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Can the Logical Framework help to manage change?

Perspectives from the field of Security Sector Reform

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Comments on this Discussion Paper are invited.

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Abstract

Despite its widespread popularity, the logical framework (LF) has also been the subject of much criticism in development. Much of this critique contends that many development processes are associated with non-linear and dynamic change, while notions of change as implied by the logical framework are based on a predicted set of causal and linear results. This critique is all the more poignant for in the domain of peacebuilding and security sector reform (SSR), where the perceived dissonance between the assumptions inherent in the LF and the complexity and unpredictability of typical SSR environments is all the bigger. Based on an analysis of the perceptions of SSR practitioners, we find that the logical framework's ability to pre-determine change is limited, as it is particularly utilized as a communications tool and mainly during a projects' design stage. Evidence suggests that determining the change process during the stage of project design was often the subject of a dialectic relationship and lengthy discussions between the various stakeholders and that the logical framework was found quite helpful in this phase of the project cycle. Its use as a communications tool, primarily during project design and the complex dialectic process of negotiation during its creation, largely explain why its perceived inability to predict and manage the complexity of change is not experienced as a problematic feature, that would 'straightjacket' the change process itself.

1. Introduction

Project managers and specialists working on in the field of SSR have been confronted with the need to manage interventions in oftentimes challenging circumstances. Though there is no commonly agreed-upon definition for SSR, it is generally understood as the process to reform a state's security and justice actors (e.g. armed forces, police, ministries, judiciary, non-state security and justice providers etc) within a democratic framework (OECD DAC 2007). It responds to situations in which dysfunctional security and justice actors, both state and non-state, are unable to provide security services to protect the state and its citizens (Ibid.). To implement and manage the change processes of these interventions, SSR experts have come to rely on a particular programming tool: the logical framework.

The use of the logical framework has become widespread, including in the context of SSR interventions. Ever since its conception in the 1960s in US military planning, it has only gained in popularity among international development organizations (e.g. UNDP, ILO etc.), development agencies and NGOs (Bakewell and Garbut 2005; EC 2004; ILO 2010; NORAD 1999; SIDA 2005; UNDP 2009; USAID 2012). Though differences in terminology, definition and visual presentation persist among these actors, at its core the logical framework is often referred to as the diagrammatic representation of an intervention's of an intervention's summarized theory (often in a matrix or table format), expressed through a hierarchy of expected intermediary and final results and governed through causality (Rogers 2008).

Practitioners and researchers have criticized the use of the tool however, pointing to a possible tension between the dynamic complexity of change processes in peacebuilding and SSR environments and change as implied by the logical framework. SSR and peacebuilding activities assume a dynamic and non-linear change process, while the logical framework is a tool based on a predicted set of causal and linear results (Ball, 2014; Brusset, De Coning, and Hughes, 2016). Building on elements in complexity theory, it is argued that, because peacebuilding[1] is complex, the use of logical frameworks is problematic (Brusset et al. 2016). If peacebuilding en-

[1] SSR is generally considered a sub-field of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding activities may include SSR, but also other activities, such as SALW (Small Arms and Light Weapons), DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) and mine action. See DCAF (2009), for example.

vironments function as complex systems, shaped by the interactions of security and justice actors, they can respond to interventions in ways unforeseen by the logical framework (De Coning 2016). Changing power dynamics among security actors, for example, can change the implementation of SSR programs significantly, thus requiring practitioners to alter programming or invest in substantial political dialogue (Ball 2014b; Gordon 2014; OECD DAC 2010). Altering programming or engaging in dialogue, however, may have an effect on the project's change process and how this process should be defined. By implication, this may change the overall course of an SSR intervention, its objectives and thus what constitutes 'project success'. Yet, what constitutes 'success', is predefined in a logical framework during a project's planning stage. Prior to implementation, a logical framework specifies through a causal, linear change path, what final and intermediate goal(s) must be achieved; what outputs are to be produced to achieve those goals; what activities are required to produce specific outputs; and what indicators may be used to measure progress, among others (Arkesteijn, Van Mierlo and Leeuwis 2015). This is incongruous with the nature of change processes in SSR, which are too often reduced in a logical framework to a single linear path, based on a set of expected, causal outcomes (Brusset et al. 2016).

