



# **Security System Reform: What Have We Learned?**

RESULTS AND TRENDS FROM THE PUBLICATION  
AND DISSEMINATION OF THE OECD DAC HANDBOOK  
ON SECURITY SYSTEM REFORM

# Security System Reform: what have we learned?

## Lessons from the publication and dissemination of the OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform

### Context

This report<sup>1</sup> focuses on the lessons learnt from the responses from donor/agency headquarters and partner countries to the publication and dissemination of the *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform*<sup>2</sup> (the SSR Handbook) from April 2007 to April 2009. In response to an OECD INCAF<sup>3</sup> Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) objective to report back to members on the dissemination of the SSR Handbook, this report also more broadly considers key issues relating to the impact of the measures advocated in the SSR Handbook.

### 1. Introduction

A better understanding of the responses to the SSR Handbook can provide important insights for OECD DAC members and other parties involved in donor programmes. In particular, this understanding can help to inform future donor activities and approaches by considering how the SSR Handbook can bridge gaps between SSR policy and practice. To lay the foundation of assessing progress by headquarters and partner countries in following the best practices outlined in the SSR Handbook, this publication begins by summarising the objectives and key findings that have emerged. It then examines the responses to dissemination to date, distinguishing between those at donor/agency headquarters and those of SSR

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper was authored by Rory Keane (OECD) and Alan Bryden (DCAF). An earlier draft was presented at the March 2009 OECD INCAF Task Team meeting and substantial feedback was received from members and incorporated into this final version. This final version was approved by OECD INCAF members meeting on 3, 4 November 2009. A special thanks to Ms. Isabel Huber (OECD) for editorial support.

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

<sup>3</sup> INCAF refers to the International Network on Conflict and Fragility. INCAF was founded in 2009 in order to help improve international responses to the most challenging development settings and to chart results. It brings together experts from governments and international organisations on issues of security, peacebuilding and statebuilding.

programmes in the field. Further, this report addresses transversal priorities outlined in the SSR Handbook, which include the challenges of bringing about coherence /co-ordination and enhanced SSR capacities, and the importance of addressing security system *governance* concerns, and supporting local ownership. The concluding section builds on this analysis to identify opportunities that can support the further operationalisation of the SSR Handbook.

The OECD DAC has been leading donor work on Security System Reform (SSR) for almost a decade. Significant milestones include: the 2001 *DAC Guidelines: Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*;<sup>4</sup> the revised 2004 guidelines on *Security System Reform and Governance: Policy and Good Practice*;<sup>5</sup> the elaboration in 2005 of the definition of official development assistance (ODA) to include several SSR elements;<sup>6</sup> the SSR Handbook in 2007; and the addition of chapters on “Integrating Gender Awareness and Equality”<sup>7</sup> and “Monitoring and Evaluation” in 2009/2010. Thorough

---

<sup>4</sup> OECD DAC, *Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation in The DAC Guidelines: Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*, 119 (Paris: OECD DAC, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> OECD DAC, *Security System Reform and Governance*, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series (OECD DAC, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> The definition of ODA was clarified to include programmes focusing on security expenditure management, the role of civil society in the security sector, legislation on child soldiers, SSR, civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, and control of small arms and light weapons. Specifically, it was agreed that SSR “to improve democratic governance and civilian control” is ODA-eligible. See: OECD DAC, ‘Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: What Counts as ODA?’ OECD DAC, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/32/34535173.pdf>.

Also see the OECD DAC ODA Casebook on Conflict, Peace and Security Activities. This casebook is a compendium of examples submitted by members of expenditure in the field of conflict, peace and security. Secretariat comments are provided on each case as a guide to ODA eligibility and reporting. [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/21/39967978.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/21/39967978.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Through the process of dissemination at field and headquarters level, it became clear that despite initial efforts to integrate gender into the entire Handbook, it remained a crucial gap. In response to feedback from a large range of SSR practitioners, the decision was taken to commission an additional chapter, entitled ‘integrating Gender Awareness and Equality’. This is consistent with the aim of creating a handbook that meets the changing needs of SSR donors and is open to revision and updating. Chapter 9 consists of five sections, which set out a range of conceptual and practical information on gender issues for SSR practitioners and policy-makers, including on concrete entry-points for the integration of gender into different sectors such as police, intelligence and defense reform. After a review process, the chapter was adopted by OECD DAC members in December 2008. In order to support dissemination at both headquarters and field level, it will be included in the handbook webpage, translated into French, and integrated into online PDF versions of the handbook.

