Chapter 4

Learning from Others' Mistakes: Towards Participatory, Gender-sensitive SSR

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Introduction

From its inception, security sector reform (SSR) was intended to promote development and reduce poverty.[1] This primary mission has been reiterated time and again, most notably by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), which in a 2007 handbook calls for a 'developmental approach to SSR'.[2] This is to be achieved through various routes, such as reducing military spending and increasing economic and social expenditure; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes; small-arms control; and fighting crime and corruption.[3] Yet current practice of SSR has been criticised for not adequately promoting development. It has been shown that SSR processes often lead to an increase in military spending, and neither necessarily reduce crime nor increase security, as is illustrated in the case of Afghanistan. Nor does SSR automatically alleviate poverty, as shown in the cases of Sierra Leone and Liberia, which after many years of SSR rank 158 and 162 respectively on the Human Development Index.[4] This has prompted statements such as by Call: 'Security system reform policy has been castigated as an "idealistic" and "unrealistic" development project, whose hubris far outstrips its achievements.'[5] Other critics have denounced SSR as a mere institution-building exercise with little to no impact on people's security and access to justice.[6] Why is it that SSR processes are seemingly unable to fulfil their original purpose?

A number of reasons have been suggested for SSR's failure to contribute adequately to development, such as a lack of resources, resistance to engaging in 'development' activities, the development community's fear of securitising development and inter-agency struggles for authority and

resources between development and SSR communities.[7] In this chapter, we argue that beyond these institutional impediments there are two key elements that render it difficult for SSR, as currently practised, to contribute adequately to development: state-centrism and gender-blindness. As experience from the field of development shows, participatory and gender critiques have transformed development thinking and practice, and today participatory, gender-sensitive approaches are seen as indispensable to development and poverty reduction.[8] We suggest that SSR would do well to learn from this experience, namely through transforming discourse and practice in response to the critiques of feminist development literature and the lessons learned from the participatory turn in development. It seems that until now the majority of traditional SSR initiatives have only paid lip-service to concepts of 'local ownership' and 'civil society participation', and if gender issues are addressed at all, it is mainly in the shape of 'adding women'. Thus we argue that unless the fundamental challenges posed by gender inequality and lack of participation are taken seriously, SSR will continue its path of inadequate contribution to development.

But what is development? In current SSR discourse, the meaning of development is rarely discussed. Development is taken as something pre-defined that will flourish once security is provided. As stated in the OECD/DAC handbook, SSR aims at 'promoting an environment in which individuals and communities feel safe and secure, within which the rule of law is respected and in which sustainable development can flourish'.[9] Yet the concept of development has a long history and has been used to refer to various things, including a material condition, an immanent element of societies or individuals, a process, a prospective state to be attained, an intervention or a political project.[10] Thus it is not a fixed reality, but socially constructed and inherently contested. Similarly, security has been termed an 'essentially contested concept'. Just like development, it has a long history and can take on various meanings. The specific definitions of these terms depend on the context and the referent object, and are situated in power structures that determine who gets to define meaning.[11] Generally speaking, dominant conceptualisations of development and security have followed similar paths from state-focused macro definitions towards human- or community-based understandings with the emergence of 'human development' and 'human security'.[12] Similar to the complexity surrounding the definitions of security and development, the security-development nexus is also a contested concept. Although often assumed to be common sense, this nexus has been imbued with various meanings and used as a political strategy justifying particular interventions and interests.[13]

Acknowledging the essentially contested meanings of development, security and their nexus, instead of working with pre-established definitions, we insist that these terms only make sense in context and it should be left to individuals and collectivities to fill them with meaning. However, for the purpose of this chapter, we adhere to the notions of development and security as processes of empowerment, wherein 'beneficiaries' should define development and security needs and voice ways in which to address them.[14] As such, development and security as empowerment is more of a meta-definition: it refers to the overall goals of development and security, while leaving the concrete content to local meaning-making. Similarly, regarding the security-development nexus, we emphasise the importance of empirically establishing the interlinkages between security and development in context-specific ways. As we shall see below, the understanding of development and security we adopt here, as any other, is fraught with challenges and contradictions. Yet this definition allows us to move beyond a pre-defined, donor-driven approach.

With regard to definitions of gender and security sector reform, for the purpose of this chapter we define gender as 'socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men [as well as boys and girls]'.[15] Currently, the most widely endorsed definition of SSR is that of the United Nations: 'Security sector reform describes a process of assessment, review and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation led by national authorities that has as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security of the State and its peoples without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law.'[16] This is clearly a definition based upon the political landscape of the United Nations; however, an in-depth discussion of definitions is not within the scope of this chapter (see Chapter 2).

The next section of the chapter reviews the participation and gender critiques of development, and extracts key lessons learned. The third section outlines how SSR processes have generally made similar mistakes and therefore have been critiqued for state-centrism and gender-blindness. The final section explores how SSR practice can take into account the lessons learned from the field of development in the realms of needs assessment, actor identification, activity selection and monitoring and evaluation. We include brief examples from the field of SSR to illustrate what a more development-oriented practice of SSR could look like. We suggest that adopting a participatory, gender-sensitive approach would allow SSR practitioners to understand development and security in context, and address

them more adequately. Thus the aim of this contribution is to examine a number of lessons that SSR could learn in order better to listen to and incorporate context-specific ways of defining 'development' and 'security', and using this as a basis for designing and implementing future SSR initiatives.

Lessons from the field of development

Since its inception, the field of development has faced a number of conceptual and practical challenges. Arguably two of the most significant of these came from the feminist and participatory movements, which have fundamentally transformed the field. This section reviews the critiques, and the transformations that development practice has undergone as a result, as well as the key lessons learned. We also touch upon a few of the contradictions and tensions of participatory and gender-sensitive approaches to development, while continuing to highlight how important these approaches are to meaningful development.

