



SSURGE TEAM

STANDING CAPACITY FOR SECURITY SECTOR REFORM & GOVERNANCE



UN Photo/ Marco Dormino

2021 - 2026

5 YEARS IN ACTION

UNITED NATIONS STANDING CAPACITY FOR
SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AND GOVERNANCE



United Nations
Peacebuilding
and Peace Support

ABOUT THE SSuRGe TEAM

The United Nations Standing Capacity for Security Sector Reform and Governance (SSuRGe Team) is a rapid response capability that provides on-demand, nimble, tailored support to Member States and UN partners on security sector reform & governance (SSR&G).

Based at the UN Global Service Centre (UNGSC) in Brindisi, Italy, the Team delivers tailored support to Member States through the UN's global network of peace operations, special political missions and country teams as well as to Member States and regional organizations.

Guided by the UN's SSR&G agenda, the SSuRGe Team contributes to sustaining peaceful societies, preventing relapses into conflict, and promoting stability in crisis affected regions. This is achieved through targeted interventions, to enhance efforts in developing accountable, professional, and inclusive security institutions.

Areas of Expertise

- Police and defence reform
- Border security
- Climate security
- Public financial management
- Gender and youth inclusion
- SSR assessments
- SSR planning and coordination
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Resource mobilization
- Policy and strategy development
- Process facilitation
- Capacity building and training



UN Women/ Ploy Phutpheng



The SSuRGe Team's expertise brought significant progress [on] MONUSCO's transition plan

This is What We Work Hard To Prevent

Parliament never receiving the defence budget due to presumed 'confidentiality'

Corrections systems as instruments of oppression, not justice

Military staging a coup to keep control of funds and enterprises

Civil society excluded from national security assessment

Unpaid soldiers selling weapons and equipment to insurgents

Former rebels who agree to be integrated into the army, but claim a senior rank

Women officers not eligible for promotion because they weren't eligible for combat training

Security institutions not mitigating, adapting to or responding to the climate crisis

Military being instrumentalized by political leaders for their partisan interests

A general incorrectly claiming to be in charge of 40,000 soldiers, in reality pocketing the salaries

Absence of a plan to diversify the ethnic, religious, linguistic or demographic base of security-sector recruitment

Soldiers suffering heatstroke, unfit equipment for weather conditions, defence forces overwhelmed by firefighting

Security-sector reform (SSR) is what national authorities embark on when they want to **enhance effective and accountable security for the State and its people**. It includes assessing what practices are outdated, too secretive, inefficient, not supported by evidence, non-inclusive, and not contributing to the protection people really need. It also involves reviewing and planning for action.

SSR is about building the capacity of governments to become better providers of genuine security to their people.

FIVE YEARS AT A GLANCE

Over the past 5 years, demand for **the SSuRGe Team has consistently outpaced its availability**. That's why the Team has been able to operate at the maximum of its operational capacity to respond to in-country and remote support requests.

41 Engagements, 17 Countries



BURKINA FASO



CAMEROON

CENTRAL AFRICAN
REPUBLIC

COMOROS



DR CONGO



ETHIOPIA



GABON



THE GAMBIA



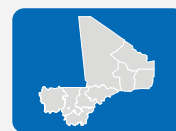
IRAQ



LIBERIA



LIBYA



MALI

SÃO TOMÉ
AND PRÍNCIPE

SOMALIA



SOUTH SUDAN



SUDAN



YEMEN



The expert's sound expertise helped the UNCT in Ouagadougou to understand the complexities of a transitioning security sector governance

“Changes in the way that the security sector is governed and organized will inevitably bring about changes in the distribution of power and resources, not only among national institutions but also in society”

- **António Guterres**
UN Secretary-General
(S/2022/280)

LESSONS LEARNED

SSR revolves around accountability, integrity, and public trust

- When armed or police forces do not serve the common good, **societal trust** – so necessary for sustained prosperity and well-being – remains elusive.
- **Integrity in security** forms the backbone for empowered and productive communities – anywhere in the world.
- A security that is not **based on an unprejudiced protection of lives**, livelihoods, rights and development, but on repression, partiality and fear, is a false – and risky – one.

Relationship building is constant

- Many requests for support are rooted in **established relationships** with UN entities in the field, highlighting the importance of sustained engagement and credibility.
- **Building trust with national security sector stakeholders** – always a time-consuming exercise – is a continued requirement.
- Effective process support, which is the bread and butter of SSR, requires **sufficient engagement periods**.

Advance SSR in complex political contexts

- Although national government is a natural first 'entry point' for SSR, it's critical to **bring key stakeholders from opposing circles together** to advance dialogue on peace and security.
- Effective SSR requires **deep understanding of local political dynamics**; it cannot be treated as strictly a technical exercise.
- Reform must be **grounded in rigorous conflict analysis / political economy analysis**, recognizing that governance failures often drive insecurity.