assessments of the challenges associated with justice and security service delivery was also conducted in 2007 and 2009 respectively.<sup>8</sup>

Building on the 2005 Guidelines, the Network for Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation (now INCAF) has worked to develop an operational handbook to help donors implement SSR at field-level in line with international norms and standards. After an extensive period of consultations – including those with recognised experts and partners from the South – the SSR Handbook was officially endorsed by OECD DAC Ministers and Heads of Agency on 4 April 2007. It has since been translated into English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, and an Arabic summary is also available. Following its publication, the handbook was extensively disseminated in donor capitals and across the broader international community.

The DAC Guidelines and SSR Handbook have also contributed to the development of related policy frameworks, including various bilateral donor countries' SSR Strategies, the European Union Concept papers on SSR,<sup>9</sup> as well as the first ever United Nations Secretary General's Report on SSR.<sup>10</sup>

## **2. The OECD DAC SSR Handbook – an overview**

The SSR Handbook builds on over a decade of policy work by the OECD, but also marks a clear shift from promoting guidelines to developing tools that facilitate better SSR implementation. The handbook's overall objective has been to distil SSR good practices and lessons learned into a guide that would provide practical guidance "to ensure that donor support to SSR programmes is both effective and

---

<sup>8</sup> OECD DAC, *Enhancing Security and Justice Service Delivery*, Paris: OECD DAC (2007). In addition, in 2009, OECD published a consultant's report which outlines options for security and justice service delivery via non-state actors. The report also critiques the merits and shortcomings of the alternative of contracting out. See Eric Scheye, "State provided service, contracting out and non-state networks" (2009), [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/8/43599221.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/8/43599221.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Council of the European Union, *EU Concept for ESDP Support to Security Sector Reform*, 12566/4/05 REV 4, Brussels, 13 October 2005; European Commission, *A Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform*, COM (2006)253 Final, Brussels, 24 May 2006; Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on a Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform*, 2736<sup>th</sup> General Affairs Council Meeting, Luxembourg, 12 June 2006.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Report of the Secretary-General, "Securing Peace and Development: the Role of the United Nations in Supporting Security Sector Reform," S/2008/39, 23 January 2008.

sustainable.”<sup>11</sup> The SSR Handbook thus lays down the essential elements for the assessment, design and implementation of SSR programmes in the framework of security and justice service delivery, with the aim of setting the norm and bringing about behavioural change.

Key elements of the handbook include:

**Fostering a supportive political environment** through in-depth knowledge of a given reform context in order for international actors to avoid exacerbating domestic divisions and capitalise on opportunities to put SSR on the national agenda. The SSR Handbook emphasises that while profoundly established security, political and economic conditions can only to a certain extent be influenced by external actors, it is critical to take these into account if appropriate entry points for SSR are to be identified. Context-specific knowledge and expertise is essential to the assessment process and subsequent design of SSR programmes.

To ensure sustainable SSR programmes, the SSR Handbook emphasises **local ownership**, built on a foundation of high and meaningful participation by domestic stakeholders. This implies that resources provided to support SSR must be tailored to the capacities and budget limitations of national authorities and that, more broadly, adopting a long-term approach is vital. Building national capacities to manage and oversee security and justice provision represents a major component of sustainable SSR programming. Rendering local ownership operational therefore requires a significant culture change in donor behaviour that moves away from narrow timeframes, tight budget cycles and the demand for short-term, output-driven results.

The SSR Handbook provides significant depth on the sector-by-sector implementation of SSR. Moreover, by adopting a common approach across different sectors such as defense, police, justice or intelligence, issues are framed in a way that stresses the **holistic nature of the reform process**. This emphasis reinforces the need to **integrate sectoral reforms** while also pointing to specific fields – such as justice and prisons reform – that need to be aligned.

Mainstreaming democratic oversight and accountability of the security system is a key objective of the SSR Handbook. In enhancing **security system governance** the oversight roles of parliaments, the judiciary, civil society, and other relevant actors must be supported and prioritised. A holistic, governance-focused approach to democratic oversight and accountability also requires engaging the full range of

---

<sup>11</sup> *Key Policy and Operational Commitments from the Implementation Framework for Security System Reform (IF-SSR)*; Ministerial Statement signed in Paris by OECD DAC Ministers and Heads of Agency, 4 April 2007.

influential and very context-specific stakeholders in security system governance, which should also include different non-state actors from civil society groups to armed non-state actors in security and justice delivery.

