Tool 1

# Political Leadership and National Ownership of Security Sector Reform Processes

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DCAF
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Toolkit for Security Sector Reform and
Governance in West Africa

## About the author

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### DCAF

The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) is a world-leading institution in the areas of good governance and reform of the security sector, established as an international foundation in 2000. In Africa, DCAF supports regional organisations, national institutions and non-state actors in their efforts to improve the effectiveness and accountability of the security sector.

## About the toolkit

### What is the toolkit?

This publication is part of the *Toolkit for Security Sector Reform and Governance in West Africa*. Its aim is to support implementation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) policy framework for security sector reform and governance through practical advice and guidance tailored for the West African context, and based on regional experiences. It specifically aims at facilitating policy development, implementation and management of SSR processes at the national level.

### Who is the toolkit for?

The toolkit has been developed as a resource for the ECOWAS Commission and all national stakeholders within ECOWAS Member States, including the executive, the parliament, the judiciary, statutory oversight institutions and civil society. It can also be useful to other actors involved in SSR processes, such as international partners.

### What is the structure of the toolkit?

The toolkit comprises eight complementary chapters (or tools):

Tool 1: Political Leadership and National Ownership of Security Sector Reform Processes

Tool 2: Security Sector Reform Programming

Tool 3: Good Financial Governance of Defence and Security Institutions

Tool 4: Effective Management of External Support to Security Sector Reform

Tool 5: Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector

Tool 6: Civil Society Involvement in Security Sector Reform and Governance

Tool 7: Non-State Justice and Security Providers and Security Sector Reform

Tool 8: Integrating Gender in Security Sector Reform and Governance

### Who developed the toolkit?

The toolkit has been produced by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) at the request of ECOWAS.

The tools are written primarily by West African experts and have been examined by an editorial board made up of world-renowned researchers and practitioners. The members of the board are West African specialists in security sector reform and governance, with long experience and excellent knowledge of the region.

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AU | African Union |
| CNRSS | National SSR Council (Mali) |
| CSO | civil society organisation |
| DCAF | Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces |
| DDR | disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| ECPF | ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework |
| EU | European Union |
| ICCES | Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (Nigeria) |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| NGO | non-governmental organisation |
| SALW | small arms and light weapons |
| SSR | security sector reform |
| UEMOA | West African Economic and Monetary Union |
| UN | United Nations |

# Preface

It is a great pleasure for me, as Head of the Regional Security Division of the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS), to present the **Toolkit for Security Sector Reform and Governance in West Africa**. This publication is a practical guide in eight volumes, designed to facilitate the implementation of the ECOWAS regional normative framework on security sector reform and security sector governance. It was developed by DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance - at the request of the ECOWAS Commission as part of a long-term collaboration.

In the light of this, DCAF and the ECOWAS Commission are working hand in hand to promote democratic governance through security sector reform in West Africa. It is within the framework of its draft "Policy on Democratic Governance and Reform in West Africa 2016" that ECOWAS is collaborating with DCAF to build operational security capacity through specific guidance tools. Indeed, DCAF provides in-depth guidance to support the development and implementation of solutions tailored to the region's context.

This project is consistent with ECOWAS current efforts to promote security sector reform and governance standards and principles in the region and this process will help us achieve "ECOWAS Vision 2050", which envisions West Africa as a stable and prosperous corner of Africa where people can live in peace and prosperity with accountable and effective security system. Indeed, security challenges are a key issue for respecting human rights and driving development in West Africa.

With a view to achieve coherence and harmonization of regional security and defense regulations and an optimal normative system, ECOWAS wishes to endow itself with essential good governance mechanisms to meet the challenges of human security. The ambition is to provide national authorities in charge of security with all the tools and mechanisms necessary for a coordinated approach to security risks and challenges in order to attain prosperity.

The aim is to develop and strengthen a West African security strategy to support the regalian imperative of democratic governance, protection and defense for the region's serene development prospective. This security effort is part of the pursuit of regional development, so it is appropriate through this practical guide to maintain an overall balance between these two dimensions.

In its drive to deploy and consolidate regional integration capacities in the area of security forces, ECOWAS aims to increase the effectiveness of its regional normative framework by equipping itself with relevant practical tools in the area of security sector reform and governance. The **Toolkit for Security**

**Sector Reform and Governance in West Africa** strives to support the implementation of the ECOWAS security sector reform project. For this purpose, the Toolkit provides practical advice and guidance drawn from regional experience and adapted to the West African context. The advice promulgated applies to the various dimensions of security and therefore offers resources to facilitate the transition from theory to practice.

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# Introduction

Security sector reform (SSR) is "a process ... led by national authorities that has as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the state and its peoples without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law".[1] In its Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform, the African Union (AU) identifies national ownership, national responsibility and national commitment as integral parts of the "core African principles for SSR".[2] United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 2151 (2014) furthermore "reiterates the centrality of national ownership for security sector reform processes".[3]

For SSR to be effective as a nationally led and owned process, national institutions and their leaders – especially the executive – must act as a driving force in the development of effective, efficient, affordable and accountable security institutions that serve the justice and security needs of the state and the public. This is not possible without firm commitment from national authorities. Without strong political commitment of key decision-makers, SSR will fail regardless of material resources and technical expertise invested in it.

However, national ownership cannot be confined to state ownership; it requires the active engagement of a critical mass of citizens from all segments of the population in the definition and implementation of the reform agenda. While state leadership is a matter of national sovereignty, broad national ownership is a requirement for the legitimacy of the reform process and sustainability of its outcomes.

In the West African region, where state security apparatuses are challenged to keep up with rapidly evolving national and transnational threats,[4] concerted efforts for sector-wide reform and modernisation are often indispensable. Respecting the principle of national ownership of the process, there should be a consensus on the objectives and values entailed in SSR for each country. Unless that consensus takes the views of the broadest possible constituency of national stakeholders into consideration, SSR will not achieve its goals.

This tool provides practical guidance for national authorities in West Africa on how to approach SSR in a way that demonstrates leadership and secures inclusive national ownership. It throws light on the importance of political will in security-sector-related policy-making, the necessity of involving non-state actors at an early stage and throughout the reform process, and the need for coordinating SSR with other nationwide reforms and policies. The tool also addresses the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in supporting member states in building nationally owned reform processes.

Practical challenges that are likely to be faced by national authorities in the design and implementation of SSR processes are also addressed, and solutions suggested as to how to tackle them.

The tool is intended to serve as a resource for strategic decision-makers, government officials, national SSR advisers and practitioners. It will also provide members of parliament, other oversight institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs) and development partners with an overview of the responsibilities of the executive in SSR and how to uphold national ownership throughout the process.

# SSR and the executive

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## 2.1. What is the security sector?

The security sector refers to the structures, institutions and personnel responsible for defence, security and justice services in a country. Although the state holds core responsibility in the delivery of these services, it is generally accepted that the security sector encompasses both state and non-state actors.

The composition of the security sector varies from one country to another. It can be defined "in general terms and in an African context" as comprising the "individuals, groups and institutions that are responsible for the provision, management and oversight of security for people and the state".[5] Based on the broad definition offered by regional organisations such as the AU and ECOWAS, the security sector typically includes but is not limited to the following.

- **Statutory and primary security institutions**, such as the armed forces, the police, gendarmerie and other defence and law enforcement agencies, the border management, customs and immigration authorities, the civilian and military intelligence services, and the presidential and national guards, as well as any other security services set up by the state.

- **The executive branch of government**, including heads of state and government, the office and/or council in charge of national security, and line ministries for defence and veterans' affairs, interior or security, foreign affairs, budget and finance.

- **Justice and rule of law institutions**, such as the ministry of justice, courts, public prosecutors' offices, lawyers, bar associations, prisons and other correctional facilities, ombuds institutions, human rights commissions, national reconciliation or dialogue councils, and customary and traditional justice systems.

- **Public oversight bodies**, such as the parliament, national audit office, anti-corruption agencies, CSOs, academic and research institutions, and the media.

- **Civil emergency units**, such as search and rescue services, firefighting, riot control, natural disaster management and natural resource protection units.

- **Non-statutory security bodies**, such as private security companies, neighbourhood watch groups, informal, traditional and customary authorities, and others, depending on the national context.

Box 1: What is the reform and democratic governance of the security sector?

The draft ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance[6] offers the following definitions.

"**Security sector reform:**  In this policy framework, SSR refers to the process by which countries formulate or re-orient the policies, structures, and capacities of institutions and groups engaged in the security sector, in order to make them more effective, efficient, accountable and responsive to democratic control, and to the security and justice needs of the people.

**Democratic governance of the security sector:** Refers to the management of public affairs based on democratic principles and values for the benefit of the people. It requires separation of power, [and] a participatory and inclusive approach involving citizens through their legally and regularly chosen representatives in decision-making processes, management and control of State activities and functions."

*Source*: Draft ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance, Articles 4-5.

## 2.2. What is the role of the executive in the security sector?

It is incumbent upon the executive branch of government to lead, implement and coordinate national efforts for public safety and security, although it may be complemented in this task by democratic oversight actors and non-state justice and security providers. States may also be supported by international partners, either through bilateral cooperation or multilateral support from specialised intergovernmental organisations such as Interpol. Regional and international organisations such as ECOWAS, the AU and the UN also play a great role in supporting the security architectures of their member states.

In practice, the governance, management and provision of security at the national level fall under the collective responsibility of various departments and services within the executive. These typically range from political leadership offices to line ministries and service delivery agencies and their personnel. The mandates of these departments are usually determined by specific legal and regulatory frameworks, such as the constitution, organic and ordinary laws, and the national security policy. These frameworks define the relations of hierarchy and interdependence between the various actors of the executive involved in the security sector. For purposes of clarity, this tool refers to the political leadership level as national authorities: head of state, vice-president, prime minister and their offices; ministers and other high-level decision-makers at the sectoral level; and leaders of major national institutions such as national security councils.

The organisation of state security institutions may vary substantially from one country to another. For instance, in both Togo and Côte d'Ivoire the ministries of defence are headed by the President of the Republic as of 2014, creating a double function that entails specific institutional and organisational challenges. In neighbouring Burkina Faso the defence portfolio was attached to the presidency until 2014, before being reassigned to the prime ministry during the 2014–2015 political transition.

In some anglophone countries where the prime minister's position does not exist, the head of the executive is seconded by a vice-president, whose powers over the security sector differ from one country to another. This is for instance the case in The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. In countries where the constitution does not formally provide for a national security council, the heads of state and/or government sometimes rely on special meetings of the council of ministers as a form of collegial decision-making mechanism, or gather pools of top defence and security officers for policy advice. Such strategic-level advisory mechanisms may be supported, at the operational level, by an office of national security or similar machinery.

## 2.3. How can SSR improve the protection of the state and the people?

The SSR agenda addresses the complex justice and security needs of the state and its population. It recognises that the state is responsible for providing security to its people. Since its establishment in 2000, the AU has made the responsibility of its member states to protect their populations a key feature of its institutional vision for peace and security in Africa.[7]

Strong and accountable states are more likely to be efficient in protecting their citizens, and an SSR process aims to contribute to this. By undertaking an SSR process, states can improve their own capacity to deliver the justice and security services required for the protection of their population and institutions.

> ### Box 2: States' responsibility to protect in ECOWAS regional instruments
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> Paragraph 41 of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) emphasises the moral obligations of member states and supranational power of the Community to protect human security through the responsibility to prevent, to react and to rebuild. In so doing, ECOWAS has clearly set as a regional standard the responsibility of state actors to lead actively and be accountable for the effectiveness and efficiency of their security architectures at the national level.
>
> Furthermore, Article 58 of the ECOWAS Treaty (1993) addresses "regional security" through the lens of the common responsibility of member states to "consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the region", notably through cooperation mechanisms.

In their efforts to improve the delivery of justice and security services on their territory, ECOWAS member states will have to demonstrate political commitment and leadership, foster a broadly shared vision of security, build national consensus on the opportunity for and relevance of SSR as a way to implement that vision, identify the most suitable entry points for the process, and master operational instruments to guide the design, implementation and evaluation phases of SSR.

# The importance of political will and leadership in initiating SSR

## 3.1. How is SSR political?

SSR is a highly sensitive and fundamentally political process. It impacts on state structures and power relations. It has significant implications for the state's monopoly on the use of force, which is only legitimate so long as it is exercised in the best interest of the public and under the transparent control of civilian authority (Box 3).

Most notably, SSR:

• touches issues of national sovereignty and self-determination;

• affects public perception of the defence and security architecture;

• requires decisions relating to societal values such as freedom, security, justice, equality, rule of law and human rights;

• implies a redistribution of power and resources;

• may entail redefining key notions of the social compact, political dialogue, national identity, citizenship and state authority, especially in volatile situations affected by mistrust.

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Box 3: Civilian supremacy and loyalty to constitutional authority

**Article 2 Civilian Supremacy:** The Armed Forces and Security Services shall be at the disposal of the constitutionally established political government and are subordinate to the constitutionally, democratically elected authorities. Political authorities and groups shall refrain from undue interference or extending partisan politics to the operations of the Armed Forces and Security Services. Personnel of the Armed Forces and Security Services shall observe strict neutrality in political matters.

**Article 13 Loyalty to Constitutional Authority:** Personnel of the Armed Forces and Security Services shall be disciplined and loyal to the State at all times. They shall owe loyalty and obedience to democratically elected constitutional authorities and all lawful commands of such authorities shall be executed.

