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**SECURITY SECTOR REFORM IN STABILIZATION ENVIRONMENTS:  
A Note on Current Practice<sup>1</sup>**

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**DEFINITIONS AND FRAME OF ANALYSIS**

This practice note focuses on planning and implementing security sector reform (SSR) activities in stabilization environments. Stabilization environments are characterized by circumstances related to descent into, continuation of, or emergence from conflict in which the physical security, economic, political, and humanitarian needs of the population are often far greater than the resources available to meet them.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the challenges of SSR in any context (e.g., shifting power dynamics, limited resources, reconciling donor and host state priorities), SSR in stabilization environments faces challenges exacerbated by the context: security (ongoing threats to civilians and the state), governance (weak state capacity, fragmented authority, destroyed infrastructure), and social fragmentation (divisions within and among communities) (Hansen, DCAF, 41). As the degree of “permissiveness” increases, in a gradual and uneven process, long-term security sector reform programming may be developed in consultation with host state stakeholders and implemented.

Given the variation in possible stabilization environments, the literature on SSR and stabilization focuses on decision-enabling and planning tools for SSR assistance providers (e.g., maintaining flexibility, adjusting expectations, options for engaging with non-state actors, and setting the preconditions for long-term SSR) and on building the capacity of local actors to support decision-making and ownership. SSR must be able to seize windows of opportunity, respond quickly, and adjust appropriately to the context, to changing power dynamics, and to unintended consequences of SSR initiatives.

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<sup>2</sup> Most of the literature, however, focuses on SSR in environments emerging from conflict or ongoing conflict with a peace agreement in place. In the case of emergence from conflict, this note assumes a peace agreement is in place.

Stabilization environments should be distinguished from stabilization interventions.<sup>3</sup> Stabilization interventions are the processes that aim to prevent or reduce violence and set the preconditions for long-term development. The scope of such interventions, which may involve military action and encompass political, economic, social, humanitarian, and security activities, is much broader than that of security sector reform. SSR in stabilization environments will likely be part of a stabilization intervention, and the activities of one will impact the other (United States, 2008, 6.4). Therefore, when initiated during a stabilization intervention, SSR strategy and programs should be planned in conjunction with, and coordinated with, such interventions.

This practice note follows this lead and discusses ways of adjusting SSR programming, as stressed in other practice notes in this series, to the realities of the field environment. The five other practice notes work from the assumption that a permissive to semi-permissive environment exists in which there is space—albeit limited—for engagement and a state—albeit weak and/or rife with corruption—with which to engage. This note works from the assumption of attempting to implement SSR in a state with a collapsed government, or government in which capacity is so low that international assistance has no choice but to shoulder functions of the state temporarily, at multiple levels, under Security Council mandate; informal security and justice providers dominate the provincial and district levels; and/or government action may have triggered the crisis with serious and wide-scale abuses of human rights. This environment necessitates a substantial adjustment of SSR objectives from what is ideal to what is feasible, and a careful sequencing of SSR with other stabilization activities, all based on a detailed analysis of the context that is frequently updated.

Any host state security sector actors—statutory security forces, civil management and oversight bodies, justice and rule of law institutions, and non-state actors—may have a role in planning and implementing SSR in stabilization environments. Their respective roles, however, will depend on their leadership, commitment to reform and ownership, and whether they themselves need to be (re)built, transformed, or to develop existing capacities. At least in the initial stages, international military assistance may take on a larger role than civilian actors. At minimum, a stabilization environment that involves international intervention likely will have a significant international presence that affects the SSR process.

Bodies authorized to use force (“security forces”) are statutory security forces (regular armed forces of the state such as army, navy, coast guard, marines/marine infantry, and air forces); state-

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<sup>3</sup> Doctrine and guidance in this area have been elucidated primarily by the United Kingdom, using the term “stabilization interventions,” and the United States, which prefers “stability operations.” The United Kingdom’s Stabilisation Unit defines stabilization interventions as “support to countries emerging from violent conflict in: preventing or reducing violence; protecting people and key institutions; promoting political processes which lead to greater stability; and preparing for longer term non-violent politics and development” (United Kingdom, 2008b, 8). The United States defines stability operations as including reconstruction and stabilization: “Reconstruction is the process of rebuilding degraded, damaged, or destroyed political, socioeconomic, and physical infrastructure of a country or territory to create a foundation for long-term development. Stabilization is the process by which underlying tensions that might lead to resurgence in violence and a breakdown in law and order are managed and reduced, while efforts are made to support preconditions for successful long-term development” (United States, 2008a, 1.12). This note uses the term “stabilization interventions” for consistency. The United Nations also engages in multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations as a form of intervention in stabilization environments. Because there is a lack of guidance on planning for SSR in stabilization environments, reference to the broader topic of stabilization interventions is included here where relevant.

sponsored paramilitary forces (gendarmerie or equivalent, and border security forces); customs, and immigrations services, police, presidential guards, intelligence and secret services, prison services, coast guards, reserves or local security units (national guards, militias), or any other security services with a state mandate to use force (Ball et al., 2004, 2.2; Hanggi, 10).

Civil management and oversight bodies include statutory executive and legislative bodies as well as customary and traditional authorities. Executive bodies include the president and/or prime minister, national security advisory bodies, ministries of defense, interior, foreign affairs, and justice, other ministries that may affect security matters (transportation, immigration, agriculture), financial management bodies (finance ministries, budget offices, financial audit and planning units), and any other civilian authorities that direct, manage, and oversee the security forces. Legislative bodies include parliament or the legislature and select parliamentary or legislative committees overseeing the security forces and security policy. This category also includes independent oversight bodies (auditing boards, anti-corruption agencies, and procurement agencies) and statutory civil society organizations (public complaints commissions and civilian review boards), which are financed by the government but maintain complete independence in decision-making and report only to parliament (Hanggi, 10; Ball et al., 2004, 2.2).

Justice and rule of law institutions include criminal investigation and prosecution services, civil and criminal courts and tribunals, military courts and tribunals, and customary and traditional justice institutions; ombudspersons and human rights commissions; and corrections systems. Formal justice institutions are the primary statutory bodies responsible for legal accountability of the security sector, upholding the constitution, rule of law, and respect for human rights (Ball et al., 2004, 2.2; Hanggi, 10; OECD, 2007, 113).

Non-statutory security forces or armed groups include liberation and guerrilla armies, private bodyguard units, political party militias, private security companies, non-statutory paramilitaries, civil defense forces, local and international criminal groups, and any other non-state groups with the capability to use force but without a mandate (DCAF, 2009, 2–3; Ball et al., 2004, 2.2).<sup>4</sup> These have varying degrees of legitimacy, and some of them (private security companies, or civil defense forces) may provide effective security and, as with non-statutory justice providers, may have more public legitimacy than statutory security forces (United States, 2003, 6-4; Baker and Scheye, 512).

Non-statutory civil society includes professional organizations, research and policy analysis organizations, the media, political parties that may affect security policy, the business community, advocacy organizations, religious organizations, concerned public, and other non-governmental organizations involved in monitoring and/or evaluating the security and justice sector, providing policy analysis or advice, disseminating information and raising public awareness about the security and justice sector (Hanggi, 10; Ball et al., 2004, 2.2).

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<sup>4</sup> Some bodyguard units or private security companies may have a state mandate and should be considered as part of security forces in such situations.

## CORE PROGRAM DESIGN ISSUES

The scope of SSR is defined by the context, especially in stabilization environments. Those seeking to provide assistance should first determine if the timing and conditions are appropriate to support SSR. Making that decision requires an assessment of context and mutual understanding of the roles that international actors and host state (formal and informal) actors would take in the reform process. If the decision is taken to proceed, program design should include coordination mechanisms with all stakeholders, and SSR should be carefully coordinated with other activities undertaken in a stabilization environment.

### Is SSR appropriate?

Stabilization environments require a substantially different approach and analysis from other prospective environments for SSR, in particular shifting focus from an ideal, holistic approach to what is feasible under specific circumstances. These circumstances may even be enabling: If host state security sector actors, and particularly leaders within institutions, are willing to engage and are committed to reform, substantial progress may be made, as a severe governance crisis may both demonstrate clearly the need for reform and persuade local parties—inside and outside government—of its value. Moreover, “the early establishment of structures and mechanisms to protect and regulate public administration... can be a crucial confidence-building step,” and “[e]xisting inter-agency mechanisms help to ensure that security considerations are addressed at early stages” (United Nations 2008, A/62/659, para. 10).

However, shifting power balances and alliances, constant threats faced or posed by statutory or non-statutory security forces, and humanitarian crises constantly affect the stabilization environment. Those providing assistance may be so consumed with meeting these needs, establishing a modicum of security for civilians, and earning respect from and building legitimacy with the population—with limited resources—that sustainable reform or rebuilding of the security sector is an ideal impossible to realize (author interviews). Stabilization environments may thus limit initiatives to establishing the preconditions and foundations for long-term SSR.

