

Training challenges to consider

The *Guide to Integrating Gender in Security Sector Reform Training* discusses challenges to implementing gender-responsive SSR training. While training on issues related to penal reform and gender you might also come across the following challenges:

- You might be faced with an assumption that it is not necessary to include gender considerations in penal reform, as separation of male and female prisoners and provision of appropriate-sex prison guards already addresses the issues. Have some persuasive points ready for the opening of your training to illustrate why attention to gender requires a much more comprehensive and integrated approach (see for example section 3 of the *Penal Reform and Gender Tool*).
- Prison staff often feel the services they provide to society are undervalued, and are often the focus of criticism rather than respect. If your trainees include prison staff, be careful to present the training in a positive way - as an opportunity for learning new skills and discussing new ideas, rather than criticism of existing practices.
- If your audience is quite diverse (e.g. including staff from various branches of government concerned with penal reform, international actors, prison management staff, individuals from different countries) consider the possibility that your audience may not share the same values regarding justice, punishment and the proper role of the penal system. This might lead them to make negative evaluations of each other during the training – to the detriment of the training environment. In such cases, it is best to make value differences explicit (when they become apparent) and offer the solution of “agree to disagree”, so that the issue is on the table and people can refer to their differences without being ashamed of them.
- You might be confronted with the argument that making prisons gender-sensitive, including providing facilities for women and children, requires modification of the prison infrastructure, and in a post-conflict setting or in a resource-poor country funds are not available for this. Governments and donors are usually reluctant to invest in prison infrastructure. You can invite trainees to share ideas about responses to this challenge, for example, engaging in sensitisation programmes to build political will, involving the media, opening the prisons up for interested groups to visit, and linking infrastructural improvement with improvement of human rights in prisons.