



AFRICAN WOMEN ON THE THIN BLUE LINE:

**Gender-Sensitive Police Reform
in Liberia and Southern Sudan**

Edited by Jennifer Erin Salahub



The North-South Institute
L'Institut Nord-Sud

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Contributors Jennifer Erin Salahub (second from left) and Caroline Bowah (fourth from left, standing) with members of the Liberia National Police following a focus group discussion in Monrovia, May 2010.

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ACRONYMS

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIVPOL	United Nations Civilian Police
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPDS	Centre for Peace and Development Studies, University of Juba
CPF	Community Policing Forum (Liberia)
CPS	Community Policing Section (Liberia)
CSO	civil society organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DCAF	Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
GOSS	Government of Southern Sudan
LIFLEA	Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association
LINLEA	Liberia National Law Enforcement Association
LNP	Liberia National Police
LSSRWG	Liberia Security Sector Reform Working Group
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NGO	non-governmental organization
NSI	The North-South Institute
NSSRL	National Security Strategy of the Republic of Liberia
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PSD	Professional Standards Division (Liberia)

SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPU	Special Protection Unit (for women and children, Southern Sudan)
SSLA	Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly
SSPS	Southern Sudan Police Service
SSR	security sector reform
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
UNPOL	United Nations Civilian Police
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WACPS	Women and Children Protection Section (Liberia)
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Network (Liberia)



Liberia National Police Headquarters, Monrovia.

Photo: Jennifer Erin Salahub

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HEARING FROM WOMEN ON BOTH SIDES OF THE THIN BLUE LINE

Jennifer Erin Salahub

Introduction

The concept of security sector reform (SSR) — transforming security institutions into accountable, rights-respecting organizations subordinate to a civilian authority, often in post-conflict situations — has coalesced over the past ten years. The process of turning that concept into action has also been evolving as efforts at holistic SSR have yielded varied results and stakeholders have worked to identify lessons learned and create new tools to assist both practitioners and policymakers.¹ Traditionally, security institutions and debates around security, stabilization and law enforcement have been the purview of a select few, the vast majority

¹ See, for example, OECD DAC, *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice* (Paris: OECD, 2007).

of whom are elite adult men. In the last several years, significant progress has been made to improve SSR processes, making them more inclusive of the diversity of populations they serve. Innovations such as the *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit*,² edited by Megan Bastick and Kristin Valasek, and contributions from authors such as Laurie Nathan, Marina Caparini and Vanessa Farr³ have helped to draw in the perspectives and experiences of many more of the security sector institutions' end users than previously.

However, the experiences and perspectives of some large recognizable groups continue to be under-represented in security sector institutions such as the police, in the development of national security sector policy and programming and in international debates about SSR, which are held largely among developed countries. Notably, women⁴ — and in particular women in developing countries — are poorly represented in all three levels of analysis; despite improvements, a paucity of their perspectives and experiences endures at all levels of decision-making. This serious gap in creating better, more effective, more representative security institutions is only beginning to be addressed through work such as the research presented here. Not only do women in conflict-affected and developing countries have valuable contributions to make in terms of framing debates and interventions that affect their daily lives — contributions which often shed light on the differential impact of programs on men and women — but many of these women are also keen to participate in the security sector. This makes the police and other organizations more operationally effective in addition to helping to secure their communities and participate in the development of sustainable peace in their countries.

2 Megan Bastick and Kristin Valasek, eds., *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit* (Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN-INSTRAW, 2008).

3 See, for example, Laurie Nathan, *No Ownership, No Commitment: A Guide to Local Ownership of Security Sector Reform* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2007); Marina Caparini, "The Relevance of Civil Society" and Vanessa A. Farr, "Voices from the Margins," both in *Security Sector Reform: Potentials and Challenges for Conflict Transformation*, ed. Clem McCartney, Martina Fischer and Oliver Wils, 53–62 and 63–70, Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation Dialogue Series No. 2 (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2004).

4 It should be noted that women are not a homogenous group and, particularly, that elite women who may be politically savvy and well connected to existing state structures (and thus likely entry points for security sector institutions seeking to engender their reform processes) may not understand or represent the interests of less privileged women.

Why Integrate Gender and Police Reform?

As has been discussed in much greater detail elsewhere,⁵ integrating a gender perspective into police reform, and broader security sector reform, is both a principled and a practical activity. On the principled side, it is about democracy and with it a more accurate representation of the population in the institutions of the state as well as ownership of the reform process by locals, a prerequisite for effective, sustainable reform. On the practical side, it is about making the police more effective in providing security for the entire population, not just a small section whose voices are heard and who hold decision-making power within the service. To turn these three goals from concepts into reality, gender-sensitive police reform focuses on two main activities: first, remedying the pervasive gender imbalance within the police, which has been traditionally populated mostly by men; and, second, making all police policies and practices gender sensitive, also known as “gender mainstreaming.” It is important to note, of course, that not all women automatically bring strong gender analysis skills with them to a position or will, by their nature, represent and advocate for women’s rights. This is why both gender balancing exercises and gender mainstreaming activities must be two sides of the same coin. The former works on making the police service more democratically representative and better able to respond effectively to a wider variety of situations; the latter focuses on raising the awareness of differences in men’s and women’s experiences and identifying and implementing practices that allow the police to better respond to women’s and men’s different security needs.

Working toward a gender balance in police staff involves creating space and an enabling environment for and then bringing more qualified women into all levels of the service. In some cases, this may involve setting a target or a quota for the recruitment of women, as in the case of Liberia.⁶ Successful recruitment efforts demand the application of dedicated resources and concerted outreach activities to raise awareness about career opportunities for women in policing. In other cases, such as Southern Sudan, it may involve investing in the professional development of existing female police officers so that they are able to perform at the level of their male colleagues. Success in

5 See, for example, Eirin Mobekk, “Gender, Women and Security Sector Reform,” *International Peacekeeping* 17, no.2 (April 2010): 278–91; Megan Bastick, *Integrating Gender in Post-Conflict Security Sector Reform*, DCAF Policy Paper No. 29 (Geneva: DCAF, 2008); Kristin Valasek, “Gender and Democratic Security Governance” in *Public Oversight of the Security Sector: A Handbook for Civil Society Organizations*, ed. Eden Cole, Kerstin Eppert and Katrin Kinzelbach, 209–34 (Geneva: UNDP, 2008); and UNIFEM, *Gender Sensitive Police Reform in Post Conflict Societies*, Policy Briefing Paper (New York: UNDP & UNIFEM, 2007).

6 The Liberian National Police has a quota of 20 per cent female representation.

this regard requires identifying women's specific needs, such as language and literacy training, investing in programs that address those needs and then ensuring that women can and do participate in them.

Positive female role models — such as women with successful career trajectories in policing, whether they are locals or foreign nationals — go a long way to encouraging women to consider policing as a long-term career. Indeed, the increase in female recruitment into the Liberia National Police following the arrival of an all-women police unit from India working under the auspices of the UN Mission in Liberia demonstrates the powerful impact that role models can have.⁷ Ensuring retention of new recruits can sometimes be even more challenging than encouraging them to join the police in the first place. In this regard, it is equally important that qualified female personnel are appointed to positions of responsibility and put in decision-making roles, demonstrating that policing for women can involve promotion and professional development. Such appointments are useful in terms of addressing the gender imbalance as well as contributing to a more positive environment for female staff and a potentially more receptive one for gender mainstreaming.

Female police officers are also crucial to the operational effectiveness of a police service as they are often able to interact more closely with other women than are men due to social and cultural restrictions. This improved access can be useful in a variety of ways, including gathering information from women and searching female suspects. For example, most cultures would not allow a man to conduct a physical search of a woman; however, female police officers are able to do so without hesitation. Indeed, this social taboo has, at times, been exploited by men wishing to pass undetected by all-male police units: in Afghanistan, Taliban members have been identified dressing as women to pass through police checkpoints staffed only by men.⁸ Moreover, women are often more adept at defusing tense situations before they escalate into violence and negotiating peaceful resolutions to disputes, valuable skills that contribute to re-establishing a culture of peace in the aftermath of armed conflict.

However, integrating a gender perspective into policing is not simply about improved numbers of women in the service. It is also about creating and implementing a range of gender-sensitive policies and practices. The development and implementation of a police-specific gender policy that outlines strategies and tools, rules and regulations for improving the gender sensitivity of the police is an important step. In particular, police gender policies should

7 UNIFEM, *Gender Sensitive Police Reform in Post Conflict Societies*, 2.

8 Kristin Valasek, "Security Sector Reform and Gender," in *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit*, ed. Bastick and Valasek, 1.

recognize and address the differences in experiences between male and female police officers. Policies such as sexual harassment, discrimination, maternity and paternity leave and the like should be addressed in the gender policy, or guided by it if they appear in other regulatory documents. Gender-sensitive policies should apply not only to how police officers interact with each other, but also how they interact with the public that they serve. Addressing that particular dynamic may involve the development of new institutions within the police to better serve vulnerable populations. Liberia's Women and Children Protection Section and Sudan's Special Protection Unit for women and children are examples of gender-sensitive institutions established within the police.

In developing gender policies, consultation with those directly involved — including members of the public — is important, not least of all to ensure that new regulations, programs and institutions respond to their specific needs. As mentioned, not only are women and other marginalized groups often excluded from these discussions at the highest levels internationally, they are often left out of such conversations at the national level as well.

Privileging the Voices of Women in Developing Countries

To create secure environments for all community members, police services must understand the different social roles that community members practise and thus their different security needs. Soliciting those different community-level perspectives can be efficiently done through consultation with engaged civil society organizations, such as community security associations, women's rights defenders or men's organizations. On the other hand, in order to ensure effective police reform — which, as argued, integrates a gender perspective involving gender balancing and gender mainstreaming — police services and other stakeholders must also solicit the perspectives of their female staff members.

By focusing on women members of civil society organizations (CSOs) actively engaged with security issues as well as female police officers, we are able to understand the security and police reform priorities of some of the most vulnerable populations and to shed light on the impact of existing reform processes on women within the police service. Analyzing these women's responses allows us to identify what the security concerns are, in a first instance, and what some vulnerable populations prioritize in terms of responding to insecurity. Such analysis also involves identifying which policies and programs are contributing to greater security for all community members, which policies

and programs are successfully supporting gender-sensitive police reform and which could be improved with a view to creating a more effective, accountable police service and contributing to the consolidation of a sustainable peace in conflict-affected communities. For example, the recruitment quota and lowered educational standard for women established by the Liberia National Police (LNP) was successful in that it was able to increase the participation of women in the police service quite quickly, but interlocutors from all corners told us that the unexpected consequences of the policy are now obstructing women from fully realizing their potential within the LNP.

In many post-conflict countries where capacity may be low, national governments and the donors supporting them often turn to international experts. While drawing on the expertise of gender specialists and advisors working for international organizations may seem a more efficient route, they are no substitute for speaking directly with local populations and can often lead to the development of parallel systems and unnecessary overlap.⁹ Moreover, such engagement at the community level (and, here, I would include policewomen as a community), helps to develop a greater sense of legitimacy vis-à-vis the reform process. It helps to realize the principle of local ownership, while at the same time establishing a forum for dialogue between communities and policing authorities and/or the government, both essential for building the trust that is lacking in most post-conflict countries. Indeed, in both Liberia and Southern Sudan, the lack of trust between the community members and the police expressed to us by the participants in all our focus groups was striking. In both situations, the policewomen claimed that they did not trust the community members and the civil society organizations lamented that they neither trusted nor received the appropriate level of respect from the police.

The approach in our project (detailed in the next section) was to solicit input from engaged actors “on both sides of the thin blue line” — CSO representatives and female police officers. In so doing, we were able to take advantage of their unique positions to gain insight into both the challenges and opportunities faced by each group as they interact with reform processes surrounding the LNP and the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS). We were also able to solicit feedback on the reform processes themselves and better understand their strengths and weaknesses, particularly from a gender perspective and the impact the reforms are having on specific groups of women. Of particular interest was the empathy demonstrated by many of our female interlocutors during the focus group discussions with both CSOs and policewomen. By this I mean the ability of these women to put

9 Mark Baird, “Service Delivery in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States,” World Development Report 2011 Background Paper (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010), 29.

themselves in the other's shoes and comment on the challenges faced by their counterparts in the community and the police services. While this certainly was not a constant frame of reference for all interlocutors, on issues of sexual harassment, livelihoods and police salaries, women on both sides of policing provided insight into the other women's experience. Perspectives such as these that our focus group participants shared with us provide an invaluable look into the lived experiences of women going through the day-to-day process of police reform. As discussed in the next section, these insights are being used to fill a gap in national and international debates as well as contribute to the formulation of better policy at the national, bilateral and multilateral levels.

The Research Project

The research presented in this volume seeks to contribute to remedying the paucity of women's voices in national and international debates on SSR by drawing on their experiences in conflict-affected and developing countries in two contexts: Liberia and Southern Sudan. It focuses on the security sector institution which has the most direct and regular contact with the public, and thus with women: the police. It also privileges the voices and experiences of women on both sides of the thin blue line: civil society activists engaged on security and women's rights issues in addition to female police officers.

The work presented in this book comes out of a year-long project led by Jennifer Erin Salahub of The North-South Institute (NSI), Ottawa, Canada, in partnership with Victoria Matatio Elia Guli, a Sudanese lecturer based at the Centre for Peace and Development Studies (CPDS) at the University of Juba, Sudan, and Caroline Bowah, a Liberian independent consultant, based in Monrovia, Liberia. It builds on previous work by NSI and developing-country partners on democratic police reform in Burundi, Haiti and Southern Sudan,¹⁰ as well as work on the gender dimensions of access to justice¹¹ and security sector reform.¹²

Case selection for this project was relatively straightforward. Only a handful of countries are actively implementing post-conflict police reform processes and for a variety of reasons, including existing expertise, established relationships

10 See project outputs for "Security Sector Reform, the Responsibility to Protect and Peacebuilding in Burundi, Haiti and South Sudan: A Research, Policy Dialogue and Capacity-Building Project," 2006–9, www.nsi-ins.ca/english/research/progress/54.asp.

11 See "Access and Action: Monitoring Gender (Un)Equal Access to Justice and Public Security in Fragile States," 2008–10, www.nsi-ins.ca/english/research/progress/52.asp.

12 Jennifer Erin Salahub and Krista Nerland, "Just Add Gender: Challenges to Meaningful Integration of Gender in SSR Policy and Practice," in *The Future of SSR*, ed. Mark Sedra, 263–80 (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2010).

and resource constraints, we settled on two cases. The choice of Southern Sudan and Liberia was made, in the case of the former, to build on the existing work of NSI and CPDS as well as investigate a case in which post-conflict police reform — let alone gender-sensitive police reform — is very much still a work-in-progress; in the case of Liberia, we sought to provide an example of a country making a concerted effort and having some success in integrating a gender perspective into its post-conflict police reform processes. Ultimately, we chose these cases with a view to drawing more concrete lessons learned from Liberia for potential application in Southern Sudan and other contexts as well as to begin to fill the gap in the literature on the gender dimensions of security sector reform in Southern Sudan.

The primary research consisting of semi-structured interviews and focus groups was conducted in Monrovia and Juba in May 2010. While the project was conceived and led by NSI, the development of interview and focus group questions was a joint exercise; the interviews and focus groups were also jointly led, for the most part.¹³ The preliminary results of our in-country research were presented at a roundtable event in Ottawa in September 2010, which brought together researchers from Canada, Liberia and Southern Sudan, Liberian and Southern Sudanese policewomen, Government of Canada policymakers and civil society stakeholders.¹⁴ Input from the roundtable has helped to frame the development of these chapters and is specifically woven into the concluding chapter at the end of the book.

The Case Studies

Our two case studies document the experiences of women in civil society and the police, identify the similarities and differences of their experiences and analyze the results to identify lessons learned. In chapter 2, the Liberian case, Caroline Bowah and I explore the process of LNP reform, documenting the efforts at gender sensitivity and their impact on Liberian women. We highlight the insights shared by our focus group participants and grapple with the challenges they — and other interlocutors — see for the future of the LNP. We also draw out important lessons learned for other police services and draw attention to issues that are currently being overlooked,

13 Some interviews were conducted over the phone, via email or after J. Salahub's departure from field locations and thus led by only one researcher.

14 "At the Margins of SSR: Gender and Informal Justice" co-hosted by The North-South Institute and the Centre for International Governance Innovation, September 23, 2010, Ottawa. For more information, see www.nsi-ins.ca/english/research/progress/80.asp.

such as retention and promotion issues for women police officers and the situation of spouses — often wives and widows — of police officers.

In chapter 3, Victoria Matatio Elia Guli and I shed light on the unexpectedly large number of women in the SSPS who are there as a result of a transfer from the former guerrilla Sudan People's Liberation Army. We explore the implications of the absence of a dedicated gender policy in the SSPS on women inside and outside the police service, drawing on the insights shared by focus group participants. We also note the instances of gender-sensitive progress being made by the SSPS despite lacking a gender policy. We close by drawing on our data to identify the main gaps and challenges faced by the SSPS, the Government of Southern Sudan and their international supporters in integrating a gender perspective into police reform in Southern Sudan.