Considerable debate, therefore, focuses on whether security sector reform *can* take place in stabilization environments, due to the changing landscape and concentration of resources on crisis management. Equally contentious is the debate on whether SSR *should* take place, since reform may empower illegitimate actors. In many contexts, it is only after basic stability has been achieved, including the completion of disarmament and demobilization, the return of refugees, the completion of emergency humanitarian operations or the election of a new national Government, that substantial political attention and resources can be directed to security sector reform (United Nations 2008, A/62/659, para. 27).

Although many argue that there is no option but to begin transforming the security sector, to better enable the state to deal with threats (author interviews), stabilization interventions are frequently resource-limited, with a very short focus on technical assistance and defense sector train-and-equip programs, rather than longer-term institution-building and governing oversight. Therefore, SSR priority assessments may find that the timing and conditions for SSR are simply not right during a stabilization intervention and that in some cases it is reasonable to await the

formation of legitimate government before attempting to determine the appropriate size of security forces and the focus or scope of SSR programming.

Decision-makers should also understand four implications of undertaking SSR in a stabilization environment that differ substantially from other environments. First, although a comprehensive approach and strategy is recommended to promote SSR effectiveness and sustainability, it is often impossible in stabilization environments for a variety of reasons.<sup>5</sup> Limited resources and capacity of either the host state or international actors may require addressing other immediate needs first. Beleaguered host governments may resist a comprehensive approach as a donor agenda, or prefer to focus on particular institutions or needs prior to development of an SSR strategy (Powell, CENAP/NSI 2007, 22–23; Hendrickson, 2007, 30–31). The demands of stabilization environments or the mandate may require engagement on other needs. Therefore, those arriving in country should identify needs, priorities, context, and key elements that will contribute to the development of a strategy at a later stage (e.g., potential partners, noting how those partners are viewed by local communities; system-wide needs; issues or actors that contribute to instability; and appropriate degrees of decentralization) (Ball et al., 2007, 9). Ad interim, the elements of a stabilization strategy should be adjusted as the environment changes and contextual understanding deepens. Indeed, a fully comprehensive strategy at an early stage in stabilization environments may be detrimental to the degree of flexibility needed to cope with a constantly changing environment (Albrecht and Jackson, 2009, 7). A major challenge for SSR in stabilization environments is supporting short-term activities to create space for long-term planning without limiting future opportunities and jeopardizing long-term goals (Ball et al., 2007, 9).

Second, although a goal of SSR is to make the security sector fiscally sustainable, undertaking SSR in a stabilization environment may require an increase in security sector resources far beyond what the national economy can afford, either to adequately address threats and establish rule of law, or to complete (re)building of the security sector. Afghanistan's defense sector, for example, in 2004–2005, cost 293% of domestic revenue and 13% of GDP (Hodes, 2007, 55), while Sierra Leone was forced to downsize its security sector in years following the military integration due to inability to pay salaries (author interviews). In the short term, international actors can support expansion, but program design and implementation should anticipate and plan that, as support tapers off, states may have no choice but to downsize the level of security forces, as happened in Sierra Leone. If economic development—itsself a long-term endeavor—has not occurred in tandem with SSR, unemployed security forces will have few economic opportunities and will be a source of instability. The obvious policy implication would be to coordinate SSR with economic stabilization activities and development, discussed in more detail, below. To understand the implications of these SSR resource decisions, and facilitate ownership and build capacity, a ministry of finance, once established, should participate in all SSR resource decisions

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<sup>5</sup> A comprehensive approach is discussed in more detail in the practice note on governance and oversight. Such an approach is not a comprehensive engagement of the entire security sector but a comprehensive *review* to determine priorities and sequencing (Ball et al., 2007, 8). It requires balance where SSR does engage: between governance and operational effectiveness, between decentralized local government bodies with centralized government, and between the components of a particular function (e.g., for justice: police, courts, and prisons). With SSR being a multi-dimensional challenge, an “integrated security sector strategy and policy framework” is essential for “sound programmatic—e.g., on force sizes, equipment—and public expenditure decisions” and sequencing and integration of issues during design and implementation (Collier et al., 2006, 67).

and understand the short, medium, and long-term implications (OECD 2007, 104–105). Building capacity to assimilate security costs into the national budget also requires full transparency, cooperation, and planning in terms of off-budget support from the international community (OECD 2007, 104–105). One of the key challenges in Afghanistan’s security expenditure management reform, for example, has not been a lack of security sector understanding by parliamentarians but that a majority of the security sector’s “budget” is off-budget, often because donors “fear ministerial incompetence” (Fair and Jones, USIP 2009, 30). It is also parceled according to donor timelines, making it difficult to build capacity, assess comprehensive long-term costs, and evaluate particular programs (author interviews).

Third, although locally owned SSR processes in which donors support host state initiatives are preferred, local ownership in a stabilization environment may be difficult to generate. The two main obstacles to local ownership are “unwillingness or a lack of capacity to drive change.” Local actors may be neither willing nor able, willing but not able, or able but not willing (Hansen and Wiharta, FBA 2007, 8). In some cases, international actors may be forced to make sensitive security decisions in place of a host state; they should be given the mandate and resources to make decisions.

Fourth, although states “define and pursue security according to their particular contexts, histories, cultures and needs” and “no single model for a security sector exists,” the end state of SSR is a security sector with a monopoly on the legitimate use of force subject to principles of good governance, including accountability, respect for human rights, and civilian control (United Nations 2008, A/62/659, para. 14–17). This goal is based on a Weberian (Western) concept of the state that may not exist for a state in a stabilization environment, which is rarely, and may not have ever been, the primary security and justice provider for those under its nominal sovereign jurisdiction. A common polity that transcends tribal, ethnic, or religious loyalties and bestows legitimacy through representative institutions may not exist and civil society as an agent for holding the state accountable for its actions may never have developed (Egnell and Halden, 2009, 33–41). In many SSR processes, “deep-seated differences in state structures between Western countries and host countries are missed because of what may seem like similarities in formal organisation and assumptions that the latter can be reformed, reconstructed or enhanced as if they were indeed Western” (Egnell and Halden, 2009, 36). The existence of statehood matters less for SSR success than how entrenched (or not) state structures are, and the strength of state control matters less than its engagement with society and the ability of society to influence it (Egnell and Halden, 2009, 46). To achieve SSR goals, therefore, governance and oversight—the defining aspects of SSR that differentiate it from traditional security sector assistance—need to develop organically via state control, legitimate government, civil society engagement, and democratization. This emphasizes the profoundly long-term perspective of SSR since “historically, these developments were preconditions of each other” rather than synchronic developments, as is often stated as necessary for successful SSR (Egnell and Halden, 41). It also emphasizes the extreme danger of generating short-term gains in the operational effectiveness and efficiency of security forces without also establishing some form of interim accountability.

## Assessment of Context, SSR Needs and Capacities

The space available for SSR will greatly depend on the context. SSR actors should have a detailed and regularly updated analysis of the context, including conflict and threat assessments and needs assessments.<sup>6</sup> These should be considered for mission needs (risks) as well as security needs of the host state.

If policy makers decide to undertake SSR in a stabilization environment, it should be informed by a needs assessment that includes security challenges and provides a contextual understanding of the mission and conflict. A realistic assessment is essential to avoid underestimating resources required for sustainable SSR and unrealistic expectations (on the part of program providers and recipients alike), and to set realistic benchmarks for later evaluation.

Security and justice needs and perceptions, and expectations of SSR, should be analyzed from four perspectives: national political stakeholders; local justice networks and informal security and justice providers; local citizens, residents, communities, and neighborhoods; and international actors with their own national interests (Ball et al., 2007, 4). SSR must balance these (sometimes competing) interests and integrate the various issues in design and implementation (Ball et al., 2007, 4). Collected information should include stakeholders' attitudes toward development, institutional capacity—especially capacity to deliver services—justice and security needs of the end users, who currently meets those needs, quality of governance in the public sector, and financial and human resources available to support reform (Ball et al., 2007, 4).

Threat assessments and defense reviews, however, are often performed using military and civilian experts in security and independently of other post-conflict needs assessments (PCNA) (Middlebrook and Peake, 4). Often, the sensitive nature of the process requires limiting access to the detailed results, but ideally assessment results should be made available confidentially to budget offices and legislative committees and subcommittees. In a stabilization environment, those bodies may not yet be sufficiently reconstituted or reliable managers of information to be trusted with much data, posing a dilemma for SSR managers that can only be resolved on a case-by-case basis.<sup>7</sup> The assessments may also establish a baseline for future evaluation of program impact.

Since 2007, the PCNA has incorporated a better understanding of the security environment and conflict analysis into the needs assessment (UNDG and World Bank, 5). Although this may help limit unrealistic expectations during the reform (as happened with the 2001 Afghanistan Reconstruction Needs Assessment; see Middlebrook and Peake, 4; and ADB, UNAMA, UNDP, WB, 2004, 79), it is still insufficient for budget planning. The needs of the defense sector, as determined through a defense review or threat assessment, must be considered relative to the needs of other security sector actors as well as government-wide actors. This can only be done if

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on conducting conflict and threat assessments, see the relevant practice note.

