SECURITY SECTOR REFORM IN AFRICA

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Introduction

Security sector reform (SSR) is increasingly recognized as a key contribution to promoting peace and development in Africa. SSR can help to address both old and new security challenges from conflicts with regional dynamics to trafficking in commodities, weapons and people. In particular, SSR has as its goal to address deep rooted cleavages between executive authorities, security actors and citizens that have been highly damaging in a number of African settings. Promoting efforts to ensure that the security sector is more effective and efficient within a framework of democratic governance therefore constitutes an agenda that is relevant across all national contexts.

Africa continues to be a major arena for internationally-supported SSR programs. This is particularly evident in post-conflict contexts where SSR is an increasingly prominent element of wider post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. However, international engagement in SSR highlights an inherent tension between intervention and ownership. In part as a result of the Anglo-Saxon roots associated with the concept, SSR is viewed with suspicion by some states. In Africa, SSR is welcomed in some quarters whereas in others it resonates with the imposition of Western values, methods and approaches in the most sensitive area of public policy.

SSR can be an extremely sensitive process both within states and in particular where national-level reform efforts are supported by the wider international community. In order to mitigate the different sensitivities surrounding SSR, it is fundamentally important to recognize that SSR not only comprises 'technical' activities but influences change in the national security discourse and is inseparable from wider political transitions. SSR creates 'winners and losers' and this reality (which is inherently context-specific) must be addressed in every reform program. It is therefore critical to tailor SSR support closely to national political, security, socio-economic and cultural realities. Consequently, there are no blueprint solutions for addressing complex, sensitive SSR challenges in Africa.

The purpose of this 'think piece' is both modest and practical. It begins by identifying key SSR principles, objectives and approaches and how these relate to African reform contexts. The subsequent two sections outline important considerations for policy frameworks and programs to support SSR in Africa. The think piece concludes with a number of recommendations to advance an SSR agenda in Africa that acknowledges the political nature of this work, embraces people-centered approaches to security and seeks to narrow gaps between national actors and international SSR support through productive partnerships. Within the text, brief case study boxes are used to illustrate key points. A number of useful online resources are provided in Annex A.

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The Security Sector Reform Concept and African Contexts

SSR and Related Terms
From its origins within international development policy circles in the late 1990s, the SSR concept has demonstrated its relevance in relation to the work of development, democracy promotion and security communities. While the concept remains contested in terms of its scope and content, a consensus has emerged among many bilateral actors, international organizations and individual experts on an SSR approach that emphasizes the need for *the effective and efficient provision of state and human security within a framework of democratic governance.*[2] This agenda is holistic in a double sense. First, security provision, management and oversight are recognized as intrinsically related. This linkage is intended to safeguard against efforts to improve the effectiveness of armed and security forces not subject to democratic control. This caveat is essential because security assistance conceived narrowly as technical support for the military or other security bodies has in some cases been simply rebranded as 'SSR'. Such activities are not consistent with the SSR approach and may in fact contribute to insecurity. And second, SSR emphasizes the need to integrate partial reforms, such as defense and police reform, which have previously been conducted as separate efforts.

Security sector governance (SSG) provides a key companion concept to SSR. As reflected in Table 1 below, a governance-driven perspective points to the wide array of public and private actors at local, national, regional and international levels that need to be engaged to ensure the legitimacy and sustainability of SSR. A governance-based understanding of the security sector is particularly important in order to highlight the fragmented nature of security and justice provision, management and oversight. On the one hand, in many African settings security is delivered by a range of armed non state actors – from community groups to private military and security companies (PMSCs). On the other, parliaments, various statutory oversight bodies and civil society should play a critical role in providing oversight and expertise to shape government security policy and practice.

Evidence shows that sector-specific reforms will only take root if situated within a framework of democratic oversight and accountability. There is thus a need to map out and take into account within SSR processes the dynamic political environments within which activities are situated. This think piece therefore underlines an approach to SSR that situates reforms as part of wider efforts to enhance democratic security sector governance.

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[2] Heiner Hänggi, 'Security Sector Reform' in Vincent Chetail (ed.) *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding – A Lexicon*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p.337.