The final chapter analyzes the results of the case studies in a comparative context and identifies lessons learned and enduring gaps in knowledge and policy. It shows that while women's experiences differ across contexts (even within the same country), they share many of the same perspectives and experiences. It also demonstrates that crucial gaps exist in police reform processes, many of which affect not only women, but also men. Finally, we offer suggestions for how different national and international actors might begin to address those gaps through targeted policy recommendations.



Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

Map No. 3775 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS
October 2010



Liberia National Police graduation ceremony.

UN Photo: Christopher Herwig

2

WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON POLICE REFORM IN LIBERIA: PRIVILEGING THE VOICES OF LIBERIAN POLICEWOMEN AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Caroline Bowah and Jennifer Erin Salahub

Introduction

Holistic security sector reform has evolved from theory into practice over the past decade with varying degrees of success. Efforts have been made to transform security sector institutions so that they behave in ways that are consistent with democratic norms and principles of good governance.¹ Security sector reform (SSR) is designed to build or rebuild state security and justice institutions, such as the police, military and corrections services, so that they provide people with effective and efficient services within a state and human security framework. Global debates

¹ OECD, *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice* (Paris: OECD, 2007), 20.

about how best to define, design and implement this reform have become more inclusive in recent years, but certain key groups remain marginalized. Significantly, women living in developing and conflict-affected countries where SSR is ongoing are often excluded from high-level political discussions about priorities and the order in which they are addressed. This chapter — and its following partner chapter on Southern Sudan — will help to address that exclusion. In it we discuss ways to develop a professional police service that is sensitive to women’s different experiences and needs and to the unique contributions they can make in developing effective, accountable police services.

While women are still often absent or under-represented in peace and security efforts, many international documents underscore the importance and value of their participation, such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) on women, peace and security.² UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), among other texts, identifies specific measures that states and their development partners can take to address the concerns of women and girls. As the secretary general of the Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, noted, echoing the sentiments of many others around the world, “In order to be successful and sustainable, all efforts to manage conflict and to establish long-term stability and peace require the inclusion of women and men on an equal basis.”³

In states recovering from undemocratic rule and armed conflict, where social institutions have also been victims of instability, SSR is an important step toward re-establishing the legitimacy of the state and its institutions as well as consolidating the rule of law. Because the police are in daily contact with local populations, police reform is a vital step in creating a stable environment at the community level in which men and women feel safe, are able to fully realize their human rights and can contribute to the development of their society.⁴ Policing and the re-establishment of security at the community level are particularly important. In places such as Liberia, a country fractured by the legacies of civil war compounded with general volatility in a region

2 UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) all deal with different aspects of women, peace and security. Together, they reinforce and expand on UNSCR 1325, which was the first UNSCR to specifically address and recognize the different experiences of women during armed conflict and recovery from conflict.

3 OSCE, “Press Release: Gender and Comprehensive Security in Focus at Annual OSCE, UN and Council of Europe Meeting,” 2010, www.osce.org/item/44514.html (accessed October 4, 2010).

4 Many and varied traditional and customary justice and security providers exist alongside these government institutions, though they are not the focus of this work.

emerging from conflict, the challenges of reconstruction and democratic development are particularly acute.

Liberia has recently suffered through an extended period of undemocratic rule and one of the world's bloodiest civil wars. During the civil conflict, gross human rights violations were committed by both state and non-state armed forces, resulting in the loss of over 250,000 lives. Sexual violence targeting women and girls became common, a pattern that continues to this day. Many men and boys were also victims of the brutality of Liberia's civil war as they were kidnapped from their families and forced into military service, and were frequently victims of gender-based violence themselves.⁵ As national security institutions became factionalized and unaccountable, ordinary citizens lost confidence in their army, police and other statutory organizations. The different experiences of men and women during Liberia's civil war and the lasting consequences of those differences on today's Liberia show the importance of including women and gender-sensitive policies and processes in SSR activities that are largely led by men.⁶

Currently, Liberia's various security institutions are being reformed. The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), the Liberia National Police (LNP), and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, among others, are undergoing a professionalization and modernization process that was codified in the August 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed at Accra, Ghana.⁷ Parties to the CPA recognized and acknowledged the problems with security agencies and mandated their reform. Specifically, Article IV of the CPA called for reform of the security sector. The CPA was strengthened in this regard by UNSCR 1509, which created the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and directs the mission to support the reform of the security sector. This includes assisting "the transitional government of Liberia in monitoring and

⁵ For more on Liberia's civil war (and particularly its impact on women and girls), see, for example: Amnesty International, "Liberia: A flawed Post-war Process Discriminates against Women and Girls," 2008, www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR34/004/2008/en; or Fatoumata Aisha, "Mainstreaming Gender in Peace Support Operations: The United Nations Mission in Liberia," in *A Tortuous Road to Peace: The Dynamics of Regional, UN and International Humanitarian Interventions in Liberia*, ed. Festus Aboagye and Alhaji M.S. Bah (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2004).

⁶ The voices and experiences of marginalized men are equally excluded from the SSR discourse, but a thorough discussion of those specific challenges and dynamics is beyond the scope of this chapter.

⁷ See Articles VII and VIII of the CPA. No timeline is specified for SSR beyond that it shall begin within thirty days of the establishment of the transitional government. Republic of Liberia. Comprehensive Peace Agreement Between the Government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Political Parties, August 18, 2003, http://www.usip.org/files/file/resources/collections/peace_agreements/liberia_08182003.pdf, (accessed December 22, 2010).

restructuring the police force of Liberia, consistent with democratic policing, to develop a civilian police training programme, and to otherwise assist in the training of civilian police.”⁸ The call for SSR in the CPA is further reinforced and operationalized in important documents which were developed through nationally led processes. These include Liberia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy: Pillar One — Consolidating Peace and Security (2008), which has a subsection on Restructuring and Reforming Security Institutions; the National Security Strategy for the Republic of Liberia (2008–11); and, most recently, Liberia’s 2009 National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325, which specifically addresses the question of SSR in Liberia and sets out goals, outputs, indicators and activities for various security sector institutions, including the police.

In this chapter we describe the reform of the Liberia National Police in general before focusing in on the gender dimensions of that process. We discuss and evaluate current initiatives, including new structures and systems and especially efforts to integrate a gender perspective into the reform process. We then move on to look at the experiences of police reform of Liberian women working in civil society and in the LNP. The perspectives of those a few steps removed from the technical process — legislators and international actors — are also included. As well, we identify challenges and gaps that remain, preventing the full integration of a gender perspective in LNP reform. From these observations we make recommendations for the LNP and its partners, and draw lessons for other countries from the LNP’s experiences. (Recommendations and lessons learned are summarized with those for Southern Sudan in the concluding chapter of this book.)

Methods

Primary semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, two three-hour focus group discussions and secondary literature are our main sources of data for this chapter. Interviews and the two focus groups were held in Monrovia in May 2010. The authors are two female researchers, one Liberian and based in Monrovia, the other Canadian and based in Ottawa, Canada; while the project was conceived and led by The North-South Institute, both researchers worked together toward its realization including developing questions and identifying interview and focus group participants.

A total of sixteen people were interviewed, ranging from civil society leaders to members of the Liberian Senate to representatives of donor agencies

8 UN Security Council, Resolution 1509, S/RES/1509, 2003: 4.

active in peace, security and justice issues in the country.⁹ Participants were selected based on their organizations' direct or indirect interactions with the LNP and on their knowledge and understanding of the reform process in the country. The focus group for civil society organizations (CSOs) drew participants from a number of different organizations including Community Policing Forums (CPFs, described below), rural women's organizations and organizations working for women's rights and giving support to survivors of violence against women. Fifteen individuals participated in the focus group, representing nine different CSOs, eight of them dedicated in whole or in part to addressing specific women's rights or security issues. While the vast majority of participants were women, the CPFs nominated two men to participate in the discussion. In our opinion, this did not significantly alter the tone of the conversation. Many of the women were strong and vocal advocates for their organizations and their perspectives; however, we must recognize the impact, no matter how small, that a male presence may have had on the openness and frankness of the discussion. The second focus group consisted entirely of female LNP officers. Twenty policewomen participated, and it was coordinated with the assistance of the Liberia National Law Enforcement Association (LINLEA), a professional organization.

While the interviews followed a common set of open-ended questions, we asked focus groups additional questions specific to the participants.¹⁰ Focus groups were held entirely in plenary and began with ice breakers followed by general questions regarding their knowledge and understanding of the LNP, its structure and the reform process to date. Particular attention was paid to the situation of women in the LNP and the integration of a gender perspective into the reform process.

The LNP focus group then moved on to discussions specific to the women present, asking why they joined the LNP and what their experiences have been with it and with the reform process. That conversation was followed by questions about the successes and challenges of LNP reform so far and its integration of a gender perspective to date. We closed the session by asking participants to identify any gaps they saw in the reform process, particularly gaps in gender-sensitive initiatives, and whether they had any specific recommendations.

With the civil society focus group, participants were asked to describe how their organizations interact with the LNP as well as their experiences working with the police, including any gender differences they identified. The session

⁹ Because of the sensitivity of the topic, we have kept our sources anonymous.

¹⁰ Further information on the questions or the focus groups is available from the authors via jsalahub@nsi-ins.ca.

closed with participants being asked about how the reforms are impacting the police and the community and for their suggestions as to how a gender perspective could be better integrated into LNP reform.

Reform of the Liberia National Police

The reform of the LNP actively began in 2004 with a deactivation exercise which was led primarily by the UN Mission in Liberia. This exercise was intended to remove all unqualified officers from the organization by dismissing all LNP staff from their positions and asking them to reapply to the police service along with new recruits. Basic criteria such as a minimum level of education and physical fitness as well as a maximum age limit were applied in determining if individuals were eligible for recruitment. Through this exercise, however, the LNP lost many qualified men and women who became dissatisfied with the process and refused to be recruited as new officers; they felt that they were already qualified.¹¹ As both CSO and LNP focus group participants told us, this loss of well-qualified personnel has affected the performance of the LNP, since most of the new officers lacked the requisite skills and, in particular, valuable policing experience.

Having rejected those officers who did not meet the requirements that were set for recruitment, the LNP and UNMIL were then keen to screen candidates for human rights violations. Recruiting young men and women innocent of such crimes was not an easy task in a country where gross human rights abuses had been committed by all warring factions.¹² Efforts were made to scrutinize the candidates before entry into the service, but the process faced a number of limitations, not least of which was the high illiteracy rate among both women and men, which endures today. For example, only the names of new recruits were placed in the newspapers as part of the vetting exercise. Because no further identifiers or photographs were provided, it was difficult for community members to positively identify an individual. Exacerbating this challenge was the fact that during the war, rebels often used aliases so people knew them only by their faces and aliases and not by their given names. This made it difficult for individuals to scrutinize recruits appropriately and provide reliable feedback on their wartime activities. With limitations such as this, which were not experienced by the Armed Forces of

¹¹ There was also discontent over the severance package offered. The officers claimed that the amount given them was not commensurate with their years of service.

¹² Republic of Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Volume One: Preliminary Findings and Determinations* (Monrovia: Republic of Liberia, 2009), 5.

Liberia, for example,¹³ we can conclude that the vetting exercise of the LNP was not as rigorous and thorough as that of other institutions.

Just as in other countries where the security sector has been reformed, a change in the name of key organizations signalled a break with the past and a renewed commitment to professionalism. Rebranding state institutions in this way is intended to facilitate positive public perceptions of organizations whose previous incarnations may have been viewed negatively, often with good reason. In Liberia, the Liberia National Police Force was renamed the Liberia National Police. The word “Force” had come to be viewed negatively, particularly in light of the involvement of state security representatives in the conflict and their brutal treatment of civilians.

The new service faces many challenges, not least of all logistical. Like other government agencies, the police faces the challenge of limited physical resources, such as fuel and vehicles. This lack of transportation severely impacts its ability to move about the country to respond to calls from various communities. The LNP’s limited presence in rural areas further limits its ability to respond to complaints and contribute to the establishment of the rule of law across the country’s territory. Resource challenges extend from the macro- to the micro-level when it comes to evidence collection and storage. Important evidence, which would later be presented in court, may be lost because of inadequate resources, improper training or poor implementation of procedure. Such constraints are further exacerbated by interference from the public and political elites seeking to influence a case by tainting or destroying evidence, thereby limiting the free functioning of the organization.¹⁴ Finally, the LNP suffers from a chronic lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation, without which it is unable to substantively measure its progress on issues such as the implementation of its gender policy, a crucial weakness in terms of its ability to account for its actions.

Administratively, the new LNP falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). This ministry is charged with executing the legal functions of the Republic of Liberia and handling all legal matters deemed to be in the interest of the government and the nation. It is responsible for enforcing the laws of Liberia and protecting both life and property. The justice minister, who serves as the attorney general of the Republic, is also

13 The AFL’s vetting exercise included both names and photos of new recruits. These were published in local dailies and an address was provided to community members if they had a complaint or information about a particular recruit. This process facilitated the identification of individuals with problematic records.

14 Interview with a senior public servant at the Ministry of National Security, Monrovia, May 2010.

responsible for the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, the National Fire Service, the National Police Training Academy, and the National Palace of Correction (maximum-security prison), among other institutions. The ministry serves as an oversight body for security agencies, including the LNP, particularly through its assistance with developing budgets. These responsibilities, however, may be based more in legal texts than in practice.¹⁵

The LNP is headed by an inspector general who is assisted by two deputies, each responsible for one of Administration and Operations. In turn, the deputy directors are assisted by four commissioners for Administration and Professional Standards, Training and Development, Crime Services, and Operations. A Press and Public Affairs Division has also been created to disseminate information about the LNP to the public. At lower levels, the LNP has regional offices led by commanders in all fifteen counties¹⁶ within the country. As well as these sections, a number of new structures have been set up through the reform process. Key among the new structures are the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS), the Gender Affairs Section (both discussed below), the Community Policing Section (CPS) and the Professional Standards Division (PSD). (See figure 1 for the LNP organogram.)

The PSD's role is to guarantee LNP professionalism, create an effective mechanism for reporting and responding to allegations of police misconduct and improve the efficiency and discipline of the LNP across the country. The division is divided into three sections: Internal Affairs; Public Complaints; and Inspections and Control, which handles internal audits and inspections and makes recommendations for improving LNP behaviour and discipline. Together these sections are responsible for processing and investigating complaints alleging LNP misconduct; managing and administering LNP rules, regulations, policies and procedures and ensuring they are disseminated appropriately; and reporting to senior management on its activities and any disciplinary cases.¹⁷

In 2009, the LNP along with UNMIL and other development partners drafted a five-year strategic plan for the police service. The plan was developed in line with Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and National Security Strategy (NSSRL).¹⁸ The plan focuses on institutional and capacity

¹⁵ Thomas Jaye, *Liberia: Parliamentary Oversight and Lessons Learned from Internationalized Security Sector Reform* (New York: Centre on International Cooperation, 2009), 6–13.

¹⁶ Main political subdivisions of the country.

¹⁷ Liberia National Police, *Professional Standards Division Policy and Procedure* (Monrovia: LNP, 2005).

¹⁸ The PRS is a three-pillared national development plan; security is the first pillar, identifying objectives for creating a secure and peaceful environment. Similarly, the NSSRL supports the

Figure 1. Structure of the Liberia National Police



strengthening, operational and logistical support, and infrastructure development. It should serve as a framework for further reform of the police service in the near future and as a specific tool to which Liberia's development partners can attach funding.

Community Policing

The CPS was created in 2005 and is housed within LNP headquarters. It uses a community policing model which promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnership and a problem-solving approach to public safety issues. Rather than maintaining distance and reinforcing a top-down authority, community policing seeks to improve police–community relations and identify ways the police and community members can work together to create a safer public environment.¹⁹ As such, it serves as a liaison between the LNP proper and a national network of civilian Community Policing Forums.

The CPFs are headed by a chairperson and staffed with civilian “officers,” drawn from the community at large; they also have an LNP representative from the local police depot.²⁰ CPF branches and chapters exist throughout Liberia. CPFs act as a neighbourhood watch team within their community and work alongside the LNP by alerting officers of crimes within the community. One focus group participant described the relationship and exchange of information between the LNP and CPF as a two-way street. Another suggested that the CPFs serve as the community-level “eyes and ears” of the police.

There are about three hundred Community Policing Forums across the country. As reported by CPF representatives in our focus groups, the forums in different regions have had varying degrees of success. The most effective CPFs are mainly those situated around Monrovia, the capital city, because of the limited presence of LNP officers in rural areas and because the concept is still relatively new to Liberia.²¹ Much needs to be done to communicate

PRS and outlines priority actions related to peace and security along with outlining an implementation plan.

