

A stocktaking of Norwegian engagement in security sector reform

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Summary

Norway is internationally recognized as one of the leading donors supporting security sector reform (SSR), yet there have been few attempts to map how much assistance is provided, the ways that support is framed and channelled and how Norwegian actors perceive SSR efforts. This policy brief represents a first attempt to establish a clearer understanding of the capacities that exist among Norwegian actors, the types of initiatives and projects that have been supported, and their perceived impact and effectiveness. Norway's current approach to SSR tends to be decentralized, which appears to account for some problems in coherence, coordination and information sharing. Based on the report's findings, the policy brief recommends that Norway should develop a more coherent approach to SSR. This could be achieved through the adoption of an overarching strategic policy framework and further institutionalization of coordination mechanisms. We moreover suggest adopting a research-based approach to SSR policy, more consistent assessment, monitoring and evaluation of SSR projects, as well as strengthening the links between functional sectors such as justice and police reform.

Introduction

This policy brief is based on the NUPI report 'A stocktaking of Norwegian engagement in security sector reform', which aims to provide an overview of 'the Norwegian approach' to SSR, focusing primarily on the period 2008-2010. The report examines how Norway has provided support across the functional sectors of defence, policing, intelligence, and justice, and demonstrates the scope of Norwegian involvement in SSR by providing examples of bilateral and multilateral projects funded in selected countries. This policy brief will summarize the report and its main findings.

Security sector reform (SSR) is a framework for supporting the development of effective, legitimate and accountable security and justice institutions that are consistent with democratic norms, good governance and the rule of law. SSR has become accepted as an integral component of peacebuilding for international and regional organizations and the donor community. Key elements in SSR include an integrated, holistic approach that recognizes the links that exist between functional sectors, such as between policing and justice. The UN holds that no single model of a security sector exists, and that states must define and pursue security according to their particular contexts, histories, cultures and needs. SSR thus recognizes the role of customary or traditional justice and security providers, reflecting a shift towards a more pragmatic and flexible approach of seeking 'best fit' rather than 'best practice'. Donors are furthermore recommended to adopt joined-up approaches and to harmonize and coordinate with other donors.

Norway is a member of the primary group of donors supporting SSR, both bilaterally and multilaterally through the UN system. The knowledge about what constitutes ‘the Norwegian approach’ to SSR is, however, limited. This study is aimed at filling that gap. The following sections will provide a snapshot of Norway’s engagement in security sector reform, as well as key findings.

Snapshot

Norway supports SSR projects and processes through multiple institutional vectors at the governmental level, funded through a complex mix of budget streams, over which the MFA maintains a central position. A core aspect of the Norwegian approach to SSR is the prioritization of multilateral channels of funding, and its efforts to strengthen the capacities of the UN in SSR. In addition, Norway funds a diverse range of bilateral SSR assistance projects. The ‘Norwegian model’ relies heavily on channelling resources through Norwegian and international NGOs.

Due to the high level of professional standards across the armed forces, police, intelligence and justice sectors, and in their respective civilian management and oversight structures, as well as in relevant civil society organisations and academia, Norway can offer a wide range of support and assistance across the functional sectors. ‘Niche areas’ of Norwegian functional expertise include training and mentoring by military and police, including the Coast Guard, defence management, and assistance by justice personnel especially in Western-type legal systems. Gender-sensitive approaches to SSR represent an especially significant niche area of Norwegian expertise and experience.

Geographically, Norwegian SSR assistance has predominantly been focused on the Western Balkans; Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, in addition to Afghanistan. However, the focus of attention and SSR engagement is now increasingly shifting towards the African continent.

Key findings

SSR as an important political instrument

SSR constitutes an important instrument for furthering some of Norway’s key foreign policy objectives and national values. It is also a means of reinforcing the

message that Norway is a good ally, able and willing to contribute in terms of defence diplomacy and supporting the development of effective, legitimate and accountable security and justice sectors in partner states. Norway’s comparative advantages include its international profile as a consistently generous donor; its commitment to multilateralism; its transparency and international image as an honest broker; its commitment to the values of good governance, democratic control, accountability, and local ownership; and its nimbleness – the flexibility of its funding and its capacity to react quickly to changing requirements.

Lack of strategic policy planning

Despite the leading role that Norway has played in promoting SSR, Norway does not have a comprehensive strategic framework for SSR engagement. The current approach to SSR tends to be decentralized, which appears to account for some problems, such as lack of coordination and information-sharing, and low visibility nationally of Norwegian support in this domain. This holds true with one significant exception: the joint MFA-MOD SSR strategy devised for the Western Balkans 2010-2014. This is a positive development in which common objectives were identified, enhancing effectiveness of engagement. Another positive development is the creation of a DSSR unit within the Norwegian Defence University College (NDUC).

In consequence of the absence of broad policy guidance, bilateral SSR projects have tended to be initiated, developed and implemented within each functional sector – i.e. within and by the defence, policing, and justice sectors, with the MFA’s country desk officers and embassy officials supporting projects directly through funding and overlooking the engagement. Norwegian SSR engagement thus tends to be segmented, with lack of coordination among components, and the absence of a more holistic understanding of where these projects fit within the broader SSR processes within those countries. It is our concern that the current approach does not fully optimize the potential impact and effectiveness of Norway’s contributions to SSR. _

Recommendations

The following section will summarize the main recommendations identified by the report.

