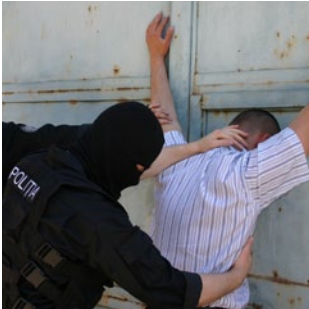


Co-ordination & Co-operation between International Actors in support of the Host Country

Good Practices Drawn from Four Case Studies:



Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings and Gender in Moldova



Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative in South Caucasus

Border Management and Security in Tajikistan

Montenegro Demilitarization Programme (MONDEM)



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Conflict Prevention Centre

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgments | 3 |
| Executive Summary | 4 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| 1. Purpose and target audience | 6 |
| 2. Background | 7 |
| 3. Methodology | 8 |
| Good Practices | 9 |
| 1. Local ownership maximizes the potential for progress | 9 |
| 2. An effective division of labour builds upon comparative advantages | 12 |
| 3. Co-ordination and co-operation structures contribute to sustainability | 16 |
| 4. Appropriate co-ordination and co-operation tools lead to efficiency | 20 |

Imprint

Prepared by the OSCE Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre, Operations Service
Design & Layout: Ulf Harr, Vienna

Published by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
OSCE Secretariat
CPC/OS
Wallnerstrasse 6
1010 Vienna, Austria

Telephone: +43 1 514 36 61 22
Fax: +43 1 512 36 69 96
www.osce.org
E-mail: pm-cpc@osce.org

© 2013 OSCE

Rights and Permissions:

All rights reserved. The contents of this publication may be freely used and copied for educational and other non-commercial purposes, provided that any such reproduction is accompanied by an acknowledgement of the OSCE as the source.

Acknowledgments

The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre's Operations Service would like to thank all staff members from the OSCE and international and national actors who made time to share their professional and personal experiences with the author of this Good Practices Study. Thanks to their commitment, this Study itself became a good practice of international co-ordination and co-operation.

Appreciation is also extended to the members of the International Stabilization and Peacebuilding Initiative (ISPI) which reviewed the initial draft of this Study and provided comments.¹

¹ Following the Washington Workshop on Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Peacebuilding (26-27 October 2010), participating organizations established the International Stabilization and Peacebuilding Initiative (ISPI). ISPI is an informal, working-level network of governments and international organizations that have joined together in their commitment to improve peacebuilding outcomes by enhancing civilian capacity globally and increasing interoperability among international actors. ISPI partners currently include Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, the African Union, the European Union, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations and the World Bank. ISPI partners have launched an International Working Group which comprises a series of Technical Sub-Groups that develop sector-specific best practices for enhancing civilian capabilities and achieving comprehensive interoperability among civilian organizations. Additionally, ISPI partners set up the Stabilization and Peacebuilding Community of Practice (SP-CoP) — a global network of international peacebuilding actors and individual practitioners, such as think tanks, NGOs, academic centers, and private sector actors and even individual civilian experts — who interact virtually to share their practical experiences, lessons learned, insights, and information on peace and stability operations. [Further information on ISPI can be found at <http://www.civcap.info>]

Executive Summary

As highlighted in the *OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century* adopted by the 2003 Maastricht Ministerial Council, no single State or organization can meet today's challenges on its own, making the co-ordination of efforts of all relevant organizations and institutions essential. Maximizing the collective and cumulative impact of the different actors involved in development also increases the efficient use of resources and the effectiveness of programmes. Staff members from various international organizations and national authorities are often confronted with similar challenges in finding the best way to work together with other actors present on the ground. This Study was drafted with the intention of providing some good practices for staff working with other actors in the field. As many good practices of international co-ordination and co-operation in support of the host country exist in the field, this Study identifies and shares a number of them collected from four cases across the area of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); namely Border Management and Security in Tajikistan, Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings and Gender in Moldova, Montenegro Demilitarization Programme (MONDEM), Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative in South Caucasus).

First of all, local ownership is a necessary condition of international co-ordination and co-operation. Local ownership can be promoted by identifying areas of assistance that are relevant for the host country and its population. Depending on the situational context, capacity-building may be needed to increase the ability of national structures to take the lead in co-ordinating incoming assistance. International actors could initially facilitate co-ordination and co-operation until such responsibility could be handed over to national actors, after which international actors could focus on indirect support.

Second, an effective division of labour is based on comparative advantages. In order to encourage this good practice, an honest and comprehensive assessment should be made of the actors present in a given area and on the strengths and limits of each partner, while at the same time respecting organizational needs and recognizing changing interests and agendas. When trust exists between partners, and willingness and responsiveness to work together is demonstrated, mandates and activities can be complementary.

Third, investments are needed to ensure co-ordination and co-operation structures are sustainable. The development of long-term strategies and the establishment of mechanisms and frameworks for dialogue can be beneficial. For that reason, actors should be prepared to jointly support such efforts, including by dedicating human and financial resources, ensuring that agreements at different organizational levels are complementary and agreeing on clear but flexible modalities and rules of partnership.

Fourth, efficient and adequate tools are required for successful international co-ordination and co-operation. Actors should therefore give in-depth consideration to which tools should be used, and how they can be used in a comprehensive manner. Meetings, for example, are only a means to foster information-exchange and encourage strategic planning. A corporate culture may help to overcome conflicting rules and procedures and personality issues.

It is hoped that through this Study, the sharing of knowledge on efficient and effective international co-ordination and co-operation can contribute to building momentum for sustainable peace and development.

Introduction

Strengthening co-ordination and co-operation with international actors has been a recurring message within the OSCE and in other international organizations. The *OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century*, adopted by the 2003 Maastricht Ministerial Council highlights that, since no single State or organization can meet today's challenges on its own, co-ordination of efforts of all relevant organizations and institutions is essential. In that regard, integrating the efforts of diverse international actors has become vital to increase financial, technical and political burden-sharing as well as to reduce duplication, wasted resources and/or incompatible equipment donations. Good co-ordination and co-operation helps to avert contradictory project philosophies and to avoid competing implementation methodologies, and it can also reduce the administrative burden of aid management on the host country as well as the confusion and frustration that might otherwise be experienced by programme beneficiaries. Co-ordination and co-operation are indispensable for the fulfilment of the mandates of international actors, especially for their field operations.

International actors typically work with partners when providing assistance to countries. These counterparts include national authorities, civil society and the local population. International actors are also encouraged to work with other members of the international community. Activities in the field are influenced by the actions of others since one seldom operates in a vacuum. International actors usually take into account the programmes of other providers for co-ordination purposes. It could also be beneficial to join efforts through co-operation agreements. In the absence of working together, the presence of various international actors within a host country could lead to duplication of efforts or an inefficient use of resources. International co-ordination and co-operation are thus an integral part of development assistance and are a pre-condition to increase the effectiveness and impact of programmes in benefit of the host country and its population.

The needs of the population and the priorities of the host country continue to be the guideline of international assistance. Programmes ought to be demand-driven in order for results to be sustainable. Local ownership should consequently be at the core of international co-ordination and co-operation. Nevertheless, some countries do not have the capacity to take the lead in co-ordinating interna-

tional assistance. Capacity-building programmes supported by international actors can be beneficial in this regard.

The leading question being addressed in this document is how the potential impact of the activities of international actors can be enhanced to the benefit of the development of the host country. The basic idea promoted is that international co-ordination and co-operation is an important tool to maximize the collective and cumulative impact of the different actors involved, such that the whole is greater than the sum of their individual efforts. Sharing knowledge on efficient and effective international co-ordination and co-operation contributes to building momentum towards sustainable peace and development.

Many strategic documents of international actors include the aspiration to improve co-ordination and co-operation in the field. Participating/member states are keen to avoid any inefficient use of resources, especially in times of limited financial means and overlapping mandates of organizations. In practice however, successful international co-ordination and co-operation is often the result of the creativity and commitment of individual staff members. The exchange of good practices is a relevant endeavour in this context. This document identifies and shares a number of good practices collected from four case studies from across the area of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) with the aim of closing the gap between strategic commitments for international co-ordination and co-operation and their concrete implementation.

1. Purpose and target audience

This Study should be seen as a source of inspiration regarding numerous practical ideas for more efficient and effective co-ordination and co-operation in multilateral working environments. While not intended as a definitive or exhaustive Guide, it nevertheless endeavours to be a useful tool to encourage mutual learning between staff in the field. No similar study covering this topic from the field perspective appears to currently exist as most reports on co-ordination and co-operation focus on the strategic level. This publication presents a general overview of numerous good practices and, as with any good practices document, translating the included recommendations into practice will need to be done with judgment and adapted to the specific political, societal and cultural context of the host country by staff in the field.

Primarily, this Study seeks to assist OSCE executive structures in enhancing their co-ordination and co-operation with other international and regional actors, especially through their respective presences in the field, as well as with civil society organizations, as appropriate. The Study is aimed at field staff in the planning and implementing of assistance to host countries or evaluating existing co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms already in place. It is also targeted at staff in the OSCE's Secretariat, institutions and field operations to help them better link existing co-ordination and co-operation efforts in the field to similar undertakings at the strategic level.