Table 1[3]

Core Security Actors, Including Law Enforcement Institutions
Armed forces, police, gendarmeries, paramilitary forces, presidential guards, intelligence and security services, coast guards, border guards, customs authorities and reserve and local security units.
Security Management and Oversight Bodies
Parliament/legislature and its relevant legislative committees; government/the executive, including ministries of defence, internal affairs and foreign affairs; national security advisory bodies; customary and traditional authorities; financial management bodies; and civil society actors, including the media, academia and NGOs.
Justice Institutions
Justice ministries; prisons; criminal investigation and prosecution services; the judiciary (courts and tribunals); implementation justice services (bailiffs and ushers); other customary and traditional justice systems; human rights commissions and ombudsmen; etc.
Non-Statutory Security Forces
Liberation armies, guerrilla armies, private body-guard units, private security companies, political party militias.

In post-conflict contexts, it is necessary to integrate SSR within the broader framework of post-conflict peacebuilding. This argues for the development of synergies between SSR and closely related issues such as transitional justice, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants[4] and small arms and light weapons control. It also reinforces the need to mainstream cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, children's' rights, conflict prevention and human rights issues. Relatedly, security and justice reforms are regarded as parallel, mutually reinforcing processes.

African knowledge and experience has contributed much to the evolution of the SSR concept. Lessons from diverse African transition processes have injected key messages into the mainstream SSR discourse. Although security sector *reform* has become the dominant discourse, a number of related concepts such as security sector development, management, reconstruction and transformation have emerged to emphasize a particular type of context or approach. Influenced by the South African experience where the insecurity and injustice caused by apartheid necessitated a comprehensive dismantling of the governance framework that supported the apartheid system, many African scholars use security sector *transformation* (SST) to stress the need for a fundamental shift in security planning and provision (see Box 1). At the heart of SST is the need to alter the culture, values and character of security actors. This reflects the dynamic in many African settings of long standing relationships of mutual dependence between security actors and executive authorities. SST should not be understood as a distinct or competing concept to SSR. Rather it draws on the challenging realities of different African political trajectories – from military dictatorship, to long-term authoritarian rule or armed conflict – to underline the context-specific difficulties of implementing SSR in Africa.

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[3] OECD DAC (2004), *Security System Reform and Governance*, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, Paris: OECD DAC, pp. 20-21.

[4] See: Alan Bryden, 'Understanding the DDR-SSR Nexus: Building Sustainable Peace in Africa', written for the 2nd International Conference on DDR and Stability, Kinshasa, 12-14 June 2007; available at: www.dcaf.ch/publications/kms/details.cfm?lng=en&id=34308&nav1=4

After the collapse of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) government that came into power following the country's first democratic, fully participative elections in 1994 enacted a paradigm shift in policy and practice at the national level. Reforming the security sector, as the central instrument of repression during the Apartheid era, represents a central element of South Africa's transformation from a state embodying regime security as its raison d'être to one founded on the human security of its citizens.

The South African defense review process began in 1994 and produced a White Paper (1996), Defense Review (1998) and Defense Act (2002). The process was marked throughout by a strong commitment to consultation within government and the security community and, in particular, across a broad range of civil society actors including NGOs, academics, businesses and communities. The drafting committee for the development of the White Paper, led by a well-known researcher and activist, included senior members of the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) and the civilian Defense Secretariat. Hotly-debated rounds of drafting saw disputes resolved through discussion and, where necessary, reference to international expert opinion. The draft revised as a result of public consultations was presented to the Parliamentary Defense Committee where a commitment to consensus proved decisive in shaping a final version that secured a delicate balance between technical realism, constitutionality, core values and priorities. The Defense White Paper provided a vital launch pad for subsequent elements of the defense review process.

The principles characterizing South Africa's Defense Review process and the White Paper that underpinned it included: respect for national and international law; transparency; subordination to parliament and the executive; political neutrality and non-discrimination; promotion of regional and international security; and respect for the human rights of armed forces personnel. National security was defined as a means to secure the rights and needs of South Africa's people. The South African experience is particularly instructive for other African reform contexts as a result of the way that these key principles were embedded in a process-based approach. This ensured that specific measures reinforced the transformation of the ministry of defense and national defense forces as entities that were integrated and cohesive at cultural, political and organizational levels.

Signposts and Indicators

A number of signposts are indicative of a reforming trend in the governance of a state's security sector. This is particularly important because the norms of democratic governance which may be identified and promulgated at international and regional and levels can only be operationalized through sustainable, participative reform processes at the national level. Fostering synergies between state authorities, the security sector and citizens is therefore critical to the effective implementation of SSR.

