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# INTERAGENCY SECURITY SECTOR ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

**GUIDANCE FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT**

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## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The United States Government (USG) has identified security sector reform (SSR) as a foreign assistance priority, as expressed in the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) joint *Strategic Plan 2007-2012*. In addition, the U.S. foreign assistance framework identifies SSR as a key program area in support of the Peace and Security foreign policy objective and security sector governance as a program element in support of the Governing Justly and Democratically foreign policy objective. The joint Department of State/USAID/Department of Defense (DoD) statement on SSR elevates the importance of interagency partnership to analyze the needs of and plan for SSR programs.<sup>1</sup>

U.S. security is enhanced by democratic security sector governance worldwide. There is growing awareness among security sector experts that a limited focus on improving law and order is not enough; fundamental reforms may be required. Such reforms include making structural changes in security policies, restructuring security sector organizations to improve their functioning, and ensuring that civilian authorities have the capacity to manage and oversee security organizations.<sup>2</sup> Every state has its share of obstacles to reform as well as opportunities for change. Detailed assessments of a host country's security and justice needs and priorities are therefore critical to effective USG support.

### Security Sector Assessments in a Nutshell

"Interagency analysis should be the basis for USG-wide programming decisions. Interagency SSR assessments may be initiated by the U.S. Chief of Mission in country or by any of the contributing USG agencies. Where possible and appropriate, an interagency team comprised of relevant USG agencies and offices should conduct the assessment. A thorough assessment will combine desktop study with field work and will map institutions and actors, identify capacity strengths and gaps, and prioritize entry points for SSR programs and activities. Assessment teams should consider U.S. foreign policy objectives; partner government capabilities, requirements, and resources; the possible contribution of other members of the international community; and community and individual security needs. Wherever possible, assessment teams should consider vulnerable groups and the security and justice issues that affect them."

— Joint USAID/Department of Defense/  
Department of State statement on SSR

Using an interagency approach to conduct a security sector reform assessment lays the foundation for enhanced coordination and effectiveness. While USAID, the Department of State, and DoD have taken the lead on developing this interagency security sector assessment framework (ISSAF), other USG departments and agencies<sup>3</sup> bring comparative strengths in planning, designing, and implementing security sector interventions. The ISSAF is a tool that enables an interagency team to assess security and justice concerns in states in every stage of development. It can function as a standalone tool, as a complement to related topical frameworks (such as a rule of law assessment tool), or as a link to broader assessment tools (such as the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework).

<sup>1</sup> The document is accessible at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/115810.pdf>, and the foreign assistance framework is accessible at <http://www.state.gov/f/c23053.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> *Promoting Security Sector Reform in Fragile States*, PN-ADC-778, USAID, April 2005.

<sup>3</sup> In this document, *agencies* refer to both departments and agencies.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the ISSAF is to provide a common foundation for USG agencies to assess a country's security and justice context and make strategic program recommendations. Assessments should inform the strategic planning process and underlie program design.

The ISSAF is divided into two parts:

1. A 10-step framework for analysis
2. Areas of inquiry with illustrative questions.

This document outlines key SSR concepts and a process for planning and conducting an interagency assessment. Supplementary assessment tools that focus on specific sub-sector institutions and topics (e.g., police, criminal justice, defense, maritime security sector reform, armed violence reduction, or gender) can be helpful in looking at particular subjects in greater detail. This broader assessment framework enables the assessment team to examine the linkages among various components of the security sector and to identify entry points for integrated programs.

The ISSAF is based on international best practices<sup>4</sup> and incorporates existing methodologies for analyzing the security sector in states receiving international assistance. It builds on previous efforts to provide common frameworks through which USG agencies can leverage comparative strengths to implement a whole-of-government approach.

## CONSIDERATIONS IN PLANNING AN ASSESSMENT

Successful assessments do not just happen; good results are a reflection of the planning and thought put into the assessment design. Preparations should consider who will participate, who the results are for, what the product will look like, where the assessment will take place, when it will occur, why it is being done, and how it will be supported in the field. The initiating entity should collaborate with relevant interagency personnel to determine terms of reference for the assessment, team composition, and use of the findings. Where possible, an interagency team composed of relevant USG agencies and offices should participate in the planning process to ensure a whole-of-government approach.

### Who? (The Team)

The assessment team will likely include personnel from the initiating agency, but inclusion of personnel from other USG agencies may provide additional expertise and experience. Whether as team participants or external advisors, staff from the U.S.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, *The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Action Committee Handbook on Security Sector Reform Supporting Security and Justice*, OECD, 2007, at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/25/38406485.pdf>.



embassy can offer invaluable expertise in a particular topic or on the operating environment. External experts with both country and subject matter knowledge are ideal team members. However, when it is difficult to identify a person with both, a subject-matter expert with regional experience or experience in countries with similar features can be a good second choice. If the budget is sufficient, an expert in the subject area can be teamed with country specialists. A combination of people who know the complexities of the situation and those with a newer perspective helps the team to view the sector objectively. It may be useful to invite other donor representatives for consultation or even to join the team. When working with interpreters, standard best practices should be employed to maintain integrity of intent.

An assessment team should include men and women. Pre-deployment activities for the assessment team should include a briefing or training on gender, including specific methodologies for collecting data on gender-based issues and from women and girls. Female interpreters can provide different perspectives than their male counterparts.

Host-country participation in some form is essential. Where possible, host-country views should influence how the assessment is conducted and how the deliverables will be used. Local experts can frame and clarify culture and context by interpreting terms of art and customary practices that international participants may not even realize are at play. They can open doors that would not otherwise be accessible to foreigners. However, host-country suspicion and distrust may be high, and the team may have to spend time educating local colleagues about the usefulness of the assessment. Teams should be aware of the lens through which host-country participants view their own country and government, as their perspective can shape which meetings are scheduled and how information is framed and interpreted. Assessment teams should extend their inquiries to include civil society groups and non-state actors involved with the security sector.

### **For Whom? (The Client)**

Identifying the client from the outset will help shape the agenda and the results in terms of the issues to be studied, the breadth and depth of those issues, and even the composition of the team. Clients typically include the host country government, the U.S. ambassador, the country team, a Washington agency, a military combatant command, and/or a donor group. A key issue to be answered as soon as possible is whether the assessment results will be classified. Ideally, the results of security sector assessments should remain unclassified to enable wider use, facilitate more effective knowledge-sharing, and promote transparency.