*Source:* ECOWAS Code of Conduct for the Armed Forces and Security Services, 2011.

## 3.2. What are political will and leadership?

Political will can be described as "the determination of an individual political actor to do and say things that will produce a desired outcome".[8] It refers to immaterial attributes such as intentions or aspirations of political figures, which guide their actions in a certain direction towards what they consider desirable goals. Applied to SSR, political will reflects the interest of key decision-makers in the government to improve the quality of the services performed by the security sector.

The political will of key individuals in leadership positions is necessary to make SSR a priority, because they have the power to decide what goals to include in the national agenda and may be able to influence others to endorse those goals. Political leadership is not only decision-making power; it also implies the ability and capacity of political actors to get others to share their views about issues of common interest, and engage others to "go with them" and embrace their way of addressing the problem or situation. It involves strong motivational skills and influencing abilities.

> *"There are many people in position of authority but not leadership; leadership emerges in the interaction between the leaders and the people".*
>
> Professor 'Funmi Olonisakin, Founding Director of the African Leadership Centre

While the firm determination of ruling elites is necessary to make efficient and democratic governance of the security sector a priority goal, it is political leadership that will induce a broader constituency of stakeholders to endorse that goal and work collectively towards its achievement. The two are mutually reinforcing. Political will plays a great role in defining priorities and shaping national agendas, while political leadership is instrumental to bring about institutional and societal change.

## 3.3. Why are political will and leadership important?

Political will and leadership are essential features of all governance initiatives. For several reasons, this is particularly true when it comes to launching an SSR process.

- **Because SSR requires strategic vision.** Policy-making without clear political orientation would be reduced to administrative processes with no strategic goal. To be sustainable, SSR cannot be merely technical; it must be part of a long-term transformation process involving the whole society. Political will is needed to make democratic governance of the security sector an integral part of that shared national project, while leadership is required to boost the reform process.

- **Because the strategic vision must be national.** While political will contributes to setting the agenda at a decision-making level, leadership is required to engage institutions and citizens, in order to make the democratic governance of the security sector a matter of public interest and not just an elite concern.

- **Because SSR impacts on the use of national resources.** Beyond training, infrastructure and equipment, SSR looks at the management and governance structures that support the security sector. This impacts on the allocation of state resources, the standards for their use and accountability for expenditure, and affects the financial status of institutions and individuals. The prospect of change in financial status can impair the willingness of affected stakeholders to embark on the reform. Firm political commitment is necessary to overcome such obstacles.

- **Because political actors can be spoilers.** Uncommitted political leaders can act as influential spoilers and discredit the SSR process.
- **Because it increases partner confidence.** By demonstrating political commitment and leadership, national authorities can increase the confidence of development partners, which usually facilitates the mobilisation of external resources in support of SSR.
- **For managing the reputation of the security sector.** Where defence and security forces are tainted with a negative reputation, political leaders can help restore trust by taking leadership of reforms and thereby acknowledging that there is room for improvement.

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**Box 4: Importance of political leadership and national ownership**

"The Security Council …

*Recalling* the sovereign right and the primary responsibility of the country concerned to determine the national approach and priorities of security sector reform and recognizing that it should be a nationally owned process that is rooted in the particular needs and conditions of the country in question and encouraging the development of expertise in the field of security sector reform at the national level,

*Recognizing* that the political leadership and political will of national authorities are critical for the progress of security sector reform and reaffirming the lead role of national authorities in developing an inclusive national vision for security sector reform, coordinating the implementation of the vision, dedicating national resources towards national security institutions, and monitoring the impact of the security sector reform process."

*Source:* UN Security Council Resolution 2151 (2014), adopted by the Security Council at its 7161st meeting on 28 April 2014, UN Doc. S/RES/2151 (2014).

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The lack of awareness of key decision-makers of their role as drivers of the SSR process often constitutes a major challenge. Although the goodwill of decision-makers is not the only requirement to ensure the success of SSR, the lack of it will surely delay and jeopardise the process, through insufficient prioritisation and improper resource allocation. Peer awareness-raising and high-level sensitisation actions may help arouse the interest of such political leaders in SSR.

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## 3.4. How to demonstrate political commitment to SSR

Some of the ways national authorities can show their commitment to SSR are by:

✓ initiating the definition of a national vision of security through an inclusive process;

✓ encouraging the adoption of a parliamentary resolution expressing the importance of SSR as a way to improve the effectiveness and accountability of the security sector;

✓ initiating a review of security-related policy and legislation;

✓ supporting the passing and operationalisation of enabling legislation, including laws that protect oversight institutions from dishonest prosecutions, administrative abuse, arbitrary dismantling and other forms of intimidation;

✓ facilitating the access of external oversight stakeholders to relevant defence and security information;

✓ adhering to international and regional instruments on good governance of the security sector and supporting harmonisation of national law accordingly;

✓ allocating adequate state resources to the process, including to oversight institutions;

✓ setting up a national monitoring committee composed of well-respected and properly trained members drawn from different sectors of society, including civil society.

Efficient communication also helps to convey the commitment of political leaders to the SSR process (see Section 8). Possible actions include:

- issuing official statements, especially at key stages of the process (Box 5);
- publishing official statements in the official gazette and issuing official communiqués in public and private media;
- adopting a high-level decree announcing the initiation of the SSR process, the creation of an SSR coordination mechanism (Box 18) and the appointment of a non-partisan coordinator accepted by all parties to manage the process;
- including SSR-related topics on the agenda of the council of ministers, especially if this agenda is public, and issuing a statement of this council on SSR.

Depending on the context, other actions may also send a strong message of political commitment to the SSR process. Each national environment presents specific opportunities for key leaders to express and demonstrate their determination to promote SSR as a national priority. National authorities should therefore consider the uniqueness of their national setting, and develop innovative strategies whenever possible and suited.

### Box 5: Asserting political commitment through public statements

Public statements are useful for informing and engaging the public about the opportunity and relevance of an SSR process. In Togo the President of the Republic mentioned defence reform as a top national priority for 2014–2015 during his address to the nation on the fifty-fourth anniversary of independence, broadcast on all public media.

Mentioning the reform agenda in major political statements, general policy speeches or political programmes sends a strong signal of high-level political will. However, to remain credible, concrete actions should follow such announcements.

## 3.5. Challenges to political leadership of SSR processes

Common challenges relating to political will and leadership, and ways to address them, include the following.

- **The tendency to reduce national ownership to government ownership.** Political leadership without a deep understanding of the need for a participatory approach may result in the monopolisation of SSR by a handful of elites. This must be avoided, as SSR cannot succeed without active involvement of all segments of the society, including men, women, boys and girls from all regions, and marginalised and minority groups. All national stakeholders must be brought on board and due consideration paid to their inputs. Demonstrating flexibility and allocating sufficient time and means to civic education and sensitisation are instrumental to allow all parts of society to relate to the process. To make SSR sustainable, national authorities must understand their role as one of coordinating the response to security aspirations emanating from the people, and not dictating the terms of those aspirations (see Section 4.2).
- **Institutional buy-in.** In an effort to move fast, leaders of national institutions may be tempted to impose disruptive changes unilaterally on their administrations. This can destabilise fragile administrations or situations and antagonise key technical staff, making it improbable that the process will survive a change in leadership and reallocation of management positions. Leaders should be aware of institutional cultures and bear in mind that SSR involves organisational and managerial changes that affect the lives and working conditions of security sector personnel. Thus a common understanding and commitment of the men and women who work in, act on behalf of and represent the executive

and the security institutions are critical to sustainable SSR. In this regard, patience and realism in expectations are required to foster long-term commitment at all levels.

- **Resistance to change among security personnel.** SSR can affect the social status, income and privileges of influential individuals or groups. Therefore, diplomacy and incentives for reform may be necessary to avoid the emergence of powerful spoilers. The 2012 *coup d'état* in Guinea-Bissau was an instructive example: it was staged by military officials unhappy with reform provisions relating to their compulsory retirement and a reduction of their privileges. Whichever level is considered (institutional, corporate, community or individual), addressing resistance to change requires solid change management skills and appropriate communication. Taking into account the "do no harm" principle (Box 10), national authorities should however exercise caution in the use of incentives so as to avoid further complications.

- **Cultural sensitivity.** For change to take place, it is necessary to factor local values and customs into the process so as not to upset social or traditional actors. Relying on their own knowledge and experience of local culture, political leaders are sometimes unaware of social evolutions that take place in areas or communities to which they are less connected. It is worth highlighting that social sensitivities can evolve quickly and should be approached carefully, even by nationals. Opinion surveys and close communication with representatives of different groups, including civil society and traditional leaders, can help national authorities refine and update their understanding of various sensitivities and implicit rules and expectations.

- **Conflict sensitivity.** In many ways, SSR touches the interests of institutions, communities and individuals. This can make affected stakeholders nervous. National authorities should ensure that, in the process of improving their security sector, they do not end up creating or reinforcing frustrations that might make the security environment deteriorate or impede the reform process.

# Understanding national ownership

> *"National ownership cannot be imposed from outside. It must be home grown, taking into account broader needs of all stakeholders in a particular context, with a view to transforming rather than strengthening already broken security institutions."*
>
> African Union, *Conclusions of the Africa Forum on SSR* (Addis Ababa: AU, 2014).

## 4.1. National ownership versus externally driven processes

National ownership is the fundamental approach of SSR. This means that SSR must be initiated, formulated and implemented by national stakeholders rather than external actors.

External actors such as development partners must align with the agenda of the country they intend to support: "National stakeholders should seek the commitment or buy-in of externals into locally generated, negotiated and inspired ideas, and their vision of security."[9]

> *"Local [national] ownership is defined as a state in which the reform of security policies, institutions and activities is designed, managed and implemented by domestic rather than external actors. What is required is not local support for donor programmes and projects, but rather donor support for programmes and projects initiated by local actors."*
>
> Leopold von Carlowitz, "Local ownership in practice: The justice system reform in Kosovo and Liberia", DCAF Occasional Paper 23 (Geneva: DCAF, 2011), p. 2.

## 4.2. National ownership goes beyond government or state ownership

Just as an SSR agenda should not be imposed by external actors, it should not be forced by national authorities on the population either. National ownership includes but is not limited to state or government ownership; it requires the involvement of the whole nation through an inclusive and participatory approach.

> *"National stakeholders must be seen as extending beyond the State to include civil society, the legislature, the media and informal and traditional justice institutions ... A viable SSR process therefore needs to strengthen – and in some cases transform – the trust between security institutions and the public."*
>
> UN Inter-Agency SSR Taskforce, *Security Sector Reform Integrated Technical Guidance Notes*, 2012.

This implies that the leading role of national authorities in the SSR process should be one of mediating and collating the expression of citizens' concerns, not one of dominating and constraining their voices. Emphasising *national* should not lead to the interpretation that SSR requires ownership only from national authorities, i.e. central government.

For SSR to enjoy public legitimacy, be sustainable and fully meet the needs of both the state and the people, the policy debate must take into account the concerns of all segments of the population. This is referred to as a people-centred approach, which recognises that it is in the nature of democratic processes to accommodate citizen participation fully. Working closely with civil society can help national authorities achieve such an inclusive approach.

## 4.3. Ownership must be decentralised

National ownership and local ownership are often used as synonyms, as opposed to externally driven processes. However, beyond this fundamental concordance, there is a slight nuance with important operational implications.

In a West African context, where decision-making often remains centralised in the capital city, emphasising the word local highlights the need to engage with decentralised administrations and communities in all geographic areas, including peri-urban and rural ones. For ownership to really be national, all local communities must be part of the national conversation on SSR. Reaching out to remote areas through a decentralised process of consultation can be challenging because of the vastness of the territory, isolation of some villages, poor road conditions and inadequate infrastructure, unreliable security situation in certain regions and limitations in staff capacity for nationwide outreach. These challenges should not be regarded as merely logistical but also as highly political, as overcoming them is critical to the inclusiveness and legitimacy of SSR.

Partnering with CSOs and networks of customary stakeholders can help overcome these obstacles. Community-based organisations, including grassroots women's associations, often have widespread local networks that can help disseminate information to local communities and channel their inputs back. Where a national platform or gathering of chieftaincy exists, it can also be an effective partner for engaging in a consistent way with traditional leaders who can coordinate local discussions on SSR.

*National conversations on SSR are a building block in defining the kind of society that the people want. Excluding local communities from these conversations puts the recognition of their citizenship into question.*

## 4.4. National ownership and experience sharing

Inspiring lessons or, conversely, major warnings can be drawn from the experience of other countries, for instance through south-south cooperation mechanisms such as bilateral experience sharing, regional forums, academic research, etc. Looking at the SSR experiences of countries with similar social and political contexts can help national authorities refine their own approach to SSR.

Through the principle of African and West African solidarity and partnerships, the draft ECOWAS Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform and Governance encourages south-south cooperation as a way for African and West African countries to support each other in the objective of building effective, efficient and accountable security sectors.

However, experience sharing should not lead to a standardisation of practices (see Section 6.1). No SSR policy transfer is possible without a major emphasis on contextualising the process to specific national needs and concerns. For that reason, national authorities and other national stakeholders involved in the SSR process design should carefully avoid making models of foreign experiences or replicating so-called success stories. Best practice is to tailor the SSR process to country-specific needs, requirements and capacities.