Perhaps the most visible sign of an emerging SSR process is a government's stated commitment to reform by garnering the political will necessary to engage in significant transformation of the security sector. Committing to a participative reform process that engages with a wide range of non-governmental actors beyond 'the state' is thus an important signpost for the sustainability and legitimacy of reforms. However, political will enhances perception rather than reality. A number of other factors providing clear entry points for engagement between governmental and non-governmental actors constitute relevant criteria for reform:

> ➤ an unambiguous statement of the key principles that will guide the management of the security forces. Such principles would often outline, for example, the roles and responsibilities of political actors, including the role of parliament and other oversight

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[5] This box draws on two sources: Nathan, L. (2007) *No Ownership, No Commitment: A Guide to Local Ownership of Security Sector Reform*, (University of Birmingham); and Williams, R. 'Human Security and the Transformation of the South African National Security Environment from 1990-2004', *Journal of Security Sector Management*, March 2005 (GFN-SSR, Shrivenham).

functions by government, the roles and tasks envisaged for each security agency and the broad democratic principles to which the security forces should adhere.

➢ a clear security policy, defined as early as possible in the reform process. This generally includes policy statements, strategic defense and security reviews, concept documents, and transformation strategies. Where this is absent, new policy should be outlined.

➢ a framework within which the relationship between the security forces and the civil authorities can be both articulated and managed. Political, public, bureaucratic and personal factors are critically important in the formulation and implementation of policy. It is equally important that the policy environment is transparent and participatory, and that leaders at all levels are accountable.

➢ a reform agenda and process that is locally owned and driven. This is particularly relevant in situations where the reform program is largely supported from external sources.

After establishing the framework and principles, the following indicators more clearly demonstrate commitment and progress in SSR:

➢ Building capacity among parliamentary defense and security committees and other civil management and oversight actors such as the ministry of finance, the office of the auditor general, and the ministry of defense;

➢ Managing critical human resource issues confronting the security forces, such as downsizing, institution of equity programs in the recruitment and promotion policies of the various security forces and transformation of the leadership, command and management culture of those forces;

➢ Reprofessionalizing the security forces, including the separation of specialist civil policing and external defense functions and reorienting the intelligence services to protect the state and its population rather than political elites;

➢ Preparing the security forces for new roles and tasks such as peace missions, military aid to the civil community, or combating transnational crime;

➢ Creating opportunities for meaningful input through public consultation processes; and

➢ In post-conflict contexts, support the incorporation of SSR into wider policy frameworks (e.g. poverty reduction strategies).

SSR Policy-Practice Gaps in Africa

The SSR discourse is currently going through a much needed phase of consolidation in terms of policy formulation and its relationship to SSR programming. The European Union, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC), United Nations as well as a number of bilateral actors have established new policy frameworks for SSR. Significantly, the continental organization, the African Union (AU), as well as regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), are also elaborating, norms, standards and policies in this field. The development of new normative frameworks to support SSR and promote democratic security sector governance offer opportunities to influence behavior change on the ground. ECOWAS has developed two complementary initiatives – the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework and the Code of Conduct for Armed and Security Forces – which set standards relating to national level implementation of SSR. These documents gain political authority once endorsed by Member States, thus offering an important entry point to support implementation at the national level. Moreover, normative frameworks have

been particularly useful in serving as a pressure point from the point of view of local actors in states where the space for expression and activism remains limited.

Policy frameworks go some way to meeting the need for a common language on SSR. There is much shared ground across actors and institutions endorsing a broad approach to SSR as outlined above. However, on the ground SSR is often applied much more narrowly than this agenda would imply. For example, international efforts often focus on police and military reform at the expense of promoting democratic oversight and accountability or wider efforts to support the rule of law. This section analyses the challenges of this significant policy-practice gap in three areas: *reconciling state and human security*; *operationalizing local ownership*; and, *working behind a national vision*.

Reconciling State and Human Security
At the heart of the SSR agenda is the need to promote people-centered approaches to security. Too often SSR tends to be confined to 'institutional reform' of the state security sector as opposed to a focus on how individuals and communities experience security and justice. In other words, the human dimension of SSR tends to get lost. There is therefore a need to reflect the reality that in many African contexts security and justice is provided by a wide range of non-state actors when the state is unwilling or unable to fulfill this role (see Box 2).

