Navigating the choices of human resources reform within security sector reform contexts

What have we learnt so far from HRM programming?

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About DCAF

DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is dedicated to improving the security of states and their people within a framework of democratic governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and gender equality. Since its founding in 2000, DCAF has contributed to making peace and development more sustainable by assisting partner states, and international actors supporting these states, to improve the governance of their security sector through inclusive and participatory reforms. It creates innovative knowledge products, promotes norms and good practices, provides legal and policy advice and supports capacity-building of both state and non-state security sector stakeholders.

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Executive Summary

At the request of its International Partner Group (IPG) Members, DCAF has set out on a Stocktaking Study on **what can be learnt about Human Resources Management (HRM) reforms**, in order to provide guidance for donors for future programming. Working on HRM reforms is emerging as a feasible step forward towards a more effective and efficient use of national resources for SSG/R. To that end, DCAF has carried out a stocktaking study, exploring HRM programming across different contexts.

This synthesis report **summarizes the key learning points about common challenges, trade-offs and choices** facing policy officers, SSG/R practitioners as well as advisors working on HRM reform projects. The **Operational Guidance Framework** (see Annex) additionally presents the recommendations in a condensed and practical manner.

HRM Reform includes **different levels of managing personnel** – strategic capability planning and creating the right organizational structure, institutional management such as setting up the right structures, processes and financial resources to support the HR function, as well as all aspects of career management from recruitment, career development and discharge. It is critical to align the level of ambition with the maturity of existing HRM systems.

International partners are pursuing HRM reforms for **multiple strategic objectives**. These range from the practical ones, such as improving the operational effectiveness of a (geo-strategically important) partner's security sector or enhancing its financial efficiency; normative ones – such as contributing to a meritocratic career development system, building integrity and advancing accountability, transparency and oversight as well as gender equality; and policy related objectives, such as maintaining peace and stability, a power sharing balance. These dimensions make HRM a key part of ensuring security sector reform is affordable and sustainable for national partners to carry forward.

HRM reforms are **characterized by their highly political nature**. They require political cover and support, and technical-level HRM is not very impactful. This means close coordination is needed between the political level, such as the embassy or mission, and the technical level, such as the implementer or advisor. Because all aspects of HRM decisions are politically weighted, decisions are almost always compromises between different principles and should involve a costs/benefit calculation. This fact means that politically savvy advisors are important, and the more politically sensitive the context, the more important the role of the advisor.

Several aspects have emerged as crucial to **creating an effective HRM reform programme**:

The programme needs to be clearly **connected to strategic reform objectives**, including some manner of compromise between the goals of the national partner and international supporters. Accountability and oversight goals, while frequently not made explicit objectives due to their sensitivity, can be very impactful. HRM is also a lever for gender equality, but it has to be taken seriously and included in HRM to achieve real impact for the presence and leadership of women.

International partners have **several possibilities of organizing and setting up HRM reform programs**, ranging from bilateral direct implementation over working through contractors/ implementing partners and multilateral missions. Each setup comes with its own advantages and drawbacks, but for most medium sized and smaller international partners, the multilateral approach is more promising as long as they can maintain close ties and provide political support to the advisors. NATO is emerging as an interesting actor to watch in this space.

The programme also needs to be part of a **holistic approach**. This includes linking the program to other processes, such as financial management and budgeting, in order to be able to cost reform priorities; linking the program to other similar initiatives which might work directly on oversight and accountability (e.g. with

parliaments, audit institutions, civil society etc.) as well as internally on areas such as Building Integrity or Women Peace and Security (WPS).

Monitoring the progress of change requires a sound Theory of Change and the identification of outcome level indicators to measure progress. This forces advisors to focus not only on strategies and policies, but also on their implementation, for instance, through providing additional training and technical support on how to run e.g. a performance appraisal process, as well as triangulating information on how these policies and processes are being applied from a diverse range of sources.

HR data is a key enabler for informing decision making. **Digital solutions**, such as databases and programs for managing HRM processes, can help create timely and solid HR data. Programmers must also consider the governance and privacy aspects around sensitive databases. Together with other digital solutions such as mobile applications for job descriptions, internal policies and regulations as well as complaint mechanisms, HR data can contribute to more transparency and accountability.

Several concrete areas emerge as highly relevant to HRM reform programming, while the weight and focus on them obviously should be a function of contextual needs. These include at the institutional level the organizational structure and within that how the **HR function** is organized, but also **performance management and job descriptions**. With regards to **career management**, international programming in the case studies observed seemed to focus primarily on recruitment, retention and promotion/ professional development; key areas such as creating a reserve, but also reintegration and retirement support were often described as bottlenecks to other reforms but are getting comparatively little attention.

Introduction

DCAF has been advising its International Partners Group (IPG) Members on issues relating to Public Finance Management (PFM) and Human Resources Management (HRM) in relation to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) since 2017.[1] However, this Stocktaking Study is the first ever publication dedicated to the place of HRM in SSG/R. Indeed, HRM is an area of reform where few international actors are working. Yet HRM includes a range of functions with enormous importance for governance, including performance management, recruitment, promotion, training, retention, retirement, equality, diversity and inclusion, psychosocial support – all with clear linkages to anti-corruption, transparency and financial management.[2] HRM is a cornerstone of an effective security institution and the credibility and legitimacy of state security actors.

HRM reform has, therefore, much to offer in terms of effectiveness and accountability of the security sector. Although overlooked in previous generations of SSG/R, there is a growing appreciation by international partners of HRM as an effective reform lever has grown, as it is understood that reshaping the human element of security forces is helpful for ensuring sustainability in the fundamentals of improved oversight and improved effectiveness.

HRM reform is also a distinctly political process because it involves choices around the use of resources and, in many cases, the transition from clientelist practices to greater transparency and meritocracy. Indeed, its political and multifaceted nature provokes plenty of choices and dilemmas for the SSG/R programmer and implementer. Among the important questions are how to balance representation of groups, how to promote the role of women, how to make HRM part of strategic change, and how to be an effective advisor.

With that in mind, the purpose of this Synthesis Report is to help guide SSG/R policy makers and practitioners through those questions and choices. It provides guidance on where HRM reform within SSG/R becomes possible and where its limitations generally are and offers insights on navigating the choices.

Whilst this report focuses on HRM reforms in the defence sector, the case studies also included police institutions and the vast majority of the mechanisms, processes and challenges described below would most likely be equally relevant to other parts of the security sector and even the public sector writ large.

This report is aimed at programmers, policy officers and technical advisors. It therefore spans the stakeholders involved in international support to partners on SSG/R. Indeed, one of the key findings of this report is the need for political and strategic cover if HRM reform is to be meaningful, which has its roots in engagement by MOFAs and embassies. In the first section, it sets out what HRM means in terms of culture and practicalities, then it works through approaches to doing HRM, from effective advising to programme design and the use of career management approaches. It illustrates these themes with data points from the four case studies. Its annex comprises an Operational Guidance Framework (OGF), which is a condensed guide for SSG/R practitioners, which is largely acontextual.

