SAFERWORLD

Security provision in Bangladesh

A public perceptions survey

March 2010

Mitra and Associates is a pioneer private sector survey-research firm of Bangladesh. Established in 1983, it has gradually grown to be a most sustainable and dependable organisation in the country for quantitative and qualitative research, evaluation and surveys predominantly in the fields of health, population, nutrition and communication/media.

Saferworld works to prevent and reduce violent conflict and promote co-operative approaches to security. We work with governments, international organisations and civil society to encourage and support effective policies and practices through advocacy, research and policy development and through supporting the actions of others.

COVER PHOTO: A policeman watches over people waiting in line to vote during the 2008 general election, Bangladesh, December 2008. © GMB AKASH / PANOS PICTURES.

Security provision in Bangladesh

A public perceptions survey

Acknowledgements

Acronyms

BDR	Bangladesh Rifles
BGB	Border Guard Bangladesh
DFID	Department for International Development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PRP	Police Reform Programme
PSC	private security company
RAB	Rapid Action Battalion
VDP	Village Defence Party
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Contents

Districts of Bangladesh

INDIA

RAJSHAHI

DHAKA

SYLHET

Dhaka

KHULNA

CHITTAGONG

BARISAL

BAY OF BENGAL

MYANMAR

Executive summary

THIS REPORT BUILDS ON Saferworld's *Human security in Bangladesh* research (2007/08)[1] and looks specifically at the main security providers in Bangladesh: the Police; the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB); the Army; Ansar and Village Defence Parties (Ansar & VDP); and the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), now known as the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).[2] It looks in detail at public perceptions of each of these security sector institutions (through a comprehensive, 3,000-person household survey, undertaken in April/May 2009) and combines this with expert opinions (through key informant interviews with current and former security sector staff and non-governmental experts conducted between April and September 2009) to develop a picture of the capacity, priorities and needs of each institution. The key findings of the research were shared with key stakeholders in January 2010 through four validation workshops, enabling them to comment and provide feedback on the research. On this basis, it identifies a number of salient issues for the future of the Bangladeshi security sector and makes some recommendations about how security providers can become more effective, more responsive and more accountable in the coming years.

Public perceptions of security

There are a number of positive trends regarding crime and insecurity. 61 percent of survey respondents thought that crime and injustice had declined over the last year or so, and 93 percent of people believe that their area is a safe place to live, up from 82 percent in 2007. The percentage of households that had experienced a crime in the last two years has also fallen, from 38 percent in 2007 to 26 percent in 2009.

However, compared with research undertaken in 2007/8, there is still considerable fear of crime, particularly among women. While 36 percent of men are worried that some-one in their family may become a victim of crime, 59 percent of women are worried, and of them 15 percent are very worried. Half of the respondents said that crime had very little impact on their lives, while around 40 percent felt that crime did affect them and just under 10 percent said that crime had a serious or severe impact on their lives.

1 Saferworld, *Human security in Bangladesh* (Saferworld, 2008).
2 The Coast Guards were not included in the list of key security providers, although Saferworld fully recognises their important and significant role. In addition, it is important to note that RAB is a branch of the Police and that Ansar & VDP provide support to the main law-enforcement agencies, rather than being a main security provider themselves.

At a glance: Public perceptions of security

Positive trends
- 61% believe there are less injustices/crimes/abuses than one year ago.
- 26% experienced a crime in the last two years, down from 38% in 2007.
- 93% believe that their area is a safe place to live, up from 82% in 2007.

Fears and concerns
- 59% of women fear becoming a victim of crime, compared to 36% of men.
- 89% of respondents think that personal property crimes (theft, burglary, robbery, mugging) are the most frequent crime in their area.
- There is more concern about murder and political violence than in 2007.