As such, it has been argued that SSR implementation poses difficulties to applying the logical framework to manage change. However, less effort has been invested in actually empirically researching the tool's perceived use in the context of SSR. SSR practitioners are especially well placed to understand the benefits and challenges of the logical framework to manage change in SSR, yet this is not reflected in research. Much of the critique, uttered by e.g. Brusset et al. (2016) and Ball 2014, is essentialist in nature and focuses on the dissonance between the complexity of SSR environments and logical frameworks per se.

To evaluate these claims, this discussion paper will therefore investigate in what way the logical framework is practically used to manage change processes in SSR interventions: Firstly, how has the tool been used in designing and implementing SSR change processes, and secondly, how is the tool assessed by its users? The first sub-question is pertinent, as an investigation into the logical framework's actual de facto function in SSR projects is essential in understanding the relevance of SSR and peacebuilding experts' critique. Much of the critique in literature is based on its innate characteristics. This is an assumption, which requires closer investigation. Categorization as a 'project design tool', for example, could draw attention away, from what the logical framework's actual function in SSR projects is, presuming it has a function at all. The second sub-question more directly addresses some of the concerns made by peacebuilding theorists (see above) with regards to the use of the logical framework, in managing change.

In order to answer these questions, we combine primary data collection with a desk research. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire to gather general information and followed up with in-depth semi-structured interviews with those participants willing to do so.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: First of all, we introduce the logical framework as a tool, i.e. what it actually is and what it consists of, and how it may be distinguished from the logical framework approach (LFA). Subsequently, through a literature review, perceptions on its use in development work, and more specifically peacebuilding and SSR, will be presented, including recent insights from the perspective of complexity theory. This will then be contrasted with an analysis of the results of our field work pertaining to the use of the logical framework in a number of selected SSR initiatives, before finalizing with our conclusions.

2. The Logical Framework in the context of Development, Peacebuilding and Security Sector Reform

2.1. What is a Logical Framework?

Since its conception in the 1960s, the logical framework has become a key project management tool. One of the main objectives of the logical framework approach and the logical framework itself was to provide a common vision and understanding of a project (Couillard, Garon, and Riznic, 2009).

In this regard, a distinction must be made between the logical framework itself and the broader LFA. The latter was devised as a systematic approach to the whole project cycle, encompassing design, implementation, monitoring and review (Naswa, Traerup, Bouroncle, Medellín, Imbach, Louman, and Spensley, 2015). As it is defined here in this article, the logical framework itself refers to a diagrammatic abstraction of the project, representing the project linearly in multiple causal stages. Adopting a LFA to project planning and management implies the creation of a matrix at some stage. As such, the development of the LFA has gone in hand with the development of the logical framework itself (Couillard et al. 2009). The logical framework itself contains information with regards to performance measurement and is often used in the context of project design, monitoring and program theory evaluations.

The logical framework in matrix or table format is governed through both a vertical logic, representing the hierarchy of objectives, while the horizontal logic demonstrates how success for each level of objective is measured through indicators and which external factors (in the form of assumptions and risks) may affect progress (Bakewell and Garbut 2005). Concretely, this matrix (or table) is divided into several columns and lines – either in a four by four model, or a variant of this model, with more columns and/or lines (Couillard et al. 2009). The vertical logic, representing the results chain or objectives hierarchy, consists in descending order of one overarching Goal, Impact or Objective; one or more Purpose(s) or Outcome(s); various Outputs and Inputs, Activities or Processes – each occupying a single line. These are all intended to be logically sequenced through a narrative, in which achieving one objective within one level (or line) leads the project to the next level (Gasper 1997). In practice, many variants exist, both in terms of structure, terminology, exact definition of each objective level etc. The terminology used above for each objective level is exemplary of the extant variety in how objectives are phrased or referred. For example, in the second column from the top, USAID will refer to 'Purposes', while DfID mentions 'Outcomes' (USAID 2012; DfID 2011). Development partners define and structure the logical framework in different ways, but, in practice, many logical frameworks will follow a similar model. This model consists of a single linear, causal pathway, based on a set of expected outcomes (Rogers 2008).

Below a template of a logical framework is included.

Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions/Risks
Impact/Goal/Objective			
Purposes/Outcomes			
Outputs			
Activities/Inputs			

Starting at the bottom of the matrix, a project's description may be derived by breaking down the conditional causal chain, as such:

- IF inputs are given, AND the assumptions between inputs and activities hold, THEN the activities can be undertaken.
- IF the activities are undertaken, AND the assumptions between activities and output are fulfilled, THEN the project outputs will be produced.
- IF the project outputs are produced, AND the assumptions between outputs and goal are completed, THEN the outcomes should be realized.
- IF the outcomes are realized, AND the outcome-goal assumptions hold, THEN the goal is likely to be achieved (Crawford and Bryce 2003).

