Contributing to Human Security through training: a mission impossible?

Conference report December 3, 2019

PAX

Introduction

Training of international security forces and governance actors is commonly seen as one of the more viable and safe options to contribute to goals as wide as Security Sector Reform (SSR), Protection of Civilians (PoC), gender, counter terrorism, stabilization, anti-piracy and border security. The Netherlands contributes to many forms of training with a variety of means coordinated by a diversity of bodies. However, 'developing' international capacities in complex and fragile settings is riddled with challenges such as competing political interests and coordination mechanisms, a limited capacity to plan for and adjust to local realities, a general lack of outcome tracking and ultimately the risk of harming human security despite the best intentions. On December 3, 2019, PAX brought together international training experts and policy makers to reflect on best practices and pitfalls of international contributions to training with the explicit aim to discuss and suggest recommendations to the Dutch training efforts.

The PoC department of PAX initiated this event as part of its partnership with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Goal of this conference was to bring together national and international practitioners and policy makers in the field of training with the explicit aim to discuss and suggest recommendations to the Dutch training efforts and to contribute to the impact on Human Security through Dutch contributions to international training.

This conference focused on both training Troop/Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) in the case of pre-deployment for UN missions and bilateral training programs Security Force Assistance (SFA) such as Flintlock. Dutch participants consisted of training specialists from the Netherlands Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs and policy makers relevant to decision making for Dutch contributions. International participants consisted of a mix of NATO, UN and EU practitioners and policy makers. Whereas the focus lies on direct operational relevance to Dutch training contributions the wider community of interest consisting of researchers, civil society and independent training specialists were included.

Opening

The opening stressed training for PoC is about behavioral change and impact on the ground, rather than about adding to paper realities or endless policy discussions. If there are no adequate protection actions provided by peacekeepers, it is important to distinguish between a lack of capacity to act or a lack of motivation to act. Training can only contribute to the capacity of peacekeepers, whereas adequate accountability mechanisms should prevent there being a lack of motivation to act in the field and at HQ levels. Evidence-based policies are needed to enable effective training and thus improve the execution of peacekeeping operations in practice.

PoC needs to address interconnected issues and requires inclusive approaches that include communities in conflict areas and that include diversity in protection actors, which is needed to connect with the diversity of people in conflict areas. Leading by example as T/PCC is important to establish a norm and an operational practice of working inclusively and comprehensively on protection.

Key note: Challenges in training for security

This presentation[1] focused on the changing landscape in which (UN) peacekeeping is taking place and on the practical challenges to peacekeeping and was followed by recommendations and key take-away's. It was argued that leadership in crisis is the lynchpin of operational effectiveness in peacekeeping and requires mentoring in addition to training. Peacekeepers need to prevent, rather than respond, and community-engagement and locating hot-spots for threats to civilians are key in training and in mission.

Among the challenges presented, were: confusion on the implementation of PoC as mission objective, insufficiently trained/prepared contingents and risk aversion in mission, restrictions on T/PCC's contributions -so called "caveats"- and the difficulty to work in partnerships. Recommendations include changing the mindset of peacekeepers to pro-active prevention, tailoring T/PCC's contributions to mission requirements, T/PCCs supporting other T/PCC's with pre-deployment training and mentoring, and providing host nations with training and mentoring whilst conducting operations.

The Q&A revolved around the (at times self-imposed) restrictions of military staff and the perceived divergence between field realities and policy making. The need to tell governments earnestly what is needed was stressed as requirement, including an honest assessment of possible success and failure. The potential contributions of training are hindered by restrictions on peacekeeping contributions and NATO communication limitations.

Reality checks: 'Are we doing the right things and are we doing things right?'

The reality checks focused on the conceptual difference between organizing training based on **outputs** or on **outcomes** and the very practical differences these yield. Whereas an **output-oriented** training essentially focuses on checking the boxes of number and gender of participants, timeslots dedicated to topics and test scores in training, the objective of an outcome-oriented approach is instead focused on a change in behavior as a result of that training, rather than the training itself being the objective. Moreover, an outcome orientation will help decide whether training, education and/or monitoring are relevant means to that outcome to begin with.

The question whether 'we' are doing the right things and are doing things right was further explored and combined with a discussion on room for critical self-reflection, learning and adapting training to achieve planned results. Politics and budget restraints (annual need to spend entire budget or lose it the following year) were discussed as limiting the freedom and honesty needed for planning and implementing training, to the extent that training missions can only be written up as successful, independent of the circumstances and results. Training also risks being viewed as the solution before the problem is known when there is insufficient honesty and realism involved in its planning and execution.

