



DCAF **25**
YEARS

Programmatic Review

「2023-2024」



About DCAF

DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is dedicated to improving the security of states and their people within a framework of democratic governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and gender equality. Since its founding in 2000, DCAF has contributed to making peace and development more sustainable by assisting partner states, and international actors supporting these states, to improve the governance of their security sector through inclusive and participatory reforms. It creates innovative knowledge products, promotes norms and good practices, provides legal and policy advice and supports capacity-building of both state and non-state security sector stakeholders.

Authors

Patrick Hagan and Abigail Robinson

Editors

Dianne Battersby, Anne Bennett, Apolline Gagliardi, Paul Gruet

Layout and Design

Nadia Joubert

DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

☎ +41 22 730 94 00

✉ info@dcaf.ch

🌐 www.dcaf.ch



Table of contents

List of abbreviations	2
Executive summary	4
Introduction	6
Background	6
Methodology	6
Key achievements and results	8
Supporting national partners	9
Europe and Central Asia	9
Middle East and North Africa	13
Sub-Saharan Africa	15
Asia-Pacific	21
Latin America and the Caribbean	21
Assisting international partners	24
Bilateral donors	24
Multilateral organizations	26
Other multilateral platforms	27
Contributing to the development of international policy and practice	28
Policy and research	28
Gender and security	30
Business and security	31
Thematic achievements and strengths	33
Supporting reform in volatile and conflict-affected contexts	34
Strengthening implementation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the security sector	35
Implementing the ‘practice – policy loop’	36
Building coalitions to support change	36
Key performance indicators	38
Gender	39
SDG 16	39
Looking ahead: Implementation of DCAF’s 2025-2030 strategy	40

List of abbreviations

ASCE-LC	Supreme Authority for State Supervision and Anti-Corruption	ASOPODEHU	Association for Democracy and Human Rights
CCS	Council for Civilian Supervision	CERT	Cyber Emergency Response Team
CIMIC	Civil-Military Directorate	CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy	CSO	Civil society organization
DCAF	The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance	DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DIDADPOL	Department of Police Disciplinary Affairs	DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EFPP	Ethiopian Federal Police	EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-based violence	GID	Gambian Immigration Department
GPF	Gambian Police Force	GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
HNP	Honduran National Police	IBM	Integrated border management
ICOAF	International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces	ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHL	International Humanitarian Law	IHRL	International Human Rights Law
ISSAT	International Security Sector Advisory Team	KPI	Key performance indicator
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces	MEAL	Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning

MOD	Ministry of Defence	MoI	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MOWIP	Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations	NAP	National Action Plan
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission	NHRI	National human rights institution
NUG	National Unity Government	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSC	One Stop Center	OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCC SEE	Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe	RBM	Results-based management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal	SEE	Southeast Europe
SIM	Special investigative measures	SOP	Standard operating procedure
SSG	Security sector governance	SSG/R	Security sector governance and reform
SSR	Security sector reform	TFNA	Trust Fund for North Africa (DCAF)
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan	UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNSC	United Nations Security Council	UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VP	Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights	WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Executive summary

DCAF's 2023-2024 Programmatic Review has been written at a time of increasing global volatility. Global conflicts have doubled over the past five years, with a 25 per cent increase in conflict events from 2023 to 2024.¹ Rising violence is coupled with democratic backsliding and shrinking civic space,² in which democratic oversight by actors, including the media and civil society, has become increasingly risky. The backlash against the rights of women and girls has continued,³ as has a broader erosion of norms related to human rights.⁴ The context for supporting security sector governance and reform (SSG/R) is also becoming increasingly complex, with developments in areas such as climate change, cyber, and artificial intelligence forming part of a broader trend of accelerating change that is testing the ability of governments worldwide to keep pace with an evolving social, political, economic, and security landscape.

Within this context, The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) supports partners in strengthening good governance of the security sector and providing effective, accountable security for communities. DCAF's approach prioritizes long-term partnerships and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders across the security and justice sectors to build and sustain momentum for change. It is not an easy time to support change in a sector that is inherently complex and often shielded from public scrutiny, yet several outcomes achieved in this reporting period demonstrate that progress on good governance and people-centred security can occur even during ongoing armed conflict.

The 2023-2024 Programmatic Review Report focuses primarily on 27 projects and programmes that have been chosen for their strategic relevance to both DCAF's mission and the current context. It is intended to provide a targeted overview of DCAF's activities and results, organized around programmes where monitoring made it possible to develop stories of change that describe not only outcome-level results, but also the ways in which change takes place in contexts along the continuum from conflict to peace.

These stories are organized under the three main pillars of DCAF's work: support to national partners (further broken down by geographic region), assistance to international partners, and contribution to the development of international policy and practice.