The host nation is necessarily a client, but the degree to which it participates varies, and the donor's intent to share results partially or fully with host-country personnel may shape the assessment agenda. In the end, the host country will benefit from an accurate assessment; host-country national participation in the process, if appropriate, can serve as a teaching model for future stock-taking. Considerable degrees of difference between donor interests and host-country priorities can affect the viability of host-country ownership of the process and outcome. To the extent possible, encouraging and allowing

host-country ownership of the assessment can set the stage for host-country ownership of future programs, thereby promoting sustainability.

### **What? (The Deliverables)**

A clear understanding of the expected deliverables from the start will increase the likelihood of success. The initiating body should ensure that sufficient guidance is provided to the assessment team regarding the breadth and depth of the assessment as well as its general length and the time frame for its completion. The specific nature of the deliverables should be captured in the terms of reference. A client that expects a 25-page report with a bulleted list of proposed interventions may be frustrated by a 75-page single-spaced narrative that thoroughly explains current conditions. Specific guidance regarding requirements for data on history and background, the cultural or political climate, the depth of particular topics, or possible programmatic entry points enables the assessment team to produce a product that meets the needs of the funder. Deliverables also might include briefings for the U.S. Mission, agencies in Washington, and/or host-nation governments.

### **Where? (The Data Collection)**

Most assessments begin with a desk study to gather existing information and conduct interviews with identified country or subject experts. These may take a few days to a few weeks. Having formed an initial impression of the likely issues, the assessment team generally moves to the field, gathering information through interviews, focus groups, surveys, observation, and examination of documents and records. The assessment team should not use their time in the host country to validate initial impressions; rather, they should seek to ascertain the symptoms and the causes of the issues identified through the desk study. To develop an accurate picture, teams must interview not only senior officials in government but also junior staff, the business community, civil society representatives, and residents. Teams should make every effort to travel beyond the capital city as issues, conditions, and opinions may vary across the country and differ significantly from those in the capital.

### **When? (The Timing)**

Numerous events may prompt interest in an assessment. Political change is a frequent motivator as new opportunities for interventions become available and existing opportunities are inevitably altered. Other significant events, such as a natural disaster, outbreak of war in a neighboring country, a spike in criminal activity, or economic hardship, can stimulate the need for security sector reform. A donor's funding cycle or budgeting process may be the motivating factor. The completion of an existing program where a follow-on project is anticipated is an excellent time to conduct an assessment to determine where the greatest needs for intervention now lie.

Depending on the size of the country and the team, the assessment may take at least a month — longer for a larger country or for more complex issues. Pre-deployment

preparation typically takes at least one week, two weeks in the host country are generally the minimum necessary, and the report usually takes at least a week to prepare.

### Why? (The Purpose)

The need for an assessment can stem from different factors and lead to different outcomes. An assessment can have intrinsic value to generate accurate information that might otherwise not be gathered. Another common reason for an assessment is to inform specific programmatic designs and decisions. Or, an assessment might be conducted to inform a broader strategy for a country. It can serve as an educational tool, generating information that enables a better understanding of how the security sector operates. It can be used to forge consensus among disparate stakeholders, both in the host nation and in the donor government. Clarification of the reason for the assessment will help the team gather the most relevant information and frame it to best suit its intended purpose.

Pre-engagement assessments inform the establishment, design, and funding of a new SSR program. In such cases, the assessment may provide the basis for initial funding levels, program priorities, and appropriate project sequencing. The assessment may also provide recommendations regarding funding streams, appropriate authorities, potential partners, and the division of responsibilities among various SSR donors and stakeholders. During program execution, an assessment can help to determine whether midcourse corrections are necessary and bring to light gaps or seams across sector-specific programs. At the close of a program, an assessment may be performed as part of an evaluation that reviews the implementation of existing SSR programs.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of the reason it is conducted, an assessment will necessarily create an impact. Host-country expectations are often raised in anticipation of aid. Those who benefit from the status quo may become anxious about possible change. Issues might be brought into the open that previously were not discussed freely. Funders and assessors should acknowledge the impact that the assessment will have and seek to mitigate any negative consequences.

### INTEGRATING GENDER

*Gender* is used to reference “the particular roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, and values that society ascribes to men and women...[and] learned differences between men and women.”<sup>6</sup> It is not about the biological difference between men and women but rather their roles and the relationships between them. Including gender in an assessment complies with international instruments such as United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) and strengthens delivery of security and justice.

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<sup>5</sup> This document refers to a snapshot of existing conditions as an *assessment* and an analysis of the impact of a specific intervention as an *evaluation*.

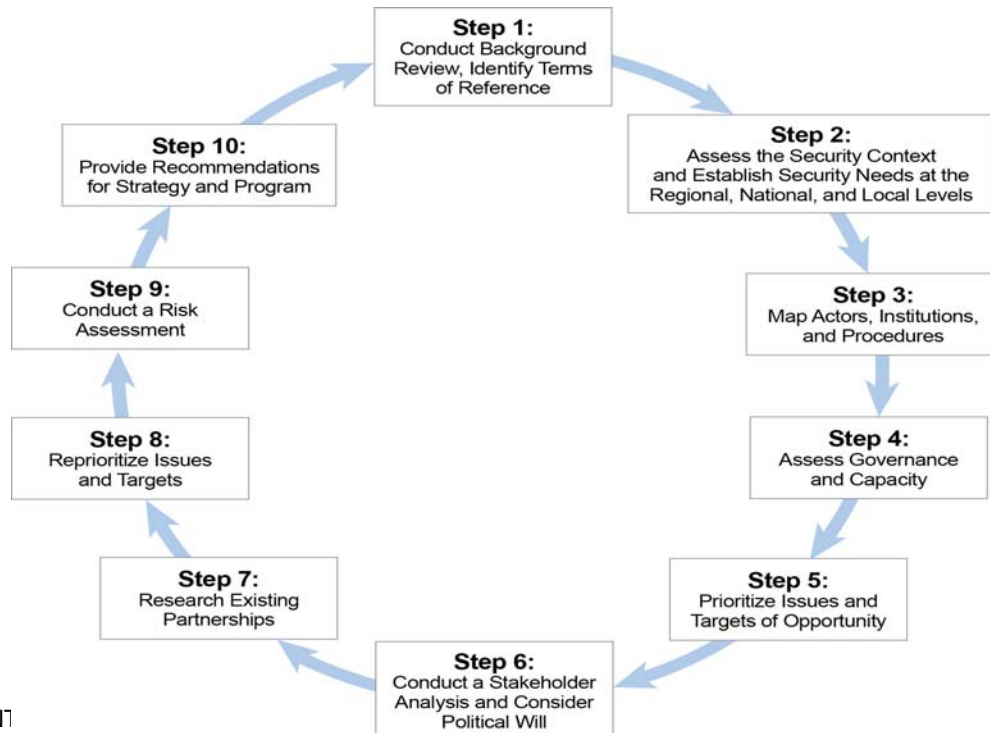
<sup>6</sup> Nicola Popovic, “Security Sector Reform Assessment, Monitoring & Evaluation and Gender,” in *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit*, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, and The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2008.