<sup>7</sup> This dilemma would be most acute in the initial stages of a stabilization intervention and/or a transitional government that emerges out of a power-sharing or peace agreement. If corrupt elements remain with the government through elections, security may necessitate keeping some data confidential and contained within the various ministries. But in some cases, SSR managers must accept that there is only so much they can do. Such is the case in Liberia, in which warlords from rebel groups MODEL and LURD became part of the transitional government and remain elected to the legislature. See William Reno, "Anti-Corruption Efforts in Liberia: Are they Aimed at the Right Targets?" *International Peacekeeping*. August 2008, Vol. 15 Issue 3, pp.387–404.

needs are determined through a comprehensive assessment process, even if actual programming is selective or sequential, as dictated by the environment.

### **Roles of International Assistance Providers in SSR**

The skills that international actors need to support SSR in stabilization environments are often drastically different from what they need in other environments. Managing a particular security institution, for example, requires an “entirely different set of skills” than building or restructuring the same institution (Scheye, DCAF 2008, 184). International actors should also understand their role when acting as transitional authorities, as well as military and civilian SSR operational capacities in stabilization environments.

#### *International Actors as Transitional Authorities*

All international actors prefer that transitional administration of collapsed states be the rare exception to the rule in international operations. Substantial resources are needed to support missions in which the state has broken down, as in the case of UN, NATO, and coalition operations in Kosovo and East Timor, or the large scale interventions in Afghanistan by the United States and NATO. Still, international actors could be given such responsibility again or choose to act under international treaty in a manner that triggers administrative obligations under international humanitarian law.

In situations where the international actor is the transitional authority, international actors must be prepared to rebuild local security forces while acting as the interim authority (Rees, UN DPKO PBPS 2006, 12).

The sequencing of returning authority and operational control to host nation security institutions must balance the need to develop local capacity and the need to generate ownership. If not initiated by the host state, ownership should be established and promoted as quickly as possible, and often one way of doing that is to learn by doing. Numerous evaluations have demonstrated that handing over authority, together with responsibility for credit and blame, is a means of generating ownership even if an international actor must provide extensive administrative support initially (Hansen and Wiharta, 20; Eric Scheye, 2008, 177). Generally, ownership will be stronger when established earlier rather than later. This requires, however, at least a minimal capacity or educational level to perform basic tasks—no small feat when a majority of a population may be illiterate. Mechanisms for transitioning authority often differ greatly by sector and may include sharing authority, consultative mechanisms, traditional power structures, engaging civil society, and building institutional capacity (Hansen and Wiharta, FBA 2007, 15–24). Kosovo’s corrections reform, for example, included a three-month training under UNMIK authority, three month co-working training, and three months under Kosovo Corrections Service authority with UNMIK support.

#### *Roles of the Military in Stabilization Environments*

Military forces may assume a more active role in SSR activities affecting the nonmilitary elements of the security sector. Ultimately, conditions of the operational environment determine the role of military forces (United States 2008, 6.4).

When the operational environment is characterized as non-permissive, military forces can expect to lead reform efforts. This reform may include establishing security, establishing civil control, and developing and enabling security forces. Any or all of these tasks may occur—as appropriate to the context—in three progressive phases: initial, transformation, and fostering sustainability (United States 2009, 4.2).<sup>8</sup>

During the initial phase, host state security forces are unable to provide minimum security and assistance focuses on helping to generate, train, or assist new or existing security forces.<sup>9</sup> Interim civilian expertise is also needed to augment the military assistance, to provide the needed expertise to “develop local institutions to take the lead in national governance, the provision of basic services, fostering economic development, and enforcement of the rule of law” (United States 2009, 4.5). The context (e.g., threats, resources) and the form of civilian expertise (e.g., humanitarian agencies, provincial reconstruction team) will determine the degree of cooperation between military and civilian capacities. As security conditions improve, transition to the transformation phase begins (United States 2009, 4.4–4.5).

The transformation phase aims to stabilize the environment in a crisis state. Security forces may still need full-time advisors and support from international actors, but no longer “need a permanent relationship . . . for tactical operations” (United States 2009, 4.6). The objectives are to improve (as opposed to establish) security, reduce the threat to local populations, build (as opposed to establish) host state capacity in the security sector, and generate a comprehensive approach. Because the environment is more permissive, the possible range of activities is much broader than the three tasks of the initial phase, and reform may include post-conflict reconstruction, stabilization, and capacity-building efforts across the spectrum of stabilization interventions. An expanded civilian capacity from the initial phase is needed to perform tasks associated with the pillars of stabilization interventions (economic, humanitarian/social, political, and security). Although more permissive than the initial phase, military protection will often be needed for civilian actors. As security conditions improve, military support for SSR can expand its area of operations, with a corresponding augmentation in size as needed (United States 2009, 4.5–4.7).

When the military is operating as part of a broader stabilization intervention and is required to support SSR, it should be augmented with subordinate units whose sole focus is supporting security forces (e.g., military transition or intelligence support). These units are often most effective when embedded with host state security forces (United States 2009, 4.9).

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<sup>8</sup> The United Kingdom’s Ministry of Defense Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40, *Security and Stabilisation: The Military Contribution*, is scheduled to be published in mid-November 2009 and has a substantial section devoted to SSR. Once available, it will provide additional guidance from another donor government on military support for SSR in stabilization interventions.  
<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/MicroSite/DCDC/OurPublications/JDWP/JointDoctrinePublicationjdp340SecurityAndStabilisationTheMilitaryContribution.htm>

<sup>9</sup> This section of the note focuses on program design and considerations for donor engagement in stabilization environments. As is emphasized in the “appropriateness of SSR” and “program planning” sections, as well as in other practice notes for governance and oversight of the security sector, management, defense sector reform, national security policies and strategies, and threat assessments that security sector institution-building is as essential as operational effectiveness. For a detailed study on institution building, see Hari Bucur-Marcu (ed.), *Essentials of Defence Institution-Building*. (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, May 2009).

Once conditions are more permissive, other civilian SSR actors assume primary responsibility for their roles, allowing military forces to relinquish the lead. Initially, the presence of nonmilitary SSR partners may be limited, “requiring military forces to undertake tasks normally performed by other interagency and civilian partners. Even when nonmilitary SSR actors are present, the nature of the environment may require military forces to support those actors extensively as they undertake their respective aspects of SSR” (United States, 2008, 6.4–6.5). In certain stabilization environments, the military establishes security and control to enable other actors to initiate programming, effectively creating the security or humanitarian space, as appropriate. Military-created humanitarian space is of course an unacceptable operating environment for many humanitarian organizations, but stabilization environments may present no good alternatives for humanitarian action.

As the transition proceeds from initial to transformational and fostering sustainability, military primacy recedes, and other civilian agencies and development organizations come to the forefront. They apply their expertise other security sector actors and leave the military to focus on the host-nation defense sector (United States, 2008, 6.25). All of this of course pre-supposes progress in building a legitimate and stable host state government that is capable of assuming responsibility for growing elements of security from international assistance providers.

### **Roles of SSR Actors in the Host State**

Issues involving host state SSR actors, discussed here, include identification of leaders and champions in host state institutions and the use of informal security and justice providers.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Identifying Leaders/Champions in Host State Institutions*

SSR should develop strong relationships with local leaders. This does not mean catering to local warlords, but rather “understanding local leadership structures, partnering with good actors, and marginalizing or changing the behavior of bad actors” (McNerney, 35). Determining good and bad actors and ways of influencing them are among the most difficult of SSR activities, and often use an ad hoc approach.

Institutional change can take years, even decades, and finding a leader who will champion a cause can make a drastic difference in SSR progress on institutional change. One of the key reasons for the operational effectiveness of Sierra Leone’s Office of National Security (ONS) was the professionalism and consistent presence of its leader throughout the reform process (author interviews). ONS was assigned a powerful role as the “nerve centre of Sierra Leone’s post-war security architecture” and managed to press for institutional reforms and better operational effectiveness (Ebo, 2006, 488). Peake and Marenin also emphasize that an SSR agenda can most effectively be advanced (in this case with respect to police) by finding

a champion within the institution whose practice/policy platform one is trying to alter. . . . Reforms will not become effective unless they are part of the routine managerial practices of police administrators. Reform thus requires ‘translators’ within the

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<sup>10</sup> For more specific discussion on the roles and responsibilities of the defense sector, civilian management and oversight bodies, and civil society, see the practice notes on defense sector reform, security sector governance and oversight, management of the security sector, threat assessments and defense reviews, and national security policies and strategies.

organization who make meaningful what is general advice, who translate the jargon of advisors into police lingo, and who have the capacity and the will to insist that reforms be executed and sustained. . . . This supporter needs to see the merit of what it is that one is trying to do and push/cajole that policy from within. In the end, all reforms are human efforts not achieved by writing even the most perfect rules, job descriptions, mission statements, and procedure manuals. These are necessary but not sufficient steps along the road to progress. The basic principle is that advice must make sense to the people receiving it and cannot undermine, or be perceived to undermine, existing status, reward, and privileges (Peake and Marenin, 2008, 65).