19 Jessica Anderson, “Community Policing — Working Together to Prevent Crime,” paper presented at the International Conference on Engaging Communities (Brisbane, August 14–17, 2005), www.engagingcommunities2005.org/abstracts/Anderson-Jessica-final.pdf.

20 Interview with a senior public servant at the Ministry of National Security, Monrovia, May 2010.

21 While CPFs and community policing are relatively novel concepts in Liberia, they — and similar structures such as neighbourhood watch associations — are certainly well established in other countries. The closest and strongest example of robust CPFs in Africa seems to be the South African experience where CPFs were institutionalized in the 1993 interim constitution. For a brief background, see City of Johannesburg, “Community Policing Forums,” 2010, www.joburg.org.

the work of the CPF and its relationship with the LNP and to explain the roles that community members must play to move the forum out into rural communities and make its work there more effective.

Bringing a Gender Face to the LNP: The Gender Policy

In November 2004, the Liberia National Police introduced a gender policy as advised by the International Police Service (CIVPOL) of the UN Mission in Liberia. The policy seeks to integrate a gender-sensitive perspective into all policing activities and, through a specified framework, correct the gender imbalance within the LNP. The policy recognizes existing gender discrepancies and the low representation of women in the service. It mandates equal opportunity for recruitment of women into the police and recommends a target of 20 per cent female participation. It seeks to ensure increased participation of women at decision-making levels within the police service, a strategy designed, in part, to overcome the traditional placement of women in predominantly administrative positions.²² It further seeks to establish gender-responsive recruitment practices and to develop an outreach and information dissemination strategy about opportunities for women in the LNP. Among other goals, the policy stipulates the implementation of regulations, procedures and practices necessary for the protection of women in the police when faced with sexual or gender bias.

Gender discrimination, however, is not the only challenge many women face when seeking a career in policing in Liberia. Indeed, low levels of education among women are a serious obstacle to both entering the LNP and being promoted. As a way of addressing the gender disparities of access to and the inadequacies in training and educational opportunities, the LNP has been mandated to take affirmative action in favour of women where necessary. In response to the 20 per cent female participation target, the police established a 20 per cent quota system for recruitment as part of a strong drive to bring more women into the police. The drive has been quite successful, bringing female representation in the LNP to about 16–17 per cent today,²³

za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=88&Itemid=75 (accessed November 1, 2010). For a more analytical review, see Eric Pelsler, "The Challenges of Community Policing in South Africa," Occasional Paper 42 (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, September 1999). For more detail on the history of the CPFs in Liberia (and an interesting comparison with parallel processes in Southern Sudan), see: Bruce Baker, "A Policing Partnership for Post-war Africa? Lessons from Liberia and Southern Sudan," *Policing and Society*, 19.4 (December 2009), 372 – 389.

²² To paraphrase one policewoman, the policy helps to ensure that women police officers aren't just "sexytaries."

²³ Interview with UNMIL Gender section representative, Monrovia, May 2010.

up from only 5 per cent in 2007.²⁴ However, recruiting qualified women has proven challenging. In response to this problem, the standards and criteria for women's recruitment — particularly regarding education — were lowered to allow more women to qualify, thereby bolstering their numbers. A special accelerated training program for women who were recruited under the lowered requirements was organized at the Mother Pattern College of Health Sciences. Since many of the applicants were not high school graduates — some having dropped out, others still in school, but not yet graduated — the program was intended to bring them up to the educational level of their peers.

Progress has also been made in placing women in senior positions. For the first time in its history, the LNP was led by a female director and a female deputy director.²⁵ Both Director Col. Beatrice Munah Sieh Browne and Deputy Director Col. Asatu Bah Kenneth were appointed in 2006, shortly after the inauguration of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as president. Both women served two-year terms, 2006 to 2008. While many other of their female colleagues now hold senior positions in the LNP, the two appointments represent the only women to have reached the senior-most decision-making positions in the service. Notwithstanding this, the appointments are strategically important in both legitimizing women's capacity to take on senior roles and in serving as role models for others.

The gender policy also addresses gender balance in promotion, particularly to decision-making positions, and is sensitive to women's particular situations — such as family or child care responsibilities — when they are being transferred from one post to another. While the policy is being implemented across the LNP, few if any mechanisms exist to monitor its progress and impact or to allow course-corrections as needed.

Finally, the LNP Training Academy plays an important role in developing the gender analysis capacity of police officers and in disseminating information, particularly regarding gender issues. All new LNP recruits take mandatory courses in gender issues. While the courses were largely taught by UN personnel in the early days of the LNP's redevelopment, increasingly, LNP personnel are gradually taking over responsibility for instruction on gender issues. This change demonstrates the growing capacity of the LNP to implement its own

24 Hilary Brown, "Female Police in Liberia Hope to Empower Women," ABCNews.com/Good Morning America, May 16, 2007, <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=3179392> (accessed October 27, 2010).

25 It should be noted that in the past a woman has served as director of the LNP, but not at the same time as a female deputy director.

gender policy. Further evidence of this is the creation of new institutions and links to other government departments under the auspices of the gender policy.

Gender Affairs Section

In March 2008, to better support, monitor, advise and report on the implementation of the LNP Gender Policy, a Gender Affairs Section was established under the responsibility of the deputy inspector general for Administration. In addition to supporting the LNP, this section liaises with the Ministry of Gender and Development and serves as the ministry's gender focal point within the LNP. As part of its mandate to ensure the full implementation of the LNP's gender policy, the Gender Affairs Section also handles internal complaints of sexual harassment by LNP officers.²⁶

Women and Children Protection Section

The Women and Children Protection Section was established in September 2005 within the LNP to address particular problems faced by women and children. The WACPS is charged with investigating all sexual offences and offences related to domestic violence and family matters, such as persistent non-support.²⁷ It is also charged with investigating claims of gender-based violence committed by police officers. This section works with women's organizations and associations within various security agencies to advocate for equality between women and men and to promote positive role models of women as partners rather than as sexual objects or subservient to men. The creation of the WACPS represents the first time that a special section has been established within the LNP to address such matters. The WACPS ensures that women's and children's concerns are channelled in a more organized manner and facilitates their access to justice.

The WACPS is staffed by about two hundred LNP officers who attend approximately one month of additional, specialized training. Through the training, officers learn how to deal appropriately and sensitively with sexual offences cases, how to make referrals for support and other skills, such as how to properly collect and protect delicate evidence such as victims' clothing.

According to WACPS staff, they receive up to four new cases a day. Most of the cases originate in the country's most populated areas and are often

26 Cecil Griffiths, "Liberia Country Profile," in *Gender Survey of Security Sector Reform Institutions in ECOWAS Countries*, ed. Kristin Valasek and Jean Jacques Purusi with Miranda Gaanderse (Geneva: DCAF, forthcoming 2011).

27 The phenomenon of absent parents — often fathers — not providing for their children, colloquially called "deadbeat dads" in North America, is known in Liberia as "persistent non-support."

characterized by social links between the accused and the survivor. For example, in most sexual offence cases, family members are associated with the criminal act. The WACPS appears to be having some success in raising awareness of the issues it deals with. In particular, and demonstrated by the number of cases the unit receives regularly, the public is beginning to take such matters more seriously. As public awareness of the WACPS and its work grows, members of the public are identifying cases that should be referred to the WACPS and contacting the section directly.²⁸ Notwithstanding these improvements, the WACPS faces several challenges, including resource and logistics constraints — such as limited access to vehicles to assist with investigations — and limited funding.

Links to Other Security and Justice Institutions

One of the WACPS' responsibilities is to work closely with the justice system. The WACPS investigates cases, collects evidence and arrests alleged criminals. When the WACPS completes its investigation of a criminal case — such as rape — it refers the case to a special court for trial. Special Court E was established in 2008 in response to the increase in sexual violence in the country and the slow movement of cases through Liberia's existing court system.²⁹ Initiated by the Government of Liberia and supported by the UN Population Fund and the Government of Denmark, the special court deals specifically with cases relating to sexual and gender-based violence. In particular, the court has the capacity to hold in-camera trials, allowing the identity of survivors and witnesses to be protected. Moreover, the court's establishment is being used as an opportunity to develop the capacity of legal professionals and court officials in the treatment of sexual and gender-based violence cases.³⁰ The court is currently under the leadership of a woman, Counsellor Felicia Coleman.

Apart from the LNP and Special Court E, other statutory departments and agencies are mainstreaming gender into their reform processes. Currently, the Armed Forces of Liberia has been able to recruit and train enough women to make up about 3–4 per cent of its force, though clearly much more work needs to be done. Moreover, the Ministry of Gender and Development has taken an active role in supporting activities aimed at integrating a gender perspective into the SSR process, and all ministries have established gender

28 Interview with senior WACPS staff member, Monrovia, May 2010.

29 IRIN News, "LIBERIA: Special Court for Sexual Violence Underway," March 21, 2008, www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=77406 (accessed September 10, 2010).

30 United Nations and Republic of Liberia, "Combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Liberia," Stop Rape Now campaign (no date), <http://stoprapenow.org/uploads/features/SGBVemail.pdf> (accessed September 10, 2010).

focal points; some have established gender units and gender-based violence sections. Most important among them to the work of the LNP is the gender unit at the Ministry of Justice, where the minister is responsible for the LNP. Despite the obvious and important links between policing, justice and corrections, links to the corrections system — particularly when it comes to gender issues — remain weak.

The MOJ gender unit was created as part of the broader SSR process and the government's efforts to mainstream gender within the ministry and across government departments. The unit is responsible for catering to the specific challenges of women and children. The unit intervenes to resolve matters such as domestic violence and persistent non-support. Intervention can take the form of facilitating a conference between the parties, particularly in matters of persistent non-support. The unit's track record is quite successful, with most cases being resolved and the parties complying with instructions without court involvement. However, when the unit is unable to help the parties resolve their dispute, the case is referred to the LNP and the courts.³¹

Liberian women can access the justice system in a number of ways. They may take their cases to the Special Court by reporting the matter to the police if the offence is a criminal one, such as rape. Alternatively, they may file a complaint with the MOJ gender unit. Cases move through the justice system as a function of their magnitude, resource constraints and the complainant's point of entry; currently, a daunting backlog of cases exists.

Another of the gender unit's responsibilities is to monitor data on gender-based violence cases. To do so, it maintains offices at the Temple of Justice. Staff visit all the magisterial courts to collect relevant data, such as the location where a crime was committed. Today, most of the cases reported are from within the Monrovia suburbs of Careysburg and New Kru Town. In more rural areas, the unit faces significant challenges in gathering information on cases and in reaching out to communities due to the distances and its lack of resources — such as vehicles — to allow its members to travel. The cases seen by the unit largely involve disadvantaged parents from low-income communities. Most of the victims of sexual offences are minors and the majority of cases continue to involve victims under the age of 15.³² These conditions make survivors and their families extremely vulnerable, particularly to bribes which sometimes come from the accused themselves.

³¹ Interview with MOJ Gender Unit staff members, Monrovia, May 2010.

³² United Nations Security Council, "Twentieth Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia," S/2010/88, 3.

Maintaining a Gender Face: Policewomen's Perspectives on the LNP and Its Reform

Even with these many encouraging signs and the creation of new institutions, many female officers feel that the implementation of the gender policy is "still at the crawling stage," as one focus group discussion participant put it, referring to the challenge of disseminating the details of the policy and turning it from policy to practice. Generating buy-in and ownership of the policy among men is also a work-in-progress, but is beginning to show signs of improvement, according to policewomen participants at our focus group.

While the results of the quota system for female recruits seem to indicate a milestone achievement in promoting a gender-sensitive Liberia National Police, it was not an easy process and has faced many challenges. The lowered standards may have helped many women qualify for a career with the LNP, but this action haunts the women who were recruited under this program and who are now reportedly unable to perform to the level they and their superiors expect. This situation is unsurprising given that the women were offered little remedial training. The accelerated training program mentioned above — which taught basic reading and writing skills — is considered by many to have been insufficient to prepare the women in terms of giving them the education that was required to excel as a police officer. These women's lower academic qualifications are impeding their professional development and their potential for advancement in the LNP. It is also contributing to lowering their self-esteem.

The impact of the gender policy and the gender-sensitive reform process on the recruitment of women to the most senior levels was noted by focus group participants. According to one female LNP officer, women in the LNP became empowered through the reform process and now hold decision-making positions. This impression was shared by many of the LNP focus group participants. Indeed, the senior rank of many of the participants themselves speaks to the heights women in the LNP have reached.³³ That said, considerable room for improvement remains in terms of empowering female LNP officers in decision-making positions when compared with their male counterparts.

Discrimination continues to be a challenge when it comes to training and promotion, in particular. A sense among the respondents is that some positions — such as director of operations — have always been occupied by male LNP officers, and are likely to continue in that vein. Training opportunities for women are also seen as limited. As reported by focus group participants,

33 Of the 20 participants who attended the focus group, none ranked below the level of inspector.

the opportunities to travel abroad for professional development and receive training that is unavailable in Liberia, are few, especially for women.³⁴ Related to this is the serious problem of sexual harassment, a challenge not unique to the LNP. Focus group participants noted that sexual harassment was not being reported despite a policy which has been widely disseminated. This problem continues in part because of confusion over what constitutes sexual harassment, suggesting a need for clarification of the policy. When incidents are reported, the implementation of the policy is haphazard. Some women felt that their careers would suffer if they reported sexual harassment. A claim of sexual harassment is difficult to prove and, once made, female officers would not be taken seriously in their work, note focus group participants. The situation is at its worst when the harassment originates with a superior officer who, it was suggested, would use his position to suppress a woman's claim.

For the policewomen who manage to avoid, meet or overcome the challenges of joining the police and the day-to-day difficulties of being a woman in a male-dominated sector, there are still other obstacles to deciding to make a long-term career of law enforcement. Some of these, such as low and irregular pay or inadequate medical insurance coverage,³⁵ affect both men and women, and some are specific to female officers. For example, social benefits such as maternity leave are encouraging, but need improvement. Currently, pregnant LNP officers are entitled to three months' paid maternity leave; but, this only applies to married women and focus group participants indicate that the regulation is applied inconsistently. Transfer policies are also problematic for female officers who frequently have family obligations and responsibilities that tie them to certain locations. Focus group participants indicate that while policy dictates that no officer can be transferred arbitrarily, little or no support for relocation, housing or transportation is forthcoming from the LNP. Female police officers also indicate that they and their female colleagues face intimidation from the public, a situation which many find challenging as they go about their police work.

Another challenge to retention of female police officers is the attitude of some policewomen themselves. Focus group participants described how, like men, some women were unwilling to accept other female police officers — particularly those who may have entered the service under the lowered educational criteria. The low number of women in the LNP certainly does not help the situation as

34 Not only are women at an educational/prerequisite disadvantage and still face some discrimination within the ranks of the LNP, but there are also few support structures — such as childcare arrangements — to facilitate women being away from home for extended periods of time.

35 Focus group participants noted that the current insurance policy only covers the parts of the body below the neck — injuries to the head are not covered.

positive, successful role models for incoming recruits are in short supply.

If the LNP is to reach and then maintain — or exceed — its commitment to 20 per cent female representation, it must address these issues in a timely manner and with the full support of the Liberian government and Liberia’s partners in development. Options to address this over the short, medium and long terms include investing in girls’ education, offering focused professional development training programs for current female LNP officers (particularly those recruited under the lower standards), and promoting a culture of respect and empowerment for all LNP officers through leadership at the highest levels. Irrespective of the state’s responsibility, Liberia’s police-women are also helping themselves through their professional association, Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA), which advocates for equal participation and treatment of women within the LNP. Given the large membership — around 500 — and the association’s dynamic leaders (some of whom attended the focus group), LIFLEA is sure to play an important advocacy role in the future as well as serving as a source of role models for female officers and women considering law enforcement careers.³⁶

Civil Society Perspectives

Civil society organizations play an important role in holding national institutions and individuals accountable for their actions. Their oversight role contributes positively to the security sector reform process and the development of security institutions that are responsible to a civilian authority. CSOs can also contribute valuable and diverse points of view during the planning stages of SSR, identifying strengths and weaknesses of existing institutions, assisting with vetting, providing training and support and advocating for society’s most vulnerable populations.

In Liberia, it seems that many of these opportunities were not pursued. During our focus group discussion with CSO representatives, they noted that after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, no national consultation was carried out in which the people could have contributed to deciding what kind of security Liberia’s SSR process was meant to create. Indeed, most of the decisions regarding the restructuring of the LNP were made by UNMIL through its Rule of Law Implementation Committee headed by the deputy special representative of the secretary general. The focus group participants went further, to say that there was little consultation with civilians in general and that the vetting process was largely UN-led. Focus group participants noted that they would have preferred a process that was more

³⁶ Griffiths, “Liberia Country Profile.”

nationally oriented to suit the needs on the ground.

