K4D | Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

Lessons of working with informal security actors

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Question

How have international organisations engaged with informal security actors? What lessons have been learned around:

- Timing in the conflict cycle; entry points and key activities
- Successes and challenges including those on human rights and accountability

Provide a review of the evidence and pointers to case studies that illustrate what has or has not worked in the past to inform DFID programming in Nigeria, learn lessons and help form a position on **whether and how to engage with informal security actors**.

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1. Summary

Security sector reform (SSR) and Security and Justice (S&J) programmes have become a part of standard procedure for donors operating in fragile, failed and conflict-affected states. This rapid literature review sought to understand how international organisations have engaged with informal security actors. In the literature the term **non-state actor** is used more frequently than **informal security actors** and the main finding is that there is **very little data** available on work specifically with informal security actors.

The inclusion of non-state actors in reform processes or security negotiations is repeatedly mentioned as desirable and means working with civil society, media and religious organisations. Although a common criticism of SSR in the literature is a failing to be inclusive of non-state actors. A multi-layered approach to community security and safety policy should consider the combined contributions of state, community-based, and commercial groups or structures (Baker,2010). Security analysts, policy makers and practitioners agree about the need to move to a 'second generation' model for SSR moving beyond traditional engagement with State judiciary and security organs. Although there is no accepted formula yet, one characteristic in this evolving landscape is a **willingness to engage with non-state actors** (Sedra, 2018). Jackson (2019) describes this shift from linear approaches to State building, working on policy and capacity of state security actors towards more inclusive justice where communities using customary justice structures are involved in diagnosis and programme design. This provides a strong rationale for including non-state actors although it is important to guard against the power inherent in traditional structures that may exclude women.

Working with informal security actors means **engaging with extra-legal non-state actors such as customary authorities, rebel groups, vigilantes** and in urban contexts neighbourhood watch schemes. Caution is advised since a common assumption among donors is that informal actors, such as chiefs or rebel groups, cannot be engaged if they are illiberal in character or have a poor human rights record. In some contexts, the role and contribution of informal security actors is recognised as potentially positive as for example across the Lake Chad basin where vigilante groups play an important role in the fight against Boko Haram (International Crisis Group, 2017a). Informal actors are a source of local knowledge, intelligence and manpower and can provide more effective security than state actors, by virtue of their community roots. States have generally been cautious about providing informal actors with weapons, equipment and training. Rather, civilian and military authorities as well as their non-state backers, have provided some non-lethal equipment such as transport and communications equipment.

Some successful examples of work with informal actors are highlighted and these **case studies demonstrate**:
- The principle of involving grassroot community structures thus ensuring that activities are locally led
- The process of community dialogue involving all stakeholders and marginalised groups
- Taking time to work out with local partners what exactly they need and want to engage with
- Timing an intervention appropriately to when the local community feel the need for external or state led support
- Flexibility in terms of activities that may be either process related or entirely practical; meeting the development needs of the community and in this way improving a sense of security

- Accountability between informal actors and the community they serve, in particular women within that community who may be traditionally excluded or omitted from local justice and security systems

There are also challenges to engaging with informal actors. Notably in understanding fragile and changing local power dynamics; engaging even those actors with poor human rights record in systems to deliver security. Experience shows that clarifying expectations, mandate and any expectations of 'reward' for such groups is essential from the outset. Otherwise the immediate and valuable contribution to peace and security they can make may be overturned at a future date. Disillusioned groups left to exert uncontrolled power over the community from which they arose may threaten security at local and national level in the future. Adequate attention to the **reintegration** elements of demobilisation programmes post conflict is essential and has been challenging. Gender sensitive and economically appropriate training programmes should be tailored to properly addressing the **social and economic reintegration challenges** facing ex-vigilantes.

The report explores lessons drawn from two substantial reviews of the evidence on outcomes of S&J programmes and the relationship between organisational capacity building interventions and improved capacity of security institutions (Denney et al, 2015; Jackson et al 2019) and from grey literature. The emphasis on developing a deep understanding of the local context implies that all stakeholder and **marginalised groups would be involved** through a good, inclusive approach to community security. An important risk flagged is that use of customary power structures at times facilitates the exercise of **hidden power that traps the dominant**, as well as the weak, in a web of socialised roles and behaviours (Jackson, 2019). The need to ensure inclusion of women and girls who suffer doubly from the violence exacted against them, and again from lack of justice delivered by gender-neutral systems is mentioned. No reference to the situation for **persons with disabilities** was found, but this group is especially vulnerable – unable to flee from attack or civil conflict; marginalised in seeking redress for physical violence or rape; and frequently lacking a voice in community dialogue because of stigma and negative attitudes to disability.

