

Security Sector Reform and Its Implication for Human Right Protection: A Study on Debre Markos Town Administration

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Abstract: SSR and human rights are intertwined each other. The focus of this study is to assess security sector reform in Ethiopia and its implication for human right protection in Debre Markos Town Administration. The central objective of the study was to explore the positive and negative implication and challenges of SSR in Ethiopia with a particular reference to protecting human rights in Debre Markos Town. The researchers employed qualitative research method with case study research design. The data was collected from primary and secondary sources. The participants of this study were selected via purposive sampling technique. The findings of the study show that SSR is currently implemented in protecting the human rights of citizens in Debre Markos Town Administration. Particularly access to services, protection from mistreatment, the protection of the right to life are protected. The finding of the study also showed that SSR is not in a position to improve the performance and service delivery of police force and right protection. Most importantly, citizens are not still treated as per the law. Sometimes there are physical and psychological insecurities treated by the security forces. The finding of the study also shows that the implementation of SSR in Debre Markos Town administration is affected by different challenges. Of these challenges lack of awareness and lack of commitment from leaders and employees takes the lion share. Lastly, the study suggested recommendations to Debre Markos Town Administration Civil service Bureau, Zonal Police Office and other Stakeholders.

I. Introduction

SSR as a concept was introduced after the 1990s by security experts and politicians in the world. It is originated from two spectrums. The first one is from the development community who were the advocators of the importance of security sector for economic development and democratization and the second one is from the field of civil-military relations who promote the holistic approach of security in Central and East Europe (Edmunds, 2002). But, it was after the speech by Clare Short, the then UK's Secretary of State for the International Development in 1998 that security sector reform became a burning discourse among scholars, government officials, and institutions at all levels of the international community (Ball, 1998). Security sector reform is a broader concept which encompasses institutions like the military, paramilitary, police, intelligence services, border guards, the judiciary and other governmental entities which are mandated to supervise these institutions (Bendix and Stanly, 2008).

The end of cold war had changed the types of conflict and security threats among the World community in general and developing nations in particular. Therefore, in order to manage such threats at all levels of the community, the concept of security sector reform was developed (Medhane, 2007). To this effect, the UN under the department of Security Council gives a due emphasis for security sector reform and assisted member states to adopt it in line with their national and regional context.

In Africa, security institutions which are established with the responsibility of managing conflicts are too weak and not governed by the norms and principles of democracy (Joseph, 2003). Despite the fact that some modifications have been taken by the leaders of African states, they solely serve the elite and the regimes than that of the society in general (Ibid). Hence, the AU cognizant of the limitations of security institutions had adopted its own policy framework on SSR in 2008. It was adopted with the intent of managing the overriding security problems and lack of African ownership of the current SSR among member states (AUC, 2008). The SSR in Ethiopia was introduced in 2002 by the Justice System Reform Program Office under the authority of Ministry of Capacity Building and later named as the Comprehensive Justice Sector Reform Program (JSRP) in the year 2005 (MoCB, 2005). The ultimate goal of the JSRP was to create an environment whereby the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens are protected via maintaining the rule of law and good governance (IMF, 2004). It was adopted under the auspices of donor countries like UK and Norwegian government (Skaar, Samset and Gloppe, 2004). However, the SSR program is solely driven by the government without the

participation of the public and with little room for democracy and predominantly focused on the military forces (Nathan et al., 2007; Wulf, 2004).

II. Statement of the Problem

In order to have a successful economic, political and social development, there should be a secured environment in which the safety, stability and integrity of a given society are achieved (Marenin, 2013). To do so, the SSR is an indispensable aspect of all forms of development at the national or local levels. The SSR or the JSRP in Ethiopia was launched for the sake of reforming security institutions in a way that they would provide efficient and effective services in accordance with the law; enhance public participation in crime prevention; to make Police Force accountable and transparent; and to create a professional security apparatus via establishing police colleges at federal and regional levels (MoCB, 2005). However, scholars suggested that the reform program is plagued with high politicization and excessive intervention of the higher executive officials (Henoke, 2014). As such, it poses a question over the practical implementation of SSR in Ethiopia.

