ODI

Using political economy analysis in conflict, security and justice programmes

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Cover photo: walking through fields in Mali. Credit: Curt Carnemark / World Bank

Contents

Figures

Acknowledgements

Summary: the steps in brief

This guidance note provides a framework for implementers of conflict, security and justice programmes to conduct political economy analysis (PEA) at the design or inception phase to ensure a deep understanding of the context drives activities. It sets out four preconditions and seven steps. PEA here does not take the form of a standalone formal report but rather a process of regular and on-going discussion among programme staff.

Precondition 1   Begin PEA early in the design process, and ensure that programming processes are in place to support it

Precondition 2   Ensure sufficient time is allocated on a regular basis for programme staff (not external consultants) to undertake and update PEA

Precondition 3   Knowledge of politics and context is key, but technical skills are still important

Precondition 4   Moderate expectations. PEA won't provide all the answers but it will help to anchor the programme in local political realities and embed curiosity and learning

1 Map out problems faced by communities using the security and justice chains and consider whose problems the programme is prioritising.

2 To understand why problems persist, unpack the political economy of each stage of the security and justice chains with reference to the interactive nature of structure and agency.

3 Given your understanding of the context, and delaying thinking about what the programme should do, make a best guess about how change might be possible within the context you're working.

4 Consider how the programme might support or influence the likely pathway(s) of change identified in Step 3.
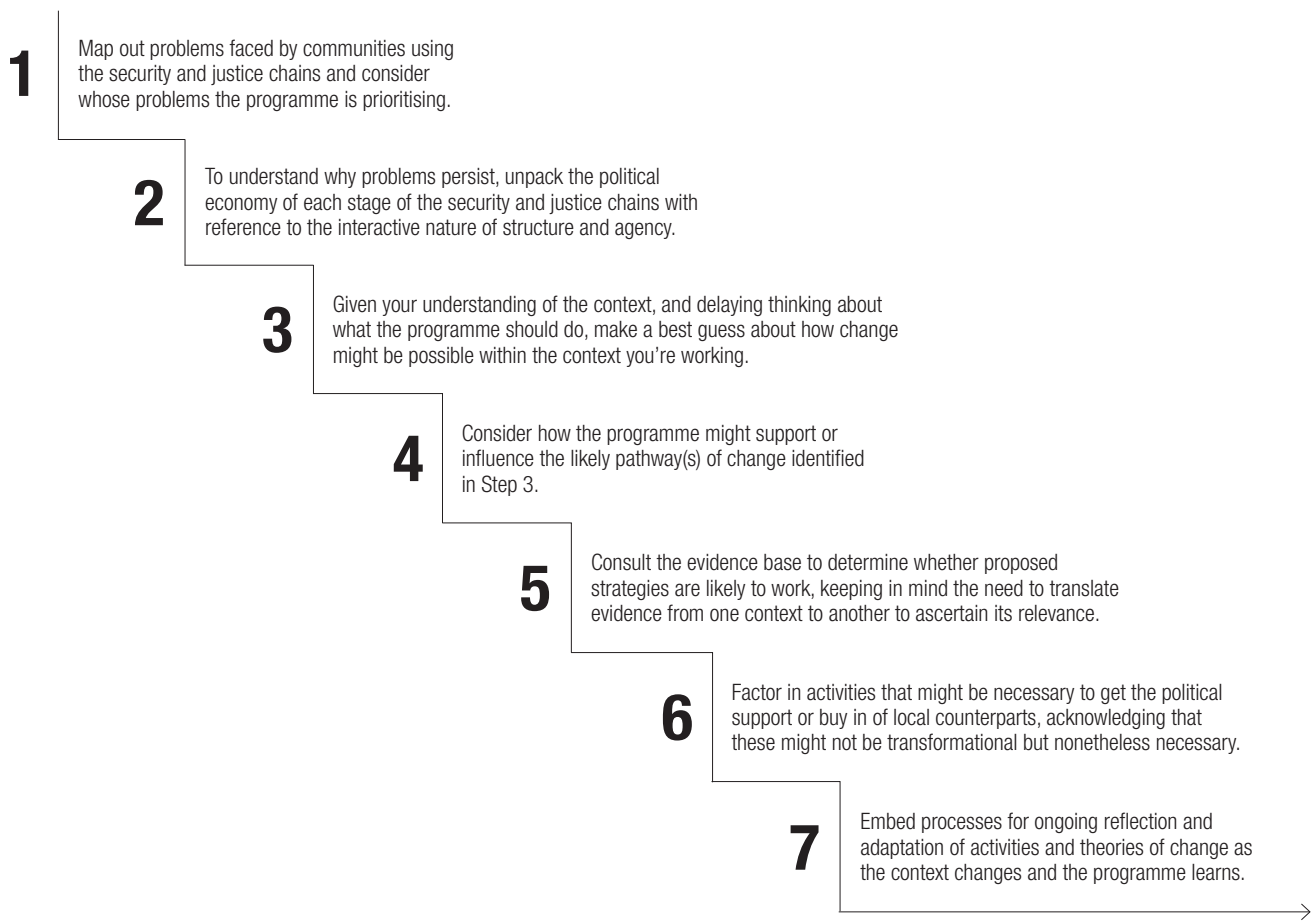
5 Consult the evidence base to determine whether proposed strategies are likely to work, keeping in mind the need to translate evidence from one context to another to ascertain its relevance.

6 Factor in activities that might be necessary to get the political support or buy in of local counterparts, acknowledging that these might not be transformational but nonetheless necessary.

7 Embed processes for ongoing reflection and adaptation of activities and theories of change as the context changes and the programme learns.

Introduction

For over a decade, there has been a widespread push for development programming to be informed by deep analysis of the political economy of context. This is understood to be crucial to move beyond an overly technical approach to aid, whereby sectoral expertise is inputted to fill a capacity gap on the assumption that this will improve delivery of a given service. But we know development problems are not purely technical but also political. Capacity deficits are the result not merely of a lack of technical know-how or resources but also of particular configurations of incentives and interests. These incentives and interests can be harder to shift and require an understanding of how the status quo is anchored in power relations; who wins and loses from the current situation and potential change; and how change might be achieved given these constraints.

To this end, a significant body of work has developed around political economy analysis (PEA), given its diagnostic potential to identify opportunities and blockages and the political (and economic) dynamics that sustain them – from developing tools, to training donor staff and practitioners, to conducting PEAs at the problem, sector and national levels (see, for instance, Booth et al., 2016; Duncan and Williams, 2012; Harris, 2013; Hudson et al., 2016; Leftwich, 2011). And PEA has not just been the preserve of researchers – donor agencies and programmers have increasingly integrated it into programmes in different ways. However, there has also been growing disquiet with the way PEA has been used in the development sector, including among its proponents, and disappointment in the limited degree to which it has affected operations. It has been called 'the dismal science of constraints' and is seen to focus overwhelmingly on identifying the difficulties of reform, rather than helping chart a course towards it (Carothers and de Gramont, 2013; Duncan and Williams, 2012).

