INTRODUCTION TO SECURITY SYSTEM REFORM[1]

Security system reform (SSR) is fundamentally important to effective conflict prevention and peace-building. It helps ensure and sustain the stability that is necessary for development.

This issues brief explains the concept of "security system reform", and why support for SSR is important. Complementing and building on the DAC Guidance on Security System Reform, it can also serve as an introduction to sector-specific work by the Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform (www.gfn-ssr.org).

Underlined words are hyperlinks to topics available at www.oecd.org/dac/conflict/issuesbriefs.

KEY MESSAGES:

- The security system includes the justice and penal sectors, customs, police, and military, as well as institutions and mechanisms for control, oversight and accountability. For reform to be sustainable in the long term and to ensure that activities across the system reinforce each other, it is essential that external engagement in any of these areas is informed by an holistic understanding of the entire system possible interconnections within it.

- SSR seeks to increase partner countries' ability to meet security needs in their societies in a manner consistent with democratic norms, human rights and sound principles of governance, transparency and the rule of law.

- Strengthening operational processes, disciplinary measures and individual competencies will only have marginal impact in the absence of broader structural reforms aimed at setting the security system within this governance framework.

- Involving very sensitive issues relating to the distribution and allocation of power, SSR is highly political in nature.

- The level of partner buy-in will determine the entry-points, breadth, depth and pace of reforms. Without the interest and commitment of state and civil society actors, SSR will be unlikely to be successful over the long term.

- Effective donor support for SSR requires coherence across security, foreign affairs and development activities. Engagement must be sustained over the long term

- Certain activities to support SSR can be counted as Official Development Assistance (ODA).

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[1] The drafting of this issues brief was led by the DAC CPDC Secretariat.

Ensuring security means ensuring the safety and well-being of people and their freedom from fear.

Security, diplomatic and development engagement must be coherent

...i.e. assistance strategies need to be are integrated in a mutually reinforcing way.

An accountable, effective and democratically overseen security system is a force for peace and stability

INTRODUCTION

Security

Security is fundamental to reducing poverty, protecting human rights and creating an enabling environment for development. The concept of security has been broadened beyond traditional notions of territorial defence to include the safety and well-being of people and their freedom from fear.

Security System Reform

SSR covers three inter-related challenges facing all states: (1) developing a clear institutional framework for the provision of security that integrates security and development policy and includes all relevant actors; (2) strengthening the governance of the security institutions; and (3) building capable and professional security services that are accountable to civil authorities.

Emphasising effective, legitimate and democratically accountable institutions, SSR provides a framework to develop appropriate strategies to meet a nationally-defined vision of security and development needs. This approach will integrate human security and gender equality imperatives.[2]

Security and development are interconnected

If states are to escape from a spiral of insecurity, crime and under-development, the theoretical links between development and security must be translated into greater co-operation and coherence between security, diplomacy and development policy communities.

This inter-relationship of security and development priorities should not mean that development agencies abandon their own objectives, roles, policy and financing instruments, and accountability, which are necessarily focussed on the goal of poverty reduction. Respecting the competences and constraints of each party is essential to any co-operative arrangement across government. Transparency among security, diplomatic and development agencies about objectives, allocations and operations will help ensure that activities are integrated into a mutually reinforcing joined-up strategy.

Why is support for SSR important?

All governments have a core responsibility to provide the conditions that allow their citizens to enjoy freedom from fear – fear of violence, oppression or injustice, including threats to personal security, torture, arbitrary arrest and other violent acts. Ineffective policing, weak justice and penal systems, and corrupt militaries mean that the poor and vulnerable suffer disproportionately from crime and fear (see table). Security sector institutions, policies and personnel can also be a threat to the security of women and girls, and children may be at risk of recruitment as child soldiers.

As stated in *Security System Reform and Governance* (DAC, 2005), an accountable, effective and efficient security system, operating under civilian control within a democratic context, acting according to international standards, and respecting human rights, can be a force for peace and stability. It provides the necessary framework within which political, economic and social development can occur.