International actors will rarely gain a complete understanding of the context, and particular local actors will always want to advance their own agenda. International actors' "contextual understanding should become sophisticated enough to comprehend when, why, and how [this] manipulation is taking place" (Ball et al., 2007, 5). On the other hand, assistance providers may mistakenly assume that host state actors hostile to SSR should not be part of initial dialogue. Excluding those actors would be further destabilizing whereas including them would channel their input into the process and possibly alter their attitude towards the process.

In some cases, engaging with less than ideal leadership might be unavoidable, if those leaders are part of a larger peace process that SSR does not want to undermine, especially if that process has self-correcting elements built into it. In Haiti, DRC, Bosnia, Nepal, Timor-Leste, Solomon Islands, and Burundi, for example, assistance providers were aware of corrupt leadership, evidence of corruption was gathered, and new political alliances formed, leading to a gradual replacement of corrupt personnel over a period of months (Ball et al., 2007, 7).

### *Informal Security and Justice Providers*

As many as 80 per cent of security and justice providers are informal, "non-state" or "non-statutory" (OECD 2007, 11). Furthermore, good practice has shown that reform must engage with 80 percent of *all* security and justice providers to be sustainable, and non-state security and justice providers in fragile states are often heavily preferred by the public over the institutions of the state (Scheye, Clingendael 2009, 21; Ball et al., 2007, 7). They operate across a broad spectrum of legitimacy and sometimes have direct linkages to or are recognized by state authorities. Given the absence of government authority and proliferation of informal security and justice providers, both of which are especially apparent at provincial and district levels, informal actors can be means of promoting interim stabilization measures.

Assistance providers must first evaluate the potential for a good partnership. Two common assessment methodologies can aid in determining non-statutory actors' motivations and potential for engagement; both concede that there is no easy or satisfying way to determine who will be a good partner.<sup>11</sup> Both seek to determine non-statutory actors' motivations and potential for engagement and their structural placement within a multi-layered government system (Baker and Scheye, 515). Many non-statutory security forces in stabilization environments will have violated

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<sup>11</sup> See Ulrich Schneckener. "Fragile Statehood, Armed Non-State Actors and Security Governance." In *Private Actors and Security Governance*. Alan Bryden and Marina Caparini (eds.). (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2006). See also William Reno. "Protectors and Predators: Why There is a Difference among West African Militias." In *Fragile States and Insecure People? Violence, Security, and Statehood in the Twenty-First Century*. Louise Andersen, Bjorn Moller, and Finn Stepputat, eds. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

human rights egregiously or engaged in criminal activity, or will not hesitate to use violence in pursuit of their objectives; they cannot be part of assistance provider engagement in governance reform. Some may have committed or incited violence but later joined peace and reconciliation processes and will be part of a political solution to the conflict (Schneckener, DCAF 2006, 25, 36). Still others may be genuinely motivated to enhance community security.

Assessments of the potential payoffs of engagement with such groups should also carefully consider how informal actors are perceived by local populations, and whether they are genuinely preferred or just tolerated because people do not have access to anything better. Their role during the conflict should also be studied. Supporting or reconstituting an informal system alone is not enough; support, in most cases, must be accompanied by reform and strengthening of accountability in order to improve security rather than worsen instability.

Strengthening state oversight of non-statutory security and justice providers can be most effective when engagement occurs through and in conjunction with other actors: civil society or, in some cases, international non-governmental organizations that can act as mediators with the local non-state actors (Scheye, 2009, 5).

*Informal security providers* operate, as noted, within a broad range of public legitimacy.<sup>12</sup> Some private security companies, state-approved civil policing, and informal anti-crime groups provide security more reliably and effectively than the state. Those that do have legitimacy can be very effective and good partners for providing immediate security, as they often continue to operate during conflict, are not as much of a target as statutory security forces, and can be directly accountable to the public. The issue in terms of governance is, as with non-statutory justice providers, strengthening regulation, monitoring, and accountability.

Accountability for private security companies can be strengthened through licensing systems and supervision by the police (if and when police services are again functional). Their personnel should also be vetted and equipment inspected for quality and proportionality to their responsibilities (rocket-propelled grenades, for example, being inappropriate to community policing or static security assignments). Assistance providers can also facilitate the development of training standards, particularly for human rights, professionalism, and weapons proficiency, as well as self-regulating (e.g., internal monitoring) oversight mechanisms (Born et al., DCAF 2007, 23–27; Baker and Scheye, 520–521).

Appropriate international engagement may include support for legislation and administrative measures that better regulate the functioning of such groups. At a minimum, there should be regular communication between them and the public and police, as well as recording and analysis of community disorder and crime where they operate. Community forums can help develop standards of behavior and professionalism (Baker and Scheye, 521–523). These standards must be widely distributed and accompanied with extended training and dialogue with civil society.

It is equally important that assistance providers support long-term state-building, however, as these groups do not lessen the obligation of the state to provide security as a public good.

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<sup>12</sup> Non-statutory security forces that commit acts of violence or act as spoilers of the peace are outside of the scope of this note.

Moreover, non-statutory security and justice providers are rarely comprehensive and inclusive. Many only cater to a particular demographic, for example, wealthy people or businesses that can afford the services of private security companies. Moreover, informal community groups may internalize national violence on a micro level. Those that work on a volunteer basis are often unsustainable, since members may lose interest, or worse, the group members may turn to looting or may target local communities for “payment.” Although statutory security providers may exhibit similar tendencies, they also can more readily earn—or lose—international legitimacy and support based on their professionalism or lack of it.

Anytime support to non-state actors is considered, engagement must also consider how or whether to phase out the non-state security forces, increase their accountability, or integrate them into statutory security forces. If economic opportunities are not available to those not integrated, they may become (or remain) a destabilizing force (United Nations, IDDRS, 163–166). In addition to long-term right-sizing of security forces (i.e., after the security threat has ended), there are immediate threats to economic instability as well. As one example, informal networks of combatants who do not meet eligibility criteria for DDR programs often maintain linkages with former mid-level commanders of armed groups who are part of DDR and military integration. This alliance benefits both individuals but is a major source of instability, and may lead to the formation of criminal networks (author interviews).

*Informal (traditional) justice systems* are common in many countries and can reduce the caseload of formal courts and increase access to justice by providing an alternative to the formal system (United Kingdom, 2007, 19).<sup>13</sup> Studies of multiple post-conflict or fragile states have estimated that 90 per cent of the population in each country preferred to use customary justice systems to the formal courts (Baker and Scheye, 512). The head of the Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission, a government body, requested that assistance providers support local justice systems, arguing that support for them would be an entry point for reform (Ball et al., 2007, 12). Other benefits of an informal system include physical proximity to clients, efficacy, timeliness of decisions, low transaction costs, support for restitution, high levels of public participation, and restorative—as opposed to retributive—justice (Baker and Scheye, 512).

Informal systems also have many shortcomings: weak accountability for decisions; no necessary adherence to or respect for human rights standards or principles of non-discrimination against vulnerable groups, particularly minorities and women; and sentences that may involve degrading punishments. But these shortcomings may be found within state systems as well, and not engaging with informal systems means fewer opportunities to affect their operation. Informal systems decentralize justice in the immediate aftermath of war and—if they have not themselves been disrupted by war—offer elements of stability and authority while formal structures are rebuilt (Baker and Scheye, 517). With their community access and legitimacy, they can also serve as a powerful source of legitimacy for the state as it rebuilds its authority. In Burundi, for example, customary law courts were used as forums for debating government policies, which allowed public participation and ownership. Chiefs then transferred the discussions upward to provincial and national levels of government (Bellina et al., OECD 2009, 27).

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<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting that many states, including developed states, have legitimate non-statutory justice providers that are commonly used for their greater speed and efficiency over bureaucratic legal systems, e.g., private arbitration and mediation services.

So many different informal networks exist that it is difficult to make generalities about what to do. But specific examples of lessons learned can provide a better understanding of nuance and mechanisms for developing initiatives for engaging with informal security and justice providers. In some cases, merely reconstituting informal justice providers without accompanying reforms may resurrect a source of tension and instability, as did the reconstitution of local chiefdoms in Sierra Leone, as the institution was a contributing factor to conflict in the 1990s (Jackson 2005, 54; author interviews).

In other cases, interim stabilization measures that involve informal networks may undermine other stabilization activities for a zero sum result. For example, US support of informal community police forces (the Afghan Public Protection Force, through the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3)) as a means of interim stabilization at provincial and district levels in Afghanistan, is viewed by some as a threat to progress of DDR and Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG).<sup>14</sup> The AP3 has had some positive initial results through a 2009 pilot program in Wardak province, but it may be less likely to work in southern or southeastern regions with strong tribal loyalties (Cordesman, CSIS 2009, 135–141).

Reform may include developing a system for explaining, registering, recording, and archiving decisions to increase transparency. Assistance providers also may engage to create mechanisms to appeal decisions of informal justice providers to higher state or non-state courts, or work towards improved human rights standards (Baker and Scheye, 517).