Personal property crimes (theft, burglary, robbery, mugging) are by far the most frequent form of crime and the highest cause of concern, with 89 percent of respondents naming such crimes as the most frequent crime in their area and 11.8 percent saying that they had been a victim of a personal property crime themselves. Other major problems include dowry-related problems and associated violence, land disputes, physical violence in public places and domestic and sexual violence. It is also notable that concern has grown over murder, political violence and extortion since 2007. This is most likely due to the lifting of the state of emergency in December 2008 and the return to democratic politics, which can result in periods of instability, insecurity, corruption and impunity.

As well as being more worried about becoming a victim of crime, women also perceive security in different terms to men and are concerned about different threats. Women are more likely to be concerned by more 'private' or 'personal' forms of violence and crime, such as dowry-related issues, personal property crimes, drug abuse, land disputes and domestic and sexual violence. By contrast, men tend to be more concerned than women about more obviously 'public' matters such as political violence, extortion, police harassment and firearms-related crime. Women are also more likely to rely on informal forms of security and justice provision than men, including neighbours, friends and relatives, and community-based organisations. By contrast, men are more likely than men to turn to the Police or RAB if, for example, they are threatened by violence.

Public perceptions of security providers

Public attitudes towards security providers can be categorised into three groups. The first group is those security providers that people are most happy with. Across a wide range of survey questions, RAB and the Army consistently emerge as the highest-rated and most popular institutions. They are thought to be better trained, perform better, are more worthy of public confidence, and are the least corrupt. The second group, consisting of Ansar & VDP and BDR/BGB, might be described as 'non-committal': attitudes towards these two providers are less warm, although on balance still positive, but their position and influence within the security sector is limited and it appears that few people think of them as crucial security actors. Lastly, the Police constitute a third group. They appear to be less popular than all other security sector institutions, with the public much more likely to say that they do not have confidence in the Police, that the Police are vulnerable to corruption, that they lack adequate training and are liable to violate human rights. While there is no formal purpose to grouping together the main security providers in this way, it highlights the fact that the Police is by far the least popular security sector institution, whereas RAB and the Army seem almost immune to criticism from the public.

The Police

Most Bangladeshis do seem to want an effective police service. 78 percent would go to the Police if threatened with violence and when asked to list institutions that provide security, 75 percent named the Police. This implies that the public still believes that the Police have a critical role to play in people's day-to-day security, although research suggests the public long for better from their current police service.

At a glance: Public perceptions of the Police

Positive views about the police
- 78% would go to the Police if threatened with violence.
- 65% say that the Police respond properly to requests for help from the local population.
- 69% believe that the Police are 'somewhat effective' in preventing crime, though only 10% say they are very effective.

Demand for more and better policing
- Only 23% said there was a police presence in their union.
- 85% would like to see more police officers in their area.
- 84% believe the Police should address all local security problems, including non-crime issues.
- Only 13% are aware of any police reform process.
- Key informants identified political interference as the key obstacle to reform.

Negative views about the Police
- Only 45% have some confidence in the Police.
- Only 10% believe that it is easy to get help from the Police.
- Only 28% of those that experienced a crime in the last two years reported it to the Police.

Just under half the survey respondents (45 percent) have some confidence in the Police, only 10 percent believe that it is easy to get help from the Police, and only 28 percent of those that experienced a crime in the last two years reported it to the Police.

Perhaps one of the biggest problems is that the Police have very limited capacity and there are simply not enough police in the country. Only 23 percent of respondents said that there was a police presence in their union (each union has a population of thousands), and 85 percent said that they would like to see more police officers in their area. This was underscored by representatives of the main security providers, who said that the work of the Police was seriously hampered due to limited resources (staff and equipment), as well as very low salaries, long working hours, political interference and other challenges.

Lack of sufficient staff is also going to have an impact on the ability of the Police to respond to requests from the public and, consequently, harm their image as an effective and efficient security provider. Contacting the Police is thought to be difficult, and 30 percent would not even know how to contact the Police if they had to.