The columns allocated to each objective level generally consist of a Narrative Summary, Objectively Verifiable Indicators, Means of Verification and Assumptions (Couillard et al. 2009; Gasper 1997). The Narrative Summary provides a short description of each objective at a specific level. One or more indicators are added to act as measures against which progress will be measured, while means of verification refer to the various data sources (e.g. surveys, reports, statistical offices, etc.) from which information can be extracted. Assumptions include a summary of external conditions, which must hold true if that particular objective is to be met. These assumptions inject the logical framework with a number of preconditions, which must be met, in order for the innate theoretical causality to be translated into an observable, tangible reality (Crawford and Bryce 2003).

In short, the logical framework summarizes what a project sets out to undertake: what it intends to do, what the various objectives of a project are, what activities are required to achieve these objectives, and what assumptions must be fulfilled for these objectives to be completed (Couillard et al. 2009). Thus, a project's change process is predefined through the logical framework's approach during the project design stage and then implemented. Various levels of objectives are linked to each other through a predefined process of causal analysis and are expected to take place, provided all conditions are met to advance through the various levels.

A note must be made in this regard with regards to the concept 'logical framework' and its definition. The definition used here, borrows from Rogers' work (2008). Yet, though de-

scribed as a 'logic model' in that particular case, care should be taken not to essentialize such terms and self-evidently associate them with a particular definition. There is no widespread agreement on the use of this particular terminology, necessarily matched with a particular definition: various authors, for example, use the terms 'logic model' and 'logframe' or 'logical framework' interchangeably without any definitional distinctions (Alcamo 2017; Arensman, van Waegeningh, and van Wessel 2018; Chen 2016; Maru, Sparrow, Butler, Banerjee, Isone, Hall, and Carberry 2018). Funnell and Rogers (2011) define 'logframes' as a particular type of 'pipeline logic model', consisting of four components or boxes for different result levels and specifying it as 'a matrix that sets out for each component a description, indicators, means of verification, and assumptions'. More generally, these views reflect the widespread diversity of phraseology and conceptualization of project management tools. Many authors admit to this widespread conceptual and practical confusion between various tools and/or how they are labelled (Dhillon and Vaca 2018; Funnell and Rogers 2011; Maru et al. 2018). Rather than discussing the nature of the tool, this paper focuses on the term 'logical framework', associates it with a broad definition and discusses its practical use in the context of development work.

2.2. Using Logical Frameworks in Development and Peacebuilding

The logical framework remains widely recognized by many experts, in the words of Couillard et al. (2009) as "an effective project design, evaluation, and management tool" (p. 32). Dale (2003) praises its simple format and conceptual clarity, prior to suggesting modifications to enhance its applicability and information-carrying capacity.

Nevertheless, its use is has been subject to debate among development researchers. Some have posed that the use of the tool leads to simplistic reductionism, based on a priori claims to knowledge. Though Rogers (2008) concedes that "they provide a clear statement of the overall objective of an intervention" (p. 34), she simultaneously cautions for the risks in using such models. Factors, such as the local context, may contribute to a project's overall outcome in unforeseen ways (Rogers 2008). Maru et al. (2018) have posed that the use of the tool simplifies the relationship between various levels of outcomes, particularly in situations of complexity when interacting feedback loops and resulting unforeseen consequences. Arkesteijn et al. (2015) have similarly argued that the logical framework approach exemplifies a rationalistic and predictive approach to causes and effect in human behaviour, without adding 'uncertainty' as an inherent feature of systemic change. Given that the logical framework presumes a static environment, it excludes contextual factors and runs the risk of running into unforeseen problems. This may complicate a project's change process – regardless how the latter is conceptualized. The emphasis on causal analysis can neglect broader relationships.