### **International Coordination and Funding Mechanisms**

Stabilization environments often host multiple international donors engaged in security sector reform, which can be an opportunity to capitalize upon comparative advantages in SSR or a cacophony of ad hoc unsustainable initiatives. International coordination and funding mechanisms therefore should be established early, and engage all stakeholders.

#### *Coordination Mechanisms*

If donors and stakeholders shared common interests and objectives, coordination problems would resolve to simply facilitating cooperation, for example, formulating agreed rules to achieve those common objectives efficiently (Doyle and Sambanis, 335–337). In most stabilization environments, however, interests and objectives—of donors, state institutions, armed groups, and civil society—are often less compatible, and coordination requires more effort.

Indeed, formal coordination mechanisms are often needed to overcome numerous challenges: differing conceptions of SSR, competition among actors, lack of will to coordinate, and “incompatible mandates, operating procedures, timelines and funding sources” (Schroeder, DCAF 2006, 211–212). Such mechanisms should aim to include all stakeholders (UN OCHA, 2008, 25).

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<sup>14</sup> To underscore the need to base SSR decisions in part on the effectiveness of other stabilization activities, it should be noted that the DDR/DIAG initiatives had many challenges of their own. Some argue they only achieved superficial gains and never truly “demobilized” armed groups from tribal loyalties. See Antonio Giustozzi, “Shadow Ownership and SSR in Afghanistan,” in *Local Ownership and Security Sector Reform*, Timothy Donais (ed.) (Geneva: Center for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2008).

Coordination works best with effective and strong leadership. Leadership can help advance coordination and coherence among multiple donors. Informal interviews with field mission staff repeatedly emphasize the need for a coherent SSR strategy. They also repeatedly emphasize the need for an SSR cell in every mission mandated to engage in SSR (MONUC, UNOCI, UNMIS, author interviews). If such a leading cell is established, it should be given a mandate and resources sufficient to coordinate SSR activities among all actors, and to be effective will need their mutual understanding and respect. Sometimes that can be difficult enough to achieve even within the leader's parent institution. The principal coordinator on SSR in Burundi, for example, the DDR/SSR unit of the UN Mission ONUB, aimed to keep its international counterparts (Belgium, France, Netherlands, Egypt, UN police, and ONUB gender unit) informed on planned SSR initiatives but was sometimes not informed of SSR-related fundraising within the UN mission itself (Banal et al., DCAF 2008, 52; Powell, 38–39).

Pro-active coordination is most effective and should use tools that identify gaps and overlapping activities, as in the case of ONUB's extensive mapping of all SSR activities in Burundi. Despite this effort, however, there remained some redundancy, as between the Belgian pre-training information gathering effort and the Dutch/UNDP/ICTJ census on police. Coordination should include sequencing along with discussion of activities, to make activities appropriately iterative. In Burundi, for example, one seminar on developing a comprehensive training strategy took place several months after the development of a basic training program (Powell, 21,49). Coordination should include timely updates to others about changes in sequenced activities, as delays in donor resources can significantly alter delivery schedules.

A common mechanism for coordination is a committee that includes international and local (state and non-state) stakeholders. The functions of such committees unfortunately are usually ad hoc; rarely are they provided with consistent guidelines, making them dependent upon the will and respect of individual members. In Bosnia, for example, the Board of Principals limited cooperation to exchanging information on activities. In contrast (and also in Bosnia), the transition between UN and EU policing operations was enhanced by co-location of staff during the transition period (Schroeder, 211–212).

Coordination mechanisms should develop and distribute detailed plans and operations to serve as terms of reference (Scherrer, DCAF 2007, 190–191). These should be updated as needed and agreed to by all members of the coordination group.

The feasibility of coordination mechanisms may be limited by factors beyond the control of donors. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, senior government officials strictly limited coordination among donors (Hoebcke et al., ISS 2008, 2; author interviews). In Burundi, although ONUB was mandated to support SSR, and its DDR/SSR unit coordinated among all donors and attempted a comprehensive approach, host government resistance and preference for initiating reform separately by each institution required an adaptation to its preferences (Banal et al., DCAF 2008, 46–47).

### *Resource and Funding Commitments*

Regardless of whether formal coordination mechanisms are established, donors should engage in substantive dialogue among SSR stakeholders, including all international actors, civil society, and

host state representatives (if available). This dialogue should develop mutual understanding and reconciliation of every stakeholder's priorities, resource commitments (time, money, personnel, and materiel), and expected outcomes. All stakeholders should develop a common policy outlining the principles under which they work and the assistance they are providing, in order to facilitate agreed objectives (Ball, UNDP 2002, 9-10).

A situation in which the lead donor has significantly more resources and often decides what is and is not possible politically, limits other donors' options (United Kingdom 2008a, 10), and further exacerbates the problem of donor coordination.

Support should include a range of inputs beyond technical assistance. Physical equipment is as important psychologically as it is in real use, but equipment provided should be in keeping with national capacity to maintain it. Host nation operational expenses should be provided where needed and appropriate in some stabilization environments (United Kingdom 2004, 42). This must be carefully considered in the context of what will be sustainable and how to taper operational expenses as SSR financial support decreases.

International actors should avoid means or modalities that undermine national institution-building, such as bypassing national budget processes or setting high salaries for local staff which undermine recruitment and retention in national institutions. Donors should work out cost norms for local staff remuneration in consultation with government and other national stakeholders (Australia, ACFID principles).

One potential approach to aligning donor funding with national budgets is to use "shadow alignment," which helps to build the foundation for future ownership by ensuring that donor programs comply as much as possible with host government procedures and systems. This can be done, for example, by providing information corresponding to host government budget cycles and classifications, or by operating within existing administrative boundaries (Australia, ACFID principles).

Funding should, as much as possible, be deposited into funding pools for more flexible use by donors and should allow for multi-year financing (United Kingdom 2008a, iv). Especially in early stages, consistent and multi-year funding commitments can facilitate the transition from inception phase to long-term programming. Such funding consistency is critical to give capacity-building programs in stabilization environments the opportunity to develop institutions with reputations for professionalism and effectiveness and otherwise to promote institutional sustainability.

### **Coordination with other Stabilization Activities**

SSR assistance providers in stabilization environments should systematically coordinate and regularly communicate with other actors. Other stabilization activities will affect opportunities for SSR, the public legitimacy of the mission, and local or national acceptance. Likewise, SSR programming can affect the direction, intensity, or longevity of other stabilization activities. Success of SSR, therefore, will depend in part upon the relative success or failure of other stabilization activities.

### *Linkages between SSR and DDR*

SSR and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) are linked in stabilization environments through both supply and demand. In terms of supply, ex-combatants completing DDR will likely feed into the (formal or informal) security sector. Because they become part of the security sector supply, the effectiveness of the DDR process also determines the demand (need and ownership) for SSR. If, for example, DDR effectively reintegrates and overcomes ex-combatants loyalties to former commanders and fellow combatants, more resources would be freed for SSR. If, however, DDR pays more attention to the “disarmament” component rather than the “demobilization” and “reintegration” components, DDR progress may be relatively superficial (United Nations OSAA and DR Congo, 2007, 6, 9). Informal networks will remain strong and a source of instability, suggesting that SSR in such situations must still work to create “space” before being able to implement SSR programs and expect real gains. In other words, ex-combatants, like all new or re-trained security forces, must overcome old loyalties and develop respect for the security forces and commanding officers before they can or will accept their new roles (United Nations OSAA and DR Congo, 2007, 6; Giustozzi, DCAF 2008, 216–218). Effective and sustainable DDR is therefore as critical to SSR as SSR is to building rule of law (Rees, 9). DDR design directly ties into SSR, determining the potential size and scope of military, police, and other security structures. In addition, reintegration of former combatants back into their communities sets the foundation for—and determines the success of—long-term peace building and development programs (United States, 2008a, 6.11). The gap between the end of DDR and the beginning of SSR should be minimal to avoid creating a security vacuum, with a security force (non-state actor or stabilization intervention) to ensure interim stabilization (OECD 2007, 105).

### *SSR and Economic Development*

SSR and economic stabilization and development are mutually dependent on each other for effectiveness and sustainability. On one hand, early economic stabilization “can be a confidence-building measure” effectively generating legitimacy and space for engaging in SSR (United Nations 2008, A/62/659, para. 10). Moreover, long-term gains in SSR and stability are not sustainable without economic development to support security expenditures and pay security sector salaries. (Improving security expenditure management should of course be part of the reform process.) Many economic issues are also security issues. Curtailing illegal taxation by armed groups and warlords, controlling border customs, and curbing illicit trade are all ways of improving security in stabilization environments (Carnahan, CIC 2007, preface). And the ability of the government to generate revenue is critical for long-term development, especially on provincial and district levels that tend to receive less aid (Jackson 2005, 52).