Women, men, and children face different challenges and threats to their security and human rights. Security sector institutions tend to have a significant overrepresentation of men, as do United Nations peacekeeping forces. Gender-sensitive assessments can generate information that identifies the threats that different groups face and provide support to effective programming to reduce human rights violations and discrimination. Assessments can provide baseline data on the number of men and women in institutions, their ranks and positions, obstacles to recruiting, retaining, and promoting women, and identification of productive and counterproductive policies and practices within institutions. Gender-sensitive measures and questions are integrated throughout this framework.

### THE ELEMENTS OF THE ISSAF

The 10-step framework (Exhibit 1) is designed to measure the quality of security sector governance and the capacity of the government to deliver security, public safety, and justice services. The steps are designed to provide the assessment team with a comprehensive interagency perspective on the context, needs, priorities, and recommendations for developing a strategy and programming. Steps 1 through 4 constitute basic information collection and analysis. Step 5 delivers a ranking of opportunities based on the initial analysis. Steps 6 through 9 refine the analysis through stakeholder and risk analyses that reflect the political environment in which SSR would ultimately be conducted. Step 10 translates these results into strategic and programmatic recommendations. A feedback loop is built into the ISSAF after Step 10 to encourage the stakeholders to review assumptions periodically and analyze changes in context. Each step is intended to help users understand what information is needed, how to gather it effectively, and how to frame it to guide strategic and programming choices.

**Exhibit 1. The 10-step Framework**



## The 10 Steps

The text below discusses each step and provides areas of inquiry. The ISSAF examines the country background and defines the terms of reference; assesses the security context and establishes needs at regional, national and local levels; identifies local actors, institutions and procedures; assesses governance and capacity; identifies stakeholders and their needs; researches existing partnerships; prioritizes targets; completes a risk assessment; and provides recommendations for strategy and programming.

*Step 1: Conduct background review, including initial problem identification, and identify terms of reference.* The team should begin by gathering basic information about the country's history, political and economic status, geography, and population. This initial step should identify the security concerns that prevent communities and individuals from engaging in economic, social, and political activity and determine the key deficiencies and/or challenges that the partner government seeks to redress. In essence, the assessment should gauge the state's ability to fulfill key security, justice and public safety functions such as the capacity to secure territorial integrity, provide law and order, protect human rights and civil liberties, provide access to justice, and address unique security and justice issues such as insurgency, trafficking, organized crime or localized insecurity. Team members must keep an open mind throughout the process, as initial impressions of existing issues may be symptoms rather than causes. In particular, the team should note differences in perspectives among various actors. Partner governments may have interests and challenges at stake that are decidedly different than those of the USG.

The team should map its strategy for determining how problems and issues are defined and evidenced and how to gather data to ensure correct identification of problems. Initial research may include desk studies and meetings with USG representatives and other organizations. The team should become familiar with relevant general and country-specific legal and regulatory restrictions and prohibitions on certain foreign assistance activities related to foreign law enforcement and military forces.

### Possible Challenges to Consider:

- Localized insecurity (lack of law and order)
- Nationwide or regional insecurity
- Gangs, organized crime
- Lack of civilian control of the military
- Oppressive security practices
- Corruption
- Extremist movements
- Military intervention in political or economic life
- Prevalence of gender-based violence

As noted above, the initiating agency or office should set the stage for the assessment with terms of reference that designate the participating agencies and their respective roles, goals and objectives, and the intended use of the findings. Once in country, the team should first meet with embassy staff to become oriented to the local context.

*Step 2: Assess the security context and establish security needs at the regional, national, and local levels.* In many countries, conflict and insecurity are inextricably linked. As a result, the team should consider contextual factors that may facilitate violence, core

grievances that lead groups to perceive themselves to be under threat, sources of social and institutional resilience, potential drivers of conflict, and mitigating factors.

From the broadest perspective, it is useful to understand the partner country's national security interests, priorities, and threats. The team should also review the historical and regional security context, as transnational threats can be significant destabilizing factors. Within a country's borders, the assessment team should identify the security concerns that affect communities and individuals; security and public safety needs of local areas are likely to vary from region to region.

Moreover, needs articulated by the country's leadership can differ vastly from the average citizen's articulated needs. To develop a holistic analysis of the security situation, the team must examine the requirements of both the government (top-down) and its citizens (bottom-up). The team should identify threats to women, minorities, youth, or other marginalized groups that are otherwise minimized or even denied. The team should consider the following illustrative questions when analyzing the perception of needs from residents:

- What security concerns does the public raise?
- How do the public and particular groups experience insecurity?
- Do men, women, girls, and boys face different kinds of threats?
- Does the public know what services to expect? What do they demand, and what services does the public receive?
- Are there inequities in service distribution among different groups?
- Who provides the services?
- What role do illicit power structures play in providing security?

Polling data, focus groups, surveys, and interviews may be used to collect this information. Women should be queried as well as men, although this may be difficult in societies where women are kept out of public arenas. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) should be able to answer these questions. Existing publicly available survey data, such as the Latin America Barometer, may be relevant.

Consistent with all USG interventions, the team, in consultation with the embassy and Washington agencies, should determine what threats challenge U.S. or global interests. The team should review the most recent country strategy and any existing SSR programming.

