



Gender and Security Sector Reform In West Africa

A Needs Assessment Report

Funded By:

THE NORWEGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY

About the Implementing Partners

Women Peace and Security Network Africa (WIPSEN-Africa) is a women-focused, women-led Pan-African Non-Governmental Organization that seeks to promote women's strategic participation and leadership in peace and security governance in Africa. WIPSEN-Africa seeks to institutionalize and mainstream women, peace and security by enhancing women's leadership capacities and promoting constructive, innovative and collaborative approaches to non-violent transformation of conflicts, peacebuilding and human security in Africa. Its objectives are to: 1) Provide a platform for women across all levels of African societies to exchange, share and harmonize strategies for women's leadership and build coalitions to promote peace and security in Africa; 2) Strengthen women's capacities to sustain their active engagement in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, peace support operations and human security at policy, research and praxis levels; 3) Promote the twin approach of mainstreaming gender and women's perspectives in peace and security institutions and mechanisms; while at the same time mainstreaming peace and security in all gender mechanisms, policies and institutions; and 4) Influence policy development and implementation on women, peace and security through rigorous research, strategic advocacy, and documentation.

The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) was established by the Swiss Government in October 2000 as an international foundation, and today has 50 member countries. The Centre works with governments, security sector institutions, parliaments and civil society to foster and strengthen the democratic and civilian control of security sector organizations such as police, intelligence agencies, border security services, paramilitary forces, and armed forces. To implement its objectives, the Centre: 1) Conducts research to identify the central challenges in democratic governance of the security sector, and to collect those practices best suited to meet these challenges; and 2) Provides support through advisory programmes and practical assistance to all interested parties, most commonly to governments, parliaments, security institutions, and international organizations. DCAF's Gender, Children and Security Programme develops research, policy and implementation materials to support the integration of gender and other cross-cutting issues into security sector reform.

Table of Contents

Contact Information	
About The Implementing Partners	1
List Of Abbreviations	3
Background	4
Session One:	
Description Of The Assessment	5
Purpose Of The Assessment	6
Section Two:	
Data Collection Methods	7
Constraints To The Data Collection Endeavor:	9
Section Three:	
Analysis	10
Key Guiding Questions For The Assessment Exercise:	13
Analysis Of Data By Respondent Types:	
1. Community Members:	14
2. Female Security Sector Personnel:	17
3. Broader SSR Stakeholders:	19
4. Civil Society Organizations:	20
Summary Of Results/findings:	21
Conclusion: Implication For WIPSEN-AFRICA/DCAF Project	22

List of Abbreviations

AFELL	Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia
ASSN	African Security Sector Network
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCAF	Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces
DFID	UK Department for International Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FSSP	Female Security Sector Personnel
FSU	Family Support Units
GC	Governance Commission
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
KA IPTC	Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
LIFLEA	Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association
LNP	Liberia National Police
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
ONS	Office of National Security
MNS	Ministry of National Security
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs
NSC	National Security Coordinator
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SSR-IP	Security Sector Reform Implementation Programme
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Missions in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNIOSIL	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WIPSEN-Africa	Women Peace and Security Network Africa

Background

In April 2008, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and the Accra-based Women Peace and Security Network Africa (WIPSEN-Africa) entered into a partnership to implement a project entitled 'Security Sector Reform in West Africa: Strengthening the Integration of Gender and Enhancing the Capacities of Female Security Sector Personnel' (see project outline for more information). The project is both derived from, and intended to respond to an identified fundamental gap in the discourse and practice of security sector reform (SSR) in the sub-region. In West Africa, a number of countries have either implemented some elements of SSR (e.g. Ghana, Nigeria) or have a comprehensive SSR process ongoing (e.g. Sierra Leone, Liberia). In either case, the SSR process has been critiqued for its inadequate consultation with, and underrepresentation of women, as well as for its tokenistic approach to issues of gender-based violence. Hence, the two-pronged goal of the DCAF-WIPSEN-Africa partnership is to strengthen the integration of gender and women's issues in SSR processes; and to enhance the capacities of female security sector personnel to act as drivers of the desired change from within.

This pilot project is currently being implemented in two post-conflict countries --Liberia and Sierra Leone-- and is intended to contribute to transforming the security sector in a manner that will promote democratic governance and guarantee that the different security and justice needs of women, men, girls and boys are adequately addressed. Key project beneficiaries include: parliamentarians on defence and security standing committees; female parliamentarians; female security sector personnel and their respective institutions; national security and gender machineries; and civil society organizations. Project activities thus revolve around these beneficiaries and are intended to:

- 1) Establish an interactive platform for female security sector personnel (if needed and where one does not exist) and by extension provide a space for them to engage in the discourse on SSR.
- 2) Enhance the capacity of key parliamentarians, female armed forces and law enforcement personnel and women's organizations to mainstream gender and women's issues into new/emerging security structures and operations.
- 3) Develop and distribute lessons learned and good practices of integrating gender into SSR processes in West Africa.

