

Security-Sector Reform Applied: Nine Ways to Move from Policy to Implementation

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Introduction

Much has been written about security-sector reform (SSR) policy, either from the perspective of the principles, good practice, and definitions that define the scope of SSR,¹ or from the specific policy orientation in a given country context.² However, there is less material available on the “little secrets and skills” required to practically apply SSR policy in a postconflict setting.³ There are many reasons for this, including the fact that the application of security-sector reform is fraught with complications that differ from one context to another. In addition, many of those writing on SSR have a policy focus rather than a need to deal with the practical issues of implementation. SSR remains a relatively new and evolving concept; it brings together practitioners with different backgrounds, including those with experience in the uniformed services, rule of law and justice experts, governance specialists, civil society activists, and those with experience in political processes. This paper provides nine recommendations for these practitioners to increase their effectiveness in supporting SSR processes in postconflict contexts.

1 See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform* (Paris, 2007); OECD DAC Ministerial Statement, “Key Policy and Operational Commitments from the Implementation Framework for SSR,” Paris, April 4, 2007; European Union, “A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy,” Brussels, December 12, 2003; United Nations Secretary-General, *Securing Peace and Development: The Role of the United Nations in Supporting Security Sector Reform*, UN Doc. A/62/659-S/2008/39, January 23, 2008.

2 See, for example, Alan Bryden, Boubacar N’Diaye, and Funmi Olonisakin, eds., *Challenges of Security Sector Governance in West Africa* (Zurich: LIT, 2008); Gordon Peake, Eric Scheye, and Alice Hills, eds., *Managing Insecurity: Field Experience of Security Sector Reform* (London: Routledge, 2008).

3 See Albrecht Schnabel and Ehrhart Hans-Georg, *Security Sector Reform and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2005).

1. Locate Entry Points for Ownership

Turning the principle of local ownership⁴ into practice is one of the most complex challenges facing the international community's efforts to support SSR.⁵ Seminal donor policy documents, such as the Paris Principles on Aid Effectiveness,⁶ call for adherence to local ownership; and international and local civil society actors are often quick to criticize the UN and donors for merely paying lip service to ownership. Yet there is little practical guidance available on how to operationalize local ownership⁷ and translate the principle into practice. In essence, ownership should not have to be operationalized; it should just be, as an ontological reality. However, in many postconflict settings, capacity and political will for reform are sometimes so lacking that ownership needs to be fostered, supported, and nurtured.

In many cases the idea that ownership can be “nurtured” has negative connotations. Perhaps it is better to understand ownership in terms of building a constituency in support of reform, as a means of ensuring that it remains high on the agenda and that there is domestic political and public pressure to implement proposed reforms.

The challenge in these contexts is to ensure that support for ownership does not usurp the essence of ownership. There are a number of practical steps that can be taken to help achieve organic ownership of SSR. First, attitude matters. The UN and the international community as a whole must adopt an attitude based on patience, mentorship, and building capacity around locally designed solutions, rather than externally designed templates. The attitude on

the government side also matters, and every effort should be made to foster the development of SSR focal points in ministries and agencies. Once the right attitude is in place, work can begin on putting together a joint program so as to achieve clearly defined results. Jointly developed government–UN–international partner programs⁸ or compacts⁹ can be an effective way of articulating shared responsibility and ensuring that all actors are working towards shared goals identified by the national government based on broad consultation with opposition parties and local civil society. While the logic of joint programmatic endeavors may be self-evident, the development of joint programs presents clear challenges, the most pressing of which is the setting of priorities. In the context of limited resources and capacity, priorities will need to be agreed upon and sequenced. This sensitive exercise can be best managed, in the first instance, by pursuing broad consultations with all key stakeholders and taking the necessary time required to complete these consultations. However, consultations alone will not deliver results in terms of coming up with an agreed set of priorities; therefore, subsequent to the consultation phase, strong leadership is required to make the hard but necessary decisions. Effective and responsible leadership on the part of the national government and the willingness to make hard decisions and take responsibility for their implementation are fundamental components of ownership.

