

Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law

End of Project Review Report

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Executive Summary

Main findings

This review confirms that the Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law (the Platform) and its core goal—to strengthen the effectiveness of policy and programming in security and the rule of law by connecting academics, practitioners, and policymakers to generate and exchange knowledge—are critical. As a participant remarked, “If it [the Platform] did not exist, it would have to be invented.”

The impact of the Platform in terms of making policy and programming more effective and evidence-based is difficult to ascertain because knowledge, though it is a major building block, does not translate linearly into improved programming. In some cases, a direct link can be made, however, between the learning achieved through the Platform and improved programming or new forms of collaboration. The Addressing Root Causes of Conflict and Migration tender, for example, benefited directly from the lessons learned from the Reconstruction tender. The work on surfacing and analyzing the theory of change of policy on security and rule of law is an important first step in enhancing its evidence base. In some cases, new forms of collaboration were forged and working relations between different types of actors became more constructive.

The Platform aims to perform three functions: knowledge brokerage, research, and networking. In terms of knowledge brokerage, it is essential that thematic areas are closely linked to knowledge questions related to policy and programming priorities. This linkage is generally perceived to be the case. Some participants feel that more acute and more political issues might be prioritized. Others are concerned that a focus on acute challenges may distract attention from long-range goals.

That key decision makers understand and accept the knowledge is an important precondition for effective knowledge brokerage. Such assimilation has varied, and the Platform needs to continue to invest in it. The key related challenge, however, is the extent to which knowledge is simply exchanged or whether it leads to joint learning that is sufficiently actionable and would in turn have a clear impact on policy and programming.

In terms of the Platform’s research function, questions arise about the relevance of funded projects. The first results of these projects are only now becoming evident, and it is therefore too soon to draw definite conclusions. Early indicators were not promising because participants reported significant issues with how the calls were formulated. In response, the research period was shortened and emphasis increased on the policy and operational relevance of the research. It is again too early to tell whether these changes have significantly improved the practical applicability of the research, but it is likely that they have.

Over time, the partnership between the Platform and the science for global development division of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO/WOTRO) has become considerably more effective. The question is whether Platform demands for policy-relevant and applied research can be brought into line with the minimum procedural parameters NWO/WOTRO needs to maintain, or whether the gap between the two is simply too wide.

In terms of its networking function, the Platform has built a network of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers that did not yet exist as such. The processes for network members to actively participate in Platform events were initially unclear but improved significantly during the period under review. The thematic focusing process became less participatory and more closed, which increased its effectiveness but decreased its transparency. Overall, however, the commitment of participants and their willingness to invest time and energy in it is quite high.

Since 2014, the Platform and its events have become more effective and interactive. This process has involved active learning and adapting, such as a shift in emphasis from developing a research agenda toward knowledge exchange and brokerage, and a push to make research more relevant to policy and

operations. This culture of learning and adapting is a major strength and should be built upon in the Platform's second phase.

One of the biggest constraints has been an unclear strategic vision and focus. The Steering Group has not been very effective in articulating vision or providing strategic guidance to the Platform Secretariat. More clarity on who is primarily responsible for the strategic direction of the Platform is essential. Outsiders also remained somewhat confused about the Platform's identity and central goals. Clarifying the overall purpose and positioning of the Platform should therefore be a high priority for its second phase and needs to be backed by strengthened strategic communications.

The division of roles between the Steering Group, Secretariat, and consortium partners presented certain hurdles in the earliest stages of the Platform (2012 and 2013). Roles and functions consolidated over time and proved effective, albeit more for pragmatic reasons than intentional design. The tasks of the Secretariat expanded dramatically, though it was and to some degree still is under-equipped to handle them. Perhaps as a result, investment in the key function of monitoring and evaluation has been inadequate. Data reporting and contact management tools require improvement, as does the website. Overall, however, the participants were almost unanimous in applauding the professionalism, approachability, and openness to criticism of the Secretariat team.

Ways forward and recommendations

A clear vision and strategic focus are crucial. Achieving them requires clarifying the overall vision and aspirations of the Platform, reconfirming or adapting the overall goal, and carefully devising strategies to achieve the objectives.

Various strategic directions are possible, each of which has its pros and cons. A few considerations are worthy of particular attention, however:

- Increasing the Platform's relevance and usefulness to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is critical to strengthening the effectiveness of Dutch policy and programming. Knowledge brokerage should probably become the primary function of the Platform, and the other functions of networking and knowledge generation secondary. The agenda of the Platform should probably be closely linked (but not exclusively) with that of the MFA to ensure its relevance.
- Bringing in high-level complementary international expertise is also appropriate given that state-of-the-art thinking is found beyond as well as in the Netherlands. The Platform can and should raise the overall quality of knowledge exchange within the Netherlands, which will benefit the effectiveness of its policy and programming. The higher the quality of exchange, the greater also the likelihood that more senior decision makers will show an interest, which in turn will increase the uptake of the knowledge.
- The Platform can be seen as having gone through phases, whereby the first phase was characterized by learning and adaptation, and in the second phase a network was built and the effectiveness of the platform enhanced. Consolidating the foundations of the network built in this last phase is a natural extension, as are accelerating valorization of the knowledge and increasing joint learning.

One important challenge is to increase the perceived usefulness of the Platform to high-level decision-makers. To do so, three steps are indicated. First, the various departments of the MFA need to become more actively engaged in the Platform, such as through liaisons (assigned or volunteered) who meet regularly with the Secretariat. Second, learning—whether through the Platform or another mode—needs to be more strongly incentivized and rewarded within the MFA, probably beginning with the Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH). Third, the Platform needs to strengthen its connections to embassies by more active outreach and involvement of embassy staff in initiating events that address their knowledge questions.

The Platform in the second phase needs to be more conscious of how it embeds its activities into a knowledge trajectory. It needs to find balance between maintaining the flexibility to respond to participants' needs and ideas and ensuring that activities combine into something greater than the sum of the parts.

The process by which the thematic focus of the Platform is currently determined needs to be more transparent and to include more people and constituencies, such as different departments from the MFA (and possibly beyond) as well as embassies, practitioners' organizations, and researchers.

Choosing a two- or even three-pronged strategy in deciding the thematic focus for the Platform, and therefore of the research calls, is advisable. The aim would be to balance research that addresses relatively immediate policy or programming questions, that verifies the assumptions underpinning the theory of change of the policies and approaches on security and rule of law, and that focuses on long-term trends in security and rule of law, which would put the Platform ahead of the game and less subject to the whim of the day.

The feedback of findings to the relevant audience needs to be addressed more systematically. A more strategic approach is necessary to organize—and incentivize—these feedback loops to maximize their value in terms of strengthening the evidence base.

The current governance structure of the Platform requires serious reflection. A Steering Group should continue but needs to become more active in providing strategic guidance. The Secretariat needs to be strengthened, and the roles of the consortium partners need to be clearly outlined, so that the Secretariat can ensure that the aims and aspirations of the Platform are met and the consortium members can continue to provide their significant added value to the Platform.

Other practical issues require attention. One is the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework, adapted to the specific nature of a knowledge platform. A second is raising the communication strategy to a higher level and strengthening the online tools, notably the website. A third is to improve the way the Platform manages its information, notably its contact database management system, so that it can better produce the data and analysis necessary for active monitoring and accurate reporting.

Contents

1	Introduction	5
2	Aims and Objectives	6
2.1	The New Knowledge Policy	6
2.2	Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law	6
2.3	Slight revision in aims and objectives	7
2.4	Methodology	8
3	Main Lessons Learned and Adaptations	11
4	Main Findings.....	13
4.1	Overall Relevance and Importance.....	13
4.2	Impact on Dutch Policy and Programming.....	13
4.3	Effectiveness of the Knowledge Brokerage Function	15
4.4	Effectiveness of the Research Function	17
4.5	Effectiveness of Networking	20
4.6	Learning and Adaptation.....	22
4.7	Operational Management	23
4.8	Effectiveness of Governance Structures.....	26
4.9	Clarity of Vision and Strategic Direction	29
5	Conclusions and Recommendations.....	32
6	Annex I: List of people interviewed	37
7	Annex II: Comparison of envisaged with actual outputs (events only)	38

1 Introduction

The Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL, or the Platform) was established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Netherlands in 2012 as part of a broader knowledge management policy.

The Platform is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under a contractual agreement with The Hague Institute of Global Justice (THIGJ) and the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) of the Clingendael Institute. The initial time frame for the project was from 2012 to 2015, subsequently extended by six-month intervals until the end of 2016. In mid-July 2014, a midterm review was conducted. This review is the End of Project review of the project and covers the period from July 2014 to December 2016.

The review is meant to provide useful insights into the relevance and the effectiveness of the implementation of the Platform. It aims to provide insight into the way in which the Platform has developed over the implementation period and what lessons can be learned for the future. A second phase of the Platform is planned for the period from 2017 to 2021, and though the new consortium has begun work in January 2017, the findings and recommendations from this report can still be considered in the inception phase.

The report begins with a short summary and analysis on the aims and objectives of the Platform, and moves on to the methodology and a further specification of the focus of the review. Because the Platform adapted itself incrementally over time, a concise overview of the main lessons learned and adaptations made from 2014 to 2016 is provided to serve the reader in making sense of the findings. The main findings of the review are then presented, followed by the main conclusions and recommendations for the way forward.

2 Aims and Objectives

2.1 The New Knowledge Policy

In November 2011, Minister for European Affairs and International Cooperation Ben Knapen proposed a new knowledge policy to support research and development specifically to underpin Dutch policy and its implementation and to make Dutch development efforts more effective (knowledge for policy). Research and development can contribute to development and self-reliance in developing countries (knowledge for developing countries). The role the ministry plays can be more effectively fulfilled if better account is taken of knowledge and experience already acquired (policy for knowledge). Furthermore, the government wants to use research to deploy existing expenditure more strategically—in a way less fragmented and more focused on priorities—and thus help enhance the relevance and use of knowledge about and research capacity for development cooperation in the Netherlands, strengthen the capacity of southern research institutions, improve access to existing knowledge in the south and extend cooperation between northern and southern knowledge institutions.¹

One element of the new knowledge strategy was the establishment of five knowledge platforms, and clarified the main tasks: first, jointly identifying, selecting, and defining research questions; second, setting up a coherent joint research agenda; third, mapping and deploying existing knowledge; and, last, linking research findings to policy and practice. It also included pointers on the setup and organization of these platforms.

The Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law is one of the five knowledge platforms established in this manner. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested a consortium of The Hague Institute for Global Justice and the Conflict Research Unit of the Clingendael Institute to take further steps toward the establishment of this platform. Their proposal was approved in December 2012, and is still the basis of the Platform today.²

2.2 Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law

The proposal for the establishment of the Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law builds directly on the aims of this new knowledge policy.

The primary goal of the Knowledge Platform is “to articulate and answer knowledge questions and promote knowledge exchange, in order to more strongly underpin the policy and its implementation, thus making international efforts more effective.”

As a secondary goal, “the Platform aims to tackle a number of additional bottlenecks, including fragmentation of research funds (the Platform is the main vehicle through which the MFA’s research funds on issues of security and rule of law are allocated), difficulties in linking knowledge to policy and its implementation, and inadequate exchange of practical knowledge and experience between organizations active in the field.”

The proposal also specified the thematic focus of the Platform, which is directly linked to the policy objectives of the Dutch government on security and rule of law: security for people, functioning legal order, inclusive political processes, a legitimate and capable government, and the peace dividend of

¹ <http://knowledgeplatforms.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Letter-14-November-2011-Ben-Knapen-Knowledge-Policy.pdf>.

² “Inrichting en werkwijze van het secretariaat van het Kennisplatform Veiligheid en Rechtsorde,” Voorstel van Instituut Clingendael en The Hague Institute for Global Justice, 2012.

jobs and basic services. The proposal further stated that a problem-solving, multidisciplinary approach will be used and cross-fertilization across thematic areas will be encouraged. Equally, bridging divides between academics and practitioners (from government, nongovernment organizations [NGOs], and the private sector) was noted as important.

The Platform was launched on the basis of this proposal and implementation begun. Relatively quickly, challenges began to appear and adaptations were made to the structures put in place. The midterm review identified these lessons learned in some detail. The challenges led to a slight revision in the Platform's aims and objectives.

2.3 Slight revision in aims and objectives

The 2014 Annual Plan begins with a description of the lessons learned over the preceding years and presents several changes to the Platform, notably a loosening up of the research working group structures. It sets the objective of further refining the strategic focus, aims, and objectives to better "ascertain the true added value of the Platform" and "add to the sustainability of its impact, its relevance and the underpinning of the legitimacy of its existence."³ The 2014 Annual Report presents the outcome of this exercise in the form of reshaped aims and objectives:

The Platform's objectives are to promote knowledge exchange and to identify, define and answer research questions with the aim of underpinning Dutch development policy in fragile and conflict-affected settings and its implementation more adequately, thereby contributing to its effectiveness.

What is notable is the reordering of the two main objectives; the (formerly secondary) objective on knowledge exchange is brought forward and the (formerly primary) research objective moved back. This is confirmed in the follow-on text in the annual report:

The Platform will transform towards a focus on the networking and knowledge brokering activities, rather than the research activities that are currently undertaken.

