

National Security Policy-Making and Gender

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There is strong recognition that security sector reform (SSR) should meet the different security needs of men, women, boys and girls. The integration of gender issues is also key to the effectiveness and accountability of the security sector, and to local ownership and the legitimacy of SSR processes.

This practice note provides a short introduction to the benefits of integrating gender into national security policy-making, as well as practical information on doing so.

This practice note is part of the **Gender and SSR Toolkit**. Designed to provide an introduction to gender issues for SSR practitioners and policy-makers, the Toolkit includes 12 tools with corresponding practice notes - see *More Information*.

Why is gender important to national security policies?

National Security Policies set out a government's approach to security and how security is expected to be achieved. They include broad national security strategies and policies, which may be referred to as a plan, vision, strategy, concept or doctrine, as well as institution-specific policies, such as a white paper on defence.

Gender refers to the particular roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours and values that society ascribes to men and women. 'Gender' therefore refers to *learned* differences between men and women, while 'sex' refers to the *biological* differences between males and females. Gender roles vary widely within and across cultures, and can change over time. Gender refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them.

The integration of gender issues into national security policies increases their relevance and sustainability:

Local ownership through participatory policy-making processes

- Broad-based consultations on security needs and priorities that include a wide range of civil society organisations strengthen local ownership, public legitimacy and help build national consensus on security issues. The different perspectives that women's and men's organisations can bring to the table are critical.

Comprehensive security policy that addresses diverse security needs

- Taking into account the different security and justice needs of women, men, girls and boys leads to more comprehensive and effective security policies.
- Attention to gender issues in national security policies highlights the importance of addressing actual internal threats to security, such as gender-based violence (GBV).

Non-discrimination in security policies and security sector institutions

- Reducing discrimination by security sector personnel builds trust, increases legitimacy and improves the provision of security and justice. A security policy can establish protective rules against discrimination within security sector institutions.

Compliance with obligations under international laws and instruments

Integrating gender into national security policy-making is necessary to comply with international and regional laws, instruments and norms concerning security and gender. Key instruments include:

- *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979)
- *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security* (2000)

For more information, please see the Toolkit's Annex on International and Regional Laws and Instruments.



Box 1	Gender issues to include in national security policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The equal right of men and women to participate in security sector institutions. ■ GBV as an internal threat to security. ■ Elimination of discrimination and other human rights violations within security sector institutions or in the provision of security and justice services. ■ Mechanisms that ensure the participation of civil society, including women's organisations, in oversight of the implementation of security policies, SSR processes and security sector institutions. 	

How can gender be integrated into national security policies?

The development or revision of national security policy requires the participation of a wide range of actors, including the national government, parliament, local government and civil society organisations (CSOs). Each set of actors can take steps to integrate gender into security policy-making:

National government

(including security coordinating bodies and security policy drafting committees)

- Build the capacity and commitment of senior-level staff and officials to address gender in security policy-making through training, briefings and reports on gender issues, and mentoring programmes.
- Increase the participation of women in security policy-making by:
 - Appointing women to national security councils and security policy drafting committees.

Case Study 1	Jamaica's National Security Policy – an inclusive process ¹
<p>In mid-2007 the Government of Jamaica adopted a comprehensive National Security Policy – <i>Towards a Secure and Prosperous Nation</i>. This policy was based on a National Security Strategy Green Paper, which was first tabled in Parliament in January 2006, and a subsequent National Security Strategy White Paper. Initially, the Jamaican Government planned to conduct a defence review. However, it was quickly realised that a broader approach was required to address the range of potential threats to national security, including organised crime, gang violence, socio-economic concerns and environmental disaster. A broad-based consultation was initiated, involving all potentially relevant branches of government, state agencies and CSOs, including women's groups.</p> <p>Under the heading 'The Effects of Violence on Communities', the National Security Policy calls for close attention to the impact of violence on individuals, communities and society. 'Domestic violence', it noted, 'is one of the more pervasive and common forms of violence plaguing the society. It contributes to the overall pattern of crime and violence due to its debilitating effects on the social fabric and its role in socialising the youths to violence as a means of dispute resolution. Women and children are disproportionately at risk from domestic violence.'</p>	

- Including in security bodies representatives from the ministry and/or other government entities or parliamentary caucuses responsible for gender and women's issues.
- Instituting mechanisms to consult with representatives from women's organisations and gender experts on security policy issues.
- Explicitly include gender issues in security policies (see Box 1).
- Use gender-sensitive language to avoid discrimination and exclusion – e.g. refer to 'police officer' rather than 'policeman' and 'chairperson' rather than 'chairman'.