In response to the lack of initial consultation, 10 civil society organizations came together in mid-2005 to create the Liberia Security Sector Reform Working Group (LSSRWG). The group comprised pro-democracy organizations, the media, women's organizations, youth organizations, as well as the national law enforcement professional association.³⁷ The International Center for Transitional Justice supported the group's work in an advisory capacity. The LSSRWG seeks to serve as a platform for CSOs regarding SSR; its main objectives include: developing local CSO expertise on SSR and security issues; providing an alternative source of expert opinion on security policies to the government, the legislature, the general public, and others; creating space for dialogue and analysis on SSR and monitoring CSO positions on SSR issues; and monitoring and evaluating Government of Liberia plans on SSR. To date, the working group has had considerable success in achieving its objectives through activities such as public forums with security actors and working with the legislative committees on national security.

In 2006, about three years after the process had begun, CSOs were finally invited to participate in the SSR process through a national consultation led by the Governance Reform Commission. The commission was tasked with developing “a shared vision of national security and a comprehensive national security policy or strategy.”³⁸ With the support of international partners such as the African Security Sector Network and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Liberian CSOs began engaging in this process for the first time and two CSO members — including the LSSRWG — were invited to sit on the committee responsible for drafting the country's national security strategy.

Since space has opened up for CSO involvement in SSR processes, different CSOs have been working with the LNP in a variety of ways. For example, since 2008 the LSSRWG has served as a member of the committee for the security pillar of the national poverty reduction strategy. Through this medium, the group is able to voice the concerns of CSOs on critical issues affecting the reform process. Independent of the LSSRWG, two CSOs have also been playing important support roles to the SSR process in recent years. The Liberia National Law Enforcement Association, a professional association

³⁷ The members include: the Foundation for Human Rights & Democracy, the Liberia Law Enforcement Association, the Center for Democratic Empowerment, the Civic Initiative, the Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia, the Women in Peace Building Network, the Federation of Liberian Youth, the Liberia Action Network on Small Arms, the United Cement, Post and General Workers Union and the Press Union of Liberia.

³⁸ Thomas Jaye, *An Assessment Report on Security Sector Reform in Liberia* (Monrovia: Governance Reform Commission of Liberia, 2006), 2.

of public and private security agencies, provides technical expertise and conducts training on different thematic areas for the LNP. The women's wing of the association is the Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association.

The Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) — a network of women's organizations which is active in most parts of the country — works closely with the LNP in communities on issues including insecurity and rape. It also follows and supports cases until redress is achieved. In some instances, WIPNET assists the LNP by collecting evidence that the police would need to carry out investigations in rape cases. Other CSOs, such as the Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia and the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia, provide training for the LNP on women's rights, how to respond to women's issues and awareness on matters specifically relating to women. Some of the CSOs also support the LNP by intervening in disputes between community members and by helping the parties involved to resolve their disputes peacefully.

Representatives of civil society organizations in Liberia who participated in our focus group discussion were keen to note that the reform process has started to take root since its inception in 2003, but many challenges remain. Participants described how it often continued to be difficult to work with the LNP due to unethical behaviour on the part of officers. Relationships between the police and members of the Community Policing Forums are also sometimes strained. Members of Community Policing Forums, according to focus group participants, feel that their presence is felt as threatening by some LNP officers; LNP officers think CPF members are trying to usurp their roles as police officers. The CPF members present at our focus group suggested that, at times, police actions made them less secure as they worked with the LNP.

CSO participants noted that training has improved and that the LNP's professionalism has increased, though lapses do still occur. Some of this lack of professionalism can be linked to the deactivation process which CSOs claim was quite harmful to police performance. Not only did it result in the loss of trained and experienced officers, but it hurt police morale as some LNP officers also felt humiliated by having to reapply for their jobs. Other challenges can be linked to vetting and training. CSO participants explained that the vetting process was insufficient; the war had only recently ended and many rebel leaders had just taken high-ranking positions in government. This meant many community members did not feel comfortable coming forward with the truth about LNP recruits. Moreover, while all LNP officers have followed the same basic training program, some officers' defensive reactions when questioned by the public suggest that training modules and

practices could be improved.

One of the more positive aspects of training and recruitment, as described by the CSO participants, was the impact of the presence (through UNMIL) of an all-woman formed police unit from India. Recruitment of women into the LNP increased dramatically following the arrival of the Indian contingent. As one interviewee put it, this was a “serious boost to this country when it came to female recruitment.”³⁹ Successful initiatives such as this are noted, but CSOs also recognize that the issues of promotion and retention of women in the police must be given serious attention. Agreeing with their counterparts within the LNP, they note that the lowered standards for female recruits have impacted those officers’ ability to compete for promotions. A low salary scale was identified as a key challenge to encouraging women to remain in the police.

Other challenges noted by the focus group participants include bribery, corruption and indiscipline among the LNP, all of which contribute to making women, in particular, vulnerable. Participants explained that some LNP officers have acted as judge and jury in disputes, with the only evidence being that of a bribe: “You get the money, you win the case.” Focus group participants told us that a male police officer will request cash from a male civilian, but with a female civilian he will request payment in cash or “in kind” — meaning sexual favours — clearly putting women in very unsafe situations. This can be further exacerbated when, for example, some LNP officers are not appropriately identified by their uniform, its patches or their badges. When a victim of corruption, particularly if that victim is a woman who has survived a sexual assault, is then unable to identify the police officer who has assaulted her, and she knows that the LNP will be unable to guarantee her confidentiality as an informant, impunity reigns.⁴⁰ Women are disproportionately vulnerable to these abuses and, in such a context, a democratically accountable security sector is a long way off. Interestingly, at least one participant suggested that the policewomen “are even worse than the men” in some situations of abuse of power. Given the wide-spread perspective that women are generally more immune to corruption than men, this comment suggests further investigation is warranted.

Many focus group participants indicated that the establishment of the Professional Standards Division has contributed to improvements in police professionalism. To increase the PSD’s impact, though, they note that it

³⁹ Interview with representative of the Governance and Economic Management Program (GEMAP), Monrovia, May 2010.

⁴⁰ Focus group participants also told us that criminals are sometimes known to wear police uniforms that they have obtained illegally. This further complicates the situation for a survivor of sexual violence if she is unable even to confidently identify her assailant as a police officer.

needs to be reinforced and its performance measured and evaluated with benchmarks and a monitoring process. Other important challenges for the PSD exist, such as indiscipline — drunkenness, for one — in uniform and summary decision making by the police. These types of behaviours worsen another challenge that CSO participants identified: the lack of trust between the LNP and the communities in which they work. Much of this distrust stems from the challenges already described, but some comes from a perception — valid or not — that the police are engaged in criminal activities.

Legislative Representatives' Perspectives

The Liberian Legislature, comprising the Senate and the House of Representatives, has important oversight responsibilities for the security sector and organizations like the LNP. The legislature's oversight role is exercised mainly through two security committees, one in each house. The committees have strong investigative authority as well as the authority to review any security sector legislation. Importantly, the legislature is also responsible for approving budgets and the Senate must approve all senior security sector staff appointments. While the legislature gains its authority from the constitution, it has yet to exercise the full range of its powers and, in many ways, is limited in its reach due to its capacity.⁴¹

For example, legislators with whom we spoke identified the limited capacity of the committees as a serious obstacle to overseeing Liberian security institutions. As in many countries, legislators assigned to the security committees are not necessarily experts in security sector issues. International institutions such as the African Security Sector Network, King's College London and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces have been providing training to the legislature through initiatives intended to broaden the legislators' knowledge of security issues and strengthen their democratic governance skills. In many places, any remaining capacity gap would be filled by dedicated committee staff which has built expertise in the area. In Liberia, however, committee staff members are assigned to the individual legislators and move with their elected representative when that person is assigned to a new committee. In this way, any expertise and institutional memory gained by a member of the support staff is lost with the rotation of the legislators.⁴²

Legislation poses its own challenges. True, legislation to establish the Liberia National Police Force — dating from 1975 — exists, as does legislation

41 Jaye, *Liberia: Parliamentary Oversight and Lessons Learned*, 9–13.

42 For a detailed account of the structures and challenges of Liberia's legislature and its oversight role in SSR, see Jaye, *Liberia: Parliamentary Oversight and Lessons Learned*, 6–13.

creating a police training academy (1981);⁴³ also true, no new enabling legislation for the Liberia National Police has yet been promulgated. To its credit, the Senate security committee is investigating these issues, though it must coordinate with a busy executive on such legislation. Concerns about the memorandum of understanding between the LNP and UNMIL have also been raised, particularly about the dominant role of the UN, which limited the opportunity for legislators to exercise their powers as articulated in Article 34 of Liberia's Constitution as the reform processes were beginning.

With respect to the integration of a gender perspective or efforts by the LNP to recruit more women, the legislators we spoke with indicated that they were "satisfied" with the LNP's progress. It must be noted that legislators have had much more contact with processes surrounding the reform of the armed forces than with similar LNP processes and could only offer limited insight into the latter.

International Perspectives

While the purpose of this project is to privilege the voices of developing country actors, particularly women whose opinions may not regularly be sought, it is also important to include third-party assessments that can be used for comparative purposes, even if they come with their own biases and agendas. To that end, a number of representatives of international civil society organizations as well as representatives of three donor programs (UNDP, UNMIL and USAID) were interviewed. Some of these representatives are Liberians; however, because they were interviewed in their organizational capacity, they were included in this section rather than elsewhere. Of further note is that five of the eight international interviewees are men.

While the perspectives of the international representatives ranged widely and brought up many important points, they tended to coalesce around a small group of themes. Low capacity, including low literacy levels — particularly among female LNP officers — as well as limited resources (human, financial, material) were common concerns. As discussed, targets for women's participation in the new police service were established, and because Liberian women are generally less educated and privileged than their male counterparts, recruitment standards were lowered. This would not necessarily have been an insurmountable challenge; however, training programs for female cadets were not sufficiently accelerated to ensure that the women were meeting the standard expected of the LNP by senior management or the Liberian public. This led some commentators to suggest that the structure set up women to fail.

⁴³ Thomas Jaye, *Liberia's Security Sector Legislation* (Geneva: DCAF, 2008), 169–73.

Low literacy and low levels of education combined with low salaries and limited resources may be contributing to a negative perception of female police officers among the public, an analysis shared among Liberian civil society and international actors alike. As in many other countries, low salaries, in particular, make police officers vulnerable to corruption and bribery, as one interviewee noted.⁴⁴ This suggestion was supported by an observation that women police officers are also viewed by the public as corrupt (similar to men and somewhat counter-intuitively) and less interested in doing their jobs than men.⁴⁵

Creating the backdrop against which these police–community dynamics are playing out are two interrelated themes that a number of international interlocutors raised: on the one hand, the continuing challenge of integrating a gender perspective (gender mainstreaming) into policing and the links between policing and justice, and on the other hand, the long-term struggle of making Liberian society more gender-equal and the impact that the continued, wide-spread devaluing of women has on policing and justice. For example, two interviewees described a backlash against the WACPS from within the LNP, explaining that the increased funding and attention placed on the section was viewed negatively by other LNP members.⁴⁶ Moreover, when it comes to sexual and gender-based violence, many members of the police and the judiciary “just don’t believe it’s a crime,” despite being aware of Liberian law and international norms. Many Liberians in communities across the country share the same opinion.⁴⁷

This attitude is neither easy nor quick to change and has many negative implications. For instance, survivors of sexual assault including rape are often blamed for what has happened to them.⁴⁸ Survivors are also subject to what amounts to state-sponsored extortion through being required to provide food to their accused attackers in the prison to ensure they are not set free.⁴⁹ When the women can’t pay, or the rights of the accused have been violated by extended pre-trial detention, the prisoners are released, often returning without any warning to the community in which their victims continue to live.⁵⁰

44 Interview with international NGO representative, Monrovia, May 2010.

45 Ibid.

46 Interviews with international NGO representative and donor representative, Monrovia, May 2010.

47 Interviews with international NGO representatives, Monrovia, May 2010.

48 Interview with international NGO representative, Monrovia, May 2010.

49 Interviews with international NGO representatives, Monrovia, May 2010.

50 Ibid.

While these are disturbing situations for the women who live them, at a higher level, they point to challenges faced by the Liberian government and its donor supporters. The challenges are in both mainstreaming gender in a meaningful way throughout statutory processes and in linking police reform with broader reforms in justice, corrections and governance. Our international interlocutors identified other challenges facing the LNP in its efforts to integrate more women and a meaningful gender perspective, including thinking through the sustainability of reforms and other programs when UNMIL ends⁵¹ and how to better support reform “champions” within the security sector institutions.⁵² Indeed, only through Liberian leadership with the support and insight of international actors, such as those interviewed by the authors, will significant progress be made in the short and medium terms.

Conclusions

When compared with many other conflict-affected countries undergoing police reform processes, Liberia has made significant progress in integrating a gender perspective into the reform of the Liberia National Police. Continued vigilance, nevertheless, is the message received through the opinions, experiences and perspectives shared by a variety of actors — not least of all, Liberian policewomen and civil society activists. This vigilance is needed in applying existing gender policies, for better monitoring and evaluation of those policies and for targeted intervention to address certain specific concerns, such as better education and training opportunities for female police officers who were recruited under lowered standards.

Of particular note are the areas in which the groups of interlocutors agreed and disagreed. On issues of the impact of lowered standards for female recruits, on continued and underreported sexual harassment by and within the LNP and on the challenges of retaining and promoting policewomen, the focus group participants and many of the interviewees were all in agreement. Accord was also evident around the importance of female role models and the need for greater trust on both sides of the “thin blue line,” that is the police–civilian relationship. Notwithstanding these challenges, all parties agreed that police professionalism had generally improved since the reform process was initiated.

Disagreement was also demonstrated. CSO interlocutors were much more critical of the vetting process than their police counterparts. CSO

51 Interview with international NGO representative, Monrovia, May 2010.

52 Interview with donor representative, Monrovia, May 2010.

representatives also identified police indiscipline, particularly male police officers using their positions of authority to sexually exploit female civilians, as a serious problem that is not receiving appropriate attention by the LNP. Corruption and bribery were identified more often by CSO interlocutors, with the nuance by some of them that, at times, policewomen can be more corrupt than men. Finally, the CSO interlocutors were more vocal in their calls for expanding the availability and accessibility of the services provided by the Women and Children Protection Section.

Drawing on the extent to which a gender perspective has been integrated into LNP reform and the key issues put forward by focus group participants and interviewees, the following lessons have been identified or confirmed for use in refining the current reform processes in Liberia and in other similar contexts.

Positive Initiatives

Dedicated gender policies are effective tools in pushing reforms forward and making the police a more welcoming environment for female officers, though their implementation needs leadership at the highest levels and rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Affirmative action programs, such as the 20 per cent female quota system implemented by the LNP, work in terms of raising numbers of women but can have unexpected negative consequences for the women who participate in them, such as being under-qualified for promotions. This can also negatively affect the retention of experienced policewomen who may feel they have little opportunity for career advancement. Policewomen's self-esteem may also be adversely affected.

Positive female role models work to encourage women to join the police and to remain as police officers over the long term. Outreach activities, including those targeting young women considering their career options, are also effective.

Retention rates can be improved by creating incentives for women to remain committed to their jobs as police officers. Creating an empowering environment for female police officers can also contribute to improved retention and has a positive impact on women's self-esteem. Empowering women should not be viewed as a zero-sum game vis-à-vis men's roles or self-esteem.

Policewomen are important advocates for policies that promote the development of the police service for all members. For example, their interest in health care benefits relates to all police personnel.

CSOs are useful partners in police reform in areas such as training, public opinion consultation, and as advocates for change. CSOs can be allies in promoting a gender perspective in police reform and should be engaged early in the process.

Processes for vetting new recruits, particularly immediately post-conflict, must take into consideration the educational and literacy limitations of all sections of the public to ensure that even those with few of these skills are able to participate in the vetting process. Greater attention must be paid to closing loop-holes in the system — such as war-time aliases — so that human rights abusers do not slip through the cracks. Measures should be put in place to protect the identity of members of the public who come forward with complaints against former combatants or their associates, given their frequent involvement in the new political culture, so that civilians are not put at undue risk.

Ongoing Challenges

Retention and promotion of female staff need more attention, even as recruitment of women is showing considerable success, to ensure that qualified women are at all levels of the LNP and in decision-making roles.

Discrimination against women is still widespread in the LNP, reflecting a broader devaluing of women in Liberian society — such as privileging education for boys — which impacts women's ability to qualify for and have meaningful careers in the police service.

Women may have higher expectations of their female colleagues when it comes to levels of education and training. Some female LNP officers can seem more exacting, at times, in their expectations and standards for their female colleagues than male officers. Professional associations and programs to train and empower women in the police need to be further developed to help address this deficit.

Sexual harassment of women, but also of men, remains a concern and continues to be underreported. Sexual harassment of junior officers by senior officers and of female civilians by LNP officers are of particular concern due to the power dynamics.

Corruption and bribery continue to be challenges for the LNP and can have serious negative impacts on female civilians when they extend to requests for sexual favours. Policewomen may at times succumb to corrupt practices, similar to their male counterparts, and contrary to popular opinion. Because this is exceptional, female police officers may be criticized more strongly than male officers and be perceived by a few members of the public as more corrupt. This warrants further investigation.