Of course, this criticism speaks as much to the unrealistic expectations placed on PEA as to the problems with its use. PEA is not a magic bullet and, even when done well, figuring out how to chart a course towards developmental change will always be difficult, contested and messy. Yet such arguments have also prompted thinking about the place of PEA – when and how it is most usefully done, by whom, in what sequence with other programme design and implementation components and to what end. It is increasingly recognised that conducting standalone PEA exercises or simply producing reports (as has often been the default approach) does not always connect with programme decisions and thus tends to end up an isolated activity (Booth et al., 2016). But, rather than this suggesting PEA has outlived its usefulness, it underscores the importance of how PEA is undertaken and how it fits with programme decisions and direction. Despite these challenges, the use of PEA can be improved to help in designing and implementing more realistic and relevant programmes. It can also assist in managing programmes that require navigating political sensitivities that can be uncomfortable territory for donors and implementers.

This guidance note draws on the Overseas Development Institute's (ODI's) PEA work in relation to security and justice specifically – both research and training – to set out how PEA might most usefully be incorporated into conflict, security and justice programming, and provides a framework to assist with this (although this may be useful to a range of delivery chains across other sectors).[1] While some adaptation of this guidance will inevitably be required in response to the particularities of different organisations, the intention is to provide a publically available resource to make PEA as relevant and useful as possible.

The note first sets out four preconditions to ensure PEA is more likely to achieve impact, before setting out seven steps detailing how PEA might usefully be undertaken, primarily at the design stage, to develop programmes that are genuinely responsive to context. The guidance also demonstrates how on-going PEA is also connected with efforts to work in more adaptive ways (Andrews, 2013; Denney and Domingo, 2016; Wild et al., 2015).

It is worth noting at the outset that there are differing views as to whether it makes sense to explicitly undertake PEA at the design stage, as this guidance sets out. Given the emphasis on adaptive programming, some have suggested that 'design' and 'implementation' should be collapsed so that programming becomes more about trialling and learning from approaches and feeding these back into constant redesign (Denney and Domingo, 2014: 7-13). There has thus been an emphasis on encouraging programmers to be 'searchers' not 'planners' (Easterly, 2006).

While fully supportive of the learning and redesign cycle, there is also a risk of haphazard selection of activities and criteria for changing them. This note suggests every search needs a plan and that, while plans should certainly not be fixed or blinkered maps that chart an assumed path to results, each change of course should nonetheless be a carefully considered decision rooted in deep knowledge of local context. This is especially important in relation to conflict, security and justice programming, which often takes place in situations where government approval is required before it is possible to engage other stakeholders. What is set out here then is an attempt to assist

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1   For an overview of ODI experience of PEA training and research relating to basic services, see Booth et al. (2016).

programmes to develop their first carefully considered plan, which should be reappraised regularly in light of changing knowledge and context and adapted as necessary to remain relevant.

The problem with PEA to date

The limitations of the ways in which PEA has been operationalised within development programming have been the subject of critique across a range of development sectors. This is not unique to the fields of security and justice: there is a focus more generally on investing in PEA that can meaningfully inform programming rather than just providing an interesting report that largely sits on the shelf (Booth et al., 2016). What is more particular to the security and justice sectors is that, despite the fact that some form of PEA is now commonplace, programming tends to fall back on a relatively standard list of interventions (ICAI, 2015). While it may be – in the best case scenario – that programmes use similar interventions but tailor the specifics of these to context (so that, for instance, community policing happens in both Nepal and Sierra Leone but in different ways), it is nonetheless striking that the intervention types themselves remain largely the same. This should come as a surprise given the differing security and justice priorities encountered in, for instance, urban Bangladesh compared with rural Kenya. It suggests context specificity is a secondary consideration to reliance on a menu of common programming approaches. How, then, can PEA be undertaken in a way that enables it to inform the selection of programme activities – not merely to influence how those predetermined activities are undertaken?

Preconditions and steps

There is no one way to do PEA and no one perfect tool or framework. One approach that ODI has developed and found helpful is the use of security and justice chains to conduct problem-focused PEA (see Diagram 1 below) (Denney and Domingo, 2013; Domingo and Denney, 2013). This builds on ODI's Problem-Focused Political Economy Analysis (Harris, 2013, building on Fritz et al., 2009) and the use of justice chains by others (Gloppen, 2006; UN Women, 2011). It has also been further developed through our own research, as well as through PEA training on conflict, security and justice issues with Coffey International in Kenya and The Asia Foundation in Indonesia.[2] This is not necessarily to be used to produce a PEA report. Here, we are talking about PEA as an analytical process – some of which might get written down (not least to enable teams to revisit and update it later)

– but not as a 'finished' product, as PEA is on-going and should continue throughout programming.

A number of caveats that act as 'preconditions' for programmes conducting PEA are required upfront. These are to ensure the necessary conditions are in place so PEA is able to genuinely impact on programme direction and not lead to disillusionment with its use.

Precondition 1: Begin PEA early in the design process and ensure programming processes are in place to support it

To genuinely inform decisions about activities, PEA should begin early in the programme cycle (during design and inception phases). By beginning PEA early, the programme is providing the opportunity for local realities to drive decisions about activities, rather than activities being selected and then being retrofitted to the context. While this is central to ensuring decisions about activities are genuinely context-led, it is also about the seemingly more mundane elements of programme design that donors put in place even before the tendering process. This relates to how business case approval, procurement processes, contract set-up (including reporting mechanisms, indicators and milestones and payment structure), expertise sought and spending targets fundamentally shape the ability of the programme to be responsive to context and learning (Denney and Domingo, 2014).

Even the most detailed and nuanced PEA will be limited in its ability to deliver improved programming if the structural components of programmes remain static and unresponsive to the needs of working in more politically astute and adaptive ways. A significant literature has emerged around the need to pay attention to the ways in which bureaucratic programme procedures impact on substantive activities of programming (see, for instance, Faustino and Booth, 2014; Hout, 2012; Unsworth, 2009; Wild et al., 2015). While this note cannot cover these issues in depth, these wider features of programming will shape the ability of PEA to deliver context-driven and responsive programming, and they are therefore critical.

Precondition 2: Ensure sufficient time is allocated on a regular basis for programme staff (not external consultants) to undertake and update PEA

PEA is a time-consuming and difficult process. This is not an exercise to be completed in a week. Working through the PEA framework requires background and field research, engagement with counterparts and country experts and collaboration among the team. Partly because of this, implementers (who may be contracted suppliers) cannot easily outsource PEA to consultants external to the implementation team (although they may draw on them

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Diagram 1: Problem-focused PEA using security and justice chains

1

Reflection: Problem identification

What is the specific 'problem' to be addressed? *(eg: violence against women; criminal violence; etc.)*

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Features of the problem: What forms does it take? Who is it between? Etc.

2a

Diagnosis: First at the broad level of the problem...

Structure: What are the systemic features in place that shape the problem?

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What are the structural and (formal and informal) institutional features shaping the problem? *(eg: relevant legislation or policies; social norms of patriarchy or patrimonialism; global trends such as migration, etc.)*

Interaction: How do structure and agency interact?

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How are actors reinforcing, challenging or subverting structures? How are structures constraining action? What opportunities are there for change?

Agency: What is the relative power among relevant actors and what interests and motivations influence their behaviour?