Chambers (1997), Gasper (2000), Rogers (2008), and Bakewell and Garbut (2005) caution that this reductionist view may also lead indirectly to a loss of the tool's representativeness. As logical frameworks reduce change processes to a single, causal chain of events, they are more likely to present a single theory of change for a specific project, rather than represent stakeholders' view (Rogers 2008). It must be stated in this regard, that all these authors focus on the logical framework as a tool, without focusing on the broader LFA or other tools, such as types of stakeholder analysis. Nevertheless, this criticism remains pertinent, given the usual focus on local ownership in development and peacebuilding processes. This principle implies an inclusive and locally defined and implemented change process. If a logical framework's change process reflects a particular agent's notions of change (such as a donors), then it could challenge local ownership of that change process. On the other hand, it has been argued by some

researchers that the extent to which 'external' actors can generate ownership of change processes is limited in any case. If social change is, for example, perceived as a result of a dialectic relationship between 'external' and 'internal' actors, the extent to which 'external' actors can 'control' local actors through the logical framework is far from certain (Long 2001).

Borrowing elements from complexity theory, some experts have questioned the feasibility of using program theory tools, such as the logical framework, to design, manage and evaluate complex programs. Referring to evaluations in situations of complexity, Stufflebeam (2004), for example, has argued that the use of program theory tools such as the logical framework is not useful, as it "assumes that the complex of variables and interactions involved in running a project in the complicated, sometimes chaotic conditions of the real world can be worked out and used a priori to determine the pertinent evaluation questions and variables" (p. 253).

It must be noted that all of the authors cited above discuss its use in development in general (Bakewell and Garbut 2005; Gasper 2000). Empirical exercises where limited however to a number of sub-fields, such as education (Stufflebeam 2004) or health programming (Barnes et al. 2004; Rogers 2008). De Coning (2016) and Brusset et al. (2016), have devoted some work to peacebuilding specifically but much of their work relates to the theoretical implications of the use of project management tools in the context of peacebuilding. These insights are relatively recent and empirical studies on the topic are rare. This is in stark contrast to the vast resources, dedicated to peacebuilding and SSR worldwide over the past few decades.

At the same time, much of current SSR and peacebuilding literature imply that change processes in their fields are inherently complex. 'Local ownership', a key concept in much of peacebuilding and SSR literature, implies that initiatives must be grounded in local circumstances, which are acknowledged as dynamic, and thus subject to constant (re)delineation by local actors (Donais 2008; Nathan 2007). This accepted complexity renders SSR of particular interest when examining the implementation of logframes. Though similar arguments have been made with regards to its implementation in the field of development in general (see above), the relative paucity of empirical studies in peacebuilding and SSR remains notable. Indeed, peacebuilding experts, such as Brusset et al. (2016) and De Coning (2016), join fellow development scholars in their criticism of the logframe, except that the latter also refer to the complex nature and characteristics of peacebuilding environments as a determinant in problematizing the change process (see below).

Some peacebuilding researchers have attempted to bridge the perceived complexity of the peacebuilding environments and the use of the logical framework. The latter defines the change process as a predicted set of causal and linear objectives, whereas the former imply that actual change processes are dynamic, non-linear and unpredictable in nature. Van Stolk, Ling, Reding, and Bassford (2011) noted that though stabilization environments[2] are unpredictable and complex, monitoring and evaluation approaches can still be utilized though in a nuanced manner. In that sense, they should be made explicit and embedded into general planning, management and delivery of activities, rather than organized discreetly on an ad-hoc basis (Van Stolk et al. 2011). In addition, proper methods of measurement should be identified and theories of change should be regularly reviewed to check for adverse impacts, which in turn would allow for revising planning and implementation (Ibid.).

[2] As Van Stolk et al. (2011) mentions, stabilization environments are referred to as environments, which are stabilizing either in the immediate aftermath of a conflict or even while a conflict is ongoing. SSR activities can often take place in such environments.

Building on elements of complexity theory, Brusset et al. (2016) have postulated that as peacebuilding (of which security sector reform is a particular form) takes place in complex adaptive systems, the use of the logical framework becomes problematic. In this vein, De Coning (2016) has stated that peacebuilding environments function as social systems which partly organize themselves. The interrelationships between actors are in themselves generating context-specific meaning within a system (De Coning 2016). Moreover, there is no such thing as a 'single state of affairs' or set of 'root causes', which can be identified and resolved (Ibid.). Systems are not static, due to the constant interactions between various actors. Multiple systems may exist and influence each other. As such, the conflict and its causes are not static, but are always in flux (Ibid.).