Under-resourced police services fail to meet the needs of the populations they serve. The security needs of the most vulnerable may be the first to fall victim to a lack of resources such as transportation and communications equipment. For example, WACPS officers unable to travel to rural locations to collect evidence in rape cases due to vehicles being unavailable can seriously impair the ability of survivors to access justice and appropriate medical and psycho-social support services.

We found several related topics to be poorly understood and in need of further exploration through rigorous research. They include:

- The gender dynamics of corruption in the security sector: are women just as corrupt or corruptible as men?
- What important roles can professional associations of female police officers play in SSR processes and in making those processes gender sensitive?
- What are the experiences of the spouses and/or widows/widowers of police officers? What benefits do they receive? Are they an untapped resource for SSR?

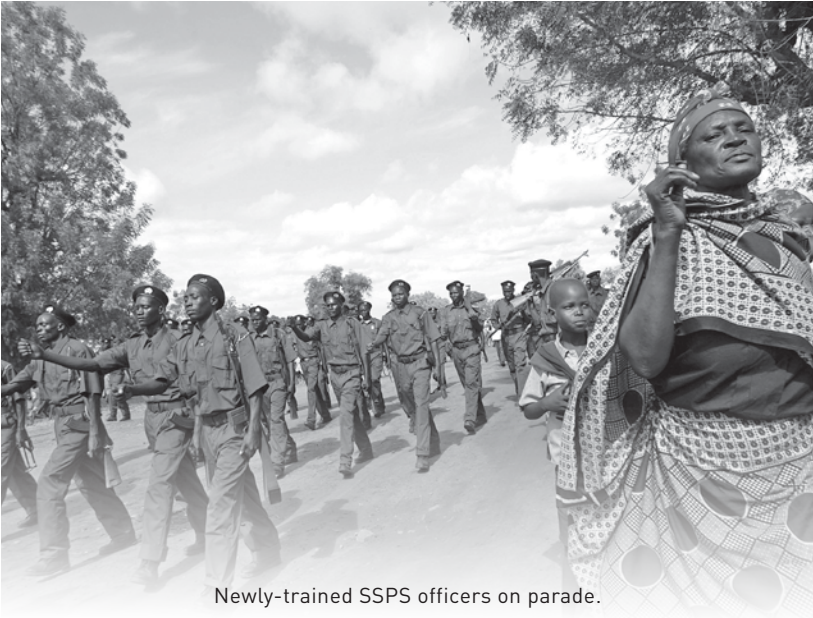
The extent of the lessons learned suggests the need for targeted recommendations for the Liberia National Police, the Government of Liberia and Liberia's development partners. (As many of the recommendations identified have much in common with those arising from the project's sister study in Southern Sudan, we have presented our policy recommendations together at the end of this book.) Despite the need for additional reforms — indeed, a long road still lies ahead for the LNP if it is to become the “gold standard” of gender sensitivity in policing — the police service has made important progress in improving the safety and security of all Liberians. This is in no small part due to the LNP's efforts to holistically integrate a gender perspective into its policies and activities as well as the support of the Government of Liberia, international partners and the women and men that the LNP serves. These commendable advancements will only be sustainable if that support and a focus on gender-sensitive service delivery are maintained. Together, the LNP and its gender-sensitive approach to policing are making an important contribution to creating lasting peace in Liberia.



Map No. 3707 Rev. 10 UNITED NATIONS
April 2007

Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

Note: The semi-autonomous territory of Southern Sudan consists of the following ten states: Western Bahr el Ghazal, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, Lakes, Western Equatoria, Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Unity, Jonglei and Upper Nile. Some specific borders are disputed.



Newly-trained SSPS officers on parade.

UN Photo: Tim McKulka

3

WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON THE REFORM OF THE SOUTHERN SUDAN POLICE SERVICE

Victoria Matatio Elia Guli and Jennifer Erin Salahub

Introduction

Sudan's recent history is one characterized by the violence and destruction of two decades-long civil wars. Unsatisfied with rule by a central government based in the North of the country, Southern Sudanese took up arms in an iterated struggle for self-rule and a greater share of Sudan's resource wealth.¹ With the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, the newly autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) set about addressing the legacy of a conflict distinguished by human rights abuses and the death of hundreds of thousands of Southern Sudanese. After years of civil war the South had

¹ In particular, oil resources located mainly in the South.

little economic and institutional capacity with which to meet the high expectations among the local communities for a quick and tangible peace dividend. Particularly hard hit were the law enforcement institutions needed to provide local communities with the requisite security.

With persistent insecurity a central feature of life in post-war Southern Sudan, the GOSS — in collaboration with its development partners — set about a process of reforming security institutions in the South. This process of security sector reform (SSR) has, to date, largely focused on transforming the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) into a functional peacetime military force. This attention has left little focus on or coordination with reform of other institutions, notably the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS), which should be well placed to provide security to local communities.² Although reconstruction and reform of the SSPS has been initiated, the pace is quite slow and many challenges to ensuring effective security for vulnerable communities persist. Establishing public confidence and meeting expectations and needs of local communities make the development of the security architecture and institutions urgent.³

The process of SSR which has been consolidated over the past decade aims to develop security institutions into democratic, rights-respecting structures subordinate to a civilian authority. SSR in conflict-affected contexts aims to build or rebuild state structures so that they can contribute to the creation of a stable, secure environment for all citizens in which human security can be realized and an enabling environment for development processes can be established. While those involved in developing SSR programs have expanded the inclusiveness of their activities in recent years, many demographic groups remain marginalized from both SSR processes on the ground and global debates on SSR internationally. One notable gap in this respect is the paucity of perspectives and experiences from women in developing countries being heard and included as SSR develops.

This chapter — and its companion chapter on Liberia — seeks to contribute to filling that gap by focusing on the voices and experiences of women engaged with police reform through civil society organizations in Southern Sudan as well as female members of the SSPS itself. In particular, it seeks to document approaches to police reform in a conflict-affected territory,

² Alfred Sebit Lokuji, Abraham Sewonet Abatneh and Chaplain Kenyi Wani, *Police Reform in Southern Sudan* (Ottawa: The North-South Institute and the Centre for Peace and Development Studies, 2009).

³ Paul Wani Gore, Abraham Sewonet Abatneh, Stephen Baranyi and Simon Monoja Lubang, Unpublished guidance document prepared for a survey of "Community Perceptions of Security with a Special Focus on the Police" (Juba: CPDS and NSI, 2008).

especially any gender-sensitive approaches; to understand how women in developing countries perceive and experience police reform processes, particularly gender-sensitive police reform; and to identify lessons learned for Southern Sudan, for Liberia and for other developing countries undertaking similar reforms. To that end, the authors sought out the views of female civil society activists on the Southern Sudan Police Service and its reform process, their understanding of the SSPS's approach to integrating a gender perspective (or not), and their suggestions for how the police and the services it provides could be improved, particularly for women and girls. As women in civil society are not the only women in developing countries affected by police reform processes, the authors also sought to understand the parallel experiences and perspectives of female police officers.

The chapter begins by explaining the research methods we used and the particular challenges of conducting this type of research in Southern Sudan. It then goes on to give some background information on the reform of the SSPS, our institution of focus, including a gender analysis of SSPS policies and practices. We then document the perspectives of Southern Sudanese policewomen and their counterparts in civil society as they relate to reform of the SSPS. For comparative purposes, we also include the opinions of international stakeholders working on these issues. With each of our groups of interlocutors, we focus on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the existing reform program and the challenges and areas with room for improvement in integrating a gender perspective into SSPS reform. Finally, we close by drawing conclusions on the process to date and its future potential. Policy recommendations for stakeholders at the national and international levels appear at the end of the final chapter of the book.

Methods

This chapter draws on primary and secondary sources. After reviewing the limited secondary literature on police reform in Southern Sudan in addition to the growing resources on gender and SSR, we arranged to meet with several key stakeholders and to hold two, three-hour long focus group discussions. Our semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were held in Juba in late May 2010. We interviewed nine stakeholders, mainly drawn from the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) and the donor community in Juba, but also including one female member of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA). Our focus groups allowed us to have deeper conversations with female civil society activists, on the one hand, and female SSPS officers, on the other. Participants at our civil society focus group included only ten women, reflecting the weakness of Southern

Sudanese civil society more broadly. Representatives from community-based organizations, academia and faith-based groups were present. With the assistance of the SSPS, we organized a focus group with nineteen police-women of varying ranks, up to the level of major. While the attendance at the police focus group was certainly more robust, due to language barriers the discussion was more limited compared to the conversation with civil society representatives.⁴

We used a common set of open-ended questions during our interviews; however, focus groups were asked additional questions specific to their different roles.⁵ Focus groups commenced with introductions and background information on the project and the partnership between the two implementing organizations. We then asked civil society participants about their understanding of the intended role of the police in the community. Next we focused on what they saw as challenges faced by the SSPS in general and then specific challenges faced by women in relation to the police service. Our question about the successes to date of the SSPS elicited few concrete examples, but focus group participants were keen to identify recommendations for how the SSPS could improve.

Due to the language barriers we faced in the policewomen's focus group, we opted to move directly to gender-specific questions to maximize the time allotted. We began by asking participants to identify any new processes and procedures with respect to women and/or gender that had been implemented during the reform process. Our next question was more specific, asking the police women why they decided to join the police. From there, we moved on to identifying first successes and then challenges faced by the SSPS, including specific challenges faced by women. Finally, we closed by asking participants for their recommendations on how the SSPS could better integrate a gender perspective into its operations.

⁴ North-South Institute (NSI) and Centre for Peace and Development Studies (CPDS) staff indicated to the SSPS that our researchers could only work in English. Despite assurances that the SSPS would assign staff members who were comfortable in English to attend the focus group, the vast majority of participants spoke only Arabic or a local dialect, a fact we discovered when they arrived for the focus group. As such, we were unable to secure appropriate translation assistance in time and had to rely on the generous assistance of CPDS staff untrained as translators and with only limited Arabic.

⁵ For more information about interview or focus group questions, please contact the authors at jsalahub@nsi-ins.ca.

Reform of the Southern Sudan Police Service

As mentioned in the chapter introduction, a huge amount of the attention and resources available for security sector reform in Southern Sudan over the past five years has been focused on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes and the transformation of the SPLA from a guerrilla fighting force into a democratic and accountable army. This has left other security sector institutions, such as the SSPS and the wildlife, corrections and firefighting services, with little strategic guidance and few resources to support their growing needs and allow them to realize their ambitious mandates. The SSPS was established in 2005 under Article 162 of the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan as a decentralized professional law enforcement service. Its primary mandate is “to prevent, combat and investigate crime, maintain law and public order, protect the people in Southern Sudan and their properties, and uphold and enforce this Constitution and the law.”⁶

Having been established by the interim constitution, the new police service needed to be quickly staffed with qualified personnel so that it could begin to perform its duties without delay. To this end, a large number of SPLA and associated “friendly” forces were transferred to the police. Some of those transferred had served in a policing capacity before the civil wars and brought some relevant experience with them; however, the vast majority came from so-called “vulnerable groups”: women, the weak and the injured — those who were being “discarded” by the SPLA.⁷ As one report notes in very clear terms,

The SSPS consists largely of former SPLA members who were not asked to join the post-CPA army and thus are mostly second-tier quality or worse. A senior official explained: “The police service is a dumping ground for SPLA rejects”. Many are old and were appeased with positions for which they were not qualified.⁸

The extremely high rates of functional illiteracy among SSPS officers, estimates of which continue to top 85–90 per cent,⁹ confirm this analysis (as does

6 Government of Southern Sudan, *The Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan* (Juba: GOSS, 2005), 66, www.sslagoss.org/docs/Const_Southern_Sudan.pdf.

7 Interview with senior SSPS official, Juba, May 2010.

8 International Crisis Group, *Jonglei's Tribal Conflicts: Countering Insecurity in South Sudan*, Africa Report No. 154 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2009), 19. In contrast, both male and female SSPS officers conveyed to us that educated SPLA officers were being selected for the police because police officers need to know how to write. Clearly, some messaging has been done by the SPLA and/or the SSPS at some point! Interview with SSPS officer and focus group discussion with policewomen, Juba, May 2010.

9 Interview with senior SSPS officer responsible for Administration, Juba, May 2010. See also, Lokuji, Abatneh and Wani, *Police Reform in Southern Sudan*, 24.

the aging staff, discussed below) and reflect trends in the general Southern Sudanese population, particularly among women. Indeed, one senior SSPS officer estimated in May 2010 that only 25 per cent of the SSPS's 4000 to 5000 officers were literate enough to properly perform their duties;¹⁰ given current interventions, this level of literacy will likely persist for a long time. As could also be expected, these former guerrilla fighters brought with them a strongly militarized culture which is ill-suited to community-level policing and endures to this day.

One remarkable outcome of the transfer of SPLA members to the SSPS is the high number of women who were included and who now form part of the SSPS. Notably, these ex-combatants maintained the ranks they held while serving in the SPLA, meaning that the SSPS now includes female members up to the rank of colonel, the fifth highest rank among police officers.¹¹ Estimates of the number of female combatants within the SPLA at the time of the CPA are difficult to come by for a variety of reasons.¹² As such, it is difficult to estimate how many female ex-SPLA were transferred to the SSPS. Current internal estimates place female representation within the SSPS at approximately 25 per cent of staff,¹³ though it must be noted that the SSPS keeps poor records and readily admits to not disaggregating the data that it does collect. It was not able to provide supporting documentation for this estimate and this figure includes new female recruits as well as those transferred from the SPLA.

With a staff in place, the SSPS was able to begin work toward fulfilling its mandate. However, the Interim Constitution provides little in the way of strategic or operational guidance — the text devoted to the police fills less

10 Interview with senior SSPS officer, Juba, May 2010.

11 Officer ranks are, in descending order: General, Lieutenant General, Major General, Brigadier, Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel, Major, Captain, 1st Lieutenant, and Lieutenant. Non-commissioned officers and privates have six additional ranks: Warrant Officer, Sergeant Major, Sergeant, Corporal, Lance Corporal, and Private. See: Government of Southern Sudan, *Laws of Southern Sudan: The Southern Sudan Police Service Act 2009* (Juba: GOSS, 2009).

The ranks provided to SSPS staff are highly reflective of their militarized culture and history. By contrast, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have the following commissioned officer ranks: Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Chief Superintendent, Superintendent and Inspector; and non-commissioned officer ranks: Corps Sergeant Major, Sergeant Major, Staff Sergeant, Sergeant, Corporal and Constable. See, Public Safety Canada, "Appendix 1: RCMP ranks," 2008, www.publicsafety.gc.ca/rcmppension-retraitegrc/apx1-eng.aspx (accessed October 20, 2010).

12 Small Arms Survey, *No Standing, Few Prospects: How Peace is Failing South Sudanese Female Combatants and WAAFG*, Sudan Issue Brief 13 (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2008); and Julie Brethfeld, *Unrealistic Expectations: Current Challenges to Reintegration in Southern Sudan* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2010), 14.

13 Interview with senior SSPS officer responsible for Administration, Juba, May 2010.

than a single page — and the existing legislation of the Republic of Sudan, which would be enforced until the GOSS was able to pass new legislation, was at times unclear or ill-suited to the context, such as those laws based on the Sharia. A new Southern Sudan Police Service Act was needed and was finally passed, after much delay, in late 2009. The new Act has the potential to empower the SSPS to a much greater degree than does the Interim Constitution; to what degree and with what effect remains to be seen since the Act is still in the process of being put into practice by the SSPS and many regulations stipulated in the Act have yet to be developed or implemented.

Even without strong guiding policies and procedures, the police are clearly advancing in some areas. In particular, many of the stakeholders we spoke with noted an improvement in traffic management in Juba town. As well, police performance during the 2010 elections and the relative calm that was maintained is being praised by observers both inside and outside the SSPS. However, overall progress remains slow and progress in some areas is likely to continue at a snail's pace as the police are focusing much of their attention on preparations for maintaining order during the upcoming referendum on Southern independence. Exacerbating the slow pace of progress with respect to development of the SSPS is the absence of a long-term vision for the service articulated in a comprehensive strategic plan. Police staff did indicate to us that a strategic plan of sorts exists, but covers only a three-year period and they were unable to provide us with a copy of it.¹⁴ Moreover, conversations with donor representatives suggest that while they were keen to support the police more robustly, a strategic plan which covers only three years would provide an inadequate framework for substantial investment. Moreover, the SSPS and its supporters in the international community need a sustainable vision for the police service to be able to plan and implement the real change that is needed.¹⁵

In addition to strategic planning considerations, the SSPS faces a host of other challenges, ranging from the strategic to the practical. At the highest level are funding challenges. With the main GOSS and donor focus on DDR and SPLA transformation, and an enormous part of SSPS budgets needed to pay salaries, the police service has been left with few discretionary funds to invest in strategic priorities such as capital or training. With increased attention being paid to the SSPS following their performance during the 2010 elections and in anticipation of the role they will play in the 2011 referendum, it appears that new donor funds earmarked for the police are starting to flow, particularly from key donors such as the United States and

¹⁴ Interview with senior SSPS staff, Juba, May 2010.

