

MONUSCO SSR transition (*Research abstract*)

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(not for quotation)

SIPRI SSR Transitions research

SIPRI examines the transition of security sector reform (SSR) activities from UN peacekeeping operations to other actors, including the host government, civil society, and the UN Country Team. The analysis on MONUSCO is based on 11 factors that are generally considered in the literature as determining the success and failure of SSR implementation and transitions:

1. Local and national political leadership commitment to SSR
2. Mission context awareness, understanding power relations, and political, economic and social obstacles to change
3. Inclusion of good governance and accountability principles
4. Acknowledgement of hybrid and multilevel governance
5. Involvement of civil society in support of local ownership
6. Gender-responsiveness
7. External actor, donor and partner commitment to SSR and DDR processes
8. Sustainable security sector funding and national institutional anchoring of the SSR process
9. Links between the SSR process and other related processes
10. Level of SSR process embeddedness in broader recovery frameworks
11. Nature and timing of the transition mandate

The more attention given to these factors, the greater the likelihood of a successful SSR transition.

In 2023, a similar SIPRI analysis was conducted on UNMISS. In both cases, the goal is to support and inform the mission mandate renewal and transition processes.

MONUSCO SSR Transition: sustainable success

Sustainable peace operation often hinge on a successful SSR process and transition. However, MONUSCO's accelerated disengagement plan left little room for a comprehensive SSR transition. The pause in the drawdown presents the UN Security Council with a second chance to implement a more effective SSR transition.

The analysis using the aforementioned 11 factors indicates that any MONUSCO SSR transition will be challenging. Some of the challenges are within MONUSCO's control, while others are dictated by the mission's operational context and are beyond its influence.

A sustainable SSR transition requires a firm commitment from local and national political leadership. If this commitment is weak or absent, attention for SSR is likely to peter out after mission closure. In the DRC, there is insufficient effective interest among political leadership. Due to *mixages* and *brassages* in the past, the security sector, particularly the FARDC, is a patchwork of militias that in practise operate without a strong unified command structure. A president may find it challenging to navigate the security sector's political

economies, some of which are driven by competition over natural resources. Additionally, in an environment of ongoing armed conflict in the east of the country, the focus of Kinshasa is primarily on defeating the armed groups, particularly M23. Within this context political leadership is mostly interested in improving the effectiveness of those parts of the security sector under its direct control, and is less receptive to improving governance and accountability.

Without sufficient emphasis on the principles of good governance and accountability, the challenges of corruption, racketeering and exploitation will persist, and the security sector's ability to serve the needs of local populations will not improve. This will likely lead communities to continue seeking alternative security providers.

In a context like DRC, hybrid and multilevel security provision cannot be ignored. A successful SSR process addresses not only to the formal security sector but also to armed groups, local self-defence, hybrid groups, and private military companies. The government uses groups such as the Wazalendo, other Mayi-Mayi groups and university students, as a reserve force to fight M23. Unless these groups are included into the SSR process, they are ticking timebombs.

To enhance the sustainability of the transition, the involvement of civil society in supporting local ownership is essential. Civil society plays a monitoring and advocacy role in SSR, also in DRC. With national political leadership showing limited effective commitment to SSR, and with the champion of SSR—MONUSCO—eventually departing, civil society will be crucial in maintaining the momentum for the process.

The success of SSR transitions depends also on the nature and timing of the transition mandate. With the drawdown currently paused, the Security Council has an opportunity to shift from a partially time-based approach to a conditions-based transition. Many civil society representatives and local government officials in Goma and Kinshasa have emphasized in interviews the need to continue the activities of the civilian sections of MONUSCO after the military drawdown, including SSR, human rights and civil affairs. They often saw a Special Political Mission as a useful interim mechanism to facilitate the eventual transition of activities to the UN Country Team.

Recommendations

To address the formidable challenges of MONUSCO's SSR transition in DRC, the following recommendations should be considered:

- 1) Given the limited space and political will, the scope and the complexity of SSR at the national level, a bottom-up, localized approach could help prevent further stagnation. Local actors often have more interest in SSR activities, so MONUSCO could focus more on local SSR activities, and therefore strengthen its field-level capacities.
- 2) MONUSCO has already begun increasing its SSR capacity, but this effort needs further reinforcement. Not only the mission, but also the UN Country Team (UNCT) needs to be brought up to speed. To smooth the SSR transition from MONUSCO to the UNCT, joint planning and implementation of new—and where possible existing—activities are necessary. This requires funding to avoid a financial cliff when MONUSCO leaves. Strengthening joint funding through mechanisms like the Stabilization Coherence Fund and the Peace Building Fund should be considered.

Moreover, an integrated office—the mission and UNDP—would facilitate integration and better coordination, while particularly political leadership in MONUSCO and the UNCT also needs to prioritize SSR.

- 3) Both MONUSCO and the UNCT need to closely partner with civil society to ensure its sustained involvement in SSR activities, including monitoring and accountability. Effective partnership involves more than informing and outsourcing implementation; it requires collaborative strategy development and joint advocacy.
- 4) Organizationally, consider expanding the Resident Coordinator's Office and adding a political element to maintain MONUSCO's political dialogue with the government and continuing its role as an SSR champion. Additionally, mission leadership needs to accompany the government in the transition, and have it reconsider the deployment of an SPM.