5 *Sustaining peace in West Africa: UN SSR support in non-mission settings*

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Introduction

> *United Nations support to nationally-driven Security Sector Reform is grounded in the conviction, expressed by the Security Council, that "an effective, professional and accountable security sector without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law is the cornerstone of peace and sustainable development and is important for conflict prevention."*[1]

In the preceding decade, the security sector reform (SSR) approach of the UN has been consolidated through the lens of peacebuilding and has mainly been geared towards reconstructing post-conflict environments. With the Department of Peace Operations (DPO, formerly the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, or DPKO) leading on the development of SSR policies and capacities, a focus on post-conflict contexts has naturally had a strong influence on the UN SSR approach. At the same time, SSR has been progressively introduced in conflict settings as well, through Security Council mandates, to support political and peace processes, particularly where mediation attempts rely on the adherence of armed groups to peace agreements.

While disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) efforts are often programmatically targeted at shorter-term imperatives, lessons learned from past peace agreements mediated by the UN have formed some of the basis for longer-term SSR approaches over the past decade. This approach is reflected in the presence of a significant SSR capacity in UN peace operations in conflict settings such as Libya and Yemen.[2] While overarching engagement is conducted by political affairs teams, SSR units rely on engaging with armed groups through the ability to analyse, convene, and sensitize them while also presenting peace mediators with options to involve armed groups in the political process.

However, experiences from the recurring UN engagements in Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR), the re-emergence of threats to peace (mutinies,

caches of weapons, etc.) during the withdrawal of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and the perception of "mission creep" in places like Libya, Yemen, and Syria, raise concerns. Persistent uncertainties surrounding peacemaking and peacekeeping have led to a renewed focus on conflict prevention, but shifting to a prevention model will demand new thinking that differs considerably from the reactive mindset frequently observed in peace operations. It will require moving beyond traditional peace operation blueprints, driven by Security Council mandates and the political support they provide to SSR practitioners.

The new sustaining peace agenda,[3] geared towards preventing conflict or its relapse, appears to have gained the attention of Member States, at least rhetorically, but it must still record concrete successes to gain real traction. To this end, Burkina Faso has been identified as a potential pilot country in which the efficacy of the preventive approach can be demonstrated. Should the country succeed in its democratic transition, other countries in similar situations may be inspired to request UN SSR support and thereby strengthen the resolve of the international community to pursue this approach. In the case of Burkina Faso, progress on democratic consolidation will not only sustainably stabilize the country itself, but it will also positively impact neighbouring countries by helping contain cross-border instability in this fragile region.

While Security Council mandates have provided integration and coherence in implementing SSR tasks in conflict and post-conflict settings, non-mission settings featuring UN SSR capacities (invited by host governments) are still working to develop a more cohesive and responsive approach. Experience suggests that SSR plays a key role in conflict prevention and is a critical factor, operationally, in moving the UN system and the sustaining peace agenda in the direction of prevention, but the conceptual approach, operational follow-through, and enabling resources must be developed to match this vision.

This chapter will first examine the sustaining peace and conflict prevention agendas through an SSR lens in order to identify the added value of SSR. Second, it will use cases from West Africa to delineate the contours and challenges of UN SSR support in conflict prevention settings. Third, it will shed light on how those experiences have benefited from South-South lessons learned, including from neighbouring post-conflict experiences, to explore untapped opportunities. The chapter will end with concluding remarks and will outline recommendations for the way ahead.

Sustaining peace and prevention: What role for SSR?

While a detailed analysis of the sustaining peace and conflict prevention agendas is beyond the scope of this chapter, it remains useful to highlight relevant aspects that relate to SSR, especially in non-mission settings, where these agendas may be most likely to succeed.

Linking SSR to the sustaining peace agenda

As defined by Security Council resolution 2282, sustaining peace is "a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the Government and all other national stakeholders, and should flow through all three pillars of the [UN] engagement at all stages of conflict."[4] SSR is relevant to the development, human rights, and peace and security pillars that constitute the scope of the sustaining peace agenda. The human rights approach is inherent to the SSR process.[5] This is recognized in Security Council resolution 2151, which links sustainable and effective SSR to a people-centred security sectors that are rooted in the rule of law and respectful of human rights.[6] Further, UN SSR capacities deployed in mission and non-mission settings stress respect for and the implementation and mainstreaming of international human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law in policies and strategic documents, as well as in advocacy, capacity building, and training. When citizens benefit from the combined effect of secure environments and socioeconomic inclusion,[7] they are less likely to resort to violence.