1: Develop a more coherent and coordinated approach to SSR

- Norway should consider developing a strategic policy framework for its engagement in SSR, setting out broad objectives and mechanisms for coordination.
- Further institutionalization of coordination mechanisms is suggested.
- Due to its strong support for and international identification with the gender policy issue, Norway should consider developing a more active and direct role in shaping developments in gender and SSR at both the conceptual and practical levels.
- Norway should look into how to better integrate and optimize SSR relevant contributions from civilian rosters.

2: Develop greater cross-government awareness about SSR

- There is a need for greater cross-government sensitization about SSR; what it is, what is the value-added of an SSR perspective; and how it can be undertaken on a practical level.
- We identify a need to assure better pre-deployment training for both civilian and military experts on SSR.
- There is a need to share the respective insights and experiences of the various actors in supporting SSR in a more systematized way. This could contribute to a more coherent and coordinated Norwegian approach.

3: Improve project planning and assessments, monitoring and evaluations

- Norway should seek to adopt a research-based approach to SSR, and develop policy frameworks from assessments, monitoring and evaluation.
- Norway should better connect research, policy and practice of SSR. Norway should build up stronger institutional links among relevant departments and organizations, and identify a forum for discussion on SSR and other interdisciplinary, multidimensional peacebuilding activities.
- Norway could consider the creation of a cross-governmental unit, working as an 'integrated hub' on SSR, focusing on ensuring mutual

understanding between relevant departments and a more coherent and coordinated approach to SSR assistance.

- The administrative infrastructures for Norwegian governmental departments engaging in SSR tend to be under-resourced. Norway should discuss how to resolve problems with understaffing and corresponding limited capacity to oversee SSR projects.
- Police training must be useful and tailored to the conditions and capacities of the local police. We recommend more focus on assessing the outcome of training and on follow-up.
- There is a lack of systematic debriefing of police, military, security and civilian personnel who have returned from international SSR assignments. The knowledge, insights and experiences of Norwegians who have worked abroad should be collected more systematically, analysed, and fed back into Norway's SSR and peacebuilding policy processes.
- As Norway is likely to become increasingly involved in SSR in Africa, it will be necessary to conduct effective fact-finding missions. A model to consider might be that practiced by countries such as the UK, with seconded African experts as members of the SSR teams.

4: Enhance international coordination on SSR

- Norway could take a more proactive and systemic approach towards donor coordination. This was seen in Bosnia and Serbia, when Norway as lead nation on a reintegration programme took on an informal coordinating role.
- Norway could propose the establishment of a clearinghouse role within NATO in which member states can inform their allies about their respective SSR projects. The clearinghouse mechanism could also be used to communicate horizontally to actors such as UNDP.
- Supporting a South-South model for SSR assistance could be relevant for Norwegian engagement in countries with Islamic law and customary justice systems.

5: Further develop Norway's approaches towards justice sector reform

- Norway should endeavour to focus on all components of the security and justice system more comprehensively, and promote greater

cooperation between those working on justice and police reform projects within the same country.

- Norway should assess the Styrkebrønnen model of extended bilateral team deployments to address the ‘chain of justice’ in a holistic, integrated manner. Where is this unique model best suited to be deployed?

6: Develop framework for deciding when and how to outsource SSR assistance and develop more robust evaluations for outsourced SSR assistance

- There is a strong pattern of reliance on Norwegian and Nordic-based NGOs as channels for SSR assistance. Norway should consider making merit-based factors such as the track record of NGOs, local experience, and relevant substantive expertise, a primary criterion for support as channels of SSR.
- International implementing partners should be subject to the same standards of monitoring, evaluation and transparency that are required of Norwegian governmental and non-governmental actors. We recommend impartial and independent external evaluations.
- Norway should consider requiring impartial and independent evaluations of UNDP’s Rule of Law and SSR-related programmes. Norway should also consider initiating its own needs assessments, monitoring or evaluations when existing arrangements for programmes that it supports are deemed to be inadequate.

Conclusions

Norway is one of the leading donors supporting SSR, both bilaterally and multilaterally, and SSR constitutes an important instrument for promoting key Norwegian foreign policy objectives and national values. Recognizing the multilateral approach, Norway’s approach to SSR still tends to be decentralized and fragmented, and we are concerned that the current approach does not fully optimize the potential impact and effectiveness of Norway’s SSR contributions. To develop a more coherent approach, we propose developing a strategic policy framework and to further institutionalize coordination mechanisms. We warmly welcome the establishment of the NDUC DSSR unit, as well as the joint MFA-MOD Balkan strategy. More thinking is needed about how to retain a good margin of flexibility whilst also enhancing coordination and coherence of Norway’s support to SSR processes.

We propose a more proactive role for Norway towards gender related policy issues as well as on international coordination. The report further identifies a need for greater cross-government sensitization about SSR, better pre-deployment training and debriefing of returning personnel. We believe that there is a need for more consistent use of pre-project assessments as well as of monitoring and evaluation of major or long-running SSR projects. Further development of justice sector assistance is recommended, as is further efforts to coordinate between functional sectors. Finally, we suggest developing a framework for evaluating decisions to outsource SSR assistance.



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