In stabilization environments, economic capacity often depends on humanitarian and development aid and remittances, rather than taxation. A long-term development initiative, which extends authority of the state, is host state taxation reform. If done effectively, state fiscal resources coming from the populace will stimulate popular demand for more effective use of resources (Egnell and Halden, 41). This is challenging in stabilization environments, where domestic revenues may cover less than half of operating expenses, and donor support decreases local incentives to generate revenue. Budgets are developed more as “wish lists,” to which donors will not explicitly say no, but to which they also won’t contribute (Carnahan, 4-6).

In order to improve revenue administration in stabilization, basic infrastructure and information management systems should be established to produce revenue statistics and monitor operations. Essential staff should be appointed. Operationally, post-conflict states need to register and identify taxpayers (sometimes through a unique taxpayer identification number for filing returns) and strengthen customs administration, an expedient means to increase revenue (Carnahan, 4-6).

When international actors agree to multi-year funding, they can establish a contract with the host state to match a percentage of funds collected by the host state up to a pre-established limit. The percentage could decrease over time to allow significantly more donor support in the stabilization period, and might require a trust fund by donors with operational guidelines and revenue expectations approved by international financial institutions. It would require aid flows becoming more reliable, per the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (Carnahan, 6).

A simple land tax system can be relatively easy to facilitate and difficult to evade. The dispute over land that is common in post-conflict environments may actually be a window of opportunity, since the power of established landowners may be fractured. Land taxation initiatives should focus on urban areas since land parcels are easier to identify, even if the revenue offices and records have been destroyed (Carnahan, 7). Often, however, many buildings and businesses on land that would generate the most revenue have been destroyed in precisely the areas that need the most revenue, and the lack of means for estimating value is a challenge (Jackson 2005, 55).

For such taxes to be useful, they must be collected applied equitably and collected transparently. In Sierra Leone, for example, taxation reform led to abuse of authority. The means for collection allowed for collusion between two local governing bodies: the district council that sets the level of taxation and the chief who collects it; the two then “share the proceeds” (Jackson 2005, 55–56).

## **PROGRAM PLANNING**

SSR programs in stabilization environments should have realistic expectations, and planners should understand categories of activities that can be initiated, their appropriate sequencing, how certain activities can constitute an entrance strategy for broader SSR, and how entry work links to long-term programming. All plans for stabilization environments should be implemented flexibly.

### **Realistic Expectations**

International actors should have realistic expectations about what they and host state partners can achieve in a given time period with given resources. These expectations involve not only the resources and capacity of actors but also the way they relate to each other and contextual determinants. For example, a lawyer who spent many years with UNMIK remarked that engagement in the beginning could only “work towards getting enough power to begin to have results” because they first had to gain legitimacy with local partners and populations (author interviews). Furthermore, their timeline ultimately was determined by the “primacy of the [peace] process” (author interviews). Should the decision be made to wait before making decisions on strategic or long-term elements, appropriate security should be provided by the stabilization intervention in the interim. This underscores the need to perform institutional needs assessments and threat/conflict assessments in conjunction with each other so as to reduce the chances of

underestimating the risks associated with engagement, both for international actors and for host state actors.

International actors should also adjust their expectations of what can be accomplished in a given time period. For example, a defense review in Uganda was allocated 6 months but took 18 to complete and obstacles remain to implementation. The longer time frame matches those done for Sierra Leone, United Kingdom, and South Africa, which could have been used as approximations for Uganda (Ball et al., 2007, 6; Hendrickson 2007, 6). Realistic expectations and benchmarks will support a framework for relative success (and long-term planning) rather than relative failure.

### **Categories of Activities**

Ball, Scheye, and van de Goor outline five categories of core activities that would need to be implemented in stabilization environments. The authors refrain from specifying particular activities (e.g., elections) and from addressing other stabilization activities that link to SSR (e.g., DDR, small arms, and mine action). The five categories are: 1) laying groundwork for long-term reform (e.g., developing inventories of infrastructure, laws, and security and justice providers); 2) strengthening the day-to-day performance of security and justice providers at district, provincial, and national simultaneously and enabling the international community to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of how service delivery is provided and by whom; 3) organizing the international community; 4) followup to successfully completed category 1 activities (e.g., through needs assessments, strategic planning, and improving security expenditure management); and 5) developing a legal framework. The authors acknowledge that the first three categories lay the foundations and plan for SSR, while categories 4 and 5 “can be addressed only after category 1 activities are underway and have largely been successful” (Ball et al., 2007, 11).

### **SSR as an Entrance Strategy and Inception Phase**

Establishing SSR as part of an entrance strategy, with appropriate resources, from the beginning of a stabilization intervention will create opportunities for more comprehensive engagement. In general, the more specific the reference to SSR in a mandate and a peace agreement or other means of engagement with a host government, the better the opening there will be for SSR when peace implementation begins.

Initial steps during an inception phase may include identifying security and justice providers, and may involve a security community census and identification program, to register, verify, and issue identification cards to members of various security sector institutions (OECD 2007, 106).

The immediate potential for SSR may depend on the political context. One UN assessment concluded that, given political uncertainty, “there is nothing wrong with waiting for the arrival of a legitimate government.” Some states can take a long time to re-establish legitimate government, however, especially if there are no external performance pressures on current office-holders. As of this writing, for example, the caretaker government Côte d’Ivoire had contrived to postpone legitimating elections four years running by arranging for conditions unsuited to free and fair elections to arise each time rescheduled elections loomed (United Nations, S/2005/604, paras. 36–38; S/2006/821, paras. 22, 27; S/2007/593, para. 30; S/2008/645, paras. 15, 63; S/2009/495, paras. 22, 51).

An inception phase may take up to 18 months, and perhaps longer in a stabilization environment. In that phase, resources will be focused on improving immediate security that can create space for dialogue and quick impact programming. All lessons learned should constantly anticipate and coordinate with long-term SSR programming and development (Ball et al., 2007, 15). It is not the case, in other words, that nothing happens during the inception phase of SSR, as conceived here. It is the case, rather, that SSR planners learn their environment, its constraints and opportunities, while the stability of that environment is slowly restored by international action, preparatory to rapid DDR, SSR, and rebuilding of legitimate and effective host state capacities.

### **Linkages to Long-Term SSR programming**

Although more detailed discussions on long-term programming are available in other practice notes, initial steps in support of SSR are mentioned here.

#### *Iterative Training*

In terms of individual capacity-building and technical assistance, experience has shown that it is most effective when done with an iterative approach, beginning with rudimentary skills and advancing at later development stages to specialized skills, such as investigative techniques (Ball et al., 2007, 6).

In terms of institution building, initial steps to build institutional capacity can prepare for long-term initiatives. For example, establishing a research capacity (basic resources, staff research training, and basic education) in legislatures can be helpful (Ebo, 494; Sherman, 2009, 1–2).

Given the varied experiences of security forces, from rank-and-file through mid and high-level officers, standardized basic training is a critical first step. Subsequent phases of training should be designed and implemented after incorporating evaluations of previous trainings. Basic training should include prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence (Powell, 17–19).

#### *Generating Legitimacy and Accountability*

SSR can support greater government legitimacy and a closer relationship with society. Legitimacy can come from inputs (representation, participation, and security sector governance), outputs (higher quality, more professional security providers), and shared goals based in community identity (Bellina et al., 15-20).

Stimulating popular demand is a means of generating short-term security performance accountability but must be backed by long-term reform to formalize accountability through operational, legal, and political channels (Ball et al., 2007, 23; Lue-Dugmore, 67). The tools for performance accountability include answerability (providing information on a decision), enforcement (strengthening delivery of public services), and organizational change (altering how service is delivered) (Baker and Scheye, 2007, 508). Performance accountability is often called a “short route to accountability” because it doesn’t require a great deal of infrastructure or logistical support. Instead neighborhood or community associations, or some other form of civil society, communicate their needs and concerns to security providers, and thereby stimulate a more effective culture of service (Ball et al., 2007, 22; Baker and Scheye, 508; Sherman, 9).

## **Flexibility**

Program design should be flexible, and include willingness to modify objectives of assistance and mandates, add new programs, and redesign or shift resources within current programs as urgent needs arise. In Sierra Leone, for example, a component on reforming and strengthening the intelligence services was not included in the initial design of the UK assistance package but was added after six months in response to urgent needs (UK, DFID 2004, 42).

SSR assistance and plans should not attempt to forecast and dictate events too far into the future. Events in stabilization environments rarely progress on a logical, linear path, and plans often underestimate the scope of changes that will occur (United States 2008, 4.18).

Nor should SSR plans for stabilization environments attempt too much detail. While sound plans must include some detail, planning in more detail than needed only consumes limited time and resources. In general, the less certain the situation, the less detail included in the plan (United States, 2008, 4.20).

## **CASE EXAMPLES: AFGHANISTAN, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, KOSOVO, AND SIERRA LEONE**

This section presents useful lessons learned on donor coordination, SSR in the context of larger stabilization efforts, and engagement with informal security and justice providers in Afghanistan, DR Congo, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone. They are not complete case studies of SSR in stabilization environments but present snapshots of lessons learned for the thematic areas described in previous sections.