[1] see, e.g., DCAF 2017 (on file with DCAF).

[2] See also the annexed literature review.

Methodology

Stocktaking Approach

The stocktaking study used a multi-pronged approach to develop the operational guidance framework (OGF), based on a varied set of case studies. As is outlined OGF, the first step included a **programme analysis of** four **HRM reform interventions** through engaging with international partners and conducting a document analysis. This involved questions regarding the programme's objectives, strategies, expectations, assumptions, achievements, and challenges. In a second step, the **OGF was drafted** and developed. The OGF intertwines various factors (such as reform goals, institutional structure, individual performance, and career management), which inform forward-looking HRM programming. The third step consisted of **data collection and synthesis** through desk research, document analysis, and semi-structured key informant interviews. Finally, the fourth step served to draw out lessons for **improving the OGF** based on the previous analytical steps. This methodology thus aims to better understand *how HRM reform can contribute to SSG/R goals*, namely that security sectors become more accountable, legitimate, effective, sustainable, affordable, and conflict sensitive.

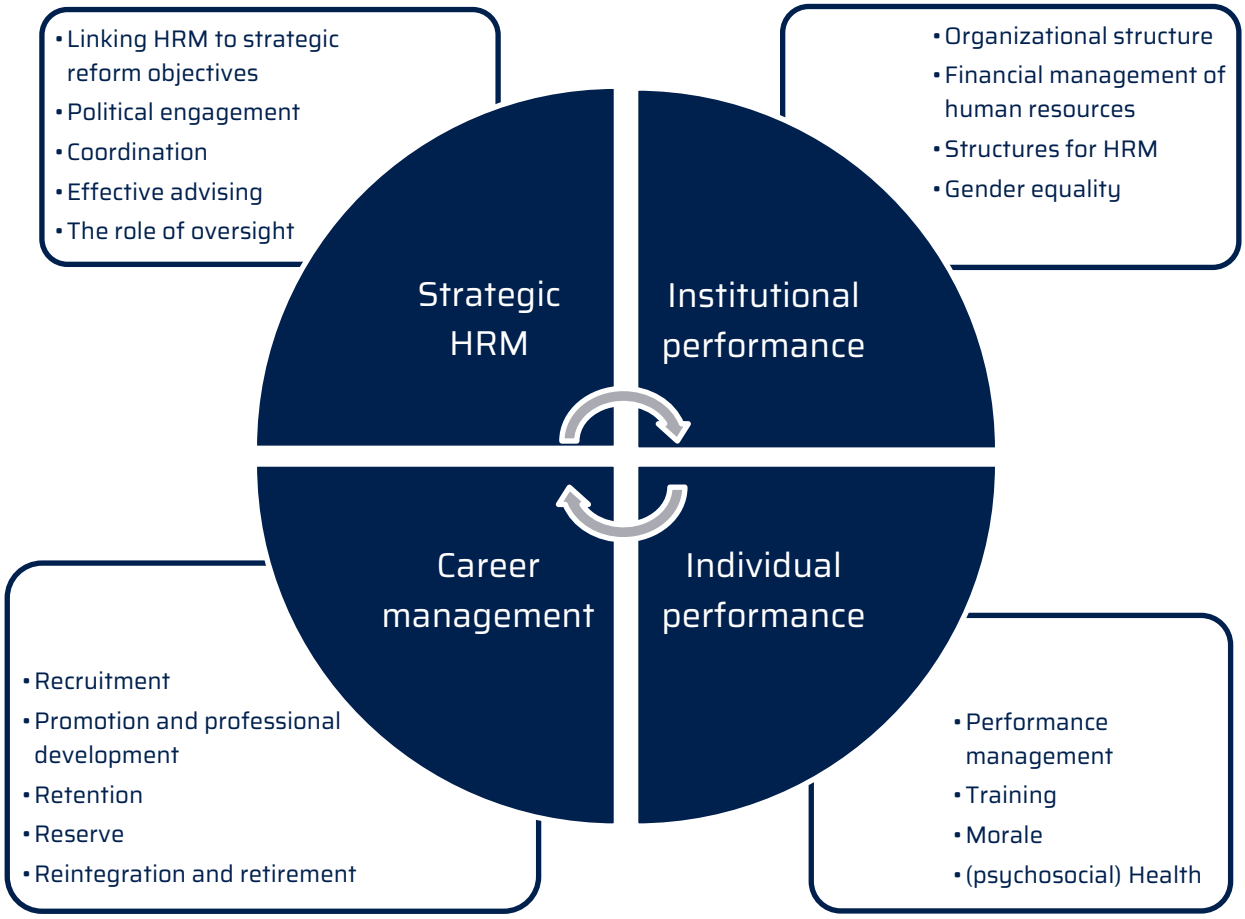

Figure 2: The components and subsections of the Operational Guidance Framework (OGF).

While the programme analysis thus focused on adjacent factors to the HRM programme, such as planning and embedding it within the context (and coordinating with other actors), delivery and outputs, the subsequent steps added components on the HRM programme itself. The subsequent OGF thus includes complementary pillars. These pillars revolve around strategic approaches to HRM, institutional performance, individual performance, and career management. To add granularity, each pillar was specified through using thematic subsections. These subsections were iteratively developed based on the insights from the different case studies and furthermore served to peel out thematically specific good practices and potential challenges.

Approach and limitations

The main difficulty of this work is directly linked to the sensitivity of information that the team required access to. Institutional management reform in general and HRM in particular, is one of the most sensitive areas of SSG/R. As such, HRM within that sector involves data and analysis that touches upon the number of personnel, equipment, capacity gaps and management shortfalls, all of which national partners need to be kept in the confidence of their closed partnerships. DCAF was in a unique position to build enough trust and use its international networks to secure a space of information exchange that was just deep enough to produce the case studies (restricted circulation) and this synthesis report. It is due to the sensitivity of the topic that the programmes and countries that provided the data for this report are not named.

The four programmes studied provided respective in-depth exploration of the following dimensions:

Dimension	Topics
International partner's relational approach	Bilateral relationship Multilateral mission
Implementation modality	Rotating advisors in mission Longer-term advisors contracted through implementing agency Multi-phase country programme including HRM component
Focus area for programme	Establishing personnel data Increasing staff numbers (focus on recruitment, retention, benefits) Reducing staff numbers (focus on rightsizing, targeted and competitive recruitment and career development, performance management) Building specific capabilities, based on changing threat assessment or international demand Decreasing administrative load from strategic planners (focus on IT systems, HR centres)
Contextual factors determining needs	Evolving risk landscape Post-conflict contexts Weak state Moving towards international standards EU accession NATO partnership

What can Human Resources Management reform offer to Security Sector Reform?

Defining HRM reforms

HRM's goal is a proactive, strategic human capital planning in organizations"[3], at its core "aimed at recruiting capable, flexible and committed people, managing and rewarding their performance and developing key competencies."[4]

HRM as explored in this report includes different levels of managing personnel – strategic capability planning and creating the right organizational structure, institutional management such as setting up the right structures, processes and financial resources to support the HR function, as well as all aspects of career management from recruitment, career development and discharge.

