

Building institutions to protect: Security Sector Reform as necessary for implementation of 1325

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Abstract

The day-to-day performance of security sector institutions in conflict-affected countries is central to protection of women and girls from violence. As such, "security sector reform" (SSR) is crucial to successful implementation of 1325. Experience in 1325 implementation points to the need for integrated approaches, with attention to governance, oversight and accountability dimensions, led by local stakeholders. 1325 work may be strengthened through SSR approaches; at the same time, existing SSR must integrate 1325.

In this year of reflection on progress on 1325 implementation, many have noted that while there have been lots of initiatives, these have often not translated to improved protection for women and girls in conflict-affected countries. Two of the key challenges of 1325 implementation are the enduring lack of capacity of local institutions and the lack of sustainability of 1325 initiatives. At the same time, much of the attention on implementation of 1325 is on implementation within UN structures and UN forces, and implementation by donor states. Whilst important, the front line for protection of women and girls is more often the local police station or the local courthouse. As such, the day-to-day performance of the police, judiciary and armed forces in conflict-affected countries is crucial to successful implementation of resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889.

In forging new strategies to protect women and girls in conflict-affected contexts, we are ready to move beyond awareness-raising, beyond fragmented events and projects, and ready to work with constituencies beyond the women's rights community. The need is for sustainable, comprehensive change across all parts of the security sector in countries affected by conflict. Police services, armed forces, courts and other security sector institutions must be transformed from institutions that have marginalised women's needs and excluded women's participation, to institutions willing and able to protect women and girls from violence. Such changes will necessarily be gradual. They can be supported by the international community, but must be led by women and men in the government, ministries, institutions and offices concerned.

1325 1820, 1888 and 1889 as a mandate for security sector reform

Understanding that implementing 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 requires systemic, deep-rooted changes to how security sector institutions operate, we understand implementing the resolutions as a type of "security sector reform" (SSR). SSR is a process aimed at ensuring that security and justice providers:

- Deliver effective and efficient security and justice services that meet people's needs
- Are accountable to the state and its people
- Operate within a framework of democratic governance, without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Adopting an SSR approach in implementing the women, peace and security resolutions allows us to learn from the experiences of reforming the security sector to other ends. SSR is not by any means the only way to implement them, nor a vehicle for implementation of all parts of the resolutions, but it offers useful insights and principles to work by. The following highlights a number of challenges in implementation of 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 to discuss the relevance of SSR thinking to this area.

Emphasis on local ownership, including civil society involvement

1325 initiatives in conflict-affected countries are often instigated by the international community, whether the UN, EU or a bilateral donor. Too often the results are disappointing, due to a mismatch of expectations between the external agents and national stakeholders. The UN Stabilization Force in Haiti, for example, trained qualified female Haitian police officers on investigating crimes of gender based violence. Following their training, however, these women were relegated to administrative tasks, and were not able to put into

practice the skills they had learned (Pearson Peacekeeping Centre 2009). At other times, results might be good, but can be sustained only as long as the external project funding is provided.

External support to implementation of the resolutions is necessary. However, a heard-learnt lesson in the SSR community is that success depends upon 'local ownership': while external actors might support reform efforts, local actors must design, manage and implement reform for it to be effective and sustainable.

In promoting implementation of the women, peace and security resolutions, we should work closely with the institutions concerned - ministries, security services - but not set their agendas. We should develop the capacity of civil society organisations to engage in security debates and reform processes, but not tell them what their objectives should be. Fostering local ownership requires flexibility, a focus on process and a willingness to engage long-term.

Focus on oversight and accountability

Ensuring accountability for implementation of the women, peace and security resolutions is challenging. States that have adopted 1325 national action plans find it difficult to ensure that the commitments made are implemented throughout the different ministries involved. Only halting steps have been made toward using indicators to track 1325 implementation, and it is far from clear that these will foster meaningful institutional reform.

Accountability is a core concern of SSR. Security sector accountability and oversight procedures reduce impunity for human rights violations and help to ensure compliance with legal standards. As such, SSR looks at fostering accountability through both internal measures, such as compliance procedures and inspections, and external oversight by parliament, ombudspersons, the judiciary and/or civil society.

Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 do not necessarily demand a range of new accountability structures. Compliance with women, peace and security obligations could be monitored by the bodies tasked with monitoring compliance with human rights and other legal obligations. As such, human rights commissioners, ombudspersons, police inspectorates, parliamentary security committees and others who exercise oversight over the security sector should be new partners in 1325 implementation. In conflict-affected countries, (re-)building effective oversight of the security sector is a recurring challenge, but integrating women, peace and security issues within broader SSR efforts to improve accountability and oversight offers the potential for a sustainable impact beyond attempts at stand-alone 1325 monitoring.

A holistic, system-wide approach

Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 call for coordination of gender initiatives between different security sector institutions, welfare agencies, healthcare providers and NGO service providers. Structures to provide protection to victims of sexual violence in Timor Leste, for example, include a Vulnerable Persons Unit within the police force, a Safe Room in the national hospital, and involvement of NGOs in psychosocial counselling, a shelter, legal assistance, and awareness-building.

Furthermore, we increasingly understand the need for linkages between different security initiatives. For example, the return of ex-combatants to civilian communities has often resulted in increased levels of violence, including sexual violence. DDR programmes and transitional security arrangements need to be coordinated with community security initiatives that protect civilians within host communities from the threat of sexual violence, as well as with efforts to address proliferation of small arms and light weapons in communities (UNIFEM 2008; UNIFEM & DPKO 2010).

A core lesson learnt in SSR is that it must be addressed holistically, taking into account all institutions and actors that play a role in security sector governance. SSR programmes need to be designed and implemented in light of the complex interdependencies of the security sector. As such, taking time to gain buy-in from all relevant stakeholders, setting up mechanisms for coordination between different institutions and developing integrated strategies are necessary to success.

National Action Plans go some way to fostering this type of holistic approach and can aid coordination. But, we should go farther, by integrating gender reforms in the policy framework and development plans for all parts of the security sector. This is why it is crucial that SSR processes are gender-responsive, and include implementation of the women, peace and security resolutions. DCAF has recently launched an addition to

the *Gender and SSR Toolkit* on: 'Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Resolutions in Security Sector Reform'. This Tool sets out strategies to implement the resolutions in security policies, defence reform, police reform, justice reform, in preparation for peacekeeping and during armed conflict, as well as ways to increase participation of women in security processes and security sector institutions

For success in creating gender-responsive security institutions, one must look at ways to create an enabling environment – considering incentives, leadership, each institution and the system as a whole. Capacity building of civil society groups and state institutions alike must go beyond training on the provisions of the resolutions, to developing the ability of people and organisations to define strategies, set priorities, solve problems and achieve results.

Recommendations

1. The UN, EU and others supporting 1325 implementation should invest in strengthening police, armed forces, courts and other national security sector institutions in conflict-affected countries. Well-functioning security sector institutions are key to protecting women and girls from violence.
2. The UN, EU and others supporting 1325 implementation should work with relevant Ministries, local authorities and civil society organisations in conflict-affected countries. To be effective and sustainable, gender reform of national security sector institutions must be locally designed, managed and implemented.
3. Efforts to implement 1325 should build good governance, effective oversight and accountability of security sector institutions. 1325 requires institutional reform rather than isolated initiatives.
4. Efforts to implement 1325 should take a system-wide approach. Services provided by police, courts, welfare agencies, the NGO sector and informal security providers must be linked up to effectively protect women and girls from violence.
5. 1325 implementation should be integrated in all existing and planned security sector reform processes, including but not limited to those supported by the UN and EU.

References

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