

# MODULE ELEVEN

## Researching Security Issues



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### A Women's Guide to Security Sector Reform Training Curriculum



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## DCAF

The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) is an international foundation whose mission is to assist the international community in pursuing good governance and reform of the security sector. DCAF develops and promotes norms and standards, conducts tailored policy research, identifies good practices and recommendations to promote democratic security sector governance, and provides in-country advisory support and practical assistance programmes.

DCAF's Gender and Security Division works through research, technical advice and regional projects to support the development of security sectors that meet the needs of men, women, boys and girls; and promote the full participation of men and women in security sector institutions and security sector reform processes.

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## Inclusive Security

Inclusive Security is transforming decision making about war and peace. We're convinced that a more secure world is possible if policymakers and conflict-affected populations work together. Women's meaningful participation, in particular, can make the difference between failure and success. Since 1999, Inclusive Security has equipped decision makers with knowledge, tools, and connections that strengthen their ability to develop inclusive policies and approaches. We have also bolstered the skills and influence of women leaders around the world. Together with these allies, we're making inclusion the rule, not the exception.

Visit us at: [inclusivesecurity.org](http://inclusivesecurity.org). Contact us at: [info@inclusivesecurity.org](mailto:info@inclusivesecurity.org).

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# MODULE OVERVIEW: Researching Security Issues

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## Learning Objectives

- Participants are able to explain why research is important and develop a research plan for a specific security issue.
  - Participants are able to give examples of monitoring the security sector.
  - Participants are able to identify safety and ethical issues around conducting research and describe ways to mitigate such risks.
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## Background Resources for Trainers

- Amnesty International. *Monitoring and Reporting Human Rights Violations in Africa: A Handbook for Community Activists*. Amsterdam: Amnesty International, 2002. [www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/HRELibrary/sec010012002eng.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/HRELibrary/sec010012002eng.pdf)
- Barcia, Inmaculada. *Our Right to Safety: Women Human Rights Defenders' Holistic Approach to Protection*. Toronto: Association for Women's Rights in Development, 2014. [www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Our%20Right%20To%20Safety\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Our%20Right%20To%20Safety_FINAL.pdf)
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- O'Neil, Carrie and Nanako Tamaru. *Advocacy for Inclusive Security Curriculum*. Washington: Inclusive Security, 2017. [www.inclusivesecurity.org/training-resources/](http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/training-resources/)
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Manual on Human Rights Monitoring*. Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011. [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OHCHRIntro-12pp.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OHCHRIntro-12pp.pdf)

## Time

## Description

**5 minutes**

### **11.1 Introduction to the Module**

11.1.1 Facilitator Talking Points

**35 minutes**

### **11.2 Knowledge is Power: Researching Security Issues**

11.2.1 Facilitator Talking Points: Why Do Research, and On What?

11.2.2 Facilitator Talking Points: Research Methods

**10 minutes**

### **11.3 Monitoring the Security Sector**

11.3.1 Facilitator Talking Points: Data Collection Through Monitoring

**55 minutes**

### **11.4. Planning for Research**

11.4.1 Activity: Developing a Research Plan

**40 minutes**

### **11.5 Challenges: Ethical and Safety Issues**

11.5.1 Activity: Research Safety and Ethics

**5 minutes**

### **11.6 Wrap Up**

11.6.1 Facilitator Talking Points: Points to Take Away

### **Adapting the Module**

### **Assessment Questions**

**Total Time: 2 hours 30 minutes**

## 11.1 Introduction to the Module



### 11.1.1 Facilitator Talking Points

#### Background for Facilitator

This section introduces the purpose and learning objectives of the module.

#### Facilitator Talking Points

- In Module 10 we discussed different advocacy approaches and activities. We thought about advocacy as a “cycle” wherein you start by analyzing the problems in the security sector that you want to address then move through the following stages: research security issues, build coalitions, plan for action, develop recommendations, deliver your advocacy message, and monitoring and evaluate progress, while engaging with the security sector throughout. We then practiced using a “problem tree” to analyze problems, mapped stakeholders, and assessed our own skills and experience with regards to SSR.
- This module focuses on the second step in the Advocacy Cycle: researching security issues. We will examine in more detail why it can be helpful for a women’s organization or other civil society organization to research security issues and/or monitor the security sector.
- After this module, you will be able to:
  - Explain why research is important and develop a research plan for a specific security issue.
  - Give examples of monitoring of the security sector.
  - Identify safety and ethical issues around conducting research and describe ways to mitigate such risks.