Building a meritocratic system that is effective

In any sector, defence or civilian, public or private, effective HRM is a set of decisions around how personnel are deployed and taken care of. Done properly, it places the right people in the right positions according to the business goals and values of the organization.

This is true for the security sector and this makes HRM one important route into effective SSG/R shaping a security institution's workforce in fundamental ways. At base, this starts at the political and strategic level where human resource decisions are made on a systematic basis, ideally from Threat Assessments, Strategic Plans, and other master documents, so that the right capacity and capabilities are chosen according to evidence on national security needs. For that, it is indispensable to have a reliable overview of available personnel, requiring tools such as an HR management system or database.

Consequently, this means that personnel have the correct skills and experience to perform their roles. It also means that the security sector institutions respect and represents different identities – be according to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race etc. It means ensuring that personnel can work effectively in terms of physical and psychological safety and that they can develop their capabilities according to the longer-term needs of the organisation. Representativeness in security sector can be particularly important – if citizens feel like the security institutions include people somewhat like them, then relations are usually on a better footing. Likewise, good psychological and physical health of personnel allows them to confront difficult situations more calmly.

[3] Oriloye, Adewumi, and Nwaodike Chibuzor 2020, 8.

[4] Price 2011, 29.

Clarity and accessibility of standards

Contemporary HRM approaches generally standardize HRM procedures so that they are clear, non-discriminatory and fulfil employment law requirements. Importantly, this includes working to explicitly articulated HRM regulations, from selection to promotion, sanction to dismissal and everything in between. This means that there are clear standards for any of these actions that are accessible both to the individual and the organisation, and that the individual has access to recourse when necessary. For instance, a contemporary promotion method should have clear requirements for the candidate to fulfil, a transparent route to promotion and an interview and selection process that is fair, meritocratic and non-discriminatory. For example, if a candidate was not able to access the list of conditions and requirements for promotion, this would constitute a flaw in a transparency recruitment system. The principle of the 'best person for the job' is the central principle. This also includes ways of overcoming barriers for women's participation and leadership, so that women are increasingly involved across the security sector and are not overlooked because of gender stereotypes.

Selected practices within the SSG/R-guided HRM process

- Placing HRM planning as a central element within security strategies and reform agendas
- Linking HRM reforms to other components, such as working with parliaments and parliamentary committees, supporting Inspector Generals, audits and civil society oversight, or strengthening public financial management
- Improving the attractiveness of employment in the security sector through methods including raising the profile of security institutions, developing attractive and adequate benefits packages, and improving recruiters' capabilities
- Revising complaints and recourse methods, including the activity of ombudspersons
- Articulating job descriptions properly so they delineate qualifications, responsibilities and authorities
- Improving evaluations used for promotion and the general selection process, making them more transparent
- Increasing opportunities for women, including leadership roles, by decreasing discrimination

Moving towards transparent and accountable management styles

This approach is a departure from other methods of HRM management, which can be characterised as clientelist and obscure. In such systems, regulations may or may not exist but are not always followed. And instead of selecting the best person for the job, it may be a case of giving favours to allies, kin or members of an in-group, perhaps based on ethnicity, class or region of origin. In each of the four case studies, this practice is reported. In some cases, international interlocutors reported that training deployments abroad are used to reward allies, who benefit by accruing valuable skills for future employment post-service. This obstructs the selection of the most appropriate individuals and also forms a sense of injustice.

In such systems, decision-making processes tend to be concentrated in a few hands and are not transparent – and with this, roles are poorly defined, such that managers are able to assume and drop at will the responsibilities of their juniors. This is also an issue reported across all four case studies. For instance, sometimes decisions about promotions require the sign-off of the most senior leadership. Because of this, the HRM system can be manipulated to serve the interests of a particular group, rather than the institution and the wider country. In other cases, the security sector and the state as a whole is part of intense

competition between rival groups who seek to capture the state and its resources. With such a system, the sense of organisational justice in the majority 'out group' is usually low, while cynicism and mistrust brews towards the leadership and the state as a whole. In many instances, interlocutors reported a widespread sense of unfairness around who is awarded promotions, deployments and other rewards.

Working around 'strategic lag'

The phenomenon of 'strategic lag' or even 'strategic vacuum', impacts HRM intensely. This occurs when there is not a regular process of strategic defence review or police strategy, meaning that the sector as a whole has no strategic masterplan, or has old strategic documents. This means that it is aligned to a previous threat landscape and therefore, so is the HRM system. Strategic lag or vacuum is linked to a political dynamic that is incapable or unwilling to update strategies and can derive from intense differences in political movements' world outlooks, or even a desire to avoid signaling hostility to a neighbouring country. To understand this strategic lag, sometimes it is necessary to understand the intense political arguments relating to the nature of the state and indeed its future direction.

Getting value for money

Systematic HRM reform has gained a special value in straitened economic times, and in places where budgets are tight. Today, general fiscal squeeze in the post-pandemic phase is compounded by competition from spending on hard security as the global security architecture frays. For instance, financial challenge is particularly evident in contexts where the security budget represents significant percentages of the overall national budget, as high as 30% in some cases. There is a need to find ways to make less go further focuses attention on the potential of HRM as a reform catalyst.

Offering inroads for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

HRM reform in the security sector offers entry points for gender mainstreaming, both with regards to increasing the absolute number of female staff and going beyond that looking into equal career opportunities. Existing HRM regulations and policies can be a useful baseline of commitment to gender equality and the WPS agenda. The strong efforts on advancing WPS at the institutional level provide an opportunity for achieving practical implementation through HRM especially in terms of women's recruitment, career development and promotion.

Peace-building and security integration

HRM reform also has a special role within peacebuilding and transitions from war to peace, including in post-conflict settings, where in such cases, the reformed security sector must be part of the settlement that balances the groups' interests and the principles at the heart of the new political settlement. There are different practices that seem promising, such as a quota system used in conjunction with a computer-based lottery as a way of seeking fairer distribution of hires into the armed forces. Another approach is using a rotating leadership between representatives of different group identities (e.g. ethnic or religious) groups, among various other power sharing mechanisms A more problematic approach is the large-scale integration of former militia into the formal security, often without proper training for their new roles. This practice risks a lack of professionalism and is especially problematic when integrating into the police, risking a further loss of trust in the state.

Ultimately, effective HRM makes an effective security partner, which should also motivate donors of SSG/R who are seeking to help their allies develop and strengthen. As such, integrity and HRM within the state as a whole is one of the sets of good governance measures for accession into or partnering with NATO and the EU, making it a step towards the security and economic integration that is the goal of many states. For instance, within the EU's conditionality rubric, public administration reform (including within the defence ministry), there are clusters including democratic institutions and public sector reform. HRM standards have also become a standard feature of NATO conditions.

How can stakeholders engage effectively in Human Resources Management?