There are a number of areas where SSR can be of great utility to the sustaining peace agenda. First, in both SSR and sustaining peace, the process is as important as the end state. The SSR process is catalytic to and cross-fertilizes other sustaining peace activities. Second, while it may be challenging to measure evidence that peace is being achieved, especially in non-mission contexts, SSR processes offer indicators and milestones that relate to the sustaining peace agenda. There are measurable dynamics within the process of SSR, such as participation, inclusiveness, and operational effectiveness, and UN SSR interventions abide by the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP), which includes its own indicators of compliance (in support of monitoring and evaluation). This strengthens the human rights objectives of SSR in line with the aim of sustaining peace. Third, SSR processes strengthen institutional reform and the establishment of security architectures, transparent decision-making processes, and national security policies and strategies. These mechanisms, tools, and processes – which embody the spirit and objectives of the sustaining peace agenda – have a long-term stabilizing effect in the course of democratic consolidation, when skilfully combined.

SSR and prevention

Though the concept of conflict prevention was discussed within the UN[8] and among regional organizations long before the sustaining peace agenda was introduced, there has clearly been a reinvigorated interest in conflict prevention since the arrival of the current Secretary-General. This may stem, too, from earlier discussions and reports, such as that of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO Report), which argued:

> Conflict prevention and mediation must be brought back to the fore. The prevention of armed conflict is perhaps the greatest responsibility of the international community and yet it has not been sufficiently invested in. [. . .] A prevention culture has not been embraced by the Organization and its Member States.[9]

While conflict prevention, like SSR, applies across the spectrum of peace activities, a few notes of caution should be emphasized regarding the contours of SSR in conflict prevention settings.

First, a note on terminology. The term "conflict" has been used loosely within the UN system to refer to both "conflict" and "post-conflict" environments in very different contexts (for instance, the situations in Libya, Syria, Yemen, Mali, and CAR, which fall along the continuum of conflict at diverse points, and had varying levels of intensity). While *violent* conflict is to be prevented as much as possible, well-managed non-violent conflict can be directed towards useful results. Tensions may serve as an opportunity for dialogue, a source of innovation, or an enabler for resilience. When implementing SSR to prevent conflict in transitioning democracies emerging from long authoritarian or military rule, however, it remains useful to view any conflict in light of the capacity of the security sector to disrupt democratic processes. This "higher" classification on the continuum of conflict should be factored into conflict analysis and should guide UN-system engagement: SSR support should be sequenced and prioritized within an integrated approach, including by advocating or advising for and mainstreaming SSR prioritization among host stakeholders.

Second, while conflict prevention is embedded into peace agreements in times of conflict, it is possible to argue that in the case of protracted conflicts, these agreements are designed to achieve damage control as much as to sow the seeds for long-term and sustainable peace. In post-conflict settings, peacekeeping operations are deployed in response to a failure to prevent conflict, though working towards exit strategies can pave the way to the analysis of deeper root-causes that may support the nexus with peacebuilding and mitigate relapse into conflict. In terms of SSR, peacekeepers could engage in "pioneering peacebuilding" by initiating in-depth participatory and inclusive mapping, followed by informed institutional sensitization and capacity building. Specifically, police and military components could be used

to progressively train, coach, and operationalize the law enforcement and military capacities of a host country. The presence of a large and impartial number of international troops, combined with tools such as the HRDDP and mechanisms such as partnership-based coordination platforms, could act collectively as "peacebuilding multipliers."[10] This is achievable within existing capacities and areas of deployment, and most importantly – in an era of doing more with less – at a low extra cost for an exponential cost/benefit ratio.

Third, beyond conflict and post-conflict settings, there are a number of contexts where insurgency and failed coups have left populations and states highly vulnerable and at risk of degenerating into violent conflict or reverting back to non-democratic regimes. Conflict prevention depends on providing further support that is context-specific, to enable swift recovery, the consolidation of democratic gains, strengthening of the rule of law, enhanced respect for human rights, and ensured continued peace and stability. To this end, the UN system, especially at the country level, must assist host stakeholders to analyse risks and vulnerabilities and to sequence preventive courses of action accordingly while also prioritizing the mitigation of disruptive risks such as military upheavals, inter-communal conflicts, etc. The UN system has in-house expertise in a number of fields (mediation, reconciliation, transitional justice, SSR, etc.) that can be tailored to specific non-mission contexts, including good offices, to support advocacy and capacity building for transformative processes, such as constitutional reviews, national reconciliation, and institutional reforms.

Lastly, SSR is not appropriate in all conflict prevention settings, but primarily in democratic transitions. The SSR process is often one of state-building, for which a "do no harm" approach in its conceptualization and implementation remains crucial. Without a political framework that is conducive to democracy and thus enables good governance, accountability, and the rule of law, efforts to strengthen discipline, authority, and command and control can be used to control a population. In other words, SSR may be ineffective or counterproductive if implemented where the political will and societal maturity for democracy have not reached a critical mass.