### Box 6: African ownership

"African ownership [of] security sector reform processes includes ownership by local communities, national ownership by Member States, regional ownership by the RECs [regional economic communities] and continental ownership by the African Union."

*Source:* AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform, Article 6.

### Box 7: Lessons on contextualising security sector legislation

Guinea-Bissau adopted in 2010 a set of 16 subsectoral laws individually relating to the armed forces, national guard, law enforcement and intelligence services, without a coherent sector-wide approach. Strongly inspired by foreign models, these laws were of uneven quality and failed to address the specificities of the Bissau-Guinean context.

# Building a common vision of security

## 5.1. Why is a common vision of security important and how can consensus building help?

> *"Ownership cannot just be co-opted by ruling elites and reinforced by outsiders ... Without a shared vision of security between leaders and the people, we cannot have something on which to anchor our national security architecture."*
>
> Professor 'Funmi Olonisakin, founding director of the African Leadership Centre.

National stakeholders involved in SSR may have different or even diverging views, concerns and priorities. Multiple factors, such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, education, socio-economic status, geographical location and political sensitivities, affect the perceptions and experiences of security and insecurity within society.

The reform agenda must take into consideration this diversity of perspectives, including the security preoccupations of marginalised groups. Consensus building can prove very useful for that purpose, as it is based on the principles of inclusive participation and aims at reconciling opposing positions. The objective is to reach an understanding and vision of security that reflects the preoccupations of all segments of society.

If properly conducted, consensus building addresses public reticence regarding SSR and encourages both public opinion and security sector professionals to influence the formulation of security policies. It notably helps ensure that the SSR process:

✓ is inclusive and participatory, so as to accommodate different shades of opinion;

✓ addresses shortcomings of the security sector in a coherent manner;

✓ accurately reflects the needs of the people;

✓ enjoys public support and does not generate avoidable resistance.

## 5.2. At what levels must consensus be built?

It is important to build several layers of consensus.

- **At the strategic level:** Consensus must prevail among political leaders and key decision-makers on the objectives and values underpinning the SSR process. Divisions within the political leadership weaken the process and damage the credibility of the strategic guidance which it should provide.

- **At the institutional level:** Seeking consensus among defence and security professionals and within security sector institutions helps to prevent institutional resistance and ensure the relevance of SSR with regard to challenges specific to the security sector.

- **At the societal level:** Citizen participation is essential to secure democratic ownership of the reform process. Experience has proven the need for open debates to make the general public aware of the SSR process at an early stage and to enable citizens and communities to influence the formulation of security policies.

## 5.3. How to initiate consensus building towards a common vision of security

As the leaders of the SSR process, national authorities are at the forefront of initiating, guiding and driving public debate on the effectiveness and accountability of the security sector. In doing so, they should be careful to create the conditions for wide involvement of all national stakeholders, including minority groups, political opposition parties, social movements, customary authorities and traditionally overlooked categories such as youth and women. Active participation by the justice system, parliament and civil society will strengthen the credibility and legitimacy of the process. Refined negotiation skills, tact and diplomacy are needed to bring all relevant stakeholders on board.

In their efforts to initiate public conversation on SSR, national authorities should identify effective entry points to raise the debate. Other governance processes may offer such entry points.

- **Peace negotiations:** After a conflict, peace talks may offer the most adequate arena to build consensus on the relevance and opportunity for SSR as part of national strategies to prevent the reoccurrence of armed violence. In order to reach a sustainable agreement that lays solid ground for SSR, the negotiation must be inclusive, with both men and women sitting at the table.

- **DDR processes:** The demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants can lead to a wider reorientation of the security sector in a country. Through the lens of DDR, issues relating to the right-sizing of armed forces and security services, the gender balance within security personnel and the management of civil-military relations can open doors to a conversation on SSR.

- **Elections:** Discussing security planning for elections can provide momentum for broader consideration of the role, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of security institutions. In countries with a recent history of electoral violence involving security forces, this in particular may be an opportunity to consolidate national consensus on critical governance issues such as the non-interference of armed forces and security services in political processes, and their subordination to democratically elected civilian authorities (see Box 3).

- **Public administration reform:** Even in well-functioning democracies, the constant effort to modernise state structures and improve public service delivery can serve as an entry point to rethinking the mandates, organisation and responsiveness of defence and security institutions. Perception and satisfaction surveys may help to channel citizens' perspectives on the representativeness, accessibility, effectiveness and efficiency of security institutions as a starting point to discussing ways of improvement.

- **National budget planning:** The national budget cycle requires the identification of priorities in order to rationalise resource allocation in the best interest of the state and the people. During this process,

both the executive and the parliament should consider the budgetary implications of addressing security needs. This process can lead to an overall discussion on security priorities and how to optimise cost-efficiency of institutional response to security threats. The reflection can be enriched by the participation of citizens, both as security service users and as taxpayers.

- **Tax reform:** In an effort to improve tax collection, national authorities may explore ways to enhance the performance of customs services. Beyond optimising tax revenue, this could be the first step towards a more ambitious discussion on the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of border control services, for instance taking into consideration the concerns of citizens relating to corruption at land borders.

## 5.4. How to approach SSR consultations

National authorities should approach SSR consultation in as inclusive a manner as possible. Various approaches can serve to give stakeholders at different levels a voice in the definition of the security agenda.

- **Formal consultations:** Organising a series of decentralised meetings culminating in a national forum such as a governmental seminar or a wider national conference on SSR is a way to engage the consultation process formally. Participation should be inclusive, with representation from various types of civil society stakeholders.
- **Informal discussions:** When key stakeholders show signs of resistance to the SSR initiative, bilateral conversations, informal meetings and discrete lobbying activities often prove more efficient than large public gatherings to reach an initial agreement and foster buy-in.
- **Public outreach:** Information and sensitisation campaigns enable national authorities to share information and collect feedback from the grassroots. This approach requires receptiveness to public perceptions, especially in adjusting the pace and intensity of or approach to SSR to the needs and concerns expressed by citizens. However, for the public debate to remain constructive, national authorities should ensure it is closely monitored and moderated.

To be inclusive and ensure a long-lasting feeling of ownership among all stakeholders, national dialogues on SSR should rely on a long-term interactive framework for consultation, rather than one-off meetings.

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**Box 8: National dialogues on SSR**

As a practical way of achieving consensus, the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) recommends frequent "national dialogues on SSR, which are consultative and predicated on participation of all critical stakeholders including security providers (both statutory and non-statutory) and oversight bodies including civil society and vulnerable groups".

*Source:* ECPF, para. 75(j).

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Depending on the stage of the process, consultative actions can take various forms, such as:

- constructive debates with political parties;
- national, regional and local dialogue forums or conferences that bring people together to discuss security issues and how SSR may benefit the ordinary citizen;
- informative and interactive television and/or radio programmes, including on community radio stations;
- community-level sensitisation and constituency meetings to inform the local population and receive their feedback through public debates or focus groups;
- information sessions on campuses and student focus groups;
- text messaging or social media, where technology is available and affordable, which can be used both to broadcast information and to collect citizens' input.

## 5.5. What are the key steps towards building an inclusive consensus on security?
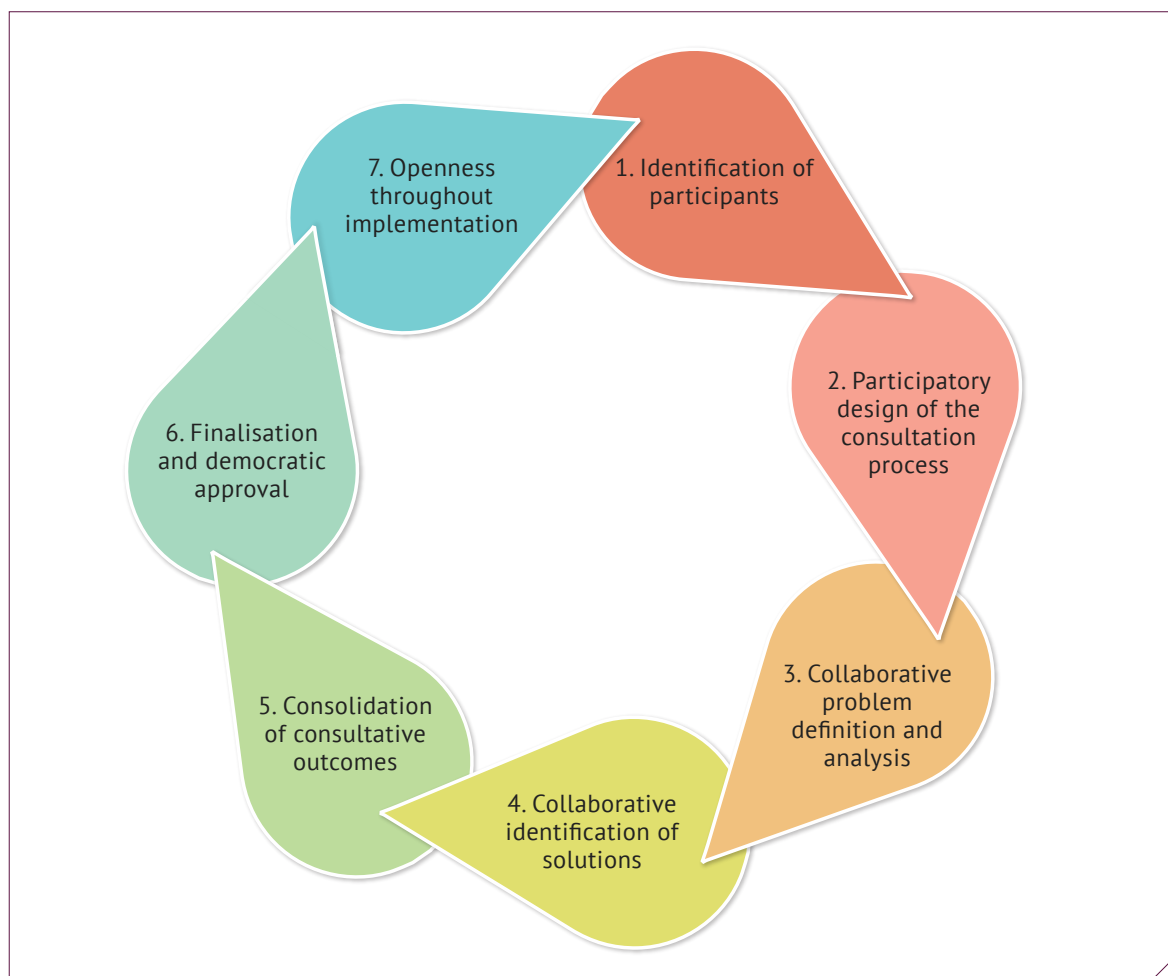


Successful consensus and confidence building requires both political sensitivity and technical skills. The process can be broken down into seven major steps, associated with key issues which national authorities should carefully consider.

1) **Identification of participants,** while paying attention to both inclusion and representation.

- **Inclusion.** Are all relevant interest groups represented? Leaving some stakeholders out reduces the inclusiveness of the process. If they consciously refuse to take part, national authorities may wish to state clearly that they have been given the opportunity to join and that the door remains open to them should they have a change of mind.

  Depending on the social and political weight of recalcitrant groups, it may be preferable to address the cause of their doubts before moving forward. However, as a general rule, national authorities should be prepared not to allow limited lobbies to paralyse the process if a significant portion of the specific target group or society in general demonstrates willingness to move on.

  Another major aspect of inclusion has to do with reaching out to vulnerable and commonly overlooked groups. It is important also to involve those who experience disproportionate insecurity and limited access to information, and are rarely given the opportunity to be heard, such as:

  - diasporas, especially if significant parts of the population have fled the country due to severe human rights violations and abuse by security sector actors – citizens who remain in exile because of fear and mistrust of the security apparatus should be empowered to participate in consultations;

- internally displaced persons who may not have access to local governance structures or other formal channels of participation;
- poor, undereducated and other socio-economically marginalised groups (including rural women).

- **Representation.** For specific consultative actions with a limited number of participants, such as national conferences, social groups may be represented by delegates. There are key questions to consider. How are adequate types (gender-based, age-based, geographical, ethnic, etc.) and levels (national, subnational, local, etc.) of representation determined? How are representatives of each group identified, and how legitimate are they to speak on behalf of that group?

National authorities should encourage the representation of each group by a small team of delegates rather than by single individuals. Representatives of social groups should also be encouraged to report back to the people they speak for, as a way to sustain broader public involvement in the process. It is crucial that each segment of the population being consulted through representatives sees itself in that representation. For that purpose, gender, age, religion and other relevant elements of diversity must be taken into consideration. Depending on the contexts, respected traditional stakeholders and credible non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a strong community base may be able to voice the concerns of various segments of populations.

> *"It is worth stressing that NGOs do not speak for the full spectrum of civic representation. The broader public and independent experts and individuals who are not parts of civic associations should also be encouraged and enabled to participate in the process."*
>
> UN Inter-Agency SSR Taskforce, *Security Sector Reform Integrated Technical Guidance Notes*, 2012, p. 16.

2) **Participatory design of the process to be used.** What is the most appropriate way to engage participants in a free, peaceful and constructive atmosphere? National authorities should weigh the pros and cons of various possible methods. While planning specific consultation activities (workshops, conferences, forums, etc.), attention should be paid to the choice of neutral venues and timing in order to enable all targeted participants to attend and speak freely. Points for consideration include possible religious holidays, socio-cultural barriers such as taboos, connotations of certain locations and cultural values associated with traditional roles – for instance, social pressure on women speaking in the presence of men, or youth in the presence of elders.