The Operational Guidelines, of January 2015, confirm these revised objectives.⁴ It adds several elements, which are not emphasized as clearly in the cited aims, namely:

'The Platform strives to test the underlying assumptions and effectiveness of current policies and their implementation, while simultaneously exploring innovative approaches to emerging challenges in the area of human security and rule of law in fragile and conflict-affected situations.'⁵

The 2014 Annual Report carries this new thinking forward and offers suggestions on how the Platform would need to operate to achieve these aims. The aims are in line with the original key elements of the approach (problem-oriented, multidisciplinary, linking academics, policy, and practice) but provide an insight into the progressive insight that the Platform achieved. The annual report suggests that the Platform could aspire to be as follows:

- 1. A cross-sector learning cycle by connecting stakeholders across divides (local-international; research-policy-practice; north-south; traditional-nontraditional).*
- 2. A trusted space for frank and open interaction and debate: examining what works and what*

³ Another reason for strategizing the Platform for the period after 2015 is that the current subsidy for the Secretariat expires by December 2015, whereas the research projects commissioned through NWO/WOTRO run until the end of 2019. To provide for a useful feedback loop from these research projects to the relevant stakeholders and for the Platform to fulfill its aims and objectives, the Platform needs to continue its activities until the end of 2019.

⁴ Throughout these documents, it is clear that this transition is under way. In the introduction of the Operational Guidelines, the old statement of aims and objectives is used, whereas under Objectives and Tasks the new one is.

⁵ *Operational Guidelines*, January 2015

doesn't work (also based on existing evaluations and meta-evaluations to provide for evidence-based learning across programs, sectors, and countries).

3. *A reliable source of information on cutting-edge issues, providing information tailored to the different stakeholder groups.*
4. *A facilitator of dynamic formats, tools, and services to stimulate breakthrough thinking on concrete security and rule of law challenges in fragile environments.*⁶

This insight did not lead to a further reshaping of aims and objectives to more strongly embody these aspirations.⁷ The Platform can therefore not be held accountable for the extent to which it achieved them. The goals, however, were a source of inspiration for carrying the work forward, and thus influenced the continuation of the work of the Platform. The types of events were adjusted, for example, and efforts were made to make the Platform more interactive. These changes were intended to serve as a bridge between the current aims and objectives and these inspirations for the future.

2.4 Methodology

The focus of the review

Following on from the aims and objectives, the Platform has set itself the following aims:

- ❖ contribute to the effectiveness of policy and programming in security and rule of law;
- ❖ contribute to the evidence base of current policies and programs;
- ❖ distribute research funding effectively toward policy-relevant research;
- ❖ facilitate the accumulation and exchange of knowledge and experience and build interdisciplinary, cross-sector networks between actors, notably policymakers, practitioners, and academics; and
- ❖ explore innovative approaches to emerging challenges.

The review focuses on these objectives. The suggestions on what the Platform could aspire to be, as described, are used as a source of inspiration, but the Platform will not be held accountable to them. In assessing the effectiveness of the Platform, the review takes into consideration the progressive insight that the key stakeholders of the Platform obtained, the extent to which adaptations have been put in place, and the extent to which they have enhanced the performance of the Platform.

Main lines of inquiry

The review is organized along nine main lines of inquiry, which overlap and influence each other to a considerable degree.⁸

Overall relevance and importance of the Platform

How relevant and important is a Platform that brings together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to exchange knowledge and experience, in particular in the area of security and rule of law?

Impact of the Platform on Dutch policy and programming

To what extent has the Platform contributed to the effectiveness of policy and programming, contributed to the evidence base of current policies and programs, and explored innovative approaches to emerging challenges?

⁶ 2014 Annual Report,

⁷ The main reason was the foreseen end of the first phase and the lack of a mandate to push through strategic choices that would need to be made in the second phase.

⁸ These are slightly different from the five lines of inquiry presented in the Inception Phase report, but cover the same issues.

❖ *Effectiveness of knowledge brokerage function of the Platform*

How relevant are the thematic priorities of the Platform for policy and programming? What is the degree of uptake by policymakers and practitioners and those involved in programming? To what extent do Platform events and products add value to policy development and programming?

❖ *Effectiveness of the research function of the Platform*

How relevant are the research findings for strengthening policy and programming? How effective are the mechanisms for distributing research funding? How effective are the research feedback mechanisms?

❖ *Effectiveness of the networking function of the Platform*

To what extent did the Platform build up a network and encourage new forms of collaboration? To what extent did the Platform facilitate the accumulation and exchange of knowledge and experience between policy makers, researchers, and practitioners? How clear and transparent are the processes for participating in the Platform? What is the degree of ownership, energy, and commitment to the Platform among its participants?

❖ *Learning and Adaptation*

To which extent were lessons learned and did they translate into changes in objectives, in strategic focus, in approaches and working methods or in governance structures? How systematic was the learning and adaptation process?

❖ *Operational management of the Platform*

To what extent is the Platform managed effectively by the Secretariat? To what extent has the Platform met its targets in terms of envisaged outputs? How effective are the Platform's communication strategy and tools? How effective are the reporting and contact management tools?

❖ *Effectiveness of the governance structures*

To what extent is strategic guidance forthcoming from the Steering Group and how does this translate to the activities of the Platform? How clear is the division of roles between the Steering Group, the Secretariat, the consortium partners CRU and THIGJ? How effective is this collaboration? How well is the relationship between the Platform and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs defined? How effective is this relationship?

❖ *Clarity of vision and strategic direction*

To what extent is there clarity and consensus on the intended purpose and strategy among the main stakeholders of the Platform? Does the Platform have a clear vision and strategic direction? How recognizable is the identity of the Platform for its participants?

Methods used

The review incorporates a combination of desk research and interviews.

Box 1. Terminology of actors

The main *stakeholders* of the Platform are those with the most direct involvement in the execution of the Platform. These are

- the main *bodies* of the Platform (the Steering Group, the Secretariat, and the consortium partners CRU and THIGJ),
- the portfolio manager (MFA/DSH), and
- NWO/WOTRO.

The term *participants of the Platform* is applied to all those who participate in the activities of the Platform, that is, co-organizing or attending events, accessing the knowledge products, applying for research funding, and so forth.

The term *audience* is used for all those who the Platform may try to reach. This can go beyond the actual participants of the Platform. This term is also used specifically in relation to the question of *relevance*—specifically, relevant for which specific audience?

Interviews

Thirty-nine interviews were conducted with a broad range of individuals:

- the principal governance bodies of the Platform (Steering Group, Secretariat, CRU, Institute)
- other key stakeholders, the portfolio manager (MFA/DSH Strategic Advisor) and WOTRO
- participants of the Platform
 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a mix of participants from DSH, other departments of the MFA, and embassies
 - academics / researchers
 - policy think tanks
 - practitioners / NGOs, from the north and the south

A detailed list of interviewees is provided in annex I. To ensure a balanced mix of views, efforts were made to interview both those who had been closely involved with the Platform and those who had had less regular involvement.

Desk review

Documents that were reviewed during the desk review include

- annual reports and annual plans;
- Steering Group meeting minutes and supporting documents;
- calls and other tender documentation for the distribution of research funding;
- midterm review;
- knowledge products, events, and online debates;
- database of network participants;
- communication strategy and guidance notes;
- appraisal process for networking events and specific examples of assessments;
- specific communications between the main stakeholders and partners of the Platform; and
- the policy framework for the Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform on Security of Rule of Law, a component of the tender documentation for the new platform.

3 Main Lessons Learned and Adaptations

❖ *Objectives, functions, and outputs of the Platform*

Strategic reflections held primarily in 2014 led to a first sketch of a vision of a Platform 2.0, as discussed earlier in the section on aims and objectives. Platform 2.0 was not fully adopted as the new vision in view of the nearing of the end of the mandate of the first phase of the Platform.⁹ Nonetheless the Platform adopted certain elements of this vision and the primary focus, on research (or more specifically on the identification of a research agenda), shifted to knowledge exchange.

In line with these strategic reflections, a distinction was made between three types of events: interactive brainstorm sessions, closely aligned with the thematic areas of the Platform and initiated by the Secretariat and developed with substantive content input from the Secretariat and CRU; networking events, initiated by network members; and ad hoc events initiated by network members or the Secretariat. It was decided that these events will always have a particular output in the form of a policy brief, a brief report, or summary of the meeting. In addition, short-term research, consultancies, and study trips could be organized to further the Secretariat's objectives.

Part of the original design was to create an online knowledge hub or repository in the field of security and rule of law. This idea became secondary to a more interactive approach considered more aligned with the broader aims and functions of the Platform.

❖ *Distribution of research funds and sharing of research findings*

In the early years of the Platform, working groups were formed to jointly develop the research agenda. By July 2014, this structure had been replaced by different mechanisms that involved a scoping or mapping study to identify areas where further research would be required. These processes were perceived as too cumbersome, however. Research calls (ARF1, SRF1, and SRF2) were then developed internally by the Secretariat with support from CRU and input and approval from the Steering Group.

It became clear that long-term, more fundamental research was more difficult to translate into improved policy and practice because of the less applied nature of the research and the long lead time in the availability of research findings. This led to a shift in the balance between strategic and applied research, with greater emphasis on applied research. These reflections led to shorter research periods in the research calls and a stronger emphasis on the policy relevance of research findings. Assessment procedures were shortened, and the criteria for eligibility and assessment were also slightly adapted, since some (a.o. capacity strengthening) were unreasonable to demand in view of the short running period of the projects. Some conditions for applying were changed to increase the opportunities for research conducted by and with practitioner organizations from the north and the south, for example that the main applicant could henceforth also be a practitioner organization. The condition of co-creation (in which scientists work together with practitioners) and the condition of north-south collaboration were already in place and remained.

In particular, acknowledgment has been strong in 2016 in the lessons learned sections of the annual plans and reports that the feedback links between researchers and the Platform has been too limited, and a more systematic strategy is needed to ensure the feedback loop from research to practice.

❖ *Stronger focus on internationalization*

Consistently from 2014 to 2016, the Platform sought to further internationalize. In September 2014, two international Steering Group members, Anton du Plessis and George Mukundi, enriched the Steering Group. From 2014 onward, the focus on internationalization strengthened, from

⁹ The decision to launch a tender document to continue the Platform after 2015 was taken in 2014. Stakeholders felt that strategic decisions should be left to the new consortium.

international activities to requirements for international engagement in networking events co-funded by the Secretariat to enhanced outreach.

In 2016, further internationalization is still deemed an important area, in terms of both increasing the involvement of key international experts and bringing in more local expertise.

❖ *Clearer and narrowed thematic focus*

The desire to set the Platform's thematic focus more clearly and more sharply gelled in mid-2014. In 2015, the original thematic areas remained in place but were narrowed down and aligned with international trends. This move was driven partly by a desire to create more clarity, focus, and coherence and partly by a drive to increase the Platform's policy relevance.

❖ *Clearer and more transparent processes and criteria*

Early on, there was relatively little clarity on the process and criteria with which the Platform conducted its events and prepared its research calls. The same was true of selection criteria and appraisal processes for proposed network events. Another important lesson was the need for more space for such events and more flexible and quicker procedures, especially for ad hoc events and those initiated by network members. The right balance needed to be found between flexibility and coherence and transparency.

In response, operating procedures were updated in August 2015 to streamline these issues and create more clarity. These included the new selection criteria and appraisal processes for proposed network events, which were shared with the network members, and the addition of ad hoc events that are more flexible and can quickly respond to specific requests or opportunities.

❖ *Shift in online interaction*

In 2014 online debates were hosted on the KPSRL website, facilitated by The Broker. Alongside them were event-specific blogs, written primarily by event participants. The debates continued until late 2015, when they were replaced with an online knowledge exchange that relied on blogs alone. In 2016 the blog series Justice and Peace was initiated in collaboration with Saferworld.

❖ *More proactive and substantive role for the Secretariat*

Over the years, the Secretariat gradually took on a more proactive role in coordinating events and linking network participants with each other and to specific topics. Expansion of the network, also internationally, became a more crucial part of the Secretariat work. The Secretariat also took on a larger role in development of research call content as well as post-event knowledge outputs. The capacity of the Secretariat was subsequently increased.

4 Main Findings

This section discusses the overall relevance and importance of the Platform and then analyzes the impact of the Platform on Dutch policy and programming. It looks at the three main Platform functions: knowledge brokerage, research, and networking.

The section also addresses governance and management of the Platform, first its learning and adaptation, followed by operational management and governance structures. Last, it discusses clarity of vision and strategic direction.

4.1 Overall Relevance and Importance

Key question

- ❖ How relevant and important is a Platform that brings together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to exchange knowledge and experience, in particular, in the area of security and rule of law?

Overall the perception among the interviewees is strong that a Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law is highly relevant in the world today, and that the core idea of bringing different types of actors and communities together in an interactive way is highly relevant. The Platform is unique in this sense. International interviewees in particular strongly commended the Dutch government for facilitating this.

A number of interviewees pointed out that the knowledge infrastructure within the MFA had become significantly reduced in recent years in response to budget cuts and staff rotation. This would further strengthen the importance of a knowledge platform by ensuring that the knowledge basis that supports policymaking is not undermined.