This chapter narrows the notion of conflict prevention, limiting it to the prevention of violent conflict in post-crisis contexts and addressing its root causes. Therefore, it does not address conflict prevention in conflict or post-conflict settings where the UN would usually deploy peace operations, instead focusing specifically on conflict prevention in non-mission settings, as described above. It is important to keep in mind that not all such contexts have received UN support.

SSR in non-mission settings

Features of non-mission settings

Non-mission settings refer to UN field presences that are not peacekeeping operations or special political missions. These have thus far taken the form of Senior SSR Advisors deployed in response to requests from host countries, in deployments that are joint ventures involving the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA, formerly the Department of Political Affairs, or DPA), DPO, and Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). These UN entities have been building capacity, coordinating partners, and providing strategic and technical advice to executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as civil society. Activities include: support for the mapping of security sectors; facilitation of national security dialogues; support for the establishment of institutional mechanisms (national security councils, multi-sectoral SSR committees, etc.); and the elaboration of national security policies, strategies, and reform processes.

In contrast to UN mission settings, non-mission settings have a number of features that can impact actions in host countries. In the cases of Guinea, Burkina Faso, and The Gambia, for example, the UN is deployed at the request of national authorities but SSR capacities remain "invited" and thus must display a particularly high level of political sensitivity. Without the backing of a Security Council mandate, invited SSR capacities may be terminated. Still, one positive aspect of non-mission settings is that, because UN SSR capacity is deployed at the request of the highest authorities in a host country, important entry points within both the executive and the parliament tend to be very accessible. Enjoying significant political support and having access to top decision-makers enables UN experts to boost nationally-led SSR processes, which can also rely on the support of relevant UN stakeholders at the country level as well as at the regional and headquarters levels. Moreover, the UN can reach out to technical and financial partners, particularly when implementing reform roadmaps.

Conversely, other actors in a host country, such as civil society, trade unions, political opposition, and the media, may presume that a UN SSR advisor to a head of state supports the incumbent government (as was the case in Guinea, and is still the case in Burkina Faso and The Gambia). In the absence of effective communication on the scope of UN SSR capacities, UN efforts may be viewed with considerable scepticism, thereby limiting the engagement of important stakeholders and their buy-in to the UN-supported SSR process. On top of this, placing any emphasis on the traditional UN peace operation principles, of impartiality and neutrality, may be less convincing when the UN is not working with parties to a conflict but rather stakeholders to a reform process. In all cases, a non-mission UN SSR capacity can

have its invitation to support national SSR processes withdrawn or disregarded, and must therefore tread carefully.

Because UN SSR support in non-mission settings relies on political opportunity, it is difficult to assess through programmatic support in the initial phases. Usually, once strategic documents have been elaborated, subsequent plans are then translated into programming. However, prior to the development of these documents, support for mapping of the security sector and the establishment of institutional mechanisms to carry the SSR process forward are heavily dependent on context-specific political constraints, which require the recognition of opportune entry points.

In each country, political opportunity has been multifaceted and has yielded nuanced lessons learned in the area of non-mission SSR support. In Guinea, for instance, the leadership and personal interest of President Alpha Conde, and the need to address the legacy of the 2009 stadium massacre by military units, provided momentum for the SSR process. In Burkina Faso, on the other hand, the post-insurrection military coup of 17 September 2015 was mainly led by a single but powerful unit, the Regiment of Presidential Security (*Regiment de Sécurité Présidentielle*, or RSP), against which the majority of the army displayed firm opposition and to which the regional army units sent a stand-down ultimatum as they moved towards the capital. In contrast to the experience of Guinea, this behaviour positively influenced the public's post-coup perception of the military. This in turn influenced the approach of political leaders. With the dismantling of the RSP and the prosecution of its one-time commander, as well as the decision of President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré to demilitarize politics, the narrative of reform is such that UN SSR support has relied primarily on political opportunities to advance the process. It is worth delving deeper into West Africa as a regional case study for a better grasp of contextual parameters that interface with the challenges and opportunities of implementing preventive SSR alongside the sustaining peace agenda.

The importance of engaging with (sub-)regional organizations

West Africa has displayed an SSR-friendly environment in recent years, which appears to be the combined result of various actors and factors. There is a historical and sociological commonality across the region[11] and a cross-fertilizing of political progress, as well as numerous geopolitical and economic ties, but it is the will of political leaders and the dynamism of civil society that have supported a high level of regional socio-economic interaction and cohesive political behaviour. West Africa has thus displayed steady progress in implementing democratic rule while simultaneously creating vibrant civil societies.