SSR remains relevant in contexts of ongoing conflict

- SSR is rarely a linear process, but can be erratic or cyclical. Ongoing conflict will influence SSR – e.g. the emphasis may shift to confidence-building or conflict management. It may limit visible progress. But **SSR remains vital at any phase in the conflict spectrum**.



The collaboration between the African Union and the SSuRGe Team [...] is very much appreciated



The professionalism, technical expertise, and responsiveness of the SSuRGe Team have been appreciated by UNMISS

Effective SSR programming is key

- SSR components should be **grounded in context specific analyses** and include measurable benchmarks for progress.
- SSR programming should **account for informal practices** and seek to gradually formalize or redirect them, rather than ignoring their influence.
- SSR must incorporate long term **affordability and sustainability**, avoiding models that exceed national fiscal capacity.
- Processes such as “right sizing” and “right financing” of the security sector require **close partnerships with national financial institutions** (e.g., ministries of finance).
- **Realistic scoping and built-in flexibility** to revise objectives and timelines – especially in single-expert deployments and complex environments – are more important than overly ambitious terms of reference.

Design context-relevant and effective mandates

- The most effective SSR mandates are **realistic, context-specific and tailored** to the country’s stage of security sector governance.
- **Alignment between mandate and mission capacity is critical**, requiring a combination of appropriate expertise, resources, and strategic reporting lines.
- Generic mandates are often defended as providing flexibility. But **if clear goals and deliverables are not defined, it may lead to a lack of focus**.
- SSR in conflict or fragile environments is especially difficult; **mandates must consider the local conflict stage and political realities**.
- UN peace operations often face serious deficiencies in SSR mandate design – these must be addressed with **clearer guidance and leadership**.

Governance is central, not secondary

- Weak governance in security institutions can fuel instability; **good governance strengthens the social contract**.
- SSR requires **long-term commitment and realistic sequencing**.



The SSuRGe Team expert demonstrated deep expertise in SSR, strategic analysis, and stakeholder engagement

CONT'D

Both team members were highly professional and effective in managing sensitivities in São Tomé

People centered and inclusive approaches work best

- Modern SSR, especially in fragile contexts, must shift from “classic” approaches to **people centered support**.
- **Inclusivity** – especially the meaningful participation of women and of ethnic / religious groups – **improves trust, operational effectiveness, and institutional legitimacy**.

It starts and ends with national ownership and political will

- National authorities must be encouraged and supported to identify and **embrace locally developed approaches**.
- Experience-sharing and lessons-learned-exercises from similar contexts are effective in **fostering understanding and buy-in from national partners**.
- In many contexts, security institutions are embedded in elite agreements that maintain political control. **Understanding, and gradually reshaping elite bargains is critical** to achieving sustainable SSR outcomes.

SSR is a connector

- Security institutions influence – and are influenced by – every other component of the state apparatus. Because of these interdependencies, **SSR support often extends into related sectors such as justice, DDR and corrections**.
- Effective SSR therefore requires an **integrated, system-wide perspective** that recognizes these linkages and promotes coordinated, whole-of-government solutions.

Holistic approaches produce better results

- SSR must consider **linkages** between police, military, justice, and corrections; for example, police reform affects courts and prisons, and military police cooperation is crucial in post-conflict stabilization.

The SSuRGe Team has been a trusted and highly valued partner in advancing the UN's rule of law and SSR efforts in Somalia



The Team has been instrumental in the capacity building of Libyan stakeholders in legislative oversight

Partnerships and coordination are essential

- **SSR is most effective when** the UN, national authorities, financial institutions (e.g., World Bank), and other **partners work jointly**.
- **Partnerships serve as force multipliers** in modular peace operations.
- Actors across the justice, policing, military, and governance spheres must work in **integrated, coordinated** frameworks.
- Engaging the **private sector** – one of the core links to peacebuilding – strengthens multi-stakeholder security governance.

Agile, modular, but governance-focused missions are the future

- “Lighter” peace operations can improve agility but **cutting core SSR functions undermines the mission’s ability to engage** political drivers of conflict.
- **Streamlined missions must maintain sharp advisory capacity** close to the political heart of the Mission and protect governance reforms essential for sustainable transitions.



THOSE WHO MADE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

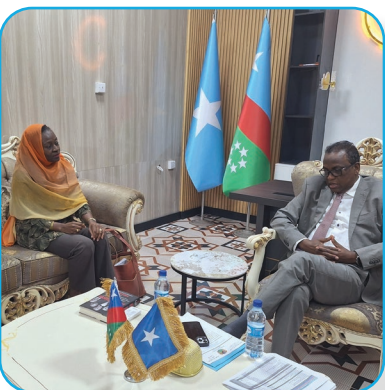
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Our Partners



PHOTO GALLERY



The SSuRGe expert demonstrated strong knowledge of international coordination mechanisms and gender-sensitive approaches



UN Photo/Iason Founten



SSuRGe TEAM

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The SSuRGe Team is now part of the United Nations Peacebuilding and Peace Support Office (PBPSO)

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www.un.org/ssr



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United Nations action on
security sector reform and governance