The participatory turn

A widespread frustration with the dominant state-focused, top-down and donor-driven approaches to development research and practice gave birth to a participatory turn in development. The general tenet was that development projects failed because people were left out. In a spirit of 'handing over the stick',[17] the aim was to increase the involvement of socially and economically marginalised people in decision-making over their own lives.[18] The argument was that participation would lead to more equitable and sustainable development, increase effectiveness and promote human-centred development and empowerment.[19] This was based on the assumption that 'participatory approaches empower local people with the skills and confidence to analyse their situation, reach consensus, make decisions and take action, so as to improve their circumstances'.[20]

Participatory approaches to development have taken various forms throughout their long history.[21] Early initiatives that stressed empowerment and collective local action include, for example, the New Deal in India in the 1930s and community development programmes in Latin America in the 1950s.[22] Yet it was only in the 1970s and 1980s that governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were finally convinced to become interested in participatory development, resulting in a 'participation boom'.[23]

With the institutionalisation of participation, it lost much of its initial radical empowerment agenda and became a formula for making people central to development by encouraging 'beneficiaries' to participate in interventions that affect them and over which they previously had limited control or influence, i.e. to increase ownership of 'the community' over its own development.[24] In what has been called the 'participation imperative' era of the 1990s, participatory development methods became the synonym for good and sustainable development, and a key condition for funding.[25] Thus, for example, the Human Development Report of 1993, entitled *People's Participation*, states 'people's participation is becoming the central issue of our time';[26] the Brundtland Commission's report concluded that one of the main prerequisites of sustainable development is securing effective citizen participation;[27] and participation has become central to the World Bank repertoire.[28] International development agencies, donor governments and NGOs alike have come to promote participatory approaches to development.

Yet the first generation of participatory approaches institutionalised in the 1980s has been critiqued in a number of ways. Some criticise the inadequate implementation of participatory methods, including the lack of self-reflection and cultural sensitivity of development practitioners.[29] More fundamental critiques have protested against the so-called 'tyranny' of participation.[30] They argue that participatory approaches are based on simplistic notions of 'community', 'power' and 'participation'.[31] There is a long-standing debate around the concept of community.[32] Community is a 'warmly persuasive word', as Williams famously put it, with many positive connotations but no clear definition.[33] Yet community is also a highly problematic concept. As Booth notes, 'to discuss community is to enter tricky conceptual and political waters'.[34] Community is often dealt with as something natural or given, a 'harmonious and internally equitable collective', based on a 'mythical notion of community cohesion'.[35] This obscures community diversity – including age, economic, religious, caste, ethnic and gender differences – and hides a 'bias that favours the opinions and priorities of those with more power and the ability to voice themselves publicly'.[36] Critics have pointed out that 'the notion of community can be adequately and usefully apprehended only in particular historical and geographical contexts'.[37] Thus they highlight the fact that development interventions should engage with communities in context-specific ways, taking into account internal differences and discriminations.[38] This involves paying attention to the various social dynamics that structure communities.

Although some of the initial participatory efforts were based on challenging dominant power structures, institutionalised participatory

development approaches have been criticised for addressing political issues through technical management solutions.[39] This happened as a result of the standardisation of approaches during a 'manual and method-oriented mania', which contradicted the original aim to move away from the limitations of blueprint planning and implementation towards more flexible and context-specific approaches.[40] This points to a more basic failure of mainstream participatory approaches to realise the complexities of power relations, which resulted in harmful outcomes of development initiatives, including manipulation, political cooptation and the reinforcement of marginalisation and the interests of the already powerful.[41] Thereby, supposedly participatory projects masked power structures within communities and between donors and 'beneficiaries', and failed to recognise the importance of power structures in determining 'whose reality counts'.[42] These projects have also been critiqued for lacking an awareness that 'local knowledge' is often shaped by local people's perceptions of what they think the agency in question is expecting to hear and deliver; hence, 'local knowledge' is never unmediated.[43] As a result of these critiques, subsequent participatory initiatives began to acknowledge the need to address power relations. If development was to be empowering, as Hickey and Mohan suggest, 'understanding the ways in which participation relates to existing power structures and political systems provides the basis for moving towards a more transformative approach to development'.[44]

Finally, practitioners and scholars highlighted the minimal consideration of gender issues and the inadequate involvement of women in first-generation participatory approaches to development (see the next section).[45] This was linked to the simplistic, gender-blind notion of 'community' on which such approaches were based, as Maguire notes: 'Gender was hidden in seemingly inclusive terms: "the people", "the oppressed", "the campesinos", or simply "the community". It was only when comparing … projects that it became clear that "the community" was all too often the male community.'[46] Thus participatory approaches often obscured women's worlds, needs and contributions to development. Instead, it was argued that greater involvement of women and attention to gender-differentiated needs and agency hold the promise of more effective and equitable processes of participatory development.[47]

These critiques of first-generation participatory approaches to development have been, at least partially, addressed through increased awareness of power dynamics and the role of the development practitioner, and developing more complex understandings of 'communities' and the social dynamics that structure them. Subsequent participatory approaches

have also sought to address the gender-blindness of earlier initiatives by enabling marginal voices to be raised and heard, and 'taking account of the power effects of difference'.[48] A variety of forms of participation can be seen in today's development activities, categorised through the creation of numerous typologies of participation.[49] For instance, Cornwall distinguishes between four modes of participation: functional, instrumental, consultative and transformative (Table 1).[50] This typology illustrates the variety of participatory approaches and their implications in terms of development and empowerment. The first three modes – functional, instrumental and consultative – are merely geared towards getting people involved in already

