

GENDER EQUALITY AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

Mainstreaming gender equality in security provision,
management and oversight

ABOUT THIS SSR BACKGROUNDER

This SSR Backgrounder addresses why gender equality is essential to security sector reform (SSR). Gender equality is an international norm that stipulates the equal right of women and men to opportunities and resources irrespective of their gender. Good security sector governance (SSG) cannot be achieved without gender equality, and for this reason mainstreaming gender equality within the security sector is an essential aspect of SSR. This SSR Backgrounder explains the importance of gender mainstreaming in all activities related to the reform of security provision, management and oversight.

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

The SSR Backgrounders provide concise introductions to topics and concepts in good security sector governance (SSG) and security sector reform (SSR). The series summarizes current debates, explains key terms and exposes central tensions based on a broad range of international experiences. The SSR Backgrounders do not promote specific models, policies or proposals for good governance or reform but do provide further resources that will allow readers to extend their knowledge on each topic.

The SSR Backgrounders are a resource for security governance and reform stakeholders seeking to understand and also to critically assess current approaches to good SSG and SSR.

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Fairlie Chappuis

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DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

Maison de la Paix
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E
CH-1202 Geneva
Switzerland

+41 22 730 94 00

info@dcaf.ch

@DCAF_Geneva

www.dcaf.ch

WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY AND WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL TO SSR?

Gender equality is an international norm that stipulates the equal rights of women and men to opportunities and resources irrespective of their gender or the sex with which they were born. Sex and gender are not the same (see Figure 1).

Gender equality is essential to SSR because it is integral to the principles of good governance that SSR aims to establish.

Gender equality is a democratic principle and a human right, and thus an integral part of each of the standards of good SSG that SSR seeks to establish through democratic civilian control, rule of law and respect for human rights. For more information on why gender equality is integral to good governance of the security sector, please see the SSR Backgrounder on “Gender Equality and Good Security Sector Governance”.

Gender equality is also a constituent part of improving state and human security through SSR.

Addressing the different needs of women, men, girls and boys as victims of insecurity, agents of violence and security sector personnel means SSR can improve both human and state security. Gender inequality is also a root cause of gender-based violence – a grave threat to both human and state security.

Gender equality is essential to SSR because it makes the security sector more effective.

Considering gender equality within security sector institutions improves the internal and operational effectiveness of state and non-state security providers by enabling the best use of human resources and more responsive security provision. For example, gender equality requires merit-based recruitment, deployment and advancement, and fosters a productive and professional work environment and culture. Promoting the aims of gender equality within the security sector helps security providers to better understand and serve the diverse needs of the population – all women, men, girls and boys.

When gender equality is not considered, SSR will fail.

A security sector that neglects the security of particular segments of the population is neither accountable nor effective. Past experience has demonstrated that when gender equality is not considered in SSR, security sector institutions will continue with status quo arrangements, typically protecting the interests of the more powerful, male-dominated political elites and overlooking the security needs of women, girls and gender-based minorities.

Gender equality is a constituent part of national and local ownership of SSR.

SSR is only successful when led by national authorities and widely supported at the community level. Legitimate ownership requires that women and men have equal opportunity to influence decisions about SSG and their implementation, including through public oversight. Participation may be direct (e.g. through diverse and representative elected or duly appointed bodies) or indirect (e.g. through consultations with civil society organizations, including those supporting marginalized groups of women, men and gender minorities).

Gender equality is a constituent part of a long-term, holistic approach to SSR.

Excluding particular groups of women, men, girls and boys from the oversight, management and provision of security creates a deficit in accountability and effectiveness, placing many of them in vulnerable situations and undermining reform in the long term.

For all these reasons gender equality must be considered throughout the course of the SSR process, including in assessment, design and planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

WHAT INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS RELATE TO GENDER EQUALITY AND SSR?

Because gender equality is a human right protected under international law, incorporating the aims of gender equality into SSR may be a legal obligation according to international instruments such as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (1979), to which 189 states in the world are party, contains several legal obligations related to SSR, including:

- the adoption of legislative and other measures prohibiting discrimination against women;
- women’s participation in the formulation of government policy on equal terms with men;
- the elimination of discrimination against women in employment;
- measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women for the purpose of guaranteeing them equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** (1995), while not legally binding, identifies specific actions to be taken by governments, international and national organizations and other relevant stakeholders to combat gender-based violence and achieve gender equality in all spheres of society, including the security sector. Its recommendations are often incorporated into SSR processes.

GOOD SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE (SSG) AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORM (SSR)

Good SSG describes how the principles of good governance apply to public security provision, management and oversight. The principles of good SSG are accountability, transparency, the rule of law, participation, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency.

The **security sector** is not just security providers: it includes all the institutions and personnel responsible for security management and oversight at both national and local levels.