The design of the consultation process should be guided by conflict sensitivity, anticipating and striving to avoid any possible negative impacts (Box 10). Involving the participants in the definition of the consultation framework helps to preserve confidence, consolidate ownership and engage shared responsibility for the process.

3) **Participatory definition and analysis of the problems at stake.** Do all parties understand and approach security challenges in similar ways? To reach a shared vision of security, all parties should agree on common definitions, such as who is or should be part of the security sector. Inclusive dialogue is especially important at this stage, as it contributes to defining core national values that will underlie the SSR process. Given the subjective and psychological dimension of security, citizens should be encouraged to phrase in their own words and in local languages their experience of insecurity, perceptions of the security sector and views on what should constitute a security priority. In many cases, lessons learnt from past experiences at the community level can enrich the national definition of security challenges.

*In countries where a long history of corruption and nepotism has deeply rooted impunity of security sector actors and reduced populations to silence, giving voice back to the population is a major step towards empowering citizens on security issues and rebuilding a real sense of ownership.*

4) **Participatory identification of possible solutions.** Once the challenges of the security sector are commonly identified, national authorities should encourage involved stakeholders to give input regarding the solutions to be adopted. This may include setting the framework for a collective thought process and encouraging the proposition of innovative, realistic and cost-efficient responses to threats and vulnerabilities. Depending on the topics under consideration, this step may prove more productive if conducted at local or regional levels, or around cross-cutting issues. Suggestions may include preventive and responsive actions, as well as systemic or problem-specific responses.

5) **Consolidating the outcomes of steps 3 and 4.** The collaborative identification of threats (step 3) and possible solutions (step 4) offers an opportunity to start outlining a common vision of security that reflects the views of all stakeholders. As part of their leadership role, national authorities have the responsibility to centralise and process the inputs from the national consultations in order to consolidate them in a strategic and consistent manner. They should be supported by technical advisers, including gender experts, who ensure that all relevant considerations are addressed (Box 9). Political leadership involves devising ways to reconcile diverging views and find trade-offs in order to define strategic priorities. Depending on whether they are seen as impartial in how they handle the outcomes of the consultations, national authorities can either strengthen or damage the credibility of the process.

### Box 9: The role of technical advisers

The consolidation of a national vision of security requires both political sensitivity and technical expertise. Technical advisers are an asset to the collection, processing and analysis of the results of the consultation process. They can translate the principles of SSR into concrete suggestions for security sector improvement, relevant to the national context.

Using both national experts and international advisers can have the benefit of combining a solid knowledge of the local environment with the lessons from experiences from other countries. However, it is worth stressing that the tendency of some external experts to try and dictate the conduct of the SSR process or promote a standard model for SRR could be detrimental to national ownership and leadership.

*Caution:* Working in the security sector, even in a leadership position, does not automatically make someone an SSR expert. Similarly, "being a woman does not automatically make someone a 'gender expert', and increasing the number of women in the room does not guarantee gender-responsive policy and programming".[10]

*Although SSR requires technical skills, technical considerations cannot substitute for political leadership of the reform. SSR is primarily a political process, which should be supported and not guided by technicalities.*

6) **Democratic endorsement of the national security agenda.** After it has been decided at the highest political levels, based on the outcomes of the consultation process, the national security vision should be formally captured in a national security policy or similar document. This document should receive some kind of democratic approval: for instance a vote of endorsement by parliament and/or signature of a synthetic document by representatives of the different social groups involved in the consultation. It should be a public document.

7) **Openness throughout implementation.** As leaders of the SSR process, national authorities should encourage and create an environment conducive to democratic oversight of the SSR process. This includes enabling active participation of civilian – including non-state – stakeholders in the monitoring system put in place. It also involves enabling the parliament, statutory oversight institutions and CSOs to exercise democratic oversight of the SSR process and provide suggestions on how to improve it.

*On inclusive implementation of SSR processes, see Tool 2, SSR Programming.*

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*There is often pressure on national authorities from international partners to speed up certain aspects of the SSR process. Consensus building is one of the critical areas that are often rushed. This can affect the sustainability of the whole SSR process. National authorities should exercise patience and allocate sufficient time to the consensus-building phase.*

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## 5.6. Challenges to consensus building on SSR

Obtaining the required level of participation and confidence of national stakeholders in the consensus building process can be challenging for several reasons.

- **Consensus building** aims at bringing together multiple parties supporting different and possibly antagonistic views. In post-conflict situations, these parties may coincide with former opposing armed groups. In post-authoritarian countries it might take time for a culture of freedom of speech to take hold. Even in situations of peace and stability, consensus building might bring deep-rooted political rivalries or long-lasting histories of incomprehension between communities to the surface. National authorities should create the conditions for a peaceful and constructive exchange of opinions.

- **The government itself may be regarded as partisan**. In that case, it can be useful to call in an external and commonly accepted mediator to facilitate the discussions. ECOWAS is often well placed to mandate a mediator, whose support will only be successful if all stakeholders recognise him/her as impartial, and feel they have been given fair access to the discussion and that their opinions have received due consideration. However, the SSR agenda must be set by national actors, not dictated by the external mediator.

- **Informal and customary security and justice providers** should be included in the reform process. However, their diversity may make it difficult to identify widely accepted representatives for this category. Legitimacy issues may also arise.

- **Managing expectations**. Consultative actions should be treated with caution so as not to raise unrealistic expectations. National authorities must be aware that the spaces created to collect the perceptions of the population can easily be misinterpreted as grievances forums, with the implicit expectations that all concerns raised will be definitely solved in the short term. However, SSR is a long, costly and complex process. To preserve its credibility, SSR should not be presented as an easy cure to all governance challenges raised during consultations.

## Box 10: Do no harm – A context-sensitive principle

"Do no harm" is a principle of intervention that acknowledges the possibility for any action, reaction or omission to generate unintended or unexpected negative impacts on the local population, the social dynamics and community structures, the security sector, or the wider political and socio-economic climate.

The objective is to mitigate two critical types of intervention risks.

- **Unintended effects:** The "do no harm" principle advises planners and implementers to anticipate all possible repercussions of SSR in order to pre-identify potential counterproductive actions.

- **Negative/adverse effects:** The "do no harm" principle recommends assessing the possible negative impact of an action against its benefits for stakeholders and the national process, and planning for mitigation mechanisms.

Do no harm has many operational implications for the consensus-building process. When consolidating the outcomes of the consultative identification of security challenges and possible solutions, SSR advisers must consider the complexity of the general country environment and assess the implications of every potential scenario, in terms of social interactions, conflict dynamics, existing governance capacities, resources and strategy management. The objective is to avoid adverse effects of SSR, such as a deterioration of the security situation or civil-military relations.

Do no harm requires not only foresight, but also flexibility and realism. Observing this principle may lead SSR planners and implementers to reframe or not go through with some activities originally planned.

# Contextualising SSR

> *"States and societies define and pursue security according to their particular contexts, histories, cultures and needs. No single model of a security sector exists."*
>
> *Source:* Report of the Secretary-General, "Securing peace and development: The role of the United Nations in supporting security sector reform", United Nations, 2008.

## 6.1. One size does not fit all

National authorities should look at SSR as a general framework that provides tools for designing a security architecture to meet the needs of their country, rather than as a paradigm set in stone that must come in the same format in all countries. SSR cannot not be presented as a "one-size-fits-all" package, but rather as a flexible framework that is most effective when contextualised.

Without engaging in a typical, full-scale SSR process, undertaking limited reforms can also substantially improve the effectiveness and governance of security institutions (Box 11). In West Africa, countries such as Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal have all made improvements to their security sectors without formally calling it SSR. Focusing on priority areas, instruments or institutions is an efficient way to make SSR most relevant to the priority goals of the country.

Even when conducting limited reforms, the approach should remain holistic. This means that the reforms should fit into a broader national vision and be consistent with other state reforms (see Section 6.4).

> *National authorities should not be discouraged by the apparent heaviness and technical complexity of SSR. Each country should initiate reforms in the most realistic and appropriate format to its own situation.*

**Box 11: Examples of limited reform initiatives**

| Sector-specific reforms: | Policy-specific reviews: | Cross-sector ethical norms: | Improving the response to specific threats: |
|---|---|---|---|
| ✓ Police reform | ✓ Military doctrine | ✓ Anti-corruption policies | ✓ Maritime security |
| ✓ Defence reform | ✓ Internal security strategy | ✓ Gender policies | ✓ Counterterrorism |
| ✓ Justice/penal reform | ✓ Civilian security policy | ✓ Human rights standards | ✓ Human trafficking |
| ✓ Reform of the juvenile justice system | ✓ Border management policies | ✓ Etc. | ✓ Domestic violence |
| ✓ Private security sector reform | ✓ Etc. | | ✓ Gang violence |
| ✓ Etc. | | | ✓ Etc. |

## 6.2. Domesticating international norms and standards

There is an increasing global consensus on the norms and standards underpinning SSR. These norms and standards are informed by best practices as well as international legal instruments relevant to how armed forces and security services work (Box 12).

**Box 12: Examples of international instruments relevant to SSR**

International humanitarian law (Geneva Conventions and their Protocols)

International human rights law, including the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform

ECOWAS Code of Conduct for Armed Forces and Security Services

ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security

UN resolutions on rule of law, peace and security

From a legal point of view, designing country-specific SSR requires the domestication of international instruments ratified by the country. Harmonising national laws with such instruments contributes to creating a legal framework that is conducive to SSR. Although often parliaments play a central role in this matter, it may be difficult for them to translate security-related international commitments into national laws without political support from the executive. The domestication of international norms is generally a joint responsibility between the executive and the parliament (see the diagram hereafter). In some cases, like in Côte d'Ivoire, the ratification of international treaties can also be the prerogative of the executive.

| International negotiations (executive) | Signature of the convention (executive) | Ratification (executive and/or parliament) | Harmonisation with national law (executive and/or parliament) | Updating national strategies and policies (executive) |
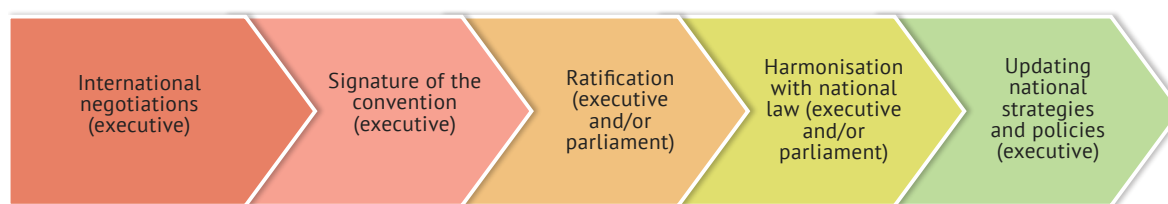
## 6.3. SSR and other public reforms: Identifying entry points

Tailoring SSR to their particular situations requires states to build the reform process into their overall governance structures. It is up to each state to develop the relevant synergies between SSR and other public reform agendas, in light of complex national environments. As part of their leadership responsibilities, national authorities will have to consider interactions and balance priorities between security needs and other legitimate aspirations of the people, such as socio-economic development.

### Box 13: Public sector reform in Ghana

For several years Ghana has engaged in a public sector reform exercise, which includes a focus on rationalising public servant wages and making the payment policies of the public sector more sustainable. This reform has contributed to enhancing productivity both in the state security sector and more generally in the public administration. Revenue losses have been reduced and resources freed up to support national priorities, including security service delivery.

### Box 14: Examples of cross-sector interactions

National regulation of the private sector can affect the way private security companies operate.

Public administration reforms can help reshape the image of the administration and create a service-oriented mind-set among public servants, including security sector personnel.

Decentralisation processes may enable the development of community policing or other locally managed security outfits.

Gender reforms across government institutions should equally impact on security institutions, notably in terms of human resources, operating standards and internal control structures.

### 6.3.1. SSR and national development agendas

In developing countries such as ECOWAS member states, SSR efforts should be linked to the poverty reduction agenda. To ensure sustainability of reforms, development and security needs of the population must be addressed in a coherent way. In Sierra Leone, for instance, SSR was successively linked to the 2005–2007 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the 2008–2012 Agenda for Change and then to the 2013–2018 Agenda for Prosperity.

National development frameworks are often aligned with international development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).[11] Striving to reach these goals in the security sector can boost governance reforms. For instance, national strategies towards the achievement of MDG 3 on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment should address the integration of gender into security sector governance. However, linking SSR with the national development agenda should not lead to the "securisation" of development, shifting critical resources from development to security. National authorities should ensure an adequate balance of resource allocation to the various needs of their communities (Section 6.3.2).

> *"Contribution to National development: The Armed Forces and Security Services shall contribute to the social and economic development of their country."*
>
> *Source:* ECOWAS Code of Conduct for the Armed Forces and Security Services, 2011, Article 23.

Poverty reduction agendas can be severely affected by security gaps. Various West African case studies have, for instance, demonstrated the devastating socio-economic impact of poor governance of the justice and penal sectors.[12] Conversely, improving the effectiveness and accountability of justice and security institutions contributes to economic recovery. Good governance of security creates jobs and stimulates social cohesion.

Therefore, the SSR agenda should be consistent with broader development and social reforms relating to the following.

