Security Sector Reform for Practitioners

FBA

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The aim of SSR is to meet the security needs of men, women, boys, and girls through an effective, affordable, transparent, and accountable security sector governed by democratic principles.
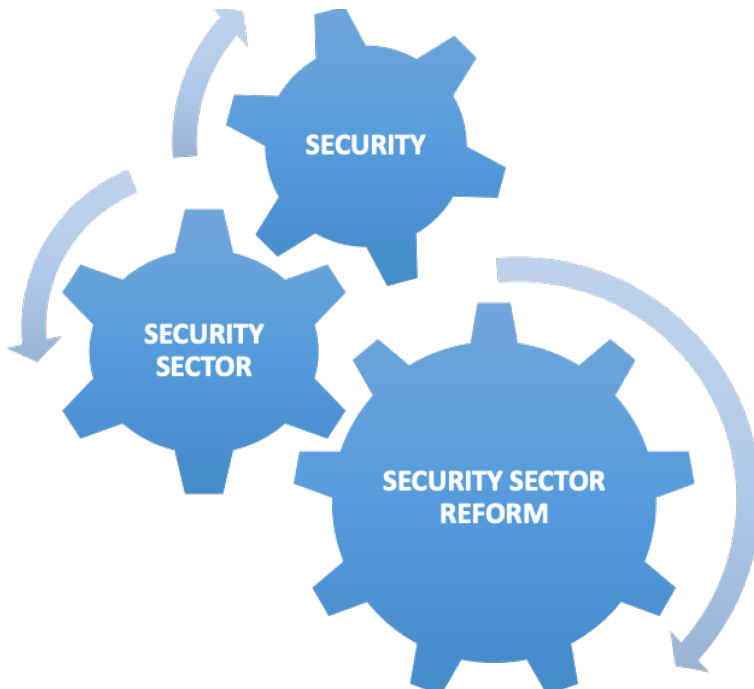
Who is this for?

The SSR booklet aims to provide the reader with a basic overview of security sector reform (SSR) as well as some initial insights necessary to engage in SSR programming. Building on the FBA Global SSR Course material, the booklet is designed for recipients new to the thematic area and extends to experienced practitioners as an aide-mémoire in their daily work.

The FBA SSR Unit offers training and advice and supports policy development in the area of security sector reform. It further contributes to Sweden's bilateral cooperation strategies in a number of countries in conflict and post-conflict settings and works with multilateral actors to strengthen their SSR capacities.

1. Conceptual Introduction

In order to conceptualize SSR, it is important to understand its interrelated components. This first chapter outlines the concept of 'security' while attempting to answer the questions of how this notion has changed over the last decades and why this is relevant to SSR.

1.1 SECURITY

A modern notion of security has come to incorporate not only conventional forms of external military threats but also the need for states to ensure the security and safety of their people (men, women, girls, and boys), commonly referred to as '**Human Security**'.

Central to the human security approach is the idea that people have 'the right to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair... with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential'.[1] Human security recognizes that peace, development and human rights are interlinked, and human security considers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to be equal.[2]

The 1994 Human Development Report found that human security includes seven aspects: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security.

A **human security approach is 'people-centred'**, and recognizes that men, women, boys and girls, together with other characteristics such as age, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, etc. have different **security needs**. Consequently, different security strategies and security policies are required to address these needs. There is no 'one size fits all' when addressing different types of insecurities, and responses must be flexible and tailored to different contexts. However, addressing them requires a firm understanding of the particular security threats experienced by different groups, as well as the participation of those groups in formulating the responses. By focusing on the root causes of the individual's insecurities, human security is also **prevention oriented**.

1 UN General Assembly resolution 66/290, September 2012.
2 Ibid.

2. The Security Sector and its Actors

What is the security sector? What is it comprised of? The first thing that comes to mind is often the army or the police, who are important actors within the security sector. But they are far from the only ones. If we talk about security sector reform, we must first have an idea of who is involved in the security sector.

In most countries, **the provision, management and oversight of security services are delivered by a wide range of actors**, all of whom should be involved in a reform process. A whole-of-state approach that involves the different elements in the security and justice chain will improve the overall effectiveness of a reform process. It is also important to take into account relevant non-state actors, such as civil society, community leaders and customary security providers.