**Monitoring, review and evaluation** are critical yet under-explored aspects of SSR programming, lacking tailored, SSR-specific guidance. The SSR Handbook underlines that review and evaluation of SSR programmes should not occur at the end of an SSR process, but throughout – closely linked to the capacities of local stakeholders.

Leveraging the right mix of **human and financial resources** is a condition for effective, sustainable SSR. The SSR handbook highlights many implications, which include multidisciplinary skill sets and pooled resources.<sup>12</sup> Canada, Denmark, the European Community, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom provide examples of “whole of government” or “whole of system” approaches, and show how indispensable co-ordinated financing is to overall coherence.

The handbook provides guidance on the need to integrate SSR in the broader framework of **post-conflict peacebuilding**. It argues for the development of synergies between SSR and closely related issues, such as transitional justice, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, and small arms and light weapons control. It also reinforces the need to mainstream cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, children’s rights, conflict prevention and human rights.

### **3. Lessons learnt from the SSR Handbook dissemination response: a review**

A central goal of the SSR Handbook is to support greater coherence and co-ordination across the SSR donor community by shaping policies and encouraging positive behavioural change. To help reach this goal, a two-year dissemination campaign focused at both headquarters and field operations accompanied the publication of this handbook. This section draws on feedback from DAC members and reporting from the dissemination campaign to identify relevant findings and lessons.

#### *3.1 Shaping policies at headquarters*

To promote the adoption of SSR best practice by donor and international actors, the SSR Handbook was launched and extensively promoted at headquarters-level. The European Union, NATO, the United Nations, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, the

---

<sup>12</sup> For more detailed information on pooled financing, see “Mapping of Donor Modalities and Financing for Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention and Security System Reform,” April 2009, DCD/DAC/INCAF (2009) 2.

Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US all launched the Handbook at their donor/agency headquarters.

Drawing on this process at headquarters level, the following observations can be made:

- SSR is a higher priority at donor/agency headquarters. In general, this has resulted in increased resources (both staff and financial) committed to SSR policy development and programming (Annex A). OECD SSR policy guidelines and the SSR Handbook have become key reference materials for SSR policies and programming guidelines at headquarters. This is explicitly recognised in national policy frameworks for SSR, as well as those of the European Union and the United Nations.<sup>13</sup>
- There is widespread recognition that there can be no security without development, and no development without security. A notable shift has taken place in donor agencies, with many OECD DAC donor agencies beginning to integrate SSR as a core component of development assistance. SSR is seen as an important tool for development agencies in their efforts to prevent conflict and build peace. This represents a fundamental change from the late 1990's, when SSR was still considered in many donor/agency headquarters to be outside the development discourse and programming.
- The role of SSR in relation to the security-development nexus is directly linked to the prominence of “whole of government” and “whole of system” approaches that seek to ensure that development agencies work on SSR matters in coherence with relevant counterparts. SSR plays a prominent role in initiatives of fostering inter-agency approaches to international responses to conflict and fragility among governments and multilateral institutions. Significantly, whole of government support to partner countries’ institutions and capacities in the area of security and justice forms a key recommendation within the “3Cs” roadmap agreed at an international conference in Geneva co-convened by the Swiss Government, NATO, the OECD, the UN and World Bank in March 2009.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> According to the European Commission, the DAC SSR guidelines and good practices “provide an important basis for EC engagement in this area in terms of norms, principles and operational guidance” *European Commission* (2006): p.6. The United Nations Secretary-General’s Report on SSR notes that the OECD DAC “has formulated comprehensive guidelines on security system reform and governance and has produced a handbook to guide their implementation” (S/2008/39, 23 January 2008).