¹⁵ Interview with donor representative, Juba, May 2010.

the United Kingdom.¹⁶ Whether these will be enough to fill the gaps the SSPS is currently experiencing remains to be seen.

On the capital investment side, the police are severely lacking in the basic tools to perform their duties. There is a shortage of all basic equipment, ranging from handcuffs and police tape to police registers and incident reporting forms. There is neither sufficient building space for police operations and training, nor a comprehensive communications platform for the police. Significantly, the police do not have adequate transportation.¹⁷ Even if the SSPS were equipped with appropriate infrastructure and tools, it would still face an enormous challenge in putting them to use due to systemic illiteracy among SSPS personnel. With rates as high as 90 per cent across the police service — and greater still among female SSPS staff — the presence or absence of incident reporting forms and police registers becomes somewhat moot.

Illiteracy and the related challenge of many women speaking only Arabic or local dialects are also challenges when designing and implementing training programs, particularly when the GOSS has stated that the common language of Southern Sudan will be English and donors provide trainers and training in English. Overall, training of the SSPS to date has been insufficient as demonstrated by the lack of progress in developing the service and continued poor public perceptions of the police.¹⁸ The lack of training and other personnel challenges certainly also contribute to a mutual distrust that exists between the public and the police in Southern Sudan. It was striking to note that focus group participants from both the police and civil society indicated a lack of respect in how the other group treats them. Without the establishment of mutual respect and trust, public perceptions of police performance are unlikely to improve in the short term. Improved training should lead to improved discipline and police performance/service delivery, thereby addressing many of the concerns raised by community members. If combined with an appropriate outreach and awareness-raising strategy, training could be an important contribution to building the foundation of trust required to improve police–community relations.

16 Ibid.

17 Ryan M. Blackwood, “Bilateral Donors Likely to Increase SSR Support to Southern Sudan as Elections Draw Near and International Projects and Programs Lack Significant Progress” in *Strategic Study of Security Sector Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Ryan M. Blackwood, Vanessa Cooper, Courtney M. Kuhn, Kelly A. Mattes, and Ian Taylor (Erie: Mercyhurst College Institute for Intelligence Analysis, 2008), online only, <http://s4rsa.wikispaces.com/Southern+Sudan+final+Reports>.

18 See, for example, Lokuji, Abatneh and Wani, *Police Reform in Southern Sudan*.

Finally, the SSPS faces a major challenge that cuts across a number of other themes: it has an aging staff. Ensuring an adequate and appropriate plan for replacing those staff members as they retire from active duty would be a challenge for any organization, let alone one preoccupied with the various challenges the SSPS faces. However, the dynamics of this situation are unique to Southern Sudan in that their aging police population is not retiring. This is because a Police Pensions Act is currently being developed — but has not yet been promulgated — which would establish the criteria for pensionable service in the SSPS.¹⁹ Understandably, existing staff members at or nearing retirement age are reluctant to retire without that framework in place and the security it would provide. The downstream challenge this creates is that space in the higher ranks which would normally be filled by promotions of junior staff is not opening up as senior members continue to occupy those positions. Without the chance for advancement, important training and professional development opportunities for junior staff members are being lost, and without the possibility of a progressively responsible career, some junior staff may choose to pursue other options outside of the police. This retention challenge could become a serious problem for the SSPS if, after the Pensions Act is passed, a large number of senior and retirement-aged staff choose to leave the service and existing junior staff are unavailable or ill-prepared to fill their places.

Policies, Practice and Perspectives: Gender and SSPS Reform

Currently, the Southern Sudan Police Service does not have a documented gender policy, nor does it have plans to develop one.²⁰ One senior SSPS officer indicated that as the new Police Act moves from high-level legislation to practical implementation, there will be opportunities to integrate a gender perspective into new regulations;²¹ it remains to be seen if those opportunities will be seized in a meaningful way. The absence of a gender policy and the political will to develop one has serious impacts on the lives of police officers and community members, in particular women. For example, while both male and female SSPS staff in interviews and focus groups suggested to us that rank trumps gender when it comes to discipline, discrimination against women continues to be evident. Women are often relegated to domestic tasks such as preparing tea or sewing tablecloths and bed sheets in their offices

¹⁹ Interview with senior SSPS staff, Juba, May 2010.

²⁰ Interview with senior SSPS officer responsible for Administration, Juba, May 2010.

²¹ Ibid.

while their male counterparts are tasked with investigating cases, as one UN police officer described it.²² Moreover, there is no specific sexual harassment policy; complaints of sexual harassment are dealt with under the Police Act and can result in dismissal or imprisonment.²³

Furthermore, it appears that the current transfer policy needs improvement to better take into consideration the familial responsibilities of many female SSPS staff members. While there was some disagreement on this topic among participants at our policewomen's focus group, there were some female officers who thought that the transfer policy was too unpredictable in terms of where staff could be transferred and was not sufficiently supportive in terms of assisting SSPS staff with families to move or adjust to a parent's or spouse's transfer. Given that women often bear a disproportionate burden when it comes to home maintenance and childcare, a routinely applied gender-sensitive transfer policy would take these responsibilities into consideration and respond to women's needs more directly.

Our focus group participants also indicated that women are not chosen as frequently as their male peers to participate in specialized training sessions. When training has been offered to all SSPS members, however, women have tended to jump at the chance to participate. But, given that most training is offered in English only and that many women speak only Arabic or local dialects, the impact of these programs and women's ability to benefit from them must be limited. The opposite may be true when it comes to literacy classes. Sources indicated to us that many more women than men are benefiting from literacy programs being offered by the police service in conjunction with the GOSS Ministry of Education.²⁴ The SSPS is also offering literacy classes specifically for female police officers with the support of the UN mission and CHF International, an NGO; the program is "expected to be the first major step in introducing gender mainstreaming in the SSPS," according to the UN.²⁵ Women's interest in and the availability of these literacy classes is extremely important given that women's low levels of literacy and education are seen by members of the police service as well as community members as a major hindrance to an effective SSPS.²⁶

22 UNMIS, "Turning Soldiers into Civilians," in *In Sudan* (Khartoum: UNMIS Public Information Office, 2008).

23 Interview with senior SSPS officer responsible for Administration and focus group with female SSPS staff, Juba, May 2010.

24 Ibid.

25 UNMIS, "UNMIS Police Launches Literacy Program of SSPS Women Officers" in *Police in Action: Policewomen in Sudan... Making a Difference* (Khartoum: UNMIS, n.d.), 8.

26 Focus group discussions, Juba, May 2010.

Despite the absence of a gender policy, the SSPS has taken some progressive steps to recognize the different needs and experiences of its female members, though these appear to be much more reactive than the proactive stance a formal, institutionalized policy would bring to the service. While the SSPS has decided not to pursue any affirmative action steps to encourage more women to become police officers, an informal target of approximately 30 per cent of new recruits being women is in place.²⁷ However, because recruitment is entirely merit-based, this target is not often met because, as one senior SSPS official told us, the educational and merit criteria are paramount.²⁸ Moreover, women face socio-cultural challenges, such as early marriage, needing their husbands' or fathers' permission to join and a preference for educating male children, which impede their ability to meet the requirements to join the police service. However, barriers are not completely insurmountable as reports suggest that one third of the cadets at the newly inaugurated police training facility are women.²⁹

We asked participants at our focus group discussion to tell us about their reasons for joining the police and, while the vast majority of them cited that they were transferred from the SPLA, some gave more detail as to their motivations. Two themes came strongly to the fore during this discussion. The first was childcare and family responsibilities: in general, policing is seen to be a job compatible with family responsibilities and having a more settled lifestyle, at least compared with life in the SPLA, even after the war. The second theme was service to the community. Many policewomen, particularly those who had joined the police through a more recent recruitment process (that is, had not been part of the SPLA transfer), said that they had joined the police so that they could work closely with and contribute to protecting their communities. This last perspective, in particular, is one that the SSPS should work toward fostering among all its members. Promoting those members who already demonstrate this quality, possibly through an affirmative action program, internal promotion criteria or focused professional development opportunities could encourage this attitude; all of these initiatives could be housed in the framework of a gender policy.

27 Interviews with senior SSPS officer and senior SSPS officer responsible for Administration, Juba, May 2010. This target follows the announcement by GOSS President Salva Kiir at his investiture that his new government would include 30 per cent women, an improvement on the 25 per cent mandated by the Interim Constitution.

28 Interview with senior SSPS officer, Juba, May 2010

29 Margaret Besheer, "South Sudan Trains Future Police Force" (VOAnews.com, 2010), www.voanews.com/english/news/South-Sudan-Trains-Future-Police-Force-105108299.html (accessed October 20, 2010).

Notwithstanding these serious challenges to improving the situation and participation of women in the SSPS, the police service does have several policies or programs which indicate that at least passing attention is being paid to gender sensitivity within the police. Some of these policies respond directly to the mandate set out in the Interim Constitution under Article 20. Article 20.4 (c) calls upon all levels of Southern Sudanese government to “provide maternity and child care and medical care for pregnant and lactating women.”³⁰ To that end, the SSPS has developed a maternity leave policy for female staff. New mothers receive three months paid leave and then return to work only half-time for the following six months, allowing them time to balance their policing responsibilities with caring for their child. At the same time, for women working while pregnant, the SSPS has not developed a maternity uniform, so women must wear their own clothes, which may undermine their ability to do their jobs, given that they are no longer easily recognizable as police officers.

Other evidence of some gender sensitivity is reflected in the number of senior officers who are women. As described, they are all ex-SPLA members who maintained their rank when they were transferred from the SPLA to the SSPS. However, with the poor literacy rates within the SSPS, the amount of meaningful work that they are able to do must be limited. This has not prevented some senior female staff from holding leadership roles. Indeed, one of the female-headed units is the Social Affairs and Gender office, which has a small staff. One progressive development which could help to improve the situation of women in the SSPS is the move to create a professional association of female police officers.³¹ Led by policewomen themselves and supported — at least tacitly — by the SSPS, the professional association could serve as an important advocate and support network for female police officers, providing professional development opportunities and linking Southern Sudanese police officers with their counterparts in other countries in order to share experiences, ideas and resources.

Special Protection Unit for Women and Children

An increase in the number of female police officers and gender-sensitive policies for staff is important. Equally important for gender-sensitive police reform are policies and practices in service delivery which address the specific concerns and needs of women, such as protection from sexual and gender-based

30 Government of Southern Sudan, *The Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan*, 18.

31 At the time of writing, October 2010, this process was underway but to our knowledge the association had not yet been formally established.

violence — a danger faced disproportionately by women and girls — and, failing protection, appropriate response when it occurs. Institutionally, the SSPS, with the support of UNMIS, UNPOL and UNFPA,³² has already established a series of Special Protection Units (SPUs) aimed at providing specialized services for vulnerable women and children. This is largely in response to the high rates of violence against women at the community level.³³ As a UNDP analysis puts it, the “sustained cycle of violence has eroded traditional social structures, which puts the internal security of people — particularly women and children — at risk.”³⁴ The SPU program is in the process of being rolled out across the territory, though resource constraints will limit its ability to be present at the community level, similar to the police service more broadly. Staff members at the units receive specialized training to allow them to appropriately serve as focal points in the community for women and children with security and justice concerns, including handling cases of sexual and gender-based violence.³⁵ Certain SPU staff members also have the opportunity to work closely with UNPOL officers experienced in these issues. This allows them the opportunity to have a strong mentor while they actively apply their classroom learning to real-world situations.

SSPS members often receive the specialized SPU training, but, as one UN representative told us, they are then transferred from the SPU before they have a chance to put it to good use. While it is important to disseminate information on the protection of women and children and how to appropriately treat survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) across the police service, it is also crucial to ensure that people staffing the SPUs have those skills and the chance to consolidate their training by putting it into practice over a longer period of time. Underdeveloped links between the policing and justice systems, a weak judiciary and poor engagement with traditional and customary legal practices (which often favour men or focus on compensation rather than justice) further exacerbate the challenges that women face when seeking redress for such crimes.

32 See, UNFPA Southern Sudan, “Briefing Note on Southern Sudan, October 2006” (Juba: UNFPA Southern Sudan Office, 2006), http://sudan.unfpa.org/souther_sudan/index.htm; and UNFPA, “UNFPA in Southern Sudan” (2010), http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/sudan/2010/02/20/1847/unfpa_southeren_sudan/.

33 UNDP Sudan, “UNDP Southern Sudan Update Volume 2, Issue 3: Focus on Gender Equality in Southern Sudan” (Juba: UNDR, 2010), 3.

34 *Ibid.*, 3.

35 UNMIS, “SSPS Setting Up Special Protection Units to Protect Women and Children” in *Police in Action: Policewomen in Sudan*, 7.

Perspectives from Outside the SSPS: Civil Society and Legislators

A strong civil society, in addition to statutory structures such as the legislature, serves an important role in civilian oversight of security sector institutions and promoting the inclusion of a gender perspective in SSR processes. It can advocate for necessary legislation, the creation of statutory oversight bodies, and improved accountability and transparency, as well as provide valuable training — particularly on women's and human rights, civic education and awareness-raising. Sudanese civil society has long had a troubled relationship with state authorities due to the requirement that every NGO be registered with the Government of Sudan's Non-Governmental Organizations Board. Concern over rejection by the board if NGOs are critical of the government has led to self-censorship across the country, even as there has been strong growth in the number of NGOs in both the North and the South since the CPA was signed.³⁶ Notwithstanding this growth, civil society in Southern Sudan remains weak, particularly in terms of civil society organizations (CSOs) involved in matters of security.

Overall, the CSO representatives we spoke with in our focus group discussion had a low opinion of the police. When asked to identify any successes that the SSPS had realized so far, they conceded only minimal improvements after some prompting and reframing of the question. Among the successes they identified were the improvement of traffic management by the police — and, in particular, that female police officers have been more effective than men at this task — and that some reduction of violence at the community level was evident. Improvement in traffic management was also identified by the policewomen as a recent SSPS success, and by the senior male SSPS officers with whom we spoke. Given the state of the roads in Juba and the poorly understood and/or respected traffic regulations, focusing on traffic was clearly a wise decision on the part of the SSPS in that it is a low-cost improvement that has a direct and visible impact on many residents' daily activities and safety, at least in Juba town.

When the topic of conversation at our CSO focus group moved on to the challenges faced by the police service and to those faced by women in particular, our participants were much more forthcoming with their responses, responses that were often echoed by those of the policewomen. For example, literacy and language issues linked to poor levels of training and poor police performance were among the first challenges identified by CSO representatives. Resource constraints were also a common concern, with CSO

³⁶ Emily Schroeder, "Project Ploughshares Briefing: Elections in Sudan 2008/9: A Complex Challenge in Need of Urgent Donor Attention" (Waterloo, ON: Project Ploughshares, 2007).

participants identifying a lack of materials, including equipment for transportation and communications, office space and weapons, as a major obstacle to the effective performance of the police. The main challenge in relation to those specifically faced by women that both the CSO representatives and the policewomen shared was women's lower levels of education. This was noted as having negatively impacted not only their ability to enter the police but also their selection for training courses and other professional development opportunities once they had joined the police.

Our CSO focus group participants also shared many concerns with the SSPS that were independent from those offered by the policewomen. For example, corruption — especially bribery — is seen to be a serious and widespread problem in the SSPS. The CSO representatives linked corruption to poor salary levels and the issue of irregular payment of police wages by the SSPS/GOSS. Two other forms of corruption, nepotism and tribalism,³⁷ were seen by CSOs as ingrained in the recruitment process and in direct contravention of the merit-based recruitment principle espoused by the police. Indeed, focus group participants asserted that even qualified people interested in joining the police needed the support of a person in power to ensure their recruitment.

Indiscipline among the SSPS was a concern expressed by CSO participants and the female legislator we spoke with. Ensuring that the police respond to a complaint can be challenging at the best of times, but is even more difficult when the complainant is a woman and the police are less likely to take her seriously. Such discrimination against women exists not only in the police service but in Southern Sudan's current legislative framework. Overlapping and out-dated laws further exacerbate the situation; as the legislator explained to us, the slow pace of legislating in Southern Sudan means that the Sharia imposed by the Northern government endures in many cases and women are not able to serve as witnesses to a crime. The police have been known to ask for a male witness, even when a stronger female witness is available.³⁸

Drunkenness while on duty and in uniform is seen as another ongoing challenge for the SSPS, though, as the participants were quick to note, this is generally a problem among male SSPS staff and is rare among women. Even more concerning is the violence that, as claimed by focus group participants, is perpetrated by SSPS members on civilians, including children. These claims are corroborated by a 2008 survey conducted by the Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission which established that the police have abused people in detention, made arbitrary or spurious arrests without warrants and prevented

³⁷ By "tribalism" participants mean privileging members of one's ethnic group as separate from simple family-based nepotism.