Box 2: Public Perceptions of Security in Liberia and Sierra Leone[6]
Analysis of how people deal with insecurity in post-conflict Liberia and Sierra Leone provides important insights to the relationship between state and non-state security provision. Common to both cases is that ordinary citizens suffered at the hands of government and opposition forces during periods of civil war as well as enduring high levels of continued violence and criminality in the aftermath of armed conflict. Both countries receive significant international support for SSR while Liberia benefits from the continued presence of a UN peacekeeping force. A lack of state policing capacity in both contexts and the security vacuum resulting from the withdrawal of UN forces in Sierra Leone led to the burgeoning of community based watch teams as well as private security companies used by wealthier citizens. Current SSR efforts that focus squarely on reinforcing state security structures do not address this de facto reliance on non-state security providers. This suggests that national level SSR programs which build synergies between state and non-state security providers will offer greater returns in terms of the security of individuals and communities while reducing the dependency on international support over the longer term.

If SSR policy frameworks emphasizing a shift from a purely state to a human security approach are to be realized, changes to how effectiveness is measured and the range of actors we consider as part of the security sector must be adopted. Successful SSR improves the level of security experienced by people. Placing individuals at the centre of an SSR process permits a better assessment of the security situation in a given context through addressing the different security needs and perceptions of women and men, boys and girls. It may be particularly important to understand how security is experienced in urban areas (where the reach of the state is likely to be more evident) when compared to rural settings.

There is no state monopoly of force in many African states. Indeed, the state security sector has in many cases served as a prop to regime security and posed a risk to the security of citizens, undermining the legitimacy of these organizations. Informal or other non-state security and justice systems may thus represent the only forces of security (but may also be agents of insecurity) for ordinary people. Close contextual analysis of a given reform setting is therefore critical in order to

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[6] Adapted from: Judy Smith-Hohn, 'Transformation through Participation: Public Perceptions in Liberia and Sierra Leone', in Alan Bryden and 'Funmi Olonisakin (eds) *Security Sector Transformation in Africa* (Munster, Lit Verlag, 2010).

understand the relationship between state and non-state security actors and thus to identify ways to enhance the security of individuals and communities. In certain contexts, building synergies between state and non-state security providers may therefore provide the most effective means to support sustainable SSR.

Operationalizing Local Ownership

In order to address inadequacies in externally-driven SSR programs, local ownership,[7] resting on a high level of meaningful participation by domestic stakeholders, should be the bedrock of sustainable SSR programs in Africa. The principle of local ownership in SSR has in some cases been understood to mean that there must be a high level of domestic political support for donor activities. This logic should be reversed: what is required is not local support for donor programs and projects but rather donor support for the programs and projects initiated by local state or community actors. This means that the partner country leadership in defining programs that are developed, managed and implemented by domestic actors would be facilitated or encouraged by donor governments. Donor country development agencies and SSR specialists would not 'implement' SSR; rather, in response to partner country leadership or demand, donor countries would adopt advisory or mentoring roles and catalyze partner country efforts to address the organizational change and political challenges central to SSR.

A key plank of local ownership is the fostering of national capacities for security provision, management and oversight. Weak line ministries and an absence of parliamentary or civil society oversight risk to create 'self-governed' security institutions that reinforce corporatist behavior, representing a potential threat to stability and democracy. The interrelated political and technical dimensions of SSR are apparent. On a technical level, there is a need to target the development of human resource, financial and general management capacities. Yet at the same time political space must be generated for parliamentarians, the media and civil society to fulfill legitimate oversight functions. This is an essential prerequisite to allaying fears and building public confidence in a reform process.

Some analysts point out that such an approach is complicated and potentially counter-productive due to i) a lack of democracy in certain partner countries, which calls the legitimacy of local ownership into question, ii) the absence of political leadership which makes local ownership improbable or iii) capacity gaps, which make local ownership unmanageable. However, as complicated and challenging as it may be, this is the approach that principles of aid and development effectiveness call for and offers the only opportunity for sustainable reform efforts. The state must not be bypassed or shadowed, but enhanced and legitimized, while the relationship of state and society with respect to security and justice evolves in ways that are defined and owned by and within national governance processes.