<sup>14</sup> The 3Cs Conference hosted by the Government of Switzerland and held in Geneva between 19-20 March 2009 brought together members of defense, development,

- There is a need for greater SSR operational co-ordination between agencies. Such co-ordination would, for example, enable donor agencies to share expert staff and advisors when required. A number of donors, including the Netherlands, the UK and Canada, have made considerable progress in this regard through the creation of expert cross-ministerial SSR teams, and linked programming and budgetary mechanisms. However, for such co-ordination to be effective, common work and programming procedures are required. While progress is welcome, much work still lies ahead: Donor agencies still tend to fund training and equipment above and beyond reforms seeking to enhance security system governance, such as capacity development, in order to enhance oversight, control and management within a ministry. Meanwhile, certain sectors such as justice and penal reform remain consistently underfunded.
- There is a growing realisation that SSR requires both quick wins and a long term commitment. Those working on SSR at headquarters are increasingly aware of the need to show quick wins that can build trust with local populations on the ground, while remaining mindful of the long-term commitment SSR processes entail. Nevertheless, due to financing limitations, procedures and mandates, international and national actors sometimes neglect to balance quick wins with sustainable activity, or fail to remain engaged in the longer term due to mandate limitations or faltering political commitments by donor governments.

### *3.2 Supporting behavioural change in the field*

The OECD Secretariat, based on the SSR Handbook, has made a concerted effort to support behavioural change in stakeholders on the ground, and SSR capacity building with partner governments. This process has been taken forward through innovative SSR in-country consultations that took place in Burundi (December 2007), the Central African Republic (January 2008), Guinea Bissau (March 2008) and Bolivia (October 2008). These four countries were chosen on the basis of (i) host government invitations, (ii) the existence of ongoing donor-supported SSR processes, (iii) sufficient local political will for reform on the ground, and (iv) evidence of concerted donor interest and an underlying need for increased SSR support. In addition to these in-country consultations, country-level SSR capacity building was provided by the OECD Secretariat to the Economic Community for the

---

diplomatic, finance and economic, humanitarian and justice and police communities to seek ways to improve responses to fragile and conflict situations. The “3 Cs” denote coherent, co-ordinated and complementary approaches. See: [www.3C-Conference2009.ch](http://www.3C-Conference2009.ch).

Central African Region (ECCAC),<sup>15</sup> the Organisation of American States (OAS),<sup>16</sup> the African Union (AU)<sup>17</sup> and NATO PfP Trust Fund partners.<sup>18</sup>

Based on the application of the handbook at field-level, a number of practical lessons and important challenges have been identified. These include:

- It is important to spend time nurturing the political process. In-country political processes may be time-consuming, but are key components of sustainable SSR. In the Central African Republic (CAR), the political process leading to the conception and roll-out of the national SSR strategy was complex, but critical. In CAR, efforts supported by the UNDP to structure the relationship between the national SSR Commission and the international community, and ensuring broad national representation were identified as critical factors. Common efforts across all consultations were to include civil society – women’s groups and minorities, among others – and to organise SSR sensitisation campaigns.
- A key challenge remains ensuring that SSR programmes are context-specific. Consultations in Guinea-Bissau were particularly useful in highlighting gaps in the national security strategy – such as a lack of focus on parliamentary oversight or on security challenges brought about by narcotics and organised crime. Similarly, the Bolivia consultation underlined criminality as a central challenge that needs to be addressed through SSR.
- It is evident that SSR is moving from the periphery to the core of programming: SSR is no longer a fringe project, but has become a central donor priority on the ground. For example, the Bolivia consultation underlined that development programmes will be less effective if not better harmonised with SSR. Similarly, actors and donors such as the UNDP and European Commission in the CAR, the Netherlands in Burundi, or the UK in Guinea-Bissau have invested heavily in SSR programmes. Partner countries have also started to build SSR into national governance strategies, while UN Security Council Resolutions increasingly reference SSR as a priority. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a holistic approach to

---

<sup>15</sup> The OECD secretariat supported the first ever ECCAS regional meeting on SSR in January 2009 in Kinshasa, DRC.

<sup>16</sup> The OECD secretariat has briefed the OAS on SSR and public security in 2008/2009.

<sup>17</sup> The OECD secretariat has indirectly provided technical support to the AU and also to the African Security Sector Network (ASSN).

<sup>18</sup> The OECD secretariat has work with the NATO international secretariat and NATO’s economic committee on issues relating to SSR.

SSR in Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSPs), as in the example of the CAR, is still rare.