4.2 Impact on Dutch Policy and Programming

Key questions

To what extent has the Platform

- ❖ contributed to the effectiveness of policy and programming?
- ❖ contributed to the evidence base of current policies and programs?
- ❖ explored innovative approaches to emerging challenges?

Platform contribution to the effectiveness of policy and programming

The overall aim of the Platform is to underpin Dutch development policy in fragile and conflict-affected settings and its implementation more adequately, contributing to its effectiveness. The link between knowledge and policy or knowledge and practice is not linear, however. Knowledge can lead to new insights, which may at some point translate into a change in how a policy is formulated or a program designed, but it is usually not the only factor in play. That it is not complicates the ways in which effectiveness can be assessed. This review combines a combination of anecdotal evidence and what can be considered to be preconditions for any impact.

The Platform has so far been weak in devising mechanisms for assessing its effectiveness. Although after-survey events have been put in place, a monitoring and evaluation framework has not yet been developed. This key weakness needs to be addressed.

In a number of cases, the relationship between knowledge generated by the Platform and subsequent policy or programming is relatively direct. One example is the lessons drawn from the Reconstruction tender, which were incorporated, in the subsequent tender on Addressing Root Causes of Conflict and Migration (ARC tender). This learning included the importance of having a joint monitoring and evaluation framework, of cooperation between donor and implementers in its development, and of instituting a continuous learning cycle throughout the implementation. The Reconstruction Tender Working Group was also an important driver in unpacking the theory of change of the security and

rule of law policy spearhead. These lessons learned and the analysis fed into the development of the ARC tender and thus directly influenced programming.

This influence on policy and programming is not always visible to Platform participants, however. Interestingly, the ARC tender was cited by some nongovernmental interviewees as a case in which previous learning did not seem to have translated into changes in subsequent approaches, which points to a challenge in communicating these linkages to the participants not closely involved in these processes.¹⁰

More generally, many interviewees were skeptical about the extent to which the knowledge or learning generated through the Platform led to direct changes in policy or programming. Participants explained that the knowledge acquired translated most directly into increased effectiveness of programming when the event was more tailored to their operational needs and when they were more in control of the agenda and who to invite.

Platform contribution to the evidence base of current policies and programs

Most of the research is not yet finalized and therefore any statements on the degree to which the research projects led to a strengthened evidence base would be premature. Anecdotal reporting by the Secretariat shows that a number of research projects are being put to use.¹¹ These include trialing tools for participatory gender analysis of conflict in Uganda, which appears to be used by Saferworld and partners; the Justice Box, a tool for evidence-based policy and legal empowerment, which is used by the Ministry of Justice in Mali; and a toolkit for Enhancing Local Peace Committees, which is used by the Dutch NGO ZOA and its partners to facilitate stakeholder debate on the strategic choices in transitional justice in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

One precondition for building a stronger evidence base for policies and programming is to be explicit and clear on its underpinnings. The work done by the Platform on surfacing and analyzing the theory of change of the Dutch policy on security and rule of law is therefore critical. This preparatory work translated directly into the theory of change of the policy spearhead of security and rule of law, which then provides opportunities to verify these assumptions. A number of research projects are indeed looking at these assumptions in more detail, but the results have not been released.

Platform contribution to innovative approaches to emerging challenges

The Platform has increasingly focused its attention on emerging challenges and innovative approaches. In 2015, the themes were “Innovative solutions for security and justice” and “New crises? Dealing with transnational dimensions.” In 2016, they were “Which balance to adopt in addressing current and emerging transnational security challenges?” and “Innovation in Security and Rule of Law programming.” The research calls issued in 2015 and 2016 reflect these topics.

Platform events also focused more on acutely emergent issues, such as migration, around which a number of events have been organized and a research call has been launched. The Platform, or rather its participants, also organized events on immediate questions around how to deal with the situations in Iraq, in Libya, and in Mali. Networking and ad hoc events have proved especially suitable to these more urgent questions.

The extent to which the Platform has managed to really scan the horizon for not-so-visible, over-the-horizon type emerging challenges is strongly doubted by a good number of interviewees. Some were

¹⁰ This either tells us something about the way the Platform communicates its impact to its members, or points to a different perception on what the key learning was from the Reconstruction tender. The MFA might be more interested in how to develop a tender, and these participants more focused on the content and underlying assumptions of the program.

¹¹ The reviewer was not in a position to confirm the actual use of these tools.

concerned that the trend toward more short-term and directly policy-relevant research may cause this long-term scanning for emerging challenges to drop even further off the radar.

The extent to which the Platform has managed to come up with innovative ideas is difficult to ascertain. But, as many interviewees said, innovation should not be a goal in itself; better policy or programming should remain the goal. Most felt that the Platform was putting many of the necessary conditions in place to come up with better approaches, such as interactive discussions among different types of actors. The recent event series around adaptive programming were generally perceived as breaking new ground. Participants also mentioned the open research calls as potentially good enablers of innovative approaches, although evidence is weak to state that they have actually produced more innovative approaches.

4.3 Effectiveness of the Knowledge Brokerage Function

Key questions

- ❖ How relevant are the thematic priorities of the Platform?
- ❖ What is the degree of uptake by policymakers and practitioners and those involved in programming?
- ❖ To what extent do Platform events and products add value to policy development and programming?

Relevance on the thematic priorities

In the early days of the Platform, themes were based on a strong vision that key policy questions emerged in interaction between different types of actors. This approach proved difficult to streamline, and interests of individuals or organizations hampered the emergence of an overall vision, not in the least because the Platform's agenda was linked to the availability of research funding. Over time, the approach to thematic focusing became more pragmatic, in which a number of themes re preselected and then vetted at the annual conference. Selection was based on careful mapping of previous themes, activities, research projects, after which new themes that could meaningfully build on them were identified, while taking into account new (policy) developments. Potential themes were scrutinized for the degree to which they built on what had happened in the past, had the support of Platform participants, and were in line with policy developments.

This process was comprehensive, derived from the input of Platform participants, benefited from the knowledge and insight from Steering Group members. The relevance of the thematic focus was thus mostly ensured through three mechanisms: the understanding of the Steering Group members on the key policy issues on both the international and the national agenda, the knowledge of CRU and the Secretariat of MFA priorities, and the input gathered informally from Platform participants.¹²

The interviewees expressed a range of opinions when asked how relevant they considered the Platform's thematic priorities. Granted, most of the participants do not attend all events and therefore do not have a good overview over the range of topics discussed. Nonetheless, most did feel that the thematic priorities were indeed relevant and understand that meeting everyone's needs would always be impossible. This perspective was offered mostly by the more active participants of the Platform, who probably also have the best overall understanding of what the Platform does.

This group still offered some criticism on the extent to which these thematic prioritization led to coherence across Platform outputs. It was often difficult for participants to see the forest for the trees, and some felt that the Platform event organization was random and not coherent. It all felt ad hoc, even the interactive brainstorm sessions and network events intended to be more closely aligned

¹² In 2016, the head of the Secretariat also joined a meeting in Nairobi, organized by the MFA with the thematic leads on security and rule of law in the region.

¹² This visit was part of an effort for the Secretariat to gain a better understanding of priorities within the MFA.

with the thematic priorities. It was also often not clear whether events were part of a larger learning strategy or knowledge trajectory.

Some interviewees noted that thematic areas of real importance to them were not included. These points of view could mostly be heard from non-DSH government officials, who wanted to see more emphasis placed on more national security and geopolitical issues, such as countering violent extremism and deradicalization, the role of international security institutions in a changing world, the rise of the East, and more acute crises, such as the Middle East or the migration 'crisis'.

Another interesting—and possibly related—point of view was that the Platform tends to continue to tackle security and rule of law problems as technocratic issues rather than as political ones. Although it was acknowledged that the Platform has consciously attempted to bring more awareness of politics into security and rule of law programming, this was considered to still be done in a relatively technocratic manner, grounded in developmental logic rather than one more foreign policy or national security oriented. This perception was grounded in the choice of topics—shying away from the more political ones—and by the lack of politicians and more politically oriented civil society organizations at Platform events.

Uptake by policymakers and programmers

An important precondition for improving policy and programming is sufficient uptake of the knowledge by key decision makers. Many participants cited the relatively low showing of ministry staff at events, and in particular of senior-level officials who influence policy or programming.¹³ Some participants also mentioned a relatively low commitment to active and open participation of policymakers and a tendency to give information rather than receive it. Other participants, however, were impressed with the commitment and openness of MFA staff. This response seems to have been event-specific, though international participants seemed more positive overall than their Dutch counterparts.¹⁴

Similarly, a number of participants observed that embassy staff do not seem aware that the Platform exists, is not tapped into what knowledge it produces, and do not have a strong influence on the kinds of issues researched or discussed through the Platform. This was considered a weak link.

Degree to which Platform events and products add value

The events of the Platform were generally perceived to have added value. Some characteristics that were mentioned by participants as important were

- a well-tailored selection of participants with good content knowledge,
- an interactive format,
- an environment in which participants felt free to speak (Chatham House rules), and
- a mix of perspectives from academics, policymakers, and practitioners from both the north and the south.

Blanket statements about the quality of the events are not possible given the variety in responses. Generally, however, most interviewees felt that the Platform had the characteristics described.¹⁵ Some of the events specifically praised were those on adaptive programming and on the role of the African Union, though given the number of interviews held this does not stand up to serious scrutiny.

¹³ The actual average proportion of policymakers present at the events was 23 percent. For more information, see the following section and annex II.

¹⁴ The degree of participation and commitment of decision makers, governmental and nongovernmental, is closely related to the extent to which they considered the events or research to be relevant.

¹⁵ In one clear outlier, a participant considered an interactive brainstorm event to be significantly substandard, both in terms of the event itself and the background papers produced for it. This is of concern, but it would not be good practice to draw strong conclusions from one such case.

The key concern was the “and now what?” question. Many felt that the activities at best opened up new ways of looking at an issue but often did not lead to more concrete recommendations on how to improve policy or programming or to real joint learning. One interviewee said neatly that it felt as if many events ended by concluding, “it is a complex issue, and dilemmas and trade-offs need careful balancing.” He wished that this could be the starting point of the conversation rather than the end point. This observation points to the need to move from mere exchange of knowledge and experience to joint learning and forging concrete ways forward. Many felt that the most useful events were those in which they had had a closer hand in developing the knowledge question, the agenda, and the format of the conversation.

Policymakers within the MFA in particular expressed this opinion. This group also strongly emphasized the importance of a “safe space.” Interestingly, opinions differed widely on whether the measures the Platform had put in place (setting the tone, Chatham House rules, invitation-only events) were enough to create such a safe space.

A number of interviewees also pointed out that Platform activities could be better linked so specific events or other windows of opportunity that open up along policy processes.

The event-related products were also generally perceived to be high quality, concise, and readable. Most participants, however, did not lend great value to these outputs. A few interviewees reported to have read the outputs of activities they had not attended, and just as few read the reports on events they had attended.¹⁶

4.4 Effectiveness of the Research Function

Key questions

- ❖ How relevant are the research findings for strengthening policy and programming?
- ❖ How effective are the mechanisms for distributing research funding?
- ❖ How effective are the research feedback mechanisms?

Relevance of the research findings

It is too early to judge the relevance of research projects funded by NOW/WOTRO under calls launched by the Platform. Few projects have released their findings¹⁷.

However, in August 2015, the Secretariat and Steering Group raised concerns that the processes in place to select research projects may not be conducive to sufficiently timely, policy-relevant, and practically applicable outputs. The long time frames of the research (two to three years in the first calls), the academic bias of the research, its weak practical applicability, and its relative distance to policy priorities were noted. Furthermore, although projects always had to be executed in consortia of scientists and practitioners, a scientific organization had to be main applicant, which caused an academic bias. A number of eligibility and assessment criteria introduced a bias against the involvement of southern organizations and practitioners’ organizations, and toward a reliance on scientific methods and academic theory. The long time frame required to prepare the calls and the assessment process was also deemed problematic. In response to these considerations, some adaptations were made. The conditions that practitioners could not function as coordinator of a project and. Some other conditions/eligibility criteria were also adjusted in order to remove possible hurdles for practitioners to operate as main applicant, such as the condition that the main applicant had to hold a PhD were dropped. The timeframe for research was also shortened, for instance by

¹⁶ The website statistics tool does not provide an easy way to corroborate these figures.

¹⁷ It has not been possible within the scope of this review to assess these specific projects for their relevance to policymakers or practitioners.

converting one strategic research call into an applied research call, so that research results would become available more rapidly and thus stay be more immediately relevant for current policy priorities. The tender development, selection, and assessment process was also shortened. These steps are likely to lead to a higher relevance of Platform research.

The vast majority of interviewees acknowledged these earlier problems with the research calls and approved of the shifts made in to address them. Some, including NWO/WOTRO, questioned whether the research period and the application period were not becoming too compressed. Excess compression could have negative impacts on the participation of southern organizations and on field-based research methods that require time and flexibility.

More generally, many interviewees were still skeptical of the extent to which the research produced would be sufficiently relevant and respond to the knowledge needs of Platform participants. In particular, the academic bias was still considered too strong.