Overly focusing on operational issues in training can distract from the needed connection with civilians who are to benefit from improved human security as the outcome of training. Mentoring

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[1] See www.protectionofcivilians.org/poc_events/ for details of this presentation.

of security staff and including feedback loops after training can help minimize longer-term negative outcomes and can help refine training and mentoring approaches. Explicit space to reflect, learn and adapt is needed to mitigate overt focus on training outputs. Honest discussion with politicians and policy makers can mitigate **over-promising and under-delivering on** training, as well as providing security capabilities that are then used against the population.

Breakout sessions

The breakout sessions in the afternoon focused on lessons learned and creating practical recommendations on the following three topics: **1) Measuring Success and Failure in Training, 2) Curriculum Development for Training and 3) Inclusivity in Training for Security**. The workshops were introduced by experts and were followed by interactive group discussions (civil and military participants combined). All breakout presentations can be found on the website www.protectionofcivilians.org/poc_events/.

Measuring success and failure in training: Do we know what we are doing?

After a presentation on UN pre-deployment training requirements and challenges, it became clear that one of the strengths of UN training can also be its weakness: UN training is a shared responsibility that requires a broad range of T/PCCs to contribute to a common goal. Different levels of pre-deployment preparedness, national caveats and diverging operational approaches challenge coherent and effective outcomes of trainings. Other challenges include the UN Secretariat having little control over whether T/PCCs follow UN guidelines and standards in the training of uniformed personnel, and the issue of some training participants being insufficiently prepared to successfully continue with the training curriculum.

Best practices for training include scenario-based trainings and table-top exercises in mission where military, police and civilian staff train together. Discussed challenges in evaluation of training were, among others, the lack of flexibility to evaluate, insufficient practical follow-ups on the evaluation outcomes, and political influence that may obscure honest evaluation of participants by imposing a need for success. Discussions then evolved around how perceived limitations on frankness in assessments on whether a participant is underqualified (and therefore should never have been selected or should not continue with the training) or needs additional training before pre-deployment training is seen to add value. Current participant evaluation mechanisms employed by many T/PCCs do not provide insight into how relevant the training was to the capacity for peacekeeping in practice, as longer-term outcomes are not measured. In this regard, the importance of following DPO guidelines on the Design, Delivery and Evaluation of Training was highlighted.

Recommendations

- T/PCCs should adhere to **UN pre-deployment training standards and requirements**.
- If individual performance is **insufficient** during the pre-deployment training**,** the individual should be sent back to unit.
- **Training and mentoring contingent rotations** by previous rotations is a system that has proven to work well.
- Evaluation of training needs a **longer-term outcome feedback loop** to assess the training content and its relevance to operational requirements in peacekeeping.

- ♦ T/PCCs should follow **the overarching UN standard** to make training troops from different countries easier, with individual training institutions and programs being held to account for quality.
- ♦ A training **needs assessment** is critical to assess the value of training as a means to an end. Do not merely implement the standard way of training, but use a training that is focused on **contextualized needs** in peacekeeping operations.

Curriculum development for training: Paper realities or practical requirements?

Participants discussed current PoC and Human Security (HS) training curricula. What makes a good PoC training; what is the current state of PoC and HS trainings offered by the UN, NATO and others and what is or should be developed. Participants emphasized the difference between training and education: *Training* prepares participants for expected situations, whereas *education* aims to achieve behavioral change and skills that can be applied to new, unfamiliar contexts. This difference is important as training is often incorrectly taken as a catch-all for all preparations for peacekeeping at the detriment of education. Current UN and NATO training and education modules on PoC and HS focus heavily on the PoC/HS concepts and policies set by these organizations but they do not always focus enough on practical implementation in the field for military participants. Next to that, there is a need rethink the way training and education of protection topics (or cross cutting topics in NATO - PoC, Children in Armed Conflict (CAAC), Women Peace and Security (WPS), Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)/Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Cultural Property Protection (CPP), Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)) can together shape a modular curriculum to prevent duplication and make sure it all adds up to a comprehensive package of training and education for military. Suggestions were made for more cultural sensitivity in PoC courses and to develop courses at the T/PCC level, rather than general basic PoC courses for all nationalities and contexts.

The group discussed the need to build consensus on the definition of PoC, including PoC in planning, mapping of PoC priorities, capabilities and activities in all parts of the Dutch government and armed forces and asked for more discussion on measuring the effectiveness of training.

Recommendations
- ♦ Continue to build a **joint definition and operational understanding of PoC**.
- ♦ **The Netherlands MOD can develop a PoC curriculum**, incorporating existing concepts and modules from NATO and UN. Mapping **existing PoC capacities** within military, civilian and police branches can serve to adapt/inform the curriculum.
- ♦ **Integrate the PoC agenda into operational planning**. Military work with strict planning; PoC needs to become a part of that planning from the start of the process in order to enable operational effectiveness and opportunities for evaluation.
- ♦ **Focus on outcomes** rather than outputs in order to understand and measure impact in all its forms.