This Study could also be of interest to staff of other international and regional organizations owing to its collection of ideas that have worked in different contexts. No single overarching organization exists to co-ordinate international assistance efforts for the full development of a host country, particularly in the post-conflict rehabilitation/peacebuilding phase.² As a result, different actors are faced with similar challenges when trying to work together in the field. By exchanging good practices, time could be saved in developing co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms with partners.

In addition, host country officials and civil society staff may find the working practices identified in the Study to be useful indicators of ways to strengthen their co-ordination and co-operation with the external actors offering assistance to their country. This is particularly relevant regarding ways that international support can help strengthen capacities for local ownership of co-ordination for the purpose of ensuring sustainability of efforts.

² The United Nations System has co-ordination mechanisms in place in most countries, mainly through the UN Development Programme (UNDP) which is chaired by the Humanitarian/Resident Co-ordinator. However, this system is mainly focused on the UN internally and can thus not be seen as a system co-ordinating all actors during all phases of the conflict cycle. In the case-studies assessed during the preparation of this Study, very little connection with the UN Country System was observed. In the humanitarian field, the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) possesses the mandate to co-ordinate all humanitarian actors on the ground. Nevertheless, by the post-conflict phase, the assistance of OCHA would be largely complete as its mandate addresses the intermediate aftermath and early recovery of natural disasters and complex emergencies.

2. Background

The OSCE is a regional security organization under Chapter VIII of the United Nations (UN) Charter. Indeed, it is the largest regional security organization in the world, with fifty-seven participating States and an area stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It thus links a diverse geographic space, a varied group of States and their societies, as well as different cultures, regions and national identities. The OSCE also has a number of Partners for Co-operation in the Mediterranean and Asian regions. To provide a context for the Study, it should be noted that the OSCE addresses to some extent all phases of the conflict cycle. Moreover, since its beginnings in the 1970s, the OSCE³ has adopted a broad and comprehensive approach to security in which the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human dimensions are seen as inter-linked and equally relevant.

The OSCE recognizes the political and operational imperative of working with other international actors as evidenced by its *Platform for Co-operative Security*, adopted at the 1999 Istanbul Summit as part of the *Charter for European Security*. The *Platform* recognizes that inter-organizational co-operation is needed to promote comprehensive security, which is evidenced by the OSCE's experience in co-operating with other organizations at both the head-quarter and field levels. The *Platform* contains a number of modalities for such co-operation and this Study builds further on its contents by looking at some of those modalities from a practical field perspective.

The *OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century*, further reaffirms that the OSCE is a forum for co-operation with sub-regional organizations in its area and pledged that the OSCE would continue to organize information-sharing and co-ordination meetings on specific topics with these organizations and institutions.

In December 2011 at the Vilnius Ministerial Council meeting, the OSCE executive structures were tasked in Decision No. 3/11 on 'Elements of the Conflict Cycle' "to develop lessons identified and best practices as regards co-operation and co-ordination with international actors in the field." This Study responds to this task⁴, and highlights in particular the importance of local ownership.

In that context, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of 2005 included that '*Partner countries commit [inter alia] to take the lead in co-ordinating aid at all levels in conjunction with other development resources in dialogue with donors and encouraging the participation of civil society and the private sector.*' Donors committed to '*respect partner country leadership and help strengthen their capacity to exercise it.*' Since co-ordination should be demand-driven and practical, local ownership was thus recognized to be at the centre of co-ordination among international actors.

³ First convened in Helsinki in July 1973 as the 'Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe' (CSCE), it was renamed in January 1995 to the 'Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe' (OSCE).

⁴ This Study complements other recent initiatives, such as the report of Amb. Lundin on "Working together: the OSCEs relationship with other relevant international organizations – Nine steps to effective OSCE engagement" (CIO.GAL/83/12/Corr.1* of 9 July 2012), which was commissioned by the Irish OSCE Chairmanship, and the report by Prof. Dr. Ulfstein on 'The Council of Europe and the OSCE: Enhancing Co-operation and Complementarity through greater Coherence', March 2012. This Study is different from these reports in as far as it takes a field perspective and it compiles practical recommendations primarily aimed at field staff.

3. Methodology

The OSCE has a wealth of experience and tools, particularly its field operations, upon which to draw. Any good practices document should thus include a number of practices that have worked well, particularly on the ground, in different circumstances. Therefore, four case-studies were identified to provide the basic data for this publication:

1. Border Management and Security in Tajikistan
2. Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings and Gender in Moldova
3. Montenegro Demilitarization Programme (MONDEM)
4. Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative in South Caucasus

The case-studies were chosen to balance different criteria. First, they cover all four regions where OSCE field operations are established (South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia). Furthermore, the three OSCE security dimensions (politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions) are reflected in these four topics. Another factor that informed the selection of cases was the variety of actors that work on the specific topics so as to gather the perspectives of counterparts with diverging backgrounds. Further consideration was given to varying degrees of intensity of working relations, the different development stages of the host countries, and the willingness of partners to participate in this research exercise.

The good practices listed in this publication are the result of a combination of research techniques. For every case study, background material was researched to understand the context and to draft first hypotheses of why co-ordination or co-operation works or does not work in the specific case. These statements were then tested through first-source information, collected through interviews with members from international staff, both OSCE and partners, and national staff, both civil society and national authorities. The interview questionnaire employed was based on the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. These subjective opinions on good practices were complemented by direct observation of co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms during field visits. Statements collected in one case study were cross verified with other cases in order to allow

generalizations of good practices to be elaborated. However, in some cases, it had to be concluded that certain practices are only valid in specific contexts. Data from other good practices across the OSCE was integrated as appropriate. Practical examples referring to the four case studies are provided throughout for the sake of illustration. The following working definitions may be useful for the reader to understand what is meant by co-ordination and co-operation as a universal definition of both terms does not appear to currently exist:

- Co-ordination happens when different actors share information on their activities with the intention of minimizing duplication and overlap and maximising harmonization, all to the extent possible. Actors are not directly involved in each other's activities but do take account of each other – sometimes through an agreed division of tasks, which may be based on a joint needs assessment.
- Co-operation occurs when different actors intensively and consciously align their efforts to reach a common outcome. Co-operation encompasses much more collaborative engagement between the activities of the actors, since the responsibility for the successful implementation of activities is now shared.

Most of the good practices described in this Study are valid for both co-ordination and co-operation. However, when certain recommendations apply to only co-ordination or co-operation it is specified accordingly.

Examples of the case studies are presented in italics at the bottoms of the pages.

Good Practices

1. Local ownership maximizes the potential for progress

The relevance of topics for the host country contributes to international co-ordination and co-operation

While it may seem obvious, practice shows that the national relevance of a topic requiring co-ordination and co-operation with international actors can significantly contribute to progress and success in common efforts. National authorities will unlikely be interested in co-ordinating and co-operating if they perceive that the assistance of international actors does not benefit their country. In some cases, civil society actors may identify different key areas than national authorities. Therefore, international actors, including donors, should continue to build their programmes on the priorities of a host country and its population.

The best progress in programmes can be found when national and international priorities coincide. This should already be taken into account in the assessment phase; hence national actors should be included to the extent possible in assessments to avoid providing assistance which is purely supply-driven. Such an approach can have the additional benefit of building national capacities in support of the gradual handover of planning and management competencies. It also serves to address the inter-cultural situation and strengthen personal/relational aspects of co-operation and ownership.

In that regard, national actors should be involved in analysing the root causes of conflict and fragility as well as challenges, trends and crisis/risks dynamics. They should also be included and, if their capacities allow, be given the lead in identifying priorities to strengthen local ownership and in contributing to confidence-building (and reconciliation, if needed). The use of shared tools and methodologies for assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation, which address the needs of all actors should be fostered to encourage coherence, co-ordination and complementarity.

Capacity-building may be needed to encourage local ownership

Although local ownership should be a central principle of international co-ordination and co-operation, the potential degree of ownership depends on the existing capacity of the national structures. In some countries, the host government has established its own department with responsibilities for co-ordinating contributions from the international community. In others, such structures require further development and strengthening. The amount of responsibility that national authorities can take to co-ordinate international efforts is directly linked to the development stage of the host country. International actors can thus be expected to be involved in capacity-building exercises, where needed, for national structures to take over ownership of co-ordination mechanisms at a certain time in the future. The best results are achieved when all international actors agree on the desired outcome of such capacity-building processes, particularly as, by working disjointedly, international actors can undermine efforts to build states.

This gradual process, an inherent and natural aspect of international involvement in post-conflict/peacebuilding situations, may take considerable time and international actors should thus demonstrate long-term interest in the outcome. In some cases, a degree of change in the mind set of national actors is required, especially where there was a historical dependency on foreign assistance. In such cases, national structures may need to learn to recognize and take responsibility for their own country's needs. For example, when central governments are weak, international actors may need to consider working in a participatory and inclusive manner at the sectoral or regional level, including with civil society.

