

# Civil Society Oversight of the Security Sector and Gender

## CONTENTS

Why is gender important to civil society oversight?

How can gender be integrated into civil society oversight?

Post-conflict challenges and opportunities

Questions for CSOs to ask

More information

There is strong recognition that security sector reform (SSR) should meet the different security needs of men, women, boys and girls. The integration of gender issues is also key to the effectiveness and accountability of the security sector, and to local ownership and legitimacy of SSR processes.

This Practice Note provides a short introduction to the benefits of integrating gender issues into civil society oversight of the security sector, as well as practical information on doing so.

This Practice Note is based on a longer Tool, and both are part of the **Gender and SSR Toolkit**. Designed to provide an introduction to gender issues for SSR practitioners and policymakers, the Toolkit includes 12 Tools with corresponding Practice Notes – see *More information*.

## Why is gender important to civil society oversight?

**Civil society oversight of the security sector**, including SSR, involves the active participation of civil society organisations (CSOs) in defining security policies and overseeing the structures and practices of security sector actors.<sup>1</sup> The objective is to ensure the incorporation of community-level and grassroots interests and perspectives in the provision of internal and external security, and to support local ownership and sustainability. CSOs participate in oversight of the security sector in many different ways, including through policy advice and technical expertise, monitoring, awareness-raising, and research and analysis.

**Gender** refers to the roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours and values that society ascribes to men and women. 'Gender' therefore refers to *learned* differences between men and women, while 'sex' refers to the *biological* differences between males and females. Gender roles vary widely within and across cultures, and can change over time. Gender refers not simply to women or men but also to the relationship between them.

### Strengthening local ownership

- Integrating gender issues and including women's organisations can generate local ownership of SSR processes by ensuring that both men and women are engaged and have the opportunity to express their distinct needs, views and priorities. This makes security institutions more representative, responsive and legitimate in the eyes of the population.

### Comprehensive oversight through the integration of gender issues

- Security sector oversight that monitors how security and justice policies and institutions address gender-based violence (GBV) *can strengthen the provision of security and justice*.
- Security sector oversight that holds security sector institutions accountable for having a non-discriminatory workplace and preventing sexual harassment and other forms of GBV *can increase productivity and operational effectiveness*.
- Security sector oversight that holds security sector institutions accountable for increasing the recruitment, retention and advancement of women and other under-represented groups *can strengthen public trust and effectiveness*.

### Effective oversight through the involvement of women's organisations

- Women's organisations are often an untapped resource for security sector oversight. They can strengthen oversight through:
  - Providing policy advice on improving transparency, accountability and responsiveness.



In Malaysia, CSOs such as the Women's AID Organisation have monitored the enforcement and efficacy of Malaysia's Domestic Violence Act, as well as the delivery of its services to victims. Findings were used to advocate for improvements in the substance and implementation of the legislation.

In Cambodia, women's organisations and human rights groups such as LICADHO are cooperating with government oversight agencies to investigate allegations of abuse and to monitor compliance with Cambodia's recently adopted Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims. This law gives police greater powers to intervene in domestic violence cases and strengthens the legal recourse available to victims. In addition to monitoring, the CSOs provide legal aid and safe houses for victims.

- Monitoring the implementation of international and regional agreements, as well as national and institutional policies.
- Providing capacity building for oversight bodies on gender issues.
- Identifying security threats and issues facing individuals and communities.
- Facilitating dialogue between local communities and security sector oversight bodies.
- Raising public awareness of how to hold security sector institutions accountable.
- Conduct a gender analysis of the SSR process and disseminate findings and recommendations through the media and to government officials and donors.
- Perform a gender budget analysis of government spending on security and defence or of individual security sector institution budgets, in order to better understand the distinct impact of budget allocation on men and women. Use these findings as a tool for advocacy.
- Ensure that women and women's organisations are included in all audit, assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes undertaken by CSOs.

#### Compliance with obligations under international laws and instruments

Taking the initiative to integrate gender issues into civil society oversight is not only a matter of operational effectiveness; it is necessary to comply with international and regional laws, instruments and norms concerning security and gender. Key instruments include:

- *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)*
- *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000)*

For more information, please see the Toolkit's Annex on International and Regional Laws and Instruments.

## How can gender be integrated into civil society oversight?

### Security sector monitoring bodies

- Strengthen the participation of women's organisations in formal security sector oversight bodies, such as civilian review boards, public complaints commissions, expert technical teams and independent monitoring groups (see Box 1).
- Place gender issues, such as the prevention of GBV or increased female recruitment, on the agenda of security sector monitoring bodies.