Evidenced-based policy does need to be grounded in facts and based on a degree of methodological rigor, but care needs to be taken that the degree of academic rigor does not trump the policy relevance of the research in practice. A closer look at the research calls makes it clear that significant improvements have made the research more policy relevant, but that continued watchfulness is justified. The criteria for research quality may still reflect a bias toward more academic research methods, and although the criterion of scientific quality carries an equal weight in the assessment as the criterion of relevance, the assessment process may be grounded in a more academic logic. Overall the resulting relevance of the research projects remains somewhat of an open question and will require a closer scrutiny of the research and the degree to which its findings are found to provide useful input into policy making¹⁸.

Effectiveness of mechanisms for distributing research funding

Research funding for the Platform is distributed through an independent intermediary, NWO/WOTRO, to avoid any conflict of interest within the Platform. Partnering with such an organization brings needed rigor and expertise to the development of the research tender and its assessment process. NWO-WOTRO generally funds long and middle term policy-relevant and applied research, but it organizes tender procedures for very short-term and/ or desk research that can address political urgency on explicit demand only. The drawback of this partnership is thus that the demands of the Platform for quick turn-over, policy-relevant and applied research may not be a full match with the procedures that were put in place at the onset of the program. As lessons were learnt by both the Platform and NWO/WOTRO, working approaches and expectations were not always well matched.

Considerable effort has gone into trying to overcome these differences in working approaches and expectations. The effort has not been helped, however, by the relative lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities between the Platform Secretariat and NWO/WOTRO, an issue already flagged in the midterm review. The understanding was that the Platform should determine the thematic content of the calls as well as the conditions (main applicants, capacity strengthening, co-creation etc.), while NWO/WOTRO was responsible for translating these into call texts, criteria and assessment procedures according to best practices. In practice it was somewhat unclear where the thematic content ends and the substantive aspects of the tender documents begin, what the exact division of responsibility was, and how this could be done most effectively. As the Platform struggled to find the best ways to develop its research agenda, it also found that the translation of these focus areas into

¹⁸ The midterm review of the contract between MFA and NWO/WOTRO will be conducted in early 2017. It can look into this question in more detail.

tender documents and criteria for selection processes was challenging. Considerable content knowledge is needed to develop the content elements in the call, for which the CRU provided the necessary support. This support is a delicate issue because one of the risks of the reciprocal arrangement is that consortium partners may be seen to benefit from their role. To be clear, there is no indication that the CRU benefited in any way from these arrangements because the thematic focus had been developed independently and development of the content-dimension of the call did not favor CRU in any way. Furthermore, the evidence shows that CRU did not benefit from a disproportionate amount of research funding, and in fact deliberately held back from applying for any. Looking ahead, clear measures need to be in place to ensure that consortium members do not gain a disproportionate advantage or disadvantage.

The relationship between the Platform and NWO/WOTRO was complicated by the separate contract NWO/WOTRO had with MFA, and was therefore reporting to the MFA and not to the Platform. In practice however, most conversations were held jointly, and the Platform was given the opportunity to comment on the NWO/WOTRO annual plans and reports, which reduced the potential disadvantages of these separate contracts. The MFA, and in particular the strategic policy advisor of DSH, has played an important role in ensuring that these contracts were aligned.

Over time, NWO/WOTRO moved a long way to meeting the needs of the Platform, such as by adapting the eligibility and assessment criteria and reducing the duration of the assessment procedure. The effectiveness of this arrangement has thus steadily improved despite some continued misunderstandings and miscommunication, and for partnership to function smoothly, all three partners need to continue to discuss expectations, demands and possibilities.

Progress in improving the effectiveness of this partnership since the outset has been considerable. It remains a difficult one, however. The expertise, rigor, and independence that NWO/WOTRO brings to the table is essential for the MFA, but also means that NOW/WOTRO needs to maintain certain threshold conditions on procedure. With an increasing shift toward more policy-relevant and short-duration research requirements of the Platform, the question can be asked whether the gap between demands of the Platform for policy-relevant and applied research can be brought into line with the minimum procedural parameters NWO/WOTRO needs to maintain, or whether the gap is simply too wide for the partnership to be practicable in the long term, especially for the more immediate knowledge demands of the Platform.¹⁹

A further outstanding question relates to the combining of the research distribution function with the networking and knowledge brokerage function, as this means that the same people are involved with identifying the knowledge demand that also have an interest in applying for the research funding. In the early days of the Platform, this tension stood in the way of building an effective network and establishing a research agenda relevant for policy and programming overall. This tension is largely dissipated, but broader questions remain on whether this method of distributing research funding is the most effective one. This question can only be answered against the background of the broader strategic discussion on who the main audience of the knowledge is and how knowledge demand is identified. In line with these discussions, it may be worthwhile to break down the type of research necessary under different categories and assess the added value of the Platform and NWO/WOTRO versus other mechanisms.¹⁹

¹⁹ It may be useful to take up this question in the midterm review of the NWO/WOTRO Research Program on Security and Rule of Law.

Effectiveness of feedback mechanisms

One area that requires more attention is the feedback of research findings to the Platform, or other relevant audiences, to maximize the extent to which policy and programming is underpinned by evidence. Although researchers were expected to feed back their findings to the Platform, this did not happen spontaneously.²⁰ The Secretariat did try to establish mechanisms to connect the researchers with other Platform members, such as by involving research consortia in the development and implementation of sessions of the annual conference. Researchers were also invited to attend or speak at events close to their topic of research. Of the thirty-three research projects funded through the Platform, twenty have shared their findings at Platform events. Of those that have not, the vast majority have not yet completed their research. Some are international organizations, which complicates their participation in conferences and events, though the Platform did secure some feedback on their findings.²¹

Whether this is sufficient is a valid question. These interactions did take place, but primarily in connection to annual conferences and refining thematic priorities for the upcoming year. Although this is useful in terms of building on earlier work, it may not be optimal to ensuring that research findings strengthen the evidence base of policy and programming. Findings were not strategically linked to policymakers or other parties who could have made specific use of them, or clearly linked to windows of policy opportunity.

This weakness was acknowledged and is reflected as a lesson learned in the 2016 Annual Plan. A more systematic and strategic approach is necessary to organize—and incentivize—these feedback loops. Requirements should be incorporated into tender documents. Emphasis on such knowledge exchange activities was underscored in the most recent research calls and is reflected in the tender documentation for the new Secretariat.

4.5 Effectiveness of Networking

Key questions

- ❖ To what extent did the Platform build up a network and encourage new forms of collaboration?
- ❖ To what extent did the Platform facilitate the accumulation and exchange of knowledge and experience between policymakers, researchers, and practitioners?
- ❖ How clear and transparent are the processes for participating in the Platform?
- ❖ What is the degree of participant ownership, energy, and commitment to the Platform?

Establishment of a network and new forms of collaboration

From 2014 to 2016, the Platform held three annual conferences and fifty-six smaller events. The number of participants, both Dutch and international, at these events has increased over time, as have the numbers of website visitors (see communication strategy).

Overall, the Platform has been successful in bringing these communities together to share knowledge and experience. Interviewees also noted that the Platform had managed to establish both a new sense of community around security and rule of law and a network of actors.

Interviewees view this network as a real success. Perhaps the most clear indication is that almost all interviewees responded with a resounding “yes” to the question of whether they would still

²⁰ NWO-WOTRO demanded mid-term workshops to share intermediate outputs, but since the first projects only now are entering mid-term, this has not yet been implemented. From 2015 only short term projects have been funded. No feed-back loop of mid-term outputs was included for these projects. In addition, researchers are careful with communicating preliminary output to policymakers since they fear to communicate incomplete messages.

²¹ These data stem mostly from the draft 2016 Annual Report.

participate in the Platform if no funding for research or events were available. An important motivator—in addition to the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience—was that to influence government policy on security and rule of law.

It is more difficult to assess the extent to which the Platform contributed to the effectiveness of collaboration between actors. One interviewee, from a southern organization, pointed to the example of a situation where the contacts he made during a Platform meeting translated into a better network on the ground in South Sudan, which influenced his programming decisions, made programming more effective, and led to a new consortium that included access new funding. Most interviewees could not give such concrete examples but did stress the importance of understanding the perspectives and constraints on the other side (such as the donor), which resulted in more constructive working relations. Both academics and practitioners remarked that they had appreciated working together in research project consortia, in part because it sharpened their thinking. The Platform and the NWO/WOTRO co-creation condition for research projects thus have been relatively successful in this regard.

Exchange of knowledge between types of actors

The number of events held by the Platform indicates how extensively it facilitated networking between actors. How effectively it facilitated the exchange of knowledge between actors is clear in the composition of the events. An overview of the composition is presented in table 1, based on the data that was presented in the annual reports.²² More detail is presented in annex II.

Composition Platform participants	International	Researchers	Policymakers	Practitioners
Average interactive brainstorm	28	47	26	26
Average networking events	<i>insufficient data</i>	35	14	52
Average ad hoc events	28	30	24	44
Overall average	29	35	23	40

In all of its events, the Platform managed to bring together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Policymakers are the least represented community in these events, but in relation to their absolute numbers they are still well represented. In most, though not all, the Platform also met its target for international participation.

The network mobilization capacity of the Secretariat is complimented by some and criticized by others. Agreement is widespread, however, that mobilization capacity is growing but that continued investment is necessary, in particular, among new groups of participants, notably political and private-sector actors and international experts as well as southern partners. Interviewees still spoke of a somewhat inward-looking network, consisting to a large extent of “usual suspects,” with a tendency to speak *about* their southern partners rather than *with* them. Most felt that having fresh, and perhaps somewhat unexpected, perspectives was important. Although many interviewees said that the Platform had improved its performance in this regard, it needed to continue.

Transparency and clarity of processes and procedures

In the early days, confusion was considerable around how the Platform was run, what the criteria and appraisal processes were, and what role participants could take in initiating or co-organizing events.

²² This data was not presented for all events that took place between 2014 and 2016. Although reporting on the composition of participants improved over time, even for 2016 this reporting was not complete.

This led to a high degree of frustration and confusion, which can still be felt today. Many interviewees had initially almost given up on the Platform and knew colleagues who had.

By 2015, these processes were far more clear and transparent. In 2014, the new criteria for assessment of network and ad hoc events were distributed to network members during the annual conference and through the newsletter, and the Secretariat has applied the criteria diligently.

No one interviewed knew how to access these selection criteria, however. Yet, the informal route, by simply speaking to the Secretariat team, worked well, at least for participants in the inner circle. By contrast, interviewees who do not attend Platform activities as regularly were less aware of the possibility to pitch ideas to the Platform. This may have implications for the perceived openness of the Platform. Some participants indeed expressed a concern that the network was run by and for a small elite group, that being part of the inner circle provided opportunities not open to others. This review confirmed that the selection criteria were applied conscientiously, but the contrary perception does exist.

Degree of ownership, energy, and commitment by Platform participants

An entity exists by virtue of the energy and commitment its participants put into it. The Platform needs to walk a delicate line between being strategic—to maintain coherence and relevance—and being flexible—to meet the short-term needs of its participants. The right balance needs to be found, because too much rigidity can reduce the energy and commitment participants are willing to invest. Equally, when the agenda is geared too strongly toward one audience, such as the Dutch MFA or researchers, it may undermine the sense of ownership of other participants. The Platform has attempted to maintain this balance by offering three types of events, whereby the interactive brainstorm sessions are most closely aligned with the thematic priorities of the Platform and organized by the Secretariat; the network activities are also aligned but arise from members, sometimes in co-creation with the Secretariat; and ad hoc events show the most flexibility. This is in principle a fruitful and productive way of managing the tension between strategy and flexibility.

Although some questions remain about how the Platform’s agenda should be developed, who its primary audience is, and how open the Platform is perceived to be, it is fair to say that the Platform has walked this delicate line skillfully.

4.6 Learning and Adaptation

Key questions

- ❖ To what extent were lessons learned and did they translate into changes in objectives, in strategic focus, in approaches and working methods, in governance structures?
- ❖ How systematic was the learning and adaptation process?

Extent

Some learning took place at the strategic level, but these reflections were put on hold given the decision to enter a tender process for the second phase, and led to only partial changes in the hierarchy of objectives and strategic focus. Nonetheless, genuine effort was placed into collecting feedback from Platform participants on the strengths and weaknesses (SWOT) of the Platform, on focus group discussions on the benefits of the Platform for the various audiences, and on the overall aspirations of the Platform. Tentative indicators of success were also formulated. Thus learning took place at the strategic level, but the translation into practice was quite limited.

At the operational level, a different story can be told. In relation to the formulation of the research agenda, the development of the tender documents, and the eligibility and assessment criteria and processes for research projects, learning was extensive. The lessons learnt were presented in each Annual Plan and were linked—to a reasonably clear extent—to the adjustments that would be made

in the subsequent year. These lessons were obtained through focus group and informal conversations with Platform participants who had been involved in or an interest in applying for research funding through the Platform calls. These lessons were drawn up in a memo, which was shared with the Steering Group and served as a basis for discussion with NWO/WOTRO. This learning translated into clear shifts in the focus of the research, the conditions for applying, and the duration of the assessment process.