In any case, perseverance and patience as well as respect for cultural and historical conditions should be guiding principles for international actors. In that respect, including local resource persons in training of OSCE staff (in pre-deployment, induction, in-mission training) should be considered as a means to deepen internationals' under-



The Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Jennifer Brush, speaking to young women from both banks of Dniester/Nistru river, at the inauguration of the 2012 Summer School of Leadership in Vadul Lui Voda, 6 August 2012. *Credit: OSCE/Paula Redondo*

standing of the local context and to create local ownership. This is especially important as the impact of international programmes is expected to be minimal without national progress and buy-in. The sovereignty of the country should be respected at all times. Internationals should never overshadow the host government as the primary service provider. Donor visibility should not be greater than visibility for the host government, the international community should always aim at acting as a facilitator rather than an implementer, and unintended consequences of international efforts should always be considered as they can further weaken fragile states. Moreover, as with any international organization involved, the OSCE, as well as its individual staff members, must understand that they serve the host country and its population and must therefore duly consider local perceptions of and approaches towards planned projects.

The OSCE Mission to Moldova aims to strengthen the capacity and ownership of national authorities and civil society to combat trafficking in human beings (THB). The Mission, as well as other international actors and NGOs (including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the US Embassy, the International Centre La Strada) participate as observers and provide advice at meetings of the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in Moldova,

which is the key national structure responsible for co-ordination within the Government, monitoring and policy-making on anti-trafficking. To support co-ordination, the Mission to Moldova established Technical Co-ordination Meetings (TCMs) on Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings and Gender Issues that, since 2009, are co-chaired by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, the Mission and, since 2011, the Permanent Secretariat of the National Committee. The TCMs

are attended by both international and national actors working on the topic, although discussions mainly deal with issues of a national nature and are held mostly in the national language. The Permanent Secretariat intends to take over the responsibility for co-ordination in the midterm. International actors, including the OSCE Mission to Moldova, will however continue to support the work of the Committee and provide advice when requested.

If necessary, international actors should initially take the initiative in co-ordination, in a transitional mode until that responsibility can be assumed by the host country

The primary responsibility for co-ordination should lie with the host country. However, in situations where the national structures initially lack the capacity to take the lead in co-ordination, international actors should, in a transitional mode and in concert with national authorities, take a leading role in establishing working relations with other actors present. At the early stage, the focus naturally lies on co-ordination between international actors. Sometimes this is a natural process and international staff gather automatically in some form and exchange experiences on how to implement programmes. Often, however, a lack of co-ordination among international actors remains problematic and continues to be highlighted in most international development documents. Some national authorities may actually be discouraged from co-operating with international actors since they may feel overwhelmed by the number of different players and interests within their country. These shortcomings point to the importance that internationals must attach to ensuring that their efforts are thoroughly co-ordinated. In order to tackle political constraints and situational factors, international actors may benefit from speaking with one voice, which requires their agreement on common messages.

When the host country has the capacity to assume the lead in co-ordination, associated responsibilities should be transferred from international to national structures. This handover moment should already be considered by all actors in the early stages of providing assistance, especially as the international lead should only be for a transitional period. During the time when international actors temporarily lead co-ordination efforts, it is important for host country actors to communicate their needs in an honest and transparent manner. Should the discrepancy in needs identified by national authorities and international actors

be considerable, compromises would have to be found, or large donors may wish to find ways to convince national structures of the importance of the population's needs. Internationals should however not take the absence of a clear national working framework as an excuse to impose their priorities on the host country without taking into account the real needs of the host authorities and the population. The principles of mutual respect, partnership and trust should not be undermined.

Existing national structures should be encouraged to participate in international co-ordination

Capacity-building should be holistic and comprehensive, leading to the growing ability of national structures, both authorities and civil society, including at the local level, to participate in co-ordination structures and practices. This process should be encouraged and, as necessary, appropriate on-the-job training and learning as well as mentoring and advising should be made available. Incentives may have to be provided at the beginning, again considering the finite time frame in which international actors are expected to operate. National actors could be involved in undertaking joint needs assessments and in the division of labour among stakeholders.

The difficulty may be to identify one national agency that could take over the responsibility for national co-ordination, to consolidate different views of national actors and, at the same time, communicate these national needs to the international community. Such a lead actor at the national level is ultimately needed to co-ordinate international assistance and, in contrast to international actors, it will need a mandate for doing so. This may result in a lengthy process, also because other national actors need to recognize the lead.

As a result, a hybrid situation can occur wherein international and national actors temporarily combine efforts in taking the lead in and share responsibility over international co-ordination. Structures may then discuss both national and international co-ordination issues, and participants represent a variety of actors working on a similar topic. National actors can be empowered by international partners in these 'educational platforms', becoming familiar with the needs of the topic and gradually learning to take over re-



Opening of the MONDEM programme (May 2007) with T-55 tanks melted for scrap and recycled. *Credit: MONDEM Programme*

sponsibilities in implementing programmes. Other bridging strategies may also be applied, such as by: co-locating international staff in local national offices; employing national professional officers who possess key expertise, receive sufficient remuneration, and have growing responsibilities; using local or regional trainers and facilitators to mitigate accusations of external intervention and/or neo-colonialism; and/or supporting younger generations in gaining professional experience and/or education abroad.

Once national structures are capable, they should set the priorities

When national actors are capable of taking the full ownership for co-ordination or co-operation structures, international actors should handover the lead as soon as realistically possible. This can often require a leap of faith early on to trust, support and work with the government, but can be rewarded by more coherent, co-ordinated and complementary actions by the international community. International actors should actively support this handover process including by addressing the financial concerns and/or a lack of self-confidence amongst national authorities. At the other end, national actors could demonstrate their interest in the topic by, when possible, making available national resources to contribute to programmes and projects. This could continue to motivate international donors to invest in the programmes on a longer-term.

The Ministry of Defence of Montenegro considered in 2006 the demilitarization and safe storage of conventional ammunition a priority during the defence reform progress. It called upon the OSCE and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for an independent assess-

ment of the matter, which resulted in the 2007 Capacity Development Programme for Small Arms and Light Weapons Demilitarization and Safe Storage for Montenegro (MONDEM). Notable results were achieved over the last four years, and stakeholders are convinced that

the key to success was to be found in the setting of national priorities leading the programme, with the Ministry of Defence taking a leading role and UNDP and OSCE advising.

The handover process should not be postponed when the right conditions are in place. This could affect the reputation and trust that other actors may have in the new lead national actor for international co-ordination. International actors can, of course, remain available to advise and provide guidance to national authorities. In-depth co-operation between international and national actors can

only take place when national structures are fully functional and encompass all activities. Therefore, a final task of international actors during this handover is to facilitate the appropriate participation of civil society partners in national co-ordination structures. In some cases, this could require overcoming a historical mistrust between authorities and civil society.

2. An effective division of labour builds upon comparative advantages

Consider the existing, but dynamic landscape of actors present

International actors seldom conduct activities in a vacuum. Other actors may have been or are present in the country or region, and some form of co-ordination and co-operation may already be in place. Therefore, it is important to assess the current situation and to build on existing structures, which may need further improvement. Additionally, on-going activities of international NGOs and civil society actors should be taken into account so as to build further on any *acquis* already in place. These actors can have a better situational awareness, have tested the possibilities and limits of the topic, and have found ways to build a constructive working relationship with national authorities. However, some of these actors often have very precise agenda's and co-ordinating with them can be very difficult, and in some cases not advisable or even welcome by them. Organizational competition can be avoided by knowing and learning about partners, and presenting them with clearly articulated priorities and activities as well as capacities and expertise of one's own organization.

The landscape of actors is unlikely to remain stable. Moreover, the environment in which they work is likely to change with host country needs evolving and emerging over time. Priorities and agendas shift, which may result in the withdrawal of some actors and the entrance of others.

In the first case, this may leave gaps that need to be filled through international co-ordination efforts. In the latter case, incoming actors may offer new incentives to national authorities and convince them of the importance of other areas of co-operation. A sudden influx of new funds may create the need to alter existing co-ordination mechanisms. In worst case scenarios, this can negatively affect the motivation of national actors to participate and to invest in current co-ordination frameworks, resulting in the hampering of progress in programme implementation. All the aforementioned already point to the importance of co-ordination mechanisms and mind sets that are sufficiently flexible to accommodate and address changing landscapes.

Think of comparative advantages in a broad sense

It is not a new concept that the comparative advantages of actors should form the basis for an effective division of labour. Only in this way can the combined efforts of the international community be stronger than the individual activities of each organization. Especially when the needs are high, a good division of labour can mean clear differences in effectiveness and efficiency of the programmes. Duplication in itself may, however, benefit the host country when deliberately planned; for instance, local capacity-building can be quicker and/or more widespread when two or more organizations provide similar training. It is important to involve the national authorities to the extent possible when

Both national and international actors recognize the importance of border management and security in Central Asia due to developments in Afghanistan. This is even more the case in light of the upcoming withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan by 2014, due to which the security of the Tajik-Afghan border has become a priority for many stakeholders. Not only international organiza-

tions, but also bilateral actors have an interest in securing the border against transnational threats, in particular the illicit trafficking of drugs and the spill over of terrorism. The role of the Russian Federation related to this issue is unique because it provided security guarantees at this border until 2005. It can rely on solid bilateral relations and remains thus an important

and experienced actor on the topic, in particular through its Border Advisory Group (BAG) resident in Dushanbe. New actors entering this field of expertise or proposing activities in this domain have to take into consideration the special relationship the BAG has with the Tajik authorities.



