government's commitment to disburse 0.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product as Official Development Assistance. Together with a freeze on staffing levels this has led to larger and larger projects being developed, which in turn has refocused attention on M&E.

[14] 'DFID's Independent Advisory Committee on Development Impact (IACDI)', Monitoring and Evaluation News, 8 March 2008.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] For example, the TORs for DFID's Output to Purpose Reviews of its access to justice programme in Nigeria stipulated that the five OECD DAC development assistance evaluation criteria be used. In contrast, the TORs for DFID's reviews of its SILSEP programme in Sierra Leone made no reference to these or any other criteria.

'Monitoring is primarily the responsibility of the managers who are implementing the development intervention. They will keep records of any baseline information collected at the start, together with data on progress as the intervention proceeds. At agreed intervals (three monthly or six monthly) the Manager of the development intervention will discuss progress with the project team at a monitoring meeting. Records of these meetings will be filed.'[17]

That said DFID's separate internal guidance on the use of logframes (see above) and standard indicators[18] is potentially useful for monitoring purposes should managers wish to use it in this way.

DFID's does however require quarterly reporting, both narrative and financial as standard from those managing projects. Responsible staff should be aware of the main issues these reports cover (ie should be involved in monitoring work) since this is their job, but again, levels of interest may vary and in many cases it is actually contractors who produce much of the reporting information. With such limited guidance and so few requirements on project monitoring, the nature and quality of information provided in these reports does tend to vary. Evaluators interviewed for this research also reported difficulties in some cases in accessing monitoring reports during evaluations.

3.3   Ministry of Defence

3.3.1 Reviews / Evaluations

The MoD is not renowned for having an M&E culture, at least not in the sense understood by development practitioners and evaluation specialists. One interviewee familiar with the MoD's SSR contributions estimated that the ministry may evaluate less than 10% of its SSR-type work, though given that most of this is training, small-scale end-of-course evaluations are the norm. Another aspect of MoD SSR work is defence education and diplomacy which accounts for some £3m of CPP annual spend at present. Though fiercely defended by the MoD which above all values good defence relations, this work is generally viewed with scepticism by those who take a more 'programmatic' view of SSR (eg DFID staff who have tended to question whether this work has any measurable impact on conflict). More importantly for this report, like training work and other piecemeal activities, it is difficult to evaluate other than at the output level.

3.3.2 Monitoring
The MoD is well steeped in monitoring and reporting which is a core part of the military's and the ministry's way of operating. This however tends to be activity focused.

3.4   Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3.4.1 Reviews / Evaluations

Given its more limited familiarity with programme work, the FCOI as a whole is less inclined towards managing for results and evaluation. The FCO is not an organization with a tradition of strategic working or programme management. Its strengths are seen to lie more in political analysis and relationship building in-country where SSR might be required. Accordingly, most staff are not familiar or comfortable with M&E practices or language. Like many other government departments however, the FCO is slowly coming to grips with results-based management approaches and more recently programmatic work. The introduction of Public Sector Agreement (PSA) targets,[19] some of which it must now work towards together with its recently established

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[17] Guidance on Evaluation and Review for DFID Staff, p 21.
[18] How To Note: Standard Indicators (February 2009).
[19] PSAs are the key priority 'outcomes' that the UK Government aims to achieve in each Comprehensive Spending Round. All UK Government departments must currently contribute through their work to 30 targets.

leading role in programmatic counter-terrorism and joint arrangements like the CPP have forced this learning.

3.4.2 Monitoring

Like the MoD, the FCO does carry out monitoring work but tends to monitor and report on political developments in-country and effects on UK interests and intentions.

3.5 Security Sector Development Advisory Team (SSDAT)

The UK's standing advisory unit on SSR, the SSDAT, has a potentially important role to play in M&E as well as SSR project design and quality assurance. Though the unit has sometimes been tasked with advising on the progress of SSR projects, so far this potential appears to have been underexploited. The unit's own procedures for M&E are fairly *ad hoc* but obvious: trip reports and assessments are regularly put together and shared with UK Government stakeholders both in the UK and in-country. Assessments and advice are given both in this form and verbally on the appropriate course of action for a project and on specific technical issues (eg content of legislation or process for institutional reform).