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Use stakeholder mapping to identify: Who are the relevant actors? What power and interests do they have? What behaviours shape the problem? What motivates these behaviours (financial, political, personal, cultural interests, etc.)?

2b

Then unpack structure, agency and interaction at each stage of the chains...*

Driver of injustice or violence

Driver of injustice or violence

Driver of injustice or violence

Driver of injustice or violence

— Prevention —

Instance of injustice or violence

Report → Investigation → Charge and trial → Conviction, sentencing, appeal → Justice outcome

— Formal security and justice chain —

Report → Investigation → Arbitration → Determination and appeal → Justice outcome

— Customary security and justice chain —

Report → Investigation → Referral and arbitration

— Alternative dispute justice chain —

Seeks medical treatment

Does not report

— Response —

3

Prescription: What can be done?

What is a plausible pathway of change? How is change realistically likely to happen given the context?

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4

What actions and entry points can the programme undertake to support change? Why do we think this will work? What assumptions are we making?

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*These chains are to be drawn by the programme as is appropriate to the context. The five chains set out here are an example for illustrative purposes and may not be the relevant chains in all contexts.

for facilitation or assistance). Rather, PEA should involve staff who will be implementing and managing. This is critical to ensuring PEA is not merely an 'add on' that sits in a silo separate from implementation and day-to-day management, but rather is undertaken as an inherent part of the rest of programming. Where programming is split into discrete 'design' and 'implementation' phases, it is critical that there is some degree of continuity and institutional memory between these stages so that the logic of decisions made during design are understood at implementation.

Where staff are locally engaged, much of the detailed political economy knowledge will reside in their heads, and drawing this out (and highlighting its value) is critical. Yet it is also important to remember the biases and interests of programme staff (their 'positionality'). These will be shaped by their technical expertise, education, gender, relative wealth, etc. The biases staff bring should also be challenged; having 'critical friends' who sit at a remove from day-to-day programming can be helpful in guarding against 'group-think'. There needs to be trust and openness among teams (and with any outsiders brought in) to enable constructive critique and questioning. This also underscores the importance of consulting widely in understanding the problems faced. Meeting with representatives of all stakeholders involved can help generate a more rounded view of the dynamics of the problem – especially the poor and marginalised, whose voices usually remain unheard.

In addition to requiring sufficient time, PEA needs regular updating. PEA is helpful in the initial programme design but must be revisited regularly to take account of changing context and evolving knowledge among the team. The latter point is especially important as the team's knowledge is likely to be limited at the outset, when relationships with counterparts are new.

Precondition 3: Knowledge of politics and context is key but technical skills are still important

While PEA as a development tool was developed largely as a result of recognition of the overly technical focus of much development assistance, this is not to suggest technical skills are unimportant. Good knowledge of the security and justice sectors is immensely helpful in understanding how these exceptionally political sectors work, recognising common problems and being able to demystify the protocols, language and procedures that accompany any sector. The challenge is ensuring this technical expertise does not single-mindedly drive programming towards 'best practice' approaches but rather is combined with astute political and contextual knowledge – and experience in successfully navigating reform processes – that can render technical knowledge more relevant, focused on technically sound and politically feasible approaches. It is about combining politically astute

operators – who can see, assess and create opportunities in a given place – with good sectoral knowledge.

Precondition 4: Moderate expectations – PEA won't provide all the answers but it will help anchor the programme in context and embed curiosity and learning

It is important also to recognise the limits of PEA. PEA is not a machine that information can be fed into that spits out the answers. PEA is only as good as the information available, and teams are always working with imperfect information. To this end, information should be sought from a variety of sources so as to triangulate as much as possible – including drawing on relevant embassies and country desks that donors have available, speaking with any predecessor programme staff and ensuring the voices of the poor and marginalised are not excluded. PEA frameworks provide a series of prompts and a process for thinking about information. This means research and knowledge-gathering need to be invested in early on, and that PEA can then help in analysing the material generated, but it cannot produce it in and of itself.

With these preconditions in mind, the seven steps of the PEA framework are set out below (Steps 1-4 mirror those set out in Diagram 1).

Step 1: Map out problems using the security and justice chains and consider whose problems the programme is prioritising

Start by thinking about the problems faced in the place you are working in. The guidance provided here charts PEA as applied to a particular problem (although likely multiple component problems will be identified). This takes as its point of departure the idea that focusing on 'problems' as 'entry points and positive motivators of change' (Andrews et al., 2015: 1) allows for a degree of granularity about the political economy of a problem that is useful for getting to programmatically useful analysis (see also Fritz et al., 2014; and Harris and Booth, 2013). It also encourages programming focused on solving a particular problem rather than on providing a particular solution (Andrews et al., 2015: 2). Focusing on 'problems' is not intended to reinforce ideas of developing countries as full of problems and donors bringing solutions. On the contrary, it is intended to hone in on locally identified and understood problems in order to build programmes around them rather than around a set of predetermined assumptions about end goals and solutions.

Of course, who has the power to decide what a problem is, and what problem development programmes should focus on, is very important – and a political question (Denney and Domingo, 2016). The status quo might well be a problem for vulnerable groups but serve the interests of elites. In selecting problems to focus on, it is therefore important to recognise who the problem is for. In order to gain political traction, it may be expedient

to pick problems where there is some degree of political support for change. Yet there is a danger here of taking a 'low-hanging fruit' approach. While some problems can be addressed through a legal or policy reform, others are addressed only gradually, by chipping away slowly. Both kinds of problems are important. The gradual changes are likely not as popular, given that clear results might not be apparent within programme timeframes, but a balance is needed so that deep-seated problems that are unlikely to be solved through a legal or policy reform are not neglected.

In unpacking the nature of the problem, you might start with a general problem, like violence against women, which can in turn be broken into multiple component problems, for instance girls being raped on the way to school, husbands beating wives, etc. Each of these problems then needs to be unpacked individually, recognising overlaps. The framework set out here disaggregates the various problems using security and justice chains. The chains help separate out the various stages of security and justice problems to enable a more granular view of the component problems. The chains will look different across different contexts. An example is set out in Diagram 1 and a blank template is provided in Annex 1. The security and justice chains map the drivers of violence/injustice and how a survivor might respond – utilising one of multiple chains (formal justice, customary justice, alternative dispute resolution) but also bearing in mind that a survivor might not report at all, or might seek medical assistance but not report to justice actors. It is important to map out these options in order to understand different decision-making logics and where potential entry points might lie. It also helps operationalise the idea that you do not always get security by 'doing security' but potentially by doing a range of other things seemingly unrelated to the security and justice sectors (ICAI, 2015). Of course, the chains are a heuristic device and in reality, the process by which people attempt to access security and justice is almost certainly not as linear as is presented here. In fact, people may enter multiple chains concurrently or at different times and at different points in the chain. Similarly, people move between chains (see Denney and Domingo 2013).

The chains are also helpful in mapping out both the drivers of the problem of insecurity/injustice and paths of response. Given that most conflict, security and justice programmes have a focus on preventing violence or injustice, it is surprising how little attention their activities pay to these 'upstream' drivers. Rather, the bulk of activities tend to focus on response mechanisms. While it is certainly arguable that strengthening response mechanisms (such as law enforcement and judicial procedures) can help deter future violence or injustice, legal sanction developing into societal norms is a very long-term process. Given this, it is also important that prevention work also engages with the drivers of violence and injustice.