14 percent of respondents think that the Police are free from corruption; 59 percent describe the Police as 'sometimes honest, sometimes corrupt' and 27 percent say that the Police are corrupt or very corrupt. Those who believe the Police are corrupt are most likely to cite incidents of alleged bribe-taking from victims of crime and others in order to supplement low incomes or because of assumed impunity.

In addition to limited capacity and perceived corruption, the Police are seen to suffer from political interference. 58 percent of respondents said that there was too much political interference in the work of the security services. Respondents suggested that the Police are the most susceptible to such pressure, with the Army and RAB enjoying relative operational autonomy. Others suggested that the RAB chain of command prevented such political interference and that the introduction of a similar chain of command in the Police would be a very worthwhile undertaking. Such interference is thought to be widespread both at the local level (undue influence by local political leaders and other influential local people) and at the national level (inappropriate

pressure from national politicians and central government officials). 62 percent said that politicians have too much say over how the Police perform their duties. It is notable that the public rated the performance of the Police much more highly during the Caretaker Government (62 percent rated performance as 'good' or 'very good') and that it now thinks the Police are once again becoming less effective (only 34 percent now rate their performance as good or better), implying that the general public may already believe that the Police could have become hamstrung by political manipulation again. Several respondents argued that political interference is the most serious obstacle to police reform in Bangladesh.

In addition to the challenges of perceptions of corruption, political interference and limited capacity, another obstacle is that only 13 percent of respondents are aware that police reform is being implemented with the support of the UNDP-led Police Reform Programme.

Nonetheless, there appears to be a strong demand for the Police to engage more actively with local populations and to try and deal with a wider range of problems at the community level. Only 8 percent thought that the Police spend a lot of time addressing local problems, and 41 percent said they spent little or no time on such matters. Yet 85 percent believe that the Police have sufficient capacity to effectively combat security problems. This is surprising given the Police's obvious lack of capacity, but perhaps suggests that addressing many problems depends more upon a change of approach than extra resources. It may also point to the need for the Police to communicate the challenges they face in their work with communities to foster better understanding, manage expectations and improve relations between them. In this regard, it is also revealing that 84 percent said that the Police should aim to deal with all problems in the areas they police, even non-crime issues. 50 percent also thought that the public should have more say in how the Police perform their duties (34 percent disagreed).

Rapid Action Battalion

There is very strong public support for RAB. Almost all respondents (98 percent) believe that the introduction of RAB has helped to tackle crime and violence, and 98 percent also believe that RAB is necessary as additional support to the Police to address serious crime. An impressive 93 percent have confidence in RAB (69 percent of which say they have high confidence), 89 percent believe that RAB is performing well (47 percent say RAB does a 'very good' job), 96 percent say that RAB is well-trained, and 81 percent think that RAB has become more effective over the last two years. For all of these reasons, 90 percent of respondents say that they would like to see RAB have a greater presence in their area.

At a glance: Strong public support for RAB

RAB is very popular with the public
- 89% believe that RAB is doing a good job (47% say 'very good job').
- 93% have confidence in RAB (69% have high confidence).
- 96% say RAB is well trained (57% very well trained).
- 98% believe that establishing RAB has helped to tackle crime and violence.
- 81% believe that RAB has become more effective in the last two years.
- 90% would like to see a greater RAB presence in their area.

RAB fulfils its mandate well but must avoid 'mission creep'
- 98% believe that RAB is necessary as additional support to the Police to fight serious crime.
- RAB only focuses on serious crimes such as terrorism and organised crime, but there is a risk of 'mission creep'.
- The public often ask for RAB's help in land disputes and personal feuds.

When asked why they had positive views of RAB, the most frequent answer was that RAB responds quickly to incidents of crime and violence. RAB is also perceived to be

better trained and better equipped than the Police. RAB is considered to have been particularly effective in recent years in combating terrorism, maintaining law and order, capturing criminals and strengthening control over weapons and explosives. However, the public felt that RAB had been somewhat less effective in working with communities to reduce crime. In part, this can be explained by the nature of RAB's work, which focuses on the most serious crimes and thus does not require the same degree of day-to-day interaction with the public as the Police. Nonetheless, it appears there is room for RAB to improve community relations.