2. How have international organisations engaged with informal security actors

Security sector reform (SSR) programmes have become a part of the standard operating procedure for donors operating in fragile, failed and conflict-affected states (Sedra, 2018). Defined as "the process of transforming a country's security system, so that it gradually provides individuals and the state with more effective and accountable security in a manner consistent with respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the principles of good governance. SSR is a long-term and political process, as it goes to the heart of power relations in a country. It needs to be nationally driven and requires political commitment and leadership, inter-institutional cooperation and **broad stakeholder participation** to achieve the widest possible consensus."[1]

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[1] EU definition in Jayasundara-Smits, 2018

Despite being rapidly mainstreamed over recent decades SSR programmes have a mixed record of success (Jackson, 2017; Sedra 2018). They are designed to build capacity of state and non-state structures, sustain peace, uphold justice and the state of law, and deliver respect for human rights. The main interventions of SSR programmes are:

- Capacity building of security sector actors
- Development of strategic legal and policy frameworks

Increasingly there is discussion among security analysts, policy makers and practitioners about the need to move to a 'second generation' model. Although there is no accepted formula yet, one characteristic in this evolving landscape is a **willingness to engage with non-state actors**, and the norms and structures associated with these (Sedra, 2018).

In the literature the term **non-state actor** is used more frequently than **informal security actors** and includes both:

- Legal and statutory actors (civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations for example women's organisations, religious organisations, human rights organisations or media) and
- Extra-legal and armed non-state actors (customary and traditional authorities, rebel groups, militias, vigilantes or criminal groups)

In this rapid review of the evidence, a narrower focus on informal security actors was requested[2]; although it is noted that the boundaries between formal and informal actors are sometimes blurred.[3] The main finding is that there is very **little data available on work specifically with informal security actors**.

A review of evidence[4] on the relationship between organisational capacity building interventions and improved capacity of security institutions and agencies to deliver, finds the inclusion of non-state actors in reform processes or negotiations repeatedly mentioned as desirable (Denney & Valters, 2015:31). However, there is only a small body of high-quality literature that discusses capacity building in relation to such non-state actors (Denney & Valters, 2015:33). Common approaches to improving responsiveness among non-state actors to citizen needs, include training, restructuring (vetting and gender-balancing) and developing new forms of security provision, such as community policing, creating gender desks and decentralisation of policing functions. A small body of evidence attributes reductions in crime to community policing and zero tolerance policing methods but in some cases at the expense of accountability and political neutrality (Denney & Valters, 2015:31).

An updated mapping[5] of evidence on the outcomes of security and justice interventions (Jackson, Bell & Bakrania, 2019) finds that policing remains by far the most studied theme, followed by access to justice/legal empowerment, justice sector reform, legal reform and non-state actors. The

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[2] In Nigeria these groups outside of the formal security architecture include local neighbourhood watch schemes, vigilantes, politically sponsored groups, and the civilian joint task force (CJTF).
[3] Some states (e.g. Kaduna) require the registration of all vigilante groups; informal groups such as the CJTF falls under military command in areas of North East Nigeria
[4] 149 studies of moderate to high relevance from a security sector reform (SSR) database compiled by the Governance and Social Development Research Centre (GSDRC)
[5] Updated from an initial assessment of the evidence in 2015; 386 documents included

evidence is strong for: capacity building of organisations; strategic/statutory frameworks and legislation; community-based approaches; and restructuring of the security and justice sector. The evidence base on **non-state actors** has also been improved to strong since 2015. The evidence is abundant for: the capacity of state and non-state organisations to deliver; strategic frameworks; confidence, trust or satisfaction on the part of citizens in providers; and roles, coordination and dialogue amongst organisations and agencies.

This analysis is in relation to the broad cohort of non-state actors; the dataset does not contain studies that are specific to informal security actors. Given that these are consistently noted as being important in security provision this lack of information about what has been done and what has been achieved with non-state actors is a glaring omission from the literature; further research into how capacity building of non-state actors can be successful is needed (Denney & Valters, 2015:34). The **gap is even more stark in relation to informal security actors**.