At the event level as well, learning was significant. After each event, the Secretariat debriefed with the main organizers on the strengths and weaknesses of the event and how it could have improved. After-event surveys were sent to all participants and the feedback was absorbed by the Secretariat and used to strengthen future events.

Resulting adaptations were all perceived to enhance the effectiveness, clarity, and quality of Platform work. Perhaps with the exception of the more short-term nature of the research varied but, where opinions differ more widely, all other adaptations are almost unanimously viewed as having had a positive effect.

Process

That an annual plan begins with the lessons learned from the previous period is commendable in itself and a sign of a learning culture.

Indeed, the Secretariat has taken learning seriously from the onset (at least the current Secretariat). This culture has meant a solid flow of feedback through informal channels. In relation to events, feedback loops are fully integrated with the after-event surveys and reviews. For the Platform as a whole, the Secretariat further organized a number of brainstorm sessions with regular Platform participants. During the annual conference of 2016 another such session was held with a wider range of participants. This feedback was interpreted and compiled and shared with the Steering Group in pre-meeting memos and background notes. Learning and adaptation is thus systematic across the Platform.

Maintaining this practice going forward is important. A further step to formalize these processes, in particular the broader vision and overall strategic direction of the Platform, would be helpful. Although the onus of learning will continue to lie with the Secretariat, drawing the Steering Group members more deeply into the learning process would be productive and ideal.

4.7 Operational Management

Key questions

- ❖ To what extent is the Platform managed by the Secretariat?
- ❖ How effective are the Platform's communication strategy and tools?
- ❖ How effective are the reporting and contact management tools?

Management

In the eyes of the participants, the Secretariat *was* the Platform and the head of the Secretariat was clearly its public face. The Secretariat team was applauded for its professionalism, its approachability, its ability to constructively engage in discussion on how the quality of events or written outputs could be achieved, and its openness to constructive criticism. With few exceptions, the interviewees were also largely positive about the way events were organized and facilitated, the venue, the catering, and the overall atmosphere of professionalism.²³ In the words of one interviewee, "the Platform breathes

²³ This relates to the quality of the organization of these activities, not to the quality of the content.

professionalism.” Participants were in fact almost unanimous in applauding the professionalism, approachability, and openness to criticism of the Secretariat team.

Table 2 presents the envisaged outputs, as presented in annual plans, to delivered outputs.

Table 2. Events and outputs		
	Envisaged	Actual
2014		
Thematic events	4	4
Working group events	9	7
Networking events	12	1
Ad hoc events	not specified	5
2015		
Interactive brainstorm	4	3
Networking events	8	10
		(budgetary equivalent, 13)
Ad hoc events	5 to 8	7
2016		
Interactive brainstorm	4	4
Networking events	4	3
Ad hoc events	12	12
	(monthly)	

In 2014, the overestimation of the number of networking events the Platform imagined it would organize was significant. This is explained at least in part by two factors: first, working groups were in the process of being dismantled and, second, the head of the Secretariat was on an injury-related leave of absence. In later years, the envisaged number of outputs were more in line with outputs and the Platform came closer to meeting its targets. Each event had a clear output in the shape of a summary report or policy brief, in addition to the news items and blogs related to most events. In this sense the Platform met its targets. For more detail, see annex II.

In terms of developing and launching research calls, a similar trend is visible (see table 3). The year 2014 was in flux, and in particular the development of the research agenda. These delays were recovered relatively quickly in 2015.

Table 3. Research calls and projects		
	Envisaged	Actual
2014		
Strategic research calls	2	1 (Employment for Stability)
Applied research call	1	1 (Embedding Justice in Power and Politics)
Open calls	1	—
2015		
Strategic research calls	2	2 (Comprehensive approach, Transnational challenges in FCAS (changed from strategic into applied research))
Open call (carried forward from 2014 and divided into 2 sub-calls)	2	2 (Open Call for Evidence-based policy advice and tools, Open Call for Evidence-informed ideas)
2016		
Applied research calls	— (inadvertent omission in plan, one planned)	1 (Addressing Mixed Migration Flows)

Communication strategy and tools

A communication strategy was developed in 2014 that led to a regularly distributed a newsletter and more outreach to international audiences. The website was revised to make it more interactive, and a series of online debates—hosted in collaboration with The Broker—was launched. In 2015, a perception survey was conducted among participants, which in turn fed a revised communication strategy. As a result, the newsletter was improved, “speed-read” summaries created for all publications, guidelines established for the summary report, blog format was normalized to support uniformity and clarity, and language standards revised to be more practice oriented and less academic. Although not all elements of the communication strategy have been fully implemented fully, steps to further tailor and professionalize communications have been taken.

Certain elements of the communications strategy were not implemented. First is a division of Platform participants into categories based on membership. The decision was taken not to follow the membership route, which made this element redundant. Second, a list of so-called ambassadors was created, per the strategy, but were not used to open new networks and make new connections, as intended. Third, a further tailoring of communication to the specific interests of the participants has not taken place. The second and third set of activities are potentially still valuable.

How effective the communication strategy is in terms of outreach can partially be seen in website traffic, which increased substantially over time (table 4).

Table 4. Website visitors

Year	Number
2013	3627
2014	14210
2015	22210
2016	18533 (through mid-August)

The perception survey carried out in 2015 carries more weight than the few interviews conducted in the course of this review. Yet a few points that came out of the interviews are significant. People reported receiving and appreciating the newsletter, and often scrolled through it, in particular to view upcoming events. Many interviewees mentioned that most events had seemed to be invitation-only, which discouraged them. When asked whether they would visit the website spontaneously, to find out about Platform news and events, to read the blogs, or to find interesting or otherwise valuable resources (research, key documents, and so on) on security and rule of law, the answers more mostly negative. Only one interviewee (from a southern organization) mentioned using the Platform as an information resource. No one mentioned looking for results of Platform research. These findings point to the need to maintain a close eye on the effectiveness of the communications, including by conducting regular perception surveys.

Although small improvements are continuously being made, the website remains essentially static and difficult to navigate. Attempts have been made to tailor it to the specific objectives of the Platform, in particular its ambition to a platform for exchange and dissemination of knowledge, the website continues to fall short. It is difficult even for those who understand the Platform well to determine what information and resources are available and to navigate to them.

In 2015, it was decided to discontinue the online debates and to emphasize blogs linked to events and—from 2016 onward—a blog series with Saferworld. This decision was based partly on workload considerations and the completion of the contract with The Broker, and partly on the results of the perception survey. Such an important decision could have been more closely linked to a broader discussion on the strategic direction of the Platform, which was not the case.

The communication strategy needs to be more strongly guided by the strategic objectives of the Platform, in particular in relation to the key question of who the main audience is and which direction the Platform would like to expand its network (international experts, southern organizations, politicians, and so on). The communications strategy also does not seem to have resolved the issue of the unclear identity of the Platform, as discussed.

Reporting and data management

Overall, the annual reports and annual plans are well written and provide a good overview of expected and achieved results.

The Platform is a somewhat complex creature, however, and it remains somewhat difficult for a reader to obtain a good overview over what it does and why despite the support provided it by the Secretariat.²⁴

The lack of a monitoring framework has been identified as a major gap a few times. This is indeed a high priority for the Platform to consider, but does need to take into account the flexible and adaptive nature of a platform. The monitoring framework should focus primarily on ways to assess to what extent the Platform has contributed effectively to its objectives. Because direct causal relationships will be difficult to establish, the framework would need to do so by clarifying its aspirations for the Platform and the theory of change that the Platform relies on. Although reporting on outputs is important, the monitoring framework should not be primarily geared toward such reporting because quality does not reside in the numbers of events or research projects. Nonetheless, as the Platform moves into a more consolidated phase, specifying indicators of success should be easier than it was in 2014.²⁵

Management of the contacts management system also requires significant improvement. The information is inadequately updated, but more importantly does not assign the relevant parameters to contacts. Specifically, contacts are not organized by type of actor (policymaker, practitioner, academic), geographic origin (north, south, partner country), and specific expertise and interest. This reduces the ability of the Secretariat to maintain an overview of its network participants and makes the Platform dangerously dependent on what people know informally.

The Secretariat has been significantly understaffed for almost entire period under review. Considering its inadequate internal capacity, the Secretariat team can be commended for how effectively it has operated.

4.8 Effectiveness of Governance Structures

Key questions

- ❖ To what extent is strategic guidance forthcoming from the Steering Group and how does this translate to the activities of the Platform?
- ❖ How clear is the division of roles between the Steering Group, the Secretariat, the consortium partners (CRU and THIGJ)? How effective is this collaboration?
- ❖ How well is the relationship between the Platform and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs defined? How effective is it?

Strategic guidance from the Steering Group

The responsibilities of the Steering Group at strategic level are, first, to oversee the fulfillment of the

²⁴ The current format for reporting in the annual reports is also somewhat unclear, projects being approved in one year and carried out in the next. It is often not clear whether the new target includes these approved initiatives or refers to new events.

²⁵ This issue has been picked up as a priority issue in the tender documentation for the next phase.

Platform's aims and objectives, and, second, to decide on the thematic program of the Platform, to adopt the research agenda of the Platform, and to instruct the tender organization accordingly. The Steering Group thus has a role in terms of both the overall strategic direction for the Platform and its thematic agenda.²⁶

A process was initiated in 2014 to clarify outstanding issues on the overall strategic focus of the Platform. Although a first sketch was made (Platform 2.0), this process was not continued. Although the vision for Platform 2.0 was published for information purposes, it was never endorsed, for reasons mentioned earlier.²⁷

In terms of the overall vision and strategic direction, the guidance from the Steering Group was limited. This lack initially led to a vacuum and considerable confusion, which is also described in the midterm review. This caused the Secretariat and the consortium members (notably CRU) to step into this space by performing this function to a large extent, beyond what was expected of them. This proved effective and indeed led to more clarity, more consolidation, and more strategic direction, but it is questionable whether this function should have so squarely fallen on the Secretariat and consortium. The new consortium needs to appropriately consider the issue of responsibility for the overall strategic direction of the Platform.

In terms of the setting of the thematic agenda, the Steering Group did indeed perform this function, as they brought their views and understandings of key policy processes and priorities to the table. There was an on-going process of aligning between the Secretariat and (some members of the) Steering Group, which assisted in maintaining a focus on the strategic priorities of the Platform.

Yet, many Steering Group members felt that their discussions were not sufficiently strategic. Although members were able to feed their ideas on thematic priorities as well as on overall strategic direction, the depth of these conversations was seen as somewhat lacking. In particular, the international members considered their participation to be somewhat of a wasted opportunity.

In practice, the work of the Steering Group was to a large extent a matter of endorsing ideas and documents prepared by the Secretariat.

Many interviewees who had been closely involved with the governance of the Platform noted the lack of time Steering Group members had to devote to their sessions as an impediment, and wondered whether remuneration might help resolve the issue.²⁸

Clarity of roles and effectiveness of collaboration

As discussed, the roles of the Steering Group, the Secretariat, and the consortium were not clear in terms of defining the strategic focus of the Platform. In the early years, this lack of clarity had a significant impact on the Platform's effectiveness. In later years, these relations consolidated in new

²⁶ The full roles are as follows: to oversee the fulfillment of the Platform's aims and objectives; to oversee the substantive quality of the Secretariat's and Platform's activities; to decide on the thematic program of the Platform, to adopt the research agenda of the Platform, and to instruct the tender organization accordingly; to endorse the annual plan and budget for the fiscal year, all material changes in the annual plan and allocations during the fiscal year, and the annual report and accounts; to analyze the activities implemented in the current year and to take appropriate measures to ensure that objectives and plans will be achieved; to represent the Platform in international fora and to actively broaden the international network and impact of the Platform's activities (*Updated Rules of Operation*, January 2015).

²⁷ Even though the Platform 2.0 vision not being fully endorsed, it did lead to consequential changes in the working methods of the Platform, as described in the lessons learned and adaptations section of this report.

²⁸ In the current setup, only the chair of the Steering Group receives remuneration. He has also been actively engaged and was in close contact with the Secretariat. He served almost as a liaison between the Steering Group and the Secretariat, for example, by conducting a first screening of issues to be brought before the Steering Group.

ways. The Secretariat, in close cooperation with CRU and to some extent the chair of the Steering Group, stepped into a largely empty space and provided overall direction.

Consortium members CRU and THIGJ had initially divided tasks between them, THIGJ more focused on facilitative and logistical support in the expectation that in the future they would take on more of a content role as the Institute developed. This further integration of THIGJ in content issues did not come to pass, and the Secretariat of the Platform remained somewhat of an island within THIGJ. This situation was, in the eyes of many, a missed opportunity. CRU's role was to provide content support, a role they filled effectively.

For outsiders, the role of CRU is somewhat unclear. Going forward, participants need to have a better understanding what exactly the role of the consortium partners is.

The Secretariat itself was initially envisaged as playing a coordination and facilitation role, not as needing strong content expertise. As the situation changed and consolidated in different ways (see lessons learned) this substantive expertise became more and more important. This led to a further dependency on CRU for such support. Although the head of the Secretariat did become vested in the substance matter, and the Secretariat was enlarged with an additional member, the Secretariat is still under-equipped on content-related competencies.