The region presents an interesting context for an empirical approach to analysis of the dynamics of SSR in sustaining peace. West African security developments have

necessitated SSR not only in order to stabilize post-conflict environments (e.g. Mali, Côte d'Ivoire), but also in the reconstruction of security sectors (e.g. Sierra Leone, Liberia) and in the consolidation of emerging democracies (e.g. Guinea, Burkina Faso, and The Gambia). In this last category, SSR has recently trended towards innovations that move practices beyond traditional post-conflict efforts and into a new generation of conflict-preventive SSR. Ongoing efforts in The Gambia, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, and Lesotho, as well as the successful experience in Guinea,[12] have been daring in their ambition, catalytic to other democratic consolidation processes, promising as far as the goals of sustaining peace, and less costly for donor partners and the international community. From the perspective of the UN, though, this support requires a more integrated approach that is often challenging due to limited resources and the minimal integration of system-wide UN resources in non-mission settings.

A number of UN entities are contributing to SSR processes in West Africa. At the political level,[13] the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) plays a central role in providing political support to UN SSR capacities deployed to Member States, including through preventive engagement, good offices, mediation, and cross-border strategies like the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS)[14] and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC).[15] The SSR approach and capacity of UNOWAS not only harmonize the UN approach across West Africa and the Sahel, but also serves to mainstream SSR lessons learned and best practices across the region. Comparative examples in this chapter aim to highlight the positive impact to SSR of cross-fertilizing South-South best practices in West Africa.

Conflict-preventive SSR processes, such as in Guinea, Burkina Faso, and The Gambia, reflect a rise in voluntary requests for support made to the UN by elected authorities in post-crisis settings, who are seeking to consolidate democratic transitions and ensure sustained peace and stability. In these cases, the UN has deployed SSR teams led by Senior SSR Advisors. Guinea recently completed a seven-year UN-supported SSR process, initiated in 2011, which generated stabilizing reform and was the cornerstone of the country's democratic transition. Likewise, there are positive indicators (national dialogues, the establishment of security sector architectures, progress on national security policies, priority reform plans, etc.) that Burkina Faso and The Gambia are strengthening democratic gains and the rule of law.

At the regional level, ECOWAS has also been instrumental in bringing together synergies among its members. For SSR in particular, ECOWAS has developed a corpus of "security sector reform and governance (SSRG)" policies, agreed to by heads of state from the bloc, which includes binding clauses. The outcome is a conceptually well-defined, hands-on approach to SSR that takes advantage of the fact that, "being essentially proactive, ECOWAS does not have to 'wait for crisis to erupt and for the capacity of our security sector to fall short before we take steps to improve

it' with an SSRG in place."[16] SSRG is also rooted in a broader continental reality and is reflective of UN SSR principles and approaches, including local ownership, inclusiveness, respect for human rights and rule of law, and gender mainstreaming.[17] In this regard, ECOWAS has helped promote an environment conducive to SSR processes, including through binding political provisions.

It is important for the UN and its partners to engage with sub-regional organizations in order to establish strong strategic, policy, and operational partnership frameworks, as well as to strengthen their capacity in SSR where and whenever possible. These sub-regional organizations offer effective and essential entry points to achieving SSR objectives. They have requisite knowledge of endogenous and regional social and political dynamics, and can engage longstanding networks to conduct SSR interventions.

Challenges for SSR in non-mission settings

At the country level, challenges to SSR processes in West Africa are multi-faceted. These include: the hurdles of democratic transitioning after decades of non-democratic rule (e.g., institutional fragility, security sector resistance to change, etc.); balancing multiple reform processes simultaneously (e.g., reconciliation, transitional justice, constitutional reviews, development plans, etc.); scarce national resources to implement reforms that are strapped with significant expectations from the public; and contending with spill over from regional conflicts (in Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali, exacerbated by extremist groups in the Sahel). Typically, these countries are also confronting fossilized military decision-making cultures and have been met by destabilizing internal and asymmetrical threats (in contexts such as Burkina Faso) at vulnerable stages of their democratic growth.

Since its inception, the UN approach to SSR has developed with more of an eye for post-conflict reconstruction than for prevention. The conceptualization underpinning this approach should therefore be redefined and the use of available resources adjusted, to generate innovations that meet the challenges of non-mission settings. The recommendations presented later in this chapter, which stem from lessons learned and best practices, tentatively provide a pathway towards shaping a new approach.