In programmatic terms, Makhan-Lakha (2016) suggests that the "complex long-term nature of the peacebuilding and conflict resolution contexts and their implementation at multiple levels (local, national, regional, and continental) clearly present a challenge to the logical framework models and their linear cause-effect assumptions" (p. 183). This raises questions about the epistemological assumptions underpinning peacebuilding and SSR on the one hand and logical frameworks on the other hand. Similarly, Hunt (2016), critiques linear modelling in the context of peacebuilding activities. This approach relies on an epistemology, which reduces observable phenomena as ordered, 'knowable' and certain (Hunt 2016). As Hunt (2016) puts it, linear modelling based on the logical framework "assumes that social systems are characterized by simple causality resulting from direct relationships between components. On the contrary, repairing conflict-affected societies constitute 'wicked' problems (rather than 'tame' ones), where unintended consequences will arise from any attempt to intervene and alter their composition" (p. 85). Furthermore, it fails to reflect the subject matter, which is systemic in nature (Hunt 2016).

In her work with regards to the Burundi Security Sector Development Program, Ball (2014) specifically refers to the absence of results frameworks and logical frameworks to allow for programming flexibility. Instead, she notes that SSD would take a problem-solving approach, based on local conditions (Ball 2014). Activities were designed and implemented progressively to improve these conditions (Ibid.). This standpoint implies at the very least that the logical framework does not contain the required flexibility to implement SSR activities.

In sum, much of the development and peacebuilding literature reflects critically on the logical framework's ability to capture inclusive and dynamic change. As noted before, the SSR concept implies a more complex approach to 'change' than is implied by the logical framework. Some SSR and peacebuilding researchers have gone further and implied that change processes in SSR require more flexibility, than can be managed by the logical framework (Ball 2014). The points, raised by Ball (2014), Brusset et al. (2016), De Coning (2016) and Hunt (2016), are of particular importance, as they connect the challenge of using the logical framework within peacebuilding environment to the logical framework's innate characteristics.

Yet, the question remains how development practitioners, working on SSR projects, view such matters in practice. In the next section, we will discuss how logical frameworks are used to manage change in the context of specific projects and how the experts using these tools perceive their value.

3. Logical frameworks in the Practice of SSR programs

3.1. Methodology

For the empirical research, we collected primary data through a questionnaire l in a first step. The questionnaire served the purpose of providing general information on the participants' backgrounds and their overall impressions on the use of the logical framework. The participants were selected from an original sample of 53 individuals, who had a full profile and biography on the online International Security Sector Advisory Team's (ISSAT) Community of Practice[3]. Though many participants (and therefore) interventions qualified, time and resource constraints required a focus on a restricted number of interventions.

A smaller group of 19 respondents to the questionnaire was selected, based on the following pre-established criteria: their background in SSR, managing or supporting specific projects, and relevant project management skills, with a specific focus on the design and implementation of logical frameworks. The questionnaire was sent to all these respondents. Five of these individuals responded to the questionnaire and participated in follow-up interviews.

Following up on this initial questionnaire, in a second step, we administered semi-structured interviews with those participants willing to do so. These interviews expanded on the information provided in the questionnaire and allowed for more tailored questions per participant and their views on the logical frameworks they worked on in the context of their projects. We did in-depth interviews with six SSR experts with a reference to one specific SSR project or program. In one case, a participant only did the interview, due to the late stage of the research process. We also included one interview with an expert who worked in the context of an intervention *without* an overarching logical framework. This expert worked with the Security Sector Development (SSD) program in Burundi, a program which was intentionally designed without an overarching results framework or logical framework so as to enable a flexible, iterative approach to planning and implementing activities (Ball 2014). As such, it was deemed that the expert's perspectives would yield useful insights with regards to the utilization of the logical framework. The analysis in this paper is based on the perspectives of participants, working with SSR interventions in Honduras, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Serbia, Moldova and Myanmar.

All participants in this research gave their consent. Partly given the political sensitivity involved in implementing SSR projects, all information provided was and remains confidential. Their names are as such omitted in this research. In order to provide some context, however, it can be stated that two of the participants were nationals, working on projects in their respective countries. The remaining four were international staff. Furthermore, this research will not discuss the details of specific logical frameworks' inherent characteristics (such as e.g. providing detailed descriptions of specific outcome statements), as this is not the focus of the main research question.

Finally, we must address some limitations inherent to this research. Firstly, this paper should not be seen as an exhaustive analysis on the application of the logical framework in the context of SSR. Rather, juxtaposing claims made in SSR and peacebuilding literature, it seeks to tentatively explore the role of the logical framework within the context of a number of SSR programs, based on the perceptions of selected individual practitioners.

