

Gender and Security Sector Reform¹

What are the gender entry points in security sector reform (SSR)? Are gender issues being integrated into current SSR initiatives? As security sector reform is increasingly on the agenda of the international development, peace and security community, it is essential that we develop the arguments, research, methodologies and tools to ensure that gender issues are mainstreamed into SSR policies and programming.

Security Sector Reform: a quick introduction

Though the concept of security sector reform emerged in the late 90s, there is still no generally accepted definition of SSR. The Development Assistance Committee of the OECD (OECD-DAC) describes SSR as “another term used to describe the transformation of the ‘security system’ - which includes all the actors, their roles, responsibilities and actions – working together to manage and operate the system in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance, and thus contributes to a well-functioning security framework.”²

SSR is a holistic approach that emphasises the interconnected nature of the security sector including official institutions (military, police, border authorities, intelligence services, justice and penal systems, and government bodies that manage and monitor the security sector), civil society organisations and the media, donors, private security and private military companies, and non-state armed actors. Though often associated with post-conflict contexts, SSR can take place in transitional and developing countries as well as developed democracies.

Support to SSR processes is being prioritised at the international level. The Development Assistance Committee of the OECD has initiated extensive research on SSR and developed a framework (2005) and handbook (2007) for donors.³ The Commission of the European Communities (part of the EU system) has published *A Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform* in 2006.⁴ There is also currently a UN initiative underway to develop a coordinated interagency approach to SSR.⁵

Why Integrate Gender Issues into SSR?

Though the answers may seem obvious to an audience that has extensive experience in gender issues, the relevance of gender to SSR needs to be convincingly presented to SSR practitioners and policymakers. Though many different approaches can be taken, we have identified three central lines of argument for why gender issues should be incorporated into SSR processes:

1. Mandate fulfilment: providing security for women, men, boys and girls

Though national legislation and policy dictate the specific mandate of security sector institutions, their underlying purpose is the provision of security to individuals, communities and the state. Men, women, girls and boys have different security needs based upon socio-cultural gender differences. These gender-based insecurities, such as domestic violence, trafficking, gun violence, sexual assault, and anti-gay violence, are globally one of the largest threats to human security. Unfortunately, gender-based insecurities are often overlooked and under-resourced within SSR processes and security sector institutions. In order to fulfil its mandate as a security provider, the security sector must take concrete steps to remedy this neglect through effectively preventing and addressing gender-based insecurities.

2. Operational Benefits

The integration of gender issues can improve the efficiency, professionalism and respect for human rights of security sector institutions. Gender mainstreaming initiatives can increase the effectiveness of prevention and response to gender-based violence. They can also help to create a healthy and efficient work environment by lowering internal rates of discrimination, harassment and violence. Collaboration with women's organisations can also have operational benefits as women's organisations often have extensive experience in local security provision, responding to gender-based insecurities and gender training.

The increased recruitment, retention and advancement of women is an operational imperative as they can undertake critical tasks that men cannot. In the context of multidimensional peacekeeping operations, this includes: the screening of female ex-combatants; widening the net of intelligence gathering; performing the cordon and search of women; assisting in the aftermath of sexual violence; and where the segregation of men and women is culturally required.⁶

Women often possess certain skill sets that are highly useful to security sector institutions. Research, specifically within the field of policing, has documented that female officers:

- Are less likely to use excessive or deadly force or be involved in misconduct.
- Are more effective at defusing and de-escalating potentially violent situations.
- Receive more favourable evaluations and fewer citizen complains.
- Report greater support for the principles of community policing.⁷

Though it is important to emphasise the benefits of increased female participation and gender mainstreaming, care must be taken not to portray women as inherently better communicators, peacemakers, or more respectful of human rights. Men and women have an equal capability to possess these traits. However, due to processes of gender socialisation, girls and women are often taught and encouraged to develop these skills to a larger degree than men and boys.

3. Normative Compliance: Equal Rights and Gender Mainstreaming

Taking the initiative to gender mainstream and increase the participation of women within SSR is not only a matter of operational benefits, it also ensures compliance with international norms, instruments and laws such as CEDAW (1979), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

UN SCR 1325 (2000) does not specifically mention SSR but includes relevant mandates such as women's "equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security." It also calls for the special needs of women and girls to be integrated into post-conflict reconstruction; support to local women's peace initiatives; the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence; measures to ensure the human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the police and the judiciary; an end to impunity; and gender sensitive DDR. The Norwegian Government's Action Plan for the Implementation of UN SCR 1325 (2006) specifically references SSR, calling for SSR and arms control measures to take into account the different vulnerabilities of men and women and ensuring that NATO's support for SSR safeguards the political, economic, and social rights of women.

How to Integrate Gender Issues into SSR?