A small percentage of the public are critical of RAB, however. In particular, there is concern in some sections of the population about human rights violations, especially the number of people that are killed in what is known as 'crossfire'. This and other human rights issues are discussed in more detail below.

Although it is sometimes argued that a stronger police service would reduce the need for RAB, most respondents felt that they have complementary roles, with RAB focused on the most serious crimes (such as terrorism, organised crime, trafficking of weapons, drugs and human beings), while the Police deal with day-to-day crime control, maintaining public order, and ensuring the basic safety and security of citizens in times of peace. In fact, a stronger police service would actually help RAB, since RAB currently gets many requests from the public to help with issues outside their remit, such as land disputes and personal feuds. Also, RAB's greater effectiveness carries with it a risk of 'mission creep', as it is drawn into other areas outside its remit, such as controlling price hikes and managing traffic congestion. This also carries with it the risk of loss of focus and purpose of RAB.

Other security sector institutions: the Army, Ansar & VDP, and BDR/BGB

The Army is just as popular as RAB. 95 percent of respondents said they have confidence in the Army, of which 71 percent said they had high confidence. 90 percent rate the Army's performance positively, with 52 percent saying it is doing a very good job. 97 percent think that the Army has good training and skills, and 94 percent say that it is free from corruption.

At a glance: High confidence in the Army

Very strong public support
- 95% have confidence in the Army, 71% high confidence.
- 90% say the Army is doing a good job, 52% a very good job.
- 97% think the Army is well trained, 62% say very well trained.
- 94% believe the Army is free from corruption.

More influence over public security than sometimes recognised
- Although the Army's main role is to maintain national security, it also contributes to internal public security in various ways.
- The Army is called on at times of crisis, whether for disaster management or serious law and order disturbances (e.g. BDR/BGB mutiny).
- The prevalence of Army officers in RAB and the BDR/BGB means the Army actually plays a considerable role in public security.

Respondents noted that although the Army's main role is to maintain national security, the Army also has considerable influence over internal public security. It is often called on at times of crisis, particularly for disaster management but also to deal with serious law-and-order problems; for example, the Army played the leading role in suppressing the BDR/BGB mutiny in February 2009. The Army also continues to be the most important security actor in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Moreover, the prevalence of Army officers within RAB and the BDR/BGB means that army personnel are indirectly quite active in maintaining public security.

As suggested above, views about Ansar & VDP are reasonably positive but less enthusiastic than they are about RAB and the Army. A significant 88 percent of those with Ansar & VDP in their area say that it is doing at least a moderately good job, with 46 percent of those respondents saying it is doing a 'good' job and 14 percent saying it is doing a 'very good' job. While 72 percent have some confidence in Ansar, only 22 percent have high confidence.

At a glance: Ansar & VDP – considerable reach, but limited role

Ansar has the greatest presence at the community level

- 51% say there is an Ansar/VDP presence in their locality – much higher than 23% who say there is a police presence in their Union.
- 74% believe it would be easy to get help from Ansar & VDP, compared to 52% for the Police.
- 88% of those with Ansar in their area think it is doing at least a moderately good job, with 46% rating it as 'good' and 14% as 'very good'.
- 72% have some confidence in Ansar, 22% percent have 'high' confidence.

Limited role and unused potential

- Ansar & VDP is perceived to have a limited role and little authority, though its contribution to maintaining security at election time is well recognised.
- 51% of respondents would be prepared to participate in Ansar activities.

Ansar & VDP appears to be the only state security provider that has a real presence at the community level across the country. 51 percent say that there is an Ansar & VDP presence in their locality, which is much higher than the 23 percent that say that there is a police presence in their union. Perhaps reflecting this, 74 percent believe that it would be easy to get help from Ansar & VDP, compared to 52 percent for the Police. 24 percent of respondents said that a member of their household had had some form of interaction with Ansar & VDP in the last two years, higher than 15 percent for the Police.