The organisation of the security sector will look different in each context. In the figure here, the security actors are organised/ structured according to their main mandate.

	USE OF FORCE	DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT	JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW
State (duty-bearers)	"Core security actors" Police, military gendarmeries; presidential guards; intelligence and security services; coast guards; border guards, customs authorities, corrections	Executive Ministries Security Councils Parliament Ombudsman National human rights comission Public complaints commissions	Judiciary Corrections services criminal investigation and prosecution services Human rights commissions and ombudsman
Non-state	Paramilitary Private security companies Liberation armies, guerrilla armies, militia, organized crime, political party militias	Traditional authorities Village councils Neighbourhood groups Religious councils Civil society, trade unions Human Rights Defenders Media	Traditional justice systems Religious courts Private dispute settlemet Dispute settlement within non-state armed groups

Note: All humans (individuals and groups) are rights-holders

3. Objectives of Security Sector Reform

An SSR process should aim to make the security sector more effective, transparent, accountable and affordable. These objectives are closely interlinked and mutually reinforce one another.

Effective   Transparent   Accountable   Affordable

If any one of these objectives is not adequately considered, it will have a negative impact on the others.

As demonstrated in the previous section, the security sector involves a multitude of actors, and its reform is thus often a long-term project. Reform must necessarily take place in different stages, considering not only priorities but also the necessary sequencing of efforts to ensure that the basic building blocks of reform are in place before the next phase commences. Moreover, it is essential that the security sector reform is appropriate for the country's wider development process. In these stages, it is important to **maintain a strategic overview of the objectives of the process as a whole**. Even when

addressing the more technical aspects of sector-specific reform, such as community policing, it is vital to consider how the specific efforts contribute to the effectiveness, affordability, accountability and transparency of the security sector and the wider reform process.

3.1 EFFECTIVE

Security actors should strive to become more effective in the provision of security to people, with a clear focus on addressing the human security needs of the population. Even when reform strives to improve defence and border security, or to combat terrorism, the **ultimate aim of the increased effectiveness should be to make people secure**. Effective security operations are sometimes translated into train-and-equip programmes, such as security force assistance that pinpoints a specific operational capability. While it is important to focus and prioritise, it is necessary to see all the challenges in the system in order to genuinely increase the effectiveness of the security sector and to transform organisations.

An effective security sector is dependent on **clearly defined human security objectives and policies**. This requires effective communication and understanding between the political leadership and military command structures as well as clear mandates, legislation, roles, and responsibilities. The security actors should be well organised to respond to security challenges, staffed with personnel who are trained for their specific tasks, and have clear work descriptions, access to relevant equipment, and are motivated to improve. The staff should be representative of the population that it serves and should understand their responsibilities as representatives of the state and in building trust with the population.

Increasing operational effectiveness must always be undertaken, while at the same time ensuring accountability, in terms of respect for human rights standards, national legislation and codes of conduct.

If this is not the case, the SSR process may increase the capacity of security forces to do harm. Increased effectiveness should also be affordable, as the nation undergoing reform should be able to bear the cost of the reform in the longer term.

3.2 ACCOUNTABLE

Accountability in the security sector is ensured through a number of processes. It requires **external oversight and control**, involving the monitoring and regulation of the conduct of security providers. This can take the form of media reporting on corrupt behaviour, financial control of expenditures, or misconduct tried by the judiciary. Actors with external oversight and control functions include parliamentary committees, media, civil society, ombudsmen, the executive and the judiciary.

Accountability of the security sector also requires **internal control mechanisms** to monitor and identify potential misconduct by security sector personnel. Internal control can take the form of whistle-blower functions and the protection of personnel who report misconduct, a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption, and training on code of conduct for staff. Not only formal mechanisms but also a change in behaviour and attitude are required if an organizational culture and management based on accountability are to be promoted.

Proactive accountability: to prevent something from happening (vetting, codes of conduct, screening, training, internal discipline, etc.)

Reactive accountability: to react to something that has happened (disciplinary action, dismissal, legal action, etc.)

Accountability is critical to ensure security actors really do provide effective security to the people and is paramount in building trust and cooperation with the people.