### Research and data collection

- Ensure that gender issues are integrated into internal and external assessments or reviews of security sector institutions and policies.
- Ensure that all data is disaggregated by sex. Sex-disaggregated data highlights the different circumstances of men and women, and is a necessary basis for equitable security services.
- Carry out a gender audit of a security sector institution or policy.

### Advocacy and awareness-raising

Use gender-sensitive research and the results of assessment and data-collection processes to develop public information and advocacy campaigns on security issues related to gender – such as raising awareness on how to report GBV to the police or lobbying for government funding for gun violence prevention programmes.

- Identify ways to convey this information to marginalised populations (such as rural populations, illiterate women, or ethnic communities) who may not speak the dominant language.
- Target advocacy at different levels – local, provincial and national – reaching key policymakers who can influence security sector programming.
- Engage local media by distributing information through small newspapers, community radio and local television stations, as well as state-run media outlets.
- Work with the media to sensitise journalists and others to the gender dimensions of security and justice issues.
- Involve men in advocacy campaigns, particularly those dealing with violence against women (see Box 2).

### Gender training

Women's organisations and CSOs with gender expertise can support the development and delivery of gender training for security sector personnel (see Box 3), including by:

- Conducting a training needs assessment.
- Developing gender training materials and delivering training.

- Developing a standard gender training curriculum that can be adapted and used by trainers.
- Lobbying for policies that mandate comprehensive gender training.
- Creating a roster of civil society gender trainers.

### Participatory and effective CSOs

CSOs that are involved in security sector oversight also have an obligation to revise internal policies and practices so that they promote gender equality, and to ensure in-house capacity on gender issues:

- Develop gender and equal opportunities policies and procedures that address human resources issues, recruitment practices, job performance requirements and sexual harassment and discrimination.
- Provide gender training for all staff – including training on gender-sensitive data collection and research methodologies.
- Mainstream gender issues into security sector oversight work.
- Conduct an internal gender audit to assess organisational capacity.

#### Also available in Tool 9...

- Stages of an SSR Gender Audit
- Questions to ask when planning an advocacy campaign
- Tips for working with the media
- Training topics to build the oversight capacity of women's NGOs
- How to strengthen the legitimacy of civil society networks
- Examples from Eastern Europe, Fiji, Iraq, Russia, South Africa, the United Kingdom and West Africa

## Post-conflict challenges and opportunities

CSOs may have become fragmented or weakened during conflict and, as a result, may not have the reach, legitimacy or capacity to effectively perform oversight of the security sector. In other cases, collaboration between CSOs may increase in the

### Box 2

#### Involving men in combating violence against women

The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) was launched in Canada in 1991 by a group of men to advocate for an end to violence against women and to educate other men about the issue. Through awareness-raising campaigns, public statements and their growing network, members of the WRC provide an alternative vision of non-violent masculinity and offer positive role models for men and boys in communities around the world.<sup>3</sup>

post-conflict period, as army and police reform, as well as ongoing insecurity, are key concerns of many organisations, providing them with opportunities to work together.

#### Challenges for the integration of gender issues

- The capacity of state institutions is often weak, to the degree that even if there is political will, the means to deliver security and justice services is not available in technical, financial or human resource terms.
- Laws, structures and mechanisms to prevent and respond to GBV are rarely in place, or properly functioning.
- Security sector personnel may have committed human rights abuses, and may continue to perpetrate abuses in peacetime.

#### Opportunities for the integration of gender issues

- SSR processes can open up the political space for CSO input into security and justice decision-making, which is an opportunity to raise gender issues.
- Evidence shows that gender roles and relationships often shift during and after conflict, which can open up an important space for negotiating the integration of gender issues and increased recruitment of women.
- Donors may be willing to provide support to CSOs in order to build their gender-responsive oversight capacity.

### Box 3

#### Sexual health education for the armed forces in Mongolia<sup>4</sup>

The NGO Mongol Vision works on reproductive health issues with soldiers and officers of Mongolia's armed forces:

**The issue:** *New recruits to the Mongolian armed forces, especially those from the countryside, have little or no knowledge of HIV/AIDS and STIs. Consequently, the rate of STIs has been relatively high among officers and soldiers.*

**The aim:** *To gain support from the Ministry of Defence and the Mongolian armed forces to increase HIV/AIDS, STI and reproductive health awareness among officers and soldiers.*

