

# OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE NOTE: PROCESSING A SECURITY & JUSTICE ASSESSMENT PROPOSAL

This is the first OGN in the assessment series. It covers issues to be taken into account when first receiving a request to assist with a security and justice assessment. It provides an overview of the main steps that you should consider in order to ensure that you have as clear a picture as possible of what is required in order to start planning, as well as gathering initial information. It assumes that the request has come from a donor, but that the national partners will be brought into the process as soon as possible, in line with commitments under the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action.

## SUMMARY OF STEPS

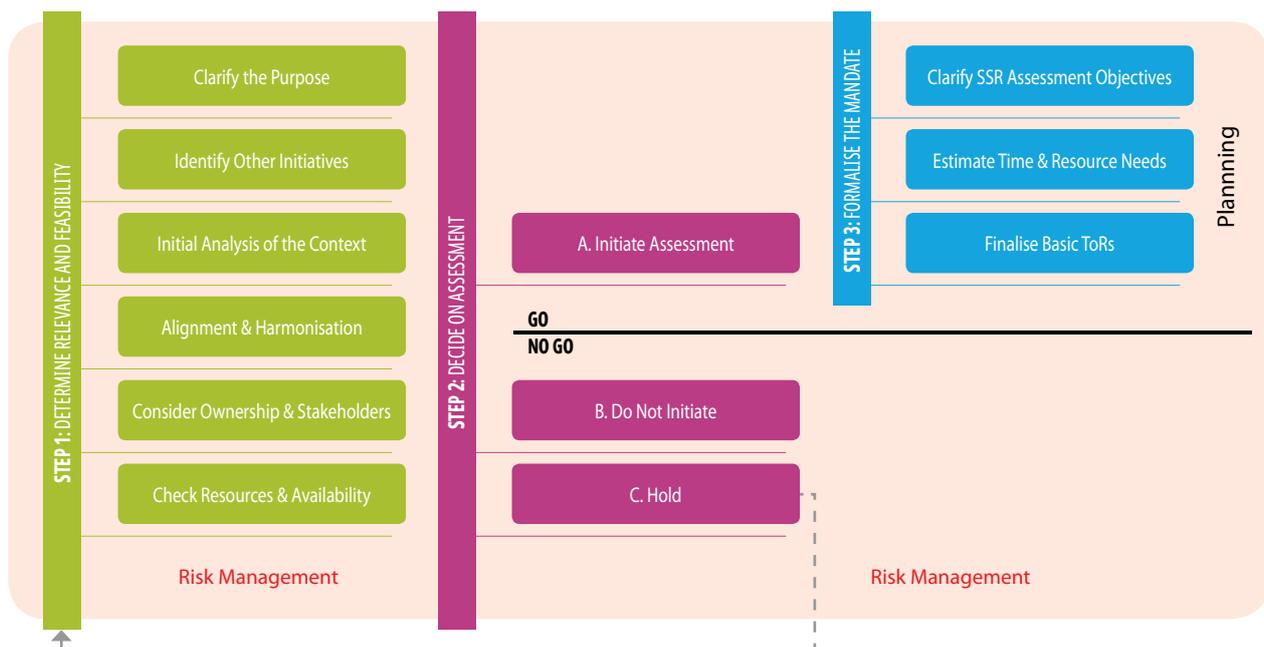
**STEP 1. DETERMINE THE RELEVANCE AND FEASIBILITY**

**STEP 2. DECIDE WHETHER TO GO AHEAD WITH THE ASSESSMENT**

**STEP 3. FORMALISE THE MANDATE TO BEING PLANNING**

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 FACTORS FOR PROCESSING THE PROPOSAL



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](http://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 THE RELEVANCE AND FEASIBILITY OF A PROPOSED ASSESSMENT

### Clarify the Purpose

A fundamental step in undertaking assessments is to clarify the purpose, as this informs the remainder of the whole process.

If not explicit in the initial proposal, the purpose of the assessment can be determined through consultations with the mandator – this may take several discussions.