A **continuum between informal security actors, other non-state and state actors** is sometimes described. As for example in urban contexts community-based security providers, such as neighbourhood watches, self-defence groups and police reserve corps, may collaborate with the police in providing local safety and security. Communities can contribute to their own need for security and safety in this way. "Community-based security providers can also build trust and confidence between residents and the police. However, they also often lack control and oversight, when they have links to alternative justice systems". (DCAF, 2019: 4). Some scholars argue that contemporary vigilantism has also been influenced by past policies of U.S. and European promotion of community policing (Pratten, 2008). Counter insurgency and other civic training that is rational during one period, may unwittingly promote insecurity during a future time.

The **role and contribution of informal security actors** is recognised as **potentially positive**. For example, across the Lake Chad basin vigilante groups play an important role in the fight against Boko Haram, making military operations more effective and contributing to reconnecting local communities with their states (International Crisis Group, 2017a). This paper provides good analysis of the development and growth of vigilante groups across the four countries[6] around the Lake Chad basin, highlighting historical differences, restraints and risks and specific measures (such as involving women to screen other women). It does not provide any detail of how the vigilante groups were initially organised, equipped or trained – nor of the specific sources of support that is mentioned (monthly stipends and health cover) (ICG, 2017a:12).

Vigilantes' potential as a source of local knowledge, intelligence and manpower has been exploited by the Nigerian army (in the form of the Civilian Joint Task Force operating alongside the Joint Task Force) and vigilante groups (in different forms) have spread across the Lake Chad basin since 2013. However, their presence also raises justifiable concerns about participation in the war economy, abuse of human rights and unregulated access to arms. In the medium term the rise in number of armed civilians poses a risk to future stability. Ways to disband, formalise or regulate these groups must be developed if they are not to become a future source of insecurity. Claims for reward are challenging to address, yet vital, especially if deals are made with the Boko Haram militants to lay down arms.

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[6] Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon

States have been cautious about providing informal actors with weapons, equipment and training. Rather haphazardly, the civilian and military authorities, as well as non-state backers, have **provided some non-lethal equipment**, such as metal detectors, phones, radios and torchlights, as well as transportation ranging from four-wheel drive vehicles to bicycles. All have been wary of arming and training most vigilantes, in order to limit weapon proliferation in general and avoid creating what a Cameroonian officer called "uncontrollable militia". (International Crisis Group, 2017a:11). Some states have exercised greater control over groups in order to mitigate against future contribution to insecurity: for example Niger made the most cautious use of vigilantes "banning civilians from manning roadblocks and bearing weapons, demanding that vigilantes work as an informant network with the army's civil-military cooperation teams" (International Crisis Group, 2017a:9).

Bennett et al (2014) describe **Saferworld's approach to Community Security** as a process through which the development and security needs of a community (as expressed by community members from all groups) are addressed with results contributing to a more secure environment. There is a clear focus on improving relationships between all members of communities (including marginalised groups and those who have disengaged from active citizenship), behaviours within communities, and the relationships and behaviours of communities with authorities and institutions. Local improvements are linked up to subnational and national levels through advocacy and the inclusion of other higher-level actors in consultations and decision-making processes (Bennett et al, 2014:6). The overall aim is thus to replicate security gains at local level in other geographic locations in the same country and at the policy level.

Conversations between communities and those providing community safety (both formal and informal groups) are a vital first step to building the cooperation necessary for a fear-free society. Including as many local stakeholders as possible is core to the approach (Bennett et al, 2014:8). The implication is therefore that all formal and informal security actors would be involved in grassroots engagement with security providers. Nevertheless, there are recognised challenges in adopting these principles (Bennett et al, 2014:19):

- There may be significant doubts about transparency, accountability or impartiality of existing local entities
- Some donors such as the US and the EU, require checks on individuals and groups to ensure they are not on a list of proscribed actors and therefore disqualified from participating in their funded programmes

Ultimately the guidance does not take a fixed position:

- suggesting that all social groups within the community, including marginalised groups who can use the community dialogue process to address their safety and security concerns should be involved;
- it notes that where armed groups or gangs are present, they are likely to have a significant role in security and conflict dynamics and so it may be necessary to engage with them to have a realistic chance of improving security
- but also finds that it may not be realistic to include them in community security working groups
- and states that "if it is conflict sensitive and safe to do so, trying to develop some mechanism for dialogue and outreach with these actors could be important." (Bennett et al, 2014:22).

3. Lesson Learned

Successes

The following limited number of case studies make a positive contribution and were highlighted in major reviews of evidence on the relationship between organisational capacity building interventions and improved capacity of security institutions and agencies to deliver (Denney et al, 2015) and of the evidence on outcomes of security and justice interventions (Jackson et al 2019).