The implementation of the project in both countries was preceded by a Project Needs Assessment which was intended to generate local input into the project design and implementation. Findings from the needs assessment exercise is captured in this report.

SESSION ONE [1] - Description of the Assessment

In order to ensure local ownership and sustainability, the project kick-started with a needs assessment that was carried out from 26th-29th May and 30th May-3rd June in Liberia and Sierra Leone respectively. The assessment aimed at generating detailed background information on existing initiatives and general knowledge on gender and SSR issues from a broad group of stakeholders in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Those targeted during the assessment were drawn from four (4) general groups:

- 1) SSR oversight actors and other stakeholders: including parliamentarians; the national defence and justice machineries; traditional leaders including paramount chiefs, ministries of finance and development; Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS); United Nations agencies; and key groups engaged in the SSR process such as Dyncorp and the Governance Commission (GC) in Liberia.
- 2) Female security sector personnel, as well as heads of different security bodies such as the army, air force, navy, police, gendarmerie, customs, border and immigrations services, intelligence services, justice and penal systems, private security agencies, fire service, drugs enforcement agencies, etc.
- 3) Civil society organizations (CSOs): comprising of mostly non-governmental organizations working on security, justice and gender/women related issues.
- 4) Community members: including grassroots women's groups, faith-based community groups, traditional and opinion leaders, and youth groups from mainly the country capitals, Freetown and Monrovia.

In light of these categorization which clearly indicates a mix of literate, semi-literate and illiterate targets, the methodology employed for the assessment was varied, as will be discussed in the subsequent section on 'Data collection methods'. Engagement of each of these groups of stakeholders was crucial in generating the necessary community support that is much needed to sustain the socio-cultural transformation and changes in perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes envisaged over the long-haul.

This report seeks to highlight the findings and feedback from the assessment, which is extremely vital for the development of future DCAF and WIPSEN-Africa project activities that respond to the highly challenging structural, policy and operational security needs on the ground.

This report is structured into three (3) main sections and covers the assessment processes and findings in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. Section one focuses on the rationale and purpose for the assessment as well as highlight its specific objectives; section two discusses the methods used in the collection of data; section three analyzes the data collected as well as presents a summary of the results and key findings; and the concluding section examines the implications of these results and findings for the DCAF and WIPSEN-Africa project in the short to medium term.

Purpose of the Assessment

Security sector reform processes are ongoing in the post-conflict West African countries of Sierra Leone and Liberia, albeit at different levels. However, similarities exist when a gender assessment of these processes are carried out, in that in both instances women have been largely excluded from the discourse on SSR and in day-to-day governance of SSR processes, given that only a paltry number of women in the sector occupy decision making positions.

In light of the on-going SSR processes in these countries, the needs assessment was intended to generate detailed background information on the general state of knowledge on gender and SSR, as well as on existing initiatives on gender and SSR in order to avoid duplication of effort and wastage of resources. In addition, the exercise was designed to raise awareness on, and enhance community support for, the project.

More specifically, the objectives of the assessment include the following:

1. Identifying current gaps/needs and opportunities for action in the area of gender and security sector reform --including as it relates to training, establishment of an interactive platform for female security sector personnel, and the documentation of good practices on gender and SSR.
2. Involving target communities in the design of the project activities to ensure local ownership.
3. Establishing baseline information on current knowledge and attitudes towards security and security sector reform issues.
4. Identifying past good practices and challenges in integrating gender into SSR processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

SESSION TWO [2] - Data Collection Methods

Participants for the needs assessment exercise in Liberia and Sierra Leone were drawn from both urban and rural communities, as well as the formal and non-formal sectors – see the Description of the Assessment for a full list of participants.

Given the myriad of stakeholders targeted for the needs assessment exercise and their differing literacy status, a combination of data collection methods was used. This included a desk review and compilation of existing data on the SSR processes in Sierra Leone and Liberia and their related gender specific initiatives, which included:

- Background research carried out by the Research Assistant at DCAF.
- A community attitude survey which involved personal interviews with a representative sample of community members e.g. local chiefs, leaders of women's community-based organizations, groups and associations, faith-based organizations and youth groups about their perceptions of women's roles in security matters.
- Key informant questionnaires and interviews with particularly key officials and leaders knowledgeable on security and/or gender issues.
- Focus group discussions, for instance with the Sierra Leonean Parliamentary Committee on Defence, Internal and Presidential Affairs.