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[2] See tipsheets on safety and security-related topics and on institutional and organizational change produced by the DAC Network on Gender Equality

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN GETTING INVOLVED

Understand the context[3]

All SSR-related activities must be informed by knowledge of the context

It is essential that a contextual analysis is included in planning any SSR process by asking, for example,:

- What is the nature of the security system apparatus and its engagement with political structures, civil society and the public?

- What agents or groups have been providing security services in the immediate past? What role could they play in a reformed security sector? Will they be the drivers or spoilers of reform?

- What major deficiencies of this system need to be tackled?

- To what extent should and can the international community engage in sensitive domestic issues involving the exercise of political power and national sovereignty?

- How might international actors initiate, foster, and respond to an interest in SSR and facilitate the political support necessary for change?

- How can a wider range of stakeholders (including parliament, civil society and the media) be brought into the process?

- Who are the drivers and potential spoilers of SSR initiatives?

- Given that the security services may have interests in the economy, what kind of incentives could be found for them to disengage from these interests as part of the reform process?

WHY DOES SSR MATTER TO GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT?	
The role of the state and its security forces have a direct impact upon the opportunities for sustainable development and peoples' physical security and human rights.	Where a government is unable or unwilling to control the military, other security actors, and their budgets, democratic and accountable government is unlikely to be able to take root and protect against human rights abuses.
The provision of law and order is a core government responsibility and is part of the necessary framework for economic and social development.	Making the security forces more competent without strengthening the institutional capacity to manage them effectively, may result in abuses of power.
The rule of law is necessary for the protection and promotion of economic, social, civil and political rights. It is correlated with economic growth and investment.	A strong, independent judiciary is necessary to resolve and determine disputes, to constrain the arbitrary exercise of state power and combat corruption.
WHY DO SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT MATTER TO THE POOR?	
Poor people themselves say so.	Lack of access to justice fosters corruption.
Poor people are less likely to invest in improving their own futures if they feel insecure.	Poor people's efforts to get out of poverty are hampered by corrupt police and judicial officers and by abuses of their human rights.
Poor people and vulnerable groups (such as women and girls) suffer disproportionately from all levels of crime, including theft or corruption.	Poor safety and security incline citizens to form self-help policing initiatives that can grow into vigilantism, and generally reduce respect for the law.
Insecurity can prevent the poor and most vulnerable groups from accessing government services.	
Based on: DFID Understanding Security Sector Reform (2002) and Safety, Security and Access to Justice Guidelines (2002)	

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[3] Example agency guidance on conflict analysis is provided on the DAC's CPDC webpage at http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict/analysis). The DAC Network on Governance is looking at political economy analysis to identify good practice in using the different approaches such as drivers of change analysis (go to http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance). See also www.conflictsensitivity.org.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

1. Designing and implementing support for SSR

Analysis will help to identify the key issues

Contextual analysis and institutional assessment will help to identify what constraints and opportunities exist in respect of security system reform. Such analysis will help define the focus of reforms and whether the emphasis should be more on capacity or integrity.[4]

SSR should be seen largely as a governance issue within a wider context of reform that strengthens the appropriate instruments within the civilian policy sectors. In addition, it is important to ensure that the security system is, and is perceived to be, an integral part of society – interacting with other components (the community, the private sector etc). The same governance (including regulatory) framework based on the rule of law must, therefore, be systematically applied to it. Support to increase operational capacity should not proceed without enhanced accountability and oversight.

...and to determine the reform measures needed.

While any final programme will inevitably be a result of negotiation and compromise, the willingness or capacity of partner countries to look at issues of integrity should be taken into account in order to determine what kind of support can be provided.

Define objectives to address two sets of issues:[5]

➢ Quality of governance – the clarity, openness, responsiveness and equity of the relations between security system institutions, the wider government apparatus, and the public.

➢ Technical competence – the human resources capacities and the institutional structures and process that underpin the functioning of the security system.

Reform activities will address both the quality of governance (notably structural integrity) and its technical competence.