Each individual chain is usefully broken down into its component stages – for example, reporting, investigation, trial/arbitration, decision, appeal, etc. There are no set stages that should be used; stages will depend on how the process plays out in a given context. Breaking each chain down in this way allows a more granular understanding of the component problems to emerge. For example, while the overarching problem might be high rates of gender-based violence, breaking down each stage of the chain might reveal component problems – such as getting women to report violence to authorities, the capacity/willingness of police to respond to such violence, the discriminatory nature of justice applied in customary arbitrations and so on. These component problems will be different across different locations, and it is therefore important to flesh out understandings of the general problem by digging into the particular features and constraints unique to each setting. Breaking chains down into these stages is also useful because the decision-making logics among security and justice actors differ, reflecting the different interests and incentives at each stage of a chain. For instance, at the stage of arrest, police may be incentivised to arrest because of quotas in place to support 'tough on crime' policies. This might be in tension with judiciary incentives to dispose of cases quickly to reduce pre-trial detention rates. Within the same security and justice chain, therefore, there can be divergent incentives that do not necessarily cohere across stages.

The chains also help maintain a wide view of the problem. One challenge for PEA is that, in digging into the specifics of a problem, it can become detached from the broader context in which it exists. The chains encourage both a higher-level view of the drivers of and responses to problems and how they connect, and a more granular view of the political economy of each stage of each chain. Mapping out the chains helps to clearly identify potential entry points for both prevention and response at different levels. Of course, it is very unlikely that any programme will be able to take advantage of all entry points identified, but the exercise helps to cast the net widely, consider less common entry points and then only later ask what it makes sense for a programme to do.

Step 2: To understand why problems persist, unpack the political economy of each stage of the security and justice chains with reference to the interactive nature of structure and agency

This happens in two steps. First, think about the relevant structures and actors and the interaction between them at the broad level of the problem, so as to identify laws, policies and norms that shape the problem and the actors involved and their interests (prompts are set out in Diagram 1). Second, apply these same analytical concepts to each stage of the chains, as set out in Diagram 2.

Structures refer to often-resilient, deeply embedded features of a context that fundamentally shape power
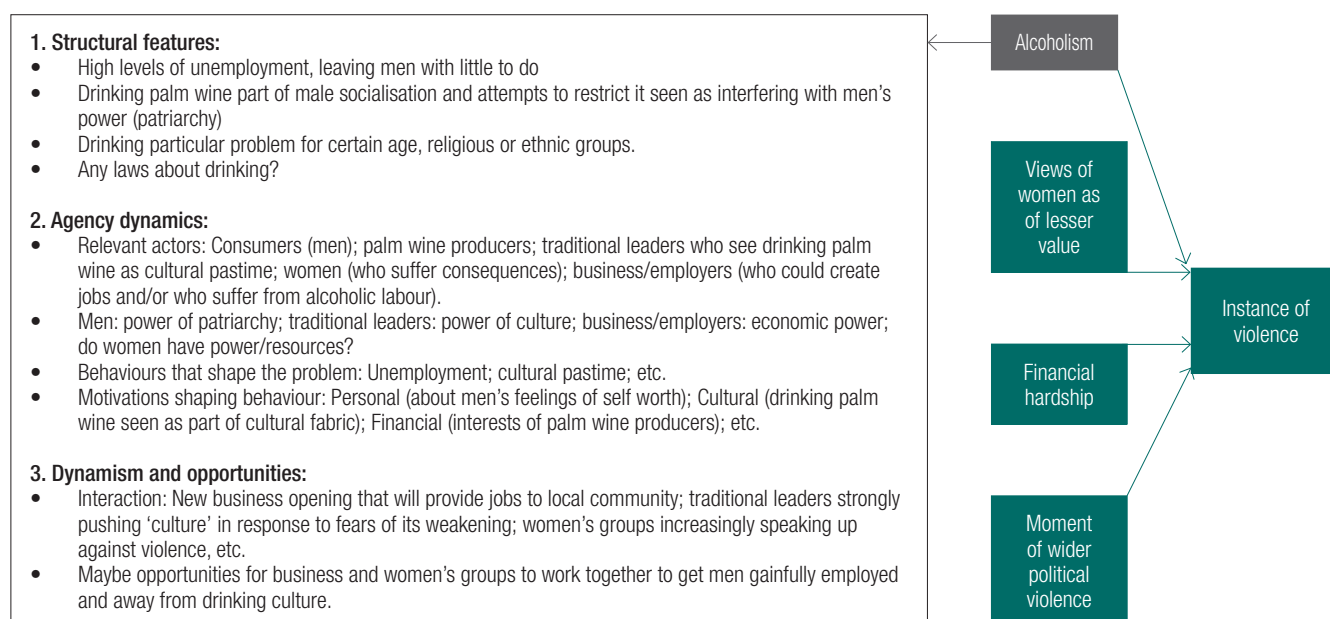
Diagram 2: Unpacking the political economy of each stage of the security and justice chains

How to analyse the political economy of each state of the security and justice chains
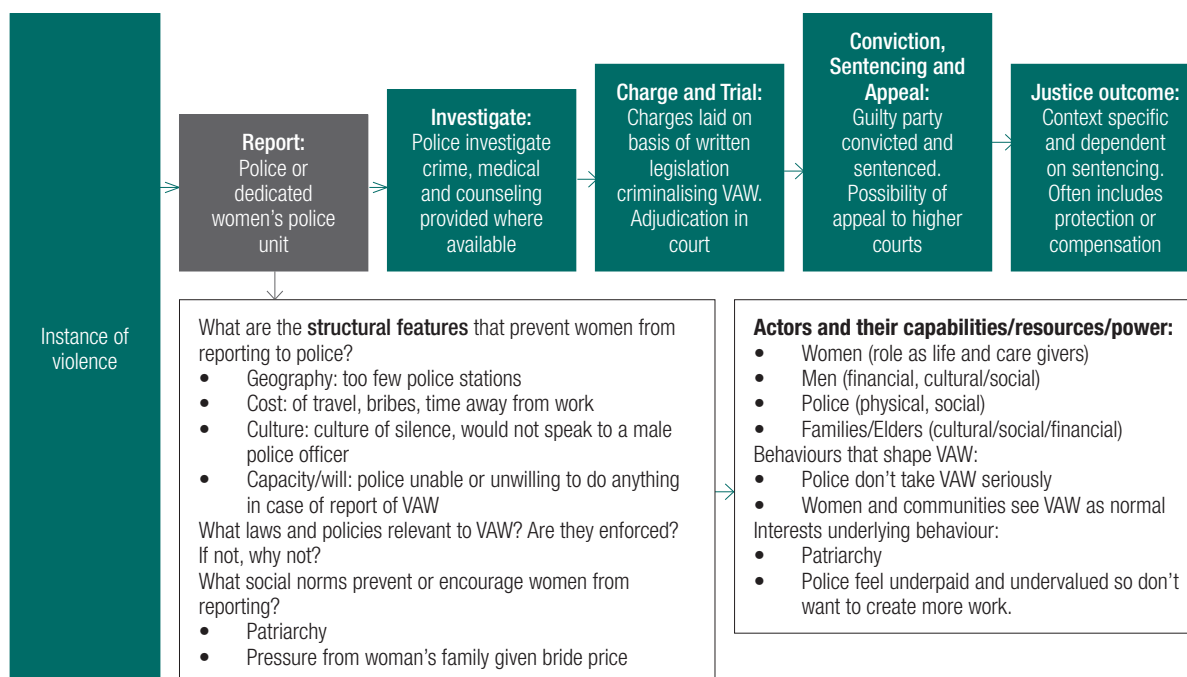
1. Structural features:
- What are the contextual/structural features influencing the problem? (eg: Geography, demography, culture/social structure, historical legacies, etc?).
- What are the relevant institutions, including formal laws/regulations and informal social political and cultural norms, that shape power relations? (Consider gender, class, age, religion, ethnicity and regional inequalities).