Interviewed SSDAT staff confirmed that in most cases the UK SSR projects and processes they are acquainted with – generally CPP funded – do not have clear M&E arrangements and that there is much room for improvement. Two notes of caution were however sounded. The first related to timeframes and the fact that civil servants in-post work to short time frames because of their rotation periods, the need to show results, and the inevitable one year funding cycle. M&E arrangements of course need to allow for this, but special allowance needs to be made for long-term endeavours like SSR which may not generate many visible results for years. The second concerned the divergent perspectives of different UK Government departments, an issue that SSDAT, like others, continues to struggle with (see below). In view of this, any M&E arrangements, and indeed guidance, need to support and encourage a whole-of-government approach to M&E at post, including agreement on definitions, timelines, responsibilities and expectations of success. This view was seconded by an experienced evaluator who noted recurrent problems with satisfying the three departments when reviewing projects to which they had jointly contributed. (As emphasized by both a DFID and MoD interviewee, even where SSR work is subject to M&E, UK staff at post from different departments often do not see this as a shared responsibility and information collected and submitted is sometimes not even shared at country level.)

Monitoring and evaluating SSDAT's work is a second-order question but one that has even greater currency within UK Government circles. In the present environment where the drive to demonstrate impact and aid effectiveness is strong, structures like SSDAT are continually challenged to show that their work, which is a combination of technical support, influencing work and advice, is delivering results. Whatever limitations the unit may have, it would seem to have a triple burden. Firstly, it is the child of three departments whose priorities and ideas about impact differ. Second, it works entirely on an issue in which even specialists and evaluators have not yet defined success or elaborated guidance on M&E. Third, as noted above, it faces the challenge of tracking the influence of its own activities, some of which would require the use intangible and proxy indicators and clearly take time to bear visible fruit. In the view of SSDAT's new governance adviser, there is indeed a case for evaluating SSDAT and indeed the UK Government more broadly, but it is most important that this is done at the strategic or policy level, perhaps building on past strategic reviews of the ACPP and GCPP (see above). Appropriate reference points here could include OECD DAC guidance on SSR, UK SSR policy, or broader aid effectiveness commitments (eg Paris and Accra). (It is worth noting however that the listed reference points relate most closely to DFID priorities.) Many of the questions asked at this level would overlap with project/programme level questions. Nevertheless, priority evaluation questions at this level might include whether actions taken and advice given is compliant with OECD policy; whether the

UK is sharing the burden with other governments; whether national capacities for governance are being built.

3.6   The Stabilisation Unit

According to an interviewee from the Stabilisation Unit, M&E is seen as having just as much relevance for stabilization work as other activities, but the context and challenges are quite different. The hope, as with other forms of programming is that if decent M&E arrangements can be put in place, strategies and effectiveness will improve, the quality of reporting will improve and the burden of doing it decrease. But with stabilization work a number of constraints apply. In Helmand, Afghanistan for example, security limits who and where information can be sought safely, and security measures probably colour the information that any surveyors or evaluators can gather. Given that perceptions are seen as key to stabilisation work (which is nowadays understood as a broadly political process), this is a real challenge. However, in attempting recently to put the bones of an M&E framework for Helmand Province together the SU has had no shortage of sources: at least eight UK Government departments work in the area, (including the MoD's Department of Targeted Information Operations (DTIO)), each collecting and reporting information according to their own needs. Instead, marrying these sources, finding a local counterbalance to aid contextual understanding and seeing off UK political influence of findings are more of a concern. In a quick survey of SU staff serving in Helmand and the UK it emerged that they have rather different needs: those in Afghanistan prefer a deeper analysis whereas at the UK end the appetite is for something brief, even eg a one-pager with a traffic light system to show progress in different areas (as recently introduced by the FCO for its preventative counter-terrorism work).

With regard to SSR, the SU would be interested in any specific guidance on monitoring and evaluating this type of work but must first and foremost report progress against country-specific measures, ie the Helmand Road-Map (a classified UK operational plan covering five thematic areas with milestones for progress at three, six and twelve monthly intervals). The objective within this type of strategy document are understandably broad at the province or country level, but will also contain district level targets (eg Governor appointed by central government with demonstrable ability to appoint staff and manage a police force; or, Chief of Police in post etc.).