Interviews during the exercise were coordinated by the WIPSEN-Africa team with support from focal points on the ground. In Sierra Leone, the focal point was drawn from the Gender Division of the Ministry for Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) and in Liberia the focal point was from the Tauma Healing Programme of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Office³. Both focal points were assisted by staff members from their respective institutions in conducting the interviews. Table one below shows the number of interviews conducted:

TABLE ONE: INTERVIEWS CONDUCT DURING PROJECT NEEDS ASSESSMENT ON GENDER AND SSR			
Liberia: 26-29 May 2008			
Institution	Male	Female	Total
KAIPTC seconded personnel to the GRC	1	-	1
Liberia National Police	-	2	2
Ministry of Defence	1	1	2
Parliament	1	2	3
Ministry of National Security	1	-	1

¹Beatrice Mosello

²Susan Sesay and assisted by Ibrahim Kamara

³Viaba Flomo and assisted by Grace Jarsor

Drug Enforcement Agency	1	-	1
Ministry of Gender and Development	1	2	3
Civil Society Organizations	2	4	6
Political Parties	1	3	4
UNDP	-	1	1
Dyncorp	-	1	1
Local Chiefs	2	-	2
Women Leaders	-	4	4
Leaders of Faith-based Organization	1	-	1
Total:			32

Sierra Leone: 30th May – 3rd June 2008

Institution	Male	Female	Total
Parliament	6	3	9
Justice Sector Coordination Unit	-	1	1
Ministry of Trade and Industry	1	-	1
Ministry of Local Government and Internal Affairs	1	-	1
Ministry of Social Welfare, <small>Gender and Children's Affairs</small>	2	2	4
Prisons Department	1	3	4
Naval Wing	1	2	3
Sierra Leone Armed Forces	1	4	5
Immigration Services	1	2	3
Private Security Companies	2	3	5
Fire Services	1	1	2
Civil Society Organizations	1	1	2
Total:			40

Four (4) types of questionnaires were designed for, and administered accordingly to, SSR stakeholders, community members, female security sector personnel and civil society organizations (mainly non-governmental organizations). Each questionnaire contained a combination of open-ended, close-ended, multiple choices and likert scaled questions. Samples of each of these are attached as appendices to this report. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, a total of three hundred (300) questionnaires were administered. Twenty-five (25) and fifty (50) questionnaires were administered to each of the four target groups in Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively; totaling 100 and 200 administered questionnaires correspondingly. Fifty-three (53) and forty-nine (49) were completed and returned respectively. Table two below shows the distribution of questionnaires by type of respondent.

TABLE TWO: DISTRIBUTION OF RETURNED QUESTIONNAIRES BY RESPONDENT TYPE

TYPE	LIBERIA	SIERRA LEONE	TOTAL
Female Security Sector Personnel (FSSP)	8	14	22
Broader Stakeholders	12	12	24
Civil Society Organizations	7	10	17
Community Members	22	17	39
Total:	49	53	102

Constraints to the Data Collection Endeavor:

By implication, one hundred and ninety-eight (198) questionnaires were not returned. Reasons for this may be deduced from general comments made by recipients of the questionnaires e.g. that there were either too bulky or technical. Most recipients requested additional time to complete and return the survey forms, but only a few actually did. For those administering the questionnaires, time and mobility were key constraints. In the first instance, the number of days within which the assessment was to be carried out was inadequate and limiting, resulting in the inability to, in most cases, return and pick up questionnaires from respondents who had requested additional days to complete the survey forms. Arising from the tight timeframe, mobility was severely constrained, resulting in the assessment being mainly implemented in Freetown and Monrovia, the capitals of Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively. Attempts to extend the assessment to other counties in Liberia and provinces/districts in Sierra Leone were futile given that this would have involved extensive travels which were unplanned and therefore not budgeted for. Other constraints include poor electricity services and limited internet access which inhibited respondents from completing and returning the questionnaires via electronic mail.

SECTION THREE [3] - Analysis

Sierra Leone and Liberia present appropriate and unique case studies for analyzing security sector reform processes in a post-conflict environment. On the one hand, their appropriateness is derived from the fact that both countries have undergone and emerged from protracted civil wars that spanned over a decade. Consequently, the two countries have been confronted with grave security challenges including unprofessional security forces, citizens' lack of confidence in national security institutions, high level of youth unemployment, etc. In their current post-conflict era there is thus a fundamental need to improve the security milieu in order for democracy and development to thrive and it is based upon this that Sierra Leone and Liberia embarked on the reform of their respective security sector.

On the other hand, their uniqueness is derived from the differing nature of their SSR experiences. In Sierra Leone, SSR is a crucial part of three national reform and developmental programmes -- *Good Governance and Public Service Reform Programme for Sierra Leone* (launched by the former President, Tejan Kabbah, in 1997 with support from the UK Department for International Development [DFID]); *Sierra Leone's Peace Support Reconstruction Programme*; and the *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP)* of 2000 which emphasizes the crucial role of an active security sector in efforts to reduce poverty as well as promote national recovery and socio-economic development. Within the framework of these reform and development programmes, a comprehensive security review was launched by President Kabbeh in 2003. This review was largely provoked by a number of contextual factors including the planned withdrawal of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) which had been largely responsible for the implementation of the SSR programme. The review exercise culminated in the production of a *Security Sector Reform Implementation Programme (SSR-IP)* which decentralized roles under the SSR programme and emphasized community participation in security matters through the establishment of provincial and district security committees. The implementation of the SSR-IP commenced in 2006 and is:

- 1) Led by the President who heads the National Security Council (NSC), the civilian monitoring and oversight body;
- 2) Managed by the National Security Coordinator; and
- 3) Administered by the Office of National Security which set up a working group that comprised of both government officials and civil society.