✓ **Employment strategies**

- How will resizing of the security sector affect the overall employment market?
- What are broader job creation perspectives in the security sector?
- What support services can security institutions outsource to small and medium-sized enterprises in order to stimulate job creation?
- How can more efficient security provision improve the business environment?

✓ **Public health management**

- How do public health issues impact on security service delivery?
- How should prevention of and response to health crises be integrated in the visions, missions, mandates and training of security institutions?
- To what extent can medical capacities of the security sector support civilian healthcare, as part of civil-military relations?

✓ **Education system**

- How does the education system address concepts of rule of law, human rights, gender equality, citizen participation and democratic accountability?
- What vocational training and retraining opportunities are offered to discharged defence and security personnel?
- How can the integration of values and ethical training into professional curricula of the security sector be enhanced?

## 6.3.2. SSR and public finance reforms

The rationalisation of public finances is critical to the stability of the state and the sustainability of its budget and resources. SSR seeks an optimum sectoral distribution of the national budget, in which security expenditures do not undermine development investments. Public finance reforms create opportunities to engage in discussions on the affordability, cost-efficiency, financial sustainability and accountability of the security sector.

*See Tool 3, Good Financial Governance of Defence and Security Institutions.*

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The establishment of effective budget processes ensures that security institutions are provided with the necessary resources to fulfil their mission and that public funds are used responsibly. Strategic planning and management of defence and security budgets are critical to ensure operability of the national security architecture.

As a component of the public service, defence and security institutions are affected by public finance reforms in many ways. These reforms can impact on salaries, benefits and taxes; recruitment, training opportunities and career development; and equipment, infrastructure and overall working conditions.

Conversely, good security sector governance also helps to improve overall financial performance of the state through the following.

- **Border management.** More efficient and transparent administration of borders improves the collection of customs duties, facilitates trade and helps in combating trafficking, smuggling and cross-border money-laundering networks. In the context of ECOWAS regional agreements on freedom of movement, ECOWAS has a great role to play in supporting member states in improving the integrity, efficiency and coordination of their border services.

- **Internal governance.** Improving the internal governance mechanisms of security institutions can optimise cost-efficiency and reduce expenditures, especially through competitive public procurement processes, harmonisation of accounting systems, standardisation of administrative and financial procedures, managerial oversight of financial transactions and integration of audits and integrity-related background checks into institutional routines.

- **Parliamentary oversight.** Parliaments play a major role in overseeing budget compliance by security institutions. Parliamentary committees for defence and security and for budget and finance should jointly analyse entries in the national budget related to the security sector. They can seek clarifications through questions to the government and hearings with defence and security officials or other sectoral experts. This enables them to make recommendations for better alignment of security budgets with the needs of the people, in order to ensure result-oriented budgeting. They should also assess the level of public spending against the policy results achieved as per national priorities.

- **Independent oversight.** Institutions such as the Court of Auditors, Office of the Auditor General and national anti-corruption agencies, as well as CSOs, oversee financial integrity of the security sector. Their work contributes to reducing waste, misappropriation of public funds and corruption, and the shortfalls they represent for the state budget. They also act as whistle-blowers on inadequate funding of state response to certain types of threats.

- **Management of revenue generated by the security sector.** Public or semi-public industries managed by security institutions sometimes engage in lucrative activities such as arms trading or the provision of income-generating protection services. Participation in peacekeeping operations also receives financial compensation aimed at covering the costs incurred by troop-contributing countries. Such income can be used in support of security sector development or in response to other national needs.

External oversight of security sector finances is not possible without the cooperation of the executive and security institutions in providing access to relevant information and records. In most West African countries, specific areas such as the financial oversight of intelligence services remain particularly secretive because of their highly sensitive nature and the tradition of confidentiality around them. Nonetheless, a number of mechanisms can be developed to allow for effective oversight without compromising confidentiality and national security, starting with a clear legal framework.[13] For instance, closed systems of oversight, such as closed hearings by parliamentary committees, can be used to prevent the abusive use of confidentiality by defence and security actors as an excuse for escaping accountability. Parliamentary inquiries and investigations by legally mandated independent oversight institutions can also be carried out through behind-closed-doors inspections, and necessary clearance granted to key personnel of these institutions after required vetting procedures.

Box 15: Financial accountability of the security sector

**Article 11: Financial Responsibility**

The political authority in a State shall ensure that adequate financial resources and appropriate logistics are provided to the Armed Forces and Security Services to enable them carry out their duties successfully.

**Article 19: Transparency and Accountability in Security Management**

The democratic control of the Armed Forces and Security Services by State Institutions (executive, legislative and judiciary) as well as ECOWAS Institutions shall be exercised with transparency and accountability, particularly in the process of security and defence planning, budgeting and procurement."

*Source:* ECOWAS Code of Conduct for the Armed Forces and Security Services, 2011.

### 6.3.3. SSR in post-conflict and democratic transitions

In post-conflict environments, a major challenge is the coordination of SSR with other recovery and stabilisation efforts, such as DDR for ex-combatants, rehabilitation of child soldiers, management of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, control of small arms and light weapons (SALW), transitional justice and demining. Several of these processes may occur concurrently. While the coordination of these various activities can be challenging, it may also create entry points into SSR (Box 16).

Similarly, in societies transitioning from long periods of authoritarian rule, the coordination of SSR with political processes such as elections, national conferences and reconciliation efforts can offer valuable entry points into SSR. In Nigeria, for instance, electoral security has offered an effective entry point into inter-agency coordination. Lessons learnt from incidents of electoral violence have led the Independent National Electoral Commission and national security sector actors to create the Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) as an innovative framework to tackle security challenges in a coherent way throughout the electoral process. ICCES has become a major instrument for containing electoral risks through a collaborative approach, acknowledging the fact that the electoral management body has to deal with electoral security issues despite little or no control over the security sector.

In 2012 the Togolese Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission included reform of the justice system, armed forces, and security and intelligence services in the recommendations of its final report to prevent the recurrence of political violence, frequent since independence. Box 16 also shows the example of transitional justice in Sierra Leone.

## Box 16: Where do we start? Learning from post-crisis experiences

Transitional settings generally present both a great need for SSR and a wide range of entry points into this complex, multidimensional process. Peace agreements, political accords, constitutional reviews and transitional justice processes play a central role.

- **Peace agreements**
  - Since they create momentum for political and social reconfiguration and renegotiation of political offices/resources, peace agreements open a window for reorganising the security sector.
  - Peace agreements that provide for the incorporation of former combatants into national forces are an opportunity to build on the DDR-SSR nexus (see below on DDR).
  - The 2003 Liberian Comprehensive Peace Agreement set a positive example of specific provision for SSR.[14]
  - In Burundi the 2000 Arusha Peace Agreement provided for the professionalisation of security and justice institutions, the creation of a national police force and the exclusion from the new security forces of those who had perpetrated war crimes, human rights abuse and violations, or *coups d'état*. It thus set the basis for national SSR to be launched in 2003.

- **Constitutional review**

  State security institutions that are created and governed by constitutional provisions might require constitutional review to allow for substantial reforms. The reviewed Kenyan Constitution of 2010 opened opportunities for institutional improvements within the judiciary, parliament and executive (including police, defence and intelligence). The constitutional review was conducted as part of the peacebuilding process in the aftermath of the 2007–2008 post-election crisis. This also illustrates how electoral events can constitute an entry point to SSR.

- **Transitional justice**

  The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone acknowledged that nepotism and corruption in security institutions contributed to the outbreak of the civil war. This laid the ground for a sector-wide reform aiming at better democratic control over police, military and intelligence services.

- **DDR**

  Ignoring the overlapping nature of DDR and SSR may result in poor coordination of reintegration of ex-combatants, for instance by making promises for integration into the regular armed forces before vetting has been completed. Effective DDR must be part of wider effort to control armed personnel in post-conflict contexts, even if different sections of a peace agreement are dedicated to each aspect. A certain level of demilitarisation and stability has to be attained before wider SSR can take root; DDR therefore comes in as a forerunner to SSR.

- **SALW**

  If SSR is not adequately linked to SALW control, the mismanagement of military or security equipment (for example, trafficking in service guns or improperly accounted-for ammunition) is likely to fuel the proliferation of weapons on the illegal market. Moreover, the inability of security institutions to contain the proliferation of firearms increases the exposure of citizens to armed violence and criminality.

## 6.4. SSR is not only for fragile states

SSR is sometimes perceived as relevant only to highly dysfunctional or post-conflict states. This belief is incorrect. In reality, in volatile situations the absence of political leadership is a major obstacle to the conduct of an SSR process. SSR requires basic state structures to be in place so that the reform can be designed in the first place by national stakeholders and ownership fostered.

*As an integral part of state reform, SSR is relevant for countries transitioning from conflict or authoritarian rule, as well as for countries consolidating their democratic culture and open societies.*

The security sector was generally left out of the public sector reforms widely undertaken in West Africa during the 1980s and 1990s. SSR can therefore be regarded as a belated extension of those reforms. In a West African context where independent states are still relatively recent, SSR contributes to a wider process of building state capacity and legitimacy. It also contributes to restoring and/or strengthening the credibility of state institutions through effective provision of justice and security services to the people. In Guinea, where state authority has largely been questioned and public administration militarised, SSR has proven inseparable from continued state-building efforts.

# Institutionalising the leadership of SSR

## 7.1. Why are clear institutional mandates necessary?

In the context of a comprehensive SSR process that involves all or most components of the security sector, operational leadership should be entrusted to a body specifically mandated for coordinating and organising the process, while political leadership remains at the level of national authorities. This facilitates the creation of an adequate institutional framework.

If institutional mandates are unclear, there is a risk of duplication of efforts by public actors and a waste of time and resources. In the absence of solid guidance on how various institutions interrelate in doing SSR, the process may be jeopardised by administrative contests for leadership. The definition of clear structures, communication channels and responsibilities among public institutions brings about coherence and coordination at a state level.

By empowering a specific body to lead and coordinate SSR efforts, national authorities delegate operational authority and assign clear responsibilities for the coordination of SSR. The coordination body entrusted with guiding the SSR process at an intersectoral level ensures the overall coherence of SSR, while relevant ministries focus on their specific sectoral reforms.

## 7.2. How to install a leading coordination body for SSR

To ensure that the particular body in charge of SSR coordination has the authority and legitimacy to fulfil its purpose, it must have a clear and official mandate, firmly grounded in the legal framework. It should be appointed by the authority that has the legal competence and constitutional legitimacy to initiate the SSR process (presidency, national security agency, national security council, etc.). This helps to avoid contestation by rival agencies in competition for leading the SSR process.

A practical approach for national authorities might include the following steps.

**Step 1:** Conduct a situation and needs assessment for SSR. Security sector review or needs assessment should be mandated by the executive.

**Step 2:** Refer to mandates codified in the constitution and other relevant statutes for security sector institutions.

**Step 3:**    Create or assign one coordination body to the SSR process (see Section 7.3) and empower it to lead and coordinate SSR. This body should report to the mandating authorities. When setting up the coordination body, national authorities should explicitly stress the need for a gender focal point or unit within it and specify gender mainstreaming as a critical requirement for effective SSR (Box 17).

**Step 4:**    Support the SSR coordination body with adequate legislation and resources to accomplish its mission: the mandated coordination body may submit suggestions to the executive on legal and/or institutional reforms necessary to enable the conduct of its mission.

**Step 5:**    Request the coordination body to submit a comprehensive SSR roadmap explaining how it intends to conduct the process. The development of such a roadmap must actively involve all major stakeholders, especially the main line ministries implicated in the reform process. After validation by mandating authorities, this roadmap may be presented to the parliament for democratic endorsement.

**Step 6:**    Review strategy over time and amend as necessary.

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### Box 17: Gender mainstreaming

"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels.

It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

*Source:* United Nations, Official Records of the General Assembly, 18 September 1997, UN Doc. A/52/3/ Rev.1, ch. IV, para. 4.

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## 7.3. What are different types of mandates for SSR coordination bodies?

Whether provided by an official decree or by another form of legal or regulatory document, the appointment and mandate of the SSR coordination body must be constitutionally irrefutable. The leadership for coordinating SSR may be specified in various ways. Most often, it is one of the following.

✓ **Provided for by the constitution:** In Ghana, the main state agency responsible for all national security-related issues is mandated by the constitution.

✓ **Identified within existing state institutions:** In this case, it may then have to be subsequently rebranded, reorganised and/or authorised. The 2003 Liberian Comprehensive Peace Agreement provided for the establishment of the Governance Reform Commission, which was soon renamed the Governance Commission through an executive order. An official letter from the President of Liberia requested the commission to provide intellectual leadership for the SSR process. With reference to that mandate, the commission played the leading role in crafting the national security strategy and facilitating capacity building for democratic oversight of the security sector, notably with the training of parliamentarians.

✓ **Created as an *ad hoc* body**, as was the case with the creation of the National Steering Committee of SSR in Guinea and the National SSR Council in Mali (see Box 18).

*Warning:* *Considering the multisectoral nature of SSR, national authorities may want to be cautious about mandating a particular ministry to lead or coordinate the SSR process, since it might give the incorrect impression that SSR only concerns that ministry. Giving authority to one line ministry over another can also generate tensions that jeopardise intra-governmental cooperation for SSR.*

### Box 18: Creating a special body for SSR: The example of Mali

In Mali the National SSR Council (CNRSS) was created by a presidential decree signed in August 2014. With reference to the Constitution and the law organising national defence, the decree defines the mission of the CNRSS (Art. 2), and specifies its composition (Art. 4), functioning and supporting structures (Arts 5 – 16).