Parliament

- Ensure that security policy-making processes are inclusive and participatory by:
 - Undertaking broad-based public consultation processes (see Box 2).
 - Holding parliamentary hearings, open debates and town hall meetings to seek the input of men and women throughout society on security issues, and to discuss draft security policies.
 - Holding separate meetings for groups in society that will not or perhaps cannot speak out in public – e.g. minority ethnic groups.
- Strive for equal participation of male and female parliamentarians in security policy-making by:
 - Promoting the participation of women parliamentarians on defence and security committees.
 - Encouraging female parliamentarians and/or parliamentarians interested in gender issues to meet across party lines to develop a shared platform on gender and security issues.
 - Supporting the establishment of women's caucuses/coalitions in parliament and within political parties (see Case Study 2).

Local government

- Involve women, gender experts and representatives from women's organisations in community level security committees and councils and community safety audits.
- Take into account the different security and justice needs of men, women, boys and girls in local crime prevention and response initiatives, as well as with regard to GBV issues.
- Communicate the results of safety audits and planning processes to regional and national security bodies, so that local security realities of men and women can be incorporated into national security policies.

Civil society organisations

- Advocate for gender issues to be addressed in national security policies.

Box 2 Consultation on national security policies should include:

- Rural and urban women's community organisations
- Labour unions
- Religious organisations
- Community leaders and activists
- Youth organisations
- Indigenous, ethnic and other minority associations
- Social justice organisations
- Migrant associations
- Associations for people with disabilities
- Children's advocacy groups
- Academics and researchers
- International organisations

- Represent the views of men, women, boys and girls across society, including those from marginalised groups, in security policy-making processes.
- Provide a pool of technical knowledge and training expertise on gender and security issues for security policy-makers and parliamentarians to draw upon.
- Monitor gender issues in the implementation of security policies.
- Conduct gender audits and assessments of security policy and security sector institutions.

Gender training is an important tool to build capacity for the development and implementation of gender-responsive security policy. Key target groups for gender training include:

- Staff of ministries involved in security policy-making, including staff in the defence, interior and foreign affairs ministries.
- Members of security coordinating bodies and security policy drafting committees.
- Parliamentarians on defence and security committees and their staff.
- Members of local citizen security councils or community police forums.
- CSOs working on security policy.

Gender-responsive assessment, monitoring and evaluation of security policies is necessary to ensure that they meet the needs of men, women, girls and boys. Useful strategies include:

- Gender and socio-economic analysis of existing gender roles and relations, in particular, differences in activities, access to resources and decision-making, and the economic, social, political and other constraints faced by women and men.
- Gender impact assessment of security policy to determine the potential or existing impact of security policy upon men, women, girls and boys.

- Gender budget analysis to determine whether equitable and adequate funding is allocated to meet the different security and justice needs of men, women, girls and boys.

Also available in Tool 8...

- Examples of gender-sensitive language in national security policies
- A five-step community safety audit process
- Actions that CSOs can take to support gender-responsive security policy-making
- Questions for a gender impact assessment of security policy
- Questions for gender analysis of budgets
- Challenges and opportunities for the integration of gender issues into security policy-making in post-conflict, transitional, developing and developed countries

Post-conflict challenges and opportunities

Security sector reform is a key priority in post-conflict countries, and security policies will form an important basis for structuring this process. Security policy-making processes can be an opportunity to renegotiate the security-related roles and responsibilities of state and non-state actors alike.

Challenges for the integration of gender issues

- State institutions and infrastructure may be weak and thus have limited capacity to conduct broad-based consultation processes. This in turn limits the involvement of women's organisations and the inclusion of gender issues.
- Low levels of education and lack of technical expertise may be barriers to public engagement in policy-making processes, impacting women and certain ethnic groups in particular.

Case Study 2

Integrating gender into security policy-making: the role of women within the African National Council (ANC) in South Africa ²

South Africa's transition to democracy demonstrates how a conducive political environment, the formation of a women's league within a political party and advocacy on gender issues across the political spectrum can influence national security policy.