#### Materials Needed

None

#### Learning Objectives

Participants are able to identify the purpose and learning objectives of this module.

**Time** 5 minutes

## 11.2 Knowledge is Power: Researching Security Issues



### 11.2.1 Facilitator Talking Points: Why Do Research, and On What?

#### Background for Facilitator

Participants will reflect on why research is important to effective advocacy and review examples of research for SSR advocacy. If possible, use examples relevant to the training context (geographically, thematically, etc.). If participants are already experienced in doing research, use the questions to facilitate a discussion; if not, this activity can be more of a presentation.

#### Materials Needed

None

#### Learning Objectives

Participants are able to explain why research is important to effective advocacy.

**Time** 15 minutes

#### Facilitator Talking Points

- What can research bring to your advocacy? Any project or action should include some background research. For example, a training needs assessment is an important first step for a training activity. Alternatively, you may want to make researching the security sector the main focus of your advocacy. For instance, conducting an in-depth study on gender and prison conditions where the research itself is your desired outcome.
- Research can help you:
  - **Strengthen your understanding of what is causing the problems you have identified:** Research can identify the factors that contribute to a problem, including its root causes, and possible solutions.
  - **Better understand the impact of your security sector problem:** The people most affected by the issues you are trying to address are an important source of information. For example, communities can help identify how police, courts, and other security sector actors are meeting or failing to meet the security needs of particular groups.
  - **Strengthen your understanding of how change can happen:** As you learn more about your problem and the actors involved, you can design and refine your advocacy strategy. You want to address any obstacles and make use of the potential drivers of change.
  - **Demonstrate your credibility:** A strong evidence base makes your advocacy more convincing. Moreover, presenting new and topical information on security issues can help you secure the attention of policymakers, the media, and other advocacy targets.
- Remember that evidence can change and evolve, so research is ideally ongoing or repeated, not a one-time event.

- What are some examples of research related to the security sector?
  - Explore women’s, men’s, boys’, and girls’ perceptions of security and security sector institutions as well as how they identify their own security needs. For example, in Libya, the organization Voice of Libyan Women researched the security needs of communities using “poster surveys.” Voice of Libyan Women set up booths in markets and asked women and men of all ages to write down their hopes for Libyan women in a time of transition. In doing so, they gathered diverse perspectives on different issues affecting women that they were later able to reference in their advocacy messaging.
  - Investigate a particular security problem (e.g., street violence, road blocks, or domestic violence).
  - Examine the conduct of particular security sector institutions in regard to boys, girls, men, and/or women. For example, in Serbia, The Belgrade Center for Security Policy observed that security problems affecting women were being poorly addressed because local security sector institutions did not understand women’s specific needs. The Center conducted a needs assessment that included data analysis, training and sensitization, and consultations with a range of actors, including women’s organizations, local authorities, local security bodies, municipal boards, the police, and the media. This assessment provided a platform for dialogue between women’s organizations and security sector institutions.



## 11.2.2 Facilitator Talking Points: Research Methods

### Background for Facilitator

This section presents a number of research methods often used by civil society organizations. Participants will reflect on their own experiences using these methods.

The research methods presented here are not covered in depth. For more information on focus groups, interviews, consultations, and policy analysis, see Inclusive Security's "Advocacy for Inclusive Security Curriculum – Module 3: Research and Collect Data."

### Materials Needed

Presentation slides

### Learning Objectives

Participants are able to list at least three different research methods.

**Time** 20 minutes

### Facilitator Talking Points

- Your research methods will depend on the problem you identified, the resources you have (e.g., time, financial, and human), and how comfortable you are engaging with particular people or institutions. It is important to remember that because women's perspectives on security are often marginalized, even a small piece of research can positively affect your advocacy.
- Innovation and flexibility are key. The Voice of Libyan Women showed us that women living in a conflict-affected country can collect data in a way that requires few resources and engages the community.
- What are your experiences conducting research? What tools have you used?
- *Discuss the methods in the 'Research Methods' box on the next page, highlighting those that correspond to examples shared by participants. Note that DCAF's "Gender Self-Assessment Guide for the Police, Armed Forces and Justice Sector" is a good reference for questions participants may have about these institutions.*
- Research can be a powerful way to raise up the voices of those excluded from decision making and to reflect the diversity of needs and perspectives in a community. When choosing whom to engage in your research, consider:
  - **Including the excluded:** Think about how to include marginalized groups, such as ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities; and illiterate individuals. When such communities are involved in research or perform research themselves, it can be very empowering.
  - **Seek to be objective and welcome all views:** The purpose of research is to test your ideas and analysis, not prove them. Participants should include a cross-section of the population—including those who might be against your cause.
- Be sensitive to the different needs of those participating in your research and be aware of what might prevent or allow them to participate. For example:
  - **Socio-cultural constraints:** Power dynamics often affect who attends or participates in specific meetings. For example, if outside researchers invite community representatives to a meeting, it might be customary for only older men to participate; you might have to make special arrangements to facilitate the participation of women, youth, or minority groups.