### **Afghanistan<sup>15</sup>**

Afghanistan presents useful discussion in terms of provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) as a model for coordinating SSR at district levels, and coordinating between military and civilian capacities in stabilization environments. Examples of lessons are also provided from the mechanisms that have been established for coordination among donors and the Afghan government and from controversial initiatives to support informal community-policing networks as a means of interim stabilization.

#### *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*

PRTs were conceived for Afghanistan in 2002, as the US transitioned from warfighting to stabilization and reconstruction, to blend civilian and military resources at the provincial level. PRTs differ in size, composition, and operational style, due to the flexibility allowed in each PRT and different mandates. They are joint teams of 50–300 military personnel (90–95 per cent of the total and equipped for self-defense only), political advisors, and development experts. The Afghan government has been involved in planning and running PRTs from the beginning, with increasing levels of cooperation, with interior ministry officials providing representatives at PRT headquarters (Jakobsen, DIIS 2005, 2-4).

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<sup>15</sup> Because of the extensive discussion on reform of the Afghan National Security Forces in the practice note on defense sector reform, this note looks primarily at means of international cooperation and tools for implementing SSR, and at use of informal actors as a means of interim stabilization.

The quick impact projects that PRTs have used, and have been especially popular with US, have been subject to very little evaluation. Their perceived improvement on the legitimacy of international SSR assistance is in question since most Afghans do not realize who is funding them and tend to conflate all international actors as “foreigners” (Jakobsen, 29–31). Although many models exist, one of the more successful has been that of the United Kingdom, which has cooperated extensively with NGOs, formulated a clear concept of operations, and focused on security rather than reconstruction and quick impact projects (Jakobsen, 32).

### *International Coordination*

Following the Bonn Agreement (2001) and donor meetings in Berlin and Geneva (2002), a “lead nation” was originally designated for each of five priority areas: army (United States), police (Germany), DDR (Japan), counternarcotics (United Kingdom), and justice (Italy). Police training has since been incorporated into the US-led Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), which is also responsible for training and capacity-building of Afghan National Army (ANA).

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime (UNODC) have provided technical, financial, and administrative support to four of the priority areas (DDR, police, counternarcotics, and justice). UNAMA has also begun supporting institutional building in five areas: human capacity, physical capacity of infrastructure on the ground, technical capacity (information technology), incentives that can attract administrators in various parts of the country (i.e., less developed and/or secure regions have difficulty attracting qualified personnel for regional governing bodies), and a culture of accountability (UNAMA website).

SSR cooperation at the strategic level is difficult to measure due to a lack of transparency among Afghan and donor governments alike. Cooperation is premised on acknowledgement that a comprehensive strategy should include the five priority areas and the endorsement of a democratically controlled security sector. Cooperative mechanisms at this level include dialogue and consultations, exchange of information, and analysis; much of the substance of these mechanisms is confidential due to the sensitivity of the issues they address. One coordination mechanism is the Policy Action Group created in 2006 as a crisis management body that discussed SSR’s role in addressing security concerns arising from the insurgency.

The US, as the largest player in SSR in Afghanistan in size and financing, has limited its coordination efforts to substantive reconciliation of other donor governments’ interests. Because agreement between the US and Afghan government becomes Afghan policy, other donors must work within that framework (Karp and Ponzio, DCAF 2008, 228).

### *Informal Security Providers for Interim Stabilization*

Engagement with informal security actors must be done with care to avoid undermining other stabilization activities. One initiative of the Policy Action Group, for example, was the Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP), intended to be a community-based informal police to increase interim security in the South and Southeast (Karp and Ponzio, 227–229). ANAP, created in 2006–2008, is viewed as a disaster, however, because its members were never appropriately vetted and many of those recruited were criminals. They were also structured according to tribal allegiances,

trained minimally, received the same salaries as police who had received more training, and were widely seen to have been ineffective, and to have worsened instability rather than reduced it (Perito, USIP 2009, 9; Cordesman, 135–141).

A new US initiative, the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3), began as a pilot program in early 2009 and is to be expanded in 2010. It seeks to avoid mistakes of the ANAP. The Afghan Public Protection Forces will receive a smaller salary and slightly longer training of three weeks. Initially set up as a pilot program in Wardak province (west of Kabul), where it showed some positive results, and plans called for a force of 8,000 by July 2009. Recent US legislation agreed to fund an expansion of the AP3 to regions beyond Wardak through 2010 and established reporting requirements to include measures of effectiveness and community perceptions of security where the APPF deploys (United States, 2009, Public Law 111-84 §1228).

The AP3 is controversial because some argue that arming informal policing networks,<sup>16</sup> even lightly, undermines progress in DDR and Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG).<sup>17</sup>

The program will face greater challenges in southern and southeastern regions with strong tribal loyalties and serious instability (Cordesman, CSIS 2009, 135–141). A common policy recommendation, for decentralization and local governance reform in SSR programming, is that local governance reform should be part of a comprehensive framework, in order to avoid inconsistencies across a country. Reform should take into account, however, the vast cultural differences that may exist in a country and carefully consider what will work for particular contexts.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** <sup>18</sup>

Implementation of SSR in the DRC has been hampered by a lack of coordination, coherence, and political commitment for funding and implementation of a stabilization strategy. The main international actors have included Belgium, France, South Africa, the EU, Angola, the UN (primarily through its peacekeeping mission, MONUC), the UK, the US, and the Netherlands.

#### *International Coordination*

From the beginning, support in the domain of SSR confronted major coordination and coherence issues. In the months leading up to the second round of presidential elections in October 2006, the relationship between the DRC government and the international community became increasingly complicated, especially in SSR and economic recovery policy domains. The “need for SSR, as conceptualised by the international community, was never internalised by the DRC government” (Hoebok et al., ISS 2008, 4). For example, World Bank and European Commission (EC)

<sup>16</sup> The weapons are provided by the Afghan Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>17</sup> To underscore the need to base SSR decisions on the effectiveness of other stabilization activities, it should be noted that the DDR/DIAG initiatives had many challenges of their own. Some argue they only achieved superficial gains and never truly “demobilized” armed groups from tribal loyalties. See Antonio Giustozzi, “Shadow Ownership and SSR in Afghanistan,” in *Local Ownership and Security Sector Reform*, Timothy Donais (ed.) (Geneva: Center for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2008). Therefore, the ability of initiatives such as the ANAP and AP3 to generate legitimacy and a culture of service based on shared beliefs and participation, and therefore overcoming tribal loyalties, should be questioned.

<sup>18</sup> The practice note on defense sector reform addresses MONUC training and support of Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and linkages between DDR and army reform and integration.

preparation of a ‘governance compact’ for the Congolese government, which incorporated SSR, was included as an annex to the Prime Minister’s government program but viewed as “an imported policy” (Hoebcke et al., 4; Melmot, IFRI 2008, 15).

Part of the problem has been the government’s deliberate prevention of external coordination (Hoebcke et al., ISS 2008, 2). Tension has arisen between those who prefer the often-advocated multilateral coordination, seen as “painstakingly slow and unclear,” or a bilateral approach, which was “clearly preferred by the Congolese authorities and by a number of donors, especially those with a more long-term vision of their relationship with the DRC.” Although the bilateral coordination seemed to move more quickly, the focus on SSR at an operational level and the lack of strategic planning at international and national levels limited the impact and reach of initial activity. For example, there is no defined end-state of SSR efforts to guide implementation (author interviews). “In addition, the government became increasingly protective of its sovereignty and, in order to secure its independence of action, favoured a wide range of bilateral partnerships,” including one-on-one meetings with donors (Hoebcke et al., 4; author interviews).

In the case of police reform, for example, there is little coordination among the main donors—France, EU, South Africa, Angola and MONUC police—on the training provided and the nature of the force being trained (International Crisis Group 2006, 6). What coordination there is has occurred bilaterally, and in Kinshasa (International Crisis Group, 6).

### *UN Security and Stabilization Support Strategy*

Beginning in 2008 and in response to humanitarian needs and increasing instability, the UN country team—led by MONUC—initiated its UN security and stabilization support strategy (UNSSS) for eastern DRC. The strategy aims to restore security and state authority, IDP returns, and economic recovery. Economic recovery includes regaining control of mines currently controlled by armed groups and ensuring state collection of taxes from resource exploitation (United Nations 2009, S/2009/335, paras. 44–48).

Attempts to develop and (politically) implement the UNSSS have been hampered by lack of funding. In order to secure funds for developing the strategy, “a significant amount of senior leadership time and attention had to be diverted to fundraising, with no ‘start-up’ funds, and no resource slack available to the mission to do this. Secondly, the so-called ‘Amani superstructure’ for implementation of this strategy required UN staff to either chair, or shadow organs and sub-organs. Staff were not available, posts did not exist, and the process for the SRS to secure new posts is slow and inflexible” (Chandran et al., CIC 2008, 42).

### **Kosovo**

The UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is an exception in terms of the executive authority granted by Security Council Resolution 1244 (June 1999), but its method of rebuilding the corrections service is worthy of discussion, especially in terms of training, oversight, evaluation, and transfer of authority.