Establishing good SSG is the goal of security sector reform. SSR is the political and technical process of improving state and human security by making security provision, management and oversight more effective and more accountable, within a framework of democratic civilian control, the rule of law and respect for human rights. SSR may focus on only one part of public security provision or the way the entire system functions, as long as the goal is always to improve both effectiveness and accountability.

→ For more information on these core definitions, please refer to the SSR Backgrounders on “Security Sector Governance”, “Security Sector Reform” and “The Security Sector”.

Regional instruments with provisions protecting gender equality include:

- the African Union’s **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa** (2003);
- the Organization of American States’ **Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women** (Convention of Belem do Para) (1994);
- the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Decision No. 14/05 on **Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-conflict Rehabilitation** (2005);
- the **European Union Equal Treatment Directive** (2006).

FIGURE 1 SEX AND GENDER ARE NOT THE SAME

Sex

Sex is biological. Sex refers to the biological, physiological and anatomical features with which people are born. Sex is defined by reproductive organs (e.g. testes and ovaries), male and female chromosomes (e.g. XY and XX), male and female hormones (e.g. testosterone and oestrogen) and secondary sexual characteristics (e.g. muscle mass and hair).

Sex is unchangeable and fixed in the absence of medical intervention (surgery or hormone therapy).

The terms male, female and intersex refer to the SEX of the individual.

Gender

Gender is learned. Girls and boys are taught and assigned different social characteristics, roles, behaviours and activities within a particular socio-cultural context on the basis of their sex.

Gender roles are changeable over time and vary within and across societies and cultures. This means gender roles are not the same in all socio-cultural contexts, and within one socio-cultural context they will change and develop in relation to the changes experienced by that society.

The terms masculine, feminine and transgender refer to the GENDER of the individual.

In the context of UN-mandated SSR processes, the **UN Security Council Resolutions (SCRs) on women, peace and security** define minimum standards related to gender equality that are legally binding. **UN SCR 1325**, adopted in 2000, is the most influential resolution, as many member states subsequently adopted national action plans detailing how it should be implemented.

The SCRs cover five broad themes.

1. The inclusion of women in leadership positions and at all levels of decision-making processes related to SSR and the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.
2. The integration of gender perspectives into peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities.
3. The inclusion of more female professionals in peacekeeping and in the security sector.
4. The consideration of the different needs of women, men, girls and boys in all post-conflict processes.
5. The creation, in consultation with women, of reforms and mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual violence.

WHAT DOES GENDER MAINSTREAMING MEAN FOR THE SECURITY SECTOR?

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the positive and negative implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. Gender mainstreaming means promoting the equal participation of men and women in every part of the security sector and everything it does (see Figure 2).

Gender mainstreaming activities in SSR vary widely, based on the specific needs of women, men, girls and boys in each context and the different responses of national stakeholders.

GENDER EQUALITY IS NOT THE SAME THING AS GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender equality is a conceptual term and a goal, while gender mainstreaming is a strategy for achieving the goal of gender equality. Sometimes other terms are preferred to gender mainstreaming, for example:

- gender responsive;
- gender sensitive;
- integrating gender;
- adopting a gender perspective;
- applying a gender- or gender-differentiated analysis;
- using a gender lens.

These terms all focus on the fact that different people have different needs, concerns and experiences, and gender is one of the main aspects of identity (though not the only one) that influences this. Strategies for integrating gender equality into security provision, management and oversight are a fundamental aspect of SSR regardless of the particular terms used to describe such strategies.

➔ For more information on gender equality and good SSG, please see the SSR Backgrounder on “Gender Equality and Good Security Sector Governance”.

The guiding questions to ask in mainstreaming gender equality in SSR activities:

- Are both women and men (including non-state actors such as civil society organizations) consulted and involved in security provision, management and oversight?
- Are the different security needs of women, men, boys and girls being adequately addressed?
- Does the security sector have the necessary policies, protocols, structures, personnel, training and resources to meet these different needs?
- Is a healthy and non-discriminatory work environment being created?

FIGURE 2 GOALS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THREE AREAS OF SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE



Figure 3 shows some starting points for gender mainstreaming at every stage of SSR assessment, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

HOW DOES SSR MAINSTREAM GENDER EQUALITY INTO SECURITY SECTOR OVERSIGHT?

Mainstreaming gender equality into both external and internal security sector oversight is essential in order to ensure that all men, women, girls and boys enjoy equal security provision and protection under the law. This often involves both capacity building and improving equality within oversight institutions.

Capacity building for oversight of gender equality: ensuring sufficient expertise and knowledge on gender equality and security, through for example:

- courses for oversight staff, security sector personnel and civil society on gender equality, human rights and international legal obligations related to women, peace and security;
- training on how and why to engage in security sector oversight for civil society and media working on gender equality;
- awareness raising on existing laws, policies norms and standards among the public and security sector institutions, including oversight bodies.

