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Measuring the Impacts of Security Interventions: Innovating for Success

in

Drugs Policy, Organized Crime, Rule of Law and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)

New York, 30 June 2015

Convene, 730 Third Ave, New York

Concept Note

The complexity of contemporary security interventions relating to drugs, organized crime, rule of law and countering violent extremism (CVE), and the climate of fiscal austerity, both underline the need to strengthen the assessment of effectiveness in those interventions. Identifying and demonstrating impact is not easy. Indeed, many of the metrics currently used to measure security intervention outcomes are arguably not fit for purpose. Innovative new technologies, techniques and methods are, however, emerging. This workshop aims to highlight innovation in these fields and encourage cross-fertilization; and allow governments and intergovernmental actors to consider how to apply these innovations in inter-agency contexts.

Introduction

How can we measure the impacts of security interventions such as drug control interventions, efforts to counter violent extremism, rule of law interventions, and efforts to combat organized crime and gangs? The challenges posed are many:

- challenges identifying the impacts of preventive programming – how do you prove you contributed to a non-event?
- security and privacy limits on inter-agency information sharing;
- limited access to and confidentiality of interview subjects and data;
- disagreement over key terms and the measurement of variables;
- small or unrepresentative samples and biases;
- research ethics (e.g. human subjects considerations); and
- challenges of contextualization and presentation of data and results.

Consequently, many existing approaches to measuring the impacts of different security interventions focus on what is easily quantifiable: mines cleared, arms collected, drugs seized, police trained, legal cases processed, combatants cantoned, gang-members prosecuted, to name some commonly-used indicators. These, however, are not necessarily good measures of an intervention's impact. They can,

on occasion provide wildly inaccurate impressions of an intervention's efficacy, with dangerous results.

Take the case of Mozambique, where a UN disarmament program resulted in the collection of 200,000 weapons – clearly a significant impact, by any measure. But what was the scale and nature of that impact? The 200,000 weapons represented a small fraction of the millions of weapons estimated to be in Mozambique at the time.¹ Moreover, the program failed to put the weapons it had collected beyond use and the caches were eventually raided by criminal elements. Mozambican arms were then smuggled to surrounding states, where they fueled further conflict and crime.² The Mozambican case demonstrates the pitfalls of assessing the impacts of security interventions by relying too heavily on easily quantified, short-term data devoid of context.

New Approaches

There is a growing debate in the international community about how to better measure the impacts of security interventions, especially in light of recent methodological and technological innovations that have put more comprehensive, accurate, and less expensive measurement within reach. Drugs policy provides a good example. Historically, international efforts at monitoring the impact of drug policy interventions focused on metrics that highlighted achievements in supply and demand reduction: seizures of illicit drugs, crop eradication, number of arrests, and consumption levels. This approach did not necessarily measure progress towards the larger goals stated by the international drug control conventions as being at the heart of the regime: improving the health and welfare of populations. The traditional 'metric' approach has often failed to measure the impact one metric had upon another, the knock-on effects of outcomes dubbed successful by quantitative standards (e.g., eradication in one area stimulating production in another), and ignored certain social and security impacts of drugs and drug control policies (e.g. corruption, political destabilization) altogether.

As awareness of these shortcomings has grown, the discussion around drug policy assessments has broadened to consider whether measurements that reveal intervention impacts on public health, development, and human rights may be needed to provide a more fulsome and accurate understanding of the complex impacts of drug policies and programming. A recent report from UNDP has called for a reassessment of approaches to drug policy evaluation, stressing the importance of including these dimensions, and highlighting the potential value of alternate metrics that measure access to health services, harm to individuals, social and economic development in affected communities, and underlying conditions

¹ Marie Eloïse Muller, *From Warfare to Welfare: Human Security in a Southern African Context*, (Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2004), 31, and Jennifer Perry, "Small Arms and Light Weapons Disarmament Programs: Challenges, Utility, and Lessons Learned," US Defense Threat Reduction Agency, July 12, 2004, 10.