Table 1: Modes of participation

Mode of participation	Associated with…	Why invite/involve?	Participants viewed as…
Functional	Beneficiary participation	To enlist people in projects or processes, so as to secure compliance, minimise dissent, lend legitimacy	Objects
Instrumental	Community participation	To make projects or interventions run more efficiently by enlisting contributions, delegating responsibilities	Instruments
Consultative	Stakeholder participation	To get in tune with public views and values, garner good ideas, defuse opposition, enhance responsiveness	Actors
Transformative	Citizen participation	To build political capabilities, critical consciousness and confidence; to enable people to demand rights; to enhance accountability	Agents

existing projects, delegating work or responsibility and collecting ideas, in order to secure compliance, minimise dissent and make projects more efficient and effective. In contrast, transformative participation seeks to create the conditions for meaningful participation and open possibilities for people to realise their rights and exercise voice. In this mode, participants are viewed as agents and not merely as passive 'beneficiaries'. In order to achieve development as empowerment, the aim is to move towards transformative participation. Nobody claims this is an easy task. Yet, as has been shown in the field of development, context-specific strategies to overcome the difficulties and contradictions of such an endeavour have been successfully implemented.[51]

Realising gender

Since the early 1970s feminists and women's rights activists have posed critical questions to dominant development theory and practice.[52] Initially focused on the issue of inclusion, the discourse shifted from 'women in development' (WID) to a 'gender and development' (GAD) approach in the 1990s. Early critiques have been assimilated and are now standard fare for development actors, from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank to USAID (the US Agency for International Development) and NGOs. However, whether or not gender and development lessons learned have really been put into practice remains the fodder of lively debates.

The first resounding gender critique of development was that women were not being consulted and included within development initiatives. As famously demonstrated by Ester Boserup, whose research served as a basis for the WID approach, early development initiatives excluded women and often had harmful impacts on their lives, including through increasing their workload.[53] The WID approach was problematically adopted by the international development community and transformed into the rationale that 'women are an untapped resource who can provide an economic contribution to development'.[54] This approach has been critiqued for focusing on women in isolation and promoting measures to have women incorporated into the market economy – thus instrumentalising them and effectively creating a double or triple burden of work.[55] The underlying assumption that 'women' are a homogeneous category of development actors has also been challenged.[56] Women's experiences of, and roles in, development differ based not only on sex, but on a multitude of factors such as age, ethnicity, geography, class, caste, sexuality and religion. As such, the focus has shifted from an essentialist inclusion of women to a broadened discussion on the

participation of contextually specific marginalised groups of women, men, boys and girls in development.

The GAD approach critiqued WID's 'add women and stir' doctrine and highlighted the need to shift from a focus on women towards a comprehensive gender critique of development that takes into account the interlinked and contextual gender roles of men and women, girls and boys, and women's and girl's consequent subordination.[57] As a practical example, the GAD approach called for creating space at community level to discuss contentious gender issues which often do not make it on to the agenda of participatory meetings, such as family planning or domestic violence.[58] The GAD approach recognises that not only does development need to be participatory, but it should also contribute to the goal of gender equality rather than entrenching discriminatory gender roles. As such, development programming should address gendered power dynamics and engage both men and women to transform oppressive gender roles. However, this approach has been critiqued as too proscriptive in its quest to develop appropriate gender tools and frameworks for development, turning gender mainstreaming into a technical issue and thus failing to address overarching issues such as cultural gender stereotypes or institutionalised discrimination. Additionally, these tools and frameworks can once again be seen as externally imposed and top-down rather than enabling people to articulate and analyse their own situations.[59]

Finally, postmodernist and post-colonial feminists have critiqued the discourse and practice of development for its Eurocentrism and universal pretentions of modernity.[60] They highlight how early development initiatives employed neocolonial stereotypes of 'third world' women as tradition-bound, oppressed, exotic and backward. This trend has continued throughout the WID and GAD eras, where women in developing contexts continue to be framed as the inherently vulnerable 'other', the helpless victim in need of Western salvation.[61] Fundamentally, postmodern feminists question the neocolonialist discourse of modernity – the imperative of helping the poor, vulnerable Southern woman become 'modern like us'. Instead, they call on the field of development to acknowledge existing power relations, both in defining what development is and in relations between 'developers' and 'developed'. They call for a move towards non-orientalising discourse and practice that seek to empower women, men, boys and girls through focusing on the contextualised voices of marginalised groups and creating equitable dialogue between them and development practitioners, so they can articulate their own needs and agendas.[62]

These feminist critiques have transformed development thinking and practice. While the first reaction was to 'add women and stir', subsequent practice moved towards gender mainstreaming, such as gender budgeting initiatives. Increasingly, women have become the explicit target of particular development initiatives, including microcredit programmes. Though these initiatives have also been critically assessed for their potential reproduction of gender stereotypes and subordination, today there is a general realisation in the field (even though not adopted by all development actors) that gender is indeed relevant. In addition, it is recognised that gender-sensitive development is about more than adding women, that gender is only one (although often the dominant) among many axes of discrimination and that development should be a process of empowerment.

In summary, these two key challenges to development, participation and gender, have resulted in a fundamental transformation of development from a state-based, top-down and donor-led undertaking towards more participatory, gender-sensitive approaches. There has been a rethinking of the meaning of development, with a general shift from macro definitions focusing on economic growth towards an emphasis on human development and empowerment. Even though there are various critiques of this move, and numerous development institutions only partially adhere to this shift, there is acknowledgement that participation and gender sensitivity are conditions for meaningful development. In the following section we argue that the challenge for SSR is to learn lessons from the participatory and gender-sensitive approaches already tested in the field of development, without falling into the same pitfalls as early approaches.

Making the same mistakes?

Turning to the field of SSR, we realise that it has faced critiques similar to those levelled against development, namely for being state-centric and gender-blind. It seems that SSR has in many ways failed to learn from the past 40 years of development work. We argue that by taking into account the recent breakthroughs in the field of participatory and gender-sensitive development, SSR practice may be able to make a more meaningful impact upon development. This section analyses the SSR critiques of state-centrism and gender-blindness and begins making the link to lessons learned from development practice.