Human Resources reform as a political process

Even while implementing standardized and transparent HRM systems takes a lot of the 'politics' out of HRM decisions, the process to get there is very political. Indeed, HRM reform is a deeply political process. This is because transitioning from obscure, clientelist practices to a modern, meritocratic system takes power away from individuals and gives it to the institution.

Furthermore, HRM will always retain some political elements, because it involves questions about how resources are spent. This stretches from 'Politics' in parliament, where budgets are debated, to 'politics' at the brigade level and below, where decisions are made about awards, deployments and promotions. This means for instance that changes to the force structure, which might embody a power-sharing arrangement through a careful blending of different groups, would be extremely controversial and possibly impact stability. This is the case even while transitioning closer to NATO standards would, in the eyes of a major international supporter, bring many benefits.

Because of the political nature of HRM reform, it allows and requires SSG/R actors to work at the strategic level, connecting HRM decision making to strategic objectives, and they can work at the institutional level, improving rules, regulations and culture. Down the line, this will have effects on service delivery for citizens, who should in theory, benefit from more effective, happier, safer and more representative personnel. It means that it is important for programmers to understand not only the official set of incentives (e.g. pay, meritocratic chances at promotion), but also the unofficial incentives and political economy, such as access to decision-makers and corruption opportunities. These are more difficult to analyze, but equally fundamental to how the sector works.

When does Human Resources Management reform become feasible and what are the limiting factors?

International supporters of SSG/R are always looking for more effective ways to reach their SSG/R goals, which are themselves part of their wider development foreign policy objectives. And HRM is part of that. However, this motivation is only one part of the picture, and space for HRM only opens up when national partners are motivated. This can take several forms.

HRM can take place in different contexts, with different consequences on the feasibility and center of gravity for HRM reforms.

In developmental contexts, there might be more of a focus on moving towards international standards and meeting international obligations. This means increasing the number of staff to meet international obligations, such as through recruitment and retention efforts; building specialized capacities which are in demand for peace missions for example; and strengthening administrative processes and management structures similar to public sector reform processes.

In unstable contexts, the focus might be more strongly on reducing risk factors for conflict such as corruption, discrimination and exclusion, while possibly requiring a built up of certain capacities to face a growing threat.

In conflict settings where the state, HRM reform is the most difficult, as the primary focus would be on operational effectiveness.

In post-conflict settings, HRM in the security sector gains a special salience:

- How the state distributes resources, including jobs in the security sector and administration has potent political and symbolic value. Who gets how many and which jobs in the military – and who is demobilised – has to be addressed as part of a settlement in most cases.[5]

- Moreover, the post-conflict defence and security sector has to be constructed in such a way that parties to the conflict do not feel threatened by domination or persecution, either militarily, politically or culturally.

- The nature and gravity of the security sector changes as the country transitions out of conflict. This means that the security sector can realign its posture and even reduce its cost, for example transitioning away from conducting major land counter-insurgency land campaigns by the armed forces to police-led counter-terrorism activities. This transition requires a realignment and a reduction of forces through a rightsizing process which needs to balance political, financial and social factors.

- Most likely, there would be a high number of (former) solders requiring access to mental-health and trauma services.

As noted, another aperture for HRM reform can come out of development ambitions or economic stress. The EU generally requires major administrative reforms, including many HRM aspects for a candidate country to adopt.

There are several constraints somewhat common across contexts that face SSG/R partners and implementors working with SSG/R. Disagreements over the direction of the security sector are a very normal function of politics, since there is much at stake. Disagreements that result in strategic lag or strategic vacuum in the strategic decision-making process, mean that there is no general plan into which to build the HRM reform process. This will limit the amount of national ownership and drive for HRM reform in ministries of defence and militaries, since the leaders there will have very little political cover for serious changes, nor the required legislative changes when it comes to matters such as salaries. In such cases, technical changes will be the limit for international partners and it will be very difficult to tackle the major material issues (e.g. salaries, conditions and organisational structure) and the intangible areas (ethos and culture).

Peacebuilding and power-sharing within the security sector is crucial in post-conflict societies, and how to balance this principle with meritocratic ethos is not a question that can be conclusively answered. For instance, it may be advantageous financially to consolidate military sites to save costs, but this is something that has to be possibly navigated within a power-sharing dynamic, because the geographic spread has a potent symbolic value, and is also connected to questions about which owns which spaces – issues that trace back to previous conflict.

Weak states lacking a minimum of administrative maturity will have difficulties handling sophisticated SSG/R reforms, and in such cases, HRM provides tools, such as databases, to take account of the personnel composition (numbers, geography, skills) in order to understand the baseline for reform. In terms of sequencing, skipping or fast-tracking these steps in unrealistic reform plans frequently leads to a lack of absorption of international support and evaporation of reform gains.

[5] Costa Rica is a highly notable exception, since it ended its military as a permanent institution after its civil war. It maintains public defence forces.

How can Human Resources Management advisory be set up?

There are different ways to run an HRM-focused programme. Programming can be managed centrally, for example within an international partner's Ministry of Foreign Affairs but in close liaison with the embassy's political advisors and defence attaches on the ground. In such a set-up, where the program can negotiate access and interest with a partner, its implementation can happen either through a secondary implementing agency or contractor providing a specialized HRM expert as advisor. These advisors usually tend to have a background in the military or police, often on HRM specifically, and receive pre-deployment training before their mission. On the ground, they work independently from the embassy and other international partners, however, are liaising regularly. In some countries, HRM programmes might additionally work with local cultural advisors to support the HRM advisor. This approach provides a certain flexibility in terms of how long the deployment lasts, ranging from several months to several years.

A different set-up is through multilateral missions, such as EU CSDP or NATO missions. Where NATO's mandate includes HRM, it deploys active-duty military staff from its member states on a system of frequent rotations (6 months – 12 months, depending on level of seniority). Advisors do not necessarily have an HRM background. Moreover, there are less direct linkages between the advisors and the political staff of member states' embassies. The EU's CSDP missions use a similar approach to NATO. Where their mandate, as decided by European Union Member States (EUMS), includes HRM, they mostly draw on civilian advisors seconded by member states. Rotations are slightly less frequent, ranging from mostly 12-24 months.

A third way to set up an HRM project is for a donor to task an implementing partner with a part of a multi-year large-scale institutional support programme, including several components (one of them would be HRM), and a permanent country office. This comes with several advantages, such as ample opportunities for synergies with other programme components, for example where they work with parliament, civil society or oversight institutions such as Inspector Generals. However, to benefit from these, close alignment between programme components is indispensable. Embedding HRM within such long-term and permanent cooperation contributes also to building relationships and trust with partners. On the downside, these types of arrangements come with the risk of removing technical implementation even further from the political engagement level. While they allow for a certain flexibility to adapt the programme, this comes with the risk of deprioritizing HRM in the process when facing obstacles.

What makes a good advisor?

1. Role of the advisor – technical and political

Across contexts, the importance of the role of the advisor has emerged as a key success factor for HRM reform programs. This makes selecting the right person as an advisor one of the most important choices within an HRM reform project.