Yet although Ansar & VDP has greater reach than any other security provider, it does not exploit this potential very well. When asked about Ansar & VDP's functions, most people named it as a key source of security during elections, yet mentioned little beyond that, and respondents agreed that Ansar & VDP has little statutory authority or influence at the community level. Some people suggested that Ansar & VDP is a natural partner in community-based approaches to safety and security, and that Ansar & VDP officers could act as a go-between, bridging links between local communities and the Police. 51 percent of respondents indicated that they would be willing to participate in Ansar & VDP activities.

The BDR/BGB, who are responsible for guarding the country's borders, have been greatly affected by a mutiny in February 2009 in which junior soldiers attacked and killed many senior officers and civilians. The mutiny was quickly suppressed by the Army and the threat of spreading insecurity has subsided. However, the unexpected and brutal nature of these events has hit the confidence of the entire security sector. Despite this, the public's views of BDR/BGB do not appear to have changed considerably, even though the household survey was conducted only two months after the mutiny. 66 percent rated BDR/BGB's performance as 'good' or 'very good', 82 percent said that they had some confidence in BDR/BGB, and 97 percent thought that BDR/BGB was effective in guarding the border, of which 63 percent thought it was very effective. These views were echoed by respondents, who were of the opinion that BDR/BGB achieves a great deal given the difficult conditions and resource constraints under which it must operate. However, some respondents did raise concern that immediately after the mutiny, many soldiers had escaped with weapons and ammunition – these weapons could enter into the black market and fuel further crime and terrorism.

Other security and justice providers

Although this research focused primarily on the state security sector, it also looked more broadly at other actors that play important roles in security and justice provision. These can be grouped into two categories. Firstly, there are other state institutions that are not part of the formal security sector. This relates primarily to local government mechanisms such as Union Parishads, Ward Commissioners and *pourashavas*.[3] Although they are not seen as 'security providers', 79 percent of survey respondents said they would turn to such bodies if they were threatened with violence – as many as said they would go to the Police. Furthermore, 58 percent named the Union Parishad/Ward Commissioner as an institution that improves security in their local area.

At a glance: Informal security and justice providers

Much justice provision comes from outside the security sector

- Union Parishads/Ward Commissioners play a crucial role in security and justice provision – 79% would contact them if threatened with violence.
- 96% are aware of Union Parishad *shalishi*, and 75% of those who have used them believe they received justice from them.
- However, only 28% of women have attended a *shalishi*, compared to 74% of men.
- There is a demand for PSCs because of gaps in state security provision.

NGOs' role in security provision appears limited but important

- 74% say that NGOs are generally at least somewhat effective, but only 36% believe they are effective regarding safety and security.
- Those that do think NGOs can be effective in safety and security matters note their roles in supporting safer neighbourhood schemes, providing legal aid and providing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
- NGO-based dispute resolution mechanisms are much less well-known and widespread, but have the highest rates of user satisfaction.

The influence of Union Parishads and Ward Commissioners is most obvious in justice provision, since they organise dispute resolution mechanisms known as *shalishi*. 96 percent of respondents said that they were aware of a Union Parishad *shalishi*, and 26 percent said that they had contacted one to resolve a problem, 75 percent of which felt that they had received justice in this way.

The Union Parishads/Ward Commissioners are not the only actors to offer dispute resolution mechanisms and related forms of justice provision; there is a second category of informal provision of security and justice by a range of different actors. Traditional village/slum *shalishi* are very widespread, as are village courts. *Shalishi* are very popular since they are seen to provide justice rapidly and fairly, in contrast to the official courts, which are seen to be unresponsive, burdened by corruption and very slow in administering justice. However, this research also found that while 74 percent of men had attended a *shalishi*, only 28 percent of women had done so. This raises concerns that *shalishi* may serve to replicate or reinforce local power structures and make it harder for women, especially poor women, to access and achieve justice.

Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also provide alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. These are much less well-known, with only 36 percent saying they had heard of such mechanisms and only 11 percent saying they had contacted one. However, those that did use NGO services were most likely to be satisfied: 86 percent of those that sought justice through NGOs said that this goal had been achieved. In terms of more general security provision, however, it appears that people perceive NGOs to have a much more limited role. While 74 percent believe that NGOs are generally at least somewhat effective, only 36 percent said that they are effective regarding safety and security issues (women were particularly negative in this regard, with 27 percent saying that NGOs are not effective at all on such matters). Those that did think that

---

3   Union Parishad (UP) is the lowest tier of the local government administrative unit; *pourashavas* (municipalities) are responsible for development and maintenance of social services and physical infrastructure in municipal areas.

NGOs had a role to play in security matters reported that they can support safer neigh-bourhood schemes, as well as providing legal aid and alternative dispute resolution schemes.

Lastly, 51 percent were aware of private security companies (PSCs) operating in their area or in the country as a whole (60 percent in urban areas). PSCs are often hired to protect offices, homes and other important infrastructure. Those that were aware of PSCs said that demand for them existed because they fill gaps that state security agencies cannot fill, they are not corrupt and companies have more confidence in PSCs than in state institutions.

Community engagement

There is strong demand for greater co-operation between local communities and law-enforcement agencies, particularly the Police. When the public was asked how to improve the relationship between the Police and the public, the three most frequent answers were: greater dialogue and consultation, such as public meetings about local problems (62 percent); more contact with the Police (48 percent); and better commu-nication based on mutual respect and politeness (42 percent). When the same question was asked about RAB, the most common answers were to engage more with commu-nity groups (59 percent) and to make community relations an important part of RAB's mandate (50 percent).

At a glance: Community engagement

Community engagement
- There is strong demand for greater Police-community engagement. The public most want the Police to communicate more frequently and more politely and respectfully with the public.
- RAB could also engage more with community groups particularly as this will help it to combat terrorism and organised crime.

One respondent suggested that both the public and law-enforcement agencies need to change how they think about security challenges and understand the need to work together. It is increasingly recognised that community knowledge – and a willingness to share it with the authorities – plays a crucial role in combating crime, including serious crime and terrorism. Hence, this is just as important for RAB as it is for the Police. In fact, 47 percent of respondents said that the public has a key role to play in reducing local crime and insecurity, and many already turn to networks of neighbours and friends to help them address security threats. Building on this and creating a true partnership between the public and state security providers will require serious engagement across a wide range of governmental, political and non-governmental actors.

Equality and inclusion

At a glance: Equality and inclusion

Equality and inclusion
- 58% believe that security providers treat everyone equally.
- People who believe not everyone is treated equally say that the poor suffer most.
- 67% believe there should be more ethnic/religious minorities in state security institutions, particularly Hindus, Buddhists and Christians.
- 65% of women and 47% of men believe there are not enough women in state security institutions.

Although 58 percent of people believe that security providers treat everyone equally, just over two-fifths (42 percent) do not. They argue that the poor, especially the rural poor, are most likely to be discriminated against. 67 percent of respondents believe

that there should be more ethnic/religious minorities in state security institutions, particularly Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. There should also be more women serving: 65 percent of women and 47 percent of men think that there are currently not enough women working for state security providers.

Security providers and human rights

Reflecting more general attitudes towards each security provider, 97 percent of respondents thought that the Army respect human rights, while RAB and the Police are perceived to respect human rights by 89 and 63 percent, respectively. Those that said the Police did not respect human rights claimed that the Police sometimes treat people without respect for human rights and that they arrest people in an unlawful manner.