A practical exercise within the Patrol Programming and Leadership Project developed for Tajik border troops and Afghan border police within the framework of Tajikistan National Border Management Strategy. Credit: OSCE



A practical exercise as part of the Patrol Programming and Leadership Project developed for Tajik border troops and Afghan border police within the framework of Tajikistan National Border Management Strategy. Credit: OSCE

international actors agree on a division of labour. Comparative advantages should be understood in a broad sense and include many different factors:

- The availability of funding is a crucial issue when it comes to the division of labour. Disposal of funds is a driving factor for taking on responsibilities, sometimes at the expense of actors with more expertise but fewer funds and where there is competition among international actors on funding.
- The experience of an actor and its staff or its historical involvement in a country can be important knowledge and expertise not possessed by partners. The involvement of internationals in neighbouring regions should also be considered since co-operation with such countries or actors working in them can sometimes be required.
- Certain actors may have long-term work experience in a given geographic region and are thus natural lead actors. They can build on existing networks, and may have gone through a process of becoming accepted by partners, local authorities and the population. The opposite may be true as well.

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) explicitly refers to the comparative advantages and expertise of each partner organization. The OSCE provides political support based on its comprehensive security mandate. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) contributes environmental expertise and UN Development Programme (UNDP)

expertise in human security and sustainable development. The UN Economic Commission of Europe (UNECE) provides legal frameworks for co-operation. The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) has expertise in leading several environmental efforts and NATO, as an associate partner, contributes by using stand-

ard mechanisms for co-operative grants under the Science for Peace and Security Programme. As such, the experiences of partner organizations complement each other.

- Actors may have different degrees of access to national and local authorities. The channels of contact of a certain actor to the population and local authorities should therefore be seen as a comparative advantage. Often a comparable cultural background of an actor and staff knowing the local language is an advantage.
- Some actors may have a welcome channel for transferring messages to a different network of donors and partner organizations because of their participation in alternative forums. This can prove to be crucial for fund raising and promoting regional co-operation.
- Different working approaches can complement each other; for example, NGOs take a bottom-up approach and governmental actors normally operate top-down.
- A given actor's previous experience in co-ordinating similar activities can provide a basis for it taking the lead for related activities.
- Staff from one organization may have more flexibility to operate than other actors with a stricter mandate or rules and regulations. This also includes speaking openly about sensitive issues.

Especially when the needs demand it, a good division of labour can make a clear difference in effectiveness and efficiency of programmes. A division of labour can be based on following criteria:

- In some cases, responsibilities can be separated along a geographic division, as for example, along the Tajik-Afghan border. The EU-UNDP Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) agreed to operate in the eastern part and the United States in the western part, with Shurobod as the dividing line.
- Project activities and responsibilities should be divided between partners according to their expertise. For example, in case of the ENVSEC project portfolio in the Southern Caucasus, the OSCE leads the trans-boundary dialogue and co-operation among States, academia and non-governmental organizations, whereas other ENVSEC partners contribute with their technical expertise to the respective projects.
- A division of labour can be agreed for implementing projects or activities which allows partner organizations to devise together common ways to address issues and implement projects or activities. In training activities, one actor can be stronger in providing funding while the other actor can have more expertise on the topic.
- A division of labour can assist in sharing workloads regarding representation on joint activities in national and international forums. In Moldova, international actors assigned one common focal point per working group to monitor the implementation of the Justice Reform Strategy, taking into account the different interests of the actors involved. Points of contact and liaison functions for a common project can be divided.



Participants at the first training seminar on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security held by the OSCE Mission to Moldova and ODIHR, Chişinău, 8 December 2011. Credit: OSCE/Igor Schimbător

Respect the strengths and the limitations of international actors

International actors not only have strengths, but also certain limitations. If these are not taken into account in the context of the division of labour, assistance could be counterproductive. Therefore it is important for actors to be as open as possible to partners about their limits. In some cases, this may be difficult, especially when mandates overlap and organizational competition is a reality. The different roles of an organization can even create internal tensions over its current priority. The UN, for example, executes a number of different functions and wears multiple hats simultaneously, i.e. peace enforcement, conflict resolution and humanitarian tasks. When such tasks have dissimilar or contrasting principles, the establishment of an internal co-ordination mechanism would be required.

Certain limitations are fairly obvious. Bilateral actors are guided by national political interests. Although in most cases this can be of benefit to good co-operation, because of the leverage this brings, multilateral partners should not forget this reality. Practice indicates that co-operation with bilateral actors may be hampered in certain situations because of national interests of states. In an ideal situation, co-ordination and co-operation should aim to find a bal-

In Moldova, the OSCE has been perceived by all partners as a leading organization when it comes to co-ordination on THB and gender. The reason for such a perception lies in its long-term expertise on the subject and its access to both leaderships and societies on both banks of the Dniestr / Nistru River. The mandate of the OSCE and its focus

on facilitating the settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict thoroughly complements the more apolitical work of other organizations. Within this mandate, which includes human rights, the OSCE has a unique role that also enables it to co-ordinate and build co-operation on anti-trafficking and gender issues in Transdniestria, although with a

slightly different emphasis than in Chisinau. The Mission organizes bi-monthly roundtables in Transdniestria where local authorities, NGOs and international actors gather to discuss co-operation issues related to anti-trafficking and gender.



T-55 tank being melted for scrap and recycled as part of the MONDEM Demilitarization Programme. Credit: MONDEM Programme

ance such that differing limitations and strengths of actors become complementary.

Recognize organizational needs

It would be naïve to forget that actors have needs in terms of visibility and accountability. Most international organizations depend on the demonstration of success to continue the implementation of their activities or to justify their existence overall. This reality counts even more for international NGOs who are fully dependent on voluntary or private contributions and, in general, do not possess the possibility to act unilaterally. They are therefore often more inclined to co-operate than larger organizations, which are certain to receive funding. Co-ordination and co-operation thus need to be organized in such a way that visibility is given to the success of programmes, both in their overall and individual efforts. Working together should be a multiplying factor that results in more visibility on the whole. Good practices include the use of logos, public awareness campaigns and joint donor campaigns. Actors need to be able to better realize their goals and objectives owing to partnerships.

The mutual benefit aspect should not be forgotten. Co-ordination and co-operation can only be effective when it provides added value to the individual projects of the organizations concerned and when it forms a tool to promote

progress in country programmes of the actors concerned. Partnerships offering new approaches or filling gaps are expected to attract more investments. Sharing the burden may also decrease the amount of risk in undertaking certain sensitive activities. Co-ordination may confirm that an organization is implementing the right activities since partners have identified a similar need. Successful project partnerships may lead to additional complementary projects being implemented outside the co-operation framework but building on its success. Therefore, it may be beneficial at times to invest in 'easy' co-operation successes that demonstrate practical results and provide a basis for more in-depth co-operation. Concrete topics are more often the focus of co-operation since it is less difficult to measure their impact and thus better facilitates 'selling' them to potential donors. A limited involvement in co-operation agreements can result in maximum output for minimum input as long as the agreement is in line with the priorities and abilities of an organization.

Willingness and responsiveness of actors and their staff are the basis of trust

No matter how well defined and balanced a division of labour is, there is one factor that no co-ordination or co-operation mechanism can do without: trust between actors. Practice shows that it is still too often forgotten, with possible dramatic consequences. Trust can be established through the demonstrated willingness of actors to engage in common efforts. Responsiveness is a key principle in this aspect. Staff in the field need to know whom they can rely on. Mutual consultation should be used as a standard principle since a complete avoidance of duplication, even unintentionally, cannot be fully ensured. Personal relationships help in this matter.

Building further on the success of MONDEM, a similar demilitarization programme was initiated in Serbia. The experience of MONDEM has been further shared in several forums in South-East Europe. The programme also gave the OSCE Mission to Montenegro inspiration for a number of comple-

mentary activities, in particular on increasing openness and accountability in on-going defence sector reform. For instance, the Mission assists the Ministry of Defence with support to regular media briefings on defence reform and facilitating better involvement of the public in the process. The Mission is able to

do so because MONDEM is in line with the security priorities of the OSCE. Co-operation with UNDP further multiplies its outcomes.

3. Co-ordination and co-operation structures contribute to sustainability

The establishment of co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms is worth the initial investment

It remains a challenge to shift from sharing information on the operational level to co-ordinating on the strategic policy-formulation level, and vice versa. However, the benefits of doing so are considerable. The establishment of formal or informal institutional structures is important to foster efficient relations between international and national actors and can assist in the effective division of labour between actors. The setting-up of such structures can be time and resource intensive, but they can guarantee a longer-term perspective both for co-ordination and co-operation purposes and result in sustainable project outcomes. Practice shows that the initial investment in outlining clear divisions of tasks and agreeing on common objectives is actually cost-effective. Related planning needs to be done in advance. In addition, the process of establishing such structures is an exercise in itself in becoming familiar with partners' strengths and limitations, in recognizing pitfalls in a timely manner, and in identifying relevant solutions in advance. By establishing such agreements, partners are forced to take co-operation seriously. It is a process of recognition of the partners.