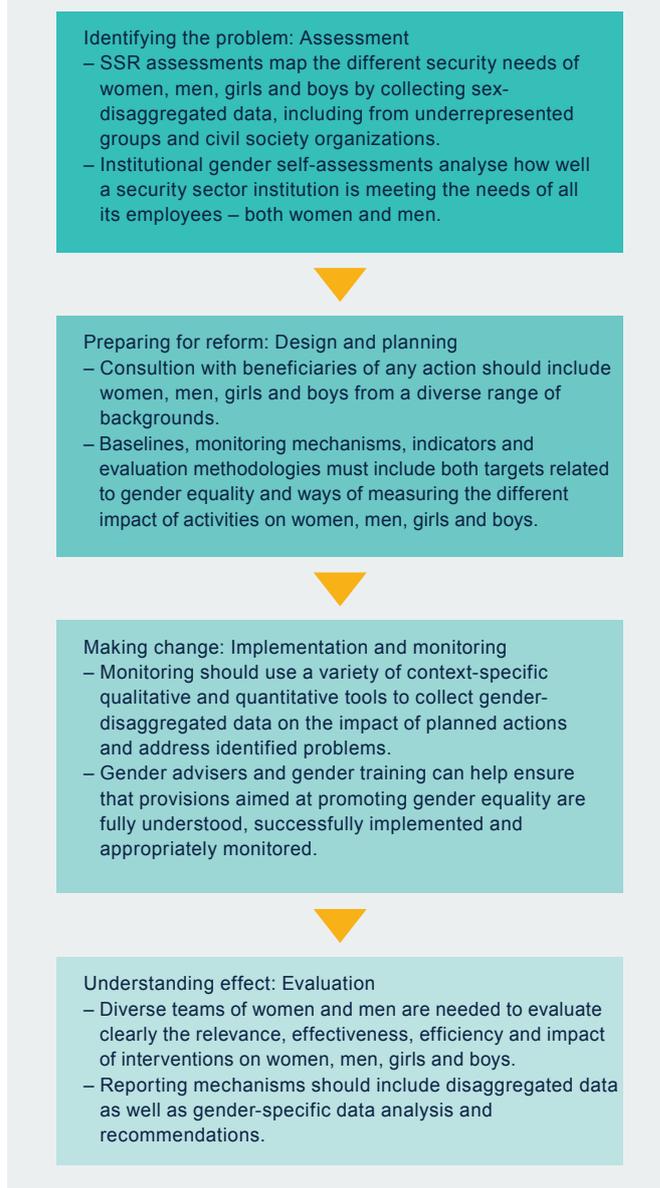
Improving equality within oversight institutions: establishing a sound legal and policy basis for gender equality within security sector oversight bodies can include activities such as:

- engaging diverse groups of women and men in national security policy-making processes;
- eliminating discrimination and integrating gender equality into specific legislation and policies on security sector strategy and oversight;
- forming security committees comprising men and women from parliament, ministries, security sector institutions and civil society organizations, including women's groups;
- in post-conflict contexts, drafting national action plans on UN SCR 1325 based on an inclusive process.

HOW DOES SSR MAINSTREAM GENDER INTO SECURITY SECTOR MANAGEMENT?

Mainstreaming gender equality into security sector management focuses on facilitating equal opportunity for women and men to participate in the sector. Security sector institutions are usually overwhelmingly staffed by man, so this generally requires enhancing conditions for women by improving recruitment, retention and career advancement, and providing a safe and productive working environment.

FIGURE 3 STARTING POINTS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING AT EVERY STAGE OF SSR



Gender mainstreaming in security sector management can include various activities.

Improving merit-based recruitment of security sector staff by:

- targeting advertising at underrepresented groups of women and men;
- vetting out human rights violators;
- ensuring equipment and facilities allow both women and men to serve professionally, e.g. separate bathrooms, uniforms that fit;
- ensuring recruitment requirements correspond to capacities needed for the role advertised.

Improving retention and merit-based career advancement by:

- creating gender-neutral professional development policies;
- introducing specialized training and coaching on gender and management;
- improving maternity and paternity provisions;
- mentoring junior staff from underrepresented groups, such as women;
- ensuring equal pay, benefits, pensions etc.

Providing a safe and productive working environment for all staff, for example, through:

- relevant training addressing sexual harassment and discrimination for staff at all corporate levels;
- meetings with women's and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/intersex staff associations;
- detailed gender and human resource policies, as well as codes of conduct prohibiting sexual harassment and discrimination;
- ongoing monitoring of behaviour;
- reliable and safe complaints mechanisms;
- zero-tolerance harassment policies.