The decree demonstrates the following points of good practice.

- **Political leadership:** Article 1 of the decree places the CNRSS under the authority of the President of the Republic.

- **Main responsibility of the executive:** Article 4 provides for members of the CNRSS to be identified among national actors, mostly line ministers. It also specifies that the CNRSS can further rely on any other department, based on the need for particular skills or expertise.

- **Direct involvement of the parliament:** Article 4 also states that a representative of the parliamentary committee for national defence, security and civil protection should be a member of the CNRSS.

- **National participation:** Article 10 provides for the possibility to involve the ombudsperson and representatives of the association of local councils, civil society, including women's and youth organisations, workers' unions and specialised CSOs, and other peace, security and human rights professionals.

- **Supporting role of international partners:** Article 4 of the decree stipulates the possibility to invite heads of international partner organisations and diplomatic representations, and representatives of civil society or other specialists based on specific competence and expertise, to particular meetings of the CNRSS.

*Source:* Decree No. 2014-0609/P-RM, 14 August 2014, creating the National Council for Security Sector Reform in Mali.

## 7.4. What are the roles of the SSR coordination body?

✓ The SSR coordination body acts as a guardian of the national SSR strategy, which it may be tasked initially to develop or update in a collaborative effort involving all relevant ministries and other stakeholders.

✓ It leads and coordinates the comprehensive review of the security sector.

✓ The coordination body conducts the comprehensive mapping of all actors (state and non-state stakeholders; external partners) involved in SSR, including their respective areas of competency, expertise and added value.

✓ The coordination body organises the programming of SSR (see Tool 2, SSR Programming).

✓ The coordination body centralises the monitoring of resource mobilisation in support of the SSR process.

✓ The coordination body sets up and manages information sharing and knowledge management routines, as well as any other mechanisms necessary for the coordination of SSR actors.

## 7.5. How to build the credibility of the SSR coordination body

To be effective in fulfilling its mission as SSR conductor, the coordination body will need to establish credibility. In this regard, several factors should be considered.

✓ **Integrity**

Executive members of the SSR coordination body should be chosen from well-respected and non-controversial women and men with clean criminal records. Special attention should be paid to any accusation of dishonest behaviour (corruption, abuse of authority, etc.). Before proceeding to nominations, mandating authorities should request detailed background checks, taking into consideration gender-related misconduct (see Box 19).

✓ **Inclusiveness**

It is critical to ensure a balanced representation of all major components of the security sector, including defence, internal security and justice institutions. Women should be part of the SSR coordination mechanism not only at implementing and operational levels, but also at executive level. Diverse components of society should be represented, including minorities.

✓ **Technical capacity**

Capacity is an essential element of ownership.[15] Decision-makers and personnel of the SSR coordination body must have a good understanding of the specific context of the country and sound knowledge of the SSR process and requirements for democratic governance of the security sector, as well as strong coordination and communication skills. This implies that executive members and technical staff should all receive training as necessary for their specific functions and to enable them appreciate the broader context of the reform process.

✓ **Internal coherence within the SSR coordination body**

A clear sharing of responsibilities prevents overlaps and conflicts of competencies by ensuring that the different components of the coordination body function in a rational and complementary way. This contributes to increasing institutional efficiency and projecting a positive image of professionalism.

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### Box 19: Points of consideration for gender-sensitive vetting

- Any history of perpetrating family or sexual violence, child abuse, sexual harassment or violent or discriminatory behaviour.

- Negative attitudes towards women as security sector personnel.

- Negative attitudes towards men and/or women who are victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault or other crimes.

*Source:* Megan Bastick, *Integrating Gender into Internal Police Oversight* (Geneva: DCAF, OSCE, OSCE/ODIHR, 2014).

# Sustaining national ownership through strategic communication

## 8.1. Why communicate?

A comprehensive communication strategy can contribute to sustaining the sense of national ownership created at the early stage of the SSR process through consensus building. Although it is crucial for engaging citizens, communication often represents a serious challenge for both leading government agencies and SSR practitioners.

Opacity and a lack of information support the perception that the SSR process should not be a matter of public interest. Deficient communication can also damage confidence between stakeholders. Conversely, through adequate internal communication, security sector institutions can sustain the commitment of their staff to the reform process. External communication aiming at the general public or specific groups within society also helps to maintain a feeling of ownership by the people. In places where there is not a long tradition of active citizen participation, publicly reporting on the evolution of the process empowers citizens with a sense of entitlement to accountability. The more they understand the process, the more national stakeholders are likely to feed into it and support it in a constructive way.

Like all aspects of the SSR process, communication must be planned in such way as to demonstrate high-level political commitment. Getting key messages directly delivered by state leaders on official occasions helps to bring out political leadership (see Box 5).

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**Box 20: The importance of communication for the armed forces and security sector**

Article 21: Public Relations

Armed Forces and Security Services shall, in collaboration with the national government, ECOWAS authorities, civil society including non-governmental organisations and the media, endeavour to inform and educate the public on their unclassified programmes and operations.

*Source:* ECOWAS Code of Conduct for the Armed Forces and Security Services, 2011.

## 8.2. How to reconcile confidentiality and public information

The potential of communication to support national ownership is often underestimated. This is in many cases related to an excessive level of secrecy around security issues. Sharing information on security-related matters runs contrary to what many practitioners and decision-makers have been conditioned to do. National authorities should throughout the SSR process strive for the right balance between confidentiality on the one hand and transparency and public information on the other.

Although secrecy is necessary in certain cases, it should be regarded as an exception rather than a norm; protection of and access to information should be defined by law. For the purposes of public communication on an SSR process, the level of detail can be adapted to give general information on the advancement of reforms without compromising confidentiality.

Some of the ways to achieve such balance include:

- classification laws that set objective criteria and conditions for classification and declassification of defence and security information;

- freedom of information laws allowing the media and other civilian actors freely to report unclassified information acquired through legal means, as advocated by Articles 60 and 61 of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF, 2008).

*See Tool 5, Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector.*   **5**

> *A fine-tuned communication strategy helps to determine which information to share with the public and how, within the limits of the legal framework. The SSR coordination body may recommend modifications of the legislation in order to improve security sector accountability to the public.*

## 8.3. What are communication plans and strategies?

A communication strategy is an integrated tool that captures the decisions of an organisation or institution about how it wants to exchange and use information with other actors. Operational breakdowns, called communication plans, are designed to clarify the implementation of specific components of the strategy. The ultimate purpose of both the communication strategy and the plan is to help the organisation or institution interact effectively, i.e. in a way that is consistent with its core mission, vision, values and strategic goals.

A comprehensive communication strategy addresses questions such as the following.

- Why do we want to communicate?
- Who should we communicate with?
- What is the public image we want to build, and how does it relate to the strategic goals we are pursuing as an institution/government?
- What are our communication capacities, and to what extent do we need to develop them?
- How can our communication best support the SSR process?

Integrating the communication strategy into or annexing it to the national security policy helps to demonstrate that it has received formal approval from political leadership. This gives it more weight.

Drawing from the general orientations of the strategy, a communication plan outlines implementation steps/actions for specific stages of the SSR process. By nature, the plan is more practical than the strategy. It settles operational issues regarding timelines, resources, division of responsibilities, design of key messages and their tailoring to specific audiences, expected outcomes and benchmarks. The communication plan also provides ways of evaluating its own efficiency through internal and external mechanisms (surveys, self-evaluation, independent evaluation, etc.). In order to be implemented, the communication plan must be budgeted for as an integral part of the national SSR programme.

*For complementary information on SSR communication, see Tool 2, SSR Programming.*

**2**

## 8.4. What are key considerations for designing an inclusive SSR communication plan?

Communication plans can promote national ownership through the continuous involvement of a broad constituency of local and national, institutional and informal, state and non-state stakeholders. In the way it is designed and implemented, the SSR communication plan must recognise all relevant stakeholders as potential sources, transmission actors and/or targets of SSR-related information.

For that purpose, attention should be paid to the following elements.

- **Access to information:** Is the information accessible to minority groups, marginalised communities, differently-abled persons, and poor and uneducated portions of the population in a form that they can easily understand and engage with? When dealing with access, communication planners should closely look at both the *availability of the information* (does it go all the way to the people it is supposed to reach?) and *its affordability* (is it available for free, or will it require socio-economically challenged communities to commit already scarce resources?).

  For instance, if communication planners opt for newspapers as a channel for delivering information, they should consider whether roads and distribution networks allow newspapers to be delivered in remote areas (availability), and whether the local communities targeted are able to buy them (affordability). They must also consider whether levels of literacy will allow the addressees to read and understand the content. It is generally advisable to use multiple transmission channels for one message to maximise the chances of reaching various categories of audience. The use of local languages, traditional channels of information and community radios to convey messages also improves access.

- **Gender equality:** Are men, women, boys and girls – regardless of their location in the territory and their linguistic background – targeted through the appropriate channels and messages? Developing youth-specific messages that rely on youth codes and ensuring that women are represented throughout the communication chain will help to maximise impact. For instance, key institutions involved in the SSR process should:

  - have both men and women in their communication teams as planners, translators and spokespersons;
  - develop communication materials that highlight women's participation (gender-sensitive language, photos, examples, etc.);
  - conduct outreach activities targeting specific gender categories.

- **Technology:** What technologies are available to convey or support the key messages? How accessible are these technologies? For instance, efficient communication through social media depends on the availability of information technology, internet penetration and the computer literacy of target groups. In 2010 Nigeria had the highest rate of internet users in West Africa with 28%, while Senegal had 16% and Liberia below 0.1%.[16] Moreover, most technological devices require access to electricity, which may be problematic in areas affected by frequent power cuts, either rural or urban. Gender can also play in, as social norms may grant men and women, especially teenage boys and girls, different access to information technology.

- **Integrity:** What measures are taken to ensure transparency in the management of public information, prevent misinformation, manage rumours about SSR, preserve the reputation of key stakeholders and sustain the credibility of the process as a whole? The circulation of inaccurate information can invalidate the SSR process, cause instability and reawaken fears and hostilities. Leading stakeholders in the SSR process should be prepared to react consistently to any voluntary or involuntary misinformation in a way that does not escalate tensions.

- **Cultural awareness:** Not all messages and channels are suited to all audiences. Communication specialists should anticipate the cultural barriers that could get their message misunderstood, misinterpreted or lost in translation. Great attention should be paid to the choice of items (images, colours, emblems, etc.) that may carry symbolic resonance or echo sensitive taboos (see Box 10 on the "do no harm" principle).

    Showing cultural awareness also involves finding the right balance between the use of local languages to facilitate ownership at subnational levels, and the use of national and/or official languages to frame a common discourse on security at the national level. Whenever interpreters are used, they should be briefed on the topic and the communication context: who is issuing the message, who is targeted to receive it, why this specific group or person is being addressed, what is going to be discussed, what are key words and how they should be translated, what are common mistranslations to avoid, etc. Briefing interpreters is essential to minimise risks of misunderstanding.

- **Conflict sensitivity:** Engaging the media as partners in SSR may be useful because of their role in spreading information and shaping the public debate. Specific information sessions targeting media professionals help to improve their understanding of the reform process. However, relations with media should be managed with care. Unequal treatment of media actors can make some of them hostile to the process because they feel sidelined or discriminated against. Considering the large audiences they have access to, hostile media have the potential to damage national consensus.

- **Media regulation:** When facing an abuse of the freedom of the press, the SSR coordination body should turn to media self-regulation mechanisms or official regulation agencies before taking drastic actions such as prosecutions. A gradual reaction often helps to de-escalate tensions and restrain allegations of arbitrariness and press muzzling. Regional or national bodies (such as the West African Journalists' Association, independent media commissions, high authorities for audio-visual or telecommunications, etc.) are valuable partners for coordinating media involvement in national SSR. In Côte d'Ivoire lessons have been learnt about the potential impact of the media on internal security. Unfounded accusations made by journalists and inflammatory discourse in the media have often had a negative impact on internal security, thus making the coordination of security sector agencies with the national media regulator a central feature of a state-coordinated response to security challenges.

## Box 21: SSR and public information management: A nine-step reminder

1. **Speak as one**

   Contradictory declarations from government agencies tend to discredit the SSR process and weaken its coherence in the eyes of the public. Communication must be properly planned for, coordinated and – to some level – centralised. Although various stakeholders, including technical staff, can be authorised to explain the basics of SSR in general terms, the disclosing of specific process-related news, strategic developments and events should be closely controlled. Unauthorised personnel should refrain from commenting on incidents or publicly expressing private opinions. When asked questions beyond their competence, staff members of institutions involved in the SSR process should refer the interviewer to a spokesperson or any other authorised personnel.

2. **Assess public perceptions of the process**

   What misconceptions will you have to tackle? What are key messages you will need to deliver? Communication around the SSR process should serve to defuse public opinion prejudices and biases and build trust.

3. **Identify your target audiences**

   Like the SSR process as a whole, your communication strategy must be context-specific. This means that your communication mechanisms should fit your audience. Demographic and social data, such as age and gender structure, literacy rates, access to internet and IT, and levels of fluency in official languages, should be taken into consideration.

4. **Set clear goals**

   What impact is your communication strategy aiming for? What paths are you choosing to achieve this/ these goal(s)?