As the role comprises political as well as technical aspects, the four cases have shown the need for a combination of these aspects in the profile of the advisor. Much of their work is around navigating power dynamics and the political economy of HRM choices, including in contexts characterized by political tensions in a post-conflict environment. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that they are able to familiarize themselves quickly with new cultural and social contexts as well as understand and have the capacity to navigate the dynamics at play behind the scenes. Embassies as well as advisors need to be aware that through their work on HRM, they will get deeply involved in the politics of the respective country.

At the same time, advisors need to have a solid understanding of the security sector and HRM within it, ideally from their own operational experience. It was stressed throughout the cases how those who bring their own practical expertise in the field have more traction with national partners and counterparts than those without.

What has also come across is the difficulty of identifying those who combine these specific skill sets. Most advisors seem to be either active duty or former military personnel. Their expertise in operational readiness

and military HRM is highly relevant; the missing element through the studies, however, was the political savviness of the advisors.

2. Type of support needed

Programme staff also need to be aware that advisors on their own will not be effective but require a substantial system of support.

Close contact with and support from the embassy's political staff, as well as support from local cultural advisors and project coordinators, offers a way to mitigate the associated risks. Additional approaches include investing in additional pre-deployment preparation, establishing joint teams including military and civilian/political experts as well as providing external expertise and advice for the advisors. For example, embassy staff need to be in close and regular contact with the advisors, providing political backing where necessary. In some instances, advisors were also able to draw upon the assistance of two local cultural advisors, who had several decades of experience working with the donor and national partner's MoD. In another case, the advisors mentioned context-specific pre-deployment preparation as well as their appreciation of the opportunity to interact with the DCAF stocktaking team as a way to jointly reflect on their approach. Where advisors were completely disconnected from access to the political leverage of their donors, this proved to be one of the main obstacles to successful implementation.

3. Approaches to advising

Advisors need to carefully calibrate the way in which they transmit their own knowledge and expertise to the national partner.

Across programmes, different approaches to advising emerged, each with their own advantages and drawbacks. One choice for the advisor to make is to what extent they see themselves as simply providing expertise on the different options and design choices available with regards to HRM, as compared to promoting a specific approach. This approach was described by one advisor as presenting different 'Lego blocks', leaving it up to the national partner to pick and choose and design their own system. The practice of study trips can be a way to practically showcase how different militaries are structuring a certain function. This approach comes with the advantage of fully respecting local ownership; however it also risks achieving real impact in terms of governance related values.

Another approach is to transplant what the advisor knows best from their own home HRM system and processes. If most of the national partner organisation is at a very different scale, for instance, with fewer resources and limited technology, this comes with the risk of not necessarily being helpful and applicable to the local contexts and available resources.

The level of interaction and embeddedness also makes a difference – ranging from some advisors maintaining their own permanent office in the MoD, while others were facing additional movement restrictions and were mostly confined to their secured compound. An established presence at the partner's building communicates commitment and in fact facilitates daily engagement. Such a presence can be negotiated by the embassy as a very useful foundation for the advisor's work.

What makes an effective and sustainable HRM programme as a package?

The four cases have shown that the following approaches are crucial factors in making HRM reform programming more effective.

1. Linkages to strategic reform objectives

The link to clearly defined reform objectives has emerged as one of the most important aspects of an effective HRM reform program across the four cases. However, disconnect between objectives between international and national partners, as well as a lack of clarity on the side of the international partners seem to frequently characterize programming approaches. This risks the programme remaining at the technical level without sustainable impact.

When an HRM programme follows a **clear strategic intent and logic**, this is a helpful enabler for all the **individual technical components** such as the focus on a new organizational structure, career management laws, recruitment and retention, to that they are designed to contribute to overall strategic goals.

Where national and international partners are following different strategic intents, this can prove challenging to strategic reform. For example, a national partner might pursue HRM reforms with the aim to adapt structure and capabilities effectively and efficiently to current and new security threats/ possibly rightsizing, while at the same time seeking peace and security objectives such as providing jobs, limiting social unrest and maintaining the balance of power between sectarian groups. The international partner on the other hand might be aiming for a tighter relationship and improving the effectiveness of a geographically important partner, but also pursue objectives tied to broader SSG/R objectives such as integrity and accountability. The resulting compromise can be a very broad objective that makes it difficult to operationalize as well as measure.

Finally, there are specific challenges to strategic reform in the absence of defined priorities, such as no defence review or strategy, on the side of the national partner. This can result in national and international partners pursuing a variety of disconnected objectives, ranging from e.g. meeting international standards, creating a conventional modern military, strengthening the partner's ability to provide certain key capacities internally and/ or internationally (such as for disaster response, demining, explosives and peace operations), to maintaining a national military as a symbol of state-level power and power sharing. Such disconnected objectives might then confront national partners with a gap in a mandate for strategic HRM reform, which makes it hard to link HRM to any particular strategic reform objectives, risking a dilution of resources and priorities.

An additional consideration for international partners at the strategic level is the rational of why to engage in HRM at all in the absence of such strategic direction. Here, the logic of on the one hand staying engaged with the partner, and moreover obtaining a direct entry point for contributing to overall peace and stability objectives, are relevant to be highlighted.

2. Political engagement/Strategic political

The second approach that needs to be included in designing and implementing HRM reforms, by policy and program staff as well as advisors, is to include a political lens.

As highlighted above, HRM reforms are intrinsically political and impact the power dynamics as well as political economy in major ways. Throughout the case studies, it was clear that programming needs to be conscious of several risks. On the one hand, in the presence of clientelist networks, programming and advisors need to be careful to navigate the need for working with reform-minded agents of change while not becoming part of these power structures themselves. An observation from several programmes in this respect has been the acknowledgement that while some counterparts expressed support for HRM reforms, advisors do not have full information to what extent these counterparts might be speaking for the entirety of their institutional, nor what individual agendas they might be pursuing.

This also requires a conscious approach towards the tensions resulting from the stability derived from maintaining a certain power sharing equilibrium, and the potentially destabilizing effects of improving the operational effectiveness by changing the organizational structure or introducing stronger meritocratic elements. This is particularly pertinent in post-conflict contexts, where peace has been built on the foundation of power sharing along the ethnic or sectarian lines, and any stronger focus on meritocratic principles for recruitment or career advancement risks shifting the formal or informal quotas.

Navigating the politics of HRM reforms is not only a task for the advisors themselves, but also for political staff at the embassy and home ministry, as well as senior mission leadership if applicable. Across programmes, there have been various levels and effectiveness of this type of support, ranging from very close involvement of the embassy's political staff with the program and advisors, to a more distant approach in other cases. In particular, the size of a large multilateral mission can make this more difficult, as the technical level might be further removed from the strategic level as well as the need to navigate the political agendas of a multitude of member states.

One interesting avenue to strengthen understanding and capacities in this respect would be to propose a lessons learning and good practices exchange of political officers overseeing or supporting HRM programs.