HOW DOES SSR MAINSTREAM GENDER EQUALITY INTO SECURITY PROVISION?

Mainstreaming gender equality into security provision means ensuring that both the security sector institutions and their personnel have sufficient skill, resources and support to provide security for all women, men, girls and boys in a way that is responsive to specific experiences and needs.

Mainstreaming gender equality into security provision can include activities focused on the following:

Adapting internal structures and operating procedures within security sector institutions to serve diverse needs, for example, by:

- providing separate facilities for medical examinations/ forensic support, interviews and detention for women, men, girls and boys;
- revising standard operating procedures so personnel can respond to security needs effectively and without discrimination;
- establishing complaints mechanisms for misconduct that are accessible to both men and women within and beyond security organizations;
- creating specialist units on gender-specific security threats, e.g. GBV, human trafficking;
- deploying security personnel in diverse teams that include women and men from different socio-economic backgrounds.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. GBV also includes violence based on a person's (perceived) sexual orientation or gender identity.

GBV exists in all societies and is one of the most prevalent threats to human security.

Forms of GBV include:

- domestic violence, including domestic abuse, family violence or intimate-partner violence;
- gender-selective murder, including female infanticide;
- forced marriage, forced pregnancy, forced abortion and forced sterilization;
- harmful practices that are accepted and justified as culture or tradition, e.g. crimes committed against women in the name of "honour", dowry-related violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation;
- sexual harassment, e.g. in the workplace, public spaces, educational institutions or in sport;
- sexual violence, including sexual abuse, rape, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, gang rape and sexual slavery;
- stalking;
- trafficking in human beings.

GBV reflects and reinforces inequalities between men and women, and for this reason most GBV is inflicted by men on women and girls. However, gender relations intersect with many other social factors, meaning that men and boys can also be victims of GBV and women, girls and boys can also be perpetrators.

Improving the capacity of the security sector to prevent and respond to GBV is a priority of SSR.

Improving the capacity of security sector staff to respond effectively to diverse security needs, for example, by:

- offering gender-awareness training for all security sector staff;
- raising public awareness of national, regional and international legal frameworks related to gender equality;
- engaging with civil society to improve responses to groups in vulnerable situations;
- encouraging knowledge sharing, referral networks and research involving civil society and the health sector, among others.

WHAT TO READ NEXT

For an overview of the theoretical background of gender mainstreaming in the context of SSR:

- Maria Eriksson Baaz and Mats Utas (eds.)
Beyond “gender and stir”: Reflections on Gender and SSR in the Aftermath of African Conflicts
NAI Policy Dialogue 9. Nordic Africa Institute, 2012.
- DCAF
Gender and Security Sector Reform: Examples from the Ground
Geneva: DCAF, 2011.

For guidance on mainstreaming gender equality in SSR programming:

- UN SSR Taskforce
Gender-Responsive Security Sector Reform
in Security Sector Reform Integrated Technical Guidance Notes, 35–60. United Nations, 2012.
- OECD Development Assistance Committee
Section 9: Integrating Gender Awareness and Equality
in OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009.
- Megan Bastick
Integrating Gender into Oversight of the Security Sector by Ombuds Institutions and National Human Rights Institutions
Geneva: DCAF, OSCE, OSCE/ODIHR, 2014.
- Callum Watson
Preventing and Responding to Sexual and Domestic Violence against Men: A Guidance Note for Security Sector Institutions
Geneva: DCAF, 2014.

For training, source materials and practical tools on gender mainstreaming in SSR:

- Megan Bastick and Kristin Valasek (eds.)
Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit
Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN-INSTRAW, 2008.
- Megan Bastick and Tobie Whitman
A Women’s Guide to Security Sector Reform
Washington, DC: Institute for Inclusive Security, DCAF, 2013.
- Megan Bastick
Gender Self-Assessment Guide for the Police, Armed Forces and Justice Sector
Geneva: DCAF, 2011.
- Megan Bastick (ed.)
Gender and SSR Training Resource Package
Geneva: DCAF, 2010.
Also available online in English, French and Arabic at the Gender and Security Sector Reform Training Resource Website: www.gssrtraining.ch

MORE DCAF SSR RESOURCES

DCAF publishes a wide variety of tools, handbooks and guidance on all aspects of SSR and good SSG, available free-for-download at www.dcaf.ch

Many resources are also available in languages other than English.

The DCAF-ISSAT Community of Practice website makes available a range of online learning resources for SSR practitioners at <http://issat.dcaf.ch>

DCAF Geneva Centre
for Security Sector
Governance

**DCAF - Geneva Centre for
Security Sector Governance**

Maison de la Paix
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E
CH-1202 Geneva
Switzerland

 **+41 22 730 94 00**

 **info@dcaf.ch**

 **@DCAF_Geneva**

www.dcaf.ch