In cases of direct co-operation between a small number of actors on specific topics, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is probably the best form of written agreement on how to work together. Some actors may actually require an MoU or a similar document as specified in their rules and regulations before they can engage in co-operation. However formal documents, such as MoUs, may sometimes be seen as overly formalistic and alarm inter-

ested partners. In such cases, preference can be given to a simple exchange of letters to retain flexibility. A joint project proposal or a programme framework document can be another option as long as it takes into account the different steps of the project cycle. A joint assessment provides sound basis since a good set-up can be adhered to during the project implementation phase.

Co-operation structures can also take a much broader form and provide a framework for joining efforts between multiple actors on several topics implemented across different regions. Such frameworks can be the result of a gradual process and their establishment and improvements can therefore take place over a long period of time. They can also result from agreements seeking an end to hostilities.⁵ Such structures can result in real integrated working arrangements and therefore need their own system of decision-making and organizational modalities. However caution should be exercised so as not to create a burden of bureaucracy. The framework should allow an easier implementation of projects rather than being an unwanted extra layer of approval or clearance.

National strategies provide a long-term perspective

Taking into account the importance of local ownership, co-ordination and co-operation structures must be placed within national long-term strategies, such as the National Programme on Gender Equality in Moldova. Such national strategies especially put co-ordination efforts into their context. The structures resulting from such strategies entail a clear responsibility for national actors to take over the lead in co-ordination and in setting national priorities.

The comprehensive institutional structure of ENVSEC allows partner organizations to better co-ordinate their activities. A Management Board, composed of representatives of every partner organization, is the key decision-making body for the initiative. Ownership of the initiative by all organizations is provided by an annual rotating Chairmanship. An ENVSEC Secretariat is responsi-

ble for the day-to-day co-ordination and consists of a Co-ordination Unit and four Regional Desk Officers appointed by respective ENVSEC Partners. In the case of the South Caucasus, an OSCE staff member performs the Regional Desk Officer function. The Regional Desk Officers are the first contact points on all activities taking place within the framework of ENVSEC Initiative.

National focal points ensure linkages with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the different countries where ENVSEC works. Meetings are held on a regular basis for the purposes of regional co-ordination, management and donor co-ordination, and are held on an ad-hoc basis for other relevant issues.

⁵ A good example is the Ohrid Framework Agreement (dated 2001) which defined the division of labour between the EU, NATO and the OSCE in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Another good example is UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) which established a four-pillar regime and, inter alia, charged the OSCE Mission in Kosovo to implement activities related to institution- and democracy-building and human rights as a distinct component of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).



Co-operation within a training course on wildfire management in Qabala, Azerbaijan, 24 September 2012. The training was organized by the OSCE within the framework of the ENVSEC initiative. *Credit: OSCE*



A practical exercise as part of the Patrol Programming and Leadership Project developed for Tajik border troops and Afghan border police within the framework of Tajikistan National Border Management Strategy. *Credit: OSCE*

Strategies are also important for capacity-building purposes, since they specify a clear end-stage and encourage co-ordination between national agencies. As experience shows, establishing similar national strategies, just as establishing related structures, may take considerable time. Efforts by both national and international actors and its implementation may be challenging. Some host countries may not be familiar with the good practice to formalize agreements in writing or develop long-term national strategies. In that regard, a change in mind set could be needed among the host country authorities.

Agreements should be accompanied by a feasible and resource-supported implementation plan. For example consistent local procurement by the international community should be a must. In fact, the elaboration of national strategies can help attract better funding as they ensure a longer-term focus and provide a co-ordinated framework for the resources national actors request from international partners. If necessary, international actors can play a leading role in establishing such strategies, as long as they are based on national priorities. Should national strategies be based on international priorities only, it is highly unlikely they will be implemented or will remain in place over the longer term. A good strategy provides a concrete basis

for sustainability and helps to guarantee that national co-ordination structures continue to exist when international actors pull out.

Define modalities and rules of partnerships

Whatever partnership form is chosen and depending on the habits and needs of each organization, good co-operation agreements should include a number of elements. First, the purpose of the agreement, and especially the objectives of the co-operation, should be clearly stated, including benchmarks to measure the progress in the co-operation and the envisaged framework. The agreement should clearly outline the responsibilities and benefits for each partner and its expectations. Local ownership can become a specified deliverable and a timeline for handover can be considered. Co-operation modalities can include funding arrangements, information exchange, frequency of consultations and reporting, points of contact at the working level for transparency and accountability purposes, and sometimes joint monitoring and evaluation of activities. Decision-making on joint projects, in meetings for example, could be specified, and selection criteria for joint projects could be agreed in advance when outlining the modalities for every stage of the project cycle. A comprehensive document allows space to recognize organizational needs and

The 2010 National Border Management Strategy in Tajikistan, elaborated initially with the assistance of the OSCE and with financial support of the Finnish Government, takes a long-term approach and defines a concept for border management until 2025. The approach aims to make international co-operation more forward-looking. The objec-

tive is to co-ordinate efforts between national governmental agencies through a new mechanism, the Inter-Agency Co-ordination Group and through the National Border Co-ordinator. This Group will be supported by a Secretariat to be composed of national staff seconded from different organizations. This Secretariat would support the co-

ordination of donor funding within the framework of national priorities set by the Tajik authorities. The Secretariat and Co-ordination Group will thus directly interact with staff from other international organizations in an advisory capacity within a national framework.



Arresting the 'trafficker' was the final step after two weeks of evidence-gathering during a training course on anti-trafficking for police in Chişinău, Moldova, 30 May 2005. Credit: Claus Neukirch/OSCE

Dedicated human and financial resources should be provided

A good practice is to dedicate specific human and financial resources for co-ordination and co-operation. Even when it may seem more important to allocate resources to the actual project implementation, investing specific resources to improve working relations can lead to better results and ensure continuity. From the human resources perspective, this may include the appointment of specific staff responsible for co-ordination within organizations. Focal points, both at national and international level, ensure that there are a clear contact points for partners and thus facilitate co-operation. International actors can consider seconding staff to national authorities to support capacity-building. From a financial perspective, the organization of co-ordination meetings requires resources, ranging from guaranteeing interpretation, to reserving meeting rooms, to offering coffee. The absence of such mundane administrative aspects could seriously hamper the process of working together. Therefore financing them is fully justifiable, including in order to avoid misunderstandings arising between international and national actors on the above practical aspects.

limitations. For example, in terms of visibility, an organization's other co-operation agreements and its internal rules and procedures could be included. The overall agreement, an important tool of transparency, should be straightforward, practical and user-friendly thereby allowing for its daily use.

A good initial co-operation agreement should enable disputes to be avoided at a later stage. Nevertheless, it cannot be excluded that difficulties can occur at any time in terms of organizational competition or related obstacles. Hence it is a good practice to include provisions for settling conflicts in the basic agreement. These can include ways to mitigate the effects of overlap or duplication, or procedures to take when one organization fails to take on its responsibilities. A conflict settlement mechanism may be suggested, including arbitration, such as is the case in the MoU between the OSCE Secretariat and UNDP on the joint implementation of projects on SALW and conventional ammunition, included upon the request of OSCE participating States.

Ensuring dedicated support is especially relevant for actors taking the lead in international co-ordination. A lead organization must have adequate support capacities in terms of chairing, report-writing and support staff, which even includes such mundane administrative issues as the provision of office space for co-ordination officers. Should this be lacking, it might be better for another organization to take the lead responsibility. For example, it may be deemed beneficial to recruit a specific project co-ordinator to be responsible for smooth co-operation and following up to ensure that each organization is fulfilling its responsibilities.

A concern about not having the required human and financial resources may be a reason for national actors refraining from chairing co-ordination mechanisms. However, rather than being an excuse for delaying handover, international actors should look to fill this gap by providing the required concrete international support to national chairmanships.

Since the organization of the Technical Co-ordination Meetings (TCMs) is a core duty of the Mission to Moldova, the OSCE dedicates staff and resources to co-ordinating activities on anti-trafficking and gender in the country. The Mission organizes monthly TCMs in Chişinău, and thematic roundtables in the breakaway region of Transdniestria.

The latter are hosted at the OSCE Tiraspol Office which is responsible for inviting local authorities. All these require dedicated staff and financial capacity. For the TCMs, the Mission provides its conference room (in-house) and simultaneous interpretation. OSCE staff prepares the meetings, collect and print the presentations and disseminate

meeting minutes. In addition, the OSCE supports the anti-trafficking and gender network website and the publication of materials.