- The “co-ordinate or be co-ordinated” syndrome remains prevalent. Putting effective SSR donor co-ordination mechanisms in place has in many cases proved difficult because of competition over who should play the co-ordination role. This appears to remain a widespread challenge for both DAC and non-DAC donors on the ground. Overcoming co-ordination dilemmas will require context-specific solutions, underpinned by practical, trust-driven co-ordination mechanisms. In some cases, consultations highlighted the absence of such structures and the consequent need to form an SSR donor co-ordination group linked to national counterparts.
- Donors on the ground need to continue to develop their own vision on how best to support and align themselves to national SSR processes (and thus to avoid harmful gaps between expectations and activities). In line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, donors are making a concerted effort to align their programming to national processes. Within the sphere of SSR, such alignment is demonstrated by the development of specialised joint working committees on sectors such as police, justice and defense. SSR clearing-house mechanisms developed jointly between donor governments and national authorities are emerging to support more coherent approaches.
- A shared in-country SSR vision is critical. All consultations showed that national authorities need to develop a clear medium- to long-term SSR vision for their country (this could take the form of a national security strategy, for example). Donor-supported reform programmes need to fit into this government-established SSR vision, based on a broad consultative process. In CAR, for example, the consultation around the SSR Handbook consisted of an initial mapping of key national and international actors that fed into the work of the national SSR Committee, and in particular into preparations for the national SSR seminar. Such a vision should support the processes of prioritising and sequencing reforms, and enabling different social groups to buy into the reform process. An SSR vision document can equally provide a solid basis for political dialogue between donors and national authorities, and for the development of SSR benchmarks.

#### **4. Transversal SSR Handbook priorities**

A number of the findings are common to both the measures advocated in the SSR Handbook and the response to its subsequent dissemination. These transversal issues address challenges and opportunities of SSR support through new insights into SSR best practice. These include: *coherence/co-ordination, the SSR resource pool, security sector governance, and local ownership.*

#### 4.1 Coherence/Co-ordination

The SSR Handbook seeks to promote coherence in support for SSR among DAC members. In conjunction with the DAC guidelines, this provides a common understanding of SSR in order to foster approaches that integrate different sectoral activities. However, this approach has not translated into programming, and key areas of the SSR agenda receive insufficient attention. In particular, international efforts too often focus on police and military reform, at the expense of the criminal justice sector and wider efforts to support the rule of law. Penal reform represents an area that, while considered an integral part of SSR on policy level, is not integrated on the level of SSR or penal reform practitioners.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, while a number of important tools have been developed to support gender mainstreaming in SSR, much work remains to be done in practice.<sup>20</sup>

It is evident that comprehensive and exhaustive SSR assessment missions are a vital donor prerequisite to coherent SSR programming. The SSR Handbook emphasises that greater effort is required to move away from sector-specific assessment missions and towards more comprehensive SSR assessment missions. An over-reliance on sector-specific assessments has the effect of distorting the intensity and order in which reforms are undertaken. Greater effort is generally required to ensure that the assessment teams represent the range of necessary expertise. Regional knowledge and local language skills are at a particular premium. Equally important, assessment missions need to take enough time (maybe weeks, maybe months) to gauge the reality on the ground. To date, the criteria for SSR assessment missions tend to focus on what to do. While this is certainly important, assessment criteria also need to include the option of doing nothing under certain specific circumstances (in line with the 'do no harm' principle).

To support coherent approaches in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action,<sup>21</sup> international actors should operate

---

<sup>19</sup> For example, the SSR Handbook does not currently form part of the online library of the International Prisons and Corrections Association ([www.icpa.org](http://www.icpa.org)), the global network for prison professionals.

<sup>20</sup> Section 9 of the SSR Handbook, "Integrating Gender Awareness and Equality", was published in January 2009 and represents a step forward in addressing this issue.

<sup>21</sup> The *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* was endorsed on 2 March 2005 by over one hundred Ministers, Heads of Agency and other senior officials. The *Accra Agenda for Action* was drawn up in 2008 and builds on the commitments contained in the Paris Declaration. See: [www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_3236398\\_35401554\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html)

within agreed co-ordination mechanisms. The nature of the INCAF network in itself provides a vehicle to support better policy coherence and co-ordination on SSR. On the level of SSR programming, the creation of an International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT) within the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF) provides additional SSR capacity for the international community.<sup>22</sup>