[3] ISSAT, a division of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), provides practical support to members of the international community in its efforts to improve security and justice. Its Community of Practice (CoP) aims to encourage practitioners to share their collective wisdom and experience, and to collaborate on the development of SJSR good practice. See https://issat.dcaf.ch/Share, for more information.

Secondly, this paper focuses on the logical framework as a project design and monitoring tool. One of its main functions is, however, in the context of evaluations (Rogers 2008). In practice, including the evaluation function, would have presented this research with an additional research challenge: evaluations were conducted by external persons, whom would have to be contacted separately. Given time limitations, this was not deemed feasible. In addition, the projects in Myanmar and Burkina Faso analyzed in this research are only in early stages of development and no evaluations have yet been conducted for these projects. Furthermore, this limitation does not necessarily detract from existing evidence on the use of the logical framework during project design and implementation, which are important functions regardless.

3.2. Project Design Phase

Theoretically, the logical framework plays an important role as a project management tool in predesignating and implementing the change process. In this regard, what must be examined more closely is its actual function at the beginning of the project cycle.

According to the findings derived from the responses, the logical framework is primarily used during the design stage. All respondents noted that the logical framework provided a common basis for understanding how the project was developed. As a respondent supporting the project in Burkina Faso mentioned: 'The logical framework allows to formalize discussions and to clearly define the objectives to be attained and begin a reflection on how to measure progress' (Questionnaire – Respondent, Burkina Faso). Thus, it served the specific purpose to reach a common agreement between stakeholders on the proposed sequence of change.

Based on evidence, it can be argued that a project's specific process of change, as required by the logical framework, implies 'reducing' various stakeholders' perspectives to a single agreed-upon process. This is determined through negotiation and dialogue, while the logical framework provided the overall structure of and format for the negotiation of that change process. A useful distinction can be made in this regard between the tool as a final product and the dialogue required to agglomerate the various opinions of stakeholders to one change process. In all cases, local stakeholders were less interested in completing the tool itself and focused more on the change process it represented, especially if they believed their needs were affected or constituted a method to control them (see below). Donors often played an important role in insisting on the use of the logical framework specifically. With regards to the matrix, in almost all cases, apart from the project in Burkina Faso, the step to draft a logical framework was undertaken or at least prompted by donors. In the exceptional case of Burkina Faso, the use of the matrix was actually decided upon, after the Ministry of Interior Security rejected using Outcome Mapping[4].

Many interviewees noted the requirement to use the tool to communicate with donors during project design and that it primarily served as a tool to validate donor's approaches to the project. This does not mean, however, that local security and justice actors were necessarily ignored. In five out of six cases, local security and justice actors simply demonstrated a lack of interest or will to actually develop and complete the logical framework as a matrix during the project design stage, according to interviewees. This mostly arose from a lack of clear understanding of how the tool functioned and how it was to support their work. On the other hand, in all examined cases, local stakeholders were consulted broadly on their needs and weaknesses through formal events such as workshops or more informal meetings. Subsequently, based on

[4] Outcome mapping is a methodological approach to development planning, monitoring and evaluation. It seeks to assess behavioural change among people, groups and organizations. See, for example, Jones and Hearn (2009).

these needs, the matrix was completed by project teams in all cases, with inputs from donors. In turn, this informed the actual design of the change process within the logical framework. In sum, though the logical framework in the initial phases of the project indeed requires reduction to a single change process, the formulation of this change process was in fact the result of dialogue between project teams, donors and local stakeholders about what interventions and therefore what change was required. At the same time, donors played an important role in initiating the process through the use of the logical framework in the first place.

A particular point of contention, highlighted by the respondents, was the need to balance local needs with those of the external partners (i.e. project teams and donors). In particular, in four out of six cases, local requirements for tangible benefits (such as trainings, equipment and infrastructure) had to be reconciled with external partners' focus on the broader governance aspects of SSR. In the context of the Burkinabe and Serbian project, for example, local stakeholders often insisted upon the provision of physical infrastructure and equipment by donors, such as vehicles for the Anti-Terrorism Unit of the Interior Security Forces in Burkina Faso (Interview with respondent, 13 August 2017; Interview with respondent, 17 August 2017). In two cases, the development of indicators proved challenging due to friction between external and local stakeholders. Donor pressure often played an important role in resolving such discussions. In the context of Burundi, the aforementioned performance measures were included, at the Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry's insistence, which was the main donor (Ibid.). Similarly, in Moldova, the respondent noted that thematic experts, such as lawyers, 'did not like using numbers. There was pressure from the donor's side to provide quantitative data. Hours of discussion were needed to see if certain indicators could be used' (Respondent questionnaire; Interview with respondent, 19 July 2017). Thus, in the context of defining the change process through the structure of the logical framework, local stakeholders and external parties engaged in a dialogue with each other to agree on a common theory of change. Pressure from the donor's side, however, often plays a decisive factor in shaping particular issues or performance measures.