Throughout the last decade, SSR processes have clearly been adapting to non-traditional contexts in West Africa, as tools developed specifically for post-conflict interventions could not be effectively transplanted in non-mission settings. For instance, national SSR committees are commonly established in post-conflict contexts, but in Guinea, it appears this may not be the most appropriate mechanism as it has hindered the ability of regular institutions to build capacity to administer the state. Though SSR committees are ultimately ad hoc structures

bound to be dismantled, they can trigger unnecessary resistance and limit the ability of an executive branch to implement SSR. In non-mission settings, it makes more sense to have ad hoc multi-sector or inter-ministerial (policy or reform) committees composed of key personnel who maintain their positions while regularly meeting for reform purposes. Committee members would in turn lead sectoral committees to develop sectoral strategies and roadmaps coherent with national security policies and strategies, without adding an extra burden or redundant structures into the security architecture.

A prominent feature in non-mission settings in West Africa has been the deployment of Senior SSR Advisors in support of governments, or as special advisors to heads of state, such as in Guinea and Burkina Faso. However, there is no specific conceptual framework, induction, or country-specific training for these uniquely positioned UN entry points, nor any mentoring modalities or official repositories of lessons learned and best practices. Furthermore, these Advisors operate with limited freedom of movement: as "invitees," they must be very cautious in how they support a sensitive area of government.

These SSR capacities also lack the traditional backing provided by Security Council mandates or the enabling tools of missions – such as political affairs officers, joint operations centres (JOCs),[18] and joint mission analysis centres (JMACs)[19] – which enable an in-depth grasp of relevant dynamics, potential entry points for the UN, and integrated preventive and responsive courses of action. SSR processes in non-mission settings in West Africa lack crucial enablers as well, such as human rights and gender capacities. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was able to deploy a human rights capacity in Guinea, but this has not been reproduced elsewhere. Yet, human rights awareness, as well as gender strategies, gender mainstreaming, and gender analysis all support the unfolding of SSR processes.

Lastly, despite the strategic positioning of the UN Inter-Agency SSR Task Force at UN Headquarters and the "loose" mandate of the UN Resident Coordinator in coordinating resident and non-resident UN entities, non-mission settings are often fragmented and only somewhat coordinated. In 2017–2018 in Burkina Faso alone, UNOWAS, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) conducted more than 50 SSR activities, including related to good offices, advocacy, training of trainers, anti-corruption capacity building, information sharing, weapons management, and women and youth. However, it has been hard to quantify and evaluate the collective impact of these efforts and whether they have strengthened the governance and effectiveness of the security sector.

Lessons learned from West Africa for SSR in the context of prevention

Elected authorities in West Africa have demonstrated an increasing tendency to voluntarily request SSR assistance from the UN, in order to consolidate democratic transitions and ensure sustained peace and stability. Preventive SSR brings inclusive and participatory nationally-led processes to these contexts, harnessing South-South cooperation and recalibrating certain classical concepts of SSR – such as the centrality of ownership. While the mainstreaming of national ownership is vital in post-conflict settings, it requires less focus in non-mission contexts, where national actors are already actively leading the SSR process. In Burkina Faso, for example, there was a sense of discomfort among host actors when the UN SSR capacity alluded to ownership, because it carried with it a connotation of the support provided to failing states. More useful, by contrast, was support to institutional ownership through collective capacity building with key actors and by encouraging institutions to brainstorm, convey, and mainstream their role in and expectations from reform.

Because of its multi-sector and nation-wide reach, the SSR process – which is inclusive, participatory, and comprehensive – induces similar characteristics in other processes, such as in national reconciliation. In both Guinea and Burkina Faso, for instance, the executive has reached out extensively to civil society, including to women's and youth organizations. In Guinea, civil society actors have actively participated throughout the entire SSR process (2011–2018). And in Burkina Faso, a representative of the national council of civil society organizations was a permanent member of the multisector committee that organized the national security forum (2017). Prior to this, civil society convened a workshop concerning oversight of the security sector, alongside other legislative, judicial, and internal governance actors, to compile recommendations that were later presented during the proceedings of the forum.

By facilitating strong and well-governed security architectures, UN SSR helps shape the future of emerging democracies. To that end, institutions such as national security councils are at the heart of sustainable peace and security. They facilitate an institutional and transparent decision-making process for the use, management, and monitoring of security sectors, and enable civilian oversight and capacity building of key actors. In Burkina Faso, after decades of military rule, the President elected after the recent insurrection is a civilian, as are his ministers of defence, security, and territorial administration – positions previously occupied only by uniformed officials. The role of institutional mechanisms in progressively instilling the subordination of the military to the political may be an evolutionary game changer in democratic transitions.