One of the most sensitive issues with regard to human rights is the number of fatalities resulting from RAB operations, commonly known as 'crossfire' incidents. Most people appear to find such incidents acceptable, not least, it is assumed, because of perceived weaknesses in the judicial system. Those who find such incidents unacceptable, do so they say because the due process of the law has been denied.

At a glance: Human rights

Human rights
- 97% think that the Army, 89% think RAB, and 63% think the Police respect human rights.
- 67% of people know the term 'crossfire'.
- Due in part to perceived weaknesses in the criminal justice system, 60% of people do not think such incidents are unacceptable.
- Law-enforcement officials see 'crossfire' as a means of controlling crime because they believe the criminal justice system is very weak.
- Only 26% say that officers should respect an illegal order from a superior, but 46% believe that in practice officers would implement such orders for fear of losing their job or missing out on promotion.
- 76% believe that Police officers will not be disciplined for doing wrong.
- 98% want the opportunity to complain if security providers do something wrong.

Respondents suggested that many law-enforcement officials understand that incidents of 'crossfire' constitute an abuse of human rights, but they continue to allow this to happen because they believe that the criminal justice system is very weak. In particular, causes for concern were very low conviction rates and the belief that many powerful criminals escape justice because of links to political patrons. In such circumstances, they believe that what they may see as 'rough justice' is better than no justice at all. Moreover, they believe that this approach to law-enforcement will help keep crime under control, partly by removing alleged master criminals from society and partly by acting as a deterrent. Many respondents also argued that the Bangladeshi context makes it impossible to combat crime effectively while fully protecting human rights, and that in such circumstances they are more concerned about the rights and safety of supposed law abiding citizens than they are about the rights and safety of offenders. It was also mentioned that such incidents would only be the result of RAB personnel acting in self-defence. In addition, it was suggested that the media often exaggerates or glorifies such incidents. Moreover, the number of RAB personnel who were often seriously injured or worse in such incidents is rarely disclosed – in part because RAB does not wish to undermine the public confidence in RAB as an effective security provider.

Regardless of people's opinions on whether deaths by 'crossfire' are justified, it was widely recognised that security providers need to be made more accountable. Respondents from the security sector also agreed that transparency is an essential component of effective security provision for the people of Bangladesh. A legislative review should be undertaken to ensure that security sector staff are not able to act with impunity. Working cultures also need to be changed so that illegal actions do not go unpunished.

Only 26 percent of respondents found it acceptable that an officer should respect an illegal order from a superior, but 46 percent thought that he/she would in practice do so for fear of losing their job or missing out on promotion. 76 percent believe that Police officers will not be disciplined for doing something wrong (68 percent thought the same about RAB officers).

There also needs to be greater accountability before the public. 98 percent want the right to complain if a security provider does something wrong, whether they are from RAB, the Police or the Army, yet less than half of respondents knew of any opportunity to do so. Respondents suggested that there should be a 'Citizens Charter' setting out what rights citizens have before security sector institutions, and that there should be an independent complaints commission to review accusations of wrongdoing by security sector personnel.

Conclusions

In general, the security situation in Bangladesh has improved in the last two years, with a slight decline in crime and people reporting that they feel safer. Yet there remain a large number of challenges that all the main security providers must address. In particular, two parts of the security sector stand out as being in most urgent need of reform: the Police and the criminal justice system.

There is strong public demand for better policing. While it is undeniable that the Police are severely hampered by an acute lack of capacity, many of the changes that the public want to see do not entirely depend on significant resources. Reform should primarily be about changing attitudes and cultures of working, particularly so that Police officers are more community-oriented and interact more deeply and more harmoniously with the public. The UNDP-supported Police Reform Programme is attempting to introduce such ideas with an emphasis on community-based policing, but it remains largely unknown throughout society.