1.   In Afghanistan, programmes funded by the US Institute for Peace (USIP) that focused on **training and capacity building with informal justice actors** (local councils - shuras and jirgas - that are outside of the state's direct control) were deemed relatively successful. Few Afghans have confidence in the state's ability to deliver justice through the formal court system, so these councils are used to resolve disputes and conflicts in a way that local communities perceive as legitimate. Activities were locally led, meaning they were informed by a good understanding of local power dynamics and social networks and there was an incentive to focus on long-term justice processes. These programmes were not deemed particularly sustainable, however, not least because there were simply too many elders involved in these informal justice forums who need to be trained. (Coburn, 2013 in Denney & Valters 2015:34). Smaller, Afghan-led initiatives have met with more success in increasing predictable dispute resolution, suggesting that certain types of small, flexible, and context-responsive programs focused on linking the formal and informal sectors can promote more predictable access to justice, particularly given the challenges facing formal sector reform (Coburn 2013:3).

2.   In the wake of the Arab spring (2011) and collapse of state control in some parts of Yemen a pilot **Justice and Security Dialogue (JSD) programme** was successfully introduced by USIP in two governorates. In Abyan and Marib there was weak state control, a high presence of transnational terrorist groups (Al Quaeda and others) and criminal (narcotics) networks and significant reconstruction and development needs. The JSDs brought together local state officials, tribesmen, and community representatives to begin to address security issues. (Gaston, 2015). Although tribes had long played a dominant role in justice and security, the community assessment suggested that tribes were now feeling overwhelmed by the growing complexity of security dynamics. Tribal leaders *and* citizens said they need greater government engagement on law enforcement, security, and justice to deal with critical issues - a level of intervention they had not welcomed before. (Gaston, 2015:10).

In each pilot area recommendations made through a multi-stakeholder gathering were subsequently actioned. Stakeholders suggested process measures such as a developing unified security action plans that engage all parties (security forces, local police and law enforcement, justice actors, Popular Committees, and citizens). And recommended complementary practical measures such as state protection of oil pipelines and electricity provision; increased military checkpoints and meaningful state prosecution of criminals. The JSD process also empowered participants by linking select local representatives with national-level policymakers and actors who might be able to support local initiatives. These local JSD initiatives were more successful when complemented by outside or national level support, ranging from a national policy decision that supported local initiatives, to funding for local infrastructure. These were perceived as concrete results from the dialogue, a perception that generated more buy-in from the communities and further cooperation with the state (Gaston, 2015:3).

3.   For security sector interventions to be perceived as successful they must be seen to be accountable by civilian government and citizens. Accountability may be either horizontal (government bodies holding other parts of government to account) or vertical (citizens holding state institutions to account) (Denney & Valters 2015:60). As well as the presence and functioning of internal and external oversight mechanisms and the extent of democratic control, whether security actors behave in a manner accountable to citizens and up to expected standards of behaviour is a key indicator. In Mozambique, the **expansion of community policing** units involved the integration of non-state actors. These members were heavily relied on by police officers, to do both the 'dirty' work of the police and attempting to control crime in their areas. Although they did manage to reduce crime this was at the expense of increased police violence (Kyed, 2010 cited in Denney & Valters,2015).

4.   Security sector governance and reform initiatives in urban centres can contribute to more inclusive, safe, resilient cities. Urban populations are often rapidly changing and composed of diverse social groups that live closely together in densely populated areas but without close neighbourly relations as populations are often transient and mobile. Crime centred policing has proven unsuccessful in increasing safety and security in cities (DCAF, 2019). People centred approaches such as **democratic policing**, which allow community members to be consulted or participate in security provision, can enable municipal governments to respond more effectively to security needs of citizens and the state. This entails equal participation of women, gender minorities and marginalized groups in the population to be represented in all relevant municipal and national institutions responsible for managing urban safety and security, including police departments and defence and disaster management ministries (DCAF, 2019:4).

5.   In many countries' domestic violence and violence against women and girls are a major reason for women and girls not to feel safe or secure. For example research from Nepal shows that Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), violence against women and girls (VAWG), and domestic violence (DV) are considered to be some of the **main insecurity issues for women**, with more than 80 per cent of women in rural areas facing recurring DV (Bennett et al, 2014:8). Despite high incidence, crimes are largely unreported and unpunished because women are hesitant to go to the police. There are few female officers to handle cases and, furthermore, the conflict in Nepal has left a legacy of distrust between some communities and the police. **Community Security meetings** are organised as part of joint programming (Saferworld and International Alert, 2014) to bring police and communities together to discuss VAWG and plan how women could gain access to security and justice. The police agreed to recruit more female officers to handle domestic and gender-based violence cases. Community members agreed to educate people about their rights and what constitutes legal and illegal behaviour with regards to VAWG. These improvements on both the supply and demand sides of security have resulted in more women trusting police enough to report crimes, and women attesting to less violent behaviour amongst some men in the community (Bennett et al, 2014:16).