For example, national governments are often willing to engage in discussions with international actors around issues such as training and equipment, but are less keen to discuss issues of governance and accountability. SSR, however, is about ensuring a

4 For an account of how ownership was approached in a postconflict setting and a brief discussion of dilemmas between the SSR agenda and the objective of ownership, see Louise Andersen, “Post-Conflict Security Sector Reform and the Challenge of Ownership – The Case of Liberia,” Danish Institute for International Studies, July 2006, available at www.diiis.dk/graphics/Publications/Briefs2006/lan_postconflict_security_sector_reform.pdf.

5 The 2007 edition of the DCAF Yearbook was entirely dedicated to the issue of local ownership and SSR; key challenges relating to the issues are unfolded and addressed, along with case studies. See Timothy Donais, ed., *Local Ownership and Security Sector Reform* (Zurich: LIT, 2007).

6 For more information, see OECD, “The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action,” available at www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf.

7 An exception to this is Laurie Nathan, “No Ownership, No Commitment: A Guide to Local Ownership of Security Sector Reform,” University of Birmingham, October 2007; and Donais, *Local Ownership*.

8 A joint program should happen where UN agencies, with national partners and donors, see clear gains in effectiveness and efficiency from combining their efforts and resources in a common work plan and budget. The work plan and budget forms part of a joint program document, which also provides details about roles and responsibilities of partners in coordinating and managing the joint activities. The joint program document is signed by all participating organizations and national or subnational partners. For more information on joint programs, see the United Nations Development Group website, www.undg.org. See also “Security Sector Reform and Small Arms Joint Programme,” a program established in Burundi for 2007–2008 between the government of Burundi, the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), available at <http://binub.turretdev.com/en/images/articles/SSR1.pdf>.

9 A good example is the Afghanistan Compact, which provides mutually agreed government-partner cooperation; benchmarks to enhance security, governance, rule of law, human rights, and economic and social development; and also tackles the drug trade. It has assisted the Afghan government in establishing a cooperative framework with the international community to address governance and development challenges.

balance between increasing the effectiveness of security and justice actors, while ensuring that there is appropriate governance over how that enhanced effectiveness is utilized. The international community must be careful not to be drawn into a situation where equipment and support to training are provided only with a vague, long-term promise of better governance. The balance between both must be sequenced to produce tangible improvements in security and access to justice at a local level. In essence, support for security-sector capacity must be linked to support for oversight and accountability.

A fundamental question remains, however. What should the international community focus on, if there is clearly no will for reform among national authorities?¹⁰ Part of the answer to this question can be gleaned from recommendation 3—understanding SSR as a long-term process—but equally, if government will for reform is not there, donors and the international community should focus their short-term efforts on supporting local, nonstate initiatives such as victim support, while building up research and advocacy capacity among civil society actors. Sustainable reforms require a strong political and social constituency. In the absence of national political will, focus efforts at the local level and engage civil society.

2. Decentralize via Second-Generation SSR

Justice and security institutions in postconflict contexts are often highly centralized in terms of decision making and authority. What we term “second-generation SSR” opens up avenues for operationalizing ownership at the local level in order to avoid an overly-centralized focus. The term second-generation SSR is slowly emerging. Similar to second-generation DDR,¹¹ which puts a much stronger focus on community solutions in

dealing with the reintegration of ex-combatants, second-generation SSR would also focus more on the community level and less on the state level. Second-generation SSR would attempt to redress the state-centric imbalance by putting a much stronger focus on the use of local security-perception surveys,¹² for example, to identify security-sector challenges and put a sharper focus on community policing, armed violence reduction, links to community security programs (second-generation DDR), the informal sector, and civil society as agents of change. A second-generation approach would also be more sensitive to the structural and psychological causes of grievance in society and would help to identify the triggers that ignite violence, alongside the potential programs that can start to foster reconciliation. Indeed, it is this link to reconciliation that really sets second-generation SSR apart, and through which ownership of SSR can start to be filtered into local communities and local initiatives. The focus on the local level and the use of the reconciliation lens invariably results in a more pronounced role for traditional justice mechanisms.