The report also analyses four themes that have emerged as particularly important over the past two years:

¹ Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), 2024, Conflict Watchlist 2025, <https://acleddata.com/conflict-watchlist-2025>

² International IDEA, 2025, Global State of Democracy 2024, <https://www.idea.int/gsod/2024>

³ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2024, Gender equality and gender backlash, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/ahrcwg11412-gender-equality-and-gender-backlash-guidance-document>

⁴ Human Rights Watch, 2025, World Report 2025, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2025/01/World%20Report%202025.pdf

Supporting reform in volatile and conflict-affected contexts: As illustrated by work in contexts such as the occupied Palestinian territory, the Sahel, and Yemen, DCAF plays a key role in bridging the gap between security forces and local communities, facilitating dialogue to lay the groundwork for future security provision and governance, and helping international partners to ground their support to the security and justice sectors in a clear understanding of local needs. Results in these contexts highlight the importance of DCAF's ability to remain engaged even when other international partners have withdrawn, maintaining dialogue and providing carefully calibrated support to shape security provision and future reforms.

Strengthening implementation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the security sector: The strong relationship and interconnected nature of SSG/R and human rights has been an increasing feature of DCAF's work in this programmatic period. While respect for human rights has always been a critical underlying feature of improved security sector behaviours, DCAF's programmes in 2023-24 worked directly on issues of international humanitarian law (IHL), such as the work in Ukraine and with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), or with national human rights institutions (NHRIs) as important oversight actors. DCAF's location in Geneva places it close to the centre of international dialogue on human rights issues, making the explicit action on human rights a sensible strategic focus.

Implementing the 'practice-policy loop': DCAF's support to national and international partners, and its focus on influencing policy as well as supporting reforms, positions it to play an important role in ensuring policies are grounded in field experience and adapted where needed. A recent study on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) illustrates this potential by analysing previous DCAF and other international support to address gender-based violence (GBV) in Mali and Ukraine, in order to determine how capacity building in peacetime influences CRSV responses during armed conflict. The study's findings highlight areas for policy and programme improvement that are relevant for organizations working on security sector reform (SSR), humanitarian responses, and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

Building coalitions to support change: To build and sustain momentum for change, DCAF works with stakeholders across the security and justice sectors. Outcomes achieved across different regions highlight the value of working with civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media to help catalyse public debate; with parliamentarians to propose and champion legislative amendments; with security agencies on specific technical reforms; with the private sector to promote responsible business conduct; and with the judiciary to institutionalize stronger oversight mechanisms. Formal and informal networks and facilitated exchanges among regional experts also help to amplify results.

Measuring and assessing DCAF programmes and projects remains complex given the often strategic and long-term nature of many of the changes that the organization is attempting to support. Outcomes are influenced by many factors beyond DCAF's control, and while DCAF is an important actor in the SSG/R domain, it remains a small entity, which must work through strong partnerships with national and multilateral capabilities. Despite these caveats, DCAF has successfully invested in outcome-focused monitoring in several programmes and projects which has allowed it to detect and claim a contribution to significant changes at the national level. The report suggests several steps for strengthening monitoring, evaluation, and learning in support of DCAF's strategy for 2025-2030.

Continued strengthening of outcome-focused monitoring, including repeated population surveys, will support DCAF in articulating how a consistent focus on governance and accountability influences the behaviour of security sector actors and ultimately leads to better security for communities. Monitoring and learning processes can be structured to better analyse pathways for change and potential outcomes in volatile and conflict-affected contexts, an important focus in an increasingly unstable geopolitical context. These same processes can also help to identify and prioritize thematic areas in which DCAF is best positioned to influence policy based on lessons learned from implementing programmes in the field. More structured analysis of policy-practice connections will in turn be helpful in identifying concrete opportunities for DCAF to improve outcomes by leveraging its multi-level approach to influencing international policy and practice and supporting national reforms.

Introduction

Background

DCAF is committed to transparency and to continually improving its approach to working with partners on good governance of security and effective and accountable security provision. This work includes a diverse range of projects that represent a multifaceted approach to strengthening SSG/R – supporting national partners in designing and implementing reforms, reinforcing the ability of donors to support national SSR processes, and influencing international policy. These projects take place in a wide range of geographic and institutional contexts, including many that are affected by conflict and fragility. Within countries, DCAF supports sectoral change through multi-stakeholder processes that bring together actors such as security forces; ministries of defence, security, and justice; parliamentary committees; independent oversight bodies; CSOs; private security providers; and local communities.

