INTRODUCTION

Good governance of the security sector takes into account the security needs of all populations and envisions access to effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. To achieve this, the security sector must include women and girls in decision-making roles in security institutions to ensure their services benefit women and girls as much as they benefit men and boys. Indeed, the United Nations and numerous other international legal frameworks and commitments require the integration of a gender perspective into security sector programming. USAID’s Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit answers the need for information and analysis on gender and SSR. It is designed to provide practitioners useful tools to integrate gender considerations into SSR program assessment, design, and implementation. One does not need to be a security sector expert or a gender expert to lead a thoughtful security sector reform program design that incorporates gender considerations. Incorporating gender considerations contributes to creating an efficient, accountable, and participatory security sector that responds to the specific needs of men, women, girls, and boys.

What are Gender Considerations in SSR Program Design?

USAID is a leader in SSR programming, with experience ranging from rule of law, institutional capacity building, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR); to civilian oversight mechanisms; to community policing. USAID has identified key lessons learned on gender considerations in designing SSR programs:

- Gender is inclusive of men, women, boys, and girls.
- All members of a gender do not necessarily think the same way, so understanding the broader context influencing an individual or group is important.
- Women are not always or only the victims.
- Cultural norms, experiences, and perceptions can create obstacles to mainstreaming gender, but certain tactics can help to overcome those obstacles.
- Political will and senior male leadership can make or break reforms.
- Donor support can help to ensure the right resources are available to appropriately incorporate gender considerations.
Violence against women and girls frequently happens behind closed doors, including in their homes, so there may not be witnesses or the police may not want to get involved in “family matters.”

Predatory security forces can be part of the security problem.

Security sector reform efforts should promote the equal participation of men and women within security sector institutions and the protection of all individuals equally. Preferably, gender mainstreaming would be promoted so gender considerations are naturally incorporated in a security sector institution and within national security policy making.

**How Should Gender be Assessed in SSR?**

All USAID program designs require gender analysis. Security sector assessments and program designs should incorporate gender analysis to ensure a holistic assessment of the sector and its impacts. Incorporating gender as a natural part of a broader security sector assessment mitigates issues that arise with individuals or institutions normally threatened by a specific gender assessment. Stakeholders are also more likely to discount the recommendations of a stand-alone gender assessment than those built within an integrated assessment. An effective way to train individuals to think with a gender lens is to incorporate it into existing security sector-related training.

USAID’s ADS 205.3 provides guidance on gender analysis, detailing how USAID conducts the analysis at the broader societal, program, and activity levels. Gender analysis is a social science tool used to identify, understand, and explain the different experiences and gaps of males and females in society. It identifies relevant gender norms, experiences, and power relations of women and men; the influence of gender norms on leadership roles and decision-making; and constraints, opportunities, and entry points. A gender analysis in the security sector should consider both gender dynamics and roles within the institutions and between the institutions and each gender.

From USAID’s [Tips for Conducting a Gender Analysis at the Activity / Project Level](https://www.usaid.gov/gender-and-ssr-toolkit/tips-for-conducting-a-gender-analysis-at-the-activity-project-level)
Interview Methodology

One of the tools used in assessments is data collection interviews. Specific assessment practices ensure credible and detailed responses about the different gender experiences. Two distinct groups need to be interviewed: the users of the security sector and the actors within the sector. Men and women are in both groups.

**Interviewing actors within the security sector:** The InterAction Gender Audit Handbook provides tips for conducting focus groups and key informant interviews of security sector employees. Interviewees should be from all ranks and include any individuals in charge of gender integration. Interviewing women who have left the security sector institutions, as well as human resource personnel, will provide valuable insights into their experiences.

**Interviewing users of the security sector:** Participants should include individuals who access services, as well as those who cannot or do not. Regardless of the participant’s gender, interviews can result in discussions about traumatic experiences. If interviewing a victim is necessary, the individual’s consent must first be obtained for using the information provided in the interview (without attribution). Interviewers need to be careful not to rush the interview and should discontinue the line of questioning if the interviewee becomes upset, uncomfortable, or shows signs of hesitation. To ensure privacy, the best practice is to give subjects numbers rather than names. Lastly, only assessors trained in interviewing children should do so, with parental consent. Given the significant impact that interviews can have on victims, it is important to consult additional resources, such as the National Sexual Violence Resource Center and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, or if possible, have a trained therapist on site.

**For both groups:** Interviewers can use a combination of focus groups of a larger group of people or key informant interviews with one or two individuals where more sensitive questions can be asked and answered. They should interview both men and women with a range of ages and socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. All data should be disaggregated by demographic information to identify any gender or age gap or simply a broader problem for everyone in the community. When interviewing men and young boys, conducting focus groups and separate key informant interviews with some of the same participants will help to identify any biases that arise. Comparing the responses from one-on-one questions to the responses within the group can guide how to interpret broader statements from groups about circumstances related to the security sector institutions.

Women and girls tend to be more reticent to share their experiences with a man. Therefore, hiring a female interviewer to conduct focus group discussions and key informant interviews can help to ensure accurate and thorough data collection. Separating the women from the men may also help elicit more candid responses. In cases where men and women are in the same group or seen interacting, it is important to examine the dynamics between the two.

Design and Implementation

Once gender dynamics are understood, gender mainstreaming is the process of ensuring gender considerations and the impact of policies on both genders are integrated into all parts of design, implementation, and evaluation. The same questions can be asked in the assessment, design, and
implementation stages to ensure effective program design and reduce negative implications and experiences of each gender in the security sector.

Tips for gender considerations in SSR program design fall into two categories:

- **Crosscutting SSR programs** (national security policymaking, human resource reform, training, DDR and right-sizing militaries, and countering-trafficking in persons)
- **Institution-specific issues and reforms** (defense, private military/security, police, justice, the penal system, intelligence, and oversight mechanisms)

USAID can program in each of the listed areas, with the appropriate waivers in place, except for intelligence and private security agencies. Interventions in defense-related institutions require consultation with USAID’s General Counsel (GC) to ensure legislative restrictions on funding are adhered to. A helpful guide can also be found here.

**Program Cycle:**

![Program Cycle Diagram](image-url)

Regardless of the type of activity, there are a couple of key points to consider when programming, monitoring, and evaluating SSR with a gender perspective:

- Have a Theory of Change and articulate desired outcomes for any new activity or policy.
- Qualify gender-related outcomes, instead of just quantifying outputs, with outcome related indicators and not just input indicators.

**Conclusion**

Over the past two decades, distinct approaches to SSR have emerged to address the evolving international security environment. Within the SSR field, gender issues are recognized as key to enhancing local ownership; ensuring good governance, accountability, and respect for human rights; and providing effective service delivery. Mainstreaming gender issues in SSR programming and increasing women’s participation and leadership in security institutions are necessary for ensuring equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the security sector.

**Use Our Resources!**

For more in-depth information, reference the complete USAID Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit and well as other SSR resources on the DRG Center’s technical publications website.