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## Challenges to reform Malawi police service

The concept of Security sector reform is very important tool of shifting from authoritarianism to democracy. It is no longer a secret that it is prerequisite for the re-installation of the rule of law and peaceful society. Security sector reform facilitates vetting of security sectors during recruitment. S.S.R activities involve transformation of all security agencies including the advancement of effective democratic oversight, management and observation on human rights violations, crimes and many detrimental issues to human survival in their living environment. This paper is only giving attention to police reform challenges in Malawi Police Service by analyzing the pillars or dimensions of security sector reform which are; political, institutional, economic, and societal about their effectiveness within principles of security sector governance circumference.

United Nations, (2012) says, "Security Sector Reform is the political and technical process of improving state and human security by making security provision, management and oversight more effective and more accountable, within a framework of democratic civilian control, rule of law and respect for human rights with the goal to apply principles of good governance to the security sector."

To begin with, the political pillar emphasizes on the development of methodologies to manage the security sector. Security sector reform concept does not only ensure civilian supremacy over security institutions but democratic civilian control. As explained in the Malawi National Security Policy (2017), "the security sector including Malawi Police Service is under civil control. The institution's top blast and civil authority like oversight committee of parliament define national security priorities, make budget for police and also look into issues of personnel recruitment." The above paragraph really indicates that indeed a country has a reformed police. However, there are several challenges arising from this development like; taking too long to recruitment personnel resulting to a shortage of workforce and skills e.g. failure to successfully investigate and prosecute perpetrators alleged to have murdered Robert Chasowa and Njaunju the anti-corruption boss, these are few amongst many decided cases that attracts peoples' attention in the way they are being handled. Deliberate reductions of police budgets greatly compromise the effectiveness of police's service delivery in many ways. This has resulted to police formations using government revenue realized from road traffic offenders' fines instead of banking in government accounts. Police officers have few institutional houses as compared to number of police personnel something that greatly lower employee's morale.

The above explained problems pose challenge to the success of police reforms in Malawi and contradict with effectiveness and rule of law principles of security sector governance. Some of the laws they enforce are out dated or discriminatory e.g. Charges to be leveled for theft offences have not been revised since colonial rule. Their own working environment is hostile and discriminatory e.g. dealing with dangerous armed criminals but police officers do not receive risk allowances. Such experiences are well explained in (Brzoska, 2000).

Secondly, according Wulf (2000, 19-23), another security reform pillar is institutional that aims at reforming and capacity-building within the security agencies. This is so because an emphasis on professionalism is intended to revamping operational effectiveness, rationalizing bureaucratic

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structures, curbing dishonesty ect. Intensification of a professional security system must be evenhanded and embrace the potential of civil control and supervision bodies with the purpose to avoid any manipulation or exploitation between security sector and civil bodies, ([www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-policy-framework-on-security-sector-reform-ae-ssr.pdf](http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-policy-framework-on-security-sector-reform-ae-ssr.pdf)). As a challenge to police reforms, the situation in Malawi police reforms is such not easy to an extent that there is a general outcry from the civil society and the general public about professionalism and integrity standards of their police e.g. high corruption reports as evidenced by a recently leaked anti-corruption bureau investigation report of high level corruption implication of some senior police security officers in the “Police Ration Contract Scandal.”

Political elites misuse or abuse the police by giving bad orders to achieve their political gains e.g. in July 2011 demonstrations 20 people died after being shot dead by their so called reformed police due to power and influence from political elites in trying to restrict them to exercise their rights. Poor remuneration packages for service men, bad conditions and terms to its employees who are upgrading themselves in various schools to enhance their capacities, forces many to resign from service after graduating and this shows lack of retention strategies for rare skills, which are not easy to acquire and put back. Transparency, accountability, human rights violations as principles of good security sector governance are being bleached in these situations.

Additionally, Jacob et al. (2008) as cited in GFN-SSR, (2009) argues that “integration of gender issues to policing work is important to the effectiveness and accountability of the security sector and legitimization of SSR processes”. In Malawi police service reforms on gender issues in form of women inclusion in the service has at-least improved but what is required is necessarily transforming the institutional cultures that evidently seem unhealthy to women officers.