## Research Methods

### Desk Research

Analyze existing research and information. For example, research by other organizations or universities; government policy documents; reports issued by the government, parliament, ombudsperson's offices, or human rights commissions; newspaper reports; crime statistics.

### Interviews

Talk to people with different perspectives on the issue. On a community level, this may include other civil society organizations, religious leaders, youth groups, local council officials, and family and friends of victims/survivors of abuse. At the provincial or national level, you could approach government officials, parliamentarians, journalists, academics, etc. Make sure you interview both women and men.

### Consultations and Focus Groups

Focus groups are discussions led by a facilitator with 7 to 12 participants. Use these conversations to assess your community's local security needs by collecting opinions, attitudes, and perspectives on a particular topic.

### Survey

Create a questionnaire with a small number of yes/no questions and administer it to a group of people (e.g. 25 to 75 people). You can also use online survey tools if your target respondents have internet access.

### Site Visits

Where permitted, inspecting security sector facilities (like police stations, prisons, and border checkpoints) can be informative.

- **Time and mobility constraints:** Women's domestic responsibilities (including child care) often require them to stay close to home. Lack of mobility may also constrain persons with disabilities.
- **Abilities and technical knowledge:** Literacy levels can vary due to differing access to education, and in some places this adversely affects women and groups like the disabled, minority groups, migrants, and indigenous people. Individuals who have been marginalized from political processes may be less familiar with related technical terms and concepts.
- What are some potential challenges in researching the security sector? *Highlight, if not raised:*
  - Access to information within security institutions may be a significant challenge, especially where human rights abuses and institutional failures are concerned. Furthermore, laws concerning freedom of information are often not applicable or not enforced regarding the security sector.
  - It may be difficult or dangerous to physically access security sector facilities such as prisons, courts, and police stations. We will return to issues of safety and security later in this module.

## 11.3 Monitoring the Security Sector



### 11.3.1 Facilitator Talking Points: Data Collection Through Monitoring

#### Background for Facilitator

This presentation covers the basics of what it means to “monitor” the security sector as one approach for conducting research. For more detailed guidance and examples, see DCAF’s “Public Oversight of the Security Sector: A Handbook for Civil Society Organizations” and Amnesty International’s “Monitoring and Reporting Human Rights Violations in Africa: A Handbook for Community Activists.”

#### Materials Needed

Presentation slides

#### Learning Objectives

Participants are able to recognize the characteristics of security sector monitoring.

**Time** 10 minutes

#### Facilitator Talking Points

- If you observe and analyze the security sector over an extended period of time, you may be a “security sector monitor.” Monitoring is the planned and systematic examination of a particular institution or issue:
  - Over an extended period of time;
  - Adhering to a transparent and consistent methodology; and
  - Using explicit criteria, in the form of legal obligations and best practices, as benchmarks.
- Monitors seek to document and analyze the impact of ongoing governmental action and suggest ways to improve it. This is one way to **engage with the security sector** in the advocacy process. It involves the publication and promotion of monitoring reports, which are grounded in research and can be used for advocacy. The results of monitoring can be presented to the government but can also be shared with the media, security sector oversight bodies, as well as other civil society organizations conducting research on particular security problems. For example:
  - In South Africa, Sonke Gender Justice works alongside the Shukumisa Campaign to actively monitor police stations, courthouses, and hospitals. As required by the Sexual Offences Act and its implementing policies, they use this information to determine what services are in place for rape victims and to strengthen the justice system’s response to sexual offences, promoting a South Africa where everybody treats rape as a serious crime.
  - In Cambodia, human rights organization, the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), uses international standards, such as CEDAW, as benchmarks against which to monitor the state’s protection of survivors of gender-based violence and the prosecution of perpetrators, issuing annual reports.
- Do you have other examples of security sector monitoring?