SSR activities to date have largely focused on the development of individual capacity and integrity, through, for example, improving operational or human rights training and/or disciplinary processes. Programmes must *not*, however, neglect the importance of structural capacity and integrity. Without broader structural reforms, the former will have only a limited impact. (See the table below for the range of areas that could be supported).

Engage stakeholders – The principle that local ownership is a pre-condition of success is often cited but is not sufficiently adhered to. Security system reforms cannot be imposed from outside.

International actors must work with local stakeholders to create a shared vision of SSR. It is important to identify jointly how, in the national context, any particular SSR-related activity fits into the broad spectrum of their security and development needs. This helps both sides to set their ambitions and expectations at realistic levels.

Security system reforms cannot be imposed from outside, but must be worked out with local stakeholders

Often a central objective of international engagement in fragile states is "state building" and to enhance the capacity to govern. This may mean that the dialogue on security and development issues initially tends to focus on government actors. However, donors should seek to work with parliaments and court user groups, the media and civil society to build their capacity to engage in security related issues. Such assistance can strengthen the performance of essential oversight roles and thus the ability to hold the security

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[4] The DAC GOVNET's work in 2005–2006 includes a focus on capacity development.
[5] Understanding and Supporting Security Sector Reform; DFID (2002).

system services (and the executive) to account.

By fostering informed civil society engagement and public discussion on the role of the security system in society, donors can enhance local demand for reform, thus catalysing and sustaining the reform process. Dialogue should be as broad based as possible, and include marginalized groups and women's organisations. Gender equality aspects must form part of the reform process to ensure that the experiences and needs of women and men are addressed.

Identify entry points – Building public awareness and engagement is key first step. This means encouraging a broader stakeholder dialogue on reforms, working with civil society to enhance national demand for security system accountability. In addition to rule of law and access to justice programmes, other entry points may include:

Security reviews – A broad and formal consultation process on security issues can act to catalyse reforms and sustain them over time. A review will determine the main security threats and opportunities facing the state and its citizens, and assess the ability of current structures to meet them. These might include, for example, gaps or fragilities in the judicial and penal sectors.[6]

Operational training programmes – For DAC donors, the SSR policy agenda focuses primarily on governance-related and democratic oversight dimensions. Partner governments in developing countries will, however, also be concerned with the operational effectiveness of their security services (including the impact of HIV/AIDS). Interaction between security officials from different countries to help make the security services more professional can act as an effective "socialisation" tool and as a means to get buy-in for wider reform programmes. Mainstreaming gender into training activities can help address issues such as discrimination, gender stereotypes within the security sector, and sexual harassment.

Comprehensive support for SSR – The example of Sierra Leone

The United Kingdom support for SSR in Sierra Leone has combined security, development and diplomatic activities designed to both create an enabling environment for long-term reform and to address shorter-term technical and financial needs. A key principle of this engagement has been to promote local ownership of the reform process and to help Sierra Leone to identify its own security needs, providing a foundation for sustainable national development.

The cornerstone of this process was a wide-ranging security sector review led by the Sierra Leone Office of National Security on behalf of the National Security Council. The review included community-level consultations and broad public dialogue on the threats and opportunities faced by the country. This review has resulted in a locally developed SSR reform strategy, and has provided the basis for the development of an overarching national security policy that has political, institutional and public support. The key findings of the security sector review have also fed directly into the security and governance pillar of the Sierra Leone PRSP.

Source: DFID SILSEP Programme

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[6] The DAC Fragile States Group has begun a process to provide practical guidance to both donors and affected countries on how to ensure that their support to service delivery remains effective in fragile states. One focus of this work is policing, prosecution and penal services.

Small Arms programmes – Initiatives that reform the way in which weapons are managed can be a relatively neutral way of encouraging wider discussion on security issues. Both the government and the public will have to consider how people can be made to feel safe and secure enough to give up their weapons. National small arms commissions that bring together government and civil society representatives are particularly effective at encouraging this type of dialogue.

