



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

Office of National Security Office of The President State House, Banjul The Gambia

UPDATE ON THE SECURITY SECTOR REFORM PROCESS IN THE GAMBIA FROM JANUARY -DECEMBER 2024

IMPORTANT MILESTONE

Based on Security Risk Assessment principles, every country needs a National Security Architecture that defines the management, decision-making and oversight structures and institutions, as well as national policies, strategies and plans.

This Architecture translates the vision of the National Security of the country and articulates the approach for the protection of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity, well-being of the citizens, promotion of good governance, social welfare, economic development, protection of the environment and its natural resources, as aptly defined in The Gambia National Security Policy 2019.

Accordingly, the cumulative development of the National Security Policy, National Security Strategy, Security Sector Reform Strategy, Defence Policy and Internal Security Policy, including the respective Policies and Acts of the respective security institutions and the Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia forms the main Architecture.

Importantly, the draft National Security Council Bill which was approved by Cabinet and presented to the National Assembly for enactment process is the bedrock that completes the National Security Architecture of The Gambia and therefore remains important and critical for the strategic and operational functioning of the national security institutions.

SECURITY SECTOR REFORM ACHIEVEMENTS

- Acceleration of reforms, restructuring and institutional development of security institutions (review of policies, acts, regulations, and institutional strengthening through capacity building) ongoing.
- Strengthened Civilian Oversight of the security sector.
- Change of mind set by the security sector.
- Paradigm shift from Regime Centered to Human Centered Security.
- Common approach in Security Service delivery- delivering as one.
- Renewed government commitment to SSR process.
- National ownership and buy-in to the SSR process.
- Innovative funding of SSR – Alternative sources of funding mechanism:

- 06% on Insurance Premium.
- 05% on International Gateway (Voice).
- 05% on International Gateway (Data).
- Levy on Government Forms,
- 0.25% Levy on National Import Duty,
- Adherence to Constitutional provisions specific to observance of rule of law and international best practices.
- Sequencing of reform processes through the conduct of Security Audit in 2017, and development of corresponding key policies and strategies such as **National Security Policy 2019**, **National Security Strategy 2020** and **Security Sector Reform Strategy 2020**
- The National Defence Policy 2023.
- A Communication Strategy 2024 to enhance public sensitization, awareness, and ownership of the ongoing SSR process.
- Internal Security Policy developed and validated.
- National Security Sector Coordination Model 2024.
- Establishment of seven (7) Regional Security Offices (for effective security coordination, collaboration and partnership).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SSR STRATEGIES

Current focus as directed by The Gambia Government is the implementation of the Security Sector Reform Strategy (SSRS), which entails the five (5) thematic areas:

Thematic Area 1: Addressing Post-Authoritarian Legacies to Enhance Reforms

Objective 1: To entrench democratic practices that uphold the principles of good governance and the justice system in line with international conventions, treaties, and best practices.

Thematic Area 2: Developing Overarching Security Governance, Legal and Policy Frameworks

Objective 2.1: To establish a security architecture at National, Regional and District levels to enhance effective command and control within the security sector.

Thematic Area 3: Reform activities to enable the Civilian Management and Oversight Bodies

Objective 3.1: To urgently strengthen Civilian Management and Oversight bodies to ensure a robust, effective, and efficient performance of functions in conformity with relevant legal and policy frameworks.

Thematic Area 4: Reform Imperatives to Address Cross Cutting Perennial Challenges

Objective 4.1: To mainstream gender, human rights and environment in order to transform the security that is responsive to the well-being of all vulnerable and differently able groups in compliance with the constitution and international best practices.

Thematic Area 5: Specific Reform Activities Relating to Individual Security Institutions

Objective 5.1: A right-sized, affordable, and sustainable sector.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Reform and Restructuring of The Office of National Security to ensure it is properly established to lead the ongoing SSR process and coordinating the eight (8) security institutions in the country.
- Legal and regulatory frameworks for security institutions being developed:
 - The Gambia Armed Forces Act
 - The Gambia Police Act
 - State Intelligence Service Act
 - Gambia Fire and Rescue Service Act
 - Gambia Immigration Act
 - Drug Law Enforcement Agency – Gambia Act
 - Gambia Prison Service Act
- Translation of Key Strategic Documents such as the National Security Policy, National Security Strategy, Security Sector Reform Strategy and National Defence Policy into leaflets/pamphlets to local languages to enhance understanding and ownership by the public on the ongoing SSR process.
- A functional website and social media handles for Office of National Security (database as a resource center and sharing of information related to the SSR process).