The Helmand mission completed its first six-monthly review of progress against the Helmand Road Map in November 2008. The review document is classified, but is said to be a comprehensive piece of work and has in turn informed a higher level Afghan Strategy Stocktake carried out by the Cabinet Office. It is, moreover, a single progress report against a joint plan, overcoming past problems with multiple reporting.

Despite this, no overall guidance for M&E exists as yet (a joint DFID/Mission project has been designed to address this and is due to conclude in 2009). The head of each Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) has until now 'owned' the information and process and reported 'as and when' to London. However, since building local capacity and political legitimacy are key objectives, moves are now underway to involve the local Governor in monitoring and reporting. As noted above however, parallel to any PRT / SU reporting, individual departments are required to funnel information back to line departments periodically, particularly in the case of ministerial, parliamentary or public interest, but with no quality control, peer review or guidance.

Other past evaluations have included one focusing on quick impact projects in February 2008 and of UK 'delivery structures' in Helmand in 2007 which in fact led to the introduction of the Helmand Road-Map. Like most other materials associated with the SU's work in Helmand however, these reviews are classified. The SU itself has not so far had any guidance, procedures or tools to offer its own staff or other departments that might support these efforts.

3.7   The Cabinet Office / Ministerial level

The M&E agenda gets another boost from the fact that Ministers are accountable to parliament and will often have their eye on public opinion or need to respond to external questions about the work of their departments. Though this often means line staff in departments or the Cabinet Office having to search at short notice for anecdotes and evidence relating to the issue of the moment, a spin-off is that almost no one sees M&E or reporting as futile. In fact, according to a Cabinet Office interviewee, project/thematic reviews and evaluations and departmental progress reports even in raw form (though preferably summary form) are one of the main sources that staff will search through when tasked to unearth evidence that UK policy and programmes are working. (Though in the case of the Cabinet Office, these requests will generally come off the back of a Ministerial Committee meeting and relevant departments will be asked to perform the search and summarise findings.)

This interest may be sparked by unpredictable events, but the UK's Public Service Agreement targets on which reporting is periodically required at Cabinet level are a major factor. Since PSA's exist for conflict prevention (PSA 30) and counter-terrorism work, there is routine interest in any evidence base for success in these areas. However, specific enquiries on SSR are rare, questions being more along the line of, *'Is the UK's strategy for country X on track?'* At the senior level of government the focus is basically on policy and high profile commitments like the PSAs. Ministers and senior officials see structures like the CPP as an instrument for delivering policy but are not interested in what the funds are used for, though Permanent Under-Secretaries will periodically discuss the CPP's work.[20] SSR itself is almost never discussed and in fact the CPP, a fairly significant cross-government structure, will only be discussed for a few minutes in between other items, the main discussion points being how much money to allocate for a particular year and perhaps any significant evidence of impact that appears in the CPP annual report.

4.   Needs and challenges

The needs and challenges in relation to M&E of SSR identified during the research for this report which range across different government departments and structures were as follows:

- *Defining and agreeing key terms:* Most interviewees were posed questions around key M&E terms such as 'impact', 'outcome' and 'output' in view of the confusion that often surrounds their use. Positions on what constitutes impact, outcomes or outputs and how they can be distinguished varied somewhat but there were important commonalities. However, it was felt that improved safety, security and access to justice at the level of households or individuals was an essential aspect of impact and one that has not been dealt with well in previous attempts at M&E. Opinions were however divided as to whether impact consists only of this or whether this is one component or whether other dimensions or levels of impact should be allowed in the SSR field, ranging from improved functioning of institutions to economic growth. Several respondents also felt there was a need for greater clarity on the differences between outputs (eg legislation passed) and outcomes (legislation implemented) among the SSR community, the general feeling being that the mainstream development world and/or governance disciplines can probably offer a lead here.

  Another potential challenge in relation to the UK is remaining ambiguity about what constitutes SSR. For example, despite heated exchanges between the likes of MoD and DFID on the question of whether defence education and diplomacy is 'really' SSR, for the purposes of CPP strategy management it is so. This means that potentially activities as diverse as language

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[20] Minutes of a meeting with the FCO Conflict Group on changes in the Conflict Prevention Pool, 14 January, 2008.

training and weapon handling skill training might need to fall under any guidance on SSR for a CPP/MoD audience.[21]

- *Short- versus long-term perspectives:* SSR, understood properly is a long-term endeavour, as in many respects is conflict prevention. This presents a number of challenges. Given that SSR-type work can be carried out in widely differing contexts and that programming may take place and sometimes endure over different phases of a conflict cycle, any guidance on M&E should strive to take account of what it is legitimate and reasonable to expect SSR to deliver at different times and in different contexts. A related problem concerns funding: UK Government funding cycles (one year reviews, three year horizon) have always hampered long-term planning and support to these types of programmes. Good guidance should in theory help to address this, but lack of cross-governmental support for certain activities is a deeper problem. This means there is an ongoing risk to such activities, which might be cut or de-prioritised in the next funding cycle.