3.3 TRANSPARENT

A key factor to promote accountability is transparency meaning that **necessary information is readily available and accessible to the public**, such as annual budget publications, reports from audit institutions, parliamentary committee reports, etc. The right to access information is recognised in international and regional human rights laws and is protected in most countries through constitutions and law.

A transparent security sector is one in which the process of planning, programming, budgeting, and implementation is publicly available and concerned actors, such as media, civil society and parliamentarians, have adequate information about the decisions made by security sector institutions. A **lack of transparency can, on the other hand, undermine the security sector's legitimacy** and perpetuate recurrent conflict and human rights abuses.

There are occasions on which limitations to transparency are legitimate, principally for the protection of state secrets and the protection of individual privacy. Some information may, for example, need to be classified to protect the effectiveness and efficiency of the military or intelligence services. However, this cannot be used as a blanket justification to keep all information classified in order to avoid scrutiny, and should be an exception rather than the rule. Special oversight mechanisms should be in place for processes and information that should be kept confidential.

3.4 AFFORDABLE
Sound financial management of the security sector is essential if a country is to have effective, efficient, and professional security organizations that are capable of protecting its people. The security sector needs to be structured in accordance with what is needed and in line with what a government can afford in the long term. Many of

the countries undergoing SSR are highly reliant on foreign financial assistance, which makes the idea of a self-sustaining security sector appear unlikely - even given time.

Sound financial planning means that security spending should be based on agreed and realistic objectives, prioritisation of money allocation, and efficient use of resources. Public expenditure reviews of the security sector are a helpful tool to obtain a better understanding of resources, and how they are spent.

4. Principles of Reform

4.1 LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Local ownership, or inclusive national ownership, refers to an inclusive and consultative process, methodology and outcome based on the perspectives, priorities and vision of stakeholders within the society undergoing reform.[3] The principle of local ownership is a key prerequisite for a successful SSR process, as it contributes to:

• improving state-society relationships
• increasing accountability
• advancing human security
• promoting gender responsiveness, and
• improving effective security provision

This is particularly the case for external actors, including donors to bilateral cooperation or regional organizations, to ensure that the host country maintains ownership in terms of decision-making, leadership, and long-term funding of the SSR process.

But - who are the local actors? **Building local ownership requires listening to wide segments of society**, beyond the political elites and actors based in the capitals. All those affected by the provision of security services must be taken into account, from children to elders, males and females, working in every sector of society, with different levels of education, different religious beliefs, economic status, and with diverse gender, ethnic, racial and linguistic identities.

3 UN SSR Integrated Technical Guidance Note (2012) p. 13.

Engaging at the community level can be achieved through community structures, such as district or provincial security committees, community safety councils, local security forums or citizen security councils. These structures should be incorporated into SSR programmes from the inception and design stages, so that decisions on security structures, mandates and policies are informed by people at the community level, who often have the best understanding of the security challenges faced on the ground. It may also involve establishing oversight and engagement mechanisms that provide the population with the ability to contribute, influence and monitor security sector policies and programming.

4.2 GENDER RESPONSIVE

Gender is used to describe the socially constructed norms that dictate the roles, behaviours and attributes that are viewed as appropriate for women, men, girls, and boys.

Gender norms vary between societies and over time; the expectations and conditions for girls and women (or boys and men) are not the same everywhere. This means gender is different from our biological sex which is relatively constant. For example, the biological definition of a boy is the same in Afghanistan and Denmark but the expectations, needs and opportunities of boys in Denmark and Afghanistan are very different, such as in terms of the expectations for them to support and provide for their families. As adults, we rarely reflect on this, but it has an impact on how we perceive each other and ourselves. If we live our whole life in a society that appreciates girls who are quiet and polite, a girl, or adult woman who speaks up with opposing views may will be met with resistance. Research shows that men who speak up in meetings are often considered professional and capable, whereas women are more likely to be judged negatively. This leads to **inequality in representation, resources, and access to rights.**

Gender roles change over time and interplay with other factors such as wealth, education, social status, and ethnicity. For example, a woman from a discriminated community is likely to meet more resistance when trying to engage in peace processes, than a woman belonging to the political elite.