There is much written on the merits and demerits of working with the traditional, or informal, justice system.¹³ The traditional system at times may not respect international principles of human rights and may ultimately challenge the relevance or legitimacy of the formal state. On the other hand, if the formal justice system is functioning badly or slowly, the traditional justice system in particular can provide a parallel option for many citizens, and over time the state and society may be able to come to some form of compromise whereby a dual or hybrid system can exist, allowing citizens to avail both of the informal and formal system at their will and enabling the option of referral from the informal to the formal system if requested. While the modalities for creating a dual system go outside

10 Duncan Hiscock, sharing some lessons learned from SSR in Georgia in the aftermath of the 2003 Rose Revolution, pointed out the “high degree of local ownership” the country exhibited “in terms of the government’s apparent commitment to the long-term goal of rebuilding its security sector in line with Western models, not only in structural terms but also in terms of democratic governance and oversight.” He also highlighted that “SSR practitioners mostly have only limited influence over these top-level political factors.” See Duncan Hiscock, “Impatient Reformers and Reignited Conflicts: The Case of Georgia,” in *Security Sector Reform in Challenging Environments*, edited by Hans Born and Albrecht Schnabel (Zurich: LIT, 2009), pp. 129-130.

11 For an overview of second-generation DDR, see United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, “Second Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Practices in Peace Operations,” United Nations, January 2010.

12 For good examples of security-perception studies, see “Security Provision in Bangladesh: A Public Perceptions Survey,” London: Saferworld, 2010.

13 For an overview of the issues, see Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, “Helpdesk Research Report: Governance in Tribal Environments,” December 14, 2007, available at www.gsdr.org/docs/open/HD495.pdf. For an overview of how to link the formal and informal system (hybrid system), see Bruce Baker, “Linking State and Non-State Security and Justice,” *Development Policy Review* 28, No. 5 (September 2010): 597-616, available at www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=4003.

the scope of this article, it does present another avenue with which to enhance a sense of ownership, by bringing security and justice services closer to the people.

Bringing SSR-related services closer to the people can also be facilitated by greater efforts to promote decentralized justice and security service delivery. To have real ownership, services will need to go beyond capital cities and into the villages across the country. This explains the recent piloting of decentralized justice and security regional hubs in Liberia, so as to enable the Liberian police, prosecutors, judges, and prison guards to provide a greater level of service for and proximity to citizens. The modality of decentralized service delivery through regional hubs is innovative and warrants more study. In this regard, the hubs under development in Liberia in 2011 and 2012 with support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund will need to be carefully monitored and evaluated for results. For long-term reform to be sustainable, people need to see tangible benefits in the short term, and decentralizing activities outside of the capital is essential in that regard.

3. Understand the Context, Be Flexible, and Take an Iterative Approach

The idea that SSR is a long-term process is not new. However, all too often text-book, best-practice approaches to SSR fail to take this into account and fail to manage programs within the constraints and limitations of international assistance.¹⁴

Whether it is through a natural tendency to overreach or a desire to do as much as possible, the reality is that development programming is not always infused with clarity or an acknowledgement of the constraints that limit it. Such constraints include restrictive funding cycles, political cycles, the need to show short-term impact, limited

capacity, or the new idiom of “dispensing more funds with fewer people.” There needs to be push-back and a reality check included in donor planning and programming, because SSR in postconflict environments means dealing with a political, fluid, and complex environment. A recent briefing paper by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on “Taking Responsibility for Complexity,”¹⁵ questioned whether programming tools such as log frames are the most relevant instruments for situations defined as complex. The paper acknowledges that complexity could be used as an excuse for avoiding responsibility for results; nevertheless, there is a real question as to whether inflexible planning tools can be effective in many postconflict contexts.

Current work by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC)¹⁶ reinforces this idea of a need for greater flexibility and an iterative approach to SSR programming, calling it the “process approach” to SSR. This approach highlights the need for international actors to have a clear and full understanding of what they have to offer, how the limitations of funding compare to their capacity, and how their level of ambition compares to the level of risk that donors can live with. Thinking in such terms should enable donors to target their assistance, help manage expectations of national counterparts, and help donors to be modest in what their contribution can bring to the overall reform process. By viewing SSR as a long-term iterative process, made up of different (and not necessarily linear) phases, donors can conceive of their assistance in more realistic short-term chunks with clearer short-term impact, such as supporting the assessment phase and planning phase, or building the capacity of specific groups to participate in the process. SSR is made up of a series of small building blocks that together represent a successful process, and overall, donors need to be clearer about their contribution