*Step 3: Map actors, institutions, and procedures.* With an understanding of the context, the team can map the host-country actors, institutions, and procedures that are relevant to the threats, issues, and challenges

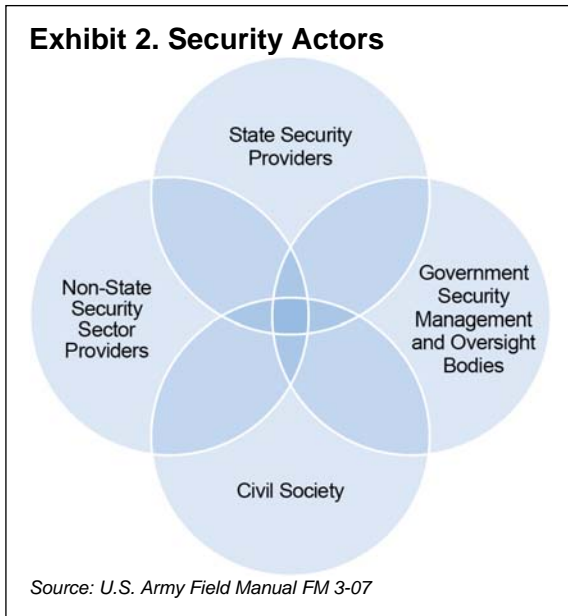
#### **Governmental Security Management and Oversight Bodies**

The office of the executive (e.g., president, prime minister); national security advisory bodies; ministries of defense, public administration, interior, justice, and foreign affairs; the judiciary; financial management bodies (e.g., finance ministries, budget offices, comptrollers general, and financial audit and planning units); the legislature; local government authorities (e.g., governors and municipal councils); institutional professional standards authorities, auditing bodies, and official public complaints commissions; among others.

— Joint USAID/Department of Defense/  
Department of State statement on SSR

identified in Steps 1 and 2. Because the security and justice sectors can be vast, initial terms of reference and problem identification should help to demarcate and prioritize the mapping effort.

Step 3 is designed to produce a map or overview of the critical security sector actors and institutions that will be analyzed in detail in Step 4. The team should ascertain both the formal (state) and informal (non-state) power structures in the country and identify the decision-makers, potential reformers, and possible spoilers in government and civil society. A map of actual providers can be complex. Security forces may include a combination of military forces, civilian police, specialized police units, formed police units, presidential guards, intelligence services, coast guards, border guards, customs authorities, highway police, reserve or local security units, civil defense units, national guards and government militias, corrections officers, and other forces.



A thorough mapping of state security providers might begin with the executive branch, such as the office of the president, the relevant ministries (such as defense, interior, justice, and finance), and the national security council or its equivalent. The team should meet with relevant actors to gain a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, it is essential to understand how the ministry of finance influences the security budget and actual operations. Local governments (provincial and municipal) also exercise varying degrees of authority over security providers and the team should understand how they enter into security sector management and oversight.

The team should also identify legislative actors such as the committees for defense, security, and/or intelligence, procurement oversight committees, and the appropriations committee (if one exists). A map of the judicial branch may include a supreme court or court of cassation, appellate courts, administrative courts, military courts, regional courts, district courts, justice of the peace courts or tribunals, religious courts, and court-annexed alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Some countries also have an informal but influential customary legal system based on traditional dispute resolution and decision-making mechanisms.

Civil society groups serve a variety of functions in any state. In addition to monitoring the performance of security actors, they articulate the public demand for safety and security. In some cases, particularly where a national government's capacity may be limited, civil society and other non-state actors may serve functions that provide security

and justice to local communities or constituents. Civil society actors may include professional organizations, civilian review boards, policy analysis organizations (for example, think tanks and universities), advocacy organizations, human rights commissions and ombudsmen, NGOs, the media, and other actors. Women's organizations may be able to offer information on gender-based violence and other issues that are not gathered or considered by the state.

The team should cover provision of services by non-state security actors, which can encompass a broad range of groups with widely varying degrees of legal status and legitimacy. The informal and customary legal systems are integral parts of the security sector that have a tremendous impact on how people perceive and experience security. Non-state actors may include private security companies, citizen associations, and other locally based safety and security groups. Some of these actors have explicit links to state police services and maybe authorized by the state, by law or custom, to engage in security activities. Informal and traditional justice systems or community watch groups may have a stabilizing effect in conflict and post-conflict settings. In some places, such as South Africa, customary law has been recognized as a source of law. Conversely, unaccountable non-state actors or illicit power structures may engender human rights abuses and facilitate inappropriate links between the private and public security sectors and political parties, state agencies, paramilitary organizations, and organized crime. These actors may be *both* providers of security and sources of insecurity.

Fragile states or states emerging from conflict may be characterized by the presence of other transitional security bodies and processes that should be included in the assessment. These may include disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes and oversight bodies; transitional justice mechanisms; and peace support operations personnel, including military peacekeepers, civilian police, and development personnel who may play a role in re-establishing a functioning security sector through mentoring and training activities.

*Step 4: Assess governance and capacity.* This step constitutes the core of the assessment. It focuses particularly on civilian command and oversight of security forces and the human and institutional capacity to manage change transparently and effectively. How able are security sector actors and institutions to fulfill their missions effectively and transparently (service delivery) and how capably do they do so (governance)? As in other sectors, security sector actors — be they elected, appointed, civil servants, or in uniform — must make political decisions; choose among policy alternatives; administer activities; coordinate policy; manage budgets and human resources; and design, execute, and evaluate projects.

Sound governance of the security sector requires capable civilian authorities, security bodies that are accountable to civil authorities and civil society, adherence of security bodies to international and domestic law, the same principles of public expenditure management as other government sectors, transparency, and an emphasis on human rights. The team must assess the administrative capacity of relevant institutions, including their ability to plan, allocate and manage resources, communicate, develop and



implement policy, manage information, and maintain institution-specific capabilities such as crime analysis.

In addition to providing services, the state has other roles to play in the delivery of the public goods of justice, safety, and security. Those roles and functions could include:

- Setting legal frameworks and minimum standards
- Registering, recording, and disseminating judicial decisions
- Regulating, licensing, and monitoring justice and security service delivery systems
- Enforcing human rights standards and behaviors
- Coordinating networks and partnerships with other service providers
- Exchanging information with other service providers.