Police reform depends on political leadership, and there is little sign that there is genuine support for such reform among any of the main parties in Bangladesh. The urgent need for reform was underscored by all respondents. There are strong concerns that the return of political government has been accompanied by an increase in political interference in the Police's work, and that politicians of all sides do not wish to change the status quo. Ultimately, police reform is a very political process and is unlikely to succeed over the long term unless it is supported by all, or at least most, of the main parties. This means that international donors who seek to support police reform must also seek to generate discussion about police reform throughout society, from the highest political levels through to people living in rural locations.

Police reform should also be linked with steps to improve justice provision. It appears that there is currently a 'justice gap'. Neither the public nor law-enforcement officials can see an alternative to the 'rough justice' that is sometimes delivered. Moreover, this is unlikely to change until issues concerning access to justice and the perceived weak-nesses of the formal justice system are seriously and systematically addressed. Only through long-term justice reform will it be possible to improve systematic adherence to human rights standards and due process among security providers – there is some benefit in practical training that shows how law-enforcement agencies can operate more effectively while respecting human rights, but simple 'awareness-raising' trainings on human rights are unlikely to fundamentally alter the situation.

The bottom line is that people want to feel secure and feel that they have a reasonable chance of getting justice if they are wronged. Preventative measures to identify causes of insecurity and develop long term solutions to address insecurities (moving from reaction towards prevention) are desperately needed to achieve this, and security

sector staff, government officials, politicians, civil society organisations, local communities and international donors all need to work together towards this goal.

Reforming the Police and the justice system are long-term processes, however. The popularity of RAB and of informal justice mechanisms such as *shalishi* are both based on the fact that people believe that they can find the security and justice they desire rapidly and effectively. There is a need for rapid action across the security sector – while maintaining principles of human rights and due process. With this in mind, reformers may need to look at 'quick wins' that can rebuild some trust in security and justice provision. For example, one option might be to employ greater use of Speedy Trial legislation for serious crimes, though this needs further consideration as there might be unexpected side-effects (such as reinforcing a message that the rest of the justice system is ineffective). Building greater links between formal and informal security and justice mechanisms may also help to improve the overall responsiveness of the Bangladeshi security and justice system.

Recommendations
- RAB and Police officers should receive practical training on how to improve investigation and law-enforcement within a framework of respect for human rights.

- Training for RAB and the Police should not treat human rights issues as a separate topic, but should seek to demonstrate through practical training how it is possible and preferable to respect the human rights of all parties while operating effectively.

- Police reform and justice reform should continue to be high priorities and be strengthened both by the Government and by international donors.

- A needs assessment of equipment, resources, installations, training and other requirements for the security providers, particularly the Police, to be able to fulfil their core mandated tasks should be undertaken.

- A congenial relationship of trust should be established between the judiciary and the law enforcement agencies as a first step in the reform process, through confidence-building initiatives and addressing the institutional weaknesses touched upon in this report.

- The new Police Ordinance should be reviewed by parliament at the earliest possible time, with a view to adopting this new basic act with cross-party consensus if possible.

- Review legislation, and amend if necessary, to ensure security providers are not able to act with impunity.

- The need for wider legislative reform, within the context of a broad security and justice sector development strategy should be addressed.

- Police reform should promote community security, but community security should also be addressed by other actors, including local government, non-governmental organisations, and Ansar & VDP.

- Address allegations of political interference in the work of the Police.

- Investigate whether Village Police or *Chowkiders* could play an effective role in supporting the Police in maintaining community security.

- Improve community-Police relations by building trust and confidence among communities e.g. through the introduction of 'open house days' at police stations across Bangladesh

- Strengthen and modernise informal justice mechanisms, in order to address some of the problems faced by rural communities and women, as well as bridge some of the poor and the rural communities, and take off some of the pressure of the backlog of cases.

- Enhance relations between these mechanisms and local government authorities.

- Raise public awareness of the roles of the various formal and informal security and justice providers and the services that are available to them.

- With the support of international development partners, explore options to provide a platform to bring together security sector providers and formal justice sector officials, in order to discuss priorities, challenges and ways of developing and strengthening good working relations and joint co-operation.