OFFICE OF NATIONAL SECURITY COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENTS WITH PARTNERS

1. Sensitization of the National Assembly Members on the National Security Council Bill

The office of National Security, in collaboration with ECOWAS and GIZ, organized a sensitization workshop with the National Assembly Members for better understanding of the National Security Council Bill before the planned enactment process on the 28 to 30 May 2024.

2. Validation of Communication Strategy for Office of National Security

The ONS, with support from UNDP, organized a validation workshop with stakeholders on the Communication Strategy on 6 June 2024.

3. A Review of the National Security Sector Reform Implementation

- Office of National Security in collaboration with the African Union Commission, ECOWAS, and The Gambia Diplomatic Mission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia organized a review of the National Security Sector Reform Implementation in November 2024.
- The workshop resulted in the development of a report highlighting the achievements, challenges and the way forward for the reform process.

4. Consultation On Proposed UN Support to Implementing The Gambia's Security Sector Reform Strategy

- A new, three-year project being developed jointly by three UN Agencies — UNDP, OHCHR, and UNODC, under the United Nations Peace Building Fund — entitled "Sustaining The Gambia's peaceful transition by supporting implementation of its Security Sector Reform Strategy".
- The consultation that was convened in 2024 was to ensure that that support being proposed by the UN:
 - Matches the needs of the principal beneficiaries — Office of National Security; National Human Rights Commission; National Assembly (Standing Committees on Human Rights and Constitutional Matters and on Defence and Security, and Select Committee on Gender, Children and Social Welfare); and the CSO Coalition on SSR.
 - Aligns with and complements the support for SSR being provided and/or planned by other partners, including ECOWAS, AU, EU, DCAF, and Germany.

CHALLENGES OF THE SSR IMPLEMENTATION

Notwithstanding the concrete achievements registered so far, there remain challenges in the SSR process. The following are outstanding activities that are equally central in the SSR process to be implemented:

- Enactment of all the reviewed Bills of the Security Institutions.
- Review the Acts of Drug Law Enforcement Agency and Gambia Revenue Agency.
- Rollout of a robust Communication Strategy.
- Rollout of Internal Security Policy.
- Development of Resource Mobilization Strategy.
- Development of Security Operational Manual for the Security Institutions.
- Increment of an underfunded budget.
- Donor coordination on the SSR process to identify alternative source of funding/Resource Mobilization.
- Development of functional training facilities for capacity building.
- Resistance to change /Embracing change.
- Right-sizing of the Security Institutions to make them fit for purpose within the national budget.
- Reinforcement of Public awareness on SSR process for partnership/ownership and buy-in.
- Revision of obsolete Legal and Regulatory Frameworks.

WAY FORWARD

Capacity Building

- Enhance coordination with Civil Society Organizations and Citizens through effective communication, coordination, collaboration and partnership.
- Establishment of a National Training Academy for all security institutions.
- Development of capacity of a pool of national SSR Experts.
- Standardization of the Security Sector Training Manuals.
- Development of Gender Policies, Mainstream Gender, and training of security personnel on gender issues.
- Enhance the capacity of Civil Society Organizations and the Media on SSR.

Planning and Resource Mobilization

- National Ownership to prevail on International Partners interests.
- Provide technical support to the different SSR pillars in strategic and operational plans.
- Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks.
- Conduct needs assessment of security institutions. The outcome to be used for budgeting and resource mobilization.
- Development of Fundraising and Mobilization Strategy that attracts donor attention.

Public Outreach and Sensitization

- Office of National Security and stakeholders to increase visibility and outreach to sensitize the local populace on the SSR process to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the program, including through visits to the provinces.
- National Security Policy, Security Sector Reform Strategy and National Security Strategy be summarized and translated into local languages to ensure ownership and buy-in of the SSR process.

Improvement of Strategic and Operational Capabilities

- Establishment and Operationalization of the Committees outlined in the National Security Council Bill.
- Establishment of functional Joint Operations Centre under the Office of National Security.
- Establishment of functional Crisis Management Centre under the Office of National Security.
- Decentralization of Office of National Security.
- Establishment of Joint Counter-Terrorism Taskforce.

Provision of Infrastructure for Security Institutions

- Establishment of a fully functional National Training Academy for the security sector to address challenges related to the provision of requisite capacity building.
- Construction of a level two Military Hospital with Emergency and Rescue Ambulances/facilities.

- Establishment of Forensic Laboratory (National Laboratory for Surveillance and Forensic Equipment, Crime and Drug) to improve crime scene processing, material evidence management, mechanisms for collection, preservation/storage, accounting, and disposal of material evidence in criminal cases.
- Prison Infrastructure: Modernize Prison Facility, including establishment of Skill Centers and Recreation Facility.

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