3. Bilateral vs. multilateral

The third aspect that requires reflection and trade-offs is whether to engage in HRM bilaterally or multilaterally. The programmes studied included both bilateral programs, mostly where they were able to rely on a well-established and strong bilateral relationship; as well as multilateral actors such as NATO and the EU.

The bilateral approach has advantages over the multilateral one, at least when it comes to the level of access to the national partners and ability to tackle very sensitive reform areas. The extent to which this depends on the scope and depth of the bilateral partnership would need to be explored in additional cases. At the same time, the stocktaking team identified several instances where even in a strong and trusted relationship, interesting opportunities for coordination with others could have added extra value to the project. For example, other bilateral partners can be engaging in rather niche but quite strategic projects on related areas – supporting external oversight actors such as the audit institutions and civil society institutions or strengthening parliamentary oversight. Similarly, regularly exchanging notes with multilateral actors on their HRM programming could bring additional benefits.

On the multilateral side, there are a variety of factors emerging that seem to impact on the effectiveness of the HRM efforts. Overall, multilateral actors have the potential to consolidate their political clout together with that of their member states, theoretically creating a stronger basis for advocacy and negotiation on certain reform issues. However, in practice this does not seem to be the case. Overall, the multiple layers of hierarchies and degrees of separation between HRM advisors and embassies' political staff seem to make it more challenging to harness their political support and engagement. Moreover, in the case of the EU, differences between its member states as well as geopolitical considerations appeared to have prevented them from fully leveraging incentives such as EU accession or funding envelope to push more strongly for difficult reforms.

In the case of NATO, as a military actor on the one hand it seems to have an advantage in terms of accessing defence actors at partner level. On the other hand, it usually comes with a certain historical legacy which limits the level of trust by the partner; moreover, its military nature also puts it at a distance from the political space and especially taking full advantage of its member states' embassies. Coordination between international actors seems to be another opportunity for additional synergies, such as exchanging experiences on their respective HRM programs where multiple missions are present.

4. Holistic approach

Another interesting pattern emerging from the four cases is the need for a truly holistic and integrated approach to make HRM reform programming effective. In a way, HRM reforms were described as resembling the mythological figure of a hydra, with two heads growing wherever one head has been cut off.

At the strategic level, there are a range of aspects that need to be either integrated into the HRM program or tackled in conjunction with other interventions. These include especially the areas of oversight and accountability, but also financial management and budgeting. On the oversight and accountability side, notably in some international partners' capacity building efforts, there seemed to be a disconnect between those efforts and an overall agenda for strengthening good governance and the Rule of Law. Moreover, some cases clearly demonstrated the way in which HRM would have been essential to unlocking the true benefits of capacity building efforts – which in the absence of a personnel database and records of who had been trained in what and by whom completely evaporated.

In other cases, international partners are engaging in a variety of initiatives, with various advisors working not only on HRM but additionally on related areas such as strategy development or HRM reforms with another institution. Similarly, this is the case where HRM is a part of a comprehensive long-term programme. Linking these initiatives could harvest additional benefits, e.g. bringing together different levels of partners,

such as legislators and operational officials, or leveraging other workstreams such as with parliament, civil society or Inspector Generals, to increase oversight and strengthen political momentum for HRM.

Another similar example in a mission context is the existence of different programs within the mission, such as an anti-corruption and a WPS project. While the HRM programme for example would not include these topics in its project documents, exchanges were described as very strong and up to the point where colleagues talked about which activities might be useful in other programs to help them achieve their own strategic objectives.

Bringing all these efforts together might be a way to tackle reforms from multiple perspectives. If such coordination is going well, the fact that most HRM programmes only implicitly - if at all - address issues around accountability and oversight is not problematic; however, opportunities need to be seized consciously.

This is also reflected at the practical level. Solving one issue – e.g. a new policy on promotions and the creation of promotion boards – requires subsequent support to the development of rules and procedures for the composition, decision making and oversight of these promotion boards in order to ensure them functioning independently. For instance, the creation of a policy on job descriptions and performance appraisal can lead to additional needs around ensuring the quality of the job descriptions as well as provision of training on how to use them together with the performance appraisal templates. There, the lack of a payroll component in a newly delivered HR IT system and subsequent challenges for payroll reconciliation highlight the need to plan and design interventions holistically.

A final aspect that is essential to include in HRM reform projects is the strong link to **financial management and budgeting**. Notably, security finances, especially, might be the one topic even more sensitive than human resources. In some cases, very little information is available on the overall defence budget preparation process. In other instances, the defence budget and military spending can become highly politicized and part of a political deadlock in parliament, making a significant increase close to impossible.

At the more practical level, the team observed in some instances a disconnect between the technical HRM reforms and their financial repercussions. For example, decisions such as raising the retirement age for enlisted soldiers, were made without looking at the additional costs; in other cases, the team learned that the development plan under the military strategy was not costed. There, international partners sometimes responded to fill such gaps, such as deploying a new advisor on procurement. In yet another case, a newly delivered HR IT system was initially lacking the function of payroll integration; adding this as an add-on turned out to be quite complicated.

5. Design process

The design process is an important component of the HRM reform project and deserves specific attention. In the contexts used here, HRM projects developed as part of a much broader engagement, either bilaterally or multilaterally. In all cases, these partnerships significantly preceded the HRM projects, and in some cases, HRM reforms have been part of the collaboration for many years before the beginning of the current project.

Nevertheless, across the cases, much care has been taken to found the projects on a solid and even joint problem analysis and design the project in partnership with local counterparts. In some cases, the design process took over 18 months, building on a design phase stretching back to 2008. In others, a country action plan was developed hand in hand with partner officials and approved by the advisor's counterparts in the Ministry of .

Clearly, local ownership is indispensable for the sustainability of HRM reforms; the difference between the programs is gradually in the amount of focus and emphasis given to aspects around meritocracy and accountability. Factors that seem to have played a role in the room for negotiation of these aspects seem to include the strength of the relationship between international actor and local partner and incentives, such as EU accession, NATO partnership or bilateral assistance; the weaker the relationship and the less incentives there were, the more objectives ended up focusing on HR as a function to improve the effectiveness of the armed forces.

Care has to be taken when transitioning between different phases of a programme to ensure a proper handover of information and continuity towards the partner. On the partner's side, efforts to withhold information or access to data acquired in one programme phase to be utilized by the successor programme are a clear red flag for local ownership.

6. Monitoring

To ensure the link between HRM reform activities and strategic objectives, but also to allow for monitoring progress and adjust where necessary, monitoring is an important component that seems to be frequently weak in HRM reform programs. At the same time, because of its political nature, classic development programming logics and planning tools were described as too restrictive and not helpful to capture the nuance of reform trajectories.

Across the majority of programs, the team observed the lack of a full theory of change that would have clearly described the intervention logic and contribution of various components and activities towards the overall strategic objectives.