³⁸ Interview with female SSLA member, Juba, May 2010.

arrested individuals from giving their side of the story.³⁹ CSO representatives told us that police officers have been disrespectful of the public, that the SSPS has harassed citizens and that incidents have escalated to include sometimes brutal beatings. This may be in part due to the perception among the SSPS that most civilians are armed and react to that perception, rather than the facts before them.⁴⁰ Many of these discipline issues can be traced back to the SSPS's military roots in the SPLA and its history of indiscipline. During and since the civil war, SPLA forces have been accused of human rights abuses including sexual violence against women.⁴¹ Very recently, SPLA soldiers reportedly raped a number of civilians in Central Equatoria.⁴² To paraphrase a CSO focus group participant, the police were good freedom fighters; now they need to figure out how to be police. Given this state of affairs, it is not surprising that trust between the police and the community is very low.⁴³

One component of the poor relationship between the SSPS and the community that is particularly concerning is police treatment of female survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. This was raised as a key concern at our CSO focus group discussion. Such concerns reinforce the need for deeper thinking and better gender analysis of the SSPS's reform. Not only do the police not respond in a timely manner to serious concerns that women present, such as instances of rape, but they also respond inappropriately and insensitively, often telling survivors to deal with the issue within their family.⁴⁴ This attitude on the part of many police officers is reflective of a broader pattern in present day Southern Sudan in which women and girls are given a low value and — at times — used to further the family's wealth or status through (often early) marriage.⁴⁵ These perspectives reflect a broader global trend of under-reporting of SGBV in communities. In Southern Sudan in particular, women face even greater disincentives to report these crimes, say-

39 Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission, "Baseline Survey on Human Rights in Southern Sudan" (Juba: Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission, 2008).

40 Mareike Schomerus, *Violent Legacies: Insecurity in Sudan's Central and Eastern Equatoria* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2008), 46–47.

41 It should be noted that many of the human rights abuses the SPLA are accused of revolve around the use of child soldiers, overwhelmingly boys.

42 "South Sudan Army Accused of Killing and Raping Civilians in C. Equatoria," *Sudan Tribune*, March 23, 2010, <http://ns211683.ovh.net/spip.php?article34515>.

43 Civil society activist at focus group discussion, Juba, May 2010. Participants in the policewomen's focus group indicated a parallel opinion, that the community members do not respect or trust the police.

44 Civil society focus group discussion, Juba, May 2010.

45 These dynamics were explained to us by CSO representatives at the focus group discussion, Juba, May 2010.

ing “that reporting domestic violence to police produces little response and makes the situation at home worse.”⁴⁶

Overlapping and contradictory legal frameworks further exacerbate these challenges. The Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan includes a Bill of Rights with a section on Women’s Rights. Article 20.4(b) calls on all levels of Southern Sudanese government to “enact laws to combat harmful customs and traditions which undermine the dignity and status of women.”⁴⁷ However, as new laws are slowly being written, debated and promulgated, the national laws of Sudan remain in force and, particularly when it comes to women’s rights, contradict the spirit of the Interim Constitution. For example, Sudanese national laws on sexual violence make no distinction between rape and adultery, an offence which falls under the purview of the Sharia, which poses obstacles for due process and gender equality.⁴⁸ Further complicating matters from an analytical perspective are the ways in which customary laws interact with Sharia and Southern Sudanese law and the widespread use of these customary legal frameworks which tend to focus on compensation rather than justice for survivors.⁴⁹

International Perspectives

Many of the concerns and challenges raised by our Sudanese interlocutors were reflected by those working at the international level, for international NGOs, bilateral donors or the United Nations. Literacy and education as an impediment to women joining the police service was a common refrain, nuanced by customary practices and traditions which require many women to seek their husbands’ permission before joining the police. Representatives working closely with the police through bilateral donor agencies or the United Nations identified significant gaps in police capacity and resources, including that of training on gender and many other issues. A UN representative whom we interviewed indicated that, anecdotally, police trainees found the two hours of gender training they received near the end of their six-to-nine week course was insufficient.⁵⁰ Trainees requested supplemental time on these

46 Schomerus, *Violent Legacies*, 46.

47 Government of Southern Sudan, *The Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan*, 18.

48 Redress and Khartoum Center for Human Rights and Environmental Development, *Time for Change: Reforming Sudan’s Legislation on Rape and Sexual Violence* (Khartoum: Sudan, 2008), www.pclrs.org/downloads/Miscellaneous/Position%20Paper%20Rape.pdf. A brief summary of the position paper may be found at www.pclrs.org/smartweb/english/gender-crimes.

49 See Cherry Leonardi, Leben Nelson Moro, Martina Santschi and Deborah H. Isser, *Local Justice in Southern Sudan* (New York: United States Institute of Peace, 2010), 60–63.

50 Interview with senior staff member at the UNMIS Gender Unit, Juba, May 2010.

issues and trainers often stretched their program to three hours, staying late past the end of class. The language of instruction in many courses offered by the UN or other donors was also raised as a concern by a donor representative; little is being done by either donors or the GOSS to address the negative ramifications of most trainings being offered in English, when most SSPS members speak Arabic more fluently.⁵¹

International stakeholders are also considerably concerned with the situation of women in Southern Sudan and in the SSPS. Sexual and gender-based violence and other violations of women's human rights continue with impunity, a cause for grave concern and — as noted above — the impetus for several programs being implemented in partnership between the SSPS and donor agencies. One of the considerable challenges to raising public awareness about these issues is the way in which concepts of gender have come to be viewed in a negative light. In some parts of Sudan, a link has been made between gender as a concept and sexual and gender-based violence to the point that the two cannot be separated. It appears that at some point international advisors conflated the two terms during training and outreach sessions and the negative aspects of SGBV were conflated with an overly simplified understanding of “gender” to the exclusion of the positive and analytically useful aspects of the latter.⁵² Undoing that damage will take some time; UNMIS's Gender Unit, for one, is working toward this in at least three ways: by focusing on the term “violence against women” instead of the troublesome “SGBV” or “gender-based violence”;⁵³ by focusing on the links between SGBV and health risks, particularly the transmission of HIV/AIDS, as a strategy to reduce SGBV; and by reaching out to children in school to sensitize them to these issues at a young age and thereby work to separate the concepts of gender and SGBV in the minds of Southern Sudan's future leaders.⁵⁴

Despite these awareness-raising activities, the negative relationship between communities and the police (which was confirmed by our international interlocutors) combined with cultural restrictions continues to discourage survivors of SGBV from reporting these crimes. Unfortunately, there are also few non-governmental resources available to vulnerable women, leading one UNMIS representative to call for greater support for civil society organizations, particularly the establishment of shelters for abused women and their

51 Interview with donor representative, Juba, May 2010.

52 Interview with senior staff member at the UNMIS Gender Unit, Juba, May 2010.

53 UNMIS, which works in both the north and the south is having particular success with this approach with Arabic-speaking populations for whom “gender-based violence” translates to “war on sex,” a concept with which many people are uncomfortable.

54 Interview with senior staff member at the UNMIS Gender Unit, Juba, May 2010.

children. Indeed, these challenges again point to the need for more gender-sensitive policing at all levels and the integration of a gender-perspective into SSPS reform.

Conclusion

Despite significant advances since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the creation of the SSPS in 2005, police reform in Southern Sudan remains a work-in-progress from many perspectives. The list of challenges begins with under-funding of the service by the Government of Southern Sudan and its development partners to date. The absence of a thoughtful, long-term plan for SSPS reform and how it would fit into broader SSR processes exacerbates the challenges, particularly when it comes to the situation of women in the police and how the police interact with members of the community, both female and male. Such gender analysis is highly relevant to the SSPS; women make up a significant constituency within it, thanks to the transfer of SPLA ex-combatants to the police service and the quotas outlined in the Interim Constitution's Women's Rights provisions. Despite their high numbers and that many of them hold senior ranks, low education, under-developed professional capacity and high levels of female illiteracy along with widespread discrimination reflective of broader Southern Sudanese society ensure that few female SSPS members serve in meaningful operational capacities. In apparent response to the requirements of the Interim Constitution, the SSPS has implemented some gender-sensitive policies, such as maternity leave provisions. But lacking in the reform process is a strategic framework for the holistic integration of a gender perspective.

Women also represent a large, diverse and important percentage of the population that the SSPS is meant to serve. Because of the ongoing nature of police reform, the SSPS's enduring militarized culture and the lack of a focused gender policy for the police service, treatment of the civilian population by the police leaves much to be desired. Of particular concern to outside observers — including Southern Sudanese civil society and international supporters — is the approach taken by the SSPS to cases of sexual and gender-based violence which disproportionately affects women and girls. While a Special Protection Unit has been created, considerable room for improvement exists vis-à-vis its resources, training and the way SSPS personnel interact with SGBV survivors.

The development and implementation of a specific gender policy that defines how the institution will mainstream gender in its specific practices, such as recruitment, benefits, promotion and staff interaction, would address many of

these gaps and be a significant step toward representative, accountable policing. A gender policy also has the potential to act as a catalyst for improved professionalism among police officers writ large, not simply in relation to women. Moreover, such a policy could bring together the existing policies relating to women and the SSPS — including maternity leave, harassment and the Special Protection Unit — under a cohesive policy framework which should strengthen these existing structures and mandate further gender-sensitive policies and practices. With the support available through Southern Sudan's development partners, drafting this type of policy should not be outside of the reach of the SSPS's capacities and, indeed, could be used to strengthen them. It could also form part of a more robust strategic planning process and/or the operationalization of the new Police Act. Ultimately, any such process must be led by Southern Sudanese themselves; clearly the demand for further improvement of policies and programs exists both within and outside the SSPS. Working together with civil society and its development partners, the Southern Sudan Police Service is well placed to build on the modest advancements it has made toward gender-sensitive police reform, to make that process more robust and to improve overall police service delivery to the benefit of all the people of Southern Sudan.



UN Photo: Christopher Herwig

Recent Liberia National Police graduates.

4

**LEARNING FROM WOMEN:
POLICE REFORM IN POST-CONFLICT LIBERIA
AND SOUTHERN SUDAN**

Jennifer Erin Salahub

While the civil conflicts in Liberia and Southern Sudan share tragic characteristics, each must be treated as unique and context specific to allow for a nuanced understanding of its current police reform processes and challenges. The points of commonality shared by both contexts include long and bloody civil wars rooted in complex power struggles in which statutory security institutions were used against civilian populations with serious human rights abuses committed by warring factions on both sides. Sexual violence was a feature of wars in both countries,

though in Liberia it was used much more systematically as a weapon of war.¹ Peace negotiations conducted in both countries (Liberia in 2003, Sudan in 2005) culminated in comprehensive peace accords which have been implemented with the assistance of United Nations peacekeeping missions — UNMIS in Sudan and UNMIL in Liberia.

In addition to differences in the nature of the conflicts — Liberia's was short by comparison, but saw troubling use of child soldiers and rampant sexual violence; Sudan's was decades long, displaced hundreds of thousands, and killed even more either through armed violence or starvation — these two countries' peace processes differ significantly. The resulting Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Liberia takes a much longer time horizon as its starting point, establishing reforms and recreating state institutions — such as the pre-war army and police. Alternatively, Sudan's peace agreement sets the stage for a power-sharing arrangement during a six-year interim period before a referendum in the South on independence (expected in January 2011).

Both peace agreements address security sector institutions, though Liberia's provides more specifics than does Sudan's. The implementation of the respective CPAs also follows different paths, with respect to security sector reform and the integration of a gender perspective in state-building processes. In particular, in Liberia a gender perspective has been integrated into much of the reconstruction and development efforts to date, largely due to the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as president in 2005 and her personal commitment to promoting gender equality. This includes recruitment quotas for women in the armed forces and police as well as the establishment of gender policies and a gender ministry.

In Sudan, the focus has largely been on developing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes and on reform of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (the rebel army cum armed forces for Southern Sudan, SPLA) at the expense of attention and resources supporting the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS) and many other reforms. Indeed, little progress on reform in general, let alone gender-sensitive reform, has been made since the SSPS was created through a wholesale transfer of SPLA forces from the army to the new police service. And, while gender issues do fall under the purview of a minister in the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS), they are the responsibility of the minister of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs and do not seem to be a government-wide priority. Despite these very

1 In the war in Darfur, however, sexual violence has been used much more strategically. See, for example, Amnesty International, *Sudan, Darfur: Rape as a Weapon of War, Sexual Violence and Its Consequences* (London: Amnesty International, 2004).

different contexts, the Southern Sudanese and Liberian women we spoke with share a remarkable range of perspectives and concerns about the reform of their respective police services while also addressing important context-specific differences. Comparing the experiences of policewomen and civil society activists in these two contexts allows us to draw out important lessons and recommendations not only for these two conflict-affected situations, but also for police reform efforts around the world.

Women Speak Out: Civil Society Activists in Liberia and Southern Sudan

As the case study chapters explore, policewomen and civil society activists share many common concerns and perspectives on gender and police reform processes in their respective contexts. However, to begin to generalize beyond these two cases, it is useful to look at what stands out as commonalities and differences between them. Understanding what women in conflict-affected Liberia and Southern Sudan prioritize when it comes to police reform allows for the creation of targeted recommendations for the greatest impact in terms of responding to the needs of local women and improving the effectiveness of both the Liberia National Police (LNP) and the Southern Sudan Police Service.²

Not surprisingly, civil society activists had much to say on the public activities of the two police services and how the police interact with community members. Chief among their common concerns are corruption, most often in the form of bribery; indiscipline, which often takes the form of drunkenness while in uniform/on duty; and a lack of trust between the police and the community. Civil society organization (CSO) representatives in both contexts are quick to note that traffic police are the worst offenders when it comes to bribery due to their frequent interaction with motorists and the ease of quickly extracting a bribe from drivers. In Liberia in particular, CSO interlocutors make a clear link between corrupt practices and sexual exploitation of female civilians by male police officers, noting that a male police officer will ask for cash from a male civilian but, “depending on the looks” may ask for cash or for sexual favours from a woman he has stopped. This sort of harassment by the police, in addition to verbal and physical abuse, is also linked to the indiscipline observed by the participants at our CSO focus groups. All of these factors and more contribute to the distrust that community members feel toward the police, a concern expressed vociferously by CSO representatives in Southern Sudan.

² Policy recommendations are provided at the end of this chapter.

Significant insight into the situation of women in the two police services is also shared by CSO participants, most likely because of our purposive sampling of civil society organizations that actively engage with the police. CSO interlocutors are keenly aware and have quite nuanced analyses in both countries of the links among societies with significant gender inequalities, discrimination against girls in terms of education, and low levels of literacy and professional skills among female police officers. Moreover, in Liberia, our focus group participants extended their analysis to involve the impact that these trends have on the ability of female police officers to access promotions and the ability of the LNP to retain women within its ranks. Both groups of CSOs are also quite attuned to discrimination against women within the police services, particularly noting that women are rarely given the same training opportunities as their male counterparts. This is linked to the discrimination against educating girls before they join the police (so that they would have the necessary prerequisites to benefit from training) as well as to the challenges of retention and promotion of female officers. In Southern Sudan, the training issue is further linked to language issues specific to that territory.³

In some instances, challenges with training both men and women have a disproportionately negative impact on women and girls in the public, for example, when it comes to reporting crimes of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Indeed, commenters in both contexts note that, despite gender-sensitive structural improvements such as the Women and Children Protection Section within the LNP, police officers with insufficient training often behave insensitively toward women reporting instances of SGBV. In Southern Sudan, for instance, one CSO focus group participant told us that it is not uncommon for SSPS officers to instruct a woman to deal with a reported sexual assault within her family. In Liberia, focus group participants suggest that LNP officers challenge women who report SGBV, often re-victimizing the survivor by asking questions such as “Why do you allow yourself to be raped?” When faced with these and similar responses, it is not surprising that a large percentage of SGBV goes unreported in both contexts. Regrettably, the responses from our interlocutors who are representatives of the state in both contexts reflect the norms in both societies where SGBV is at the very least tacitly accepted and seen as an issue to be dealt with within the family rather than a crime to be addressed through the

³ Many female SSPS officers speak Arabic fluently, but have only minimal English skills. Given that the GOSS has declared that English will be the common language of Southern Sudan and, to that end, has requested training in English (meshing conveniently with many donors’ resources), many women are left out of training programs because they do not have the prerequisite language skills. Literacy levels among women, regardless of language, are also very low in Southern Sudan.

justice system.⁴ In both contexts, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations are working with national/territorial governments to change public opinion on these topics and to improve monitoring and training.⁵

Civil society participants in both contexts also identify resource constraints as an important issue, particularly with respect to transportation and communications, and to salaries. In both places, a lack of equipment and transportation means reduced access to households in rural areas, and thus a reduction in services. In terms of salaries, the challenge seems the most extreme in Southern Sudan where CSOs suggest (and some police officers grudgingly concur) that salaries are low and disbursement of them is unreliable at best. In Liberia, it seems that LNP officers are paid regularly and on time, though the CSO participants suggest that their salaries could be improved and that this would have a positive impact on the rates of corruption among the police.