Headquarter initiatives should complement working relations in the field

Initiatives to work together in the field should be in line with on-going efforts at Secretariat/headquarters levels. In fact, field structures could be strengthened by the development of supporting agreements between actors at the strategic level, and vice versa. The advantage is that preparatory work can already be done at the Secretariat/headquarters level, allowing a quicker establishment of co-operation mechanisms in the field. Such agreements can plan for a number of modalities; e.g., funding, reporting or conflict settlement. An absence of such an agreement may, on the other hand, hamper the actual co-operation in the field and could lead to embarrassing situations which impact negatively on working agreements and the overall reputation of the respective actors. Therefore, co-operation agreements at different levels must complement each other.

The desire for co-ordination or co-operation can be a part of organization-wide work plans to facilitate efforts in the field by ensuring the necessary buy-in and continuity. In that regard, the activities to combat trafficking in human beings in Moldova are justified by the strategic OSCE Action Plan to Combat THB and the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. The support of the Secretariat/headquarters in such efforts helps to provide legal and policy support for the development of co-operation agreements. The Secretariat/ headquarters could also share good examples of co-operation agreements in different regions or on other topics to encourage learning and avoid reinventing the wheel.



Disposal of highly toxic 'melange' oxidizer from the shores of the Bay of Kotor. Credit: MONDEM Programme

Flexibility in agreements should be maintained to allow changes to be reflected

Although it can be a good practice to partly institutionalize co-ordination and co-operation, the resulting structures should be flexible enough to reflect changing conditions. As stated above, it can be expected that the priorities of actors will change together with the evolving context in the area of operation. Agreements should therefore be regularly evaluated and need to preserve room to be adapted and updated when required. Co-operation agreements can also include parameters defining the requirement to update them periodically. The need to adapt timelines for handover when required should especially be included. Additional ad-hoc agreements or the drafting of multiple agreements could also be considered.

For example, ENVSEC is not of an institutional nature. Decisions in the Management Board are binding within the framework as long as they are not in contrast with the rules and procedures of the partner organizations.

The MONDEM agreement needs to be seen in the context of a global MoU between the OSCE Secretariat and UNDP on project implementation. This baseline document, agreed between the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna and the UNDP Regional

Centre in Bratislava, provides the basis structure for the division of roles and facilitates co-operation in the field. A third-party cost-sharing agreement between both organizations lays down technicalities for funds transfers. Without this agree-

ment, financial transactions from the OSCE to UNDP could not be conducted, which would have practical consequences for joint project implementation.

4. Appropriate co-ordination and co-operation tools lead to efficiency

Tools should facilitate the objective of working together

The difference between co-ordination and co-operation should especially be taken into account when it comes to using tools to facilitate the specific objective of working together. Tools can only increase efficiency in working relations if they are used properly and in line with the set objective. Organizations should, if possible, jointly define the outcome of co-ordination and co-operation by building on previously defined comparative advantages. The danger arises that when tools are incorrectly used they are likely to become a burden for the staff. In the best case scenario, this leads to wasted efforts, time and resources by actors. In the worst case scenario, this may negatively affect the relationship between actors. Tools should be kept as simple as possible.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, the case-studies allowed the following functions to be identified:

Co-ordination

Information-sharing

Avoid duplication

Harmonization of efforts

Task division

Joint needs assessment

Joint strategic planning

Joint project planning

Joint fund raising

Joint implementation

Joint management

Joint evaluation

Co-operation

Information sharing is without a doubt the underlying principle of any co-ordination and co-operation effort and thus requires proper communication. Information exchange can be done in a number of ways and a variety of communication tools can be used.

Who co-ordinates what should be determined early on

In case the host country is not be ready to assume its leading role, the international actor having the interim lead for co-ordinating which activity should be agreed as early as possible. There is no set answer; it will need to be determined case-by-case, taking account of prevailing circumstances and various factors which may differ between cases. It is possible that changing circumstances over time may necessitate a change in the leading role; this should be a last resort given the potentially detrimental impact on the continuity and consistency of efforts.

Factors that could have a bearing on which international actor should have the interim lead for co-ordinating which activity include the following (not in priority order or an exhaustive list): willingness and capacity of an actor to assume the leading co-ordination role; comparative advantages of an actor *vis-à-vis* others in the specific thematic,

host country and regional setting, including from a historical perspective and taking account of other activities in the host country/region in which that actor is also involved; recognition among others actors of one actor's preminent expertise in the activity and/or country and region; and, acceptability to the host country's authorities and population.



A practical exercise as part of the Patrol Programming and Leadership Project developed for Tajik border troops and Afghan border police within the framework of Tajikistan National Border Management Strategy. Credit: OSCE

Meetings need to be approached in a comprehensive manner

Meetings continue to be the most common and best known tool for co-ordination and co-operation. At a minimum, they provide a time-saving opportunity to bring relevant actors together in one location and are the basis of networking. There are many different kinds of meetings, with a variety of names.

The mere act of holding meetings can be beneficial in the initial stage of co-ordination and/or co-operation but is, however, insufficient for meaningful outcomes over time. Meetings are not an end stage, but rather should be a part of the process. Therefore, a number of dimensions should be taken into account to guarantee that meetings serve their purpose. These aspects should be carefully considered and discussed before the actual meetings are arranged.

The **objective(s)** of the meeting should be understood by all actors in order to facilitate similar expectations as well as valid and productive discussions. It is advisable for meetings, particularly the purpose and expected deliverables, to be agreed upon in a comprehensive manner and with a special focus for participants to own the process and its outcome. Donor co-ordination meetings, for example,

are of a different nature than technical project co-operation meetings. Participants in the latter category can consider drafting Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the meeting. ToRs can provide an effective tool to stay focused, help ensure that new participants understand the rationale of the meeting and make its outcome relevant for all actors involved. Experience demonstrates, however, that drafting ToRs can be a difficult process, especially when different participants may have diverse expectations from the meetings. On the other hand, establishing ToRs can help reveal such differing opinions in a timely manner.

Different kinds of meetings can have complementary objectives. For instance, holding regional co-ordination meetings on top of centralized meetings can be considered in order to facilitate more in-depth discussions. Sub-groups can further allow for more detailed and technical discussions. In Moldova, for example, the TCMs in Chişinău focus on the results of specific projects, research studies and activities implemented by various organizations, as well as on fostering the debate between authorities and NGOs on key issues and strategies. The regional meetings, on the other hand, focus on taking stock of the work of the National Referral System and further developing this system.

The **level** of a meeting depends on the objective(s). Experience shows that co-ordination and co-operation also benefit from holding meetings at several complementary levels. As in any organizational practice, ambassadorial (or equivalent) level meetings can be useful to agree on overall perspectives, while senior staff members can address in operational/technical aspects, and working-level staff can benefit more from an exchange of experience on concrete taskings. When an issue is not solved on one level, bringing it to the attention of a higher level can help to generate solutions.

The level of participants can benefit, on the one hand, from actors sending representatives of a similar level of authority and seniority to meetings. However, a mixture of ranks/grades may allow for different perspectives to be shared. While the attendance of higher-level staff members can indicate the interest that actors attach to co-ordination

The Border International Working Group (BIG) in Tajikistan has been organized on a monthly basis since 2005 by BOMCA. The meetings bring together local embassies and all donors involved in the provision of assistance for border management and the counteraction of drugs trafficking. BOMCA provides secretariat functions for

the BIG. National actors are invited to take part on a case-by-case basis; for example when the National Border Management Strategy was discussed. A sub-group on general law enforcement and border police training is organized by the OSCE on a monthly basis to discuss these topics in more detail. On a different level, the Central Asia Border

Security Initiative (CABSI) is a co-ordination platform for all stakeholders, donors and host countries, in the areas of border management and drug control in Central Asia. It also promotes a comprehensive and sustainable integrated border management approach in the region. CABSI meets once a year at the ministerial level.

meetings, the limited availability of senior staff may make the participation of junior staff with more preparation time more productive.

The **organizational participation** is naturally dependant on the objective of the meeting. Co-ordination meetings should be open to any actor working on the topic and any organization should be allowed to participate on a voluntary basis. The size of the international community in a given place should be considered, and the weight some actors naturally bring into the table should not be forgotten.

Efforts should be made to ensure the participation of relevant stakeholders for co-ordination purposes. To the extent possible, all actors should be involved in meetings even if only by sharing information. In particular, relevant civil society should be encouraged to participate in co-ordination meetings when appropriate. Meetings can serve as a platform for them to speak openly and thus foster empowerment and confidence-building. A word of caution is well placed, however; while all actors are generally welcome, too broad a representation and too high a number of participants may have a negative the impact on the meeting. In this regard, a fine balance needs to be struck, with attendance tailored to the needs of the meeting's objectives.

Participation in the host country's capital can differ from participation at the regional level because of organizational presences, or that regional actors may not have the capacity to send representatives to attend co-ordination meetings in the host country's capital. International actors may opt to meet separately to agree on a joint message towards national actors or discuss sensitive topics. Such meetings could be organized just prior to meetings with national partners, as a kind of pre-co-ordination. Some donors may prefer having co-ordination meetings without the presence of national authorities. Also for national authorities, such international pre-co-ordination meetings can have clear advantages, since it is easier and more time-efficient to address one voice of the international community than to deal with numerous requests. However, situations should be avoided which cause defensive reactions among national authorities or create the impression that they are being unfairly excluded, since this limits the productivity. Ways need to be found to keep national authorities involved.