- *Baseline assessments:* There are no standard requirements or arrangements for establishing baselines among any of the main UK Government departments or their joint structures. Most SSR programmes – and many justice programmes – have neglected this in the past. Awareness appears to be growing of the value of establishing baselines however, with the topic coming up spontaneously in discussion with interviewees from different departments and CPP Secretariat staff. In addition, two major new SSR programmes being commissioned bilaterally by DFID in mid-2008 (Southern Sudan and DRC) have each required baseline surveys in their TORs for contractors. It was also pointed out that with Strategic Conflict Analyses (SCAs) being carried out more frequently now by DFID and/or CPP partners in conflict-prone settings, some baseline information may exist in this form. However, as pointed out by a DFID evaluation specialist, baselines come in different forms. In almost all cases a project document will provide an analytic baseline, however vague or incorrect, for later evaluation. This however is distinct from a tailored baseline study or survey that might be carried out, eg involving gathering primary information from external stakeholders and beneficiaries.

- *Allocating time and responsibilities for M&E:* Several interviewees felt that HMG staff have often failed to set aside the time for carrying out M&E, but just as importantly, for attending to and responding to findings. Linked to this, project staff are sometimes under the impression that their reports and reviews go unread by seniors. This has apparently been less of a problem where a dedicated strategy manager is available, indicating how important it is to clearly assign responsibility not just for doing but also for responding to M&E findings at different levels of seniority.

- *Marrying frameworks for SSR evaluation with other issue areas:* Questions are now being asked in different parts of the UK government about what exactly a 'good' SSR programme can legitimately be expected to deliver (eg growth, development, stability) and the relationship between the outcomes of SSR work and other initiatives, particularly DFID's more mainstream development work. Should a single overarching SSR M&E framework or guidance note be developed to serve multiple departments and/or funding arrangements like the CPP or SAF, this raises the spectre of 'cascading' sets of indicators and similar, to allow for the fact that different types of programmes may contribute towards overlapping or similar ends. Related to this, CPP interviewees felt that tailor-made guidance and tools for the M&E of SSR would be very welcome, provided it dovetailed with other emerging systems and concepts (eg stabilization, conflict prevention). One suggestion made from within the CPP is that a measure or criterion of 'contribution to stability' should be considered for SSR work carried out in stabilisation environments because of the increasing focus on these contexts.

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[21] The international capacity building manager with the CPP is pushing for this type of work to be evaluated for results as best he can, eg how many trainees were actually deployed onto PSOs as a result of training?

- *Useable and actionable evaluations:* A challenge mentioned by an interview from the DFID evaluation department was making reviews and evaluation reports attractive and useable. DFID has always placed great emphasis on 'publishability' with its evaluations, the overriding concern being to get information out into the public domain to emphasise accountability and safeguard transparency. It was stressed however that most target audiences will never read a full review or evaluation – at best they may scan an executive summary.[22] Better ways of reaching most audiences include preparing separate targeted policy briefs based on evaluation findings and tailoring messages. In the case of higher level officials the advice was to focus, (a) on higher-level, strategic and comparative evaluations which tend to generate messages with greater political significance, (b) ensure timeliness. But the issue of quality assurance was also raised – DFID has now begun to use not just external evaluators but outside specialists during the design and final drafting stages of evaluations to ensure that evaluations and reports will be useful for particular audiences or issue specialists.

  A related issue is making reviews actionable and getting them actioned. As noted above, where there is prior interest, timeliness and information is suitably presented, the chances of findings and recommendations being actioned is higher. But issue specialists and in-house staff also have a role to play in working with evaluators to ensure that recommendations are prioritized and management-oriented to increase the chance that they will be taken up. (One interviewee suggested that instead of the customary list of recommendations, evaluators be tasked with producing two to three detailed recommendations with an accompanying action plan.) This would of course require input from in-house staff, something that is not always easy to obtain.