While CSO participants in our focus groups share many experiences and face many common challenges, the contextual differences they live led to many divergent priorities and themes in our discussion with them. In Liberia, largely because of the relative progress the LNP has made regarding police reform and integrating a gender perspective, many CSO representatives focus on processes and structures that simply do not exist in Southern Sudan. For example, CSO interlocutors lament what they consider an “incomplete” vetting process for the LNP. They complain that when compared with the vetting process for the Armed Forces of Liberia insufficient information was provided to community members to allow them to confidently and anonymously identify and report those candidates they believe were guilty of human rights abuses during the war.⁶ In Southern Sudan, by contrast, no vetting process has taken place and none is anticipated. This is unfortunate for the Southern Sudanese because a rigorous vetting process could help to diminish many of the challenges they

⁴ Non-statutory justice mechanisms are also available and often legitimate options for addressing all manner of crimes; however, when it comes to issues of sexual violence and women’s rights, their weaknesses are often revealed. Take, for example, the Liberian system of trial by ordeal which often elicits false confessions or recantations of accusations in the face of painful and dangerous ordeals. For more information, see for example, Tim Luccaro, “Navigating Liberia’s Justice Landscape: The Foundations for Judicial Policy Reform in Liberia,” United States Institute of Peace In the Field report, 2010, www.usip.org/in-the-field/navigating-liberias-justice-landscape; or IRIN News, “Liberia: Trial By Ordeal Makes the Guilty Burn But ‘Undermines Justice,’” 2007, www.irinnews.org/fr/ReportFrench.aspx?ReportID=75111 (accessed November 26, 2010).

⁵ Indeed, UNMIS reports considerable success in raising awareness about and beginning to reduce the incidence of SGBV by linking it through public health campaigns to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Interview with UNMIS Gender Unit representative, Juba, May 2010.

⁶ Unlike the Armed Forces of Liberia which provided names, photographs and known aliases of candidates, the LNP provided only candidate’s names thereby making it extremely difficult for community members to confidently identify them. The Armed Forces also provided a return address for the public to submit anonymous tips regarding individual candidates.

identify with such a militarized police service, helping build trust between the community and the police. Liberia's vetting process also included rigorous tests of officers' abilities, including education, which could not be practically replicated in Southern Sudan. If, for example, a literacy requirement were applied during an SSPS vetting process, the service would be decimated overnight and nearly all of the SSPS's women would be dismissed. Any efforts to initiate a vetting process in Southern Sudan or elsewhere must focus on strategic goals as well as on developing a process that is context relevant.

In Southern Sudan, CSO interlocutors lament the poor professionalism and performance of the SSPS which they link to the organization's militarized past, to inadequate training — including literacy training — and to under-resourcing by the GOSS. In contrast, the Liberian CSOs suggest that while they feel that community policing needs improvement and they would welcome the expansion of the services of the Women and Children Protection Section, and notwithstanding the concerns expressed above, some improvements in the LNP's professionalism have been observed compared with the past. CSO representatives in Southern Sudan were not so generous in their assessment of the SSPS. In addition to complaining of a lack of professionalism overall, our CSO focus group participants claim that nepotism and tribalism have been institutionalized in the SSPS; according to them, it is near to impossible to join or advance within the SSPS without the assistance of either a well-placed family or tribe member.⁷ Nevertheless, CSOs in Southern Sudan did concede that there had been some improvement with respect to community-level violence, a perspective they share with their counterparts in the SSPS.

Women Speak Out: Female Police Officers in Liberia and Southern Sudan

Contrary to the numerous shared challenges and perspectives among CSOs, policewomen in Southern Sudan and Liberia seem to have very different experiences, attributable in large part to the very different historical and present-day contexts in which they are working. In Liberia, the LNP retrained a significant portion of police officers who served in the pre-war police service.

⁷ This sort of preferential treatment is worrying as Southern Sudan moves toward an expected separation from the North. Given the ongoing low-level conflict perpetrated at the tribal level and the potential for Southern Sudan to disintegrate after secession, a preponderance of one tribe in the security services should be cause for concern. Learning from Burundi's civil war, we note that power imbalances established during the colonial era between Hutus and Tutsis, particularly within the police and armed forces, directly contributed to the conflict and became a key grievance to be remedied in the peace process.

This, in combination with prioritizing police reform and government-wide gender mainstreaming processes sits in stark contrast with Southern Sudan's newly created police service. The SSPS, initially formed by a considerable transfer of personnel from the army, has been left largely to its own devices by the GOSS. The lack of a dedicated gender policy for the SSPS is also an important difference between the two contexts and one which certainly influenced the themes that emerged from our discussions with Liberian and Southern Sudanese policewomen.

Some important practical concerns for the ways in which female police officers are integrated into police services are found in the shared experiences and perspectives of the policewomen. Issues such as maternity leave, harassment policies and policies around transferring personnel to other locations are raised as important considerations in both contexts. Maternity leave allowances in both countries are quite similar, despite their very different approaches to integrating a gender perspective into police reform. In fact, policewomen in Southern Sudan, where the police have made no efforts to mainstream gender into their policies, benefit from a more generous leave policy than do those in Liberia, thanks to requirements set out in the territory's Interim Constitution. However, it seems that the harassment and transfer policies in Liberia — which form part of the gender policy — are more robust from a gender-sensitive standpoint than in Southern Sudan. With respect to all three policies, implementation seems to be the greatest challenge with focus group participants in both Liberia and Southern Sudan criticizing inconsistent application of the policies.

Policewomen's perspectives differ once topics expand beyond general administrative concerns. As noted, the SSPS has no gender policy, nor does it have any plans to develop and implement one. At the same time, policewomen in Southern Sudan seem less aware and less concerned with gender-sensitive policies and practices. In contrast, female LNP officers who are implementing a strong gender policy are well versed and have quite nuanced analyses of gender dynamics and the importance of gender-sensitive policing. For example, female SSPS officers focus much more on the work of the police writ large in terms of challenges it is facing with respect to resources, its relationship with community members and the progress it has made, such as the maintenance of order during the April 2010 elections. LNP policewomen, on the other hand, focus on issues of recruitment, promotion and retention of female officers, how women are improving the LNP and how to better implement the gender policy to militate against a tendency toward discrimination within the police service.

When Southern Sudanese policewomen do address gender-sensitive concerns, it is often in the context of broader structural constraints on women's participation in policing stemming from cultural norms. For example, female SSPS officers are quite cognizant of the fact that women in Southern Sudan are generally not very well educated. They linked this to challenges in recruiting women to join the SSPS as well as to the reasoning behind the small number of women who are deployed to posts outside of the capital city. Language issues are also a concern with respect to women's participation in training activities. As do their CSO counterparts, female SSPS officers note that many policewomen speak Arabic fluently, but are not able to benefit from training sessions offered solely in English. Women's education seems to be less of a concern in this regard for Liberian policewomen who focus on it only in relation to the impact that the lowered educational standard for female recruitment had and continues to have on women brought into the LNP under the program who now face challenges in accessing promotion and training opportunities.

One final area in which we see both convergence and divergence in responses from policewomen is in their motivations for joining the police. The responses we received are compelling, particularly from a policy and program development standpoint, as they may allow decision makers to design recruitment strategies that will speak directly to women and encourage them to pursue a career in policing. In terms of overlap, several respondents in both Liberia and Southern Sudan suggested to us that they were interested in joining the police for benevolent reasons: they wanted to work closely with and help or protect the community, or they felt they had a personal quality that would contribute to improving the police. At least one or two policewomen in each focus group cited the influence of a respected person — such as a family member, or in one case the late John Garang⁸ — as their motivation for joining. Interestingly, many Southern Sudanese policewomen said that they were interested in policing in order to spend more time with family or children, something which did not come up in our conversations in Liberia. This may be due in large part to the vast majority of our SSPS interlocutors' experience with the SPLA and the unpredictability and insecurity of guerrilla warfare. In contrast to the Sudanese policewomen, many Liberian policewomen stated that they joined the police service purely as a means of employment. Strikingly, all the women who suggested that their original motivation was to find work told us that they then developed a strong passion for policing and now think of it as much more than “just a job”; it is important to note that

⁸ John Garang led the SPLA through the 2005 peace negotiations and served briefly as Southern Sudan's president before being killed in a helicopter crash in July 2005.

this latter response may be a factor of the demographic of our Liberian focus group participants, all of whom are senior ranking female officers.

Lessons Learned

While many of our lessons learned come out of the Liberian context due to their more extensive experience with implementing a gender policy and gender-sensitive police reform, there are some important lessons for a wider audience stemming from our analysis of the Southern Sudan Police Service. The following are the major, policy-relevant lessons we have identified through the course of our research.

1. Gender-sensitive policies can develop and be successful in the absence of a specific gender policy. Further research is needed to determine how and why this is the case, but it is clear that a gender policy is not a necessary condition for at least some gender-sensitive policies.
2. Strong gender policies can have profound impacts on the breadth and depth of gender mainstreaming within a given police service as demonstrated by the differences between gender-sensitive police reform in Liberia and Southern Sudan.
3. Gender mainstreaming and the promotion of gender equality can be significantly improved through leadership at the highest levels (up to the head of state). This can be through holistic policy implementation as demonstrated by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's leadership in Liberia, or it can be more subtle and pointed such as the 30 per cent unofficial recruitment target in the SSPS which mirrors President Salva Kiir's commitment to having 30 per cent female representation in his cabinet and the Government of Southern Sudan.
4. The number and placement of women in a police service can be profoundly impacted by the links between demobilization of guerrilla forces — both spontaneous and structured — and SSR processes, as we have seen through the transfer of SPLA members to the SSPS. However, in such situations, a senior rank does not necessarily equate to a more qualified woman with substantial decision-making authority.
5. Affirmative action policies — such as lowered educational standards for women — often lead to positive initial results, but can have negative longer term consequences if inadequate support is provided, as Liberian policewomen are now experiencing.

6. Recruitment, retention and promotion of female police officers are systemically impacted by low levels of literacy and their links to discrimination against women and girls regarding education and training.
7. Holistic approaches involving coordination and cooperation between security and justice sector institutions to addressing issues such as sexual and gender-based violence are demonstrating encouraging results and should be strengthened.
8. Civil society organizations can be useful partners in police reform in general and in gender-sensitive police reform in particular. CSOs can provide important context-specific training, oversight of security sector institutions, advocacy and awareness-raising, and can help foster local ownership of SSR processes when they are consulted regularly and in a meaningful way.

Our research and the discussion at a September 2010 policy roundtable⁹ also identified a number of enduring gaps in knowledge and understanding of security sector reform, its gender dimensions and women's roles:

1. Understandings of personal security in the developed world may need to be adjusted to reflect security priorities in conflict-affected, developing countries, particularly for marginalized groups. A stronger understanding of how different groups, including marginalized populations (male and female, young and old), define security for themselves is needed.¹⁰
2. Better understandings of family dynamics — such as decision-making power in families, division of childcare responsibilities and household labour, and early marriage patterns — and how they influence a woman's decision to join the police or maintain a career in policing would be useful in designing recruitment and retention policies.
3. The widely held assumption that women are less corruptible than men is suggested by our research not to be true in certain contexts, and calls for investigation into the gender dynamics of corruption, particularly among the police.
4. The suggestion made to us by some male and female interlocutors in Southern Sudan that the strict hierarchy of the SSPS creates a level playing

9 "At the Margins of Security Sector Reform: Gender and Informal Justice," September 23, 2010, Ottawa. For more information, see www.nsi-ins.ca/english/research/progress/80.asp.

10 This knowledge gap is also raised in Jennifer Erin Salahub and Krista Nerland "Just Add Gender: Challenges to Meaningful Integration of Gender in SSR Policy and Practice," in *The Future of SSR*, ed. Mark Sedra, 263–80 (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2010).

field for female SSPS officers seems counterintuitive based on experiences in other countries, such as Liberia, and warrants further investigation into the question of whether or not the chain of command can create an empowering environment for women.

5. Better understanding of what policies, programs and practices work best to retain female police officers, including what motivates women to pursue careers in policing over the long term, would help refine and improve existing interventions and develop better ones in the future.
6. Understanding the experiences of the spouses (female and male) of police officers, what are their needs and how they support their husbands or wives, particularly in conflict-affected and developing countries, could help develop better policies and programs for incentives, such as health benefits and pensions, as well as identifying a potential untapped resource for the police in terms of creating support structures and interacting with the community.
7. Better understanding of the potential roles that professional associations of female police officers can play would be useful in terms of professional development, advocacy, support structures and in promoting gender mainstreaming.¹¹

Conclusion

The work presented in the preceding pages represents a modest effort to better understand the experiences of a small group of women in two conflict-affected contexts undergoing police reform. Our resources were certainly not exhaustive and therefore the results of our work cannot be considered universal. That said, the perceptions and experiences we were able to glean from engaged focus group participants and interviewees provide valuable insight into the roles women are playing in police reform processes, how those processes could be improved and where further work needs to be done to increase our understanding of the many and nuanced dynamics of gender-sensitive police reform.

The research has also demonstrated that integrating a gender perspective into police reform processes is a valuable exercise for both individual police officers and for the broader community served by the police. It has also shown that while important progress has been made in some areas such as recruitment

¹¹ Indeed, the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces is currently working on a study of female staff associations, the results of which should be available on their website (www.dcaf.ch) in 2011.

of women, significant room for improvement exists. Many challenges remain to be addressed in Liberia, Southern Sudan and elsewhere in their respective police services and more broadly to address the socio-cultural issues at the root of some of the policing-specific challenges. By taking a much more holistic approach to gender-sensitive police reform, national/territorial governments and their development partners will be better placed to achieve not only their immediate security, stabilization and policing objectives, but also their longer term efforts to support the full realization of women's human rights and the promotion of true gender equality. To that end, we present the following policy recommendations:

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Southern Sudan Police Service and the Government of Southern Sudan:

1. Develop and implement a gender policy for the SSPS.
2. Better enforce existing policies regarding issues such as harassment and transfer of personnel to create a working environment that is more empowering for female police officers.
3. Invest heavily in remedial education for policemen and women, with a focus on literacy and language skills, particularly in English so that they are able to fully benefit from existing training programs.
4. Integrate a gender perspective into the operationalization of the Police Act to the extent possible.
5. Develop and implement procedures to collect and analyze sex-disaggregated data on policing staff, including ranks and assignments. Use that data to remedy any imbalances in terms of where certain staff members are assigned.
6. Consider offering training courses in Arabic so that those policewomen and men who are not yet fluent in English are able to develop their professional skills.
7. Engage proactively with Southern Sudanese civil society on issues such as community security, women's and human rights and improving relations with community members.
8. Invest in girls' education — particularly literacy — so that future generations are well placed to compete for merit-based SSPS recruitment and promotions.
9. Work to quickly promulgate and implement the Pensions Act so that the SSPS can begin addressing its unbalanced organizational structure and create opportunities for junior officers and non-commissioned officers to advance into positions currently occupied by personnel who qualify for retirement.
10. Support the development of an active and robust professional association for female police personnel across Southern Sudan and encourage the association to make links with counterparts internationally.

To the Liberia National Police and the Government of Liberia:

1. Better enforce existing policies regarding issues such as harassment and transfer of personnel to create a working environment that is more empowering for female police officers.
2. Expand the services of the Women and Children Protection Service to more robustly respond to cases of SGBV as well as promoting a more positive relationship with communities across the country.
3. Implement more robust strategies to assist women who join the police through affirmative action programs/lowered professional standards to improve their qualifications through longer-term professional development opportunities to ensure they are qualified for internal competitions.
4. Develop and implement a gender-sensitive policy to address retention of LNP personnel.
5. Encourage the development of more positive female role models within the LNP, such as wider use of all-women police units in UN peacekeeping missions or through the Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association.
6. Improve outreach programs to women — including young women — to encourage them to consider a career in policing.
7. Invest in girls' education — particularly literacy — so that future generations are well placed to compete for merit-based LNP recruitment and promotions.
8. Encourage LNP personnel to share their experiences and lessons learned with counterparts internationally, including through networks of professional associations.

To the international community and development partners supporting police reform:

1. Invest in policy-relevant research to address the gaps in knowledge outlined here.
2. Encourage and support the meaningful inclusion of gender-sensitive police reform in peace negotiations and/or peace accords.¹²
3. Improve the context sensitivity and gender analysis of programs supporting police reform in cooperation with national stakeholders.

¹² UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security provides a framework in which this may be pursued.

4. Encourage and support partners in development to draw up and implement gender-sensitive police reform programs that take into account the local context.
5. Invest in improving the gender analysis skills of national staff — such as police trainers and development officers — so that they can act as resources to developing country actors.
6. Take advantage of the many activities that are allowable under OECD regulations regarding Official Development Assistance to increase investment in police reform and take a much longer-term perspective on that support, in cooperation with developing countries.

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