Supporting greater coherence includes the need to better situate SSR in broader peacebuilding and statebuilding agendas. The SSR Handbook emphasises interconnected peacebuilding challenges, echoed by the Presidential Statement from the Open Debate in the UN Security Council on SSR that stressed the importance for the Security Council to "recognises the inter-linkages between security sector reform and other important factors of stabilisation and reconstruction, such as transitional justice, disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation of former combatants, small arms and light weapons control, as well as gender equality, children and armed conflict and human rights issues".<sup>23</sup> Significantly, this has been followed up by the development of a module within the UN's *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards* that provides practical guidance for policy makers, operational planners and practitioners on the DDR-SSR nexus.<sup>24</sup> Ongoing work as part of the OECD INCAF PWB for 2009/10 on linkages between SSR and armed violence reduction offers an opportunity to build further synergies between related issues from a people-centred perspective.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> ISSAT is a multi-donor initiative whose current membership consists of 14 countries (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Switzerland, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and 5 multilateral actors and agencies including the European Commission, UNDP, UN DPKO, UN DPA and the OECD. The ISSAT was created to support both donors and multilateral partners in line with best practice such as the SSR Handbook through four core services: advisory field support, operational guidance tools, knowledge services and training support. See: [www.dcaf.ch/issat](http://www.dcaf.ch/issat)

<sup>23</sup> *Statement by the President of the Security Council* at the 5632<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Security Council, held on 20 February 2007, S/PRST/2007/3 (21 February 2007)

<sup>24</sup> See: [www.iddrs.org](http://www.iddrs.org)

<sup>25</sup> This work builds on OECD DAC, *Armed Violence Reduction (AVR), Enabling Development* (Paris: OECD DAC, 2009). With support from the Netherlands' government INCAF is currently preparing a programming note on the inter-linkages between AVR and SSR.

## 4.2 The SSR resource pool

SSR support requires the deployment of a range of different capacities: SSR is first and foremost a political process that requires careful political analysis and judgment on the side of the donor. In some cases, those working on SSR at headquarters still lack sufficient in-country political knowledge – a prerequisite for successful support to SSR programmes on the ground – despite the possibility of financial and expert resources at headquarters.

A growing number of private sector organisations, NGOs and individual consultants operate within the SSR field, and the EU, UN and the ISSAT have developed expert rosters that can also generate important “force multiplier” effects. Given expert staffing limitations, especially in donor agencies with historically little or no SSR capacity, increased use could be made of these capacities. If the emphasis in the SSR Handbook on high quality service delivery is to be achieved, donors have a clear responsibility to apply robust contracting procedures and ensure that work by all service providers is consistent with SSR good practice. In particular, donors should develop a joint vision with the partner government on how external expertise can be used to reinforce and develop national SSR capacities. The DAC Peer Review Process provides a useful tool to gauge donor implementation in this area, and assesses effectiveness against agreed criteria.<sup>26</sup>

A key means to building SSR capacities among both national and international actors is specialised SSR training. Donors increasingly realise and call for more concerted and effective SSR training for staff at headquarters and in the field that reflects the scope of SSR policy and programming. To this end, the OECD Secretariat has developed and piloted an SSR training module in English and French for OECD members. Building on these modules, organisations such as ISSAT have developed their own training packages. Other specialised training bodies include the Association for SSR Education and Training (ASSET),<sup>27</sup> a network of leading SSR training organisations from the North and South working towards a co-ordinated approach to SSR training and capacity development.

Despite the 2005 elaboration of the definition of ODA to include a wide spectrum of SSR activities, funding in many cases remains *ad hoc* and project-based, rather than

---

<sup>26</sup> See : [www.oecd.org/dac/peerreviews](http://www.oecd.org/dac/peerreviews)

<sup>27</sup> The Association for SSR Education and Training (ASSET) is a professional association of education and training organisations that supports the development of SSR capacity in governments, donors, security sector institutions, parliaments, civil society and international/regional organisations. Its membership spans the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. See: [www.asset-ssr.org](http://www.asset-ssr.org)

geared towards long-term programming commitments. Addressing this gap was one of the key arguments behind the development of the SSR Handbook. The handbook also emphasises that “great care should be taken to ensure that such assistance is eventually assimilated into government budgets and revenue streams so as to minimise the risk of creating fiscally unsustainable services”.<sup>28</sup> Addressing the continued shortfalls in the availability of adequate, timely and sustained resources thus represents a key challenge for both DAC and emerging donors. The establishment of consolidated multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs) at a country-level could do much to assist donor co-ordination and ensure the coherence of their activities.