SSR as state-centric

SSR has been criticised as being state-centric in two main ways: regarding its definition of (in)security and the referent object of security, and regarding its definition of security providers. SSR practice has tended to focus on security as national security, the state being its key referent object.[63] This understanding of security tends to be expert-led and 'one size fits all', and its conception of security needs is top-down, with a focus on state- and institution-building.[64] SSR theory and practice have also been accused of being largely donor-driven.[65]

SSR has long been characterised by an almost exclusive focus on reforming or building formal state institutions. Indeed, non-state actors,[66] such as customary tribal authorities or local councils of elders, were not initially part of SSR thinking and practice, but have recently been included as a conceptual afterthought.[67] The initial failure to recognise the variety of actors neglects the extent to which people in post-conflict and developing contexts rely on non-state security and justice providers.[68] Evidence shows that non-state actors provide the majority of justice and security in 'fragile' and post-conflict environments. For example, according to the OECD/DAC, in sub-Saharan Africa non-state providers are estimated to deliver at least 80 per cent of justice services.[69] In many contexts, local and non-state (or customary) security and justice providers have been shown to be more trusted, accessible and efficient, and their enforcement capacity superior to that of state providers.[70] While customary actors are often framed as oppositional to the state, in many contexts, including Colombia, Liberia and Sierra Leone, customary actors are state-sanctioned, for instance through recognition in the constitution.[71] In such 'hybrid societies', interlinked state and customary security and justice actors, such as national police and tribal police, exist in parallel. It has to be noted, however, that this observation is not valid for all customary actors. Moreover, these actors have also been heavily criticised, including for perpetrating violence and/or discriminating against specific groups, in particular women.

Due to state-centrism, most SSR funding from international donors has gone to 'reforming' formal state security institutions, such as the police and armed forces, rather than focusing on oversight bodies such as parliament or civil society, or non-state security and justice providers.[72] Though the rules of the international assistance game make it difficult for donors to work with non-state actors that have a conflictual relationship with national government, donors can and do fund initiatives to work with armed opposition groups, and donors, in particular development agencies, have the

ability to provide support to community-level customary and civil society actors.[73] Critiques of SSR state-centrism shed light on how reform of state institutions does not necessarily translate into improved access to justice and security at the community level. SSR initiatives often fund institutional reforms that may have a limited impact in the capital city, but barely touch the lives of the majority of the rural population. This approach also sidelines civil society actors, which, as demonstrated by Anderlini and Conaway, make important contributions to both security sector oversight and security and justice provision.[74] Hence, emphasising the different layers of authority in post-colonial states, Scheye encourages SSR donors to support the strengthening of local and non-state security and justice networks.[75]

These critiques have resulted in changing SSR discourse. The role of non-state actors in security provision is increasingly acknowledged. This can be illustrated through a brief comparison of the OECD/DAC SSR guidelines from 2005, where there are only six references to non-state actors, with the 2007 OECD/DAC handbook, where references to non-state actors abound.[76] The OECD/DAC handbook calls for donors to 'take a balanced approach to supporting state and non-state security and justice service provision', and warns that 'programmes that are locked into either state or non-state institutions, one to the exclusion of the other, are unlikely to be effective'.[77] In addition, the notions of 'local ownership' and 'inclusiveness' have entered SSR rhetoric. For instance, according to the OECD/DAC guidelines, SSR should be 'people-centred, locally-owned and based on democratic norms and internationally accepted human rights principles and on the rule of law'.[78] An emphasis on local ownership has also increased the mention of 'participation', which can be seen in the multiplication of OECD/DAC references from the 2005 guidelines to the 2007 handbook.

Although current SSR discourse recognises the role of non-state actors and local ownership, SSR practice is a different picture. Despite appropriating the development rhetoric of local ownership and participation, in practice SSR initiatives often fall back on to state-centric approaches. Non-state actors are frequently excluded and the norm of 'local ownership' is applied selectively, as we discuss in more detail below.[79] In addition, participation is often limited to specific civil society groups, such as capital-based NGOs that have existing contacts with the government and/or international actors. Furthermore, participation seems limited to the incorporation of particular actors in pre-defined SSR projects or in security provision, i.e. a functional mode of participation. Community or even district-level consultations regarding the definition of (in)security needs and priorities are largely absent. The individuals and communities who

experience everyday insecurity tend to be excluded from the picture. Furthermore, in cases where local or non-state actors are acknowledged and included, they are often portrayed as mere service providers, which risks instrumentalising and alienating them, i.e. employing an instrumental mode of participation. This can be partly attributed to a gap between SSR discourse and practice. However, it is also a question of not having applied lessons from development practice regarding community, power and participation. It seems that in SSR practice, when participatory approaches are adopted, it is predominantly the functional, instrumental or consultative modes of participation (see Table 1). Thus in SSR participation is mainly justified on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness, to secure compliance and sustainability,[80] rather than being part of an equitable process of empowerment. SSR processes have a few basic lessons to learn from development practice in order to move towards more transformative forms of participation.

SSR as gender-blind

In the last five years a small body of literature has emerged which specifically challenges SSR for its lack of inclusion of women and gender issues. Though very little has been written on the nexus between SSR, development and gender, clear parallels can be seen between gender critiques of SSR and those levelled against development. SSR practitioners thus have a valuable opportunity to learn from the past 40 years of gender and development experience rather than repeating many of the same mistakes. Key gender critiques of SSR include the lack of equitable participation in security needs assessment, decision-making and provision; insufficient focus on meeting the different security and justice needs of women, men, girls and boys; and the failure to transform institutional culture, including cultures of violent masculinities.

Gender critiques of SSR have their roots in decades of feminist activism, including the work of women's rights and peace activists as well as academic critiques of security and development. From deconstructing neorealist security discourse to innovative street protests against invasion, soaring food prices or violence against women, dominant understandings of security and development are being questioned and challenged (see Chapter 3). Writers on gender and SSR generally tend to draw from the schools of liberal or postmodern/post-structural feminist theory, in many ways reflecting the WID/GAD division. The former focuses on women's equal rights as a platform to call for women's equal participation in security

decision-making and their equal right to security. This school often highlights the need for women to join security sector institutions (SSIs), including combat positions within the military, in order to become full citizens and security providers rather than the stereotypical 'victim needing protection'.[81] In contrast, postmodern/post-structuralist feminists argue against uncritically advocating for women's participation in security discourses and practice without an analysis of the gendered power dynamics of these discourses and structures.[82] A common critique of SSIs is their perpetuation of a culture of violent, militarised masculinities. As in the field of development, postmodern feminist critiques of SSR also challenge the simplistic categories of 'women' and 'men', and note that in addition to gender, other factors influence security access and agency, such as ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, location, religion and ability.