Pertaining to the studies little has been done on SSR in Ethiopia in general and in Amhara Regional State police force in particular. Pertaining to the studies done on the study area, little have been conducted at the national level. One of these studies is Elias (2015) and he studied on the Legal sector reform pursuits in Ethiopia and gaps in grassroots empowerment. His study focused on examining the level of attention given to the legal sector institutions and indicated that the reform is fragmented and lacks empowerment and harmonization from below. Moreover, Tedla and Zelalem (2012) also studied on SSR in Ethiopia and indicated that the reform is mainly focused on the military and overlooked the Police and other security apparatus. Their study is still blurred and did not come out of indicating the typical SSR and its implication in Human Right protection in Debre Markos Town Administration. Denney and Demelash (2013) also studied on community policing in Amhara Region which is solely focused on the success and challenges of community policing officers in the region than other part of Police Officers. These studies are limited to assess the implementation, implication and challenges of SSR with a particular reference with Human Rights Protection. Hence, such gaps inspired the researchers to conduct further investigation and to fill the existing knowledge gap. Consequently, this study assesses SSR and its implication for Human Right Protection in Debre Markos Town Administration. The general objective of this study is to assess the SSR and its Implication in Human Right Protection in Debre Markos Town Administration. The specific objectives of this study are:

- To explore the implementation of SSR in Debre Markos Town Administration.
- To explore the implication of SSR in the protection of Human Rights in the study area.
- To identify the challenges that affects SSR in protecting human rights in the study area.

III. Definition of Terms and Concepts

The concept of security is included here because it is the major subject of my study, that is, security sector reform. Security as a concept is defined by different scholars differently. For example, Buzan (1991) defined security as attaining one's freedom from threat that may endanger the life of individuals and the society at large. Booth (1994) on the other hand delineated that security means a condition whereby individuals or the society as a whole are freed from threats such as from physical violence which hinders them doing whatever they like.

The traditional notion of security emphasized on the military strength of state and its protection from external aggression. But, this approach could not address the security threats of individuals and the community since the end of cold war had brought a new phase of conflict in the world particularly in developing nations (Hussein, Gnisci and Wanjiru, 2004). Since then, a new paradigm of security has been developed which moves away from state-centric conceptions of security to people-centric conceptions, thereby much attention are given for the security of the individuals, their protection from multitude threats and empowerment in general (UNHSU, 2004). Hence, the concept of human security comes to exist which would be discussed below. The shift of paradigm in the field of security led to the integration of the concept of human security. According to the UN Commission for Human Security (2003), the need for having a new paradigm of security is "in response to the complexity and the interrelatedness of both old and new security threats – from chronic and persistent poverty to ethnic violence, human trafficking, climate change, health pandemics, international terrorism, and sudden economic and financial downturns"(p.7). Therefore, human security is defined as protecting the essential values and rights of human kind in a way that they can achieve their freedom and fulfill their need.

Security Sector Reform, in other words, is termed as security sector governance, security sector transformation, security sector development, security sector review as well as security and justice reform (AUC, 2008). It is the process through which those security sector actors mentioned above adapt to the political and organizational demands of transformation via adhering to the democratic norms and principles of good governance such as

transparency, accountability, the rule of law, and adequate oversight of security systems in general (Ejdus, 2009).

However, the mere existence of SSR does not guarantee the overall security, wellbeing and development of citizens and state. Hence, Wulf (2004) argued that to have a successful security sector reform, there must be democratic institutions in line with the realization of a democratic politics by the government, civil servants and security actors itself. Therefore, the existence of a genuine and democratic institution and the full-fledged realization of democratic norms and principles are indispensable aspects for effective SSR. Hence, it will create a vacuum of security between the government and citizens and finally it begets the loss of state legitimacy (DFID, 2005).