Role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The MFA is involved in the Platform in five ways: as a member of the Steering Group (the former director of DSH), as a Platform member interested in the exchange of knowledge, as project manager in relation to the funding of the Platform (sole funder), as project manager of the contract with NWO/WOTRO on disbursement of research funding, and as content liaison between the MFA and the Platform.

The role of the Steering Group is performed by the former head of DSH, who has been deeply involved since the onset of the Platform. Although some interviewees mentioned that this continuity of vision is important, reasons to recommend that the a current member of the management team of DSH, ideally the director, takes up this role are sound: to increase the visibility of DSH in the Platform, to incentivize the DSH-staff staff to actively participate in the Platform, and to ensure the relevance of the Platform to current policy needs of DSH.

These three roles have in practice been largely fulfilled by the same person, the strategic policy advisor of DSH.²⁹ It is probably beneficial to have the same person be responsible for both the contract with NWO/WOTRO and with the Platform because this increases the synergy between the projects.

Combining the financing functions with the content liaison function could well lead to a disproportionate influence of DSH over the agenda of the Platform, and thus a reduced independence of the Platform. In practice, however, this does not seem to have occurred. Contact between the Secretariat and the strategic policy advisor is frequent, mostly to learn whether the ministry would view a particular topic as relevant, but this regularity does not translate into DSH "pushing its agenda." Almost all interviewees who have been closely engaged with the Platform commended the strategic policy advisor on her contributions to the quality and relevance of the Platform's activities. Going forward, clarity on the degree of influence that DSH has over the agenda of the Platform is important.

²⁹ The second and third role is supposed to be played by a different staff member of DSH, but for logistical and personal reasons this separation has not been put in practice.

4.9 Clarity of Vision and Strategic Direction

Key questions

- ❖ To what extent is there clarity and consensus on the intended purpose and strategy among the main Platform stakeholders?
- ❖ Does the Platform have a clear vision and strategic direction?
- ❖ How recognizable is the identity of the Platform to its participants?

Clarity and consensus on the intended purpose and strategic direction

The main stakeholders—the Steering Group, MFA/DSH, CRU, THIGJ, and the Secretariat—have a clear sense of the purpose of the Platform, at least at high level. Consensus is established on the overall objectives, in particular on the importance of bridging gaps between policy communities (in particular among policymakers, practitioners, and researchers, but also between thematic policy communities), and on the need to bring different perspectives to the table. One level down, some differences in emphasis are evident.

The Platform brings together three functions: networking, knowledge brokerage, and research. The strength of the Platform lies in combining these functions, but they can also lead to fragmentation and lack of strategic coherence if the relative importance or hierarchy between them is not clear. Do all three hold equal value, or are one or two objectives expected to feed into a third? Some key stakeholders place more emphasis on the knowledge brokerage functions, others on the research or the networking function.

A related question is the primary audience. Because the central objective is to contribute to a stronger underpinning of Dutch development policy and programming, the Dutch MFA is clearly a key part of the audience. However, policy is not developed by a single actor, but rather in interaction between actors. Indeed an important part of the rationale of the Platform is that nongovernment actors can constructively debate and influence policy formulation. Furthermore, implementation of Dutch development policy and programming is largely carried out by practitioner organizations, whose knowledge and experience can add considerable value to policy formulation and improve programming. All stakeholders recognize these audiences—and additional ones, such as politicians and private-sector actors—but the relative importance of each audience varies. To put it differently, is the Platform a service provider to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs or does it exist primarily as a network run by its members for the needs of its members?

The question on the different audiences is strongly related to the question of how closely connected the strategic (thematic) focus of the Platform should be to the policy agenda of the Dutch government. Several logics were put forward:

- ❖ One school of thought is that the Platform’s strategic focus should be closely linked to the Dutch policy priorities. Because the goal is to improve Dutch policy and programming, the Platform should ensure that the knowledge generated is directly pertinent to addressing policy and programming questions. This rationale is bolstered by the notion that Dutch implementing organizations—though they may have slightly different priorities in terms of knowledge needs—are generally still working within the broad policy themes prioritized by the Dutch MFA.
- ❖ On the other end of the spectrum is a strong vision that priorities for knowledge generation and exchange should not be defined by policymakers but instead should emerge from the network, where especially NGO partners in the north and south, who have an extremely important role.
- ❖ Another rationale is that the Dutch policy framework on security and rule of law—at least how it is presented on paper—will remain the same for years, whereas actual policy priorities shift more quickly. A knowledge platform may be able to be more agile and responsive to immediate emerging issues. The Platform can thus be more forward looking and play an important role in

responding to acute policy questions, such as how to respond effectively to migration and how to combat radicalization.

- ❖ An argument was also brought forward that policymakers tend to be weak when it comes to envisioning long-term trends, and that the Platform should play an important role in surfacing and shedding light on these. “The Platform must be able to be ahead of the ministry.”³⁰

All stakeholders expressed the need to further internationalize the Platform. However, the exact nature of that internationalization and the reasons for desiring this vary considerably. Roughly, they can be divided into four lines of argumentation:

- ❖ It is essential for a Platform to bring a wide variety of perspectives to the table so that issues can be discussed from radically different angles. In particular, the importance of southern, or more grassroots, organizations is often mentioned as crucial in ensuring that policy and programming stay rooted in reality. Politicians and private-sector actors are seen as still missing in this regard.
- ❖ Dutch policy and programming does not exist in isolation; it is deeply embedded in a context of global policy processes and relations with multilateral actors. It is essential for a knowledge platform to be closely linked to the international policy agenda.
- ❖ For the Platform to be relevant and useful, it needs to bring in state-of-the-art expertise and thinking, which means that international expertise needs to be actively mobilized.
- ❖ The Platform is currently funded solely by the Dutch government, which reduces the sustainability of the Platform and affects its independence. Increased internationalization can also lead to more opportunities for multiple donors.

Does the Platform have a clear vision and strategic direction?

The overall vision for the Platform is quite clear and widely shared, and perhaps taken somewhat for granted. Although all the rationales presented have value and are not mutually exclusive, the relative emphasis placed on them has implications for the strategic direction of the Platform and the theory of change underpinning it. Indeed, the theory of change is currently not clearly articulated. Because it is not, the ability of the Steering Group to oversee the fulfillment of the Platform’s aims and objectives is reduced, as is the ability to learn and adapt at the strategic level. A clearer articulation of what indicators of success would look like would be helpful.

The Platform has a number of objectives, between which tension may arise, as it clearly did in the Platform’s early years.³¹ A careful balancing is in order, and at times a clear articulation of what takes precedence over what and why. Although the strength of the Platform lies in the connection between these objectives, strategic drift is a real risk if overall strategic direction is at all unclear. Such strategic direction is still weak.

This weakness seems attributable to two factors. The first relates to the weakness of the Steering Group in regard to strategic discussions and to the lack of a clear division of roles among the Secretariat, the Steering Group, and the consortium members. The second relates to the fact that the first phase of the Platform was scheduled to end in 2015 but extended until the end of 2016. The decision having been taken to develop a tender procedure for the next phase, the main stakeholders believed that they did not have a mandate to take such fundamental strategic decisions. As a consequence, the discussions that led to the first sketch of Platform 2.0 were put on hold.³²

³⁰ Slightly outside the scope of this review, but still interesting to ponder, is whether the Platform should aim at reaching more non-experts and play a larger role in the public debate on issues of security and rule of law.

³¹ Early on, Platform participants were expected to jointly formulate a research agenda and then to submit proposals for research projects on the basis of the agenda. This created inappropriate incentives and distracted from building a community of sharing.

³² Most of these ideas were taken forward in the tender documentation for the second phase of the Platform.

The identity of the Platform

Perhaps as a result of this lack of strategic clarity, for many Platform participants, especially those not in the inner circle, the identity of the Platform is not clear. Participants have many questions about the role of the MFA in the Platform, whether it is primarily a vehicle for distributing research funding or more for exchanging knowledge and information, that influences what is being discussed within the Platform, and so on.

For an entity that aims to combine a variety of functions and views this as a source of strength, it is more difficult to present a clear identity than it is for a single-issue organization. This, however, is all the more reason to be keenly aware and strategic in portraying one's identity. Strategic communication is essential and should take the issue of identity into serious consideration.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This review confirms the overall importance of the Knowledge Platform on Security and Rule of Law. The core idea—of connecting academics, practitioners, and policymakers to generate and exchange knowledge in order to strengthen the effectiveness of policy and programming the area of security and rule of law—was perceived to be extraordinarily important. “If it didn’t exist,” a Platform participant said, “it would have to be invented.” The concept is also exceptional in the area of security and rule of law, and thus occupies a niche. A network, a community around security and rule of law, has been formed that did not exist before. Participation and commitment of Platform users has increased over time. This is a resource that can now be capitalized upon.

The impact of the Platform in making policy and programming more effective and more evidence-based is difficult to parse because knowledge does not translate linearly into improved programming, despite being a major programming building block. This complicates the ways in which its effectiveness can be assessed. A direct link can be made, as various examples demonstrate, between the learning achieved through the Platform and improved programming or new forms of collaboration. The ARC tender benefited directly from the Reconstruction tender, for example. The work on surfacing and analyzing the theory of change of the policy on security and rule of law is an important first step in enhancing its evidence base, because research can (and has been) more focused on the assumptions underpinning this logic. In some cases, new forms of collaboration were forged, and working relations between different types of actors made more constructive through a deeper understanding of each other’s concerns and constraints. This was particularly true of practitioner NGOs and donors, and between researchers and practitioners or think tanks that worked together in research consortia.

The Platform aims to perform three functions: knowledge brokerage, research, and networking.

In terms of knowledge brokerage, it is essential that the thematic areas are closely linked to policy and programming priorities and knowledge questions surrounding these priorities. The topics the Platform covers are broadly perceived as relevant and important within the field of security and rule of law. No real consensus is established on whether these are necessarily also the highest priority areas. Some feel that more acute and more political issues, such as the crisis in the Middle East, international migration, and radicalization should be emphasized. Others are concerned that a focus on acute challenges may distract attention from over-the-horizon topics, which the Platform could signal and build a knowledge base on way before policy makers are starting to view these as priorities.

The key challenge in the knowledge brokerage function is the extent to which knowledge is simply exchanged or leads to actionable joint learning. Actionable learning was often not felt to be the case, which reduced the usefulness of the Platform for some participants, and in turn the degree to which the knowledge would have an impact on policy and programming. This was especially true for the MFA, which reduced its uptake of the knowledge and learning generated. A good number of participants cited the low presence and active participation of policy makers as a weakness. Yet, actual data show a relatively high presence of policy makers overall, so this may be more an issue of perception.

In terms of the research function, questions arise about the relevance of projects funded through the Platform. The first results are only now emerging, which makes it too early to draw definite conclusions. Early signs were not promising, however, Platform participants having reported significant issues on how the calls—in particular the criteria for eligibility—were formulated. The long time frame and academic bias were also considered serious impediments to the uptake of these research findings and the way they might contribute to improved policy and programming. In

response, the research period was shortened and the emphasis shifted more squarely to applied research and policy relevance. It is premature to conclude whether this has led to significant improvements in the practical applicability of the research, but it is likely to do so.

Partly because of the differences in ways of working and expectations of the Platform and NWO/WOTRO, mechanisms for distributing research funds were at first not effective. Over time, considerable progress has been made in improving the effectiveness of this partnership. It remains a difficult one, however, because the expertise, rigor, and independence that NWO/WOTRO brings to the table is essential for the MFA, but this also means that certain threshold conditions on procedure do need to continue to be met by NWO/WOTRO. . Given an increasing shift toward more policy-relevant and short-duration research requirements for the Platform, the question is whether the gap between research demands can be brought into line with the minimum procedural parameters that NWO/WOTRO needs to maintain, or whether this gap is simply too wide to bridge.

In terms of its networking function, the Platform has built up a network of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers that did not exist before as such. Knowledge and experience was exchanged between the various types of actors, as is clear in the composition of event audiences. The processes for network members to actively participate in events were at first unclear, but improved significantly during the period under review. The process through which thematic focusing takes place moved from being participatory to closed, which increased its effectiveness but reduces transparency. Some participants perceive the Platform as a relative closed entity, for which the Platform needs in some way to compensate. Overall, however, the commitment of the participants to the Platform and their willingness to invest time and energy in it is high.

Between 2014 and 2016, the Platform has become more effective and more interactive and improved the quality of its events. The process has been one of active learning and adapting, in which some significant changes were made to how the Platform operates. Perhaps the most significant were the shift in emphasis away from a research agenda and toward knowledge exchange and brokerage, and a push to make the research projects more policy and operationally relevant. The adaptations did increase the effectiveness of the Platform, although challenges remain. This culture of learning and adapting is a major strength and should be built upon in the second phase of the Platform.

The Secretariat's operational management of the Platform has largely been effective. Participants were almost unanimous in applauding the professionalism, approachability, and openness to criticism of the Secretariat team. The responsibilities of the Secretariat expanded dramatically and became more substance-related—a role for which it was, and to some degree still is, ill equipped. Its capacity will need to be supplemented if it is to manage all these tasks effectively. Investment in the key function of monitoring and evaluation has been scanty, and the absence of a monitoring and evaluation framework adapted to a knowledge platform is a serious flaw. The management of some processes, notably contracts and the website, also need significant improvement.