This information provides insight into the state's ability to set security provision parameters and monitor the delivery of security services.

Given this broad array of activities, an assessment's scope of work will need to specify areas and issues for in-depth focus, such as obtaining consensus on long-term visions for the state and security sector or establishing transparent and accountable systems for SSR management.

*Step 5: Prioritize issues and targets of opportunity.* After gathering information under Steps 1 through 4, the team can begin to identify and prioritize key issues. This threshold analysis should identify the most pressing problems facing the state and its citizens, whether the state has the capacity to address them, and primary deficiencies within the security sector. Through this analysis, the team can generate immediate opportunities for engagement based on need and the ability to make an impact. The team should substantiate that the targets identified address the underlying causes of problems, not merely the effects. The team is also positioned to comment on the capacity within the country to sustain any suggested improvement.

*Step 6: Conduct a stakeholder analysis and consider political will.* Once the team has developed an initial list of priority areas, it should consult with the relevant government partners identified in Step 3. Through interviews with government officials, the team should determine what the government hopes to accomplish and how a security sector reform project would help achieve those goals. Referring to the actors mapped under Step 3, the team should identify the key players (government, private sector, informal actors, illicit groups, and civil society), the power dynamics between them, and any relevant relationships. A key factor in the analysis is identifying change agents, opponents, spoilers and, to the extent possible, their respective degrees of influence. The team will need to anticipate the level of resistance to reform and determine what circumstances or triggers exist to expand the pool of supporters and neutralize opponents. Lack of political will, extensive fiscal problems, and social constraints can all impede the effectiveness of a proposed SSR intervention. Therefore, the team must carefully analyze the human, financial, and material resources available to carry out and sustain the reforms.

*Step 7: Research existing partnerships.* The next step in the process is to determine where and how USG programs can complement and supplement existing activities. The findings of this step will help the team make recommendations for future programs and country strategies, as discussed in Step 10. At a minimum, it should help to avoid redundancies. From their discussions with embassy and USAID Mission staff, the team should know at this point which USG agencies have programs. The team should meet with relevant implementing partners (contractors, grantees, and civil society organizations). Given the range of ongoing programs, the team may consider developing a matrix to determine where an SSR program would fit best.

The team also will need to meet with bilateral donors (for example, agencies from the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, and France). In contrast with more traditional development assistance programs, the donor context is likely to be much more varied; each donor may represent a number of program sponsors through their development agencies, military groups, and ministries of foreign affairs. As a result, the assessment team will need to consult a wide array of counterparts from other embassies to get a complete picture of the assistance context. Similarly, there will likely be multilateral stakeholders including United Nations agencies (United Nations Development Program, United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operations, United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, or United Nations High Commission on Refugees), the European Union, and the World Bank. These stakeholders may have programs in the security sector. Additionally, the team should meet with relevant regional organizations such as the African Union, Economic Community of West African States, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Organization of American States, or Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Robust information collection at this step will help the team determine how best to design a coordinated program.

*Step 8: Reprioritize issues and targets.* In Step 8, the team should review the results from Steps 5, 6, and 7 to reprioritize potential entry points. At this stage in the assessment, the team should have a robust picture of the security sector and understand the power dynamics between institutions and actors. After Step 7, the team should also understand what activities other donors anticipate or have are under way to address the gaps identified in Steps 1 through 4. Additionally, the team should be able to determine whether overarching USG national security or development interests might drive the USG to address one area over others.

*Step 9: Conduct a risk assessment.* Security sector reform involves greater risk than other assistance projects. SSR programs are likely to shift the balance of power between uniformed actors and civilians or state and non-state actors. As a result, assessment teams need to consider the impact of foreign assistance on security and

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mitigating Risk</b></p> <p>SSR planners and implementers must pay close attention to minimize adverse effects on the local population and community structures, the security sector, or the wider political, social, and economic climate in unanticipated or unintended ways. Developing a thorough understanding of the system for which change is sought, and the actual needs that exist, is a prerequisite for the success of any SSR-related activity. Practitioners should conduct a risk assessment prior to implementation and be prepared to adjust activities over the lifetime of the SSR program.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">— Joint USAID/Department of Defense/ Department of State statement on SSR</p>
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public safety. Local input on this point from government, private-sector actors, and civil society groups — particularly those working on gender and minority issues — is essential. The team should consider immediate and downstream consequences — intended or not — of the planned intervention. The adverse effects of a poorly designed, implemented, or managed program can be devastating for the local population as well as USG interests. The assessment team should incorporate a ‘do no harm’ approach into program and strategy recommendations. Proposed programs should mitigate conflict, reduce tensions and promote stability. The team should consider a variety of factors that will influence the design and implementation of any intervention, including its effect on political, economic, and military dynamics and structures.

*Step 10: Provide recommendations for strategy and program.* In the final step, the team should prepare a written document with its findings. Recommendations should include clear objectives and local “owners” responsible for leading the reform efforts. SSR program recommendations should be linked to partner government strategic objectives as well as to USG, donor, and other stakeholder objectives and activities. The team also should provide recommendations for sequencing and resourcing proposed interventions. As part of the analysis, the team should note how the operating environment shapes specific recommendations. For example, interventions in a fragile state may require shorter time frames and greater flexibility; lengthier interventions may be more appropriate for more stable states. Additionally, the team should provide recommendations for how to mitigate the risks identified in Step 9 and for monitoring and evaluating SSR programming.

The team should use its Step 7 findings to recommend where and how USG SSR programs offer added value. For example, the team should identify opportunities to complement or expand upon existing USG programs. Recommendations should build on the core competencies of relevant USG stakeholders.