IV. The Challenges of Security Sector Reform in Africa

At the early inception of SSR in Africa, most of the States in the continent have understood that SSR would be pertinent for early recovery from protracted conflicts, sustaining their economic development and the whole peace building effort at the regional and international level (UN SSR Unit, 2011). However, the security sector reform was prone to divergent challenges that hampered not to meet its ultimate objective. Joseph (2003), pointed out the obstacles of reforming the security sector in Africa. Accordingly, the challenges of SSR in Africa is complex and attributed in the institutional nature of the security sector itself and it needs the rearrangement of such fragile institutions in such a way that there would be strong oversight of civilian and the community in general. To do so, it needs the commitment and dedication of leaders to implement the policies and strategies of SSR. Likewise, DAC in its guideline has also identified the constraints of SSR in Africa and it encompasses; lack of local ownership, lack of adequate funds, fragmented in implementation, lack of political will, weak government leadership and inter-agency collaboration, lack of transparency and participation, lack of policy and strategic frameworks (DAC, 2005). Lack of local ownership, among other things, is a serious hindering factor for most Africa states.

Hence, it is at this juncture that in most cases the African security institutions in general and the military and police in particular have shown unremitting deficiency in protecting the security and rights of its people. In this regard, Bandix and Stanly (2008) delineated that the security forces in Africa are the mirror of their colonial security institutions and solely served the security and wellbeing of their political elites than the society at large. Others also added that, many of the security problems in Africa stem from the security forces than from the people (Mehler, 2009).

V. The Need to Adopt SSR in Ethiopia

The need and initiatives for adopting SSR across countries is different given the existing political, social and economic conditions. In most cases SSR is more likely needed for states which emerge from long and protracted conflict and instability (UNITAR, 2014). It is intended to strengthen the overall peace building efforts which would be made to bring lasting peace and sustainable development by preventing the recurrence of conflict and protecting rights of citizens. Therefore, the need for adopting SSR is mainly with the objective of transforming the roles, responsibilities and actions of security institutions so that they will be managed and operated based on democratic norms and principles of good governance and contribute for the overall development endeavor of a state. Coming to Ethiopia, the need to launch the SSR or locally known to be the JSRP is for different reasons. While the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia government came into power since 1991, it has tried to transform its institution in a way that they can contribute for sustainable development and ride out of poverty. Hence, the then Ministry of Civil Service (today's Public Service and Human Resource Development) has launched the 14 national capacity building programs. Of these programs, the justice sector reform program is one given due emphasis at the time (MCS, 2013). Yet, in spite of the efforts made by the government to reform institutions at the time such as the justice system, different problems have been manifested.

However, in spite of the efforts made to improve the security institutions in general and police forces in particular, the reform remains to be below the expected outcome. There are different reasons why the reform program has taken a back seat in Ethiopia. The reform program among others is merely driven by the government without intensive public participation and with little room for democracy and good governance (Wulf, 2004).

Generally speaking, the current condition under which the Ethiopian JSRP and the police reform activities operating across different security force remains to be lip-service than improving their service delivery in practice. The reform programs are not well articulated and designed in line with protecting the rights and freedoms of citizens and could not enable the police force to provide efficient and effective service via adhering to the principles of transparency and accountability.

VI. The Challenges of SSR in Protecting Human Rights in Ethiopia

Even though the JSRP and police reform was established by setting fascinating objectives which are mentioned above, the program is overwhelmed with different constraints or challenges. Likewise, Elias argued that the reform program at its early phase was too ambitious followed by fragmentation of the reform process with inadequate grassroots empowerment and harmonization (Elias, 2015). In this regard, the Organization for Economic cooperation and Development stated that while setting goals, it is advisable to be specific, realistic, achievable and pragmatic other than being over ambitious (OECD-DAC, 2007b). But, the Ethiopian JSRP was aimed at addressing the problems of all justice institutions within a short time interval. One of the basic pillars to have an effective SSR is the prevalence of strong oversight control by the parliament or civilian. However, lack of strong oversight control by the parliament of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia government is also one of the challenges that the Ethiopian JSRP faces today (COI, 2016).