In Liberia, SSR is an integral part of the post-war recovery and reconstruction process and finds its mandates in the 1985 Constitution of Liberia, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2003) and the UNSC Resolution 1509 (19 September 2003). The Accra Peace Agreement specifically requested the United States to play a leading role in the process of restructuring and training of the army, and it is in fulfillment of this that the US government contracted two of its private military companies, Dyncorp International and Pacific Architect Engineers, to train and restructure the army, as well as vet and recruit its personnel. The UNSC Resolution 1509 mandated the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to provide support in monitoring and restructuring the police force to conform to democratic policing norms, and it is on this basis that UNMIL

continues to play a leading role in the training of the new Liberia National Police (LNP), albeit with support from the United States through DynCorp. The outsourcing to private military companies posed critical

challenges for the SSR process in Liberia. First, it remains extremely skewed in favor of the police and army, excluding other security agencies, particularly the paramilitary bodies. Second, the process was kick started without any consultations to generate a shared vision of national security and thus lacked local ownership. Consequently the Governance Commission (GC) was tasked with the responsibility of developing a comprehensive national security strategy. Third, it did not focus on the governance aspect of SSR; and it is this that the African Security Sector Network (ASSN), DCAF and others set out to achieve through parliamentary training and cooperation with the GC on SSR issues.

Issues relating to gender and women have not necessarily been placed on the centre stage of the SSR initiatives in Sierra Leone and Liberia. It is acknowledged that there have been some efforts to make the security sector more gender sensitive. For instance through increasing the number of women recruited into the sector (e.g. through quotas), integrating gender in the training curricula and programmes of security institutions, establishing Family Support Units (FSUs) and Women and Children Protection Units in Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively to handle issues related to gender and sexual based violence, etc. Notwithstanding, most of these initiatives have only taken place in the context of police reform, entirely neglecting other security sector institutions. A lot more is required and there is an urgent need to move from mere rhetoric to action if the opportunities SSR presents for women's empowerment and gender equality within the sector is to be maximized. Feedback from the needs assessment survey highlights some of the threats, gaps and challenges, as well as opportunities that exist for effective gender mainstreaming within the framework of SSR.

The data analyzed was largely generated from interviews and through the use of questionnaires. Accordingly, the analysis in this section will be structured by the four categories of respondent types identified, namely: 1) female security sector personnel, 2) broader SSR stakeholders, 3) civil society organizations, and 4) community members. The sex distributions of respondents in each of these groups

TABLE THREE: SEX DISTRIBUTIONS OF RESPONDENTS

Respondent Type	Male	Female	Not Indicated
Liberia			
Broader Stakeholders	5	7	0
Community Members	10	3	9
Security Sector Personnel	1	7	0
Civil Society Organizations	4	2	1
Total:	20	19	10

Sierra Leone			
Broader Stakeholders	6	6	0
Community Members	2	14	1
Security Sector Personnel	2	10	0
Civil Society Organizations	3	7	0
Total:	13	37	1

Institutions represented by each of the respondent category include, but not limited⁴ to the following:

TABLE FOUR: INSTITUTIONS BY RESPONDENT CATEGORIES		
Category	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Female Security Sector Personnel	Liberia National Police	Mount Everest Security Agency (PSC)
	Liberia National Fire Service	Timap for Justice
	Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization/Ministry of Justice	Sierra Leone Prisons Service
	Drug Enforcement Agency	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
	Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA)	National Fire Force
		Office of National Security (ONS)
Broader Stakeholders	Ministry of National Defense	Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs
	Parliament	Parliament ⁵
	Ministry of Gender and Development	Ministry of Trade and Industry
	Ministry of National Security	Justice Sector Coordination Office
	International Colloquium Secretariat	All Peoples' Congress Party
	UNDP	Peoples' Movement for Democratic Change
	Political Parties (Unity Party)	
	Academia	
	Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy	
National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration		
Community Members (including faith based Groups)	National Lutheran Church Women Fellowship	Robis Women's Organization
	Youth Crime Watch of Liberia	Kamayama Training Institution

¹ Not all respondents indicated their institutional affiliations as they preferred to remain anonymous.