- *Addressing different audiences:* As previously noted, UK Government departments typically lack common strategies at country level. This generally precludes clarity over how SSR 'fits' and what a particular project should be seeking to achieve. This reflects a broader issue of different policies, mandates and working cultures among the departments which may diminish but will always remain. Producing guidance that meets the needs of different departments and staff is consequently a challenge, but it is one that needs addressing.

  At the higher level are ministers, parliamentary under-secretaries and potentially members of the international development select committee. These figures will only take an interest in the detail of SSR on rare occasions and essentially want to know if UK policy and significant delivery structures (eg CPP) are working. Within the CPP framework, Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) who chair CPP strategy groups need more detail: they must be empowered to ask the right questions, particularly in relation to allocating funds to different themes or regions (eg should we do SSR at all and if so, how much should we spend?). Heads of department or strategy groups (eg SSAC) are another audience, again at strategic level, while at the tactical or programme level, desk officers need far more detail. Any guidance, tools or indicator set would need to serve these different audiences albeit in different ways (one interviewee suggested dividing this into two groups: one with a specific interest in SSR, the other with an interest in UK policy and in CPP terms, conflict prevention writ large and along with that conflict prevention indicators and similar).

  When questioned as to what makes a UK Government review of SSR work 'actionable', or what gets it actioned, opinions varied. In essence it would seem that the higher the level and broader the scope of the review, the greater the political will, interest and resources needed to see it through (eg a CPP commissioned report on international capacity building, outsourced to NY State University, which unusually went to the Foreign Secretary). However, it was generally felt that these reviews would often only be commissioned when interest was already

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[22] This concern was echoed by an interviewee who remarked that DFID now has a computer system filled with project reviews of SSR-type work and each review contains recommendations and lessons learned. Unfortunately the reports and lessons remain on file and are not used for comparative learning.

there and that a degree of self-justification is often at work. More prosaic reviews, eg yearly programme reviews, are not subject to much impedance or influence in terms of take-up unless the country in question is an important political priority. However, whether there is time, staff capacity and continuity to follow up on review findings in the majority of cases is another question.

- *Security clearance:* An important feature of SSR evaluations, and one that is increasingly important, is the need in many cases to have only security-cleared personnel on the team. This is understandable where there are sensitivities, UK intelligence or counter-terrorism work ongoing and similar, but an unintended consequence is reliance on a fairly small pool of evaluators or rather issue specialists with a similar background who may not in fact have a background in evaluation. This obviously limits the potential for outside views, including of nationals from the country in question to input and may lead to a degree of 'group-think'. Advice on countering this problem included better monitoring arrangements, in particularly the type of public perception surveys that some of DFID's justice sector programming have used to good effect,[23] but also where possible the inclusion of outsiders and local staff, validation workshops and quality assurance checks on evaluation reports. A related point is the need for SSR evaluations to draw on a broader range of information sources, where possible triangulating the views of different actors, but also where views diverge, highlighting this as a finding. In the majority of cases, UK (ie DFID) project level reviews and evaluations of justice and SSR work take a maximum of two weeks, centre on the capital city and do not solicit the views of the general public in any way. The limitations of this are obvious, though there might be some question as to whether the typical security specialists who carry out DFID/CPP SSR evaluations have the requisite skills to hold public consultations.

- *Staff rotation:* A further challenge identified is that of staff rotation at post. Staff from all three main government departments may spend a few years at most, and often only months in post. This means that M&E arrangements must be clear and embedded into projects and office management systems or else the knowledge of individuals is very quickly lost.

5.   Trends and opportunities

A few trends and opportunities can be identified which might be useful in the drive to improve UK Government practice with respect to M&E of SSR. The general trend towards focusing on aid effectiveness and improving impact evaluation that affects all government departments to a degree but for the most part DFID and the CPP is perhaps the most notable. But as part of this larger trend, several concrete opportunities can be identified.