VII. Methodology

In this research, the researchers employed qualitative research approach. Qualitative research approach helps to examine the decision, attitude, and behavior of people or other phenomena in dept (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). To this end, this method enabled the researcher to study the behavior, experience, and performance of police force in their distinctive institution. Since the research problem by its nature needs an investigation of the experience and attitude of the research participants on the reform program, qualitative research method was the most appropriate one. As a result, the researcher used this approach to assess the implementation, implication and challenges of SSR in Debre Markos Town Administration.

The researcher employed a case study research design. It is also important for studying a topic which is not given due emphasis by any previous researchers. In order to select participants, the researchers employed Non-probability Sampling techniques. Hence, the data were collected from Debre Markos Town administration Police Office, Woreda Militia Office, Zonal Police officers and residents of the Town. Besides these, in order to triangulate the data FGD were conducted with Kebele 01 and 03 community police officers.

The researchers have interviewed participants until they get new ideas/ the views of participants are repeated on the same interview questions. Accordingly, the researchers used a total of 30 participants and each of them gave their response based on the interview questions provided by the researchers.

In order to get the appropriate data different techniques, both primary and secondary source have been used. Primary sources of data are collected through Semi-structured interview, Key informant interview and Focus Group Discussion. Whereas, secondary sources of data were collected through document review. Hence, the following documents such as; journals, books, reports (at international, national and regional levels), thesis/dissertations were consulted. But in order to get relevant and empirical data, the researcher has relied more importantly on primary sources of data. The collected data was analyzed through thematic analysis technique. It is essential to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole content and give opportunity to understand any issue in a wider spectrum (Marks and Yardley, 2004). Therefore, the data collected via interview, key informant and focus group discussion were analyzed thematically.

VIII. Data Analysis And Interpretation

The Implementation of SSR in Debre Markos Town administration is practiced in different reform tools like BPR and BSC. The ANRS Justice System Reform Plan since 2011-2015 affirmed that the justice system reform program encompasses the judiciary and law enforcement bodies. It is aimed to speed up democracy and good governance, ensure rule of law and respect for the rights and freedoms of citizen. Accordingly, the JSRP includes three subprograms, i.e. justice sector reform sub-program; law enforcement bodies (Police, prosecutor and prisons) reform subprogram; legal education, training and research reform sub-program. Each sub-program has specific projects to be accomplished within each institution. For example, the law enforcement body reform sub-program has 31 projects and one of these projects is police force capacity building project (the ANRS justice Bureau GTP I JSRP Plan document, 2011).

Therefore, the study concluded that the reform program in the Debre Markos Town administration particularly in the Woreda police office is practiced in the form of the so-called civil service reform tools (BPR, BSC and 1 to 5 arrangements) and through the establishment of community policing program.

Besides, SSR has a positive and negative implication in protecting human rights in Debre Markos Town. Of the positive contribution of SSR in human right protecting, it enables citizens to have harmonious relationship with police forces; the attitude of the society towards police has also dramatically changed; helps to exercise their rights of movement, freedom of expression, right to peaceful demonstration. On the other hand SSR is not in a position to insure the security and human rights of resident of citizens in Debre Markos Town administration. Still there are police forces that violate the rights of citizens in the time of demonstration and allegation of rights before they get into courts. The study also revealed that still police forces attitude towards

protecting and safeguarding the rights of citizens is not yet changed. They believe in use of guns in dissolving the crown rather than using other alternatives.