Challenges

Although there is some consensus around the need to involve informal security actors in security sector reform programmes there is still a level of anxiety about doing so. Concerns centre around the human rights records of informal actors and their lack of accountability to local structures. Some programming is still in large part donor lead, with design influenced by donor perceptions and

priorities. Weak states may rely on vigilante or informal groups to fight insurgents, but this strategy can be a double-edged sword perpetuating human rights abuses in the present and building the basis of future illegitimate yet powerful groups.

Non-state actors that many people rely on for security **are often not engaged** and reforms are thus not as relevant to people's lives (Baker 2006; Barnes Robinson and Valters 2015; Podder 2013; Sedra 2013 in Denney & Valters 2015:39). The literature indicates that capacity building approaches may fail – for example in improving the responsiveness of the security sector – if they do not acknowledge or **include locally legitimate forms** of security and justice provision that exist outside of the state. In a review of Australia's law and justice programming, Cox et al. highlight that, while caution is required given **concerns about the human rights records** of some non-state actors, this should not prevent **innovative and experimental engagements** with such actors, in particular to improve their responsiveness to concerns around rights and gender equality (Cox et al 2012 cited in Denney & Valters 2015:39)

A failure to **understand fragile local power dynamics** has made large, internationally sponsored programmes attempting to promote rule of law through the informal justice sector generally ineffective (Coburn 2013:3). These programmes face serious challenges to the model applied and linkages made in programming (such as through a programme Theory of Change). Applying a 'one size' model has at times been counterproductive where structures of local legitimacy and accountability are changed, and local actors emboldened or empowered with limited community oversight and control.

In an analysis of past successes and shortcomings of past SSR programmes Jackson (2019) argues that peacebuilding differs from imposing hard security and should encourage bottom up approaches that move beyond State institutions that are often dysfunctional, illegitimate, or unrepresentative. The role of women is particularly important in inclusive justice and women should be both beneficiaries and decision makers and involved at every level of the justice sector (Jackson, 2019:3). More hybrid approaches encompassing a wide range of State and non-State actors are now found under rule of law programmes, exemplifying the broader definitions adopted by the international community. Caution is still necessary as 'local ownership' may cloud a truly rigorous understanding of where power lies. Marginalised groups might appear to be better served by programmes designed to involve grassroot structures while these still hold power over some groups or individuals in their 'jurisdiction'. For example, the use of **customary power structures facilitates the exercise of hidden power** that traps the dominant, as well as the weak, in a web of socialised roles and behaviours. Justice and the dispensing of justice in local village structures, for example, can be a part of the exercise of power in those localities. Local ownership may be contested. Local actors who see their power enhanced by their ability to dispense justice are unlikely to give up their power in order to conform to a set of international standards (Jackson, 2019:7).

Denney (2012) describes how moving from **policy in practice** is still constrained by **public perceptions of aid.** A relatively successful SSR programme carried out in Sierra Leone since 1998 by DFID engaged with state security providers almost exclusively, neglecting informal actors who provide approximately 80% of policing and justice services in rural Sierra Leone (Denney 2012:5). In doing so DFID found itself limited in its aims of comprehensively transforming security provision in Sierra Leone. Although chiefs play a central role in providing security, the liberal bureaucratic nature of DFID predisposes it to engage with the state and not with informal actors some of which are illiberal in character (not demonstrating acceptable standards of human rights). The only DFID programme that did seek to work with chiefs

demonstrated a lack of understanding within DFID of the complexity of the chieftaincy system and Sierra Leoneans' views of it (Denney 2012:6). While understanding the importance of engaging with informal actors has improved: chiefs in Sierra Leone are referred to as the 'missing bottom of governance' (Gaima, 2009); the 'basic unit of local government' (Jackson, 2006) and chiefs themselves refer to their central purpose being law and order (Denney, 2012:10) a clear gap between policy and practice remains. Concluding remarks seem as pertinent in 2019 as they were in 2012: "As aid modalities have changed to recognise that, in fact, aid might be more effective if it also deals with entrenched political realities that are often illiberal, patrimonial and patriarchal, the public relations of aid has not kept pace. While this new message might not seem palatable to public audiences, demonstrating why (for example) engaging with chiefs will improve development is important in creating the space aid agencies need to implement the programmes they believe will most effectively reduce poverty." (Denney, 2012:21)