5. **Map out media organs and engage with them**

   This may be done through confidence building and specific sensitisation activities. Early involvement reduces the risk of media acting as spoilers. The more they understand the process and support it, the more effective partners the media will be.

6. **Use clear, concise and accessible language**

   Overly technical, complex or pedantic language tends to confuse the message. In some cases such language may even be interpreted as a calculated attempt to keep the process inaccessible to the public. The clarity of information released may support the integrity of the SSR process and enhance citizens' confidence in it.

7. **Communication should not be one way only**

   As you plan for channels to deliver information to the public, also plan for channels to collect input and feedback from the public. An effective SSR communication strategy prompts people to voice their views on security. Focus groups, hotlines, interactive radio discussions, public meetings and social media pages are just some of the ways feedback can be collected.

8. **Budget and secure funding for communication**

   Implementing a communication strategy and plan requires human and material resources that cannot be improvised. Therefore, the strategy should be accompanied by a budget and funding secured at an early stage. Communication personnel of the SSR coordination body may require additional training. The coordination body may also need to recruit communication professionals at particular stages, be it for advice, staff training or direct implementation of communication tasks. It is also critical to report on the use of funds allocated to communication and visibility in an accurate and timely manner.

9. **Monitor communication activities and assess public reaction to them**

   A communication plan is not a static tool. It should provide flexibility to accommodate evolving communication needs. Several features, such as messages, channels of communication or strategic approaches, may need to be reviewed and updated according to the evolution of the context.

# Asserting national ownership and leadership in the management of international assistance

## 9.1. Why is international support an opportunity for SSR?

SSR is a technically and financially challenging endeavour. While retaining the lead for the process, national authorities may wish to request the support of international stakeholders in achieving nationally set goals.

The increasing interest of the international community in supporting SSR is an opportunity for national stakeholders to access additional human, logistical and financial resources. ECOWAS has supported the SSR processes in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau since the 1990s. In Sierra Leone the UK Department for International Development has been a major partner in national SSR efforts after the civil war. The UN Regional Office for West Africa has also made SSR a priority area for its support to conflict prevention efforts in Guinea. In Mali the UN and European Union (EU) have developed programmes that support SSR after the 2012 crisis, through the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the EU Training and Capacity Building Missions (EUTM/EUCAP Sahel Mali).

It is usually easier to get commitments from the international community when SSR takes place after a violent conflict and as part of the peacebuilding process than when reforms happen as part of an ongoing improvement of security governance in times of peace. In the latter situation, national authorities may need to put more effort into communicating and explaining to partners why SSR is a priority even in peacetime (see Section 6.3).

However, external funding is never guaranteed. Many SSR processes in West Africa have been hamstrung by external partners unexpectedly withdrawing their commitment at a time when it was most needed. For example, security institutions in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Guinea-Bissau have been affected by funding cuts in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis. Such situations have highlighted the need for national core funding, clear partnership frameworks and contingency plans to cope with the uncertainty of external support.

**4**

*See Tool 4, Effective Management of External Support to Security Sector Reform*

## 9.2. Who are potential external partners for SSR in West Africa?

Potential partners for SSR in West Africa include, but are not limited to, the following.

- **Multilateral organisations of which the countries are members**, such as the UN, the AU, ECOWAS, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Mano River Union, l'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, the Commonwealth, etc.

- **International or regional financial institutions**, such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the West African Development Bank (as a UEMOA development financing instrument), etc.

- **Other multilateral organisations,** such as the EU, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, etc.

- **Bilateral partners** (states and their agencies), from either developed or emerging economies.

- **International civil society actors,** such as international foundations and NGOs, academic and research institutions, think-tanks, policy advisory teams, etc.

- **Private security companies.**

- **Private sector companies and corporations** (not specialised in security).

The government can engage private sector companies through various means, including corporate social responsibility policies and special taxation.

## 9.3. How to demonstrate national ownership in relations with external partners

Some of the ways to demonstrate national ownership and foster partner buy-in to the national security agenda include the following.

- **National request for assistance**

  International assistance to SSR must be demand-driven, and the demand must be home-grown. No international actor should therefore take part in the process unless duly invited. National authorities should emphasise this requirement as a fundamental principle for intervention by external actors. A poor understanding of political sensitivities and local needs and traditions by external actors can otherwise generate frustrations among local stakeholders, provoke their resentment and ultimately lead to their disengagement from or even revolt against SSR.

- **Alignment with national agenda**

  Although external partners tend to develop SSR support programmes according to their own foreign policy priorities, assistance must be aligned with the national agenda. In light of their own areas of interest, external partners may decide to support specific aspects of the national agenda (response to gender-based violence, decentralised delivery of security services, police reform, etc.), but they should not be allowed to intervene outside the framework of national priorities.

- **Partner accountability**

  Considering the actual or perceived weakness of state institutions, external partners may be tempted to act on their own without reporting to the national authorities. This was the case in Liberia, where bilateral partners contracted private security companies to support SSR, bringing about issues of a lack of accountability of those contractors. State actors can demonstrate ownership and leadership by demanding the right of inspection of what external actors do and how well it serves the national vision of security.

- **Traceability of financial flows through national monitoring mechanisms**

  Disorganised use of financial resources can lead to monumental waste without any tangible outcomes being achieved, which would eventually damage the credibility of the process. For instance, uncontrolled

monetary flows from international NGOs – however well intentioned – can distort local markets and weaken economic growth and poverty reduction efforts. Tracking external contributions to SSR is an absolute requirement for policy evaluation and accurate management of national resources.

- **Seed resources**

Including SSR costs in the state budget demonstrates political commitment and emphasises the sovereign nature of defence and security expenditures. Low- or lower-middle-income West African states might not be able to cover all SSR costs. However, committing seed resources to the process demonstrates ownership and helps attract additional external funding.

- **National pace**

International partners are sometimes constrained in funding cycles that do not match national governance cycles. It is critical to stress that the pace of national SSR must not be imposed by programme cycles of external partners. Core national funding helps to maintain state control over the pace of the reforms.

- **Use of national structures and procedures**

External partners can be tempted to design and implement SSR-related projects according to their own systems and procedures. Instead, programmes and projects funded by external partners should be managed according to national project management procedures and through national structures. Strengthening these procedures and structures is sometimes a necessary prerequisite.

- **Coordination of international assistance** is covered in the next section.

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**Box 22: Guiding principles for effective external support**

As resolved by the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, external support to national development agendas should be mindful of five guiding principles.

- Ownership and leadership by the country.
- Alignment of external partners to national agendas and use of national structures rather than donor systems.
- Harmonisation of operational arrangements, simplification of procedures and information sharing between external partners.
- Result-oriented rather than activity-focused programme management.
- Mutual accountability: State actors are accountable for the sound use of international assistance resources; conversely, external partners are accountable to the state for the various forms and impacts of their involvement in the country.

*Source:* Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005); Accra Agenda for Action (2008).

## 9.4. Why is national coordination of external partners important?

The key skill necessary to optimise the impact of international support for SSR is coordination. Coordination refers to initiatives and mechanisms aimed at making all actors involved work together in an organised and organic manner. It aims at securing consistency in intervention and efficient use of available human and material resources. Coordination of external partners usually falls under the core responsibilities of the national SSR coordination body.

Coordination serves three main types of purposes.

- **Strategic coordination** is about consistency of all actors' approaches to SSR and strategic planning under a common framework. Strategic coordination guarantees smart division of responsibilities through clarification of mandates and identification of sectoral leaders among external partners.

- **Financial coordination** ensures cost-efficiency of SSR. It requires a clear overview of funds from various sources being invested in SSR, and supports rational and results-oriented resource allocation.

- **Operational coordination** helps to avoid duplication and contradictory activities through smart division of labour at the technical level, shared tasking based on the comparative advantages of each partner, proper sequencing of activities and sharing experience on lessons learnt.

## 9.5. How to ensure coordination of external partners

At the beginning of the SSR process, all international partners should be mapped. The mapping list should be regularly updated in order to maintain an accurate overview of the potential and actual assistance deployed. There are various mapping methods.

Depending on the features prioritised to support decision-making, actors may be sorted by:

- political categories (NGO, intergovernmental organisation, etc.);
- thematic cluster, e.g. specialised area of expertise (corruption, integrity, gender, etc.);
- sectoral cluster, e.g. police, justice, corrections, customs, financial management, etc.

The SSR coordination body should identify the added value or comparative advantage of each external partner. This will enable it to make optimum use of available support and assistance while minimising waste of time, expertise and materials. Conducting joint exercises of SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) with international partners is an efficient way to identify which partner is best suited to do what.

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**Box 23: Examples of mechanisms for effective coordination**

| **Expertise and competencies** | **Knowledge management and information sharing** | **Optimising financial resources** |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Joint teams | ☐ Coordination meetings | ☐ Partners' roundtables |
| ☐ Cluster-specific taskforces | ☐ Newsletters | ☐ Basket funds |
| ☐ Focal points' network | ☐ Communities of practice | ☐ Integrated resource management matrix |
| ☐ Cross-cutting expertise | ☐ Joint operational reporting | ☐ Harmonised administrative and financial frameworks |
| | ☐ Experience-sharing forums | ☐ Harmonised procurement procedures |
| | | ☐ Harmonised and/or joint financial reporting |

## 9.6. How to mobilise external resources in support of SSR

When it comes to securing resource mobilisation from external partners, attention should be paid to the following requirements in order to preserve national ownership.

✓ **Consider strategic partnerships over isolated grants:** Resource mobilisation should not be envisaged as a stand-alone action of requesting financial support, but rather as part of constructive partnerships that also take other forms, such as strategic advice, technical assistance, logistical support, etc. SSR coordination institutions should always demonstrate sensitivity when linking with potential financial partners who perceive their role as more complex than just "bankers". For instance, requesting partners' input at an early stage (i.e. policy formulation, programme design) enhances their commitment to assist the process throughout.

✓ **Identify assistance needs** through needs assessments conducted by appointed expert committees or inter-agency taskforces. In many cases these may be done jointly with external partners. There are several key questions to settle. What are the gaps to be filled? What kind of resources are needed (human, material or financial), how much, and over what timeline?

✓ **Identify potential sources of support** to fill the gaps. Who are the potential partners? Are their own agendas and areas of interest compatible with national priorities? Updated mapping of partners and contact lists are useful tools at this stage.

✓ **Develop a strong programmatic framework:** The readiness of international partners to commit resources depends on the robustness and credibility of the programme developed. There must be a clear, logical framework, realistic timelines, and risk management tools and reporting mechanisms that meet international standards. It is also critical to plan for sustainability and allow partners to anticipate their exit strategy: how do national authorities expect to sustain the process in the long run, even after external funding has been withdrawn? The overall coherence, inclusion and transparency of the national agenda and programming framework are instrumental gauges for external partners to assess the credibility and reliability of the process.

✓ **Request partner support** based on the nationally agreed agenda, typically comprising a national security policy (what we want to do, why, and how we want to do it) and an integrated resource management matrix (what we need to do it, i.e. what we already have and what more we are left to mobilise).

✓ **Set clear budget management procedures:** Which state agency should collect external contributions? How will they be distributed among the various SSR programme areas? Who will be responsible for financial monitoring? How will instalments, disbursement and other financial movements be managed? Who will report on financial execution, and what internal and external control mechanisms should be put in place?

✓ **Share responsibility within the executive:** Differentiate competencies between ministries of planning (strategic coherence and centralisation), finance (especially treasury), defence, security and other relevant departments. Also define what consultation and coordination mechanisms should be set up among the various departments involved in the management of national and external funding. Empower the SSR coordination body to report on behalf of all others stakeholders to the head of the executive (prime minister or president) on the use of financial resources, and to coordinate external partner relations.

✓ **Plan for fund allocation to oversight bodies:** Ombuds institutions, parliament and parliamentary committees, human rights commission, etc. must be provided with the necessary means to perform their oversight duties.

✓ **Gather technical expertise** for programme management with relevant approaches, ensuring sensitivity to human rights and gender as well as result orientation. When necessary, external partners may help develop national expertise through technical assistance, transfer of competence, staff training or experience-sharing exercises.

✓ **Report in a timely and accurate manner:** Repeated delays in the agreed reporting calendar are likely to raise questions regarding transparency of funds management, ability to drive the programme effectively and reliability of state actors, and may jeopardise future commitments from external partners. Operational challenges that may induce delays in implementation and reporting should be communicated to partners in due course.

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### Box 24: ECOWAS support to resource mobilisation

On several occasions ECOWAS has supported conflict-affected members in mobilising resources for SSR and wider peacebuilding efforts.

Acknowledging the link between financial fragility and vulnerability and the recurrence of violent outbreaks, ECOWAS has coordinated discussions with UEMOA and the Central Bank of West African States on the possibility of financial and technical assistance to the economic recovery of Guinea-Bissau,[17] at a time when the public sector could not guarantee the payment of civil servants' salaries and the financing of security institutions. SSR was identified as an entry point to reconstruction, alongside the fight against drug trafficking.

Between 2010 and 2012 ECOWAS also played an important role in support of resource mobilisation for Guinea and Mali by convening fundraising meetings, conducting joint SSR assessments with potential international supporters and strengthening national capacities for SSR programming (see Section 10).

# The role of ECOWAS in supporting national ownership of SSR processes

ECOWAS is a privileged arena for member states to share their SSR experiences and agree on common standards for SSR and security sector governance. It provides a space for defining shared values that are both respectful of West African cultural and historical legacies and responsive to evolving regional threats. It thereby supports the development of national security apparatuses that align with regional and continental frameworks for peace and security.