First, in the case of DFID, the creation of the IACDI may present a number of opportunities in relation to project level evaluations which have been identified as one are for future improvement. In addition, in view of concerns raised both by external actors and DFID advisers on questions surrounding M&E of SSR, DFID's evaluation department has now proposed that a comparative thematic evaluation of all SSR work supported by the organization be carried out. This would be a unique opportunity for an in-depth study, allowing comparative learning from numerous projects. However, this proposal will be considered by the IACDI committee along with many other priorities and it would take two to three years for any such evaluation to start up.

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[23] For example, the Malawi Safety, Security and Access to Justice (MASSAJ) programme established its own Criminal Justice Sector Audit Office which did nothing but collect public perceptions on these issues and the sector's performance. Routine survey work has also been used in Nigeria by DFID, though there is still much variation on justice work. Interview, Biesheuvel, 17 October 2008. In addition, SSDAT's governance adviser made reference to a simple but powerful monitoring tool that has proved successful in the broader governance area, the 'citizens' report card' in which members of the public regularly rate government on responsiveness, service delivery, levels of corruption and similar. However, where this has proved successful, it has generally been backed up by an engaged civil society. Interview, Newsum, 24 September 2008.

Second, the birth of the CPP may be a window of opportunity for those looking to push forward the M&E agenda in relation to SSR but also conflict prevention, since for the first time there is a single market force driving programmes and departments to compete for funds through demonstrating rigorous project design, planning and M&E plans. Those who can demonstrate impact are more likely to win bidding contests, and provided the CPP can maintain funding levels In the face of other pressures, this should follow through to enhance the monitoring and evaluation of SSR work.

More than one interviewee pointed out that M&E is becoming a focus area for the inter-departmental critique of bid proposals to CPP with far more rigour now being introduced to deal with questions of defining success and ensuring that adequate preparation for M&E is in place for funded programmes. (One interviewee estimated that around three quarters of the commentary exchanged between departments on proposed CPP bids now relates to M&E.) Spending restrictions (eg ongoing reductions in non-ODA funds within the CPP) are apparently a further inducement to ask searching questions, particularly for those departments and strategies that are most affected (eg the FCO-managed international capacity building strategy that supports non-ODA peace support operation training, or MoD military capacity building).

Third, HMG's response to the concluding report of the 2008 review of GCPP SSR expenditure which contained a commitment to improve measures of impact for this type of work, has since been formally endorsed by the NSID Cabinet committee, making improvements to the M&E of SSR a clear political commitment for the UK Government.[24] This makes senior managers within the CPP and related SSAC structure who are responsible for coordinating thematic SSR work and expenditure key allies since they stand to gain from the introduction of viable M&E guidance. Similarly, structures like the SSDAT which are currently changing their role, could potentially take on greater responsibility in relation to M&E.

Lastly, among several tasks allocated to CPP staff is developing indicators for its programmatic work on conflict prevention. These would be part of a broader structure of strategies and guidance that will feed into a coming cross-Whitehall strategy on conflict prevention linked to PSA 30 and the UK's new National Security Strategy and will in some form need to take account of SSR work. As noted earlier, the CPP Secretariat and also SU would look favourably on any additional guidance for SSR work provided it can somehow be married with their broader arrangements.

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[24] Promoting Conflict Prevention Through Security Sector Reform: Review of Spending on SSR through the Global Conflict Prevention Pool, Recommendations and HMG Responses. Available from, http://www.ssrnetwork.net:5001/documents/Publications/PromConfPrevThruSSR/GCPPSSRreportresponse3June.pdf.

Annex 1: Interviewees

Piet Biesheuvel, Libra Advisory Group, 17 October 2008

Nikki Burgess, Policy and Planning, Ministry of Defence, October 2008

Chris Campbell, CPP Strategy Manager for International Capacity Building, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 17 September 2008

Mike Hollis, CPP Secretariat, CHASE, DFID, 28 August 2008

Mark James, Stabilisation Unit, 04 August 2008

Stephen Logan, Security Sector Development Advisory Team, 24 September 2008

Angus Morris, Security Sector Development Advisory Team, 24 September 2008

Asha Newsum, Security Sector Development Advisory Team, 24 September 2008

Eleanor O'Gorman, M&E Consultant to CPP, Cambridge University, 28 August 2008

Louise Proudlove, Cabinet Office, 01 October 2008

Tim Robertson, Evaluation Department, DFID, 24 September 2008

Mark White, Regional Conflict Advisor, DFID/Foreign and Commonwealth Office, West Africa, 18 September 2008