As a consequence, the **security needs of men, women, boys, and girls vary**. As an example, men often face security threats in the public sphere, whereas women often face security threats in family contexts, which are considered private. Whereas the risk of death or injury through combat is reduced for men after conflict, the risk of sexual and gender-based violence against women tends to increase in a post-conflict setting. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes may also hide a number of security needs of men and boys. To avoid making incorrect assumptions or not capturing relevant information on security, it is critical to undertake gender analysis and to design a gender-responsive SSR.

Furthermore, gender roles affect the representation of men and women in peace and SSR processes, as well as the right of women to participate in public affairs and in the security and defence committees of parliament. Security is still a male-dominated field and women are universally under-represented in core security institutions, such as the police services and the armed forces. A representative security sector has many advantages, such as increased access to qualified staff, improved civilian trust, and local ownership.

5. Reform Processes

5.1 POLITICAL

Frequently, SSR is misguidedly interpreted as a purely technical reform process. In contrast, **SSR is inherently political** as it deals with transforming power dynamics, both between state actors and non-state actors. SSR involves renegotiating the social contract between individuals and groups in society on the one hand, and the state on the other. Strong political commitment and leadership is therefore key for successful reform, as it will determine the objectives placed on the national agenda, and can wield influence to create consensus around those objectives.

SSR reform often involves shifting the perspective from understanding security as limited to the security of a regime or state, to providing security services to the population and including a human security approach. Such a shift requires a whole-of-state approach, that takes into account, among other entities:

• Ministries managing core security actors, such as the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of the Interior
• Ministry of Finance that provides the financial framework
• Parliament committees and independent institutions (such as National Audit Office or Ombudsperson´s Office) that carry out oversight functions.

It also requires a political vision and a common understanding of the expected results, the timeline and process.

5.2 HOLISTIC

SSR requires a holistic approach, which means that any support must take into account the **interconnectedness** of different institutions, functions, and the parts of the security and justice chains. Specific technical reform programmes in a certain sector should be mindful of, and designed to support, the overall development and reform agenda of the country.

A state's strategic response to the identified security needs are most commonly formulated in a national security strategy or policy. Once these overarching objectives and priorities are defined, they must be translated into sectoral reform programmes run by the respective security sector institution.

It is important to bear in mind that activities targeting one area will influence and are influenced by activities in other related areas. For example, even the best possible police reform programme might not be successful in reducing crime unless there is also reform of key functions in the prosecution procedures, judicial processes, or correctional systems. Likewise, it is important that oversight bodies mandated to oversee, such as intelligence services, have sufficient resources and a mandate to carry out their functions efficiently, including having access to classified information, sufficient investigative powers, financial resources and staff at the appropriate level.

In adopting this holistic approach, it is important not to forget non-state actors and how they may impact the broader reform process. Engaging with non-state actors, such as traditional community security providers, community councils or other actors from civil society, may be the key to the success and sustainability of reform efforts.

5.3 TECHNICAL

As the SSR process progresses, it becomes increasingly technical. Once strategic priorities have been defined, the reform requires **thematic competence in a number of sectors**, such as policing, defence, intelligence, and border management – including at the strategic, operational, and technical levels. Depending on the nature of the reform, expertise is likely to be needed in areas such as logistics, budgeting, change management, procurement, parliamentary oversight, and internal conduct and disciplinary structures. While addressing these technical aspects of SSR, it is important not to lose sight of the broader objectives and principles of the reform, as well as the interconnectedness between its different components.

For any further questions, please contact the FBA Security Sector Reform Unit at ssr@fba.se

Additional Resources

- OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform – Supporting Security & Justice - OECD DAC, 2007

- UN Security Council Resolution 2151 (2014)

- UN SSR Integrated Technical Guidance Notes, 2012

- EU SSR Framework, 2016

- AU SSR Policy Framework, 2013

- ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance, 2018

- OSCE Guidelines on Security Sector Governance and Reform, 2016

- NATO Allied Joint Doctrine for Security Force Assistance (SFA), 2016

- NATO Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction, 2015

The Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) is the Swedish government agency for peace, security and development.

FBA supports international peace operations and international development cooperation. The agency conducts training, research and method development in order to strengthen peacebuilding and statebuilding in conflict and post-conflict countries. We also recruit civilian personnel and expertise for peace operations and election observation missions led by the EU, UN and OSCE. The agency is named after Count Folke Bernadotte, the first UN mediator.

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