² Mark Knight and Alpaslan Ozerdeem, "Guns, Camps, and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (July 2004), 501-502.

such as poverty and insecurity.³ Researchers and advocates are also grappling with these issues and developing innovative new ideas for rethinking drugs policy metrics.⁴ These types of expanded approaches to measuring security interventions become all the more relevant in light of the soon-to-be finalized Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which will require effective measurements to gauge progress. Impact assessments in the fields of organized crime, rule of law, and drug policy can contribute to successful action on SDG Goal 16, which seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Innovations in one field – such as anti-gang programming in North America, which has through innovation and analysis developed sophisticated measurement techniques over the past two decades – may also be highly informative for programming design, implementation and M&E in other fields, such as CVE.⁵ In other cases, technological innovations have led to new techniques and methods for measuring success, expanding the amount and types of data collected and shifting the nature of collection itself. In the rule of law field, the low cost and pervasiveness of mobile technologies is facilitating perception-survey based methodologies for rapid assessment of citizen attitudes to different justice needs and providers.⁶ Cellular technology and cloud computing have made it easier to poll people in dangerous areas and analyze their political preferences; games-based approaches may help us better evaluate notoriously difficult to measure social beliefs, norms, and relationships, like trust.⁷ Moreover, research has suggested that subjective measures, such as beneficiary perception surveys, may, if used wisely, help provide a more complete picture of an intervention’s impact, with wide applications for security interventions from rule of law to CVE programming.⁸ Instead of – or in addition to – measuring the number of court cases processed by a newly reformed judiciary, measuring the public’s acceptance of, and experience with, the new institutions may be a more effective approach to understanding the impact of such reforms.⁹ Digital technologies are also transforming the sources of data available to researchers and funders, and the ways that communities impacted by security

³ UNDP, *Perspectives on the Development Dimensions of Drug Control Policy*, March 2015.

⁴ Robert Muggah, Katherine Aguirre, and Ilona Szabo de Carvalho, “Measurement Matters: Designing New Metrics for a Drug Policy that Works,” Strategic Paper 12, Igarapé Institute, January 2015.

⁵ Anthony A Braga and David L. Weisburd, “The Effects of ‘Pulling Levers’ Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime,” Campbell Systematic Reviews, Vol. 6, March 2012. Available from <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/lib/project/96/>

⁶ See for example Maurits Barendrecht, Martin Gramatikov, Roger El Khoury, Gediminas Motiejunas, Sam Muller, David Osborne, Kavita Heijstek-Ziemann, “Justice Needs of Yemenis from Problems to Fairness,” The Hague Institute for the Internationalisation of Law (Hiil), 2014. Available from http://www.hiil.org/publication/yemen_report; and “Les Besoins des Maliens en Matière de Justice: Vers plus d’équité,” Hiil, 2014.

⁷ For example, see Craig Charney, “Here, There, and Everywhere: The Cell Phone at the Bottom of the Pyramid,” December 5, 2009. Available from <http://www.charneyresearch.com/resources/here-there-and-everywhere-the-cell-phone-at-the-bottom-of-the-pyramid/>.

⁸ For example of the use of subjective measures in evaluating some CVE programming, see Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Peter Romaniuk, and Rafia Barakat, “Evaluating Countering Violent Extremisms Programming: Practice and Progress,” September 2013. Available from http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Fink_Romaniuk_Barakat_EVALUATING-CVE-PROGRAMMING_20132.pdf.

⁹ For example, see Gramatikov et al. 2014.

interventions can participate in monitoring and accountability. In South Africa and South America, for example, the availability of digital cameras and social media is transforming approaches to monitoring policing and complex security interventions such as the ‘pacification’ programmes in Brazil’s favelas.¹⁰

About the Workshop

To improve awareness and uptake of these innovations, this workshop, hosted by UN University’s Office in New York, invites Member States, donors, practitioners, researchers, academics, and innovators of all kinds to explore new approaches to the assessment of an array of security interventions.

Participants will engage with innovative research on intervention assessment, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in the fields of rule of law, organized crime, drug policy, and countering violent extremism. They will consider how developments in one field may contribute to the others, and begin to consider what they mean for policy and programming. Despite the differences in the aims and approaches of drug policy, organized crime, rule of law, and countering violent extremism interventions, they share common methodological challenges, use common data (or commonly find it lacking), and can take advantage of many of the same innovations. By bringing together scholars and practitioners focused on an array of security interventions, this conference will help break down siloed mentalities, facilitate cross-fertilization of evaluation approaches, and share lessons learned.

¹⁰ David Bruce and Sean Tait, “A ‘Third Umpire’ for Policing in South Africa: Applying Body Cameras in Western Cape,” Strategic Paper 14, Igarapé Institute (March 2015). Available from available at <http://en.igarape.org.br/a-third-umpire-for-policing-in-south-africa/>