² From the following Committees: Finance and Development Committee; Education Committee; Youth and Sports Committee; Presidential and Defence Committee

		Victory School
		Entrepreneurial Women's Association
		Grassroots Training Centre
Civil Society Organizations	Liberian Council of Churches Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program	Women in Community Service
	Liberia Democratic Institute	African Women Advocacy Agenda Sierra Leone
	National Coalition of Civil Society Organizations of Liberia	Advocacy Movement Network
	Women in Peacebuilding Network of WANEP	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities
	Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL)	Thorough Empowerment and Development for Women and Girls
	ECOWAS Women in Liberia	Women Governance Peace and Security Sierra Leone
		West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

Key Guiding Questions for the Assessment Exercise:

The needs assessment exercise sought to gauge the level of knowledge about, and available information on, the gender and security sector reform processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In doing this, it was also imperative to identify existing gaps, needs and challenges to, as well as opportunities for, the effective mainstreaming of gender and women's issues, not only in the security sector, but also within the broader areas of security and development. In order to elicit this information, a number of questions were posed and respondents were given the options to either respond orally (during interviews and focus group discussions) or in writing by filling out the questionnaires distributed.

The questions raised largely focused on what the biggest threat to the security of people (men, women, boys and girls) is; level of knowledge on, and familiarity with, the concepts of gender and security sector reform; involvement in security sector reform or gender related programmes and policymaking; institutional efforts/initiatives to mainstream gender issues (including addressing gender based violence) or to increase and retain the number of its female personnel. A number of questions were specifically aimed at finding out:

- The challenges (including gaps and capacity needs) to gender mainstreaming, as well as opportunities at both policy and operational levels;
- Level of awareness about international, regional and national instruments for the protection and promotion of women's rights --including UNSC 1325;

- Trainings received and/or needed;
- Existing platforms for women within the security sector;
- Perceptions about key security institutions such as the police, military, the courts and penal systems;
- Views on the roles for parliament and other oversight bodies, including civil society;
- Case studies of good and bad practices for gender mainstreaming and SSR; etc.

Analysis of Data by Respondent Types:

1. Community Members:

In Liberia community members, at the first instance, strongly believe that armed robbery and unemployment are the biggest security threats to the country. Other popular views include lack of educational opportunities, poverty and non-demobilization of deactivated personnel from Armed Force of Liberia (AFL), Liberia National Police (LNP) and the Special Security Service (SSS). When asked what the biggest security threats are for men and women, the men identified "unemployment" as an issue. A few perceived the empowerment of women (especially on security matters) to be an emerging threat for men. For women, the biggest threat to their personal and collective security is the rising rate of sexual abuse and rape. Illiteracy, poverty, lack of healthcare, and male-dominance are also perceived to be additional threats to women's security.

There were also mixed responses to the question about who the provider and guarantor of safety (security) are in the community. Answers included God, government (police), friends and community vigilantes. A minority emphasized that no one provided them with security and so they did it for themselves. Follow-on questions revealed that there is a low level of trust for the police, mainly because they are perceived to be corrupt, ill-equipped and unprepared or lack the capacity to deal with reported cases. In comparison, the level of trust for the military is slightly higher; even though their function is perceived to be more external (defending the country from external aggression) than domestic. Trust for the courts is much lower, as majority expressed that the justice system is weak and highly corrupt.

On gender, all but two respondents stated they were familiar with the concept. However, requests for the definition of gender revealed there is a grave misconception of what gender is. The overwhelming majority defined gender as the biological or sex-based distinctions between male and female. Irrespective of the misconceptions and flawed definition of gender, a majority agreed that gender is relevant to security sector reform.

On SSR, community members generally have mixed views as to what it really is, and what it involves. Most respondents in this category were either unsure or clearly had no idea. For many in this category, SSR was perceived to be an “organization” because the license plates for Dyncorp vehicles carry 'SSR'. Those who claimed to be familiar with the concept defined SSR as “the dismantling and replacement of the old security apparatuses to promote professionalism”.

When asked if the security sector reform process creates a greater sense of safety (and security), the majority said “no”. There is a general consensus that more needs to be done for this to happen. So far, the focus has been on the army, police and parliament, other institutions are yet to benefit. Community members also have to be part of the process if it is to attain significant impact, guarantee local ownership and be sustainable. Specific recommendations here include promoting community policing (i.e. police-community cooperation to prevent and solve crimes), community vetting of prospective recruits into the security sector, public hearings on security issues, sensitization and training for community groups, as well as for the security sector to ensure increased sensitivity and facilitate cooperation with community members.

While widely disagreeing that security issues are solely the preserve of men, respondents acknowledged that culture and tradition posits otherwise. Continuous sensitization at the community level was highly recommended to eradicate this erroneous perception. Other recommendations include the need for special programmes to facilitate increased recruitment of women, showcasing of women within the sector, incentives, gender awareness training, etc.

Many respondents stated that increased representation of women within the security sector will increase communities' confidence, in particular with regards to the police. Female officers are perceived to rely on a style of policing that uses less physical force and are better able to facilitate cooperation and trust. Additionally, some noted that it will also promote gender equality and enable better response to gender-based (including domestic) violence.

There were many similarities in the responses given by community members in Sierra Leone. The general security threats identified include poverty, youth unemployment, and low-levels of literacy. As was the case in Liberia, unemployment, hunger and the rising cost of living were the biggest threats for most men and as well as women's empowerment. Identified threats to women's security include poverty, illiteracy, discriminatory customs and traditional practices, and violence against women such as rape.