2. Agency dynamics:
- Who are the relevant actors?
- What are the relationships between the key actors and what capabilities, resources and power do they have?
- What behaviours shape the problem?
- What are the motivations (financial, political, personal, cultural, etc.) that shape these behaviours?

3. Dynamism and opportunities:
- How do the structural and agency features interact? How are agents reinforcing, changing or subverting structural features of society?
- What opportunities or roadblocks for change does this interaction create?
- What opportunities or changes are possible given upcoming events?
- How are these likely to play out given your analysis of structure and agency? Will any opportunities arise? Any roadblocks?
- Given your stakeholder map, what opportunities might there be for forming coalitions, giving greater voice to certain groups, etc?

Driver of injustice or violence → Driver of injustice or violence → Driver of injustice or violence → Driver of injustice or violence → Instance of injustice or violence

Example of analysing drivers of violence against women…

1. Structural features:
- High levels of unemployment, leaving men with little to do
- Drinking palm wine part of male socialisation and attempts to restrict it seen as interfering with men's power (patriarchy)
- Drinking particular problem for certain age, religious or ethnic groups.
- Any laws about drinking?

2. Agency dynamics:
- Relevant actors: Consumers (men); palm wine producers; traditional leaders who see drinking palm wine as cultural pastime; women (who suffer consequences); business/employers (who could create jobs and/or who suffer from alcoholic labour).
- Men: power of patriarchy; traditional leaders: power of culture; business/employers: economic power; do women have power/resources?
- Behaviours that shape the problem: Unemployment; cultural pastime; etc.
- Motivations shaping behaviour: Personal (about men's feelings of self worth); Cultural (drinking palm wine seen as part of cultural fabric); Financial (interests of palm wine producers); etc.

3. Dynamism and opportunities:
- Interaction: New business opening that will provide jobs to local community; traditional leaders strongly pushing 'culture' in response to fears of its weakening; women's groups increasingly speaking up against violence, etc.
- Maybe opportunities for business and women's groups to work together to get men gainfully employed and away from drinking culture.

Alcoholism → Views of women as of lesser value → Financial hardship → Moment of wider political violence → Instance of violence

Example of analysing the responses to violence in the justice chain…

Woman reports through the formal legal system…

Report: Police or dedicated women's police unit	**Investigate:** Police investigate crime, medical and counseling provided where available	**Charge and Trial:** Charges laid on basis of written legislation criminalising VAW. Adjudication in court	**Conviction, Sentencing and Appeal:** Guilty party convicted and sentenced. Possibility of appeal to higher courts	**Justice outcome:** Context specific and dependent on sentencing. Often includes protection or compensation

Instance of violence

What are the **structural features** that prevent women from reporting to police?
- Geography: too few police stations
- Cost: of travel, bribes, time away from work
- Culture: culture of silence, would not speak to a male police officer
- Capacity/will: police unable or unwilling to do anything in case of report of VAW

What laws and policies relevant to VAW? Are they enforced? If not, why not?

What social norms prevent or encourage women from reporting?
- Patriarchy
- Pressure from woman's family given bride price

Actors and their capabilities/resources/power:
- Women (role as life and care givers)
- Men (financial, cultural/social)
- Police (physical, social)
- Families/Elders (cultural/social/financial)

Behaviours that shape VAW:
- Police don't take VAW seriously
- Women and communities see VAW as normal

Interests underlying behaviour:
- Patriarchy
- Police feel underpaid and undervalued so don't want to create more work.

and politics (Leftwich, 2011). These are generally slow to change and so tend to constrain what is possible. Structures can include historical influences (such as colonialism), geographical features (such as multiple neighbouring countries or lack of water resources), ethnic composition, etc. Structural features also include formal and informal institutions. These are sometimes referred to as the 'rules of the game,' including both formal rules (laws, policies and protocols) and informal rules (how things really happen behind the scenes). This has been described as what happens in air-conditioned offices (formal institutions) versus what happens on the back veranda (informal institutions) (Emmanuel Terray, cited in Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 134). Informal institutions include social norms like patriarchy and patronage that shape actors and their behaviour.

Agency refers to how actors exercise their will over a particular issue. Think about the actors involved in each stage of the chains and their interests and incentives. How do the behaviours of actors shape the problem and what motivations and interests shape that behaviour? For instance, behaviour shaping the problem of violence might involve politicians using armed groups to intimidate voters or political opponents. In turn, that behaviour may be driven by their interest in ensuring adequate access to resources and services for their community, which they see as ensured only through being in power. This aims to understand both the interests of the actors involved

(what they care about) and their incentives (what drives them). Stakeholder mapping can be useful here, plotting stakeholders along x and y axes according to their relative power and their supportiveness of change (although it is often not clear in the early stages of programming what change you are looking for in addressing a problem, and so determining whether actors are 'for' or 'against', and the extent to which they might be willing to spend political capital, can be difficult) (see Annex 2 for a stakeholder map template). Nonetheless, mapping stakeholders and their interests is useful for identifying potential partners, gatekeepers and spoilers and can be revisited once activities are clear.

Finally, consider the interaction between structure and agency and what changes might emerge from this, or from other opportunities. How are agents reinforcing, challenging or subverting structures? What opportunities or roadblocks for change does this create? For example, women's groups might be pushing against patriarchal values; in turn, elders and religious leaders might be reinforcing traditional values. This analysis can help highlight potential partners or coalitions for change, as well as potential blockers. In addition, consider what kinds of opportunities might emerge. These might relate to upcoming events or processes, such as elections or on-going decentralisation efforts. How are these likely to play out given the analysis of structure and agency?

This step is about recognising that change can come as a result of relatively quick events – like elections or a natural disaster – in response to which actors and their interests are being repositioned. Or it can come about more slowly as a result of on-going interaction between structure and agents. For instance, improvements in women's rights have been achieved through actors continually challenging structures of patriarchy. Change here is more gradual but nonetheless important. While the push for results in development programmes can result in more of a focus on quick change processes, recognition that governance transitions take 15-30 years is a reminder of the long-term nature of the work we are involved in (World Bank, 2011: 10). Diagram 2 sets out the analytical questions relevant to unpacking each stage of the security and justice chains, followed by examples of what this might look like applied to the drivers of violence and response mechanisms.