#### *4.4 Promoting security system governance*

The SSR Handbook explicitly points out that SSR in the narrow sense of lending technical support to the military or other security bodies will fail to take account of the dynamic political environment. A narrow SSR focus also fails to address underlying gaps between the state, security system and society which are often at the root of conflict and fragility. There is thus a need to better understand and strengthen security system governance frameworks. Military and police experts tend to neglect the role of civilian authorities both to provide a strategic direction and leadership for security institutions and to manage these institutions. The role of parliaments remains under-emphasised. Weak line ministries risk creating “self-governed” security institutions and reinforce corporate behaviour – both of which are potential threats to stability and democracy.

International assistance needs to focus on strengthening capacities of civil servants, political leaders and oversight bodies to ensure that they have the understanding and the tools to steer the security system. A regional dimension to SSR is an important way to support these efforts. Increasing outreach to emerging donors, supporting the capacities and engagement of regional organisations in the South, and promoting South-South experience-sharing all represent means to enhance the sustainability and legitimacy of international SSR support.

At the heart of the security system governance agenda is the need to promote people-centred approaches to security. Too often, SSR tends to be confined to institutional reform, and does not focus on how individuals and communities experience security and justice. In other words, the human dimension of SSR tends to get lost. Placing people at the centre of an SSR process enables donors to better assess the security situation in a given context, and to address the different security needs and perceptions of women and men, boys and girls. A governance-focused

---

<sup>28</sup> OECD DAC (2007): p.105.

approach places particular emphasis on the need to link monitoring and evaluation of SSR to the impact of public service provision on individuals and communities.

#### 4.4 Local ownership

The OECD DAC and its membership have sought to put local ownership at the heart of international SSR policy and practice. SSR policy formulation and programme implementation by the international community includes donor country departments of justice, interior, police, and other uniformed and non-uniformed services, working directly with professionals within partner government structures. While this has widened the range of co-operation between development agencies and partner countries, it has not necessarily increased partner country ownership of and accountability for their SSR processes.

To mobilise greater levels of partner and donor country financial support for and political commitment to SSR, several challenges related to local ownership must be addressed. This will necessitate a paradigm shift that would, *inter alia*:

- Focus the donor intent on the context-specific challenges associated with local ownership;
- Focus more on community security needs, including justice and armed violence issues;
- Assist partner countries in setting their SSR approach and its relationship to governance, poverty reduction, and livelihoods;
- Address the challenges of donor co-ordination, harmonisation and alignment in different fragile and conflict-affected contexts;
- Address the public financial management challenges associated with managing donor support for SSR in ways that are transparent and accountable to parliaments and civil society more generally.

Up to now, the principle of local ownership in SSR has in some cases been understood to mean that there must be a high level of domestic political support for donor activities. This logic should be reversed: instead, donor support for the programmes and projects should be initiated by local state or community actors. This means that donor governments should facilitate partner country leadership in defining programmes developed, managed and implemented by domestic actors. Donor country development agencies and SSR specialists would not implement SSR; rather, in response to partner country leadership or demand, donor countries would adopt advisory or mentoring roles and drive partner country efforts to address the organisational change and political challenges central to SSR.

Some analysts point out that such an approach is complicated and potentially counter-productive due to (i) a lack of democracy in certain partner countries, which calls the legitimacy of local ownership into question, (ii) the absence of political leadership which makes local ownership improbable, or (iii) capacity gaps, which make local ownership unmanageable. However, as complicated and challenging as it may be, the state must not be bypassed or shadowed, but enhanced and legitimised, while the relationship of state and society with respect to security and justice should evolve along defined lines, owned and run by national governance processes.