There was a general consensus that it is the responsibility of the police to provide security for communities. However, there seems to be a minimal level of trust in the Sierra Leone Police Force (SLPF). There are two major dissenting views on the capacity of the police to deal with security and crime matters. In the first instance, respondents noted that the police respond adequately to security threats in the communities. In the second case, the police are seen to be corrupt and lack the capacity to effectively deal with security threats. To buttress this, while agreeing there has been significant increases in the number

of domestic violence cases reported to the police, it was emphasized that it is mainly because the police is the only institution mandated to deal with matters of such a nature, and not necessarily because they have the adequate mechanisms to respond.

As was the case in Liberia, there is a higher level of trust in the military, and their function is seen to revolve more on defending the country from external aggression. While acknowledging the role of the justice and court system, most respondents noted their lack of trust in the sector because of its corrupt nature. However, to improve safety and security in communities the following were recommended: police and community partnerships (community policing), recruitment of more women and youth, sensitization and training. The government was also called upon to take up its responsibility in guaranteeing that communities are secure.

Most respondents claimed they understood the concept of gender, but in a few instances attempts to define the concept proved otherwise. Except for a few professional staff of the Gender Division of the MSWGCA, many lacked clarity on the differences between gender and sex. Notwithstanding, all agreed that gender was relevant to SSR. In the Kissy Brook area (a community in the east-end of Freetown) the situation is worse, as there is very little knowledge on women's rights issues. For them, women's rights are personal aspirations which a few women are attempting to impose on society albeit contrary to tradition and customs.

Views were split as to whether security-related jobs are only for men. Those arguing for this noted that women are not physically strong enough to participate, in particularly in combat activities. Those opposing argued that physical ability is relative and should not be used as a deterrent to prevent women from joining the security sector. Gender training, gender considerations in recruitment, awareness raising and the profiling of particularly senior female personnel within the sector were strongly recommended.

Eighty-five percent (85%) of community respondents in Sierra Leone stated they were not familiar with the concept of security sector reform, although most had heard of it. It is not surprising therefore that they define SSR as "efforts made by the government to maintain peace and security". Most respondents reiterated the significance of women's involvement in the security sector. Some further explained they have more trust in female police personnel, for instance because they tend to be less corrupt and more responsive to the needs and concerns of women and children. For these respondents, having more women in the police force will lead to reduction in crimes, as well as curb violence against women. Like respondents from Liberia, they recommended the following measures to prevent and/or respond to the security needs of women: gender training for all security personnel, recruitment and involvement of more women in security institutions and reform processes, promote more qualified female security personnel to leadership and decision making levels, and provide the necessary logistics support to the security institutions so they are able to respond to security threats in a timely manner.

2. Female Security Sector Personnel:

Before analyzing the responses from this category of respondent, it is important to state that the original plan was to focus on women in leadership positions within the security sector; however, this was not the case in the end. Given that most security institutions are headed by men, male security personnel had to be involved. For female security sector personnel in Liberia illiteracy, gender-based violence and the marginalization of women from decision making are the biggest threats the country is faced with. Their male counterparts on the other hand perceived job security and unemployment to be the biggest threat.

All respondents, but one, stated they are familiar with the concept of security sector reform and broadly defined it as "the creation of an enabling environment for development and good governance on the basis of the rule of law." Their participation in the SSR process however largely revolved around attending meetings, seminars and workshops; and in a few cases included making presentations at these meetings (e.g. someone made a presentation on UNSC Resolution 1325 during a working group session on SSR at the Liberian National Women Conference). Two respondents were beneficiaries of the UNMIL training for the police and were also engaged in vetting exercise for security personnel.

All respondents indicated that they are familiar with the concept of gender; however in-depth enquiry again showed there is a general misconception about gender and sex. Five of the eight interviewees had participated in a training programme or seminar on gender and all agreed gender is relevant to SSR.

All, but two, stated that their respective institutions had made, or is making, efforts to mainstream gender and women's issues into its operations. Some examples given to illustrate this include the 30% quota put in place to encourage more female enrollment, establishment of a women and children protection unit within the police force, enactment of anti-sexual and gender-based violence regulations, gender training, creation of the Office of the Gender Advisor within UNMIL, development of a gender specific training manual for the police academy, development of a National Police Service Gender Policy, the training of 104 females who graduated as police officers, launch of an educational programme in January 2007 to encourage Liberian women between the ages of 18-35 years who did not meet the requisite qualification an opportunity to join the police force, etc.

Poor gender awareness, lack of technical know-how, and the low involvement of women in decision making within the sector were identified as the main challenges to gender mainstreaming. Lack of staff development opportunities, including participation in local and foreign training, was also identified as a challenge. For instance, only three noted they had received training on SSR. Another constraint highlighted is the low level of interaction and collaboration between women in the security sector and civil society, which minimizes the role the latter can play as external advocates or driver of change in the security sector.