14 A 2007 report by Clingendael, commissioned by the Dutch Foreign Ministry, discussed four factors that underpin the environment for effective programming in fragile/postconflict and fragile/rebuilding countries: political decision at the national level to engage in reform over the long term; understanding of the varying political dimensions and contexts; modest expectations and prioritized goals; differences and similarities between fragile/postconflict and fragile/rebuilding states. It also made some suggestions on how to operationalize an approach that reconciles the need to provide immediate responses to security and justice demands with challenges to designing and implementing SSR programs, which by nature are long-term undertakings. See Nicola Ball, Eric Scheye, and Luc van de Goor, “From Project to Program: Effective Programming for Security and Justice,” The Hague: Clingendael, December 2007, available at www.clingendael.nl/publications/2007/20071211_cru_occ_ball.pdf.

15 Overseas Development Institute, “Taking Responsibility for Complexity,” *ODI Briefing Paper* No. 68, August 2011.

16 This includes work by the OECD’s International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), by Luc Van der Goor and Nicole Ball (unpublished).

and realistic about their achievements.

An iterative process would also view an assessment not as a prerequisite to beginning an SSR process but as an integral part of that process. An iterative process would not aim to tick the box of local ownership, but rather see it as a continuum of open discussion between the national government and international partners, regarding expectations, needs, and what is feasible given certain constraints.

A long-term process also requires significant levels of flexibility, and so it challenges the pro forma and traditional approach to program management. Integrating flexibility, some might argue, also increases the risk, with no clear or guaranteed route to success. However, there is no guaranteed path to success, and recognizing the need to be flexible and to respond to a changing environment is the best route towards aid effectiveness. Working in politically fluid and challenging postconflict environments means that a program designed on the basis of an initial assessment and with rigid outputs may not take into account the reality of the situation. What is required is agreement on the end goals of the project and a realization that there are many routes to these ends; deciding how to get there will be a matter of discussion and agreement between all parties.

4. Reduce Uncertainty and Build Up Trust

Some of the key characteristics of postconflict environments¹⁷ are the presence of collapsed state structures and security and justice institutions beset by political interference, often governed through ad hoc processes. This results in high levels of uncertainty for citizens when it comes to what they can expect from their engagement with these institutions. Programming that focuses on reducing this uncertainty provides entry points for broader reform initiatives and helps the public to see tangible results in a short period of time.

To reduce uncertainty and begin building trust, it

is important to have clear and reliable information. In this regard, supporting the mapping of security institutions, audits of spending, censuses of security personnel, and public-perception surveys all help to fill information gaps and ensure that programs are based on real figures and real issues. Supporting the professionalization and visibility of security and justice actors can include initiatives that formalize selection, promotion, and dismissal procedures, or that ensure transparency regarding budgetary procedures, procurement procedures, and how fines are managed. Greater visibility can also be achieved through the introduction of identification cards and uniforms, for example, and the accompanying code of conduct and clarity of roles and responsibilities.

Where state institutions are sometimes tarnished by the role that they played during the conflict or under the previous regime, re-establishing a basic level of trust with the public is critical. Rebuilding a relationship of trust, however, is never an easy task; it requires transparency within the reform process, and both real and symbolic reforms. Symbolic reforms could include changes to police uniforms and insignia, for example, to signify a new start and a clear break with the past. Trust is also rebuilt through the empowerment of citizens, community policing, public information campaigns, support to legal aid, victim support groups, greater debate on security and justice issues, and recognition of the fact that nonstate and traditional actors have a role to play in the provision of justice and security.