As noted for Step 2, the recommendations should ensure consistency with the U.S. legal framework. Program recommendations must comply with legal guidelines regarding assistance to military and police<sup>7</sup> (see relevant policy guidance on police and other security assistance). The team should consult with general counsel and the ambassador.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, specific provisions contained in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 prohibit training, advice, and financial support for foreign law enforcement forces, while other provisions of the Foreign Assistance Act and other statutes authorize limited exceptions to that prohibition. Similarly, neither economic assistance nor humanitarian assistance funds appropriated to USAID may be used for military purposes, and DoD military support to civilian policing programs is generally not authorized. The Leahy Law, section 620J of the Foreign Assistance Act, prohibits provision of assistance under the Foreign Assistance Act or the Arms Export Control Act to security force units concerning which the Secretary of State has credible evidence of gross violations of human rights; a separate amendment in annual DoD appropriations acts (e.g., Section 8062 of the DoD Appropriations Act, 2009) prohibits the use of DoD appropriations to fund training for security force units concerning which the Secretary of State has credible evidence of gross violations of human rights. The Department of State is also responsible for implementation of the Arms Export Control Act in the control of the export and temporary import of defense articles and defense services, as well as implementation of end-use monitoring of defense articles, services, and related technical data licensed for export. While under certain circumstances special authorities may be available to overcome the restrictions discussed here, in each such case it is essential

*Feedback loop.* The security sector assessment process should be iterative, and interventions should be based on lessons learned. The result of Step 10 can serve as baseline data for comparative purposes at later dates. The feedback loop provides assessment teams and implementers a means to track progress in the security sector and incorporate lessons learned into future programs.

## **SUMMARY**

The ISSAF provides a conceptual framework for a whole-of-government approach to security sector assessment. The tool is designed to guide USG agencies to conduct security sector assessments by leveraging comparative strengths and respective knowledge. Using an interagency approach to conduct a security sector assessment lays the foundation for enhanced coordination and effectiveness. Ideally, the ISSAF enables an assessment team to produce a document that the USG interagency can use to develop country strategies and programs that are relevant to the local context, meet the needs of the government and local population, and support USG priorities.

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that SSR planners consult with their general counsel prior to the exercise of these authorities. In addition, it will be necessary that all applicable policy considerations be taken into account before any of these authorities is relied upon.

# ANNEX

## AREAS OF INQUIRY AND ILLUSTRATIVE QUESTIONS

This portion of the ISSAF provides a more detailed list of questions to guide users in conducting a robust analysis of the context in which potential SSR programs may be implemented. In this annex, Steps 3 and 4 are broken down into subcategories.

<b>Step 1: Conduct Background Review, Identify Terms of Reference</b>	
<b>Background review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the basic structure of the country's political, economic, social, and geographical makeup?</li> <li>• What kind of state exists: post-conflict, transitional, fragile, or one focused on sustaining development?</li> <li>• What is the historical government context of this country (colonial rule, military dictatorship, longstanding democracy)?</li> <li>• What are the basic demographics, population densities, and livelihoods?</li> <li>• Are essential public services being delivered, and to whom?</li> <li>• Is there or has there recently been violent conflict? Between whom?</li> <li>• Is there internal or external displacement of the population?</li> <li>• Who are the key stakeholders among government, business, and civil society actors? Among illicit groups and individuals?</li> <li>• Is there popular confidence in the government in general?</li> <li>• Who is defining security threats and concerns?</li> <li>• What is the political will for change? Who are the key drivers and spoilers?</li> <li>• What legal and regulatory restrictions and prohibitions on USG assistance exist?</li> <li>• What security-related international treaties and conventions is the country signatory to?</li> <li>• What kinds of data exist, and what is the reliability of the data?</li> <li>• What donors are active in the country or have plans in the sector?</li> </ul>
<b>Terms of reference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the goals and objectives of the assessment?</li> <li>• What are the specific topics for study and analysis?</li> <li>• For whom are the assessment results intended? Who will have access to the results? How will they be used?</li> <li>• What agencies will participate in the assessment? What is the role of each?</li> <li>• What positions will be required for the assessment team? What are the qualifications for each position?</li> <li>• What is the budget for the assessment?</li> <li>• What kind of preparatory work will be needed?</li> <li>• When will the assessment occur, for how long, and when is the deliverable due?</li> <li>• What should the deliverable include?</li> <li>• What methods of data collection are likely to be used?</li> </ul>
<b>Step 2: Assess the Security Context and Establish Security Needs at the Regional, National, and Local Levels</b>	

<p><b>Conflict context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What security threats does the state face (for example, international war, border disputes, civil war, insurgent movements, separatist groups, other internal conflict, petty or violent crime, street gangs, organized crime, trafficking in arms or drugs, resource-based conflict/scarcity)?</li> <li>• What are the state's legitimate national security interests? (These may be political, military, social, or economic.)</li> <li>• What security threats are faced by local governments, and what are their legitimate security interests?</li> <li>• What are the most pressing threats to individuals?</li> <li>• What particular threats exist for women, men, minorities, youth, or marginalized groups?</li> <li>• What may be the triggers of conflict?</li> <li>• What role does the state play in the region? In relevant regional organizations?</li> <li>• If there is an internal conflict, what is its nature?</li> <li>• Are separatist groups destabilizing the country? If so, what do they seek and how are they operating?</li> <li>• What threats and challenges exist toward the U.S. Government and international interests?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Security sector context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the strengths and weaknesses of the security sector?</li> <li>• What state capacity exists to address the threats that the state and citizens face?</li> <li>• What economic or political factors will affect SSR?</li> <li>• How does corruption affect the government? Are security services involved in grand or petty corruption?</li> <li>• Is the country or military considering or involved in demobilization, demilitarization, and/or reintegration?</li> <li>• Are parts of the country inaccessible due to separatist movements or armed rebellion?</li> <li>• What has been the role of the government in protecting human rights?</li> <li>• Has the government been involved in the perpetration of human rights violations?</li> <li>• What groups have been responsible for human rights violations?</li> <li>• Are small arms or other weapons readily available?</li> <li>• Is there a ready supply of resources that could be used to fuel conflict?</li> </ul>

