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Gender Assessment Methodologies for Security and Justice Institutions: An Overview

The Gender and Security Division (GSD) at DCAF (the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance) has developed a strong expertise in designing, adapting and implementing gender assessment methodologies for different security and justice partner institutions across various contexts.

Our approach is defined by a participative dialogue with partners that seeks to understand institutional needs, resources, timeframes and goals. We recognize and prioritize local ownership, as well as fostering momentum and leadership ‘buy-in’, to better facilitate meaningful and sustainable gender sensitive reform. On this basis, we offer technical expertise, support and guidance to develop and implement an institutionally-tailored assessment methodology, which may be adapted from one of the first three methodologies described below, or designed on a bespoke basis. The DCAF MOWIP Helpdesk can also provide Geneva-based support to security institutions (police, gendarmerie, and armed forces) willing to implement the MOWIP methodology (fourth methodology presented below) considering that the security institution would have to (or recruit someone to) endorse project management responsibilities and hire a research entity to conduct the assessment on the ground.

All four DCAF gender assessment methodologies use both qualitative and quantitative research and data collection methods, and may employ document reviews, surveys, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, community group interviews and site visits.

The methodologies differ from each other in: the areas of focus (dimensions examined); the scope (from in-depth in one institution to a broader overview of the whole sector); and the degree of institutional engagement (from implementation to consultation).

1. Gender Survey

The purpose of the gender survey (GS) is to provide an **overview of the extent of gender mainstreaming within the security and/or justice sector** of a country. That is, whether women have equal opportunities to serve in security and justice institutions, and how well the security sector is responding to the different security needs of men, women, boys and girls.

The GS comprises a set of techniques – typically desk research, document analysis and interviews – to collect data against a defined set of indicators to provide a **snapshot of the current level of gender mainstreaming within each institution**. The indicators pertain to the following thematic areas of gender mainstreaming: institutional structure; institutional policies and procedures (including institutional culture); personnel; institutional capacity; accountability.

The methodology of a gender survey is designed in a **participatory manner** with the respective security and justice sector institutions and is **implemented by an external team**. It includes several rounds of consultation and validation with a wide range of actors from the security and justice sector and civil society.

A gender survey covers several institutions in less depth than a gender self-assessment but provides insights into the coverage and effectiveness of sectoral regulations, policies and practices. GS analysis and recommendations create a baseline that can offer a framework gap analysis and suggest a set of reliable indicators to monitor progress and achievements across institutions.

Past examples:

- [Gender and the Security Sector: A survey of the Security Services of The Gambia](#)
- [Gender and the Security Sector: A survey of the National Police, Civil Protection, the Armed and Security Forces, the Justice system and Penal services of Mali](#)
- [The Security Sector and Gender in West Africa: A survey of police, defence, justice and penal services in ECOWAS states](#)

2. Gender Self-Assessment

The gender self-assessment (GSA) is the most comprehensive and in-depth methodology, implemented in one institution by that institution itself, with expertise, guidance and support from DCAF. The purpose of the GSA is to **assess the gender responsiveness of a security or justice sector institution**. That is, the degree to which this institution meets the distinct security and justice needs of men, women, boys and girls, and promotes the full and equal participation of diverse men and women in its service.

The GSA uses a combination of the above techniques – typically comprising document reviews, interviews, focus groups and site visits – to gather and analyze information in six thematic areas: performance effectiveness; laws, policies and planning; community relations; accountability and oversight; personnel; institutional culture.

The methodology of a self-assessment is **designed, adapted and implemented by a working group inside the institution**, to serve institutional priorities. In contrast to a typical gender audit or externally conducted assessment, this methodology garners **internal leadership support**, which is critical for **follow-up measures (e.g. a gender action plan, policy development, training, etc.) intending to better integrate a gender perspective and promote gender equality in the institution**. In our experience, we have found that an internally led process is more effective in **overcoming resistance and promoting enduring institutional structural and cultural change**.