Under the banner of 'equal participation and full involvement',[83] SSR has been critiqued for perpetuating women's underrepresentation in security decision-making and SSIs. The lack of female participation is framed as manifest in three different realms. The most obvious is underrepresentation in SSIs, including security sector oversight bodies.[84] Second is the often even lower rate of women in positions with security decision-making power, such as inspector general of the police, minister of defence or chair of the parliamentary committee on defence and security. Third is the minimal level of women's external involvement in SSR through civil society oversight and activism. According to Sanam Anderlini, 'women are in fact highly-relevant local stakeholders seeking to influence and drive SSR processes to meet local needs … Yet international SSR practitioners, as well as local political and military leaders, have tended to sideline such groups, or ignore their relevance, as if women or civil society more generally were not central to discussions of security.'[85] In response to the critique of women's underrepresentation, security sector actors have often implemented isolated initiatives focused on increasing the number of female security sector personnel. These initiatives have been criticised for equating gender sensitivity with numerical representation and ignoring the fact that simply including more female personnel in institutions imbued with sexism is likely to endanger or coopt women rather than transform the institution.[86] In addition, arguments of 'operational effectiveness' used to promote female participation have been critiqued for bordering on essentialism and instrumentalisation. Finally, the approach of 'adding women' to SSIs fails to address women's underrepresentation in the other two realms of decision-making and civil society oversight.

A parallel gender critique, largely emerging from literature, practice and activism on the prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV), is that there needs to be a fundamental shift in SSR. Rather than starting with the objective of building effective and accountable SSIs, the point of departure should be the diverse security and justice needs of people.[87] Men, women, boys and girls have different security and justice needs based upon a wide range of intersecting social, cultural, political and economic factors. In order to stay faithful to SSIs' mandate of guaranteeing the security of the people and their state, SSR initiatives should be developed in response to these needs. The locus lies in the person or group of persons who have suffered violence or had their rights violated, and reforms should be constructed with the aim of improving their access to justice and security. Gender critics come to the same conclusion as critics of state-centrism: current SSR initiatives focus on institution-building rather than prioritising identifying and responding to diverse justice and security needs. In particular, feminist theorists and women's rights activists lambast SSR initiatives for not taking into account the urgent need to prevent and respond to pervasive GBV. This approach has in some cases been questioned for its discourse of victimisation.[88] By focusing (in particular) on women as potential or actual victims of violence, women's agency and resistance are marginalised – not to mention their perpetration and perpetuation of violence.[89] In addition, this line of critique is often silent on the specific security and justice needs faced by men and boys, including those who are victims of GBV (see Chapter 3).

The third central critique is that SSR processes do not go far enough with their efforts to transform the institutional culture of SSIs. Rampant corruption, impunity, human rights violations and misogyny are some of the challenges facing many institutions undergoing SSR processes – especially the armed forces, police and border guards. Forms of militarised, violent masculinities are institutionally cultivated in the name of military conduct and group loyalty, resulting in discriminatory institutional policies, structures and practices, including high rates of sexual harassment and exploitation.[90] Despite the grave need for SSR initiatives to address misogynistic and xenophobic institutional cultures, 'Even in post-conflict situations, security sector reform processes do not necessarily lead to any questioning of militarism, or of the cultures of masculinities sustained within military institutions.'[91] However, very little practical research exists on how SSR processes should go about this seemingly Herculean task.

Reviewing the gender critiques levelled against SSR, it is disappointing to see similar mistakes being repeated from the field of development. However, these similarities create an opportunity to learn from development discourse and practice. For instance, in order to steer clear of instrumentalising or essentialising women's representation, there needs to be a shift towards SSR processes that enable the participation of marginalised groups, rather than simply focusing on women's participation. This broader focus on participation recognises the multiplicity of factors influencing security and justice needs, priorities and actions. For example, depending upon the specific context, it may be that young, poor, indigenous men are most excluded from security decision-making. Active, equitable participation where 'beneficiaries' of SSR and development can set the agenda to meet their needs is an antidote to the ongoing trend of imposing development and SSR as a top-down, Eurocentric project. However, in the path towards a context-specific understanding of participation, the objectives of empowerment and gender equality should not be lost. Perhaps due to the differences in development versus security culture, gender critiques of SSR have been more tentative about outright declaring gender equality as a central objective of SSR. SSR could greatly benefit from such a conceptual shift, which at the practical level means enlisting both men and women in the effort to transform oppressive gender roles and discriminatory institutional culture.

What lessons can SSR learn from development practice?

This final section provides a few glimpses of what participatory, gender-sensitive SSR could look like. Through applying lessons learned from the field of development, practical steps can be taken to address the critiques of state-centrism and gender-blindness. We argue that this 'redeemed' form of SSR will be better able to fulfil its original purpose, namely reducing poverty and contributing to development. Though seemingly steeped in jargon, re-imagining SSR as participatory and gender-sensitive entails concrete changes in current practice, including in the realm of needs assessment, the identification of key SSR actors, SSR activities and monitoring and evaluation. To illustrate these points, we provide brief examples from the field.