<b>Step 3a: Actor and Institutional Analysis (formal sector)</b>	
<b>Executive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which state institutions and organizations are involved in the management, oversight or execution of security and justice? What do they do and how do they do it?</li> <li>• Is there a framework for security sector governance at the national level? At the local level?</li> <li>• What types of corruption exist at each level?</li> </ul>
<b>Legislative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a legal and constitutional framework to determine roles, functions, and missions of the security sector?</li> <li>• What types of crime are covered under the law?</li> <li>• Who in the legislature is responsible for oversight of security, public safety, and justice?</li> <li>• Do legislative bodies have access to security sector expenditures or budgets?</li> </ul>
<b>Judicial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is the criminal court system organized?</li> <li>• Are there specialized criminal courts?</li> <li>• Is there a juvenile criminal justice system?</li> <li>• Are there provisions for alternate sentencing?</li> <li>• Is there popular confidence in the judicial system and judges?</li> <li>• Are there external sources of pressure on judges and court staff in individual cases?</li> <li>• Are there sufficient trained justices, court personnel, and lawyers?</li> <li>• Is there a demand for judicial reform?</li> <li>• How is military justice handled? Are there circumstances under which military tribunals may try civilians for criminal offenses?</li> </ul>
<b>Municipal government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is management, resource allocation, operational control, and oversight decentralized? To whom, how, and to what degree?</li> </ul>
<b>Uniformed forces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Roles.</i> Establish primacy of service with respect to air, land, sea, internal and external security, and intelligence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What is the chain of command?</li> <li>– How many different uniformed forces exist?</li> <li>– Are the same security forces responsible for internal and external security?</li> <li>– Is there a hierarchy among them?</li> <li>– What is the size of the force?</li> <li>– Which entities possess arrest authority?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Missions.</i> What actions do uniformed forces engage in (peace, prevention of personal and organized crime prevention, enforcement of court decisions, border patrol, counter-narcotics, counter-terrorist missions, and other specialized missions)?</li> <li>• <i>Functions.</i> What capabilities does each service possess and maintain to perform its stated missions?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the relationships between the courts, prosecution, police, and prisons?</li> </ul>

<b>Step 3b: Actor and Institutional Analysis (informal sector)</b>	
<b>Informal security actors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other actors provide “security” or law and order (customary leaders, private security companies, organized crime syndicates, militia, gangs)?</li> <li>• What are their roles, missions, and functions?</li> <li>• Do they have control over territory, populations, or resources?</li> <li>• What threats do they pose to the official security sector and the community?</li> <li>• What gaps do they fill?</li> </ul>
<b>Civil society</b>	<p>Civil society is both an active participant in the sector as well as a consumer of its services. What groups exist in the following roles?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and oversight</li> <li>• Advocating for special interests</li> <li>• Providing information and ideas for policies and procedures</li> <li>• Serving as consumers of security (business owners, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Step 4a: Normative and Regulatory Frameworks</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the president a civilian or a military officer?</li> <li>• Do any bodies or laws guarantee the rule of law?</li> <li>• Are there clear constitutional provisions regarding the roles and functions of security forces? Are they enforceable?</li> <li>• Are the rules and regulations governing the use of force codified in legislation or established policies?</li> <li>• Is the independence of the judiciary guaranteed by law? Do judges have adequate subpoena, contempt, and enforcement powers? What is the relationship between the security sector and the judiciary?</li> <li>• Does customary law affect security-related decision-making? If so, how?</li> <li>• What relevant international treaties is the country signatory to, and are they enforced?</li> </ul>	
<b>Step 4b: Norms/Principles of the Uniformed Services</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the security forces apolitical? Are they able to be? What is the institutional culture? What is the ethnic/religious/socioeconomic composition of the forces?</li> <li>• Do security forces respect their role in society? Have security forces traditionally been keepers of the peace or triggers for violent confrontation, or both?</li> <li>• Describe the relationship with their civilian counterparts. Is there mutual respect?</li> <li>• What is the system of accountability?</li> <li>• Are security forces engaged in unauthorized or excessive violence against civilians?</li> <li>• Are residents afraid of crime? Are they afraid of the security forces?</li> <li>• Are security forces corrupt? Are they engaged in shadow economic activity?</li> <li>• Do security forces respect human rights? Is it incorporated in doctrine and training?</li> <li>• Is international humanitarian law respected or known?</li> <li>• Are internal codes of conduct promulgated? If not, why not (inadequate resources or lack of political will)? How are complaints handled?</li> <li>• Is there internal democratization and adherence to democratic principles within the security forces?</li> <li>• What standards exist with respect to entry and career progression (gender, age limits, or educational requirements)?</li> <li>• What are public attitudes toward the security forces?</li> </ul>	



<b>Step 4c: Performance/Service Delivery</b>	
<b>Internal security and public safety</b>	<p>Key Missions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uphold law and order</li> <li>• Solve and prevent crimes</li> <li>• Protect vulnerable populations</li> <li>• Counter trafficking (human, narcotics, arms, illicit goods)</li> <li>• Secure freedom of movement</li> <li>• Protect critical infrastructure and/or persons</li> </ul>
<b>External (national) security</b>	<p>Key Missions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fight and defeat enemies, militia, and/or insurgents</li> <li>• Secure borders</li> <li>• Deter or dissuade attack</li> <li>• Counterterrorism/counter-extremism</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are security forces able to perform their jobs adequately?</li> <li>• Do they understand their mission?</li> <li>• Are the rules of engagement identified and communicated effectively?</li> <li>• Are security services properly trained? Do they use appropriate force?</li> <li>• Are expertise levels of uniformed and civilian personnel appropriate to their roles?</li> <li>• Are the uniformed forces engaged in any major actions or specialized missions?</li> <li>• Are security forces able to defeat insurgencies/militia activity? Is there evidence of their ability to defeat enemy forces? Have there been cross-border wars in the last 10 years?</li> <li>• Does the criminal justice system (police, judiciary, prosecution, and corrections) function effectively?</li> <li>• Are public spaces reasonably safe? Are there regular cross-border incursions?</li> <li>• Are police deployed based on workload (relative to crime levels, population size, and area)?</li> <li>• Are justice institutions in accessible locations? Accessibility?</li> <li>• Do people use formal criminal justice institutions widely, or do they seek alternative ways to deal with threats and problems?</li> <li>• What is the quality of the police precincts/stations? Are they approachable?</li> <li>• Are community/police relationships collaborative? Is a system in place for emergency assistance? Do police respond promptly to calls for assistance? Do police possess the equipment (such as radios, vehicles, and bicycles) to respond rapidly?</li> <li>• Are measurable crime statistics available? Are groups targeted for crime (for example, women, ethnic groups, and religious groups)? How do police respond?</li> </ul>	