In addition to the purpose given, there may be additional reasons why the assessment is taking place at a particular time or place. Understanding the trigger for the assessment proposal and understanding the motivation of the mandator will help you to map the environment in which the assessment will take place, as well as flagging up potential areas of political sensitivity.

It may be useful to ask for clarifications in writing to avoid any ambiguities, and guard against differences in views between different representatives of the actor proposing the assessment. In addition, it will allow you to monitor any changes in the purpose throughout the assessment.

Trigger example: A country has an election where reforming the security sector has been part of the campaign. The donor wishes to provide immediate support to capitalise on the momentum created by the elections.

Trigger example: A minister in the country that has mandated you has a large Diaspora in his constituency and wants to be seen to support SSR efforts in the home country of his potential voters.

### Identify Other Initiatives

It is critical to know of previous similar initiatives (planned or already carried out), both internally (donor country) and externally (partner country and other donors). In addition to benefiting from prior information gathered on the context and challenges in country, you can also benefit from any lessons that previous initiatives have gathered on the process they used.

It is very rare that an assessment would be going into an environment where there has been no prior security or justice related

There may be sensitivities over alerting external parties that an assessment is being planned – for example, expectations can be raised – this may be particularly pronounced during peace processes or in post-election contexts.

In such circumstances, a particularly cautious approach should be adopted – initial contact to obtain information may have to be broad and unspecific. A cost-benefit analysis should be undertaken with the mandator to determine how much information should be released about the potential engagement when sourcing external information.

activities, so it is unlikely that you will be starting from scratch. However, it can be difficult to find out about prior initiatives – especially if carried out by actors other than the mandator, due to the reluctance of many parties to share reports.

Useful sources to identify other assessment initiatives include:

- Donor coordination mechanisms in the partner country;
- Individual networks with people working in the country;
- Local and international academic institutions and civil society organisations that deal with security and justice, as well as related subjects (human rights, etc.) in the same country;
- International organisations and other donors implementing security and justice programmes in the country or region.

## Initial Analysis of the Context

### In the Mandator Country(ies)

In your initial analysis of the donor country context, you should identify and review:

- Past and current country strategies for engagement in the partner country;
- Relevant thematic policies;
- Inter-departmental coordination mechanisms;
- Related budgetary and funding procedures.

Such policies, mechanisms and procedures determine the framework in which an assessment can be carried out and can have an impact on its relevance and feasibility.

A Whole of Government Approach (WGA) should be encouraged throughout the whole process, using existing, or encouraging the establishment of, inter-departmental policies and coordination mechanisms. For example, a proposal to assess a police institution may be shared with relevant counterparts in justice, corrections, defence, foreign affairs or development departments in order to identify possible synergies and/or frictions.

Government changes, restructuring of institutions, or staff turnover could have an impact on the assessment. Such risks need to be considered to determine the relevance and feasibility of an SSR assessment request.

A proposal to assess a police institution may be shared with relevant counterparts in justice, corrections, defence, foreign affairs or development departments in order to identify possible synergies – but be aware that there may be issues of internal politics to overcome.

### In the Partner Country

Whilst considerably more in depth analysis of the political, economic, socio-cultural, geographical and physical factors will be carried out during the planning and conducting stages, you need to carry out an initial analysis, as these factors could affect the relevance and feasibility of a specific assessment. In addition, you should consider important development frameworks such as Poverty Reduction Strategies, IMF benchmarks for debt reduction and EU integration processes.

A useful method for classifying the information gathered is using a framework of Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal (and National Strategy), Environmental and Security factors (PESTLES). Examples are available on the ISSAT website [www.issat.dcaf.ch/toolsandresources](http://www.issat.dcaf.ch/toolsandresources).

## Alignment and Harmonisation

In order to operate in such a way that the assessment adheres to the Paris Declaration commitments, you need to consider how your actions will support alignment and harmonisation in the partner country. You should:

- Identify relevant coordination mechanisms in the partner country that could be used for security and justice (such as mechanisms related to policy, funding, or technical and strategic coordination);
- Identify donor countries are potential partners for engagement in any future security and justice support activities; Determine potential overlaps with current or future bilateral or multilateral security and justice support initiatives (including assessments).