Step 3: Given your understanding of the context and delaying thinking about what the programme should do, make a best guess about how change might be possible

After completing this analysis, the team needs to consider how change might realistically happen given the contextual features identified. This is crucial to developing programmes that are realistic about the nature of change sought and thus more likely to achieve results. It is also critical because it recognises that change does not ultimately come from development programmes but rather from within a society. Development programmes may act as catalysts for or facilitators of change but are not the source of change. This is the most difficult step, and is often where much PEA ends – moving directly from an analysis of the context to what programmes should do, leading to unrealistic theories of change that are disconnected from the analysis that has gone before. This step requires multiple team discussions and reflection in order to identify where possibilities for change might lie. Meeting with a range of stakeholders is also important to identify potential coalitions that can be supported or otherwise engaged (although coalitions will not always be possible).

A plausible pathway of change articulates how change around a particular problem might be possible within the political realities analysed through the PEA. For instance, in the violence against women example, the pathway of change may be that such violence will be reduced by improving attitudes towards women over the long term and passing/implementing legislation that criminalises domestic violence in the short term. Various assumptions need to be made here, in part because there will undoubtedly be information gaps that need to be filled. No programme starts out with (or even ends up with) complete knowledge of a problem. Being explicit about the assumptions made is important so that these can be revisited throughout programming to see whether they still hold and, where they do not, the programme can be adapted (especially given that programmes can change substantially between design, inception and implementation phases). Because it is increasingly recognised that programmes likely have to iterate in order to remain relevant, the pathways of change should be understood as a 'best guess' based on the information available at the time. Programmes may end up supporting multiple pathways of change at different times. Or they may trial multiple pathways at once to see which yields promising results. Thus pathways of change should not be considered fixed or permanent, but rather require regular reassessment.

Step 4: Consider how the programme might support or influence the likely pathway(s) of change identified in Step 3

Finally, we come to what activities a programme might undertake to support the plausible pathway(s) of change. Putting this consideration last is key to ensuring decisions on activities are genuinely driven by the context and not by other factors. Teasing out how the programme intends to support the local change process becomes the theory of change – because you are articulating the ways in which programme activities will contribute to a wider change process identified on the basis of the analysis. Coming up with entry points for programming is not easy. There is a tendency to fall back on projects or activities staff are familiar with and that have been done before. If stuck for entry points, the following questions can be useful prompts for opening up potential entry points:

- What are the main drivers of the problem? Can the programme usefully engage with these?
- What are the underlying beliefs/attitudes/power structures that contribute to the problem? Can the programme usefully engage with them?
- Who are the relevant actors? Who has power and influence and who does not? Is there a role for the programme to play here?
- What opportunities are on the horizon that the programme might take advantage of?
- What does the programme not yet know that it would be useful to understand better?

Of course, considerations regarding activities extend beyond just the context and political economy of the problem, to include issues such as funding availability, capacity of staff and partners, risk appetite, value for money and so on. These are unavoidable realities of programming but, as much as possible, their influence on strategies to solve development problems should be delayed until this point in the analysis. Otherwise, there is a danger of falling into the trap of supply-driven aid – where the skills, funds and capacities of donors rather than the needs of recipients drive what is delivered.

Conducting a PEA so as to arrive at genuinely context-driven programming is an excellent start to more effective

programming. But it is just the first step. Once the potential activities to be undertaken are arrived at, at least three further steps need to be taken.

Step 5: Consult the evidence to determine whether proposed activities are likely to work, keeping in mind the need to translate evidence from one context to another to ascertain its relevance

Of course, it is critically important that development programming learns from previous experience and that knowledge within the sector is refined as the catalogue of experience builds. Yet this push for 'evidence-based programmes' must also be viewed through the lens of context. Evidence is itself not acontextual. Rather, evidence emerges from particular places. As a result, it is necessary to translate evidence. Relevant evidence may be found in the same sector in different countries (i.e. security and justice programmes in country x might learn from security and justice programmes in country y), or in a different sector in the same country (i.e. security and justice programmes in country x might learn from health, education or governance programmes also in country x). In the first case, the process of evidence translation happens by considering whether the reasons a particular activity worked in country x also apply to country y. Or indeed, the argument could be made that an activity that did not work in country x could work in country y when the differences of context are taken into account. In the second case, the process of evidence translation happens by considering whether the reasons a particular activity worked in another sector are also applicable to the security and justice sector (examples might be found in relation to use of technology or access to services). In both cases, the critical point is the translation of evidence to factor in context.

It is not enough for programmes to point to successes or failures of particular activities in other places and then assume the same results will play out elsewhere. The reasons for the successes and failures need to be spelt out, and then consideration is needed of whether these reasons plausibly apply in the second context. If community policing worked in a particular country because of ethnic homogeneity, for instance, then it does not necessarily follow that it will work in another setting where ethnic homogeneity does not feature. So evidence should of course be used but its relevance must be interrogated and translated.

Step 6: Factor in activities that might be necessary to obtain the buy-in of local counterparts, acknowledging that these might not be transformational

It is important to factor in how local buy-in can be obtained. Development programmes operate only with the good graces of the host government. For this reason, programmes must ultimately be shaped according to what is politically feasible within a given context. This may mean certain programme activities end up being added in,

or changed, to ensure the support of national counterparts. While such activities likely need to be integrated into public-facing documents, the programme team should be clear that these activities may not be genuinely considered realistic or transformational but nonetheless serve an important purpose within the programme more broadly (namely, getting counterparts on board). This step may well also apply to considering donor internal politics and what kinds of activities are possible given risk appetites and concerns over organisational reputation.

Programme intervention logics should trace a discernible path through the above steps – explaining that the programme is addressing these problems for this reason and why they are being addressed in particular ways.

Step 7: Embed processes for on-going reflection and adaptation of activities and theories of change as the context changes and the programme learns

While the above PEA steps should help in the design phase to ensure programme activities connect with the particular conflict, security and justice challenges faced in a given context, this is not where PEA should end. Rather, monitoring and learning processes that feed back into programme decisions and direction will benefit from on-going PEA embedded throughout the life of the programme. In this way, the PEA process set out in this note is intended as a launch pad for on-going trialling, learning and refinement but must be regularly revisited.

Again, this is less about having a standalone piece of PEA research conducted and more about programme staff routinely reflecting on the political economy of the context they are working in and critically engaging with what this means for programming. This is critical to developing programmes that are agile enough to adapt to changing circumstances (which is often particularly important in highly fluid conflict-affected situations), the team's evolving understanding of the dynamics around a problem and the ability to take advantage of opportunities that arise. This is where PEA intersects with problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA), which advocates a 'muddling-through' approach to addressing problems whereby programmes trial, monitor, learn and adapt through feedback loops that enable on-going reflection and repositioning (Andrews, 2013; Andrews et al., 2015).

There are a number of ways to carry out reflection, learning and adaption, and innovations continue to emerge. One way, set out by The Asia Foundation, is strategy testing, with regular team meetings that explicitly reflect on the changing political environment, new information, relationships and opportunities, and how these impact on the programme's activities, assumptions and theory of change (Ladner, 2015). In a similar vein, the Law & Development Partnership in its Legal Assistance for Economic Reform (LASER) programme uses problem diaries as a way for staff to routinely reflect on changes in the context (events, relationships and knowledge) and

the implications these have for the programme and the problems they are trying to tackle (LASER, 2015: 14).