Public expenditure management – In many cases, the starting point for security sector reform may be to address problems outside the security sector, relating to wider questions of administrative capacity and political governance. For instance, public expenditure management reform seeks to enhance democratic control of security expenditure, improving financial accountability of the security services. It addresses any inappropriate roles played by the security services in the economy, such as their involvement in natural resource exploitation. When linked to a broader security needs assessment, change in this area can generate widespread public and political support for reform. Practitioners should be aware, however, of the potential risks of focusing on expenditure levels, as governments can seek to hide security/defence spending off budget or through other non-security related Ministries – thus making security budgets less transparent and therefore less accountable.

Public sector reform – There are strong linkages between public sector reform/pay reform and the underlying political structure and processes that are relevant to SSR. Poor, irregular and inadequate pay are common challenges in developing countries and affect governments' capacity to make security services work for the poor. Where donors are planning or implementing support to partners for pay reform and broader civil-service improvements, there is an opportunity to integrate SSR-related objectives. The level of political competition, the degree to which public revenues are diverted into patronage politics, and the quality of institutions will be the key determinants of the policy options available in the specific context.

Peace Agreements – Post-conflict environments or instances of state crisis can provide a good opportunity for security-system overhaul. In many cases the resistance to reform has been swept away with the former regime. How to incorporate SSR into peace agreements remains a challenge that needs further research.

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) – During post-conflict transition, short-term DDR and longer-term SSR need to be linked. The DDR of armed groups and the restructuring of security services can provide a unique, and under-used, entry point for broader discussions on security service structures and role.

2. Help partners develop and implement a reform strategy:

Broadly, and taking a long-term perspective, the main components of SSR programmes are outlined in this section. The box below relates them to the range of components making up the security system.

Legal framework – Ensure that the legal framework, within which the security system institutions operate, is in line with democratic norms and procedures.

SSR engagement may be usefully integrated into efforts to tackle wider questions of administrative capacity and political governance

In post-conflict transition contexts, DDR and peace processes can open a unique space for broader SSR reforms.

Certain key components of SSR programmes can be identified...

Oversight and accountability – Strengthen structures and mechanisms for holding the security system to account, procedurally and financially. Internally within the security services, this may focus on (i) transparent and equitable disciplinary procedures; (ii) a code of ethics; (iii) mechanisms through which public complaints can be made and effectively dealt with (e.g. Police Complaints Authorities). Key institutions include internal affairs services, Ombudsman office, parliamentary, committees as well as civil society.

Management capacity – Enhance the strategic and financial management capacity within the security system. This will involve increasing efficiency and transparency, and, thus, help make the reform process sustainable. Support for gender equality initiatives at the structural, policy and personnel levels is also essential.

Technical capacity and capability – Keep in mind that, even if development assistance will emphasise governance norms and procedures, a core function of partner governments is to provide their citizens with security from crime and violence. The professionalisation of security actors (military, police, customs etc.) helps them to deliver these services more efficiently and effectively.

Implementation capacity – Ensure the institutional capacity to assess, plan, direct and oversee the reform process over the long term. Objectives, timeframes and ambitions must be set accordingly. Throughout the process, oversight institutions and civil society will need to strengthened in order to be capable of holding executive authorities to account on its commitment to the reforms.

SSR – What could be supported?

Military reform: Support structural and governance reforms in respect of armed forces (beyond the traditional budgetary focus) and help adapt rules of engagement for such forces in line with their role in democratic society.

Police Reform: Build, at the national level, the capacity of the police to develop strategies on how to combat organised crime and police borders and communities. Help establish a transparent system of internal affairs and a police-education system that reflects the ethos of democratically accountable service. At the community level, reforms to enhance contact between police officers and citizens can increase trust and effectiveness.

Customs Reform: Help establish efficient and transparent customs procedures (key to raising revenues and fighting corruption.

Intelligence reform: Support reforms to the rules of engagement of intelligence services and reforms to ensure adequate control and oversight. This is an often neglected part of the security system.

Judicial reform: Help develop the legal framework and capacity to ensure that laws are created, applied and enforced fairly, uniformly and efficiently, according to international standards, to both public officials and ordinary citizens, protecting them also from abuses of state power.