Working Behind a National Vision

A major challenge to promoting SSR is the absence of a discourse on security issues in many African contexts. This phenomenon has multiple dimensions. First, while SSR has achieved considerable prominence across the wider international community, it has gained less traction within African states. Looking beyond an unsurprising reluctance on the part of political and security elites to

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[7] For the state of the art on the concept of local ownership see: Donais, T. (2008) Local Ownership and security sector Reform (Munster: LIT Verlag) and Nathan, L. (2007) *No Ownership, No Commitment: A Guide to Local Ownership of Security Sector Reform* (University of Birmingham).

promote greater transparency and oversight over national security issues, this translates to a lack of focus on the security sector among the media and civil society more broadly. Relatedly, while considerable emphasis is placed on the professionalization of security providers, much less attention is given to building the capacity of statutory and non-statutory actors responsible for security sector oversight. Finally, gaps in both political will and knowledge of security issues are exacerbated by a lack of political space for engagement. Security remains a 'sacred cow' of executives and security establishments resulting in an absence of participation in security issues. This is shown by a limited engagement by civil society organizations in SSR at the national level and a deficient oversight role in this area by parliaments, regardless of formal mandates, roles and responsibilities.

In order to avoid the risk of cosmetic changes through building a critical mass in favor of reform, institutional reforms need to be accompanied by more systemic changes in security sector governance. In contexts as diverse as Mali, Sierra Leone and South Africa, participative national dialogue processes between government, security forces and civil society actors have created important dynamics for change resulting in confidence building as well as providing the basis for a new national vision of security. Ensuring that the resulting insights from these processes form the basis of a national security or sector specific strategy provides legitimacy and concrete knowledge as well as a clear medium-to-long term SSR vision.

Consultative processes are essential in order to engage reform-minded elements within the security sector. Dialogue about pernicious practices such as promotions based on patronage, poor terms and conditions or mistreatment of veterans can help channel legitimate concerns and build a broad coalition of support for change. These are crucial steps in addressing the legacies of past abuse through re-forging links of trust between citizens and security providers. In such contexts, SSR may be closely linked to processes and mechanisms of transitional justice. National dialogue processes also demonstrate the central role that parliaments can play in binding disparate efforts within a broader national framework. Parliaments can play influential roles in reframing the legal framework to deliver a new national vision of security.

In-depth knowledge of a given reform context is identified as a key requirement if international actors are to avoid exacerbating domestic divisions and capitalize on opportunities to put SSR on the national agenda. Taking security, political and economic framing conditions into account is critical if appropriate entry points for SSR are to be identified. Donor supported reform programs need to fit within such a common vision for SSR established by the government, based on a broad consultative process. This vision should support prioritization and sequencing of reforms as well as enabling different groups within society to buy into the reform process.

SSR Programs in Africa
Many international actors have made long-term commitments to supporting security and development in Africa. This section focuses on ways to support partnerships in SSR programming that complement locally, nationally and regionally driven SSR processes. Possible measures to embed SSR good practice in programming support are identified as are means to support nationally driven SSR processes.

Partnerships and the SSR Programming Cycle
Comprehensive and exhaustive SSR assessment missions are a vital prerequisite to coherent SSR programming. Greater effort is required to ensure that the composition of assessment teams comprises the range of necessary expertise. Regional knowledge and local language skills are at a

particular premium. For more general assessments, knowledge of the political and integrated nature of an SSR process may be more valuable than sector-specific expertise. Equally, assessment missions need to take the time to gauge the reality on the ground. To date the criteria for SSR assessment missions tend to focus on what to do. While this is necessary, the option of doing nothing in certain specified circumstances also need to be part of assessment criteria (in line with the 'do no harm' principle).

Program design needs to address how international support can best be aligned to national SSR processes (and thus avoid harmful gaps between expectations and resulting activities). An SSR vision document can provide a solid entry point for political dialogue between donors and national authorities and thus form a basis on which SSR benchmarks can be developed. It is important that such agreements are developed in a transparent manner that does not bypass national security sector oversight bodies.

In line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, there is a need for concerted effort to align international SSR programming to national processes. DCAF's International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT) is one example of bilateral donors and multilateral organizations coming together to support SSR programming in a joined up manner.

Beyond its specific activities, greater coherence is generated through a transparent approach to mission planning and implementation as well as an emphasis on multi-donor engagement.[8]

At the national level, alignment has been taken forward through the development of specialized joint working committees on sectors such as police, justice and defense. SSR clearing-house mechanisms developed jointly between donor governments and national authorities are emerging to support more coherent approaches to program implementation (see Box 3).