## 11.4 Planning for Research



### 11.4.1 Activity: Creating a Research Plan

#### Background for Facilitator

This activity guides participants through developing a research plan for a specific security issue. Be prepared to give participants more information on research learning resources, bringing examples of guides and handbooks if possible.

#### Materials Needed

Flipchart; [Developing a Research Plan](#) handout

#### Learning Objectives

Participants are able to develop a research plan for a specific security issue.

**Time** 55 minutes

#### Instructions

Let each group choose an issue to work on or assign each group an issue. Distribute the [Developing a Research Plan](#) handout (see annex).

Ask each group to develop a plan to research or monitor their issue, using the handout as a template. For this activity, they should only consider the first three columns of the worksheet (they will complete the last two in the next activity):

- What information do you need to research your specific security problem?
- Where/how can you get the information?
- Whom might you work with (e.g., other organizations) or ask?

Circulate, help groups to generate ideas, and try to ensure that every group member is participating in the task. (20 minutes)

When the groups are finished, do one of the following:

- Ask each group to hang their plan on the wall and invite participants to walk around the room, reading each others' plans. Each group should leave a representative with their research plan to answer questions. Have participants mark with a yellow highlighter elements that they particularly like in other groups' research plans. Have them draw a red arrow next to any elements they think might be very difficult to achieve; OR
- Have each group do a short presentation of their research plan, inviting feedback from the rest of the groups. (20 minutes)

#### Debrief

##### Facilitator Instructions

Facilitate a discussion about the research approaches participants identified in their plans. Prompt participants to articulate the resources they would need for their research and identify (other) challenges they might face.

Use this discussion of challenges to introduce the following activity on research safety and ethics. (15 min).

## 11.5 Challenges: Ethical and Safety Issues



### 11.5.1 Activity: Research Safety and Ethics

#### Background for Facilitator

This activity is a continuation of the previous one, in which participants started to develop their research plans. This activity will help participants identify safety and ethical issues related to conducting research and come up with ways to mitigate some of these risks.

Participants should be in the same groups as the previous activity.

#### Materials Needed

Presentation slides

#### Learning Objectives

Participants are able to identify safety and ethical issues related to conducting research and ways to mitigate those risks.

**Time** 40 minutes

#### Facilitator Talking Points

- When conducting research, one must always think first about ethics and personal safety.
- Identifying and documenting human rights abuses can present security risks to both the researcher and those who share information with researchers. In some contexts, simply asking questions about human rights abuses is dangerous—both those asking and those answering questions can become targets. It is important to identify whether this is a practical reality in your context and to think carefully before taking on such an issue. If such research is conducted, it is important to establish basic protections to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. For example, will you share the names of the people you interview? If not, how will you ensure that the identities of those you interviewed will remain anonymous?
- You might also consider questions around the physical safety of your staff and risks related to convening groups of participants. Also, questions on how your research could impact participants (e.g., whether your questions could trigger past trauma; community perceptions (or stigma) of individuals who support your research). Risks can come in many shapes and forms – it is important to think about what range of issues could arise.

#### Instructions

Redistribute the research plans to the groups. Ask each group to consider the last two columns: security and ethical issues that may arise and steps that could be taken to mitigate risks. If participants conducted a gallery walk in the previous activity, the red arrows added by other participants might help to identify some areas of risk. (15 minutes)

Invite each group to share two key risks and strategies to mitigate them.

Facilitate a discussion, highlighting that approaches to manage risks might include: (20 minutes)

- Anonymizing records, which means deleting all personal data (e.g., age, sex, profession, etc.) that could identify a person.
  - Keeping all data in a safe space that you can lock, and to which only you have access.
  - Only undertaking research with the formal permission of the institution concerned.
- 

## Debrief

### **Facilitator Instructions**

Emphasize that in all circumstances, participants must assess the risks to their and others' personal safety. People's safety should never be jeopardized. (5 minutes)

## 11.6 Wrap Up



### 11.6.1 Facilitator Talking Points: Points to Take Away

#### Background for Facilitator

This section highlights the main points of the module.

#### Facilitator Talking Points

- Knowledge is a powerful tool. Research helps you understand root causes and effects of problems, increases the evidence for your arguments and your credibility, and allows you to more strategically formulate the message you want to convey to security institutions.
- Research methods include desk research, interviews, site visits, focus groups, consultations, and surveys.
- If you have the resources for more sustained engagement, you can monitor the security sector, which requires more comprehensive methodology and standards.
- When engaging in research or monitoring, you may encounter obstacles such as limited or no access to information and suspicion towards your role and project. Research can even put both researchers and research participants at risk. In all circumstances, an assessment must be done of risks to your or others' personal safety before any research starts.