Working with vigilante groups carries inherent risks. Weak states tend to subcontract certain security functions to non-state actors or vigilante groups, many of which take up arms to protect their communities. The more fragile the state the more dependency on vigilantes is found. The more successful the vigilante group in fighting insurgency the harder they are to disband. Typically recruited from local communities, their members likely share the same ethnic or political identity, collective interests and perceptions of the threat, therefore raising the odds that they will act as local militias – potentially more powerful than state authorities – and pursue narrow ethnic agendas. If working with local militias is in the short-term a necessary evil, it can pave the way for longer-term conflict. There are some positive lessons to be learned too: vigilante groups can be far more effective than state actors in providing local security. They generally enjoy greater legitimacy by virtue of community roots, and can be more efficient in identifying, tracking and combating insurgents because of familiarity with local languages, geography and culture (ICG, 2017b).

The International Crisis Group (2017b) provides a comparative analysis of the experience of four weak, conflict affected African states[7] where **vigilante groups** evolved as fighting forces and were harnessed to varied extent by the state to fight insurgency or provide civilian security. These are the experiences and trajectories of the Kamajors in Sierra Leone, the Zande Arrow Boys in South Sudan, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Nigeria, and the Teso Arrow Boys in Uganda. Each case provides helpful lessons particularly on the **challenges and risks of working** with this section of informal security actors. The dilemmas confronting the nation state, are shared by international actors. Although the most desirable partner in fighting insurgency is a strong nation state with a monopoly over the use of violence, international actors may be tempted to partner a militia or vigilante group where the state alone is not effective. In cases where the insurgent group has become a terrorist organisation threatening outside interests this appears more easily justifiable.

Broad lessons, that should be **applied with care to the context**, emerge from this study:

- Engage local leaders with influence over vigilantes with the aim of settling on finite, mutually acceptable objectives within an overarching counter-insurgency strategy, and ensuring they

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[7] Sudan, Uganda, Nigeria and Sierra Leone

provide political oversight over rank-and-file members;

- Be clear upfront with vigilante leaders and foot soldiers as to what they should expect as reward for their efforts and compensation for any losses;

- Provide vigilantes with adequate political and material support, including weapons when necessary, with the goal of ensuring they can pursue their objectives, thereby reducing the risk of extortion of resources from civilians;

- Where possible, provide military oversight of, and ensure accountability for vigilantes' abusive actions;

- Put in place a gender-sensitive plan to demobilise vigilantes once the insurgent threat has receded and to help them find work in locally relevant sectors.

Key learning is also that Government and donors **paid less attention to reintegrating former fighters** than to the disarmament and demobilisation phases. Administrators in Sierra Leone in particular acknowledge that vocational training courses were too short and did not fit economic needs. This has delivered a cohort of ex-militia, both leaders and foot soldiers, who remain aggrieved that they did not receive the support to which they were entitled. Donors can play a key role in providing international expertise and financial resources to help partner governments plan and implement sufficiently generous, locally tailored disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs. To be most effective DDR initiatives should be gender-sensitive, considering the particular obstacles faced by female and male vigilantes, whether they have fought or played supporting roles, and the social stigma they may encounter as they assume family responsibilities or seek employment.

A **growing private security sector** provides security for people and property, under contract and for profit (Richards & Smith, 2007). Legitimate organisations, private security companies or private military companies, may be contracted by states to expand their own capacity. Some provide traditional military services though more often 'non-lethal' service providers supply training and logistical support or intelligence. In addition to these, unofficial and/or illegal operators such as mercenaries and neighbourhood civil defence forces may be found in the private security sector. Richards & Smith suggest that when effectively regulated and fully accountable, **private companies can make a valuable contribution** to the provision of security. However as private actors increasingly assume roles that have traditionally been the responsibility of the state, the activities of an uncontrolled or poorly regulated private security industry can present governance problems, and in transitional or post-conflict states, can act as an obstacle to peacebuilding and good governance. These should not be ignored by donors or practitioners who should assess whether the private provision of security in a country is problematic and consider how best to incorporate it into existing or planned security sector reform (SSR) programmes (Richards & Smith, 2007:10).

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