During SSR processes a window of opportunity is opened in which it may be possible to integrate gender issues. In order to ensure sustainable and in-depth mainstreaming of gender issues concrete measures need to be taken to:

- Effectively prevent and respond to gender-based insecurities.
- Create non-discriminatory institutions, and institutional cultures, with low rates of internal sexual harassment and violence.
- Build representative institutions through the increased recruitment, retention and advancement of women and other under-represented groups.
- Ensure a participatory, transparent and accountable security sector through the oversight and involvement of civil society, including women's organisations.

Civil society organisations, including women's organisation, play a key role in integrating gender into SSR processes and security sector institutions. Initiatives that they can take include:

- Advocate for gender-sensitive security policies.
- Lobby for/Implement gender training.
- Provide SSR training to empower women.
- Awareness-raising on gender and SSR.
- Lobby for/Take action to increase the participation of women within SSR and security sector institutions.
- Support mechanisms to prevent and address discrimination and gender-based violence.
- Research and document gender and security issues.⁸

Gender and SSR Toolkit

Despite the clear connection between gender and SSR and the long history of activism and research around gender, peace and security issues, there are only a handful of case studies, reports and articles that have dealt directly with the topic.⁹ In addition, many recent SSR initiatives fail to adequately incorporate gender issues, as is highlighted in a 2007 UK Department for International Development (DFID) evaluation of their SSR programming in Africa.¹⁰

In response to the need for resources on gender and SSR, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) initiated the project *Gender and Security Sector Reform: Creating Knowledge and Building Capacities* in February 2007 to:

- 1) Commission new research to produce **12 gender and security sector reform tools** (20-30 pgs). From these tools, shorter **briefs** (2-4 pgs) will be produced. The full set of resources will be developed into a **Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit**.
- 2) Hold **e-discussions**, an **expert workshop** and a **launch/workshop** to promote and operationalise the Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit

The topics of the twelve tools and briefs are:

1. Introduction to SSR and Gender
2. Police Reform and Gender
3. Defence Reform and Gender
4. Justice Reform and Gender
5. Penal Reform and Gender
6. Border Management and Gender
7. Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector and Gender
8. National Security Policy and Gender
9. Civil Society Oversight of the Security Sector and Gender
10. Privatisation of Security and Gender
11. Integrating Gender into SSR Assessments, Monitoring and Evaluation
12. Gender Training for Security Sector Personnel: lessons learned and good practices

The Toolkit is designed as a practical resource for security sector reform practitioners and will be launched in early 2008. For more information please contact:

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¹ This article is based on a forthcoming DCAF policy paper on gender and security sector reform.

² OECD DAC. *Security System Reform and Governance*. DAC Guidelines and Reference Series. Paris: OECD, 2005. 20. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/8/39/31785288.pdf>

³ OECD-DAC. *Security System Reform and Governance*. OECD, 2005. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/8/39/31785288.pdf>

OECD DAC Handbook on Security Sector Reform: supporting security and justice. OECD Draft Edition, 2007. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/25/38406485.pdf>

⁴ Commission of the European Communities. *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: A Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform*. Brussels. 24 May 2006. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0253en01.pdf

⁵ United Nations Security Council. *Statement by the President of the Security Council*. (S/PRST/2007/3) 21 February 2007. <http://www.diplomatie.be/en/pdf/nu/S%20PRST%202007%203.pdf>

⁶ United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. *Enhancing the Operational Impact of Peacekeeping Operations: Gender Balance in Military and Police Services Deployed to UN Peacekeeping Missions*. Background Paper. New York: UN DPKO Policy Dialogue, 28-29 March 2006. 23. http://www.peacewomen.org/resources/Peacekeeping/DPKO/women_in_peacekeeping.pdf

⁷ Kim Lonsway et al. *Hiring & Retaining More Women: The Advantages to Law Enforcement Agencies*. National Center for Women & Policing: 2003. <http://www.womenandpolicing.org/pdf/NewAdvantagesReport.pdf>

⁸ Kristin Valasek. "Gender and Democratic Security Governance." *Handbook for Civil Society Organisations on Public Oversight of the Security Sector*. Marina Caparini, Eden Cole and Katrin Kinzelbach, eds. Bratislava: Renesans for UNDP & DCAF, Forthcoming December 2007.

⁹ One that is important to mention is the joint International Alert – Initiative for Inclusive Security *Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action* which is directed towards civil society organisations and includes a specific section on gender and SSR. It can be found online at: http://www.international-alert.org/our_work/themes/gender_training.php

¹⁰ Nicole Ball et al. *Security and Justice Sector Reform Programming in Africa*. Evaluation Working Paper 23. London: DFID, April 2007. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/42/1/38635081.pdf>