Participants noted that one of the main effects of this dialogue was the establishment of a working relationship between project stakeholders. This could be quite challenging, due to the nature of the work. In four cases, participants noted the particular difficulty of establishing this trust with local security and justice actors. The difficulty of developing indicators in Burundi and Moldova demonstrates this (see above). Similarly, during the design stage in general, in the context of the Myanmar police reform project, the respondent mentioned that much time had to be devoted to arranging and holding meetings with local stakeholders (Interview with respondent, 18 August 2017). Nevertheless, all participants noted that the dialogue during the process of formulating the logical framework, proved important in the long-term process of establishing a functioning working relationship.

Upon finalization during project design, all respondents mentioned the importance of the logical framework as a matrix or table in its communicative abilities to visualize the change process. It was perceived as a good visual tool to communicate how the change process is supposed to develop. In all cases, the target audience comprised mainly donor officials, project team members and key beneficiaries.

To conclude, during the design stage, the use of the logical framework is perceived as providing a common basis for understanding. Donors are viewed as playing an important role in the whole process: in most cases, the drafting of the logical framework was initiated at the requirement of donors and particular issues, such as including certain performance measures,

could be demanded. Local security and justice actors had in effect little interest or will in designing the logical framework as a tool in itself. Instead, there was more interest in the process of change as such. Dialogue between the external and local stakeholders is viewed as important in shaping what constituted change. This negotiation process eventually allows to reduce various perceptions into a single theory of change. The process of dialogue in turn allowed in many cases the establishment of a working relationship between external and local partners. Furthermore, as a tool and finalized product, the logical framework in SSR projects proved useful as a communications tool to visualize the change process. This nuances the views, expressed in peacebuilding literature, such as Brusset et al. (2016), which poses that the use of the tool in se is altogether too challenging to use in peacebuilding contexts, due to its nature. This critique focuses on the inherent characteristics of the tool (see above). This neglects to focus on the tool as a possible product of negotiation and discussion between various actors.

3.3. Implementation Phase

The logical framework should in principle play an important role in capturing change as a monitoring tool.

However, the evidence we gathered from our respondents suggests that the logical framework's actual use during implementation is more limited. In this regard, it must be noted that, in the final quarter of 2016, the projects in Burkina Faso and Myanmar are still in early stages of development. In other cases, the actual use of the logical framework was much more limited during implementation. In the context of the Serbian, Moldovan and Honduras SSR interventions, respondents noted that the logical framework was not revised or changed, once project implementation had started.

However, four out of six respondents also generally noted the difficulty of adapting the logical framework in the context of changing, dynamic situations[5]. Only in one case was this challenge perceived, as directly connected to the nature of SSR itself. With regards to the Burundi intervention, a respondent firmly noted the impossibility of using logical frameworks to implement and monitor SSR (Interview with respondent, 17 July 2017). At the same time, this program was conformed to a specific logic, which from the outset declared the use of the logical framework incompatible with the SSR concept (Ball 2014).

In contrast to the respondent from the Burundian project, it was less clear from the other respondent whether the difficulty of using the tool was necessarily associated with the characteristics of SSR specifically. They noted the difficulty of predicting overall long-term change with the use of the logical framework in often rapidly changing situations. The logical framework's predefined and linear process of change was often interpreted as too simplistic to manage this dynamic change. It should be noted that the used logical frameworks all contained a single causal path. Though linking the difficulty of using and revising the logical framework with the nature of SSR is not straightforward, at the same time all participants noted in their questionnaires, that SSR is a dynamic, unpredictable process, involving many different types of actors (Respondent questionnaires).

According to four respondents, it was felt that the logical framework could not fully capture the less tangible elements of reform, which SSR practitioners designated as fundamental to long-term change. For example, the respondent supporting the SSR process in Honduras, notes that the logical framework may not be a sufficient tool as it 'may be too mechanical, and that it must be completed with elements of institutional processes.' (Respondent question-

[5] This group comprises the respondents attached to the projects in Serbia, Burkina Faso, Myanmar and Burundi.

naire).