Prison Reform: Support measures for the regular and transparent review of prison conditions, human rights training (e.g. use-of-force training) etc.

In many cases, work on one institution will not succeed unless complementary work is carried out on others (such as between police and prosecution services, or justice and prison systems) Wherever these links exist, it is imperative to join up the reforms in each area of engagement.

Policy coherence – The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI)

In 2003, after several years of ethnic tensions and economic decline, the Solomon Islands Government sought the assistance of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to help restore the rule of law and basic functions of government. The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was deployed in July 2003, drawing on contingents from PIF member countries and led, in the security sector, by Australia.

The underpinning principles of RAMSI have been not only to restore law and order but also to build capacity and the support structure of security-sector institutions in the Solomon Islands. With this objective, experienced external personnel have been placed in line or advisory positions in the Royal Solomon Islands police force (RSIP), judiciary and corrective services. In parallel, advisers have also been deployed to assist in reversing the chronic state of corruption and economic decline; as well as to assist in building the machinery of government and administrative structures.

The integrated approach has required effective, inter-departmental coordination by participating countries involving foreign affairs, defence, international development, finance and treasury and justice departments and national police services. In-country, the Office of the Special Coordinator works to ensure policy and strategic coherence between the various elements of RAMSI, key donors and between RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Government.

Source: Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID).

...in providing support to them, international actors must adopt a whole-of-government approach

3. International coherence and co-ordination

SSR is a cross-cutting policy area – The nature and breadth of SSR activities necessitates a whole-of-government approach.[7] For example, police, defence and judicial officials from within donor governments or organisations often have key expertise that helps to guide engagement in the field. Joining up these efforts requires increased co-operation and coherence between security, political and development communities in both planning and implementation. Each community will have its own role, but each must be transparent about objectives, allocations and operations.

...piecemeal engagement must be avoided.

Among donors, identify and harmonise roles – Because of the interconnected nature of the security system, reform (or lack thereof) in one sector can affect the outcome of reforms in another; therefore piecemeal approaches must be avoided. A single donor is unlikely to be able to provide all the support necessary to sustain reforms across the entire system. Wide consultation with other donors and multilateral institutions (such as the UN and International Financial Institutions) is essential to assess what reforms are already underway and where value can be added.

Putting in place monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will help ensure successful outcomes.

Monitoring and Evaluation

As SSR is a long-term process, monitoring and evaluation will be required to ensure that programme and reform objectives are adjusted as necessary. The involvement of local stakeholders in the process will increase local capacity and ownership and, therefore, the overall sustainability of SSR.

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[7] The DAC Fragile States Group is pursuing a workstream on policy coherence during 2005-2006.

Specific challenges must be tackled in post-conflict situations, including locally-operating armed groups.

SSR In post-conflict transitions

Post-conflict governments face continued instability and violence connected to the proliferation of armed groups and the collapse or continued absence of the rule of law. These situations can be characterised as "no war, no peace", and it is vital that immediate post-conflict efforts also address the ongoing destabilising impacts of continuing rebel activity, banditry and the actions of other "spoiling" groups. The engagement of these groups in commercial activity, and their inter-relationship with it, is characterised by their need to finance armed capacity and activities, or by pure opportunism and a desire to acquire funds (often by violence or extortion). Moreover, their capacity to disrupt reform processes can disproportionately elevate their status and bargaining power in peace talks.

In the space that may open up following a peace agreement, therefore, short-term priorities, such as integrating the (often young) members of these groups into normal life, must be integrated into longer term peace-building measures to ensure stability and development – notably SSR.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Websites and reference documents can be found through www.oecd.org/dac/conflict/themes.

Links

Global resources:

Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform

The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces

Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management

The Bonn International Centre for Conversion

The International Peace Academy

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Security Sector Development Advisory Team (SSDAT)

United Nations Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery

African resources:

African Security Dialogue and Research (ASDR)

Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)

Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) – South Africa

Institute for Security Studies (ISS)

References

This issues brief can also be seen as an introduction to the compendium of good practice in SSR, developed by the Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform (GFN-SSR)

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