Box 3: Strengthening SSR Coordination in Burundi

In Burundi, the large number of international actors engaged in supporting SSR led to coordination challenges. In 2006, the DDR/SSR unit of the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) recognized the need to improve coordination and identified as a first step the importance of gaining an overview of relevant actors and activities. This was done by mapping current and planned SSR support by international actors in order to minimize overlaps and identify gaps. The mapping was divided by categories of support and included applicable implementation timelines. Results were regularly distributed to the wider international community. Several bilateral actors recognized the value of this initiative and highlighted that the unit had a comparative advantage in fulfilling this role because it had the human resources necessary to undertake such efforts.[9] While coordination challenges among such a large number of actors are inevitable, ONUB's efforts have contributed to a more structured dialogue on these issues within the international community in Burundi, thus leading to more meaningful dialogue with national authorities.

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[8] ISSAT activity areas include advisory field support, operational guidance development, training and knowledge services. Current members include: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK as well as the European Commission, The Council of the European Union, the OECD DAC Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Department for Political Affairs (DPA) and the United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). See: www.dcaf.ch/issat

[9] See Laurent Banal and Vincenza Scherrer, 'ONUB and the Importance of Local Ownership: The Case of Burundi' in Security Sector Reform and UN Integrated Missions: Experience from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, and Kosovo, eds. H. Hänggi & V. Scherrer, Lit Verlag, 2008.

Finally, monitoring and evaluation provides an important entry point to review SSR programs and ensure individual activities are being implemented in a mutually supportive manner. Mid-term reviews are increasingly recognized as a significant mechanism to assess impact, identify unintended consequences and undertake course corrections.

Improving International Support to National SSR Efforts

The acknowledgement that SSR is first and foremost a political process has not in all cases transformed into equipping SSR staff with better political understanding. A major gap lies in the non-availability of empirically-grounded case study evidence from SSR interventions which can contextualize and reality-check policy prescriptions and emerging good practices. There is an across the board need for relevant, timely and accurate knowledge capture of different African contexts. Mapping relevant (state and non-state) security actors, management and oversight bodies is essential to situate programs within their context. Moreover the absence of mechanisms to preserve institutional memory means that knowledge resides in individuals and can therefore be easily lost. This constrains the ability to learn from past experience. New initiatives to develop SSR communities of practice[10] represent one means to identify and preserve field-based good practice.

Appropriate training for SSR policy makers and practitioners is essential. Due attention to local ownership requires that international support reinforces the ability of national actors to take responsibility for their own security provision, management and oversight. A mentoring approach necessary to supporting national capacity building places particular emphasis on skills transfer. Thus, beyond sector-specific activities, enhancing the integrity of security institutions through fostering line management, human resource and financial management capacities is particularly important. Initiatives to standardize SSR training and make it more readily accessible provide another avenue to reinforce the capacities of policy makers and practitioners. A specialized SSR training network, the Association for SSR Education and Training (ASSET)[11] has emerged in order to develop a coordinated approach to SSR training and capacity development. Significantly, this body links training organizations from North and South, thus permitting the pooling of knowledge from different regions.

Many SSR interventions suffer from the criticism that they adopt a 'cookie cutter' approach based on experience drawn from different environments. However, there is a growing recognition of the need to embed local political, security and socio-economic realities in policy and programming decisions. Transnational civil-society-based expert groups have become increasingly important actors in supporting post-conflict and democratic transitions in Africa and can help support this goal. A major development is the increased *networking* of actors and capacities. This means that both national authorities and the wider international community can draw much more readily on national and regional expertise, facilitating the context-specific approach that is so crucial to successful SSR. This resource should be utilised much more by bilateral donors and multilateral organisations in this field. There is no longer any excuse for these capacities falling under the radar screen of larger institutions. Different examples include the African Security Sector Network (ASSN),[12] the Global Consortium

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[10] See: www.dcaf.ch/issat

[11] The Association for SSR Training and Education (ASSET) is a professional association of education and training organizations that supports the development of SSR capacity within governments, donors, security sector institutions, parliaments, civil society and international / regional organizations. Its membership spans the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. See: www.asset-ssr.org

[12] See: www.africansecuritynetwork.org

on Security Transformation,[13] and the alumni network of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS).[14] African led networks such as the ASSN can offer input to policy processes, facilitation of national dialogue, and expert support. Utilizing these networks in support of international SSR efforts provides an important means to access African knowledge and expertise. Particularly significant is the South-South approach that underpins the ASSN network and methodology. Leveraging experience from within and across different regions of Africa provides a compelling dynamic to support behavior change in different contexts.