Security from sexual violence and capacity building (including training and sensitization) were identified as the two most pressing issues to be addressed within the security sector. A platform for women within the security sector was also identified as crucial for effective mobilization and action; however there were differing views as to whether such a platform already exists or not. Notwithstanding there is an existing platform for female law enforcement officers in Liberia called the Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA). Its visibility and functionality is what is in question.

With specific reference to training, the following areas were generally suggested: gender mainstreaming, general knowledge on SSR, laws and instruments on gender and security issues, conflict resolution, and institutional reforms. Project proposal and report writing, legislation drafting, as well as computer studies were identified as additional areas for training.

In Sierra Leone, most men within the security sector stated poverty as the biggest security threat. Their female colleagues on the other hand identified male dominance and violence against women as the biggest threat.

As opposed to Liberia, only few respondents were familiar with the concept of SSR and defined it as "the process of identifying threats to security and ways to address such threats in a manner that leads to sustainable peace". None had however participated in any SSR related activity. The same was applicable to gender, only a few female security personnel (particularly those in the police force) had a fair knowledge of what the concept is and implies. Here again, none had participated in a gender related programme, and except for actions taken to address gender-based violence (e.g. the creation of Family Support Units and help line within the police force) none had knowledge about any gender-related initiative undertaken at their institutional levels. They nonetheless affirmed that men and women, boys and girls had differing security needs which must be considered in any reform process. It was further noted that except for the private security companies that specifically called on women to enroll when placing job adverts, recruitment processes in the Sierra Leone security sector is usually gender blind.

Women's poor access to decision making positions in security institutions and male chauvinism, especially men's unwillingness to generally accept women as equals and the lack of institutional gender policies were highlighted as constraints to gender mainstreaming. Also there seems to be a tacit acceptance that women within the sector have a limit to which they can aspire and this de-motivates female security personnel and discourages other women from seeking to take up careers in the security sector. In addition, there are peculiar challenges for married women who seek to take up professional careers within security institutions, as demonstrated in instances where women have passed through the recruitment exercises, been selected but 'ordered' by their husbands not to take up the jobs/appointments. Increased representation of women in decision making and sensitization were recommended for addressing this. Other recommendations include active involvement of female personnel in recruitment processes, creation of equal opportunities for career development and promotion, gender training, initiatives to curb sexual harassment, recruitment of qualified females, and the development of institutional gender policies.

Female respondents generally identified the lack of a platform for women within the security sector as another challenge and requested that such a platform be created, and that it include women's civil society groups. The absence of such a platform also minimizes collaboration and effective mobilization. Respondents however acknowledged that such a platform is necessary. Responses from the Prison Services indicated that an Association of Female Prisons Officers and Wives of Officers had recently been established. They emphasized that such platforms are crucial for negotiating even with their male counterparts. General knowledge on gender (including gender mainstreaming) and security sector reform, as well as the laws and instruments on these were suggested as areas for trainings.

3. Broader SSR Oversight Actors and Stakeholders:

This category of respondents, largely comprised of members of parliament, government officials and representatives of UN agencies, in Sierra Leone identified security threats such as unemployment, poverty, lack of discipline, lack of justice and rising domestic violence. 60% of respondents, particularly those from the Parliament and MGSWCA, stated they are not familiar with the concept of security sector reform, although they had heard of it. On the flip side, they seemed to be more knowledgeable about gender. Ironically however, most parliamentarians were of the opinion that males are best suited to handle security issues, though some reluctantly agreed that spaces should also be created for females.

From the assessment it is clear there is a very vague understanding among key stakeholders about gender and/or SSR. This was confirmed with the request for urgent trainings on gender and SSR issues from the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs, the Parliament and the Justice Sector Coordination Office.

Views on security threats were similar in Liberia; however the following were added to the list --armed robbery and sexual and gender-based violence. As opposed to Sierra Leone, more stakeholders in Liberia were knowledgeable about both gender and SSR. Members of the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committees at both the level of the Senate and House of Representatives specifically acknowledged the efforts DCAF, ASSN and the Kings College London are making to ensure they exercise their oversight function on issues pertaining to SSR.

From the feedback received it was evident that more is being done in Liberia to mainstream gender issues into the security sector. Examples of such efforts include gender awareness seminars, appointment of gender focal personnel, launch of a nation-wide campaign against all forms of sexual violence, passage of a rape bill, gender budgeting, the establishment of a SSR Unit within the Ministry of Gender and Development, etc. Notwithstanding, a number of challenges were still identified, namely discriminatory cultural practices, poor funding for gender projects/structures, and high level female illiteracy. The SSR Unit in the Ministry of Gender and Development for instance is in dire need for resources such as books and materials on SSR.

Sensitization and capacity building were listed as immediate strategies for addressing these challenges. The following were specifically suggested as immediate training areas: gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, laws and instruments on gender and SSR.