#### Materials Needed

None

#### Learning Objectives

Participants will understand the main points of this module.

**Time** 5 minutes

# Adapting the Module

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## Less Time



**11.4.1 Activity:** Developing a Research Plan



**11.5.1 Activity:** Research Safety and Ethics **(SAVE 55 MINUTES)**

Activities 11.4.1 and 11.5.1 can be combined into one facilitated plenary discussion on a single topic. Suggestions under different columns in the research plan can be written up on flipcharts.



## More Time



### 11.2.2 Facilitator Talking Points: Research Methods



#### 11.4.1 Activity: Developing a Research Plan (ADD 15 MINUTES)

Brainstorm ways to include marginalized groups in the research, such as ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities; and illiterate individuals. Alternatively, add this category to the [Develop a Research Plan](#) handout.



#### 11.4.1 Activity: Developing a Research Plan (ADD 15 MINUTES TO ONE HOUR)

After deciding what research methods they are going to use, groups can begin to design their research plan in more depth. For example, if they are conducting interviews or focus groups, they can start determining who they will interview and what their questions will be. If they are doing surveys, they can start writing questions and strategizing their distribution approach.

If you were working with a cohort that is particularly interested in monitoring human rights abuses, they could be tasked with developing a monitoring plan. This is research in the form of a planned and systematic examination of a particular institution or issue:

- Over an extended period of time;
- Adhering to transparent and consistent methodology; and
- Using explicit criteria, in the form of legal obligations and best practices, as benchmarks.

Use the further resources indicated in Section 11.3 to prepare materials for this.



#### 11.5.1 Activity: Research Safety and Ethics (ADD 30 MINUTES TO 2 HOURS)

This section could be developed into a longer module on personal safety and research ethics, using relevant material from the Background Resources for Trainers. For additional material, see DCAF's "Public Oversight of the Security Sector: A Handbook for Civil Society Organizations ([www.dcaf.ch/Publications/Public-Over-sight-of-the-Security-Sector](http://www.dcaf.ch/Publications/Public-Over-sight-of-the-Security-Sector)) and WHO's "Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists ([www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9241546476/en/](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9241546476/en/)).

## Assessment Questions (Blank)

**Q.11.1 Which of the following is NOT likely to be a credible way to gather information on security issues: (select one)**

- a. Holding focus group discussions.
- b. Conducting interviews.
- c. Quoting anonymous posts on the internet.
- d. Visiting police stations as part of a prison visitor scheme.

**Q.11.2 Monitoring human rights abuses by the security sector is important because: (select one)**

- a. It can hold the security sector and its personnel accountable.
- b. It provides important contacts and increases your chances to be hired.
- c. It saves the ministry from having to collect the same information itself.
- d. It provides justice for victims.

## Assessment Questions (Answer Key)

**Q.11.1 Which of the following is NOT likely to be a credible way to gather information on security issues: (select one)**

- a. Holding focus group discussions.
- b. Conducting interviews.
- c. Quoting anonymous posts on the internet.
- d. Visiting police stations as part of a prison visitor scheme.

**Q.11.2 Monitoring human rights abuses by the security sector is important because: (select one)**

- a. It can hold the security sector and its personnel accountable.
- b. It provides important contacts and increases your chances to be hired.
- c. It saves the ministry from having to collect the same information itself.
- d. It provides justice for victims.

# ANNEX

# Developing a Research Plan

PROBLEM/SECURITY ISSUE <b>High rates of domestic violence</b>					
Information needed	How to find it	Possible research partners	Ethical and safety issues	How to mitigate risks	
<p>Example: How well police respond when a woman reports domestic violence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk review: Reports from any women's refuges and NGOs, report of Human Rights Commissioner</li> <li>• Ask/interview police</li> <li>• Observe police; visit station</li> <li>• Ask victims' representatives; interview women's refuges/ groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's refuges and NGOs</li> <li>• Reporters</li> <li>• Human Rights Commissioner</li> <li>• Academics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of police retaliation against us, women's refuges, or women who report?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach police commissioner through informal networks, to build police trust and support for research</li> <li>• Keep interview records secure and anonymous</li> </ul>	

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