Participatory and gender-sensitive security and justice needs assessment

Rather than building an SSR programme based solely on a political and institutional-level assessment, SSR processes should be solidly grounded in a participatory and gender-sensitive assessment of national and community-level security and justice needs. Though currently lip-service is paid to seeking 'the direct views of local people who are the consumers of justice and security services and who should be the ultimate beneficiaries of SSR programmes',[92] in practice, SSR assessments rarely take the time for local-level consultations. It is seen as a time-consuming, complex and costly activity that is beyond the scope of SSR assessment. As such, little emphasis is given to its importance, and SSR practitioners are offered a convenient 'way out' by the OECD/DAC handbook on SSR: 'Where community level consultations are not possible in an initial assessment, perception surveys should be included in the design of assistance programmes to provide a means of tracking progress.'[93] Paradoxically, the handbook is using the language of participatory development programming to obscure a fundamental rejection of a participatory approach to SSR in practice. By turning its back on the lessons learnt regarding participatory development practices, SSR is doomed to be a top-down, externally imposed process that fails to acknowledge the agency and authority of people who experience (in)security. Rather than aiming for transformative participation, SSR initiatives are settling for functional participation in order to gain 'buy-in', minimise dissent (i.e. 'winning hearts and minds') and apply a veneer of local ownership.

In other words, SSR donors are missing the point. If the objective is to reduce insecurity and increase access to justice, and thereby contribute to development, the starting point must be to establish a comprehensive picture of the contextual security and justice needs of different groups of people, making sure to take into account those who are most marginalised. People identifying their own security and justice needs, as well as actions to take in response to these needs, can then be the basis for developing SSR programming objectives. Participatory community-level needs assessments are not an impossibility – they are currently being undertaken by a variety of peace-building and development actors, including the UNDP and international NGOs such as International Alert and Saferworld, as well as various local civil society organisations.

When the community problem-solving group (CPSG)[94] in Tirana, Albania, got together to discuss human security and safety issues in the local community, they identified their key problems as loud music, anarchic

parking, domestic violence and building safety.[95] This illustrates how locally identified concerns might differ from pre-defined donor understandings of key security threats. It also highlights that when the point of departure is a participatory needs assessment, often the theoretical distinction between requirements for development and SSR-related activities is blurred. As a result, 'traditional' development activities such as youth employment programmes or awareness-raising campaigns on domestic violence in schools may be identified as priority activities to improve community-level security. This was the case in Albania, where the UNDP-supported CPSGs identified a broad range of security/safety issues that require a mixed response of both 'security' and 'development' activities. However, community-level security and justice needs assessments must avoid the common pitfalls that have been identified in the field of participatory development, and recognise the diversity and power relations within communities and between communities and SSR practitioners as well as the often-occurring contradictions between donor agendas and community-level priorities. They also need to ask the crucial question of 'whose reality counts?'

As can be seen with the following example from the post-apartheid South Africa defence reform process, participatory, gender-sensitive community security and justice assessments can also serve as a basis for national-level SSR-related programming. The 1996 white paper on National Defence for the Republic of South Africa, exemplary in its inclusion of gender content and language, called for a defence review to take place.[96] The initial review was set to focus on operations, including doctrine, force design, logistics, armament and human resources. However, at the insistence of female parliamentarians on the Joint Standing Committee on Defence, the review process was expanded to include national consultation on defence priorities. Rather than simply holding a parliamentary hearing on the topic, the decision was made to have district-level meetings and workshops to ensure a broad range of public participation. Military planes and buses were used to transport religious and community leaders, NGO activists and representatives from women's organisations to these consultative meetings. As a result of consultation with grassroots women's organisations, previously ignored security threats were brought to the fore, namely the plight of dispossessed communities whose land had been seized for military usage, the environmental impact of military activities and sexual harassment perpetrated by military personnel. This participatory process revealed the link between security and development issues at the local level, as well as demonstrating the gendered character of security needs. In response, two

new subcommittees were formed within the Defence Secretariat to address these issues and concrete reforms to the policies and practices of the armed forces were made, including efforts to reduce sexism and sexual harassment. As an outcome of the two-year participatory defence review process, the human security focus voiced at the community level was institutionalised in the defence reform. In addition, national consensus and public legitimacy had been generated for the new defence policies and structures.[97]

Participatory assessment methodologies, as demonstrated in these two examples, can serve as a basis for transformative SSR-related programming that is far more likely to meet the specific security, justice and development needs of communities through a process of empowerment.

Recognising diverse security sector actors

Based upon the results of participatory security and justice needs assessments, a broader range of actors can be identified to meet these needs. Instead of being restricted to focusing on national-level state actors, such as the police service and the formal justice system, a participatory SSR approach takes into account a range of key actors, including local and non-state actors – which is something participatory development activities have been doing for decades. Yet there are many myths about the supposed challenges of working with customary justice and security providers such as tribal authorities or community leaders.[98] They are often depicted as corrupt, politicised, lacking accountability and expertise, violating human rights and involved in battles over resources.[99] Support for non-state actors is also seen as potentially strengthening local elites,[100] as well as shifting the obligation of service provision away from the state. Even otherwise gender-blind writings on SSR are quick to mention that customary justice systems are often discriminatory against women. However, precisely the same charges can be levelled at state security and justice institutions – and this does not stop them from being seen as valid targets of SSR initiatives and funding. As customary non-state actors are currently the largest providers of security and justice in most developing and post-conflict contexts, working with them at community, regional and national levels in order to improve access to security and justice for women, men, boys and girls should be a key component of participatory SSR processes.

Though this argument is commonly voiced on paper, it is rare to see SSR initiatives engaging with customary security and justice providers. However, a three-year International Alert project in West Africa did just that. Its Human Security Project in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone focused

on enhancing community-level security through preventing GBV.[101] According to the project evaluation: 'Women and girls have the least access to protection and recourse to justice because of the perceived weak justice and security services in the three countries. Customary law remains the most accessible recourse for seeking justice in rural areas.'[102] Using community mapping to identify key local security and justice providers and 'beneficiaries', the project brought together community-level activists, police, judiciary, customary leaders, survivors of GBV, women's groups, youth groups, civil society organisations and community radio journalists. Project activities involving customary leaders included dialogue and focus group discussions on women's human security issues and GBV with male community leaders, chiefs (especially those who chair the local courts which are part of the customary justice system), elders, teachers, pastors and imams. In addition, three judicial training workshops brought together (for the first time) customary and statutory justice personnel in order to 'exchange ideas on how to work together to increase access to justice for women and girls at the community level'.[103]