An inability to adhere to these principles would seriously call into question the relevance of the proposed security and justice assessment.

## Consider Ownership and Stakeholders

Although it can be difficult to obtain detailed information at this stage, you should already try to identify the most relevant stakeholders that should be actively included, and those that should be at least informed, in the different stages of the assessment process. This is to minimise resistance and to ensure ownership of the

**Joint Assessment Mission (JAM):** Including representatives from various stakeholders (country counterparts and relevant other donors) in the assessment team represents a unique opportunity to build a common understanding about the specific security and justice challenges and the appropriate responses, as well as to enhance coordination. JAMs are, however, also challenging. Their members represent the institutions they come from and do not necessarily bring together a set of complementary competences that would be desirable.

process. As a general principle, joint assessments with local partners and other donors are preferable to stand-alone initiatives. You may want to consider an initial scoping assessment to build up a clearer picture of what is possible within the constraints of the mandator's budget, procedures, etc, and determine who the best partners in country could be, which would then be followed by a more in-depth contextual assessment involving a joint team. As a minimum, you should ensure that the intention of and purpose for conducting the assessment are well communicated to partner country actors before the assessment formally goes ahead.

Engaging with in-country coordination mechanisms is not without risk. There can be significant levels of competition between the high number of governmental and non-governmental donors in a specific post-conflict country and the existing structures may be blocked.

Often, it is difficult to get an accurate picture of the activities of other donors in the same sector. As a result, complete information on donor activities cannot be obtained and duplication of security and justice activities may happen. Partner countries may not always alert donors if particular activities are already being funded by someone else. Such a situation may make it difficult to develop reliable findings during an assessment. This can be mitigated against in part by encouraging joint assessments from the start, as different members will have access to information from a greater range of donors.

As far as possible, assessments should be locally-owned processes. This means a process owned by both the security and justice providers and the population that the providers serve. This raises a

number of questions that you should address with the mandator:

- What is the role of the partner country in deciding to launch the security and justice assessment?
- Is the involvement of the partner country in the security and justice assessment being considered by the mandator – and if not, why not?
- What individuals, groups, networks and institutions will be consulted in the assessment?
- Will the partner country's people be heard in the security and justice assessment and will they be able to voice their security needs?
- Who makes the decision on these questions?
- What process is followed in making that decision?

Relevant constituencies to be consulted during the assessment, as well as potential spoilers and supporters of the proposed assessment should be identified to determine the relevance and feasibility of an assessment: Who needs to be heard? Can they be heard? How can they be heard? And what are the time and resources needed to hear the relevant constituencies?

It may be the case that a group or an actor should be consulted for a particular assessment but can actually not be heard because their security is at risk or because the necessary time and resources are not available. Assessing the security needs of the population, for instance, usually involves complex, time-consuming and resource-intensive surveys that may need national researchers engaged over a long period of time. As a result, the proposed terms of reference for an assessment should take these factors into account.

### Check Resources Availability

You will need to have a clear idea of the kind of resources available to undertake the assessment, as well as their source and any constraints or risks that might affect their availability. In addition, if the purpose of your assessment is to identify a potential SSR programme, you should also find out the amount and potential funding sources for the

Launching an assessment always raises some expectations. Launching an assessment without availability of any funding for future programming support is generally not advisable. It raises expectations that cannot be fulfilled from the beginning. Assessments should not be carried out just to be seen to be 'doing something'.

potential programme. The amount of funding available for programme support determines the kind of support activities a security and justice assessment can propose. Generally, an assessment should not be launched if no funding for future programme support is available, or if there are no procedures in place to obtain funding.

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## STEP 2. DECIDE WHETHER TO GO AHEAD WITH AN SSR ASSESSMENT

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The decision to go ahead or not with an assessment needs to be explicitly taken with the mandator, based on your review of the relevance and feasibility of the proposed security and justice assessment. The decision may be to:

- Initiate the security and justice assessment;
- Not initiate the assessment;
- Hold until certain conditions are met;

The potential positive and negative consequences associated with each of these three decision options should be identified before a decision is made. An analysis of the potential positive and negative consequences will not only facilitate the decision-making itself but will also help to promote opportunities associated with a decision or to manage undesirable consequences once the decision is made.