The political space to address gender issues was created by women within both civil society and political parties. Concerned that women were being marginalised, the ANC Women's League was reformed in 1990. It vigorously demanded women's inclusion in leadership positions and the inclusion of gender equality in ANC policies. Its advocacy is evident throughout the ANC's pivotal 1992 publication *Ready to Govern: Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa*, which acknowledged that 'gender discrimination has either excluded or subordinated women's participation in all socio-economic and political institutions'.³ *Ready to Govern* proposed embracing four interrelated values: democracy and civilian authority, human security, anti-militarism and gender equality. It reiterated that security sector institutions must respect the ideals of democracy, non-racialism and non-sexism, and reflect the national and gender composition of South African society.

Box 3 **Engaging women's organisations in security policy-making**

- Facilitate interaction between women's groups and local security providers – e.g. through their inclusion in local security committees.
- Build the capacity of women's organisations to address security policy issues, including security sector oversight.
- Include representatives from women's organisations as gender experts in parliamentary hearings.

- The executive and security institutions may see CSOs as political opponents and therefore be reluctant to work with women's organisations.

Opportunities for the integration of gender issues

- Peace agreements can mandate the development of gender-responsive national security policies.
- Participatory national dialogues on security and reconciliation can make it possible for both women and men to have a voice in identifying national security needs and priorities.
- Women's civil society groups that worked for peace and supported community-level security throughout the conflict can offer valuable expertise to security policy-making.
- Constitutional and electoral reform that increases the proportion of women in parliament makes it more possible for women to hold positions in security decision-making bodies.
- Rising rates of post-conflict GBV can bring to the forefront the need for security policies to include the

prevention and response to GBV as a security priority.

- Donors and international organisations may support gender-responsive security policy-making processes.

? Questions for national security policy-making

Key questions to ask to ensure that gender issues are addressed in national security policy-making include:

- Is the emphasis on national or human security? Have internal security threats and day-to-day threats to human security been included?
- Has the policy been developed in a participatory manner, including women's groups and other CSOs, staff from the ministry of women's affairs, female parliamentarians and gender experts?
- How does the policy address the particular security needs of women, men, girls and boys?
- How does the policy address GBV?
- How does the policy emphasise the importance of gender equality goals, including non-discrimination and the equal participation of women and men?
- Is the policy formulated in gender-sensitive language?
- Is the policy in line with international, regional and national legislation and policies on gender issues?
- Will the policy be implemented, monitored and evaluated in a gender responsive manner?

More information

Susanna Bearne, Olga Oliker, Kevin A. O'Brien and Andrew Rathmell - **National Security Decision-Making Structures and Security Sector Reform**, The RAND Corporation, 2005.

DCAF - **DCAF Background: National Security Policy**, 2005.

Initiative for Inclusive Security and International Alert - **Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action**, 2004.

OECD - **OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice**, 2007.

Kristin Valasek with Kaitlin Nelson - **Securing Equality, Engendering Peace: a Guide to Policy and Planning on Women, Peace and Security (UN Security Council Resolution 1325)**, UN-INSTRAW, 2006.

Gender and SSR Toolkit

1. Security Sector Reform and Gender
 2. Police Reform and Gender
 3. Defence Reform and Gender
 4. Justice Reform and Gender
 5. Penal Reform and Gender
 6. Border Management and Gender
 7. Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector and Gender
 8. National Security Policy-Making and Gender
 9. Civil Society Oversight of the Security Sector and Gender
 10. Private Military and Security Companies and Gender
 11. SSR Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation and Gender
 12. Gender Training for Security Sector Personnel
- Annex on International and Regional Laws and Instruments

Each of these tools and practice notes are available from: www.dcaf.ch, www.un-instraw.org and www.osce.org/odihr.

This Practice Note was prepared by Mugiho Takeshita of DCAF, based upon Tool 8 authored by Peter Albrecht and Karen Barnes of International Alert.

¹ *National Security Strategy for Jamaica: Towards a Secure and Prosperous Nation*, a Green Paper, revised in May 2006; and Stone, C. et al, *Supporting Security, Justice, and Development: Lessons for a New Era*, 2005.

² Anderlini, S.N. and Conaway, C.P., *Negotiating the Transition to Democracy and Reforming the Security Sector: The Vital contributions of South African Women*, (Washington DC: Women Waging Peace), 2004.

³ African National Congress (ANC), *Ready to Govern*, ANC Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa adopted at the National Conference 28-31 May 1992. <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/readyto.html>