In clear understanding of police reforms on gender equality, the usual universal response from Malawi police service often has been to increase the numbers of females during police intakes. However, this can be argued to be shallow understanding of reforms that will yield a minor or no impact upon the entire organization. Malawi police lacks wide-ranging approach because isolated gender initiatives like “police women network” will have very little or no impact as it is feminine internal group without involvement of males. Therefore, the incorporation of gender issues at a wider analysis can be a positive gauge to conclude whether reforms have really occurred logically and comprehensively.

Valasek and Hendricks (2010) have highlighted some common problems facing security sector reforms which in the Malawian police context really exist in though claiming to be a reformed institution. They say, “there has been a number of observed challenges of incorporating and retaining women in security sector institutions, such as persistent gender biases, lack of a quota system for women, cultural attitudes e.g. believing that police work is for males, safety concerns, family responsibilities, women-unfriendly equipment and uniform design and living quarters e.g. women junior police officers married to civilians are evicted from police lines. Impartiality is not fully practiced and human rights are to some extent violated.”

Furthermore, the economic dimension is of the view to critically look into how security organizations use resources for the long-term sustainability of reforms. Promoting good usage of public funds depending on the set standards by government is crucial to reach the supply demands of a suitably sized and equipped security police. Inadequate resources and accountability, and weaknesses in control of expenditure have led to failure of sustainability of

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community policing program a product of reforms in Malawi Police Service. In our Malawian context Security Sector Reform programmes have failed to fulfill the intended original goal because reform donor projects phased out and the resources depleted before the police is fully reformed. It is out of this that we see community policing branch of Malawi police service that was being funded by donors is nowadays dormant due to lack of funds. The government fails to sufficiently fund its police to sustain some of the reform programs. Community policing helps to build a cordial relationship society and their police. It is out of this inactiveness of the branch that has led to growing loss of the locals in their police in the recent years as supported by Herbert Wulf et. al. in the book 'security sector reform in developing countries (2002). Effectiveness principle cannot be achieved with little government funding to the institution.

Finally, Hendrickson, Dylan (1999) and Brzoska (ibid), argues that the societal or social dimension or pillar has an important responsibility to civil society in the security duties of the state. Non-governmental organizations, the media, influential individuals, researchers and support or advocacy institutions are looked at as casing a significant role in monitoring and evaluating the security sector and ensuring transparency and accountability of the institution. As a challenge to police SSR in Malawi the civil society and the entire general society seem to know very little about security issues hence they lose focus of their role on embark only the negative parts of security sector. They seem not to be aware that praising and appreciating on good police work can motivate to do even more good things. This situation makes it difficult for civil society and police agree on certain crucial issues. Some incidences have shown that amongst police officers there are some who seem also not to know the usefulness of civil society and media to their work such that they are hostile to these stakeholders. Media can act as mouth piece to air their problems to the arms of government.

According to OECD/DAC (2005), 'these reveal new internal security threats that require maintenance of social inclusion in a quickly changing society, by dealing with these deep-rooted social ill behaviours in such individuals.' such issues promote the eroding of people's trust in their police resulting from deficiencies in governing of the institution. Lack of proper and successful utilization of information on performance remains one of the most debated issues in the Malawi police today. Malawi police service as one among public sector organizations face extraordinary demands to improve the quality of their services. Transparency and accountability principles are difficult to prevail in such environments. This can be achieved by learning from regional states doing well on reforms like South Africa.

In summary, the paper has just tackled very few of the challenges in Malawi Police service reform process. The question was approached by analyzing the challenges affecting dimensions or pillars of security sector reforms which are political, institutional, economic and social or societal. However, this analysis has been made within the spheres of how the principles of security sector governance are affected. Rule of law, accountability, transparency, effectiveness, impartiality, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights are few among the many principles of security sector governance, of which none is fully implemented in Malawi as per the paper.