In principle, a pragmatic approach should be the guiding factor for the **frequency and length** of meetings. Technical meetings are best held on a needs-basis. More open and general co-ordination meetings can be held on a regular basis, such as once per month. Multiple meetings per month are often not useful since they can create a burden on the time-resources of staff. The frequency also depends on the level of the meetings, be it working-level,

director or ambassadorial level. Flexibility should be kept regarding the frequency in cases of arising developments. In terms of the length of monthly co-ordination meetings, experience shows that a maximum of two hours is most appropriate.

The decision on **individual participation** of staff members needs to take into account the following:

- An organization should try to always send the same representative to meetings. While sending different staff on a rotational basis has the benefits that the burden of attending is shared among staff and the information collected in meetings is spread across the organization rather than stay with one person only, having one representative can be more advantageous. He/she can facilitate the development of contacts as he/she becomes identified with his/her organization. Also, the continuity of discussions and the consistency of positions are less likely to be compromised.
- The frequent staff turnover (every two to three years) can slow down the process of co-ordination since new staff needs learning time. One solution if an international organization has national staff members, is to encourage their participation, possibly on an ad-hoc basis, to help ensure continuity.
- Staff turnover and rotated representation at meetings make it necessary to guarantee that institutional knowledge is shared and saved internally.
- It should be kept in mind that staff may need to take decisions in meetings. Representatives of organizations should thus be given the authority to do so.
- Meetings also provide an opportunity for individual staff members to gain knowledge for their personal development and to network with colleagues that they may otherwise not meet.

The **location** of co-ordination meetings deserves specific attention. This is more than just a practical aspect since it can impact on the outcome. Meetings should be held in a location that is considered by participants to be neutral and easily accessible. The infrastructure available is important: the conference room, for instance, should be of an adequate size for the number of participants and offer equal seating for all. Security arrangements should, if possible, not be too strict as it may intimate interested participants. If multiple places meet these requirements, a rotational system to host the meetings can be considered to share the burden and increase the ownership of the process among actors.

For co-ordination meetings, the **content** should serve a double purpose: to allow actors to share an update on their activities and to encourage forward-looking discussions on issues of common concern. Too often, co-ordination meetings do not realize their full potential to harmonize efforts because information-sharing is limited to completed activities. Meetings should be forward-looking. When it seems that activities may actually overlap, participants should use the opportunity to look for solutions to avoid duplication. This is best achieved when activities are presented well in advance so that time remains to adapt projects as needed. Such information also allows actors to validate their own activities in comparison to the overall objective and activities of other actors.

Meetings may also be used as an opportunity to call the attention of partners to existing needs resulting from recently undertaken assessments, to ask for support on certain activities or to offer funding for others. Participants should share lessons learned, including on failures, to the extent possible. It should be possible to raise problematic issues, such as competition and inter-organizational frictions; but this requires participants to focus on arriving at problem-oriented solutions rather than ‘finger pointing’. The participation can influence the topics discussed since some participants may feel constrained when certain actors or individuals are present.

The **structure** of co-ordination meetings can take many forms. The following is an example of a structure that worked well in some of the case studies:

1. A presentation on a topic of joint interest which leads to open and constructive discussions. Guest speakers from national authorities or external organizations can be invited. Rather than project summaries, presentations can deal with common challenges or share experience in dealing with civil society or national authorities. Presentations can also deal with broader issues than the actual topic of co-ordination to encourage cross-fertilization with related activities.
2. A second standard agenda topic can be a roundtable in which actors provide a regular update on the progress of their activities. In terms of sequence, it proved to be more effective to have first a presentation and then a roundtable, as the latter can result in too lengthy presentations by actors. Care must be taken to ensure roundtables are not misused as a way for an organization to purely sell its successes. The chairperson of the meeting needs to remind speakers to remain focused on the topic and limit the length of their presentations in order to keep the attention and interest of all.

The person **chairing** the meeting first depends on who is leading the co-ordination in a given situation, and on the exact set-up of the structures. When possible, co-chairing between national and international actors is preferred because it promotes local ownership and cements international support. However, international chairing may provide leverage that national actors cannot demonstrate, especially towards national civil society actors. The chairperson should actively encourage participants to take ownership of the co-ordination process and to share ideas on how to improve working relations.

Additional tools facilitate information exchange

Information exchange could also take place through a number of additional communication tools, possibly, but not exclusively, in parallel with meetings. These tools should be used in a strategic and well-thought manner.

An **agenda** should aim to facilitate meeting discussions. A timely prior circulation of the agenda to participants should take place, at least ten days in advance. This serves two purposes: to encourage participants to prepare adequately and to allow actors to identify the appropriate staff member to represent them. An annual work plan informs participants in advance of the dates of the meetings and the topics to be discussed in the year to come.

A common tool in meetings is to have **notes or minutes** of the discussions. Lengthy notes/minutes should be avoided as relatively few staff actually read them. If it is decided to circulate notes/minutes, they should be concise, action-oriented and easily accessible. Therefore, the objective of the notes/minutes should be clearly understood:

- Notes/minutes for institutional memory purposes are especially relevant when there is frequent staff turnover and can be useful reference material when drafting reports.
- Staff who could not participate in the meeting are often reliant on reading the notes/minutes. Therefore, meeting notes should be shared as soon as possible after the meeting, even if that decreases the possibility for checking and feedback. Few staff read minutes of meetings that took place weeks or months before.

Actors may opt to compile a **matrix** which provides an overview of on-going and future activities undertaken by different actors. In most cases, such a matrix was well received as a tool to avoid duplication. The following should be taken into consideration when using matrixes:

- The matrix should be used as a planning tool in meetings rather than merely a means of sharing of information.

- The matrix should be constantly updated to reflect the most current situation, which requires dedicated support. Experience shows that the success of a matrix can depend on the efforts of one individual.
- Some staff found that a matrix could only be useful if it also included data on the budget of the activities. However, some actors were reluctant to share this financial information. Donors may, however, actually find this information valuable for avoiding duplication on their side.
- The inclusion of deadlines was seen as relevant to allow proper planning and consolidation of input from different actors.

Newsletters can be a welcome tool to inform a larger audience on developments and in particular to keep national partners informed and ensure their buy-in. The latter is important to increase their interest and encourage their involvement in the process even if newsletters provide little added value in terms of gaining new information on top of a large amount of email exchange and meetings. Ideally, the newsletter should be a common project and include information from different actors so as to avoid it being used to promote one organization only.

Websites on the overall co-ordination or co-operation framework, such as the one used by ENVSEC (<http://www.envsec.org>), or on specific projects are useful to inform the larger public, as well as researchers and journalists. They should be user-friendly and regularly updated to contain the most recent developments. Even if minutes or matrixes are saved on the website, experience shows that very few staff members consult the website, giving preference to email exchange instead. In contrast, providing all information online may decrease the incentive for staff to attend meetings. A database containing all material, for example, on in-country training, and publications of all partners can be still useful for institutional memory and mutual learning.

The TCMs in Moldova rely on a number of complementary tools. Agendas are sent in advance to allow preparation and identify suitable representatives and presenters. The meeting is actively used by civil society to address common challenges and raise common difficulties, including working relations with authorities. Simultaneous interpre-

tation is a must since most national actors speak in the national language. A matrix of activities and projects implemented by different organizations, meeting minutes and a website support the meetings. In order to discuss more specific areas of work or projects in-depth, representatives of different organizations also meet on an ad-hoc basis out-

side formal co-ordination meetings. Even the fact that most internationals lived in the same neighborhood facilitated the working relationship.



A young audience watches an interactive performance on the theme of human trafficking, in Moldova, 11 September 2008. Credit: OSCE/ Dumitru Berzan

Interpretation is a factor that unfortunately receives too little attention when planning for co-ordination. The provision of simultaneous interpretation at meetings in which national actors participate is, however, crucial for a successful outcome and to encourage local ownership. Dedicated financial resources should thus be foreseen. This also counts for translation of relevant documents, meeting notes, presentations and/or publications.

Direct contact between staff members outside the meetings should be encouraged:

- Direct communication – telephone or email – remains a solid basis for good working relations. Such methods are a preferred communication tool when insufficient time impedes staff members attending meetings. Skype contact details can be exchanged as more organizations tend to use it in their normal routine.
- Networking and additional discussions can be achieved through the organization of informal meetings; for example, in the form of breakfast meetings, Saturday runs or picnics open to anyone who wishes to attend. In the end, the form is subordinated to the opportunity to meet.

- Co-location is another way of encouraging direct contact between staff members. The proximity of offices of partners can directly promote contact between staff members. In Georgia, the fact that the ENVSEC national co-ordinator, who reports to the ENVSEC South Caucasus Regional Desk Officer at the OSCE Secretariat, is co-located in the Ministry of Environment facilitates contact, information exchange and project implementation.
- Electronic social networks can be considered for involving younger generations.