5. Forge Relations Between Police Investigators and Prosecutors

The breakdown of key relations within the security and justice system has a direct knock-on effect on basic service delivery. These relations often break down either because of political frictions or the lack of a culture of cooperation. One of the fundamental challenges facing SSR in postconflict countries today is the relationship (or lack thereof) between

¹⁷ Here are some of the characteristics of war-torn societies as depicted in the UN Secretary-General's August 2004 report, *The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies* (UN Doc. S/2004/616, para. 3): "devastated institutions, exhausted resources, diminished security and a traumatized and divided population.... a lack of political will for reform, a lack of institutional independence within the justice sector, a lack of domestic technical capacity, a lack of material and financial resources, a lack of public confidence in Government, a lack of official respect for human rights and, more generally, a lack of peace and security."

the investigative wing of the police and the prosecutorial wing of the justice system. When the need for coherence along the security and justice chain comes into question, it is the link between police investigators and prosecutors that makes or breaks the chain. The challenge stems from the fact that police and prosecutors work within different parts of the state structure, have undergone different training, and in many cases have a completely different outlook on the essence of law and order. On the side of international actors, the challenge is also evident; and it is most often the case that international actors divide themselves into policy communities that support the police or the justice system, but rarely both at once. SSR advisors and practitioners are also to blame for not bringing these policy communities together more effectively—more often than not, the SSR community fits and sits, practically and emotionally, on the side of the police. In essence, the SSR community has tended to behave with “a justice blind spot” to date.¹⁸ This attitude and approach is beginning to alter in some cases, but much more work is required to link policy communities together.

A few very practical and modest steps can be taken to enable this critical process: First, more joint training exercises between police investigators and prosecutors need to be put in place, as it is critical that both communities have a better understanding and appreciation of one another. Second, on the part of the United Nations and international partners, more effort is required to link justice and security policy communities and programming. If feasible, joint UN-government programmes on justice and security reform should be put in place. Third, the UN and international partners must prioritize support for government in enhancing case file management. While this appears to be a rather mundane task on the surface, effective case file management is key to effective prosecution and can ultimately help to reduce the levels and duration of pretrial detention, a critical problem in many postconflict countries in sub-

Saharan Africa especially. Not only are proper procedures for filing necessary, the quality of reports submitted by police investigators to the prosecutorial wing is paramount.

Likewise, within the international community, the lack of coherence and coordination between personnel working on SSR, justice/rule of law, police reform, governance, and on political dialogue with national governments limits the potential impact of international support.¹⁹ Not all international partners may have whole-of-government security-sector units or departments that can aid coordination and coherence. However, it should be possible for all international partners to ensure a whole-of-government conversation at headquarters during the program planning phase, so as to ensure that this phase is as coherent and effective as possible. Subsequently, in terms of the implementation phase, international partners should be encouraged to establish security- and justice-coordination fora, while the United Nations should make itself available to support such fora through information or Secretariat support.

6. Support Reforms That Are Sustainable

A much cited challenge in SSR relates to ensuring sustainability after the internationals have left. Ironically it seems the more support the international community provides to SSR in postconflict countries, the more pressure is put on governments to deal with recurring costs, including fuel, maintenance, and salaries. If these recurring costs cannot be met, the SSR agenda falters, as newly recruited officers suddenly find themselves without salaries (and sometimes turn to criminal activities as a result), newly-purchased land cruisers seize up due to lack of gas, and new barracks fall into disrepair without funding for maintenance. Responding to the recurring costs dilemma is complex. One way of reducing the sustainability dilemma is for international actors to do less and to do it slower. Such an

¹⁸ Development agencies such as the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) have led the way in bridging the silos between policy communities working on SSR and justice by bringing justice and security under one banner. In a similar vein, the 2011 World Development Report also favors an approach that prioritizes justice and security reforms, see World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development* (Washington, DC, 2011).

¹⁹ The 3C Conference held in Geneva from March 19-20, 2009, which brought together actors from the defense, development, diplomatic, finance and economic, humanitarian, and justice and police communities, made some recommendations aimed at achieving coherent, coordinated, and complementary (3C) approaches in conflict and fragile situations to improve the results of interventions by the international community. The 3C Roadmap is available at www.3c-conference2009.ch/en/Home/Conference_Outcomes.

idea is almost sacrilege for many international partners, however, given the call for quick impact and quick disbursement rates. It is certainly quite true that doing less and doing it more slowly is simply not an option in many postconflict countries, where a small window of opportunity exists, where it is necessary to show the peace dividend, or where it is simply critical to provide vital services. In such circumstances, the sustainability dilemma needs to be addressed head on, especially given the minute size of national budgets in many postconflict countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