At the operational level, some programs have a clear country action plan with milestones. However, the objectives remain mostly at the output level (e.g. establishing a formal management through the services programme or passing of a regulation/ policy), and the results framework similarly measures mostly activities and outputs. Another programme showed a complex fragmentation of between multiple objectives, even more action points, a three-year action plan and additional annual priorities without clear linkages or logic between them. This was reported to be due to the frequent rotations within the team but makes it very challenging to monitor progress. This output-driven focus across programmes studies risked a gap between milestones on paper and their actual application.

In terms of good practice, to measure outcomes, some advisors reported triangulating information on the approval of a policy through their various networks to determine to what extent the policy was actually implemented. The final step with regard to impact is to monitor what changes happen through the implementation of said policy over an extended period of time.

What are the basic Human Resources Management elements, and the choices involved?

There are various elements implicated in institutional HRM reform, such as organizational structure, HRM structures (how the HRM functions are devolved into different units and reporting lines) as well as processes and mechanisms for performance management.

1. Organizational structure

Here, 'organizational structure' means the basic setup of a security organization . For instance, a military can have different branches, such as navy, air force and army, which then each are organized into commands, brigades and battalions etc. A police can have different function areas, such as traffic police, criminal investigations, family affairs etc.

The organizational structure is fundamental to the performance of a security institution and has a large impact on HRM. It also needs to evolve according to the changing threat environment and strategic direction. And, whatever the official structure, demographic change has its own life – personnel age and retire, for instance. However, changing the organizational structure is extremely difficult, politically and technically. Indeed, the programmes in the case studies did not have strong traction on changing the organizational structure. This illustrates how strategic and political the issue is. However, the programmes do provide some insights into working around the margins of the issue and the challenges involved.

Several key aspects emerge regarding the organizational structure and the different types of contexts observed.

The first important observation across contexts is the phenomenon of the 'inverse pyramid', a phrase commonly used to describe a superfluity of high-ranking officers. This was observed even in contexts where there is a high number of recruits. All of the cases featured voluntary professional armed forces with no conscription, no matter whether recruitment and retention were a challenge; remarkably, even in the cases where attrition rates were described as extremely high, the system was at the same time top heavy.

Several factors are reportedly involved:

- Higher disincentives among enlisted soldiers to join or remain in the military vs. NCOs and officer corps
- Insufficient retirement benefits, including retirement waiting lists
- Lack of formal recruitment campaigns over many years (adding the risks around informal recruitment if officers were too old for duty).
- Practices such as raising the retirement age have an impact on the organizational structure and its age pyramid
- The space for making significant changes to the organizational structure also differed between contexts
- In some cases, programming specifically targeted the organizational structure and supported a process to establish a new organizational structure, but this was not the case everywhere
- In other cases, advisors were faced with a high level of caution to engage directly with the organizational structure. Instead, they focused their work on less sensitive issues such as job descriptions, with the objective that clarifying individual positions will impact the organizational structure as a whole
- In yet other cases, political advisors described that attempting to address the organizational structure was too great a risk to the power-sharing equilibrium

One key capacity requirement on the side of the national partner for effective management of the organizational structure is a personnel database. Building on this database, it is indispensable to have an analytical capacity, which can identify how personnel is evolving and how this compares to organizational needs. This might be something akin to the Office of Requirements and Capabilities Analysis (ORCA) in the US system. This unit systematically analyses evolving capability development and recruitment needs from forecasted attritions and retirements, promotions and career progression, and also identifies which specialties are deficient. HRM advisors in each case advocated for strengthening national capacity in this vein, albeit with limited results.

2. Effective Human Resources Management structures

Across the case studies, the team observed a variety of options of how to set up units to manage HR in the security sector, or 'human resource management structures'. These units are those that run the HRM tasks on a day-to-day basis. Overall, they demonstrate the need (and general lack) of making HRM a strategic matter, and the practice of separating strategic planning from administration.

Some cases demonstrated clearly the extent to which the HRM can become merely an exercise in replacing those who leave because of attrition or retirement. This comes about largely because of the absence of a broader strategic direction.

Recurring themes are the division of labour between civilian and military staff, including the role and status of civilians as part of civilian oversight. In some instances, programming supported the creation of a dedicated HR Centre which would include civilian and military staff, and take on the vast majority of administrative tasks such as contracting and issuing security cards. Supporting the development of such an HR Centre was seen on the one hand a way to liberate strategic planners from administrative demands; moreover, it serves international advisors as an entry point to discuss the role of civilians within the MoD and armed forces. In this light, the approval of a new policy on job descriptions by senior military staff and rank equivalent civilian staff was highlighted as a successful step towards strengthening civilian oversight.

Another aspect is around the devolution of power and decentralization of decision making. In some instances, programming supported new career laws which devolved the power to promote only until the level

of captain at the minister's level; below that, promotion boards have now been installed, effectively aiming to increase transparency and accountability. Decentralization efforts can also serve to free the strategic decision-making level from being overwhelmed with administrative tasks. This is one of the purposes given when shifting these to an HR Centre.

Resourcing of these HR functions was another recurring theme, with a notable absence of dedicated recruitment and retention officers. This posed the question whether such dedicated capacity would be worthwhile for fairly small armed forces, and to what extent these functions could be mainstreamed into the responsibilities of NCOs. Adequate resources also include the right IT systems to provide the necessary data for force planners, track performance and to execute HR functions. IT and specific HR databases were something supported by international partners in all cases observed for this study.

3. Performance management

Performance management is important both to having an effective organization and an accountable one. However this task is challenged by existing evaluation models that are weak, the need to balance the 'best person with for the job' with power-sharing principles, and under-capacity process and administrative systems. The case studies show ways of mitigating these issues to different degrees.

With regards to performance management, the case studies suggested that programming needs to accept trade-offs and tensions between the need for respecting ethnic quotas or power sharing principles while leveraging meritocracy for optimal effectiveness. One way to approach this are complex point-based ranking systems which use a mix of fairly objective criteria such as schooling and education, trainings and courses, years of experience, awards, fitness tests, languages, deployments to peace missions and disciplinary measures, and a performance appraisal form to be filled in by commanders (including a box "recommended for promotion"). These systems have been particularly criticized as being ineffective due to up to 98% of candidates in some cases scoring "excellent". Attempts by programming to give the appraisal form more weight was seen critically by national partners, as it was perceived as more subjective. At the same time, such a ranking list's impact can be significantly limited by the need to respect a certain ethnic or sectarian composition also for professional development opportunities and promotions.

In other instances, programming supported the creation of a performance-based system. Where new career management laws covered the introduction of a new appraisal process, this might include officer evaluation reports as well as specific training for commanders in the new appraisal process, frequently facing the risk that these types of tools are underutilized.

Within HRM reforms, performance management is one of the areas at the heart of the reform agenda across contexts. At the same time, the creation of a performance management system is usually developed as a subsequent step once other reforms are in place, such as job descriptions. Across the case studies, job descriptions were important for having an initial benchmark for managing and evaluating performance. One recurring theme here was the question of how to best use these and especially how to address the inflation of excellent ratings.