In Burkina Faso, the SSR process has also been catalytic to a number of sustaining peace objectives. Fora held in thirteen administrative regions to consult populations

on their security needs and expectations triggered discussions on how to rebuild trust between the population and the Forces de Défense et de Sécurité (DFS), especially in remote Sahel districts. The DFS encompass the army, law enforcement, corrections, forest guards and customs. A recommendation in the February 2018 Emergency Plan for the Sahel (PUS) to outsource engineering work to military engineering units[20] would increase the military's visibility in these areas outside the context of direct combat, which could help increase confidence in the DFS among the population.

Mainstreaming lessons learned through South-South cooperation is another key to boosting SSR processes, including by redefining suitable entry points in similar and contiguous settings. The SSR capacity in Burkina Faso has benefited from numerous deployments of SSR officers from the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), UNOWAS, UNDP Guinea, and UNDP Central African Republic, as well as experts from DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance in The Gambia. They have supported the mapping of the security sector in Burkina Faso and the planning of subsequent steps of the SSR process, such as identifying priorities, establishing institutional mechanisms to elaborate a security architecture, and developing a national security policy and sectoral strategies.

SSR units from MINUSMA and UNOWAS have been instrumental in supporting the UN SSR capacity in Burkina Faso, including on best practices. In Mali, the interior security sector had attempted to lead the SSR process, only to find that the Defence Ministry would not endorse outcomes and had been working to develop its own process. The lesson was mainstreamed among key national stakeholders in Burkina Faso, where a similar pattern was initially seen in connection with the national security forum, which was organized by the Ministry of Security but with a lack of consultation and inclusiveness (including the absence of key actors, such as the military). With advice from the UN SSR capacity, the presidency stepped in to own and lead the process and ensure wider participation, including through popular consultation (in the regional fora mentioned above) and strong engagement by governmental oversight actors, civil society, and the military.

A significant lesson learned from South-South cooperation is related to ownership and its import in non-mission settings. While ownership is crucial across the spectrum of SSR engagement on the peace continuum, its nuances must be understood. In Security Council-mandated operations, ownership is a goal of UN SSR support, but in non-mission settings, as mentioned above, national ownership already exists and it is elected authorities who have requested support, often because they campaigned on the promise of institutional reforms. This distinction is important when engaging with country actors. In Burkina Faso, for example, mapping of the security sector was largely carried out by national actors, with some advice and capacity building in niche areas by UN and EU experts. Compared to Guinea and The Gambia, where security sector mapping was led by regional and

international actors, the process in Burkina Faso demonstrated particularly effective ownership, inclusiveness, and participation.

In the mapping phase and beyond, SSR processes unfold differently in different contexts. Guinean actors had moved promptly on reform plans, but lost momentum when they realized the need for strategic documents to guide the process. Then, when traditional mechanisms from post-conflict environments were introduced, such as a national SSR committee, the support provided in conceptualizing and implementing reforms came with negative impacts that were not immediately appreciated. Because the national security council was not operationalized, for example, the Guinean security architecture was weakened. Indeed, the council did not hold its first session until early 2018, despite an SSR process that began in 2011, and it remains a challenge to merge the competencies of the national SSR committee and the national security council. Further, the SSR committee implemented reform roadmaps itself, limiting the capacity of the executive to carry out these tasks as regular prerogatives and thus build executive capacity to implement, monitor, and evaluate in the future.

Recommendations

This chapter has sought to open discussion on how SSR can play a role in the sustaining peace and conflict prevention agendas, particularly as SSR experiences are still in progress, some in their early stages. From an analysis of several cases of ongoing SSR processes and lessons learned, a number of recommendations can be made, particularly when it comes to aligning resources and visions, strengthening partnerships, and fostering political primacy.

Matching operational concepts and resources with the overall vision

Bearing in mind that SSR and sustaining peace processes are as important as their outcomes, there is a need to rethink their alignment, adequacy, and flexibility alongside the specific political opportunities that characterize non-mission settings. As underscored by the HIPPO Report:

> The security sector must be a particular focus owing to its potential to disrupt peace in many countries, with the UN in a convening and coordinating role, if requested [. . .]. In sustaining peace, the UN System must overcome structural and other impediments to working together, including through more innovative resourcing options.[21]

In other words, if SSR and other processes or programmes working towards the sustaining peace and conflict prevention agendas are to be effective, **the UN system and its partnerships must align visions with adequate resources for implementation**.