As with PEA during the design phase, there is no single correct approach to continuing PEA throughout implementation, but the underlying philosophy should be one of continued critical thinking and questioning of programme logic and direction, political astuteness to shifting dynamics and the opportunities and roadblocks this can create and a willingness to take calculated risks, learn and adapt. The on-going inclusion of 'critical friends' in programme discussions can help, challenging received wisdom and programme comfort zones. This kind of rolling monitoring, learning and re-design needs to be protected from the incentives of positive reporting that can attend conventional monitoring and evaluation (M&E), which tend to play more of an accountability function. It is also important to ensure that a culture of questioning and learning is not constrained by rigid M&E frameworks that lock teams into milestones or outputs that might not be relevant in later stages of programming.

Conclusion

This guidance note is intended for use by implementers of conflict, security and justice programmes (although it may have relevance beyond this), to assist them in designing programmes that are genuinely responsive to context and take seriously efforts to understand the political dynamics that shape the prospects for change. The framework set out here should be widely shared, used and adapted to be of the most practical use to implementers.
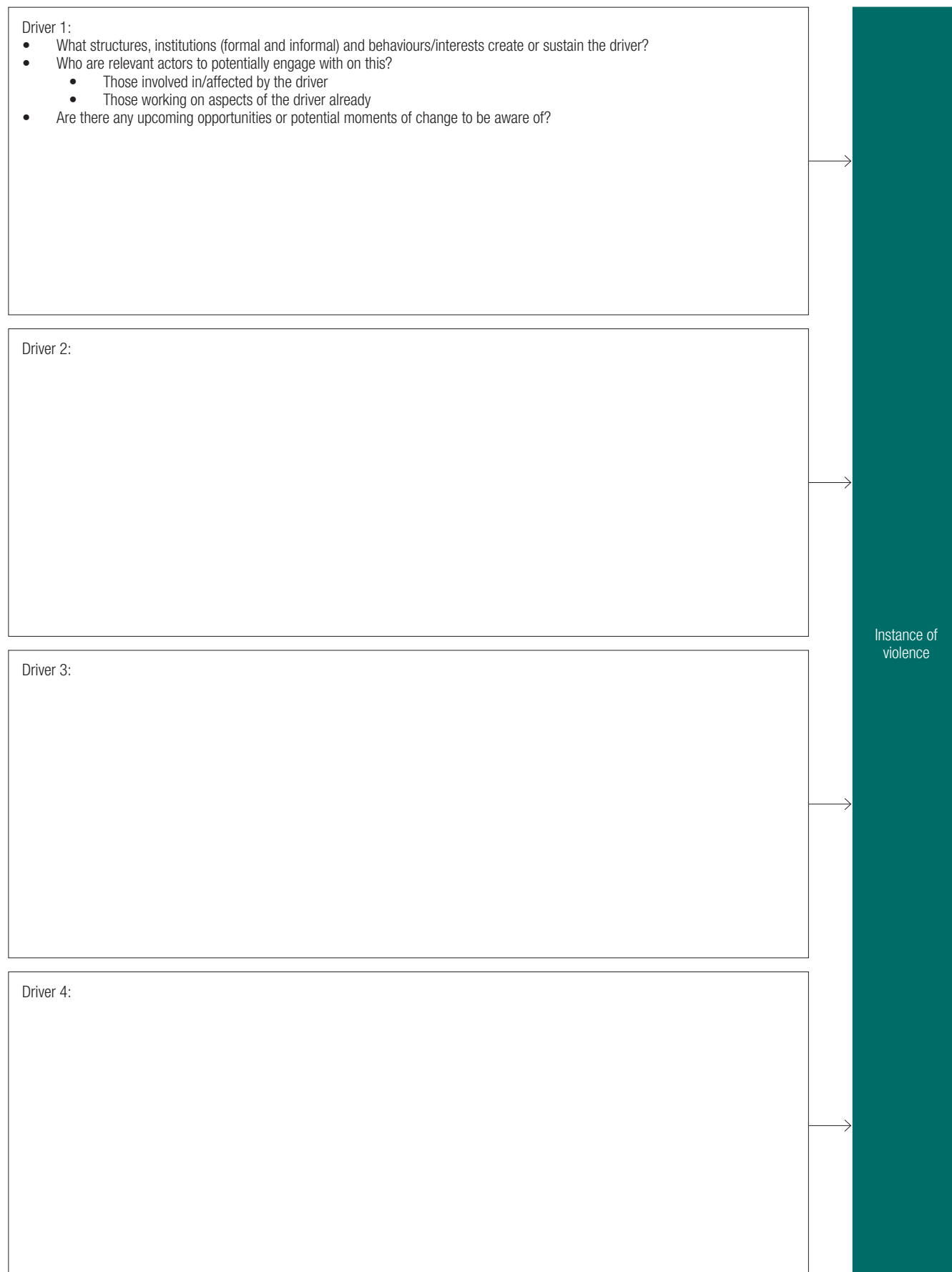