## **5. Conclusion**

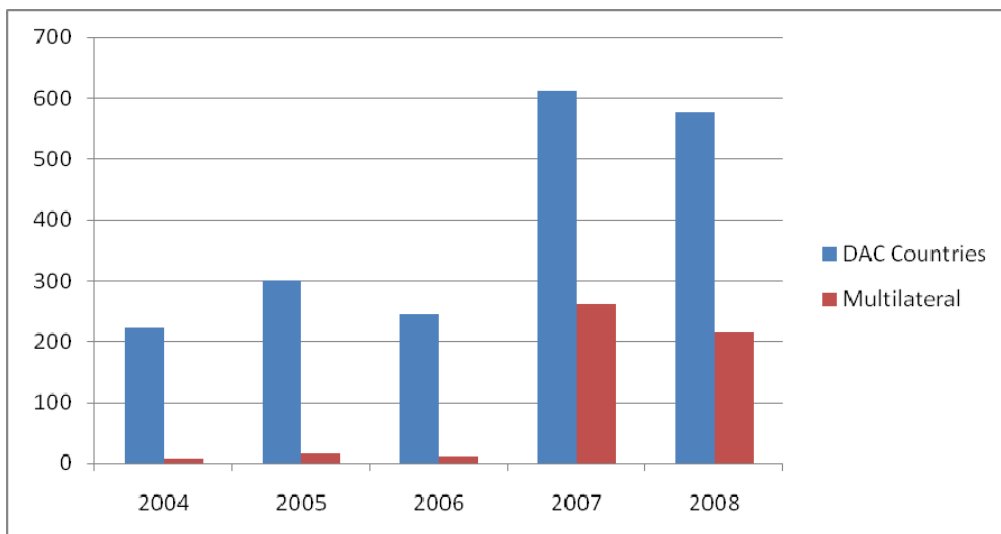
This paper considers the responses to the SSR Handbook, highlighting both positive trends as well as continued gaps between our understanding of good practice and its application. Addressing transversal issues succinctly captured in the 3Cs agenda represents an important way to bridge these gaps. Embracing the policy imperative to support democratic security system governance within SSR programming can help to ensure that security provision is properly linked to civil oversight and accountability. Moreover, feedback from headquarters and the field on the SSR Handbook offers a valuable frame of reference for the prioritisation and sequencing of further OECD DAC work in this area.

Continued dissemination of the SSR Handbook – which includes new chapters on integrating gender awareness and equality’ and monitoring and evaluation – remains a priority. This will help to promote a growing awareness that SSR activities must be better placed in a rule of law and human rights frameworks, and that policy development and operational support on the criminal justice sector must be further prioritised. Developing guidance on penal reform represents one priority area that could provide a catalyst for more effectively integrating this sector in a holistic SSR approach.

In conclusion, the concept of local ownership provides a common aspect running through the issues discussed in this report. While focusing on local ownership is central to the discourse on state- and peacebuilding, how it is treated in practice is especially significant in shaping the future evolution of the SSR agenda. Establishing local ownership requires the development of skills and an approach by the international community that have not been a priority in the past, as well as the inclusion of national capacity building at the heart of the SSR agenda. Furthermore, in the drive to realise demonstrable outputs, donors can diminish domestic legitimacy – a cornerstone of successful SSR. Instead, an ongoing domestic reform process should itself be seen as a result by donor country oversight bodies. Donors need to be more patient and spend more time supporting domestic processes rather than outputs. Evidence across a range of different contexts suggests that a

home-grown SSR process, no matter how imperfect or slow, will be more useful than an imposed process.<sup>29</sup> The implications of this shift in donor policies and programming are profound. But such a change is necessary if the growing commitment to SSR by OECD DAC members and the broader international community is to contribute to legitimate and sustainable reform processes.

Figure 1: Reported ODA expenditure under ODA code on security system management and reform from 2004-2008. Figures are expressed in millions, based in all cases on the mean value of the US dollar in 2006.



<sup>29</sup> For a comprehensive analysis that includes both policy perspectives on local ownership in SSR and case studies from Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe, see the DCAF 2008 Yearbook: Donais, T. (Ed.), *Local Ownership and SSR*, Lit Verlag, Munster, 2009.

# Security System Reform: What Have We Learned?

## RESULTS AND TRENDS FROM THE PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE OECD DAC HANDBOOK ON SECURITY SYSTEM REFORM

This lessons learned report begins by summarizing the objectives that underpinned the development of the OECD DAC Security System Reform Handbook. It then considers the dissemination of the Handbook to date, distinguishing between headquarters-focused activities and dissemination in relation to SSR programmes in the field. Transversal priorities addressed in the SSR Handbook are discussed in the penultimate section of the report. Issues include coherence/coordination dilemmas, the need for enhanced SSR capacities, the centrality of security system *governance* concerns, and the imperative to operationalise local ownership. The concluding section builds on this analysis to identify opportunities that can support the further enhancement of security system reform.