The UN also has a role to play in gathering its own resources, as well as in synchronizing the comparative advantages of UN entities, whether in country, at the regional level, on standby, or at Headquarters. In particular, the peculiarities of non-mandate and non-mission settings must be factored into responsive and comprehensive context analysis. Untapped opportunities remain available in SSR by which to pursue the aims of the sustaining peace and conflict prevention agendas through flexible and innovative approaches, especially in non-mission settings. A significant step the UN could take would be to **harness various SSR-related activities, both in-country and regional** (UNODC, UNREC, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)), etc.)**, and ensure that their collective impact is assessed and harmonized to enhance cross-fertilization and effectiveness**.

Mainstreaming conflict prevention in partnerships

To mobilize resources, **the UN can play an important role in advocating among partners that SSR be viewed through the lens of conflict prevention**. This may require the UN prove to these partners that it is worthwhile to invest in transitioning democracies rather than merely reacting in response once crises unfold. The EU leads important and resource-intensive missions in post-conflict settings, for instance, such as the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali), the EU Capacity Building Mission in the Sahel (EUCAP Sahel), and the Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA), but has only a light footprint in countries like Burkina Faso, where the Project to Support the Strengthening of Internal Security in Burkina Faso (PARSIB) has a comparatively small interior security capacity.

Partnerships in non-mission settings also face SSR coordination issues, including multiplicity and redundancy. These issues are particularly acute in The Gambia and Burkina Faso. In both countries, there is a need for DPO, DPPA, PBSO, and UNDP to synchronize support and ensure strategic back-up, resource mobilization, and sustained interest and momentum. In the case of The Gambia, in-country UN SSR capacities must also develop effective coordination mechanisms with SSR advisors from the EU, the AU, and ECOWAS. Given that challenges to partnerships persist even when Security Council mandates clarify roles, **it is imperative that partners in non-mission settings engage in policy dialogue at both the strategic and operational levels in order to maximize comparative advantages and cross-fertilize delivery**.

Political primacy

It is important to stress among host actors and partners alike that SSR is, at its core, inherently political. SSR strengthens the resolve of political leaders, who are usually civilians learning on the job, to address the intricacies of promoting the acceptance of civilian political control by military and other security actors. It must also balance train-and-equip strategies with the longer-term aim of good governance through civilian oversight, rule of law, respect for human rights, and gender mainstreaming.

However, while SSR is inherently political, there should be no confusion within the UN between the roles of SSR and political affairs, which overlap in scope but should remain complementary and unexchangeable in order to deliver holistic support. While UN SSR capacities evolve along a "political-technical" continuum, the lens of political affairs is crucial in boosting transformative processes (reconciliation, transitional justice, etc.) that bring about societal and institutional change and adherence that is essential to sustainable SSR. This requires that entry points to UN **political support are identified, stakeholders are engaged on the political implications of SSR processes, support is harnessed to advance progress, and cross-fertilization is explored as part of a comprehensive sustaining peace approach to other (ongoing) democratic consolidation processes, including constitutional reviews, national reconciliation, and state building**.

SSR capacities must also ensure that political decision-making addresses the entire SSR process. In that regard, it is not only important that SSR capacities enable this on a political level but also that they **facilitate an effective junction between political and sectoral actors, to support the former in understanding technical constraints and risks and the latter in translating political aims into sectoral delivery**. This is particularly vital in non-mission settings, where political affairs capacities are limited to a peace and development adviser (PDA) who often struggles to meet the numerous, complex, and resource-intensive political demands of the sustaining peace agenda.

Conclusion

The cases from West Africa highlighted in this chapter show the impact of SSR dynamics on the prevention and sustaining peace agendas. West African security contexts reveal the importance of SSR to stabilize post-conflict environments, but also its particular potential in reconstructing security and enabling the consolidation of democratic transitions. More broadly for the UN, experiences in the region have revealed that, even if the Organization's vision for conflict prevention and sustaining peace appears to be established and promising, the conceptual framework, resources, and innovations – including in efficiently harnessing synergies – do not yet

match the vision. And, as the UN approach to SSR was developed predominantly in post-conflict settings and is thus heavily tied to peacebuilding, it must now be adapted to new contexts in which tools developed specifically for post-conflict realities may not be effective. SSR in non-mission settings can also only be effective when the political framework is shaped through transformative processes such as constitutional reviews, national reconciliation, and transitional justice. Yet, while those processes remain critical enablers of democratic transitions in contexts including post-insurrection and post-coup spaces, the UN presence in non-mission settings has yet to be adequately integrated and equipped to support governments in dealing with the complexities of those processes and meeting the high expectations they raise among citizens.