4. Civil Society Organizations:

Among civil society organizations in Liberia, unemployment, the rise in criminal activities, the culture of impunity, rape and corruption are perceived to be some of the key security threats plaguing the country. Also, there seemed to be a higher level of knowledge about SSR and gender. Beyond participating in conferences and trainings, a few (0.3%) respondents in this category claimed they had either contributed to the DCAF Gender and SSR Toolkit or been involved in the recruitment of more females into the Liberian Army and Police.

Generally, it was noted that CSOs were not consulted or involved in the national SSR process, which is largely being driven by external actors. Their participation seems to be limited to information sharing or participation in meetings on SSR. They decried the lack of local ownership and called for the recognition of civil society as critical partners in the SSR process. They noted the efforts made to address gender and women related issues e.g. the establishment of the women and children protection units, passage of rape bill, special and fast track measures taken to increase female recruitment in the police force, increased gender trainings within the security sector, etc. It was however mentioned that low level of education and discriminatory cultural norms remain key challenges to the realization of gender equality especially within the security sector.

Recommendations to address some of these issues include an institutional policy review, community sensitization on the role of women in security, provision of incentives (including equal salaries for men and women), funding to support gender initiatives, and trainings in particularly monitoring and evaluation.

In Sierra Leone, CSOs identified poverty, marginalization of women, unemployment, poor access to justice, corruption and gender-based violence as major security threats. Only one respondent in this category admitted having knowledge on SSR, though a majority indicated they were knowledgeable on the concept of gender.

On the SSR process, CSOs were unsure as to what exactly its impact has been. However, some indicated they had observed some improvement in the justice sector (courts) which they claim is more efficient in its delivery of services since the recruitment of more magistrates, training and the provision of logistics under a British funded project led by DFID.

Training was emphasized over and over again by respondents from civil society and the following areas were suggested: general knowledge on gender and security sector reform, gender mainstreaming, laws and instruments in gender and SSR. A special call was also made for the government and international community to invest in the education of women.

Summary of Results/Findings

- Very little knowledge exists about SSR in both countries. Those who claim to have been engaged in the process largely see SSR as training of the army, police and/or the recruitment of women into these bodies.
- The SSR process, in particular in Liberia, is generally seen as a closed process that has lacked broad-based participation, especially from civil society and women's groups.
- Gender was not prioritized in either of the SSR processes in Liberia or Sierra Leone. The focus on gender/women's issues has mainly revolved around getting more women to enroll in the army or police.
- There is a huge knowledge gap and very little capacity for engagement in the SSR processes; however, there is interest and a willingness to learn.
- Little or no collaboration exists between the security sector and the gender machineries. It was only through the assessment that the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children in Sierra Leone became aware of a one-day workshop that was organized by the Sierra Leone Prisons for its Prison Women Association.
- Collaboration does not currently exist amongst women in the security sector in Sierra Leone, and in Liberia the existing association for female security personnel is factionalized and at the moment unpopular.
- The security sector is still largely perceived as a male domain even at the level of parliament. This is largely due to gendered stereotypes defined by society.
- Very little information exists on the process and experience of SSR, where it does it is closely guarded and not easily accessible to the general public.
- There is generally a low level of awareness of existing gender initiatives within the security sector – for instance, female security sector personnel were often unaware of gender initiatives within their own institutions.
- There is still a general misconception about gender and sex. It is imperative that more training be organized for key stakeholders, an understanding of the distinction between the two is crucial for effective mainstreaming of gender in policies and programmes at all levels.
- Security sector institutions are still largely male-dominated, and there is still a major under representation of women in decision making positions. For instance out of the 94 Parliamentarians in Liberia only 14 are female; of the 135 personnel in the Drug Enforcement Agency in Liberia, a little over 15 are female; of the 422 personnel in the Ministry of National Security in Liberia only 20 are female. The Liberia Bureau of Immigrations has a staff strength that ranges from 1,947 to 2,000, but only 500 are female. The Sierra Leone Prison Service has 1,125 personnel, but only 208 are women.

Conclusion: Implication for WIPSEN-Africa/DCAF Project

The needs assessment has generated high expectations from diverse national stakeholders who see this as an opportunity to add their voice to the SSR process. This expectation comes with a number of demands on the implementing partners of the project, WIPSEN-Africa and DCAF. First is the request to set up a gender and SSR resource unit within the resource centre of the Ministry of Gender and Development in Liberia; second is the request for special trainings on mainly gender mainstreaming and SSR for the Justice Sector Coordination Unit and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, both in Sierra Leone; third is the call for the establishment of a platform for female security sector personnel in Sierra Leone, and the strengthening (revival) of the Liberian Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA); fourth is support for the development of institutional gender policies.

While some of these are part of the original project package proposed by WIPSEN-Africa and DCAF, a few are not, but given that these are the real needs on the ground, the project will have to be reviewed accordingly to accommodate these urgent requests. Furthermore, it is imperative to review activities such as trainings that were initially planned to incorporate other actors identified during the needs assessment e.g. the Justice Sector Coordination Unit.

NOTES

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