**Key stakeholders:** *Ministry of Defence and headquarters of the Mongolian armed forces.*

**Primary stakeholders:** *Soldiers/officers and their sex partners.*

**Approaches and communication:** *Letters were sent to the Ministry of Defence and headquarters of the armed forces; official and unofficial meetings were held with high-level officials; a project was developed in collaboration with high-level officials; a workshop was held with high-level officials; and commanding officers and military unit doctors presented a report on the current STI situation among armed forces personnel.*

**Indicators of success and sustainability:** *Sexual health was included in the official education curriculum for military staff; increased awareness of high-level officers; and increased support from the Ministry of Defence.*

- ✓ How is civil society, including women, being included in oversight processes?
- ✓ How are women's and men's particular security needs being identified and met?
- ✓ How many men and women work within the military, police, intelligence services, border police, customs, immigration and other law enforcement services, and in what capacities (percentage of women/men, by grade and category)?
- ✓ Are measures in place to ensure that women have equal opportunities to be part of every security institution?
- ✓ Is gender training provided to the police, military and other security services?
- ✓ What measures are in place to prevent, investigate and punish GBV by security sector personnel?
- ✓ Is there adequate funding for gender-related programming?

## ? Questions for CSOs to ask

One of the best ways to identify entry points to integrate gender issues into SSR processes is for civil society organisations to conduct an assessment. Below are sample questions on gender that CSOs might include in SSR assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

- What are the particular security and justice needs, perceptions and priorities of men, women, girls and boys?
- Do security sector personnel have the capacity to respond to all of these needs? If not, why not?
- Are women, men, boys and girls equally able to access security and justice services?
- Are security legislation, policies and protocols gender-responsive? Is there adequate legislation against GBV?
- Do women have full and equal access to employment within security sector institutions?
- What is the work environment like within security sector institutions? Are there problems of sexual harassment and other barriers to women's advancement?
- Do security sector oversight bodies include women and consult with women's organisations?
- Do security sector oversight bodies monitor issues related to GBV and equal opportunities for men and women?

## More information

### Resources

Amnesty International – *Monitoring and Reporting Human Rights Abuses in Africa: A Handbook for Community Activists*, 2002.

Amnesty International – *Understanding Policing: A Resource for Human Rights Activists*, 2006.

DCAF – *Public Oversight of the Security Sector: A Handbook for CSOs on Democratic Security Governance*, forthcoming 2008.

Family Violence Prevention Fund – *Toolkit for Working with Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-Based Violence*, 2003.

International Alert and Women Waging Peace – *Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action*, 2004.

OECD DAC – *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice*, 2007.

### Organisations

DCAF – [www.dcaf.ch](http://www.dcaf.ch)

International Alert – [www.international-alert.org](http://www.international-alert.org)

UNIFEM Portal on Women, Peace and Security – [www.womenwarpeace.org](http://www.womenwarpeace.org)

UN-INSTRRAW – [www.un-instraw.org](http://www.un-instraw.org)

WILPF Peacemakers – [www.peacemakers.org](http://www.peacemakers.org)

### Gender and SSR Toolkit

1. Security Sector Reform and Gender
  2. Police Reform and Gender
  3. Defence Reform and Gender
  4. Justice Reform and Gender
  5. Penal Reform and Gender
  6. Border Management and Gender
  7. Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector and Gender
  8. National Security Policy-Making and Gender
  9. Civil Society Oversight of the Security Sector and Gender
  10. Private Military and Security Companies and Gender
  11. SSR Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation and Gender
  12. Gender Training for Security Sector Personnel
- Annex on International and Regional Laws and Instruments

Each of these Tools and Practice Notes are available from: [www.dcaf.ch](http://www.dcaf.ch), [www.un-instraw.org](http://www.un-instraw.org) and [www.osce.org/odihr](http://www.osce.org/odihr).

**This Practice Note was prepared by Rahim Kanani of UN-INSTRRAW, based upon Tool 9 authored by Karen Barnes and Peter Albrecht of International Alert.**

<sup>1</sup> Caparini, Cole and Kinzelbach, *Public Oversight of the Security Sector: A Handbook for CSOs on Democratic Security Governance* (Renesans: Bratislava), forthcoming July 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from: OECD DAC. *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice* (OECD DAC: Paris), 2007, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from: 'The White Ribbon Campaign'. [http://www.whiteribbon.ca/about\\_us/](http://www.whiteribbon.ca/about_us/)

<sup>4</sup> Cited from: Albrecht, P., 'Advocacy', *Public Oversight of the Security Sector: A Handbook for CSOs on Democratic Security Governance*, eds. Caparini, Cole and Kinzelbach (Renesans: Bratislava), forthcoming July 2008.