A security and justice assessment may have to be delayed, adapted or may not be possible at all for a variety of reasons. Examples include:

- Upcoming elections that focus all attention and may change the political environment;
- The security risks for an assessment team are too high;
- The rainy season makes in-country movements difficult

Such factors have to be identified and considered in deciding whether and when to go ahead with an assessment request.

Potential positive and negative consequences of decision options relate to changes of expectations of potential beneficiaries, as well as changes to the role and perception of the donor country in the partner country. For instance, the decision of a donor country previously involved in humanitarian assistance to launch an SSR assessment will draw the attention of security actors and other donors involved in SSR, and will raise the donor country's political profile due to the sensitivity of security and justice.

Depending on the circumstances and whether they have already been involved at this stage in the process, partner country representatives should be involved. Other government actors and departments at Headquarters and in the field who are affected by the decision should be informed about its outcome.

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## STEP 3. FORMALISE THE MANDATE OF THE ASSESSMENT

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### Define Objectives and Scope

If a decision to initiate a security and justice assessment is taken, you should determine the objectives and scope in partnership with the mandator, on the basis of the constraints identified during Step 1 (the relevance and feasibility review). In addition, you should make preliminary considerations on the assessment approach and methodology that you might use in order to determine the amount and type of resources and time needed for the assessment.

Whilst not ideal, when time and/or budgetary constraints prevent mobilising a multidisciplinary team, the lack of specific expertise may be mitigated by providing clear instructions and methodological tools to gather and compile information in these specific areas.

### Estimate Approximate Time and Resources Needed

You will need to make a preliminary estimation of time and resource needs of the assessment. Mobilising these resources (in particular relevant human resources) is critical for a successful security and justice assessment. When considering the team, remember the three dimensions of security and justice development: with the holistic nature, political sensitivity and technical complexity.

Suggestions for team skills are included in the table below.

Context Skills	Process Skills	Personal Skills	Technical Skills
Country Knowledge	Research Techniques	Cultural Sensitivity	Sectoral Technical Expertise
Language	Drafting Skills	Humility	Gender Expertise
Seniority & Political / Diplomatic Weight	Analysis Skills	Ability to Tolerate Uncertainty	Knowledge of Other Actors Supporting SSR
Political Acumen	Negotiation Skills	Team Player	Security Awareness
Cultural knowledge	Listening Skills	Organisational Skills	Logistics

Gathering such a team is usually challenging and should be considered and initiated as early as possible. At least three to four months lead-time should be foreseen if no pool of qualified experts exists. The team leader will play a key part in the planning, so this post should be filled as early as possible if different to the person who has been involved up to this stage (i.e. the person working through this OGN).

### Finalise Basic Terms of Reference (ToRs)

In most instances, the mandator will have already submitted ToRs with the request for you to support them in an assessment. Based on these, and in partnership with the mandator, you should ensure that the basic ToRs are updated so that set out the parameters for the planning stage. The ToRs should describe the background of the assessment request, the objective of the assessment, its scope and provide sufficient information for the operational planning to begin. If possible, they should include the criteria that the mandator wishes you to use if developing priorities or recommendations. They should also outline the cumulative skill set needed within the team and provide a rough timeline envisaged for the assessment.

The choice of team members will be influenced by the type of output required from the assessment (e.g. type and delivery of report). Note - you will be either updating the basic ToRs or drafting a second set during the planning phase that will include details of the methodology and take into account any developments or new information.

### Set Up Your Risk Management Matrix

As covered in the Overview for the series of OGNs on Assessments, risk management is a crucial part of planning and conducting an assessment. You should set up a risk management matrix at this stage, which will be checked, maintained and updated throughout the process. This includes possible risks that you have identified (for example, including those in the red boxes throughout the OGNs), an analysis of their likelihood and possible impact, as well as ideas on how to mitigate against such risks. A separate OGN is available on risk management on the ISSAT website.



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# SUPPORTING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S SSR CAPACITY



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