In addition, three respondents also noted that an important factor in its lack of use during implementation, was tied to a lack of sustained buy-in from project teams and local stakeholders. In Serbia, there was no interest among local stakeholders to generally invest in monitoring and evaluation (Interview with respondent, 17 August 2017). In the context of the Moldovan project, there was a general lack of attention to adapt it to changing circumstances (Interview with respondent, 17 July 2017).

At the same time, at least four respondents noted the challenges in obtaining data from security and justice actors specifically, regardless of the use of the logical framework. The process of data collection was very much subject to a dialectic relationship between external partners and local stakeholders. In Burundi and Moldova, the debates involving performance indicators, extended well into the implementation of the projects. Collecting data for these indicators proved quite hard, due to reticence on the part of local actors to do so. The projects in Burkina Faso and Myanmar suffered similar problems. Though respondents were less clear whether the logical framework as a monitoring tool proved challenging to use because of any perceived complexity of SSR per se, at the same time they did note the challenges in obtaining information and collecting data, when working with local security and justice actors.

In sum, use of the logical framework during implementation was deemed challenging, as most SSR practitioners experienced the change process as dynamic and subject to constant change. At the same time, collecting data and information sharing in general proved difficult. Much like the use of the logical framework as a design tool, data collection and information sharing is in itself subject to successful dialogue between project teams and local stakeholders. Respondents noted that security and justice actors could challenge this process, thus making informed decisions about the change process in general more difficult.

4. Conclusions

Not much is known about the way in which logical frameworks function as a practical project management tool in SSR programs. This is strange, because in theory there is tension between the simple linear causality implicit in the logical framework, and the evidently complex reality of SSR due to its deeply political nature and its multi-actor setup. This pertains in particular to the claim made that the logframe inherently attempts to 'straightjacket' change in a field, which is inconstant and dynamic. Yet the evidence suggests that, in the actual practice of SSR project management, this tension is less of a problem than the literature would suggest.

The logical framework was in actual fact viewed as especially useful during the design phase of a project. It assisted in providing a common understanding for all project partners and served its purpose in outlining the desired change process. Functionally speaking, it was viewed as a well-performing communications tool to visualize change. In a broader sense, it functioned as a medium, initiating discussions with regards to the change process and performance measurement between donors, project teams and local stakeholders. As a tool, the logical framework may structure change in a predetermined, linear and causal path. However, actually defining the various objectives and performance measurements in terms of contents, is subject to dialogue between the various stakeholders. This process can be dialectic in nature, and in this context the LF can be very useful in establishing and facilitating a continuing dialogue, especially between external and local partners.

During implementation, the actual use of the logical framework is more limited. With regards to the change process in SSR itself, SSR experts viewed it as a non-linear, dynam-

ic process, influenced by political factors and the actions of many security and justice actors. Though the participants to this research did not necessarily attribute this to the nature of SSR per se, they did acknowledge the difficulty of generally extracting information and data from local stakeholders, both during the design stage and implementation. In Burkina Faso, Moldova and Burundi, substantial dialogue was often required with local stakeholders on the definition of the change process and performance measurement. Even so, local stakeholders could be quite reticent in sharing information. As during project design, using the logical framework as a tool (in this case in connection with monitoring activities), could be quite problematic and subject to change and discussion. In addition, the logical framework was not believed to be capable of capturing the less tangible elements of change.

Though in theory the logical framework 'should' be used as a comprehensive project design and monitoring tool, it can be argued that a distinction can be made between the logical framework's notional function and its de facto function in SSR projects. With regard to its capacity to actually assist in the design and implementation of SSR projects, it is assessed rather poorly. It is often not used by any of the stakeholders beyond the project design stage and it is hardly ever adapted. Moreover, most SSR experts acknowledge that change processes can be dynamic and unpredictable, which the logical framework is often believed incapable of managing. In conclusion, its limited use as a communications tool, mostly during project design; the complex negotiation process, involved in completing it; and its perceived inability to manage perceived extant complex change, inhibits the tool's capacity to simply predetermine any change at all – except for the fact that it facilitates dialogue between a variety of parties engaged in the project.

Finally, a point of caution: given the relatively limited sample of respondents we were able to draw on, our findings must be treated with due care, they should serve above all as an invitation for further enquiry into this topic.

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