The division of roles between the Steering Group and the Secretariat, as well as with the consortium partners, were not clearly defined at the onset. This led as it often does to unnecessary confusion and strain in the relationships. The roles and functions consolidated over time, and proved to work rather effectively, although more through pragmatic need than design.

Perhaps the biggest challenge was a relatively weak strategic vision and focus. The degree to which the aspirations for the Platform are articulated and agreed upon is low, and the theory of change underpinning the Platform remains opaque. The Steering Group has not been very effective in providing strategic guidance to the Secretariat, which obliged the Secretariat and consortium partners to take on a larger share of that role. Although this has worked well in practice, the arrangements are not ideal moving forward. Clarity on who is primarily responsible for the strategic direction of the Platform is essential.

Ways forward and recommendations

The analysis and suggestions here are based on the main findings of the review and are the synthesis of the related implications. This review focused on the Platform's first phase but drew out lessons and recommendations for the future. No single avenue is the "right" one for the Platform going forward, however. A platform will always need to manage dilemmas and trade-offs. There are many ways to do so, and these recommendations can perhaps provide some pointers.

At this point in the life of the Platform, a consolidated vision and strategic focus are especially important. Having them means clarifying the overall vision and aspirations, reconfirming or adapting the overall goal and objectives, and carefully devising strategies to achieve the objectives. Doing so requires answering six key questions. First, what is the hierarchy in objectives and outcomes? Second, what is the relative importance of the different functions of objectives (generating knowledge, knowledge brokerage, networking)? Third, how closely should the agenda of the Platform follow the priorities of the MFA? Fourth, what is the relative importance of the different audiences and their knowledge needs? Fifth, in which direction does the network need to expand, including the type of internationalization necessary? Last, should and how should the financial dependency on MFA be reduced? These questions are deeply interlinked, and different schools of thought exist on each of them. Such differences are often a matter of relative emphasis and most rationales are not mutually exclusive. That said, different combinations can lead to entirely different directions.

Different strategic directions are possible, and all have their pros and cons. A few considerations merit focused attention, however:

- Increasing the Platform's relevance and usefulness to the MFA is critical to strengthening the effectiveness of Dutch policy and programming, which is the Platform's primary goal. Knowledge brokerage should probably become the Platform's primary function, and the other functions of networking and knowledge generation second to and supportive of it. The agenda should be closely linked to the agenda of the MFA to ensure its policy and programming relevance (but not exclusively).
- Bringing in high-level complementary international expertise is also appropriate given that state-of-the-art thinking is found beyond and well as in the Netherlands. The Platform can and should raise the overall quality of knowledge exchange in the Netherlands, which will benefit the effectiveness of policy and programming in the Netherlands. The higher the quality of exchange, the greater the likelihood that more senior decision makers will show an interest, which in turn will increase the uptake of the knowledge.
- Consolidating in the second phase of the Platform the foundations built in the first phase is a natural and logical extension, as is accelerating valorization of the knowledge and increasing joint learning.

When more clarity is reached on strategic direction, serious consideration should be given to the identity of the Platform and how it is communicated.

An important challenge is increasing the perceived usefulness of the Platform to high-level decision makers. To do so, a few steps are indicated. First, the various departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs need to become more actively engaged in the Platform, such as through liaisons (assigned or volunteered) who meet regularly with the Secretariat. Second, learning—whether through the Platform or another avenue—needs to be more strongly incentivized and rewarded within the MFA, probably starting with DSH. Third, the Platform needs to strengthen its connections to embassies by more active outreach and involvement of embassy staff in initiating events that address their knowledge questions.

The process by which the thematic focus of the Platform is currently determined is not transparent and relies on a small group of people. To broaden the Platform's relevance and build a strong

ownership, formalizing and expanding this process is recommended. Input could be collected through a representative selection of the different audiences, in particular from different MFA departments and possibly beyond (the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Home Affairs, for example) as well as from embassies, practitioners' organizations, and researchers. This process does not need to be fully participatory, as was attempted in the beginning, but rather a collection from a broad range of views that would be channeled through the Steering Group, which would then select from among them, choices to be confirmed or adapted at the annual conference. The adaptation at the conference could also be enlarged, given that currently it is largely a vetting exercise.

Choosing a two- or even three-pronged strategy in deciding the thematic focus for the Platform, and therefore of the research call, is recommended. The aim would need to be to maintain a balance between research that addresses short-term policy or programming questions, that verifies the assumptions underpinning the theory of change of the policies and approaches on security and rule of law, and that focuses on long-term trends in security and rule of law, which would put the Platform ahead of the game and less subject to the whim of the day. Whether the existing partnership with NWO/WOTRO is suitable for all these types of research, or only some of them, is the next question. The gap in demands on speediness and policy relevance by the Platform on the one hand and the procedural requirements and academic rigor that NWO/WOTRO may be too wide for at least for some of the knowledge demands of the Platform.

The feedback of findings to the relevant audience needs to be addressed more systematically. This would entail taking it into account an earlier stage, when the thematic focus and research calls are determined. Researchers and the Platform would need to prepare a joint strategy and action plan for it, to clarify who is responsible and accountable for it, and finally to enforce the plan agreed upon.

More generally, the Platform in the second phase needs to be more conscious of how it embeds its activities into a knowledge trajectory. It needs to find a balance between maintaining the flexibility to respond to participants' needs and ideas and ensuring that activities combine into something greater than the sum of parts. This may be in part a matter of being more strategic in sequencing of events and building up to greater joint learning, and in part a matter of communicating more clearly.

The current governance structure of the Platform requires serious reflection as well. Again, multiple options are available to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different actors. A Steering Group should certainly continue, but needs to become more active in providing strategic guidance. More time and commitment are expected from Steering Group members, which may require some changes in the remuneration structure. The overall composition of the Steering Group is sound and can be maintained. The Secretariat, however, needs to be significantly staffed up if it is to play a facilitating and coordinating role as well as a substantive one.

In particular, the role of the consortium partners requires careful thought. They have valuable contributions to make but have an innate interest in applying for research funding. Measures therefore need to be in place that isolate consortium partners from strategic decisions that might place them at a comparative advantage. The role and reporting lines of the Secretariat are key in this regard. The Secretariat will require distance from all stakeholders so that it can establish and maintain appropriate balance between the interests and preferences of the main stakeholders, using the overall vision of the Platform as its compass. This effort requires careful articulation of the roles and functions of the Steering Group versus the Secretariat at a strategic level, and between the Secretariat and the consortium partners at a tactical level.

A key area that requires attention is the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework, adapted to the specific nature of a knowledge platform. Other practical issues require attention as well. One is developing the communication strategy to a higher level and strengthening online tools, especially the website. Another is improving the way the Platform manages its information, notably

its contact database management system, so that it can produce the data or analysis necessary for active monitoring and accurate reporting.

It falls outside the scope of this review to analyze the tender documents for the new phase of the Platform, but many of the recommendations presented in this review have already been incorporated into these documents.

6 Annex I: List of people interviewed (redacted)

	Name	Surname	Title
Steering Group	Joost	Andriessen	Program Director Policy & Implementation, MFA
	Anton	Du Plessis	Managing Director ISS
	Yannick	Du Pont	Director SPARK
	Willem	Van Genugten	Professor, Tilburg University
	George	Mukundi Wachira	Head of the African Governance Architecture, AU Secretariat, Ethiopia
Platform Secretariat	Anna	Gouwenberg	Head of Secretariat
	Manon	Tiessink	Project Officer
Representatives MFA	Wilma	Van Esch	Strategic Advisor DSH (Directie Stabiliteit en Humanitaire Hulp)
	Staff member		DSH
	Staff member		DSH
	Staff member		DSH
	Staff member		DVB (Directie Veiligheids Beleid)
	Staff member		DAF (Directie Sub-Sahara Afrika)
	Staff member		DMM (Directie Multilaterale Instellingen en Mensenrechten)
	Staff member		Dutch Embassy
NWO/WOTRO	Judith	De Kroon	Senior Policy Officer
	Marije	Severs	Policy Officer
	Petra	Griffioen	Policy Officer
Representatives Consortium	Anton	Nijssen	Head of Operations - The Hague Institute of Global Justice
	Mariska	van Beijnum	Head Conflict Research Unit - Clingendael Institute
Network participants	Organizational representative		The Broker
	Organizational representative		The Broker
	Organizational representative		PAX
	Organizational representative		Cordaid
	Organizational representative		ECDPM
	Organizational representative		Search for Common Ground
	Organizational representative		IDLO
	Organizational representative		OXFAM
	Organizational representative		NIMD
	Organizational representative		NIMD
	Organizational representative		NIMD
	Organizational representative		Accord
	Organizational representative		Centre for Conflict Resolution
	Organizational representative		Asia Foundation
	Organizational representative		WANA
	Organizational representative		VVI

7 Annex II: Comparison of envisaged with actual outputs (events only)

Envisaged	Actual
Annual Conferences	
Annual Conference 2014	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Online debate -> b. International Conference c. Thematic agenda 2014 -> see synergy report d. Report -> Synergy report e. Newsletter -> News item 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. online debate b. International Conference c. Thematic agenda 2014 -> see synergy report d. Synergy report e. News item <p>Participants: 150</p>
Annual Conference 2015	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference involving at least 150 participants, with a fair representation of practitioners, policymakers and researchers and at least 1/3 participants from outside of The Netherlands. • Increased understanding and buy in of the network for the Platform 2.0 • Clear and policy relevant outputs, such as policy briefs, pod casts and visuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approx. 100 participants (20 internationals), involving most of the WOTRO funded research consortia, and some 25 practitioner organizations. • Platform 2.0 was not introduced • Outputs: • Summary report • News item • Blog post by Rabia Nusrat on SMEs in peacebuilding • Blog post by Joe Whitaker on role of employment • Blog post by Nora Stel on embedding justice in politics • Video response by Rachel Kleinfeld
Annual Conference 2016	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • international conference with 150+ participants (1/3 from outside of The Netherlands) • vetting of the themes previously identified by the Secretariat and Steering Group • focused agenda for the months to come • Increased understanding and knowledge of the research projects outcomes (short term research) and interim results (long term research); • new networks and partners for the Platform • online blog series based on the sessions • synergy report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 180 participants: researchers (40%), policy makers (20%) and practitioners (40%) • Themes vetted in the parallel sessions throughout the day • Focused agenda -> see summary report • Research -> shared findings in sessions and distributed results • New partners, amongst whom research consortia that hadn't been involved before, organizations like ODI, conciliation resources, UNDP, OECD • Outputs: • Blog by Janet Anderson • Blog by Erica ten Broeke • Blog by Lorelei French • Blog by Marije Balt • Blog by Rob Sijstermans • Blog by Sander Wirken • Summary report • News item • Video
Interactive Brainstorms	

<p>2014 Thematic events</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Four events, including international participation b. Four in depth studies on the thematic focus of the Platform c. At least one policy brief identifying concrete policy implications from the studies executed 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Local' conflicts in transnational entanglements 1 July 2014 Number of participants: 20 experts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept note (background research) • <u>Policy brief #1 Upgrading Peacekeeping - 5 essential actions</u> • <u>Blog serie</u> 2. Big Cities: Sources of and Approaches to Urban Insecurities in Fragile Contexts 13 November 2014 Number of participants: 34 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept note • <u>Event report</u> • <u>Policy brief #2</u> 3. Measuring Security Progress: Politics, Challenges and Solutions 20 November 2014, New York Number of participants: 41 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept note • <u>Event Report - Measuring Security Progress: Politics, Challenges and Solutions</u> 4. All for the Few and the Few for Themselves, How elite interests and coalitions influence the provision of security and justice 4 December 2014 Number of participants: 26. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept note • <u>Report</u>
<p>2015 In depth brainstorms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four events, including international participation • Clear cut policy recommendations, tailored towards specific stakeholders and based on the inquiries made prior to and during the events • Attractive and user-friendly presentation of the outputs online and offline 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Iraq: How to stabilize a vortex? 6 May 2015 Number of participants: 24 experts (12 research, 8 policy, 4 NGO, 1/3 international) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Summary Report</u> • <u>Blog</u> 2. Innovative thinking on strategic approaches to conflict management 7 October 2015 Number of participants: 42 (21 research, 5 policy, 15 NGO, 1 business, 1/3 international) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept note • <u>News item</u> • <u>Blog by Erwin van Veen</u> • <u>Blog by the Peace Factory</u> • <u>Policy brief #4</u> 3. Informal Economies in Fragile Environments: Exploring the links to justice and security 23 November 2015 Number of participants: 19 (12 research, 2 policy, 5 NGO, 1/4 international) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept note • <u>News Item</u> • <u>Blog by Frauke de Weijer</u> • <u>Blog by José de Ruijter</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog by Floortje Klijn • Summary Report
<p>2016 Interactive brainstorms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four events (1 event was transferred from 2015 & therefore is not included in the budget) • Four outputs, such as policy briefs, blogs, podcasts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making better security and justice programming happen Participants: 26 experts (5 research, 12 policy, 7 NGO, 30% international) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News item • Podcast • Summary report 2. Understanding and engaging informal justice 20 October 2016 Participants: 21 experts (13 research, 4 policy, 4 NGO, 38% international) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News item • Podcast • Study Understanding & Engaging Informal Justice • Policy brief (forthcoming) • Blogs (forthcoming) 3. Going with the flow: migration in the Sahel Participants: 30 experts (14 research, 11 policy, 5 NGO, 16% international) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept note • News item • Report 4. To adapt or to be irrelevant (3 lunch meetings, 1 interactive brainstorm) Participants: 19 experts (7 research, 4 policy, 8 NGO, 15% international) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept note • News item • Three 1-pagers (per lunch meeting) • Policy brief (forthcoming) • Blog by Nic van der Jagt • Blog by Elbereth Donovan (forthcoming)
Networking events	
2014 - Working groups	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Training course “PSD for Employment and Stability” (Working Group Employment for Stability (EfS)) b. Report “Assessing the gender specificity of human security approaches” (Working Group Comprehensive Approach to Human Security (CAHS)) c. Report “Scoping study on Human security and the New Deal” (CAHS) d. Report Study “Enhancing our understanding of the comprehensive approach at the 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. News item & ‘Business versus Development Approaches on Employment Creation in Fragile Contexts.’ b. No output -> very low quality & not approved by us c. Presentation of scoping study on the New Deal and Human Security Organized by Community Comprehensive Approach to Human Security, 7 May 2014. Scoping study d. Presentation of two scoping studies by the Comprehensive Approach and Human Security Community