While current conversations around PEA are focused in particular on the importance of its continuation throughout the life of programming – a process that this note strongly advocates – the emphasis here has been on the use of PEA in the design stage. This, it is hoped, can assist in improving the way PEA is employed at this stage of programming and make it more meaningful, laying the groundwork for taking politics seriously. While the use of this framework is no guarantee of successful programming, it will hopefully make PEA more accessible and useful to
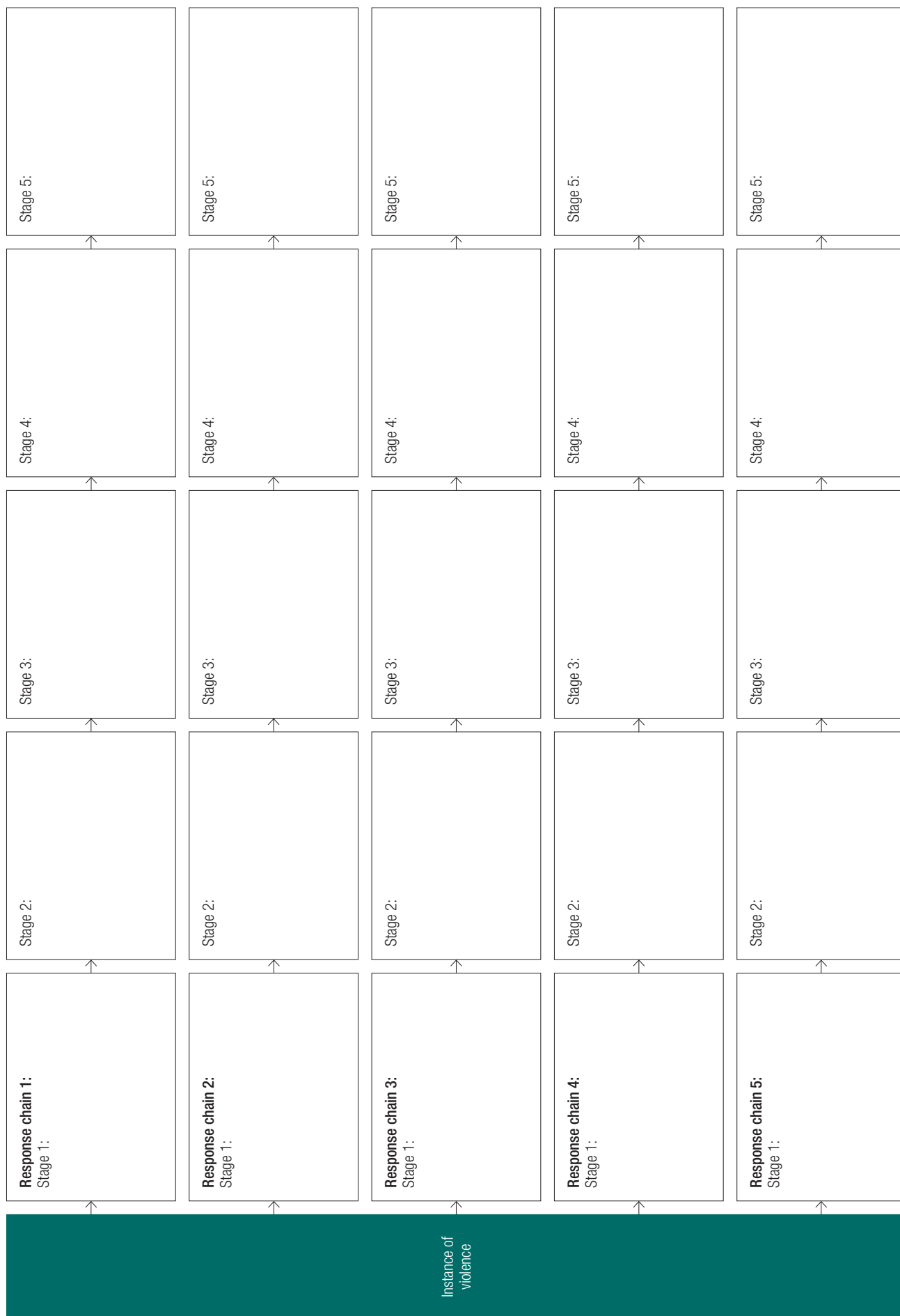
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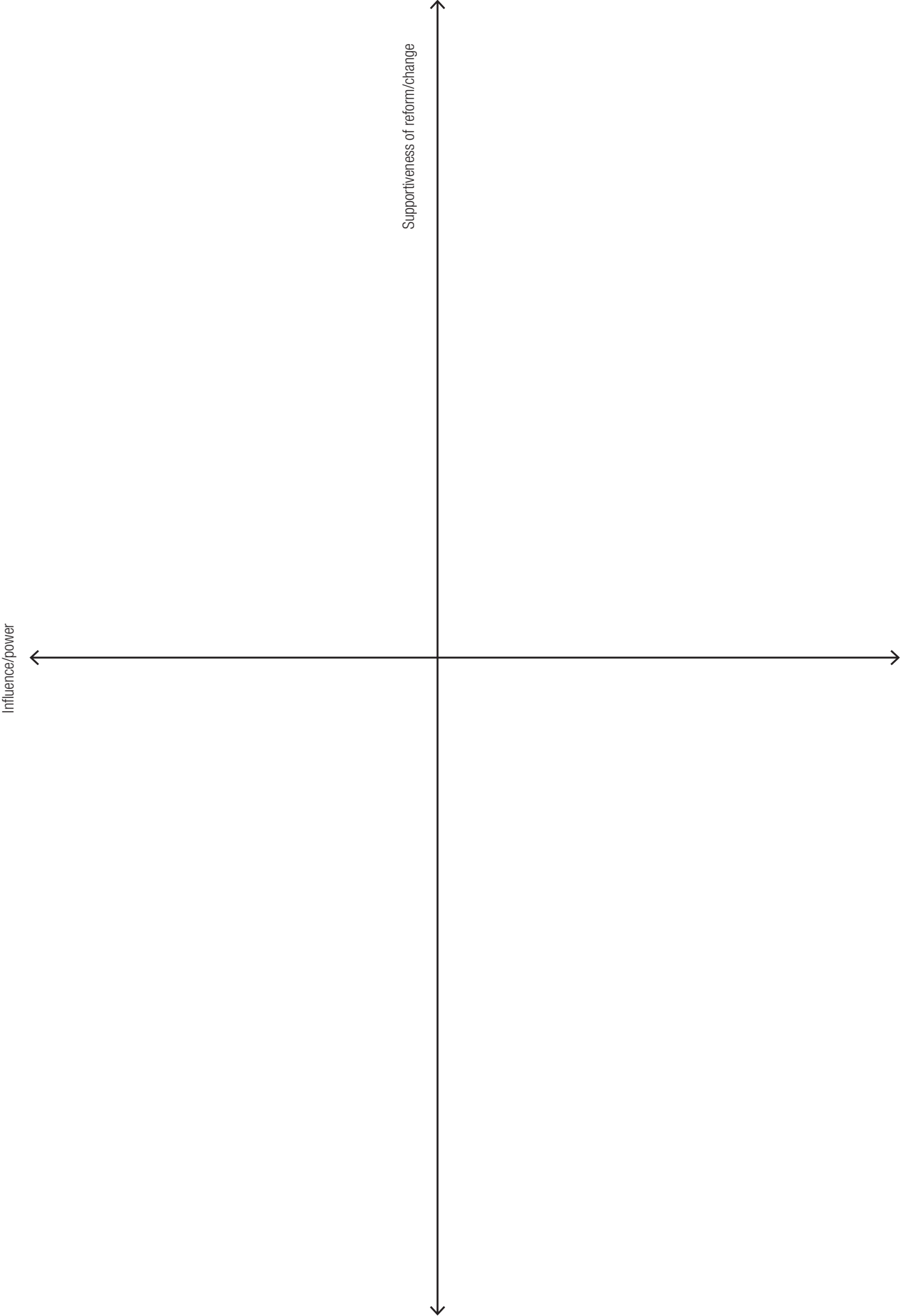
Annex 1: Security and justice chain template

Security and justice chain: drivers of violence

Driver 1:
- What structures, institutions (formal and informal) and behaviours/interests create or sustain the driver?
- Who are relevant actors to potentially engage with on this?
    - Those involved in/affected by the driver
    - Those working on aspects of the driver already
- Are there any upcoming opportunities or potential moments of change to be aware of?

Driver 2:

Driver 3:

Driver 4:

Instance of violence

Security and justice chain: responses to violence – What are the problems at each stage of the chain (think about structures, institutions and behaviours/interests)?

Response chain 1:
Stage 1:

Stage 2:

Stage 3:

Stage 4:

Stage 5:

Response chain 2:
Stage 1:

Stage 2:

Stage 3:

Stage 4:

Stage 5:

Response chain 3:
Stage 1:

Stage 2:

Stage 3:

Stage 4:

Stage 5:

Response chain 4:
Stage 1:

Stage 2:

Stage 3:

Stage 4:

Stage 5:

Response chain 5:
Stage 1:

Stage 2:

Stage 3:

Stage 4:

Stage 5:

Instance of violence

Annex 2: Stakeholder map template

Supportiveness of reform/change

Influence/power

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Cover photo: walking through fields in Mali. Credit: Curt Carnemark / World Bank

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