<b>Step 4d: Institutional Capacity</b>	
<b>Leadership (command authority)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How effective is leadership atop and within key ministries, legislative committees, and the office of the president?</li> <li>• Do civilian officials (office of the president or prime minister, national security council, or other inter-ministerial body) offer strategic direction and guidance? In writing or verbally? Is it translated into policy or codified in law?</li> <li>• Do the uniformed services possess the authority to perform functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish missions?</li> </ul>
<b>Management, administrative, and operational control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What systems exist for control of resources and equipment, personnel management, unit logistics, individual and unit training, readiness, mobilization, demobilization, and discipline?</li> <li>• Are management positions filled by civilians or uniformed personnel? Describe their level of competence.</li> <li>• Are there adequate financial, material, and human resources?</li> <li>• How is the HR function structured? Does it function well?</li> <li>• Are there mandatory retirement ages? Are they enforced?</li> <li>• Is a pension plan in place?</li> <li>• What technical systems are in place to support the security sector? Are competent professionals in place to manage them?</li> </ul>
<b>Policy/strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a national security strategy, crime prevention strategy, or national defense strategy?</li> <li>• Do regular defense and security reviews occur? Are civilian actors engaged? If so, how?</li> <li>• How are threat assessments conducted? How are national interests determined?</li> <li>• Is the formation and execution of policy priorities transparent and participatory?</li> <li>• Do security priorities conflict with or support larger government objectives?</li> <li>• Are there policies to address specific crimes (such as violence against women or kidnapping)?</li> <li>• What is the hierarchy among the executive branch, legislature, and security forces?</li> <li>• Is there an interagency national security council or body?</li> </ul>
<b>Internal oversight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are management positions uniform or civilian?</li> <li>• What are the quality, reliability, and availability of information and statistics?</li> <li>• What role do auditors general/inspectors general play? Are their decisions respected? Are they resourced adequately?</li> <li>• Do ombudsmen or special commissions conduct inquiries as appropriate? Are their findings respected? Are they staffed and financed appropriately?</li> <li>• Are internal codes of conduct, employee (including whistleblower) protections and systems in place to encourage internal reporting?</li> </ul>
<b>External oversight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What ministries or inter-governmental structures contribute to or oversee defense policy and plans?</li> <li>• How is policy oversight executed at the local level? Can security issues be raised in town hall meetings or public fora? Is there public debate regarding</li> </ul>

	<p>military or police action?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the parliament possess the competence to effectively oversee budget and policy decisions? Does it possess sufficient financial, human, and material resources to fulfill its mandate?</li> <li>• Do outside groups (NGOs, journalists, think tanks) monitor the security sector? Are they effective? Do they have access to resources and information? Are they qualified?</li> <li>• Are there institutionalized checks on military/police power?</li> </ul>
<b>Budget/resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there links between policy, planning and the budget?</li> <li>• Is the budget driven by a strategy? Are resources allocated according to government-wide priorities or driven by special interest groups?</li> <li>• Is the security sector subject to the same rules of budget oversight as other sectors? Is there a difference between stated budget oversight plans and actual procedures?</li> <li>• Do established rules and procedures guide financial management decisions?</li> <li>• Are the budget and the budget process transparent?</li> <li>• Are troops/police properly equipped with, for example, weapons, uniforms, and vehicles?</li> <li>• Is the pay structure sufficient?</li> <li>• Are there off-budget finances that support the military? If so, how are they collected (for example, through hotel ownership, national lotteries, extortion)?</li> <li>• Is the budget sufficient for the security services to perform their basic functions?</li> <li>• Is there a black budget? Who has access to those numbers and plans?</li> <li>• What is the oversight process? Are other departments within the government involved in assessing military budgets?</li> </ul>
<b>Step 5: Prioritize Issues and Targets of Opportunity</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the key gaps or deficits in the security sector?</li> <li>• What are the short- and long-term opportunities to address the gaps identified?</li> <li>• What programs does the government have that could provide an entry point to SSR?</li> <li>• What is the country's capacity to sustain any contemplated programming?</li> <li>• What gaps exist in current donor programming?</li> <li>• Is there a decentralization or civil service reform program?</li> <li>• Is there a poverty reduction or national development strategy that relates to security?</li> <li>• Have the needs of women, minorities, youth, or other marginalized groups been addressed?</li> </ul>	
<b>Step 6: Conduct a Stakeholder Analysis and Consider Political Will</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the stakeholders from government, business, civil society, and illicit groups?</li> <li>• What informal or undefined groups or individuals do citizens consider powerful?</li> <li>• Who are the change agents and potential spoilers?</li> <li>• What potential coalitions can be identified?</li> <li>• How strong is the interest of each group?</li> <li>• What is the ability of each group to affect the issues?</li> <li>• What is the ability of each group to affect potential programs and solutions?</li> <li>• What are these groups' connections with each other? What are their power dynamics?</li> </ul>	

**Step 7: Research Existing Partnerships**

- What USG programs to strengthen governance are currently operating or are contemplated?
- What programs exist through other donors?
- What are their goals, timeframes, budgets, and scopes?
- What local organizations, agencies, and groups do they work with?
- What value is added by the engagement of another international actor or program?
- What international organizations is the country a member of or active in?

**Step 8: Reprioritize Issues and Targets**

- How do political, economic or social dynamics in the country affect the proposed entry points?
- How do relations between actors, their interests and their resources affect the initial list of issues?
- What are the practical constraints on the recipient side? Are there limits to how much assistance can be effectively absorbed?
- How do ongoing USG or donor activities affect the proposed entry points?
- Would efforts to address the symptoms undermine efforts to address the problems?

**Step 9: Conduct a Risk Assessment**

- What are the potential risks of engagement in SSR?
- How would a SSR program alter power dynamics among armed actors? Among non-state actors? How would it affect civil-military relationships? How will it affect civilians?
- What unanticipated consequences might this program engender?
- Would an identifiable group benefit or lose from the proposed program?
- Is there evidence to suggest the possibility of violent repercussions?
- Have groups that might be affected by the SSR program made warnings or threats?
- What impact, either positive or negative, will international involvement have?
- What risks exist if internationals do not engage?
- How can risks be mitigated in the design of assistance programs? What connections exist between those engaged in conflict, on which further collaboration can be built?
- How will staffing choices for the proposed intervention affect the situation?





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