In some instances, programming worked on ensuring job descriptions for all positions and prioritized the approval of a policy on job description as well as a concrete target of how many positions should minimally have one. In addition to the template for job descriptions including a goal statement, and relevant attitudes and principles, this would also include support work especially on making the attitudes more measurable, as well as targeting the inflation of excellence ratings. With regards to transparency, one approach was to add important components such as the creation of a complaint mechanism in case of staff questioning their rating as well as the development of a digital application where staff can have access to their job description.

In terms of successful approaches, many cited applying an incremental approach, that begins with a basic and still imperfect process and then refining it further and demonstrating its value in each iteration to improve overall operational effectiveness by identifying the best performers. Cognizant of the resulting changes in responsibility and potential reduction of opportunities for nepotism, advisors were also aware of risks of getting sustainable traction for these types of reform.

Career management

The career path of a soldier – and of security sector staff more broadly – follows different phases. First, the entry into the position requires recruitment, whereby relevant HRM considerations align with retention efforts as well as the potential for reserves. Second, professional development, training, and promotion play a role in allocating the right talent to the right position and offer suitable career paths. Finally, towards the end of a career, retirement considerations come into play to assess how specific expertise could be leveraged or implemented beyond the security sector.

Recruitment, retention and reserve

The case studies presented two contrasting situations. While in some contexts, attracting personnel is a challenge, in other contexts candidates outnumber available positions, making recruitment more competitive. In some contexts, ensuring enough personnel remain is a problem, while in others, it is difficult to get older personnel to retire. Consequently, the approaches to render recruitment and retention more attractive also differ. They included:

- Improving material conditions such as pay by tying salaries to a cost-of-living index, access to health insurance, accommodation and provision of basic services, such as food, less obligation to rotate, avoiding contractual gaps, etc.)
- Offering transferable skills, for instance in the form of university degrees or trainings (see also below; the risk of increasing attrition to the private sector once the degree has been obtained remains a caveat for this, however)
- Modernizing recruitment practices (such as better access to recruitment centres as well as outreach at universities and using digital means)
- Suggestions to strengthen the disciplinary system in case someone ends their contract prematurely.

Potential approaches applicable to all case studies were a certain degree of anonymization as well as questions regarding the value for money of centralizing recruitment and retention responsibilities in a dedicated unit. Anonymization and/or the use of clear and transparent guidelines are particularly useful in cases where potential biases exist and should be overcome. The use of a balanced panel in terms of, e.g., gender and ethnicity to take selection decisions together is one approach to this. Another example is a lottery, in which everyone that fulfils the minimum requirements[6] can participate. Centralizing HRM services can benefit recruitment and retention through better planning, foresight, and strategizing for the needs as well as analysing attrition, for instance through an ORCA[7]. However, centralizing these services poses the risk of detachment from the individual units, such that it requires a bigger effort to ensure that the units and individuals are aware of such a centre.

Notwithstanding, if done properly, such a centre could also aid in tracking rare technical knowledge to help retain it. Another option was the potential of installing a reserve force, which could employ former service people as well as civilians who have specific knowledge but lack the willingness or ability to join the service in a full capacity.

A final and often overseen aspect in relation to recruitment and retention is health (both mental[8] and physical). The cases showed certain steps towards considering the health of personnel, for instance in the

[6] These requirements can vary from case to case based on the power sharing arrangement.

[7] Office of Requirements and Capabilities Analysis

[8] For a detailed study, see, e.g., Aeberhard, Robinson, and Hales 2024.

form of a program to prevent mental health issues for deployed staff or through some laws on support in case of physical harm. However, they seemed to be rarely considering health holistically and account for both physical and mental health together, and the team found no ongoing international programming across the assessed cases.

Professional development, training and promotions

The topics of clientelism or 'unwritten rules' were prominent across the case studies when it comes to continued learning and professional growth within the service. To mitigate the impact of such practices within the case-specific power sharing arrangement, different approaches to improve transparency and accountability in promotion and training were mentioned. Options would include clarifying job descriptions, determining books of rules, and installing promotion/selection boards to that end. Moreover, potential exists for a complaint mechanism in case someone disagrees with the outcome of a decision regarding training and/or promotion. Overall, the installation of a centralized unit/centre to decide on the professional development based on technical and objective criteria as well as needs – such as increasing meaningful participation of women in the security sector – was mentioned as an option.

When it comes to training, too, multiple dimension matters to HRM. In a first step, training offer should coincide with the needs (in terms of topics and available spaces) of the partner as well as integrated with the existing frameworks. In one case, so-called 'harmonization training' was necessary to ensure that expertise acquired abroad was adapted to the local context at home and integrated into local approaches. While this might be needed in some specific cases, it could be avoided by strategically choosing and sending personnel as well as allowing trained personnel to give feedback on the training itself to continually improve it. To fully reap the benefits of training and avoid duplication, training needs to be properly recorded in personnel files, and utilized by deploying staff to roles corresponding to acquired skills. At the very least, international partners can ensure a degree of coordination in terms of who they train and on which topics.

Reintegration and retirement

Towards the end of a career, programming included two prominent aspects, one regarding the available conditions and benefits, and the other regarding organizational support. While throughout several contexts, the absence or inadequacy of retirement benefits posed a significant challenge, international programming has been reluctant to support this area. The absence or inadequacy of retirement benefits affects morale, placing financial strain on personnel. It can also be a blocker to retirement, even among superannuated officers, who may fall into poverty when they stop working. Organizational support could come in the form of a centralized unit, which tracks the staff outlook and upcoming retirement (and relates them to recruitment needs, see above), while in addition providing information. Relevant information was often said to be opaque or missing. Consequently, international programming aimed to clarify the regulatory framework, such as retirement age, transition programmes, and job placement opportunities. Examples include partnerships with private sector companies, which would receive a tax break for integrating veterans in their workforce, programs providing in-kind assistance (such as payment of a professional training) to acquire relevant skills for the labour market, or options to transition to work in a civilian role through a short course.

Conclusion

What challenges exist when using HRM reform as an SSG/R tool?

Bearing in mind these constraints, although HRM is an important avenue for SSG/R it is not always easy. Three common challenges surface, and for each there is no clear answer, but they do provoke useful questions that practitioners can continue answering as they engage.

1. HRM is deeply political and should be based on strategic goals, and if there are no defined strategic goals, it is difficult for programmers to design effective programmes. **The question therefore arises, how can strategic space for HRM reform programming be opened?**

2. HRM reformers have to make trade offs between various factors, including between:
   a. Respecting the sovereignty of the partner country and driving a normative SSG/R agenda.
   b. Current operational requirements, future development and budgetary limits.
   c. Within post-conflict situations, between power-sharing among different groups and meritocratic principles.

3. Given this space and these limits, and given the appetite of the partner, **What are the HRM reform priorities, and the most appropriate sequence of work?**

At base, there needs to be a minimum of national will at the political and strategic level, and implementing projects in the absence of this will deliver only limited technical changes.

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