The transfer of authority discussion must be placed in the context of UNMIK’s mandate, which distinguished between “the establishment, pending a final settlement, of substantial autonomy and

self-government in Kosovo”; “the development of provisional institutions for democratic and autonomous self-government”; and “transferring, as these institutions are established, its administrative responsibilities while overseeing and supporting the consolidation of Kosovo’s local provisional institutions” (United Nations 1999, S/RES/1244, para. 11). This distinction established phased stages of SSR that, for better or worse, aimed to build capacity prior to transferring authority (Scheye, 2008, 175–177). In contrast, a common recommendation is to prioritize the early transfer of authority which, it is argued, will more rapidly generate ownership and capacity. Therefore, the cohesive strategy and structure of corrections service reform is an exception and stands in contrast to the lack of strategy and inefficiency associated with police and justice reform initiatives.

### *Kosovo Corrections Service*

The development of Kosovo Corrections Service (KCS), through the support of the Prison Management Division (PMD) of UNMIK, has been one of the operation’s more successful elements of SSR. Although initial phase was halted due to lack of planning and resources, the first international personnel arrived in October 1999 and by 2002 KCS had hired 819 personnel and assumed control of the prisons—an astounding timeframe. The staff gender balance is appropriately proportional to the number of female prisoners, and performance has been assessed as “well above the regional norm” (Scheye, 2008, 185–186).

KCS is acknowledged to have had two elements—maintained throughout the seven-year process—which contributed to its relative success: 1) a comprehensive prison management plan; and 2) KCS development by a single team (PMD) throughout the process (Scheye, 2008, 185–188).

The prison management system plan was developed at the beginning of UNMIK and implementers carried out the plan in its entirety, subject to annually developed institutional target objectives. The PMD did not allow lack of resources to stop the initial implementation, for example, opening the first penal facility in November 1999 even though UN funds were not made available until the budget was approved in February 2010.

Essential steps toward implementation of the strategy included the development of job descriptions, standard operating procedures, and wide-ranging managerial policies, which were introduced systematically. Social workers and medical teams were hired and trained within the context of existing resources. Plans for transferring authority from PMD to KCS were developed and implemented for individual facilities within a comprehensive plan, beginning in 2001. This transfer plan involved three months of training staff under UNMIK authority, three months of “co-work,” and three months of mentorship during which the KCS facilities manager held executive authority. Another critical step was PMD’s development of an “internal prison inspection, audit and compliance system” that included indicators such as the number of attempted escapes, prisoner complaints (number and type), quality of intelligence information on inmate population, medical complaints and treatments (number and type), prisoner visits (number), and inmate self-harming incidents (number) (Scheye 2008, 186–187).

PMD retained managerial control of KCS development throughout the process and personally interviewed corrections officers to ensure consistency in practice and appropriate skills. This

helped to ensure that the skills of SSR assistance providers matched what was needed by the context (Scheye 2008, 187).

### **Sierra Leone<sup>19</sup>**

Sierra Leone's initiative, with United Kingdom support, to decentralize governing authority in its post-conflict stabilization environment can be thought of in two parts: 1) the reconstitution of the informal paramount chieftom system in the initial phase of the stabilization intervention and 2) the creation of town and district councils through the Local Government Act of 2004, which passed in March 2004. Local government elections to decide seats on district councils were held the following May.

The legislation and subsequent constitution of district councils and support to rebuild the traditional paramount chieftom system reflects several challenges in the post-conflict governance context of Sierra Leone: the need to establish security immediately and the difficulty of measuring the intentions of informal security providers, the difficulty of identifying security providers who have not been a cause of or a threat during the conflict, and the difficulty of reflecting the will of the populace in new legislation when legislation is controlled by self-interested (and possibly corrupt) political elites who may have contributed to the conflict.

On the one hand, the gradually increasing centralization of government power following independence 1961, including the abolition of local government in 1972, was a major source of political tension and instability that contributed to the conflict. On the other hand, one of the effects of the original chieftom system was abuse of authority through arbitrary fines and alienation of youth through labor "contracts" in exchange for land—also a major cause of the conflict. Following the conflict, however, there was consensus that power needed to be decentralized again, and there was really no other immediately available option to improve security during the initial phase of the United Kingdom's stabilization intervention (Jackson 2005, 58; author interviews).<sup>20</sup> The Local Government Act was a means of linking the chiefs with statutory local governing bodies—an often stated policy recommendation intended to strengthen formal oversight of informal networks. The Act created town and district councils that would collaborate with—as opposed to supplant or usurp power from—paramount chiefs on issues such as taxes and planning. The paramount chiefs, however, viewed the introduction of the district councils as a potential threat to their power and immediately sought permanent seats on the councils (which they did receive).

Attempts were made to collect nation-wide input into the composition of the councils through an extensive consultation performed by Sierra Leone's Ministry of Local Government and Community Development. Although the district level votes were close, the results were clear and reflected popular will through three concrete recommendations: non-party elections for district

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<sup>19</sup> This case example is largely excerpted from Paul Jackson, "Chiefs, Money and Politicians: Rebuilding Local Government in Post-War Sierra Leone." *Public Administration & Development*, February 2005, 25 (1): 49-58.

<sup>20</sup> For added complexity, it is worth noting that although the chiefs were a source of conflict, they also command respect from the community, particularly among elders. For one more layer, the "traditional" label of the chiefs comes not from Sierra Leoneans themselves but British recognition of them in the Hut Tax War of 1898. Chiefs are elected from a hereditary line of up to three families. Paramount chiefs maintained local order during British rule through monitoring, taxing, and reporting on migration activities (Jackson 2005, 53).

councils, no reserved seats for paramount chiefs, and special representation of women, youth, and disabled war victims. Ultimately, however, these options were rejected by the officials drafting the Local Government Act (Jackson 2005, 51–52).

The example demonstrates how local parties will attempt to further their own interests, in this case augmented resources for the stabilization intervention. Sierra Leonean officials knew that donors favored decentralization, and therefore “certainly knew that this was a route to obtain external funding” and there was “an incentive for official to ‘say the right things’ to external donors” (Jackson 2005, 51). Furthermore, given complicated national and local political dynamics, it is difficult to assess the degree to which government officials and the populace (through the district vote) truly favored the proposed system or whether they expected it to be a source of tension. Controversial and major policies should be especially careful to understand the context of political sensitivities, authorities, and community perceptions of decision-makers, those benefiting from the policy, and the policy itself (Jackson 2005, 57).

Second, reformers should be aware that decentralizing authority can be just as easily manipulated and abused at the local level as authority can at the national level. Perhaps there were few other options for establishing immediate security, but local governance reform offered an opportunity to improve upon abusive practices and introduce oversight to the paramount chiefs.

Although the UK, through DFID’s support of the Justice Sector Development Programme, intended to reform the justice sector (including the chieftain system) through training, it lagged far behind other SSR efforts that began in 1999. Delaying justice reform until 2005 allowed several years of chiefs’ consolidation of authority. Recent surveys present differing views of the chiefs in Sierra Leonean communities. One 2006 study painted a picture of corruption, abuse of power, and lack of respect for human rights, particularly gender equality (Rennie, 2006, 5–8). A second study in 2008 seemed to present more positive perceptions of paramount chiefs but was a more objective portrayal of public *use* of various justice mechanisms rather than a qualitative survey of public *perceptions* of legitimacy (Sierra Leone, 2008, 65–67).

## **ITERATIVE LESSONS OBSERVED**

The case examples demonstrate that much of the guidance for designing, planning, and implementing SSR in stabilization environments is valid. They also demonstrate, however, the need for a thorough understanding of complex environments and that guidance can never be blindly implemented—however well-intentioned it may be.

SSR in stabilization environments requires coordination on multiple levels: among international actors, and between donors and host governments, donors and local populations, and civilian and military capacities. Various coordination mechanisms are available, and the context dictates what will be most effective. If the Congolese government prefers to meet bilaterally, and that allows reform to proceed (and security to improve) more rapidly, then that is possibly the best way of moving the reform agenda forward for the benefit of the populace even if it is not an optimal or ideal strategy.

There is also need to balance planning and flexibility. A strategy and a defined end state can allow reform to progress more efficiently and effectively under most circumstances. But with limited resources and a rapidly changing environment, planning in too much detail or too far in advance will be a waste of time and resources.

Whenever undertaking SSR in a stabilization environment, donors must ask a series of questions to determine whether support is appropriate. Those doing the asking must understand the resources and commitment involved with SSR, especially in stabilization environments with a collapsed or extremely weak government. Insufficiently comprehensive initial assessments will likely underestimate the risk involved in undertaking SSR as well as the resources required. And not following through with governance reform and institution building as well as improving the operational effectiveness of security forces will ultimately do more harm than good.

SSR in stabilization environments requires careful consideration of how to engage with informal security and justice providers. Donors should understand that such actors will have varying degrees of legitimacy—including substantial legitimacy—and they should assess how engaging with particular actors will be perceived by the populace and potentially affect security in the short, medium, and long term.

Those providing assistance must be able to identify the leaders who are committed to reform and professionalism for the sake of improved security for local populations. Those leaders should be the owners of the security sector reform process.

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