IX. Challenges of SSR in promoting Human Rights in Debre Markos Town

Challenges are those hindering factor that contributes for the low performance and inadequate implementation of SSR and low protection of human rights in the study area. Hence, there are different challenges that hampered the low implementation of SSR particularly police reform programs in the Debre Markos Town police officers and it includes;

Political Interference: undesirable interference of government officials is the major hindering factor that affects the reform programs in the study area. Most of the interviewees indicated that the Police institution should be non-partisan/run its activities independently and serve the people equally. However, the police reform activities are tightly controlled by other executive official (mayors and other cabinets). They could not execute their tasks independently and rather they are forced to sand for the protection of the ruling party program. But the ultimate objective of the SSR is to make police other security apparatus to be loyal and guardian for the rights and privileges of the society. Therefore, the study concluded that lack of strict separation from other government institutions and the tightly control and interference of officials has affected the overall reform activities of the police force in the Debre Markos Town Woreda police office. As a result the rights of citizens are not well protected.

Lack of Competent Leadership: The other challenge that hinders the reform programs not to meet its objective is lack of competent and effective leader. Those leaders assigned in different positions of the Debre Markos Woreda police office are not based on their merit rather they are appointed based on their affiliation/dedication to the ruling party/government. This, in turn, led to the backlash performance of the institution in general and the police force in particular. So it is plausible to say that lack of quality leadership in security institutions has an impact on the overall implementation of SSR and the human rights of citizens.

Lack of Continuous Capacity Building: There is also lack of continuous and consistent capacity building. One of the reform tools used to enhance the capacity of police officers is through providing short or long term trainings on different issues such as on protecting the rights of citizens; proper handling mechanisms of citizens who are suspects in custody; utilization of modern technologies; the code of conduct and mechanisms of accountability and others. The Amhara National Regional State Zikre Hig under part two article 3 (a, b and c) stated that police forces shall take basic police training related to their professional and service competency (the ANRS Zikre Hig February 25th, 2004). However, in spite of some efforts made to provide trainings, much has not yet done. In other words, it is not given due emphasis by the government and other stakeholders. As the findings of Denney and Demelash (2013) rightly mentioned, the role and engagement of civil societies in SSR programs in Ethiopia is very limited because of different reasons. As such, the effectiveness of SSR remains to be at stake given that the engagements of civil societies are insufficient. Therefore, the role of stakeholders to improve the reform program and service delivery of police is not well planned and adequate enough, with the exception of some movements.

X. Findings And Conclusions

Conclusions

The study was intended to assess the implementations, implications and challenges of Security Sector Reform in Debre Markos Woreda Police office. The study set out major objectives and to meet these objectives, research questions were prepared. Accordingly, the first finding of the study shows that SSR is practiced in the Debre Markos woreda police office in the form of BPR, BSC, and 1: 5 arrangements and through community policing. But it is not exclusively compiled and documented as it there in other security institutions in Ethiopia. The study also concluded that the SSR has both positive and negative implication in the protection of human rights. Even some reform programs are missing its objectives and serve as a political instrument for the government at large. This study has identified the major challenges of the police reform in Debre Markos Woreda police office. These include; political interference, lack of competent leadership, lack of continuous capacity building, lack of access for education, lack of adequate budget and incentives. Hence, the study concluded that political interference, lack of human and material resources and competent leadership are the most serious challenges that affected the reform programs.

The role of civil societies including different NGOs working on security and justice sector in the ANRS Police Commission in general in Debre Markos police office in particular is very limited. This is so, because of the fact that the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation adopted by the parliament of our country (Ethiopia) restricted the contribution of different non-governmental institutions.

Lastly, the study concluded that in order to improve the effectiveness of the police reform program and to protect the human rights of citizens the most serious challenges that are mentioned above should be solved as soon as possible. In addition, Stakeholders like NGOs should have the room to fully participate in the reform activities of police. If so, the service delivery of police force will be improved and this, in turn, leads to protection of the rights of citizens and ensure good governance and democracy at large.

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