The partner institution uses the data, analysis and recommendations arising from the GSA process to produce an assessment report, which provides an overview of institutional key strengths and challenges in being gender response: this is a baseline for discussion and planning. Since the institution decides whether the findings and/or reports are shared publicly or not, the ‘self-assessment’ is likely to be more transparent and honest. The GSA is intended to lead to internally driven institutional change, which may be expressed through a **gender action plan** containing longer-term monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Useful resource:



- [Gender Self-Assessment Guide for the Police, Armed Forces and Justice Sector](#)

3. Gender-responsive organizational climate assessment

The purpose of a gender-responsive organizational climate assessment (OCA) is to evaluate the impact of policies, practices and procedures within a security institution on the **atmosphere of and experiences in the workplace** for women and men. It provides an in-depth understanding of the institutional climate of the institution, including (but not limited to) the ways in which it restricts the roles and participation of members based on gender.

The gender-responsive OCA can be **designed and implemented externally**, with the support and regular engagement of key members of the institution, or **internally** with external expertise and/or support as needed. It uses interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys to enable personnel to confidentially share **experiences and opinions** about a range of issues related to their workplace; to share their thoughts on organizational growth and change; and to give feedback on specific approaches, programmes and services.

The results, analysis and recommendations from a gender-responsive OCA provide a baseline or progress measurement in relation to a set of issues, which can include: the treatment of women and men on the basis of their gender; the treatment of specific minority groups; leadership and accountability; diversity and inclusion; workplace behaviors. It can also **highlight hidden issues** such as sexual harassment and discrimination, and how those impact the institution as a whole. Insights from the gender-responsive OCA can help the institution review or develop policies, standard operating procedures, organizational strategies, and can inform interventions aimed at improving the lived experience for members of the institution.

Useful resource:

- [Gender-Responsive Organizational Climate Assessment in Armed Forces. Guidance and Case Studies.](#)

4. MOWIP Assessment

The purpose of a Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Assessment is to **measure the degree to which uniformed women can meaningfully participate in peace operations** from the perspectives of troop- and police-contributing countries (TPCCs). It provides a systemic and comprehensive framework for identifying **a security institution's good practices and possible improvements** in each of ten issues areas identified as central to women's meaningful participation by measuring **the degree to which the issue areas constitute a barrier or create opportunities** for women's meaningful participation. The MOWIP methodology captures both **institutional** (to do with rules, regulations, policies, and programmes as well as infrastructure and equipment) and **cross-cutting barriers and opportunities** (reflecting the values, norms, perceptions, behaviours, and practices of individuals within the security institutions, as well as the institutional cultures and group dynamics this brings about).

The MOWIP methodology is an **extensive, rigorous tool** that uses **three quantitative and qualitative data collection tools**: 1) a fact-finding form (consisting of over 200 questions); 2) a survey of (at minima) 380

personnel (190 women and 190 men); and 3) (30) key decision-maker interviews. The three tools are used to assess a set of indicators that measure the general policies, practices and programmes in place for each issue area, the country context and prioritization of women's meaningful participation, the experiences of female and male personnel with each of the indicators, and the gap between the policies, practices, and programmes and the personal experiences.

The MOWIP methodology is the **most rigorous and demanding DCAF gender assessment tool** and was developed in collaboration with Cornell University. We recommend that a MOWIP assessment is implemented **externally** by an **independent partner**. The DCAF Helpdesk and the Cornell Gender and Security Sector (GSS) Lab can also provide support to the security institution and the assessment team based on agreed cooperation modalities.

The assessment team uses the results and findings of the analysis to produce a draft **assessment report** which provides a basis to develop, in collaboration with the security institution, **contextually relevant and appropriate recommendations to overcome the barriers and leverage the opportunities** for women's meaningful participation at TPCC level. The validation process of the assessment report provides a discussion platform strengthening buy-in and ownership of the assessment results by the security institution. It's also where the security institution decides on which findings (and subsequent recommendations) will be publicly released (**public report**) and which information will remain confidential (**internal report**) contributing to a more **transparent** and honest assessment.

Interested TPCCs may submit proposals to the Elsie Initiative Fund for funding support to implement a MOWIP assessment, and projects to implement recommendations based on the assessment findings.

Useful resources:

- [Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations \(MOWIP\) methodology](#)
- [MOWIP Toolbox](#)
- [DCAF Elsie Initiative webpage](#)
- [Ghana MOWIP report](#)
- [Implementing the MOWIP methodology with the Zambia Police Service](#)