Jointly conducted activity strengthens co-operation

Joint efforts of two or more international actors working closely together and integrating their work in common endeavours are effective ways to foster close co-operation and interoperability. Joint project activity can be particularly useful in that respect and can be pursued through, for example, joint needs assessments, joint planning, joint implementation and/or joint evaluations. Including the host country as one of the joint partners, as happens in ENVSEC and MONDEM, will clearly strengthen local ownership. Joint efforts by several organizations can be especially beneficial to a project/programme in many ways. For instance, more specialist expertise and greater technical experience can be drawn upon, access to a wider funding base can be gained, broader political engagement can be pursued and widespread visibility of the programme/project can be maximized. Indeed, so significant are the advantages that, to the extent possible, programme/project managers should always be encouraged to seek other actors to work with in a joint manner.

There are two basic approaches to different organizations integrating their work in common endeavours. In one there is a lead organization that provides the framework for the joint work. In MONDEM, for example, the UNDP is the prime implementing agency and hence UNDP rules, regulations and auditing standards apply to the procurement, logistics, and administration as well as to the evaluation of the programme's implementation, including the external evaluation that UNDP undertakes. The other approach, such as occurs in ENVSEC, is based predominantly on jointly-agreed procedures (such as in needs assessments, planning, implementation and evaluations) supplemented only when necessary by specific procedures of the different organizations (such as for procurement). A number of factors will influence which approach is better according to the specifics of the situation, these may include: the organizations that will be involved; their expertise; the flexibility of their own rules and procedures; and whether one of the organizations has already established procedures with the host country.

Regardless of the approach, a number of tools can be employed to increase synergies and overcome the inevitable challenges that may occur when working jointly, particularly as a continuous working *partnership* is vital:

- A framework document is useful in clearly setting out joint agreements on topics such as: common goals and objectives; guiding principles; roles, responsibilities and tasks of each of the different organizations involved; work plans and timelines; modalities of implementation, including the project approval, monitoring and evaluation procedures; and management structures and procedures.

- A joint management board can periodically review regional work programmes and individual projects at its meetings to measure their progress towards the completion of key results, based on the achievement of specified success indicators agreed in advance. The reviews can also consider financial reports and serve as a forum to share lessons and best practices. The joint management board could also take joint decisions on policy matters, and could approve adjustments to existing programmes/projects or the creation of new ones.

- Joint working level meetings, facilitated by a co-ordination unit, can enable information to be shared on the status of the programmes/projects, with challenges and problems discussed and joint solutions sought.

- An annual donors forum can be held to update actors on the portfolio, the host country's and donors' priorities, and to mobilize resources in support of new ideas. The donors' forum can also contribute to periodic project monitoring, evaluation and assessment, and facilitate donor co-ordination active in the area.

- Annual financial and narrative reports can be jointly prepared by the partners. This would also contribute to joint monitoring of the regional work programmes and individual projects.

- Joint workshops and joint round tables can be held. Maximum impact and co-operation benefits will be realized if they are jointly organized and chaired by all the organizations involved, with presentations given by representatives of the different organizations according to the jointly agreed division of labour for programme/project implementation.

Compromises can overcome organizational rules and procedures

Rules and procedures are inherent to any organization in regulating how it functions. However, they are often inward-looking and not necessarily drafted with the objective of interacting with others. They may in themselves become



MONDEM Inaugural ceremony (May 2011): Partnership bears fruit. Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Ambassador Sarunas Adomavicius (left), shaking hands with UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative, Alexander Avanesov (right), with the Minister of Defence of Montenegro Boro Vucinic (middle). *Credit: MONDEM Programme*

an obstacle for co-operation, especially if partners have contradictory rules. Internal problems should be managed in such a way that they do not influence actual working agreements with partners. Secretariat/headquarters support can be crucial to finding pragmatic and quick solutions for challenges to co-operation/co-ordination arising in the field. On a related note, reporting should not become an extra burden and double reporting lines should be avoided.

On the other hand, different rules and procedures can actually add value in co-operation. For example, when the rules of one organization impede the recruitment of certain experts, an existing agreement allows another organization with more flexible rules to fill this need, facilitating project implementation. Some actors may not be able to fund civil society, while others can be in a position to be the middle men. Then again, burdensome bureaucratization in one organization can be overcome by channelling funding through a partner with more flexible rules. Different budget cycles can equally be a comparative advantage. In Moldova, for example, the IOM was able to provide funding for projects in the beginning of the year and the OSCE later in the same budget year. Especially towards the end of the year, the opportunity for combining unspent funds was larger. Co-operation should allow gaps in the bureau-

cracies of one organization to be ameliorated by the efforts of another which is not limited by those gaps.

Ways need to be found to overcome difficulties related to transferring of funds

Financial issues can already be difficult within an organization. Complexity is increased when several organizations rely on the same funding for project implementation. A few solutions could be considered. A common fund can be one of the best ways to avoid duplication and limit transaction costs. Donors may finance one common fund where a number of organizations working together can dip in for common projects. A common fund allows for quicker project implementation and more straightforward project management by avoiding double management work. An important condition for a common fund is that strict rules for access and use are agreed upon by organizations. However, organizational limitations on transferring funds may have to be overcome. In addition, the fund and the management thereof should not conflict with the needs of organizations in terms of accountability and reporting. Transparency is thus a crucial factor here.

In most cases however, preference is given to one organization being responsible for the actual project implementation. As such, the project is dependent on the rules and procedures of only one actor. This avoids conflicting needs. Other problems may occur here as well, such as again regarding the use of funds. Especially when joint fund raising is done, provisions clarifying the method of transactions need to be specified in detail and agreed upon in the formerly established structures.

Institutional means need to be found to compensate for the negative impact of personalities

A recurrent problem for co-ordination and co-operation is the individual, both in terms of frequent staff turnover in organizations and in terms of personalities. The following ways of dealing with such difficulties and overcoming personality-related obstacles could be considered:

- The need for a professional working attitude can be included in the ToRs of staff members and/or in the evaluation of staff.

In MONDEM, it was agreed in the MoU that UNDP would be the project implementer since it already had a related structure on the ground. Rules and procedures thus fall under the UNDP organizational modalities. This was found to be effective. Joint fund raising benefits

from the wider donor base from the OSCE while UNDP can only receive funds bilaterally. This resulted in initial problems for the OSCE to transfer funds to UNDP, including as UNDP charges for overheads whereas the OSCE does not. This challenge was managed in such

a way that it did not hamper the actual project implementation. Both organizations are co-located in the field, which was identified as a factor enabling easy and obstacle-free contacts.

- Staff policies can include the requirement to reply to routine emails within two working days, with emergency situations being answered as quickly as possible.
- Staff can be encouraged to participate in trainings or meetings before or during assignments to build up their people-to-people relationship skills.
- Staff members that clearly demonstrate the ability to work together with staff of different backgrounds could be specially selected.
- Local language skills can help overcome inter-personal obstacles.
- A good working relationship can be fostered by staff members staying longer in their posts. Therefore, organizations should put in place ways to encourage staff members to do so, in terms of financial and non-financial motivation tools.
- Consulting with other actors can also become a deliverable for individual staff members, and a benchmark in project evaluation to encourage working together. Having a stake in working with others motivates staff.
- Actors need to pay attention to the problematic consequences of corruption for co-ordination and co-operation.

Create a corporate culture

Creating a corporate culture for the collaborative efforts can be advantageous when it results in individual staff members and the organizations identifying with the outcome of co-ordination and co-operation processes. After all, a corporate culture leads to an open atmosphere resulting in transparency, which is fundamental to any successful working relationship. The following tools have proved useful in creating such a corporate image:

- External presentation of the interaction is important. This can be achieved through joint presentation to donors in terms of fund raising and reporting. Reciprocal representation can be organized.



A practical exercise during a training course on wildfire management in Qabala, Azerbaijan, 24 September 2012. The training was organized by the OSCE within the framework of the ENVSEC initiative. *Credit: OSCE*

- Public awareness campaigns can highlight the successes of working together. Briefings to the population, civil society and the media are useful ways to raise awareness of successes. Joint publications should clearly demonstrate the logos of all actors involved and place the contents in the overall framework.
- Material and publications of actors can be openly exchanged and partners may wish to use this material in their own activities. The OSCE Office in Tajikistan, for example, collected training material relevant to border guards training into a database available to partners. ENVSEC partners rely on shared maps.
- An easy policy on openness of documents is advised. If possible, the outcomes of evaluations and audits should be shared since these documents often include the most relevant lessons learned.

The website of ENVSEC provides a comprehensive overview of the co-operation framework including the background, objectives and projects. It is a good example of a corporate culture tool since it highlights ENVSEC as a framework that is successful thanks to the joint work of in-

ternational organizations. It allows ENVSEC to have a strong common image, while still providing visibility to the individual organizations. The website clearly shows the logos of all the partners involved. The website is up-to-date and contains interesting information for partners and the

public; such as news, information on meetings, meeting reports, and also a range of publications of the different organizations and maps. This availability of such information creates the feeling of transparency and trust.