While the dilemma will always exist, a few practical measures can be taken to minimize the risk. To begin with, a security-sector reform public-expenditure review (SSR-PER) should be undertaken early on in the SSR process. Such reviews have been spearheaded in the past with some success, by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) in Kosovo and Sierra Leone and by the World Bank in Afghanistan²⁰ and the Central African Republic. An SSR-PER should involve a multiyear budgetary analysis to understand the prospects for the fiscal budget and ascertain what can be feasibly undertaken by government within the security-sector budget over the medium term. The results of such a review can help both government and partners to plan accordingly and decide collectively how phasing recurring costs into the national budget might work, taking budgetary realities on board. Beyond a "phasing in" approach based on the results of a public-expenditure review, recurring costs can also be better dealt with by international partners at the program-design level by factoring in at least some recurring costs into donor-supported programs. In parallel, supporting the development of a government-run vehicle-maintenance unit or training of government mechanics can enhance sustainability. The third obvious action that should be taken, but is often forgotten, is to include ministry of finance officials in policy discussions on SSR from the outset. Ministry officials must be

sensitized about the issues and also must be afforded the opportunity to be part of the planning process so that recurring costs can be factored in. The absence of ministry of finance officials in SSR discussions is almost universal in postconflict countries. SSR advisors also need to share some of the blame for rarely getting involved in national budgetary issues or often not engaging finance ministry officials or parliamentary budget-committee officials from an early stage.

7. Mind the Gap—Build Up the Missing Middle

The limits of national capacity are perhaps the single biggest constraint facing SSR in most postconflict countries in sub-Saharan Africa. After years, sometimes decades, of war and underdevelopment, levels of education have often plummeted, and those that are educated and able to leave have done so (the brain-drain challenge in postconflict environments is well documented). A common feature is the "missing middle" within the civil service. For example, ministers and deputy ministers often simply do not have the support at the middle civil-service layer to turn policy into practice, to systematically build institutional memory, and to follow up on the various action points that arise from day to day. Ultimately, a more effective education system alongside civil-service reform is the way to deal with this challenge. However, educational development and civil-service reforms take time, and stop-gap measures need to be put in place in the interim. Certainly, the recently published UN report on civilian capacity²¹ provides a number of signposts on how to tackle the problem. One effective stop-gap measure is the co-location of relevant international staff in national ministries and government agencies, so that support and mentorship can be more directly applied. This model can work well if the government in question is open to co-location and does not see it as an invasion of sovereignty, and if those

20 Nicole Ball and Yoichiro Ishihara, "Working Paper 4 for Afghanistan Public Expenditure Review 2010: Security Sector," World Bank and DFID, 2010, available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/afghanistanextn/resources/305984-1264608805475/6739619-1276813833351/Paper4.pdf>. See also the following report regarding a security-sector expenditure review in Sierra Leone, which "charts the...level and structure of security-related expenditures and assesses their strategic coherence, consistency and fiscal sustainability." Peter Middlebrook and Sharon Miller, "Sierra Leone Security Sector Expenditure Review," prepared for the UK Department for International Development, Sierra Leone Country Office, 2006, available at www.ssrnetwork.net/document_library/detail/3481/sierra-leone-security-sector-expenditure-review.

21 United Nations Secretary-General, *Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/66/311-S/2011/527, August 19, 2011. See www.civcap.info for more information.

co-located not only have the relevant technical expertise but the personality type and didactic skills needed to mentor, coach, and support national staff effectively. Co-location by itself is not a solution and will only be effective if efforts are made in parallel to prepare and train the future cadre of civil service officers required to run ministries, manage service providers, and oversee governance structures.

Beyond co-location and mentorship programs, efforts must also be made to identify so-called champions of change within government ministries and agencies or within local civil society, who can not only provide much-needed capacity, but can also motivate others to perform. Such “champions” exist in almost all ministries and agencies and often just need an extra measure of technical or political support to deliver and perform at a higher level. Sometimes, such support can simply take the form of providing an Internet connection and technical equipment or making a minister aware of the person’s competence.