The contribution of SSR to peace and development remains a critical and potentially game-changing element in non-mission settings considering the disruptive nature of security sectors in these contexts and in sub-regions. By enabling the construction of a security architecture, the definition of national interests, and the capacity to achieve them, SSR processes lay the groundwork for state- and nation-building by democratic means. Indeed, inherent to SSR processes are participation, inclusiveness, a people-centred approach, national dialogue and consultation, a shared security vision, a governance perspective, and respect for human rights – all of which strengthen state-building. Moreover, the creation of a security architecture facilitates state-building more broadly by enabling a transitioning democracy to build the capacity to use its instruments of power (diplomatic, economic, military, etc.) to achieve its national interests within the rule of law.

The identification of entry points and consecutive UN engagement in non-mission settings will require redefining country-level presences. This may involve rethinking Resident Coordinator Offices so that they are more politically robust and strengthening SSR capacities in regional UN hubs. By supporting state- and nation-building as potential outcomes of SSR processes, changes such as these have the strong potential to contribute significantly to the conflict prevention and sustaining peace agendas.

Notes

1 United Nations, Deputy Secretary-General's Remarks at High-Level Roundtable on Security Sector Reform and Sustaining Peace, 23 April 2018. Available from: https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/dsg/statement/2018-04-23/deputy-secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-roundtable-security.

2 As part of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OSESGY).

3 See United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (A/RES/70/262), 27 April 2016; United Nations, Security Council Resolution 2286 (S/RES/2286), 27 April 2016.

[4] United Nations, Security Council Resolution 2286 (S/RES/2286).

[5] For a detailed approach, see Mirko Daniel Fernandez and Kim Piaget, "Rethinking a Human Rights-based Approach to SSR," ISSAT HRBA Working Group Paper 1, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, June 2016. Available from https://issat.dcaf.ch/download/104618/1850703/HRBA%20Working%20Group%20Paper%201.pdf.

[6] See United Nations, Security Council Resolution 2151 (S/RES/2151), 28 April 2018, which notes that "an effective, professional and accountable security sector without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law is the cornerstone of peace and sustainable development . . . "

[7] Of particular relevance to the development-SSR nexus, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Agenda is dedicated to "the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels." See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16.

[8] For example, see United Nations, Note by the President of the Security Council (S/2002/207), 1 March 2002; and United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/891), 18 July 2006.

[9] United Nations, Report of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/70/95– S/2015/446), 17 June 2015.

[10] In peacekeeping settings, and within a UN integrated approach geared towards an exit strategy and handover of military and law enforcement tasks to host authorities, military and police peacekeeping units can engage at the earliest appropriate stages – and along HRDDP requirements – to enhance joint deployments and manoeuvres and, when feasible, conduct collective training on niche capacities of host units, usually constituted after a DDR/SSR process. This operational coaching would also enable host units to become familiar in practice with how international standards (International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights and Refugee Laws, protection of civilians, conflict-related sexual violence and child protection requirements, etc.) are effectively implemented in operations.

[11] SSR is "special" in West Africa, where conditions have been more conducive to the process in recent decades. The emergence from military rule and the success of democratization movements in a number of West African countries, along with the development of security coordination mechanisms within sub-regional organizations (ECOWAS and the West African Monetary and Economic Union (UMEOA)), have led to policy dialogues and frameworks widely endorsed despite differentiated Anglo/French security sector traditions.

[12] Josie Lianna Kaye, *What Works in UN Resident Coordinator-led Conflict Prevention: Lessons from the Field: Republic of Guinea 2009-2017* (United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, 2018). Available from https://i.unu.edu/media/cpr.unu.edu/attachment/2850/RC-Project-Guinea.pdf.

[13] At the technical level, other UN system entities are also involved in SSR-related activities, including UNODC and UNREC.

[14] See United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Sahel Region (S/2013/354), 14 June 2013.

[15] See UNOWAS, "Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission," n/d, https://unowas.unmissions.org/cameroon-nigeria-mixed-commission.

[16] Economic Community of West African States, "ECOWAS seeks collective ownership of security sector reforms," press release, 19 June 2016 (posted 3 July 2017), http://www.ecowas.int/ecowas-seeks-collective-ownership-of-security-sector-reforms.

[17] See Economic Community of West African States, "Political Affairs," www.ecowas.int/ecowas-sectors/political-affairs.

[18] JOCs provide UN peacekeeping operations with integrated situational awareness, facilitate integrated operations coordination, and support crisis management.

[19] JMACs (when available) provide integrated analyses for the senior management of peacekeeping missions, and are an integrated tool for information-collection capability at strategic or operational levels.

[20] See Government of Burkina Faso, "Programme d'urgence du Sahel: 154,9 milliards de F CFA devront être injectés sur le terrain en 2018," press release, 15 February 2018, http://www.gouvernement.gov.bf/spip.php?article2087.

[21] United Nations, A/70/95–S/2015/446.