<p>level of the EU and its member states” (CAHS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Report “Accountability and knowledge through data” (Working Group Justice Power and Politics (JPP)) f. Report “Scoping study for identification of key common Theories of Change and M&E processes” (Working Group Reconstruction Tender (RT)) g. Two events Reconstruction Tender (RT) h. International Conference on Theories of Change and M&E approaches (RT) i. Annual Conference WG Indonesia (Working Group Indonesia) 	<p><u>Scoping study by ECDPM</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. ROLN Report³³ f. Report g. Workshop on Theories of Change Organized by Reconstruction Tender Community, 11 April 2014 & Workshop on Monitoring & Evaluation Organized by Reconstruction Tender Community 10 July 2014. h. Not organized i. Indonesia Netherlands Legal Update Organized by Van Vollenhoven Institute of the Leiden Law School, on behalf of the Indonesia Community and in cooperation with the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Jakarta, 20 - 21 November 2014.
<p>2014 Networking events</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Twelve events, including international participation b. Twelve products, such as policy briefs, reports, and video reports 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workshop: Effective Cross-Sector Partnerships for Business and Development in Complex and High-Risk Environments Organized by SPARK, Save the Children, Netherlands African Business Council (NABC) and Conflict Research Unit (CRU) as part of AfricaWorks! Conference, 17 October 2014. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>News item</u> • Report <p>Over the course of 2014, the Platform received a number of requests for activities that have been granted funding. Considering the fact that most of these activities have been agreed upon during Q3 and Q4 of 2014, the majority of these events took place in 2015. Nevertheless, these events are related to the budget of 2014 and therefore mentioned in the Annual Report 2014.</p>
<p>2015 Networking events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight events, including international participation • Eight products, such as policy briefs, reports, and video reports 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brainstorm meeting on Women, Peace & Security Organized by WO=MEN and the MFA, 30 January 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>News item</u> • <u>State of the art Report</u> (quick scans on the three issues discussed) 2. Field study and expert meetings The Plural Security Provision in the City Research Collective Organized by the Conflict Research Unit of Clingendael Institute, the University of Amsterdam and UNHABITAT, 22 October 2015 (total budgetary equivalent to two networking events) (approved in 2014)

³³ This document has not been made available for public circulation - available upon request

- [news item](#) study trip
- [news item](#) event
- [five blog posts](#)
- [policy brief](#)

This networking activity has led to a successful application to the WOTRO research funds affiliated to the Platform, which led to the consolidation of this research collaborative and related [website](#) & outputs.

3. **Barriers and Enabling Factors to Using Local Research Capacity in Fragile and Conflict-affected Contexts - Workshop Series** | organized by Integrity Research, SpringFactor and SPARK in Bamako (Mali) on 16 March 2015, in Juba (South Sudan) on Friday 20 March 2015, and in Beirut (for Syria) on 23 April 2015 | feedback meeting in The Hague, 28 May 2015 (total budgetary equivalent to three networking events) (approved in 2014)
 - [news items](#)
 - [Report](#)
4. **Workshop Joint M&E framework** | Organized by Reconstruction Tender Community, 18 March 2015
5. **Events series: Dutch NAP1325 III** | Organized by WO=MEN & NAP1325 partners, 24 April 2015 (kick off meeting) & 3 September 2015 (feedback meeting)
 - [news item](#)
6. **Expert Meeting 'Private Sector and Conflict-sensitivity'** | organized by SOMO, Oxfam Novib and Tilburg Law School, 21 May 2015
 - [news item](#)
 - [summary report](#)
7. **Participatory Validation Event for the Community Security Research in Afghanistan & South Sudan** | organized by Cordaid & Conflict Research Unit, Clingendael Institute, 18 June 2015
 - [news item](#)
8. **Supporting primary justice in insecure contexts: taking stock** | organized by Cordaid & Van Vollenhoven Institute, Leiden University | 24 June 2015
 - [news item](#)
9. **Gaps in knowledge regarding youth and economic opportunities in fragile contexts** | organized by the Reconstruction Tender working group, 8 October
 - [news item](#)
10. **Preparing a New Generation of Civil-Military-Police Coordination in Peace Support Operations** | organized by GPPAC, Alliance for Peacebuilding and KROC Institute, 9 - 11 December 2015
 - [news item](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blog posts
2016 - Networking events	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four events, including international participation • Four products, such as policy briefs, reports, and video reports 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnering for local value chain development in contexts of instability 26 April 2016, organized by the Clingendael Conflict Research Unit, SPARK, IFC (initially planned for 2015, approved in 2014) 2. Public expert meeting: Engaging with political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings and Thematic Carousel: Engaging with political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings organized by NIMD, Berghof Foundation and International IDEA, 15 and 16 September 2016 <u>Participants 15/9</u>: 36 experts (12 research, 3 policy, 22 NGO) <u>Participants 16/9</u>: 20 experts (10 research, 1 policy, 9 NGO, 60% international) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ News item ○ Summary report (forthcoming) 3. How can sub-national governments strengthen state-citizen relations in fragile contexts? Insights and implications for policy organized by PAX and CCDP, 4 November 2016 <u>Participants</u>: 18 experts (4 research, 5 policy, 9 NGO, 33% international) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ News item ○ Outcome report ○ Podcast
Ad Hoc Events	
2014	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of events, including international participation • A number of products, such as policy briefs, concept papers, (video)reports 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultation meeting with the delegation of the South Sudanese Parliament and the Embassy of South Sudan in Brussels Co-organized by Cordaid, 27 June 2014 <u>Number of participants</u>: 10 2. Conference ‘De Nederlandse Geïntegreerde Benadering: Een Leidraad voor effectieve inzet op veiligheid en stabiliteit’ (guidelines for the comprehensive approach) Organized by The Netherlands MFA, 10 July 2014 <u>Number of participants</u>: 52 3. Panel Discussion Cities, Peacebuilding and State building Organized by UN Habitat, The Hague Institute for Global Justice and GPPAC, 7 October 2014 <u>Number of participants</u>: 47 <u>Outputs</u>: Video & News item 4. Lunch briefing meeting on Post-2015 Agenda 8 October 2014 <u>Number of participants</u>: 18 5. The Future of Rule of Law Development: Opportunities for the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law Organized by the Netherlands MFA, Hill, The Hague Institute

	for Global Justice, 10 December 2014 Number of participants: 25
2015	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five to eight events, including international participation • Five to eight, such as policy briefs, concept papers, (video)reports or pod casts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Iraq & the Middle East: brown bag lunch with Dr Lina Khatib and Mr Mehdi Khalaji organized by the Secretariat, 3 June 2015 <u>Number of participants:</u> 20 (9 research, 5 policy, 6 NGO) 2. Informal meeting with Dr. Jakkie Cilliers: Africa in the global power context and the future capabilities of the continent's Big Five organized by the Secretariat, 4 June 2015 <u>Number of participants:</u> 10 (5 research, 3 policy, 2 NGO) Outputs: summary report 3. Brown bag lunch with Magdy Martinez-Soliman, Director Bureau for Program and Policy Support and Izumi Nakamitsu, Director Crisis Response Unit of UNDP organized by the Secretariat, in close cooperation with IDLO and the MFA, 17 June 2015 <u>Number of participants:</u> 55 (9 research, 21 policy, 15 NGO) 4. 'Trains' or 'sailboats'? Programming for complex environments - lunch meeting with Rachel Kleinfeld organized by the Secretariat, 20 October 2015 <u>Number of participants:</u> 25 (5 research, 9 policy, 11 NGO) Outputs: blog, news item 5. Mali - current challenges for security and rule of law programming organized by the Secretariat, 2 November 2015 <u>Number of participants:</u> 22 (10 research, 3 policy, 9 NGO) Outputs: discussion note, news item, blog 6. Expert Discussion Transitional Justice and Current Conflicts organized by the Secretariat, in close cooperation with the MFA, Impunity Watch and IDLO, 26 November 2015 <u>Number of participants:</u> 60 (36 experts IDLO/IW meeting, 22 KP: 10 research, 3 policy, 7 NGOs) 7. Lunch discussion with Senior Mali & Sahel Analyst of the International Crisis Group organized by the Secretariat, in close cooperation with the MFA, 2 December 2015 <u>Number of participants:</u> 15 (7 research, 3 policy, 5 NGO) Outputs: news item
2016	
Open budget line with the view to provide for flexibility, yet with approx.	1. Lunch discussion on the progress of MINUSMA and the Dutch contribution - 11

one of these activities per month.

- Events/ short write ups responding to direct needs and/or opportunities (international visitors, parliamentary debates, international happenings, new research findings etc). One potential link that is already identified: discussion within the MFA on rethinking development cooperation and fragility
- To build on and to test new ways of interaction and engagement

January 2016 | organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Participants: 26 experts (7 research, 12 policy, 7 NGO)

2. **Roundtable Afghanistan and its International Partners: The Road Ahead. economic development, migration, and security** | Expert Discussion with Mr. Wahid Waissi, Director-General for Economic Cooperation, Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 1 March 2016 | organized in cooperation with Oxfam Novib, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Clingendael and The Hague Institute
Output: [blog](#), [summary report](#)
3. **Mali beyond MINUSMA: Which Role for ECOWAS & the EU?** | 14 April 2016, organized by GPPAC, WANEP, Human Security Collective and the Platform
Participants: 17 experts (4 research, 1 policy, 12 NGO, 11% international)
Outputs: [news item](#)
4. **Blogging as social activism in Burundi: Brownbag lunch with the Burundian YAGA collective** | 25 April 2016, organized by RNW and the Platform
Participants: 13 participants (2 research, 1 policy, 10 NGO, 38% international)
Outputs: [blog post](#)
5. **Expert roundtable: exploring the links between experiences of injustice and violent conflict** | 26 May 2016, organized by Saferworld and the Platform
Participants: 29 experts (12 research, 9 policy, 7 NGO, 48% international)
Outputs: [policy brief](#), [news item](#), [synergy blog](#)
6. **Measuring peace** | organized by the Platform Secretariat, 23 June 2016
Participants: 13 participants (2 research, 1 policy, 10 NGO, 30% international)
Outputs: [blog post](#), [news item](#)
7. **ARC Kick-off Meeting** | organized by the Platform Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 June 2016
Participants: 179 (6 research, 28 policy, 137 NGO, 8 consultants, 43% international)
Outputs: [report](#), [news item](#)
8. **Rising Powers and Peacebuilding: Innovative Approaches to Preventing Conflict and Sustaining Peace** | organized by NUPI and Secretariat, Thursday 25 August
Participants: 30 experts (15 research, 6 policy, 9 NGO, 36% international)

	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Outputs: news item</u></p> <p>9. Great Lakes: linking and learning under the reconstruction tender organized by Oxfam Novib and the Secretariat, 26 September 2016 <u>Participants:</u> 37 participants (7 research, 1 policy, 28 NGO, 32% international) <u>Outputs:</u> <u>news item</u>, Summary Report</p> <p>10. Interactive meeting: Why do we need the African Union? organized by ECDPM and the Secretariat, 28 September 2016 <u>Participants:</u> 63 participants (17 research, 35 policy, 14 NGO, 15% international) <u>Outputs:</u> <u>blog posts</u>, <u>news item</u></p> <p>11. Libya in Turmoil: Implications for international support? organized by the Secretariat in close cooperation with the MFA, 4 October 2016 <u>Participants:</u> 45 participants (14 research, 26 policy, 5 NGO, 20% international) <u>Outputs:</u> <u>news item</u></p> <p>12. Education and radicalization: security or development? organized by the Platform, in close cooperation with SPARK, The Hague Institute, ICCT and Human Security Collective, 16 November 2016 <u>Participants:</u> 25 participants (2 policy, 6 NGO, 4 research, 15 other - 30% international) <u>Outputs:</u> <u>news item</u></p>
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