8. Consider a Low-Tech Approach for Higher Yields

It has often been said that those supporting SSR bring both the benefits and the baggage of their experience with them. International SSR advisors²² may be experts in their own right, with criminal-investigation or internal-affairs competence, for example, but the system that enables them to do their job in their home countries has been developed over decades, if not longer. And these same advisers, while benefiting from that system, have rarely been involved in creating it. So this is the challenge—the training, knowledge, and experience that these advisers can transfer is dependent on having an effective system in place, but in postconflict contexts, it is the system itself that is lacking.

Expectations are always high within the international community when it comes to its own ability to influence the trajectory of a reform process or enhance basic service delivery to the public in postconflict countries. The reality, however, is that

it is much more difficult, political, and complex than expected. For instance, if basic service delivery and accountability is the goal, then a focus on support to forensics, while necessary in many countries, will have limited impact on basic services.²³ On the other hand, in order to have a significant impact on a larger number of cases, basic interview skills and evidence-gathering techniques might cost less to improve but have a bigger overall impact.

Liberia provides one useful example of the value of low-tech policing methods that are both sustainable and effective. In 2010, with support from the United Nations, a simple hardcover logbook was distributed to every police station in Liberia. These sturdy logbooks provide police officers with the opportunity to record the names and details of those arrested and detained for questioning, in addition to providing some basic information on the reason(s) for their detention. Police officers across the country are submitting the relevant details into the book on a daily basis, which not only helps to enhance accountability and proper information gathering, but can also help the police station to record and access the types of crimes that tend to crop up in their locality. This low-tech initiative is working very well in Liberia. It keeps costs to a minimum, it requires only basic training to use, and it provides a visible symbol of accountability and professionalism in police stations throughout the country. In all, it shows that low-tech solutions should be at the high end of our policy agenda in poorer postconflict countries. Low-tech options are also more likely to be sustainable if there are limited recurring costs. Needless to say, more thought is required on how a focus on low-tech SSR could change the international community’s approach.

9. Put the Right Skills and Systems in Place

When asked about the issue of getting the right capacity in the right place to support reform, a colleague, Serge Rumin, replied that you don’t “send a doctor to rebuild a hospital.” So why is the

²² The International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT) provides insightful guidance on how an advisor can best perform her/his tasks. See ISSAT, “Operational Guidance Note: The Security and Justice Sector Reform Adviser,” November 2010, available at <http://issat.dcaf.ch/>.

²³ Forensics support will be particularly important in countries where there are high levels of alleged rape cases.

international community predominantly sending uniformed officers to reform, restructure, and rebuild security institutions?

While uniform-to-uniform exchange is valuable and necessary, the assumption that a good police officer from Dublin, Accra, or Oslo will automatically be a good trainer, mentor, or advisor on reforms underestimates the skills that these tasks require. It also fails to recognize that working effectively in a well-established system is very different from trying to create a system from scratch and with limited capacity and resources.

What we are proposing is not the exclusion of uniformed officers, because their experience is invaluable, but the recognition that a multiplicity of skills and a variety of knowledge is required to reform a justice and security system, and the institutions it includes. The need for multidisciplinary teams is nothing new;²⁴ however, to date the international community has only had limited success in putting in place a system that brings robust civilian capacities to bear in postconflict contexts.²⁵ With an overdependency on military and police secondments, there is a failure to recognize that security and justice reform is as much a political endeavor as it is a technical exercise.

A related issue is whether organizations approach security-sector reform as an integrating function or as a standalone activity that runs parallel to other reform initiatives.²⁶ The UN, for example, appears to have two complementary approaches to SSR, which are reflected within the mission structure and, as a result, in the focus of SSR initiatives.²⁷ The

first approach appears to view SSR as both (i) a set of principles²⁸ that needs to be integrated into existing activities and (ii) an activity related to the development and implementation of a national security strategy, which should inform individual reform initiatives aimed at improving security and justice service provision. This approach means that the SSR advisor or advisory team needs to work across the mission, supporting the rule of law and police components with the civilian aspects of their reform mandates, helping the political section to oversee security providers, and ensuring coordination and coherence among all those directly or indirectly involved with security and justice actors.