## 10.1. Guiding principles of ECOWAS support to SSR

As an intergovernmental organisation, ECOWAS plays an important role in supporting the design and implementation of SSR initiatives in member states. This support is guided by fundamental principles which aim at fostering regional coherence while preserving national ownership and leadership of SSR in each country.

These guiding principles include the following.

- **The primary responsibility of member states** to maintain peace and security in their respective territories (see Section 2.3). This involves the sovereign right of member states to design the security architecture most suitable for addressing their particular security needs. ECOWAS plays a supportive, complementary and subsidiary role, supporting the leadership role of member states through human and institutional capacity building.

- **Non-interference of security actors in political affairs** and the importance of subjecting the security sector to democratically elected civilian authorities (see Box 3). There is a strong emphasis on this exigency due to the history of military coups and authoritarian rule in the region.

- A human security approach, which places people at the centre of security concerns, emphasises the importance of civilian engagement on security issues and considers interactions between security and development goals. The human security approach encourages people-centred SSR processes.

- **Compliance with international norms and standards of rule of law,** including respect for human rights by security sector actors and non-discrimination against women and minority groups. More generally, ECOWAS has made respect for the rule of law one of its key institutional values.

- **The interconnection between security and economic development:** As an initially economic community, ECOWAS acknowledges the interdependency between political stability, human security and economic development.

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**Box 25: Provisions of the ECPF on the roles of ECOWAS in promoting human security**

**Article 4 stipulates:** "Civil society shall play an increasingly critical role alongside Member States in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. In this order of things, the principal role of ECOWAS shall be to facilitate creative conflict transformation interventions by Member States and civil society."

**Article 41 specifies:** "ECOWAS is imbued with the necessary supranational powers (acting on behalf of and in conjunction with Member States, AU and UN), as well as the legitimacy to intervene to protect human security."

*Source:* ECPF, 2008.

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## 10.2. Taking into consideration country specifics

ECOWAS can help member states assess their security environment and approach emerging security challenges. This assistance can take various operational forms, such as documenting best practices, convening experience-sharing activities and coordinating fact-finding missions.

ECOWAS seeks to enable member states to respond effectively to national and transnational security challenges, taking into account the varying situations from one country to another in terms of state authority, legitimacy, financial viability, levels of decentralisation and capacity to govern their whole territory and population effectively. These differences include, but are not limited to, the following.

- **State effectiveness:** In a context of political instability and institutional fragility, ECOWAS exceptionally assumed a leadership role in Guinea-Bissau based on an agreement signed with national authorities. The ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau was deployed in 2012 with a mandate for direct provision of security services and leadership of the implementation of the Defence and Security Sector Reform[18] programme. Through this first-hand involvement, ECOWAS has also significantly contributed to the coordination of external assistance (see Box 24).

- **Local governance:** Decentralisation processes have reached various stages in ECOWAS member states. This affects the modes of governance of security institutions and their proximity to communities.

- **Economic status:** Whereas several West African countries are classified among the most modest economies of Africa, Nigeria became the first economy of the continent in 2014. When necessary, and given availability of funds, ECOWAS may commit financial resources to support SSR programmes in member states.

- **Democratisation process:** The spectrum ranges from stabilising democracies, such as Ghana and Senegal, to countries transitioning from military or authoritarian rule (Nigeria, Togo, etc.) and post-conflict states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone in the early 2000s, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

## 10.3. Political support to member states

Through continuous engagement, ECOWAS has demonstrated political commitment to assisting its member states to restore, maintain and consolidate peace and security. Political support is often provided through:

- the appointment of mediators who can help prevent or settle conflicts and encourage the integration of SSR as a conflict prevention and peacebuilding tool in peace agreements and political accords;

- the adoption of resolutions that affect security sector governance in member states;
- the issuance of official statements and high-level declarations supporting democratic governance of the security sector in member states;
- the negotiation of status-of-mission agreements with member states to serve as partnership frameworks for ECOWAS support to national SSR programmes;
- the facilitation of relations with external partners, e.g. by coordinating resource mobilisation (Box 24) and the delivery of external assistance to national SSR programmes;
- the conduct of supervisory missions enhancing the credibility of political processes, such as election observations;
- the provision of regional judicial oversight through the ECOWAS Court of Justice.

> *ECOWAS leads by example by opening regional consultations on security challenges and democratic values to civil society, and by promoting gender equality in its political offices.*

ECOWAS can provide political support through various institutions and organs, such as:

- the Authority of Heads of State and Government;
- the Council of Ministers;
- the Council of the Wise;
- the ECOWAS Parliament;
- the ECOWAS Commission and special representatives of the president of the ECOWAS Commission;
- special mediators and other special political appointees.

### Box 26: ECOWAS diplomatic and political support to SSR in Mali

In the aftermath of the 2012 crisis in Mali, ECOWAS supported the resumption of political dialogue, the organisation of elections and the rapid return to constitutional rule and civilian leadership of the state. Intense diplomatic efforts were deployed to create conditions for a democratic transition that would address the root causes of the security crisis and the inability of the state to respond effectively to security threats.

ECOWAS also played a major role in mediating discussions between Bamako and the separatist Azawad National Liberation Movement, as part of the response to the wider crisis in northern Mali. Furthermore, ECOWAS has deployed a special representative in the country.

## 10.4. Providing normative frameworks

A major aspect of ECOWAS support to SSR is the development of regional norms and standards to guide the governance of the security sector in member states (Box 27). ECOWAS also strives to ensure the dissemination of these instruments and support their active implementation in member states, through regional implementation plans.

Regional commitments encapsulated in milestone instruments contribute to mitigating political instability and positively influence the security environment in the region. They are an essential link to ensure coherence and alignment in the chain between national security policies and SSR principles promoted by ECOWAS, the AU and the UN.

**Box 27: ECOWAS instruments relating to governance and reform of the security sector**

1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security

2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance

2003 Declaration on a subregional approach to peace and security by the Authority of Heads of States and Government

2006 ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials

2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework

(2015) ECOWAS Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform and Governance (SSRG) *(To be adopted)*

## 10.5. Technical and operational support

ECOWAS supports member states at an operational level through the development of institutional and technical capacities. This may take various forms, such as:

- support to institutional audits and needs assessments;
- support in identification of context-specific entry points;
- support to the development of strategic and operational planning instruments;
- support to the development of effective communication plans and strategies;
- support to the development and improvement of training curricula;
- support to the implementation of training events;
- facilitation of exchange of experiences;
- facilitation of knowledge sharing among member states;
- support for the implementation of SSR-related activities on the ground;
- provision of operational guidelines and implementation tools;
- provision of operational advice and guidance on the implementation of normative and policy framework;
- provision of technical assistance through ECOWAS personnel or consultants.

To improve its technical and operational support, ECOWAS should develop in-house capacities through recruitment of SSR specialists. ECOWAS expertise in various other areas, such as political processes and post-conflict reconstruction, should also be used to support a holistic approach to SSR. Like all international stakeholders, ECOWAS should promote the transfer of knowledge and skills to national stakeholders, in order to ensure sustainability of reform processes.

*In addition to the development of norms, ECOWAS also has a critical role to play in advising member states on how to move from theory to practice.*

# Checklist

The following reminder should not be regarded as an invariable list of boxes to be ticked, but rather as a *general aide-mémoire on important points for consideration* while initiating and conducting an SSR process. Some elements of this checklist may not be suited to a particular environment, and some additional ones may be needed. With respect to the context-specific requirement of SSR, *the checklist must be contextualised*.

## 1. Make SSR part of a comprehensive national vision/project of society

- Mention SSR in presidential statements and general policy speeches, to demonstrate political commitment.
- Encourage the adoption of parliamentary resolutions expressing the importance of SSR and good governance of the security sector.
- Coordinate SSR with other peacebuilding (DDR, SALW, transitional justice, etc.) and political (peace agreements, elections, national dialogue, etc.) processes.
- Coordinate SSR with the national development agenda.
- Approach SSR as part of wider public sector reforms:
  - consider how public administration reform impacts on the governance of security institutions, and vice versa;
  - consider how public finance reform impacts on financial management of security institutions, and vice versa.

*Remember:* Although SSR is a conflict prevention and peacebuilding tool, it is not only useful for fragile states with weak security institutions, but also provides a framework for improving delivery of security services by functional institutions in stable environments.

## 2. Build national consensus on the need and opportunity for SSR

- Build consensus within top political leadership (private discussions, peer-to-peer awareness-raising, discrete lobbying activities).
- Engage security sector institutions and their personnel on the opportunity for a reform process:
  - institutional buy-in should not be limited to institution leaders but should involve men and women from all ranks and levels;
  - consider incentives to prevent the emergence of spoilers from within security institutions.
- Build strategic partnerships:
  - liaise with media and sensitise them on the importance of SSR;
  - engage community leaders as partners for the national consultations;
  - associate with CSOs, research institutions and the private sector.
- Engage citizens in a national conversation through national forums and conferences, and constructive engagements with opposition parties, ensuring effective representation and participation of all segments of society.
- Design and implement a process-wide communication strategy and plan:
  - present the objectives and advantages of SSR to national stakeholders;
  - ensure conflict and gender sensitivity, and overall accessibility of communication tools.

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*Remember:* Communication runs two ways. National ownership of SSR should be based on an inclusive consultation process that allows all members of society to express their security needs. At the same time, take care not to raise unrealistic expectations.

## 3. Institutionalise the leadership of SSR

- Specifically mandate a joint body to conduct and coordinate national SSR efforts; this coordination body should report directly to the mandating authority (political leadership).
- Ensure that the mandate of the SSR coordination body is anchored on a clear and formal legal basis (e.g. embedded in a high-level decree).
- Provide the SSR coordination body with the necessary resources to implement its mandate:
  - human capacity, including governance, change management and gender expertise, and set up an operational support office;
  - financial resources – allocate core funding from national budget;
  - material and logistical support;
  - access to information from security actors.
- Build the credibility of the SSR coordination body through:
  - vetting, including integrity and gender-sensitive background checks, especially for leadership positions;
  - organisational coherence and institutional efficiency;
  - strategic and technical capacity building.

### 4. Assert national ownership in the management and coordination of international assistance

- Identify and select opportunities for partnerships based on national priorities.
- Mobilise support funding and expertise according to national governance cycles.
- Promote joint planning, monitoring and evaluation within the framework of a national SSR programme.
- Enable mutual accountability with external partners and maintain a national right of inspection of all externally funded initiatives.
- Request ECOWAS political, technical and other support as needed.

## Additional resources

African Union, "African Union Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform" (Addis Ababa: African Union Commission, 2013), www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-policy-framework-on-security-sector-reform-ae-ssr.pdf.

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Global Campaign for Pretrial Justice, *The Socioeconomic Impact of Pretrial Detention in Sierra Leone* (New York: Open Society Foundations, 2013), http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/access_to_justiceandruleoflaw/the-socioeconomic-impact-of-pretrial-detention.html.

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International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect – Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001), www.idrc.ca/EN/Resources/Publications/openebooks/960-7/index.html.

Thomas Jaye, *Liberia: Parliamentary Oversight and Lessons Learned from Internationalized Security Sector Reform* (New York: Center on International Cooperation, 2008), http://issat.dcaf.ch/Learn/Resource-Library/Policy-and-Research-Papers/Liberia-Parliamentary-Oversight-and-Lessons-Learned-from-Internationalized-Security-Sector-Reform.

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## Notes

1.  UN General Assembly, "Securing peace and development: The role of the United Nations in supporting security sector reform", report of the Secretary-General, UN Doc.A/62/659–S/2008/39 (New York: United Nations, 2008), para. 17.

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3.  UN Security Council, "Resolution 2151: Underscoring the need for national ownership of security sector reform", UN Doc. S/RES/2151, 2014, para. 2.

4.  For more details see Okey Uzoechina, "Security sector reform and governance processes in West Africa: From concepts to reality", DCAF Policy Paper No. 35 (Geneva: DCAF, 2014).

5.   African Union, note 2 above, Art. 4.

6.  As of the publication date of this tool, the draft ECOWAS Policy for Security Sector Reform and Governance has been endorsed by technical experts representing ECOWAS Member States and is pending official adoption by the Heads of State and Government.

7.  For example, the Constitutive Act of the African Union, Art. 4, para. h, asserts "the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State [in case of] war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity" (Addis Ababa: Organisation of African Unity, 2000).

8.  James Manor, "Understanding 'political will'", in *"Politicking for the Poor", Final Report to the UK Department for International Development* (London: DFID, 2004), p. 1.

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11. The MDGs cover the 2000–2015 period; they will be followed by the Sustainable Development Goals starting from 2016.

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13. Aidan Wills, "Financial oversight of intelligence services", in Hans Born and Aidan Wills (eds), *Overseeing Intelligence Services. A Toolkit* (Geneva: DCAF, 2012).

14. Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Liberia (GOL), the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Political Parties. Part IV is dedicated to security sector reform.

15. UN Inter-Agency SSR Taskforce, note 8 above, p. 17.

16. Abossé Akue-Kpakpo, *Study on International Internet Connectivity in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Geneva: ITU, 2013).

17. UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau", UN Doc. S/2006/162, 2006.

18. ECOMIB State of Mission Agreement, Art. IV.

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