

Gender and Security Sector Reform Working Group

Background Information

1. Introduction

Security sector reform (SSR) is increasingly recognised as a crucial part of development, peacebuilding and human rights work. It is essential that gender is analysed, addressed and mainstreamed into all SSR initiatives in order to ensure the right to security for women, men, girls and boys, as well as to create a just, democratic and effective security sector.

The institutions and organisations collectively responsible for ensuring day-to-day security are known as the security sector. This sector is commonly understood to include all the organisations that have the authority to use, or order the use of, force or the threat of force, to protect individuals, communities and the state.

The official security sector includes: international and regional forces (including peacekeeping operations), military, police, border guards, customs authorities and intelligence services, government bodies that manage and monitor the security sector, and the institutions responsible for guaranteeing the rule of law, including the judiciary and penal systems. Civil society organisations, the media and donors can play important roles in SSR processes. Armed opposition groups and private security firms also need to be addressed within SSR.

Reform of the security sector takes place on a daily level in both developed and developing countries and previously piecemeal initiatives are increasingly being framed as part of a comprehensive process of SSR. Support to SSR processes in conflict-affected and transitional countries is recently being prioritised at the international level. For example: both the OECD and UNDP are expanding their work on SSR, and the UN is currently developing its policy framework for SSR. The new UN Peacebuilding Commission has an implicit SSR agenda, being mandated to propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery.

A key challenge to this recent upsurge of SSR initiatives is to integrate a gender-sensitive approach that promotes the security of women, men, boys and girls. This includes taking steps towards:

- Militaries, police and other security institutions that understand and act upon the different security needs of women, men, girls and boys.
- Integration of gender issues into security sector institutions and security sector reform processes at the structural, policy and personnel level.
- The full involvement and equal participation of women in security sector institutions, security policy creation and implementation, security sector oversight, and security sector reform processes.
- A participatory, democratic and accountable security sector.

Examples of gender issues in the context of SSR include: responding to violence against women in policing initiatives and transitional justice (sexual violence, domestic violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking etc.); addressing the connections between young men, masculinities and violence; redressing the under-representation of women in security decision-making and security

institutions; and addressing violence against women by members of the security sector.

Failure to take a gender-sensitive approach to SSR results in the continued criminal neglect of the security needs of women, girls and marginalised men. Violence against women remains one of the largest global threats to human security, yet security sector institutions continuously fall short in the prevention of and response to these crimes. Further, women's participation is recognised as crucial to building sustainable peace and security. In peacekeeping operations, for example, the presence of women has been shown to enhance access to services by civilian women, lower the incidents of sexual misconduct and to encourage the confidence and trust of civilian populations.

2. Rationale

During processes of security sector reform, a window of opportunity is opened in which it may be possible to integrate gender issues and to increase the participation of women.

A large body of international, national and institutional mandates stand behind the call for gender mainstreaming and women's full and equal participation in SSR. At the international level, these include CEDAW (1979), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action (2000), and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security* (2000). Security Council Resolution 1325 reaffirms "the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and ... [stresses] the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security."

Despite this clear mandate, many policy and programming initiatives on SRR fail to take into consideration the need to ensure women's participation and to mainstream gender issues. There is a strong recognition by SSR practitioners and donors that gender *should* be mainstreamed in SSR, and that SSR should incorporate implementation of UN SCR 1325, but there is a lack of policy articulation and practical implementation tools. Only a handful of case studies, reports and articles have dealt directly with the topic of gender and SSR.

In order to efficiently and collaboratively address gender and SSR issues, it is necessary to pull together key institutions and individuals working in this area and to create practical materials directed towards SSR practitioners. In light of this need, DCAF and INSTRAW will convene a Gender and Security Sector Reform Working Group. It will serve as an initiator, resource and facilitator for efforts to mainstream gender issues into SSR initiatives, policies and tools.

3. Objectives

The Working Group will be a mechanism for information-sharing, strategising and collaboration between members to:

- Generate and disseminate new, practical research and training materials on gender and SSR.
- Build the capacity of SSR practitioners, security policy-makers, and parliamentarians to mainstream gender into SSR initiatives.

- Promote the mainstreaming of gender in SSR policy and programming, including the United Nations policy framework currently under development, and within the UN Peacebuilding Commission, European Union, OECD, OSCE and others.
- Strengthen understanding of linkages between the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and SSR, and dialogue between the 'Women, Peace and Security' and SSR communities.
- Bring together those working on gender and SSR in southern and northern countries, in particular including women involved in SSR processes in transitional and conflict-affected regions.