The second approach is to view SSR as a separate, overarching unit or department aimed at reforming the security and justice sectors of a postconflict country. In this case, the focus is on establishing an SSR unit that aims to coordinate the activities of the mission in the area of SSR, while also filling the gaps in UN support to the national government. This can mean the SSR unit is involved not only in advisory functions but also in direct programming, and thus, such units also need to work with agencies and partners to access funding. The advantages of this approach is that, if successful, it helps to facilitate a translation of knowledge and activities from peacekeeping missions to longer-term development activities.

We propose that SSR in a peacekeeping context is about ensuring the integration of SSR principles into ongoing activities and ensuring that those with the technical experience (military and police components) help to establish the foundation for

24 For a comprehensive overview of the capacity challenge with key recommendations for the UN, World Bank, and other multilateral organizations, see United Nations, *Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict: Independent Report of the Senior Advisory Group*, UN Doc. A/65/747-S/2011/85, February 22, 2011.

25 An inventory of UN capacity in peacebuilding in 2006 provided a good overview of UN preparedness to support SSR in postconflict settings; the inventory concluded that “the overall UN capacity in SSR understood as support both to governance and the development of national capacity in core security operational tasks remains limited, when not practically non-existent, as in the case of specialized defence reform capacity. What capacity exists is dispersed and poorly coordinated.” See United Nations, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, *Inventory: United Nations Capacity in Peacebuilding*, September 2006, p. 22, available at www.undp.org/cpr/iasc/content/docs/Oct_Links/doc_4.pdf.

26 For an overview of how some bilateral and multilateral donors approach SSR, see David M. Law, ed., *Intergovernmental Organisations and Security Sector Reform* (Zurich: LIT, 2007); Nicole Ball, “Transforming Security Sectors: The IMF and World Bank Approaches,” *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development* 1, No. 1 (2001); Charles T. Call, “Competing Donor Approaches to Post-Conflict Police Reform,” *Conflict, Security and Development* 2, No. 1 (2002): 99-109; Commission of the European Communities, “A Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform,” Brussels, May 24, 2006; Mark White, “Security Sector Reform: A Joined Up HMG Approach,” SSR Practitioner’s Course, March 12-14, 2007, hosted by Global Facilitation Network for SSR (GFN-SSR) and the University of Birmingham, available at www.ssrnetwork.net/documents/PractitionersCourse/Mar07/DFID-Mark-SSR%20A%20Joined%20Up%20HMG%20Approach.pdf.

27 For information on the UN’s SSR work, see Heiner Hänggi and Vincenza Scherrer, “Towards a Common UN Approach to Security Sector Reform,” *DCAF Policy Paper* No. 25, 2007. See also the UN SSR website, <http://unssr.unlb.org>. Edward Rees provided a good account of how ready, prepared, effective, and efficient UN peace operations had been in carrying out SSR support and assistance activities; see “Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Peace Operations: ‘Improvisation and Confusion’ from the Field,” Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, March 2006, available at www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org/pbps/Library/ES_SSR_PEACE_OPS_REES_PBPS_2006.pdf.

28 These principles can be easily summarized as (i) local ownership, (ii) ensuring a balance between support to increasing the capacity and the accountability/governance of security and justice actors, and (iii) recognizing that reform of the security and justice sectors is political and technical, and needs to understand security and justice services as interlinked initiatives.

longer-term reforms and reinforce the need for greater governance and accountability. It is also about ensuring support to a coherent national security strategy. Establishing units or structures within a peacekeeping mission may be useful in some cases. Therefore, the mission is best placed to assess what type of SSR modality to put in place, depending on the specific in-country needs, existing capacity within the mission, and existing capacity within the UN country team, as well as national government capacity and the nature of the mission's relationship with the government. Successful SSR implementation will partly result from the mission choosing the correct modality for the context it finds itself operating in.

Conclusion

While the local context needs to determine how security-sector reform is implemented, the recommendations outlined here can help practitioners to accelerate progress on the ground. In sum, the application of SSR can be enhanced by building a constituency in support of reform; decentralizing ownership to the local level; being flexible in the face of complexity; reducing uncertainty and building up trust; forging relations between police and prosecutors; focusing on the sustainability of reforms; supporting the layer of government that turns policy into practice; prioritizing low-cost SSR solutions; and putting the right staff, skills, and systems in place. This is not an exhaustive list, but small, smart steps can go a long way.

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