Inclusiveness in training for security: from numbers to effectiveness

In the breakout session on inclusivity in training for security, participants gained more insight in the dynamic of the Engagement Platoon for UN Peace Operations, which was originally developed to enhance the situational awareness of the Battalion. Examples were given on why a

focus merely on participation is not sufficient (*from numbers to effectiveness)*, with the promotion of more female participation in training as a clear case study (*inclusivity is about more than 'add women and mix').* While it encouraged female engagement, the original narrative and the messaging gave the impression that women exclusively have the role of engaging with the local population, whereas a culture of acknowledging and accepting the importance of women was needed in *all aspects* of peacekeeping operations.

Participants felt the need for a shared understanding of what inclusiveness means in practice. In general, participants described inclusivity as an approach that is about giving inclusive weight to the various voices in intervention strategies, meaning that all diverse views should be represented at the table. If these views are not included in missions and trainings, a significant part will be missed and, consequently, the goal of the training, and therefore overall goal of the mission, will not be met. Some participants perceived inclusivity as a general demand from higher up, and wanted more room for a focused discussion on how it contributes to the goal of the training and what it exactly means for the implementation process.

Recommendations
- There is a need for **a clear definition** on what inclusiveness is **in practice** and **more discussion** on *how* and *when* **it contributes to the goal of the training**.
- Inclusiveness should be considered as a **means to an end rather than as a goal in itself**.
- Inclusiveness is **not exclusively about numbers, rather it** is an ongoing approach that needs to **be tailored from the higher ups to the mission forces on the ground**.
- In military training, inclusiveness should not be considered as 'ticking off the boxes', but as an **approach that improves the effectiveness of training and the mission**.
- **Local communities** and **specific groups** that are the **target of protection efforts** should **benefit from improved human security as an outcome of military training** and **their perspectives should be included to improve the effectiveness of training**.

Reflections: How training can contribute to Human Security

These general reflections are inspired by contributions from participants, but the wording and categorization are PAX's responsibility. Based on the plenary sessions, breakout sessions and plenary discussions, PAX identified several lessons learned:

- **Definitions and clarity of concepts**: It is vital for the planning and conduct of training to have shared definitions and concepts among organizers and participants, specific clarity on what the concept and goal of PoC is, the difference between an output- and outcome- oriented training, and clarity on education, training, and mentoring as specific contributions to changing behavior. This clarity can be provided based on current definitions and concepts.

- **Frank discussion, honest reporting and open discussions and critical self-reflection**: Training that 'must be a success' will be judged as such independent of the outcome. Addressing a fear to fail needs to include all levels, from the field to HQ, as it obstructs learning and the improvement of training practices.

- ♦ **Politics and funding:** Many participants have experienced insufficient space to discuss operational limitations with politicians. 'Mission impossible' situations can be prevented by discussing limitations up front and in earnest, forcing a realistic goal that can be evaluated.

- ♦ **Mindset and changed behavior:** Leadership in crisis and training for changed behavior were seen as more relevant than more policy documents, particularly when coupled with appropriate accountability mechanisms.

- ♦ **Capacity and motivation:** Training will not be effective when there is a lack of motivation to apply lessons learned in practice. Accountability on performance needs to be coupled with clear training and operational goals to improve the outcomes of training for security in general and for peacekeeping specifically.

- ♦ **Quality improvements in training outcomes**: It is necessary to include vetting processes based on relevance and capacity of participants, besides the ability to assess participants throughout their training (including sending back to unit when performance is insufficient) based on criteria relevant to operational requirements. Feedback loops on relevance of training for operational requirements can refine content and approach to training when needed. Diversity and inclusiveness in the vetting process should be focused on the quality and effectiveness of the training.

Concluding reflections from the Netherlands Ministry of Defense, Foreign Affairs, PAX and the audience (photo: Jeppe Schilder)

Evaluation

In the final session, an open and frank conversation was encouraged through the use of Mentimeter questions with subsequent opportunity for discussion. This way, we captured feedback from participants on the meeting itself. Figure 1 shows the results of feedback on participants' general impression of the day.

In general, participants appreciated the conference. When asked how people felt in one word, the most frequent answers were: 'insightful', 'interesting', 'informative' and 'reflective'. When asked what people liked most, words that were mentioned were 'frankness'/'openness', 'comprehensive and integrated approach', 'diversity' and 'interaction with others in the field' ('different actors and perspectives'). When asked about a negative aspect of the day, most people answered 'absence of police actors', 'military focus', 'too much NATO or UN focus', 'need for more NGO perspective' and 'more structured breakout sessions'. When asked which key actor was missing in the room, most people answered 'police', 'political actors' and 'other (non-Western) TCCs/PCCs'.

A complete overview of the evaluation results can be found on
www.protectionofcivilians.org/poc_events/.

Figure 1: Participants sharing their impression of the day in one word