In Colombia there is also a long-standing tradition of customary justice and security actors, many of which are recognised under national law. According to a 2011 Clingendael publication researched in cooperation with the local Centro de Recursospara el Analisis de Conflictos, there are a number of different community-level non-state justice and security providers.[104] These include *juntas de acción comunal* (local development councils), neighbourhood watch groups, *jueces de paz* (justices of the peace), *conciliadores en equidad* (mediators) and indigenous peoples' administrations. With the exception of the neighbourhood watch groups, all these actors are recognised in either the Colombian constitution or national legislation.[105] The research demonstrates that these community security and justice actors – even though they face a number of problems, such as threats from armed groups – are efficient, legitimate and trusted, whereas there is little trust in the national police and armed forces. The assessment also includes a gender dimension, exploring the gendered provision of justice and security of these non-state security actors. Finally, the assessment highlights the challenges and potential entry points for SSR initiatives as well as for external donors to fund these community-level actors. This could be a starting point for participatory, gender-sensitive SSR activities.

Activities to build trust and strengthen collaboration between community, customary and state actors

After assessing needs, identifying the key actors and establishing programmatic SSR objectives based on the needs assessment, the next step is to identify activities to meet these needs and objectives. Traditional SSR activities, such as training security sector personnel or restructuring ministries of interior, should be reoriented towards meeting the security and justice needs of the people, as well as being linked to activities with customary security providers. In addition, a participatory, gender-sensitive approach opens up the field of SSR to non-traditional community-level activities, which are typically categorised as development or peace-building activities, such as training on security issues for radio journalists or micro-grants to women's organisations. In particular, building formal and informal mechanisms for dialogue and interaction on security issues between state, customary and community groups becomes an essential activity for participatory SSR.

A Conciliation Resources pilot project in Kenema, Kailahun and Freetown districts of Sierra Leone, entitled Strengthening Citizens' Security, recognised the importance of strengthening mechanisms for interaction between SSIs and community actors.[106] From 2007 to 2008 this project involved a diverse group of local actors, including women's organisations, in defining, developing and delivering a wide range of activities aimed at making the Sierra Leonean security sector more accessible and accountable to 'ordinary' people. Activities included weekly radio episodes on security issues, roundtable discussions, a student debate series and training for women's groups and radio journalists on engaging effectively with state and customary security and justice providers. In one district the project also supported civilian visits to military barracks and football matches between civilians and armed forces personnel. In addition to these informal trust-building and information-sharing activities, the project sought to strengthen the local policing partnership boards through exchange visits in order to study practices, successes and lessons learned. These boards are a formal mechanism for interaction between civil society and the police. They consist of non-partisan, inter-religious groups that monitor police performance and act 'as a general forum for discussion and consultation on matters affecting policing and enhance public-police cooperation on crime prevention'.[107] Strengthening both formal and informal mechanisms for trust-building and collaboration between SSIs and community actors can sustain a participatory

approach to the ongoing process of defining and addressing community-level security and justice needs.

These collaboration mechanisms come in many different forms, from the CPSGs in Albania or the Holywood Neighbourhood Policing initiative in Northern Ireland to the provincial and district-level security committees in Sierra Leone. They can provide a forum for state and customary security and justice providers, as well as community-based organisations and community members, to identify and discuss local security and justice needs on an ongoing basis, coordinate their activities and cooperate on specific initiatives. Yet lessons learnt from the field of participatory development show that in order to avoid marginalisation, particular care needs to be taken to ensure that women and representatives from women's organisations and other marginalised groups are able to participate fully in these mechanisms. Also, due to the power imbalance between the different participants, measures should be taken to create a safe and productive environment for discussion, to avoid community actors becoming instrumentalised, alienated or disempowered. Nevertheless, there is a need to allow conflicting ideas and dissenting voices. Thus realising a participatory and gender-sensitive approach to SSR can include activities such as trust-building exercises, creating forums for dialogue between different actors and formal mechanisms for interaction between community-level representatives of security sector institutions, local government, customary authorities and civil society organisations.

SSR monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities can also benefit from a participatory, gender-sensitive approach. SSR M&E is often implemented in a top-down way by senior managers or external experts, based on externally pre-defined indicators of success. Participatory approaches to M&E would instead be based on flexible indicators of success, locally defined by the 'beneficiaries' and assessed by methods such as (small-scale) surveys, interviews and oral histories.[108] UNIDIR (the UN Institute for Disarmament Research) has adapted a participatory M&E methodology to evaluate its weapons collection and weapons for development programmes.[109] Findings from a UNIDIR project that tested this methodology in Mali, Cambodia and Albania indicate that it 'represents a compelling tool to ensure improved accountability and transparency in DDR and arms reduction activities'.[110] The results from Albania show that 'the use of inclusive participatory approaches can increase communities' confidence and thereby lead to better results in retrieving illegally held weapons from post-conflict societies'.[111] The caveat, as noted above, is that particular attention should be paid to the mode of participation, i.e.

instrumental and functional participation should be avoided, to encourage transformative participation and gender sensitivity.

Conclusion

This chapter began with the assertion that SSR, as currently practised, does not adequately contribute to development despite the fact that it was originally intended to promote development and reduce poverty. We argue that in order to transform the practice of SSR so it has a positive impact upon development, it is essential that SSR learns from the past 40 years of development practice, namely by adopting a gender-sensitive and participatory approach. Sadly, when comparing critiques of development with critiques of SSR, it becomes clear that SSR processes have committed many of the same mistakes made in the field of development. By charting how development theory and practice have been transformed in the face of these critiques, we identify key practices that can serve as lessons learnt for SSR.