Conclusion

Understanding opportunities to better support SSR in Africa is important on a number of levels. The development of the SSR discourse has owed much to African expertise and practical experience. Moreover, if Africa has and continues to be a major theatre for internationally supported SSR, evidence suggests that the impact of this effort has been limited in terms of matching support to professionalization with a commensurate focus on enhancing oversight and accountability of the security sector.[15] With a particular emphasis on the need for synergies and partnerships between state and non-state actors, this think piece therefore concludes by proposing a number of recommendations in support of legitimate, sustainable security sector reform processes in Africa.

Recommendations

➢ Reinforcing **security sector governance** institutions and actors will contribute to more meaningful national ownership of, commitment to and confidence in SSR processes. Increased support for the security sector oversight roles of parliaments, the media and civil society organisations can help to work through historically-rooted cleavages between executive authorities, security actors and citizens.

➢ Paying due respect to **context** may imply fundamentally changing the frame of reference for internationally supported SSR programmes. This means moving beyond a focus on the state in a narrow sense to addressing relevant actors at regional, state and sub-state levels and acknowledging this in programming. Mapping relevant (national and international) actors in a given context is an important point of departure. Local knowledge and language skills are essential in order to build an appreciation of domestic political dynamics surrounding SSR.

➢ The policy imperative of **local ownership** needs to be translated into strategies and methods to support SSR processes that are rooted in the local context. Adopting a long-term approach is vital. This means that the process of building a genuine national vision should underpin specific SSR efforts. Close involvement of parliaments and civil society is critical to building consensus on security issues.

➢ Acknowledging the important security roles played by different **non-state actors** across Africa is essential in order to improve the human security of individuals and communities. Rather than defaulting to efforts that seek to reinforce state structures, synergies should be developed between state and non-state security providers.

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[13] See: www.securitytransformation.org

[14] See: www.africacenter.org

[15] Nicole Ball, Piet Biesheuvel, Tom Hamilton-Bailie and 'Funmi Olonisakin (2007), 'Security and Justice Sector Reform Programmes in Africa', *Evaluation Working Paper 23*, UK Department for International Development, London.

- An under-emphasised approach is that of reinforcing **regionally-driven SSR** and thus the need to effectively support regional/sub-regional organizations. Regionally driven SSR offers important opportunities to address regional patterns to insecurity and generates opportunities to promote common approaches and values across borders. The influence of expert communities in shaping these frameworks points to a link between norm-setting at the regional level and national level implementation. Regional norms and policy frameworks are important in providing tools to support initiatives by governments, parliaments, civil society actors, donors etc across the region.

- **Capacity building** is an essential component of sustainable, legitimate SSR. Such an approach highlights relevant skills for international support sets that may not have been prioritised in the past (human resources, financial and line management) but also pedagogical skills, emphasizing the need for trainers. It also places a premium on building the capacity of national actors for security provision, management and oversight.

- An emerging **SSR community of practice** with a strong African civil society component has already played an important role in SSR policy development. This capacity should be more consistently engaged across SSR assessments, program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Links should be institutionalized with African expert networks in order to draw more readily on this resource base.

Key Online Resources[16]

Albrecht, P. & Jackson, P. (eds.) *Security Sector Reform in Sierra Leone 1997-2007: Views from the Front Line*, Lit Verlag, Munster (2010).

Ball, N., Fayemi, K., Olonisakin, F., and Williams, R. *Security Sector Governance in Africa: A Handbook* Centre for Democracy and Development, Lagos (2004).

Born, H. & Schnabel, A. (eds.) *Security Sector Reform in Challenging Environments*, Lit Verlag, Munster (2009).

Bryden, A. & N'Diaye, B. (eds.) *Challenges of Security Sector Governance in Francophone West Africa*, Lit Verlag, Munster (2010).

Bryden, A., N'Diaye, B. & Olonisakin, F. 'Security Sector Governance in West Africa – Turning Principles to Practice', *DCAF Policy Paper No. 8* (2005).

Bryden, A., N'Diaye, B. & Olonisakin, F. (eds.) *Challenges of Security Sector Governance in West Africa*, Lit Verlag, Munster (2008).

Bryden, A. & Olonisakin, F. (eds.) *Security Sector Transformation in Africa*, Lit Verlag, Munster (2010).

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