Following in the footsteps of current development practice, we hold that SSR needs to shift away fundamentally from lip-service to local ownership and 'adding women' to a transformative approach based on self-identified security and justice needs, priorities and actions. Rather than basing SSR programming on political and institutional needs assessments, a transformative participative approach would begin with community security and justice assessments – creating a space for the 'beneficiaries' of SSR to set the agenda. A reflective assessment process can take into account existing power dynamics and ensure that the voices of marginalised groups are heard. Moreover, participation should not just be advocated in the name of increased effectiveness and efficiency, but as a path for empowerment and transformation. Participatory, gender-sensitive assessment reveals that SSR processes should move away from state-centrism to work with the full range of local-level security and justice providers, including women's organisations and customary authorities. It also emphasises the importance of support to formal and informal mechanisms for local-level collaboration between representatives of SSIs, customary authorities, community leaders and civil society groups. Yet we are not arguing for completely substituting SSR initiatives at the national and regional levels with community-level activities. Instead, we propose to take individuals and communities as a starting point for assessing the various context-specific security and development needs, and to improve linkages between different levels and

sites of SSR.

Finally, a participatory, gender-sensitive approach enables us to see the links at community level between 'security' and 'development'. As illustrated in the examples from the field, the meanings of development and security are highly context-specific. Listening to the contextual understandings of development and security needs highlights the ways in which they are interlinked. This provides an opening for traditionally separated 'security' and 'development' activities to collaborate or merge, with the mutual goal of empowerment. In sum, a participatory, gender-sensitive approach would allow SSR to understand development and security and their linkages in context, and contribute to addressing these needs in ways that support the empowerment of men, women, girls and boys. In order to make this happen, SSR practitioners need to do their development homework.

Notes

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3 Michael Brzoska, 'Development Donors and the Concept of Security Sector Reform', DCAF Occasional Paper no. 4 (Geneva: DCAF, 2003); Julius Ward, 'Can Security Sector Reform Alleviate Poverty?', *Polis* 3 (2010): 4–6.

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6 See, for example, Lauren Hutton, 'A Bridge Too Far? Considering Security Sector Reform in Africa', Institute for Security Studies Paper no. 186 (Pretoria: ISS, 2009): 2–3; Eric Scheye, *Pragmatic Realism in Justice and Security Development: Supporting Improvement in the Performance of Non-state/Local Justice and Security Networks* (The Hague: Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, July 2009): 2.

7 Brzoska, note 3 above: 44.

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10 A detailed overview of the meaning and history of development goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

11 Gunhild Hoogensen and Kirsti Stuvoy, 'Gender, Resistance and Human Security', *Security Dialogue* 37, no. 2 (2006): 207–228.

12 Mark Duffield, *Human Security: Linking Development and Security in an Age of Terror* (Bonn: German Development Institute, 2006); Maria Stern and Joakim Öjendal, 'Mapping the Security-Development Nexus: Conflict, Complexity, Cacophony, Convergence?', *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 5 (2010): 5–29. Even though this shift has been judged as progressive by many, there are also voices that criticise the universalising, exclusionary, interventionist and disciplinary tendency of human security and human development discourse and practice.

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[22] Gujit and Kaul Shah, note 18 above: 3.
[23] Ibid.: 4.
[24] Ibid.: 3; Cooke and Kothari, note 14 above: 5.
[25] Gujit and Kaul Shah, note 18 above: 4.
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[41] Cooke and Kothari, note 14 above: 6.
[42] Robert Chambers, *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last* (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1997): 101.
[43] Cooke and Kothari, note 14 above: 8.
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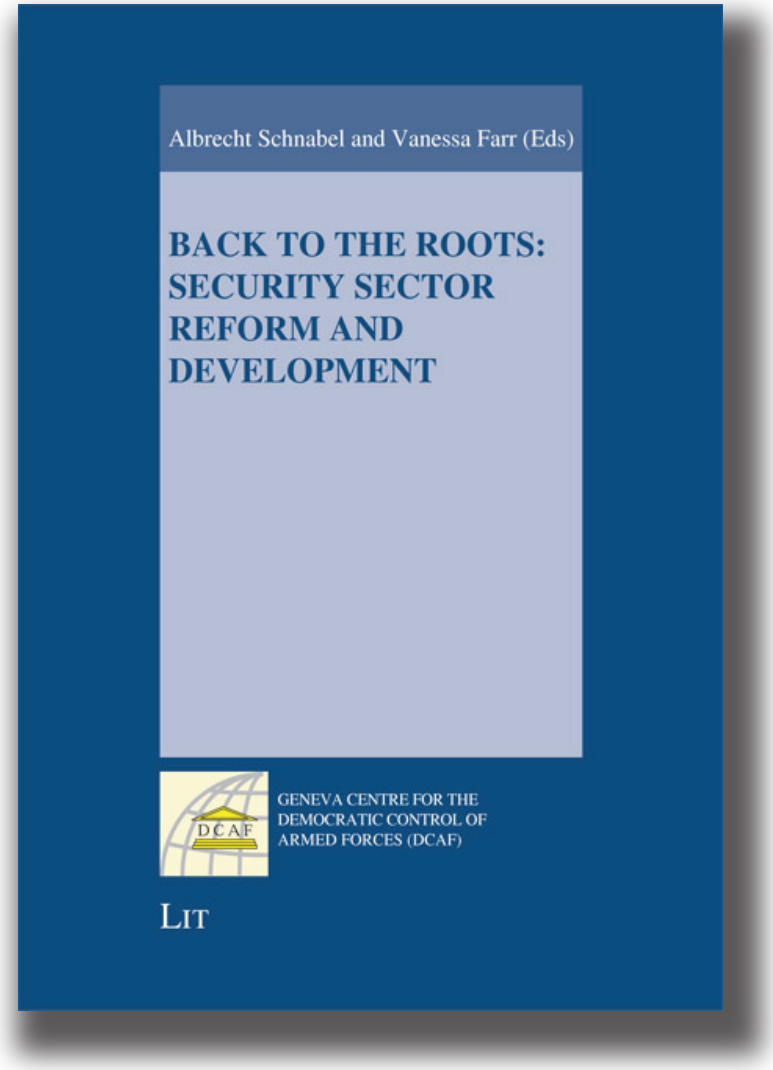
Back to the Roots: Security Sector Reform and Development



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