While DCAF's work occurs at different levels of the security sector, from legislative reform and policy development to more technical capacity building to address specific security challenges, it ultimately aims to support partners in providing effective, accountable security for communities. DCAF's research, policy advice, and support with regard to national reforms are grounded in a commitment to democratic governance, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

Methodology

DCAF's 2023-2024 approach to the Programmatic Review focuses on describing outcomes (and, in some cases, impacts) from a selected number of programmes, projects, and initiatives – as an assessment of progress made in the final two years of implementation of the 2020-2024 strategy. Reports were selected by DCAF's management team, based on their strategic relevance to DCAF's mission and to the current context. This report therefore analyses 27 projects that submitted results-based management (RBM) reports in 2023-24.⁵

The report draws from programmes' and/or projects' annual RBM reporting, which describes the context and needs that drove DCAF's support, as well as the approach adopted to address these needs, and it provides evidence of the main challenges and outcomes that characterize the 2023-24 reporting period. Where possible this information was supplemented with data from project monitoring systems or from periodic evaluations that covered the same timeframe.

Reporting was used to select stories of change that build from monitoring evidence to contextualizing the results achieved and explaining their significance as a reform outcome.

⁵ A total of 69 projects submitted RBM data in 2023, and 66 projects furnished data in the framework of the annual report process in 2024.

Focus-group discussions were held across DCAF with the respective project teams in order to develop the stories of change and frame them within the various contexts. The first section of the report covers results achieved in specific geographic contexts, where the primary emphasis of DCAF's work has been supporting national partners engaged in reform processes. The second section describes results from DCAF's support to bilateral donors and multilateral organizations that play a key role in supporting national-level SSG/R. The third section focuses on results achieved through DCAF's efforts to influence international policy.

The report further identifies and describes several cross-cutting aspects of DCAF's performance in 2023-24 that represent thematic strengths or important developments in assessing and understanding DCAF's performance for this period. The specific reporting of programmes and projects is supplemented with an analysis of two key quantitative measures that are covered in the annual reporting by all programmes: the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Gender Policy Marker rating of the programmes' contribution to gender equality, and an assessment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16⁶ targets that the programmes contributed towards achieving. The report concludes with a brief analysis of the performance implications of 2023-24 for successful implementation of DCAF's new strategy, covering the period from 2025 to 2030.

6 Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



01

Key achievements and results

Supporting national partners

DCAF's work with national partners continued to be the largest area of activity in 2023-24. DCAF works globally with a wide range of government, security sector, business, and civil society partners to enable positive change, and supports national partners in designing and implementing a range of reforms focused on making the security sector more effective and accountable. During the reporting period, DCAF's multi-level support with regard to national reforms has included drafting legislation, working on institutional policies and procedures, strengthening oversight mechanisms, and facilitating dialogue between communities and security forces.



Europe and Central Asia

DCAF's work in Europe and Central Asia over the past two years has focused on strengthening SSG not only at the national level in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, North Macedonia, and Ukraine but also through regional initiatives, including a cybersecurity programme in the Western Balkans and the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe. Projects have supported key technical reforms in areas such as intelligence, special investigative measures, and data exchange, as well as efforts to strengthen oversight roles played by civil society, the media, and the judiciary.

Challenges to reform in the region include outdated legal frameworks, limited accountability mechanisms, corruption, ongoing conflict, and a persistent risk of authoritarianism. Some countries are experiencing democratic backsliding, with security institutions playing a role in consolidating authoritarian control. The war in Ukraine, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and sporadic clashes along the Kyrgyz–Tajik border highlight the urgent need for security forces to adhere to IHL and strengthen SSG.

At the same time, many states in the region are strongly motivated to engage with reforms to facilitate progress towards membership of the European Union (EU), and, in some cases, NATO. DCAF's efforts in 2023-24 are based on a long history of partnership with many of these countries and build upon previous successful efforts with regard to reform.

Moldova

The context in Moldova has been one of positive reform over the reporting period, as the government's focus on negotiations and engagement with the EU after its 2022 application for membership has provided a noticeable political will to address reform. The conflict in Ukraine has had a strong impact on Moldova; it has led to a significant flow of refugees and has triggered a serious economic crisis. In addition, the unresolved conflict in the Transnistria region, and the increase in regional instability, hybrid warfare tactics, organized crime networks and corruption are all raising significant risks for the country.

DCAF's partnership with Moldova, which has expanded significantly in response to these new realities, has made progress in several areas of engagement. For example, the programme has built upon its long-term support regarding the alignment of national norms to SSG principles and standards by contributing to the review of statutory laws defining the powers and functions of the intelligence service. The previous laws had enabled a wide range of intelligence actions within Moldova but with insufficient judicial or parliamentary oversight to ensure accountability. DCAF provided support to the consultation process around the two new laws governing the activity of the intelligence service, providing expert written and oral input throughout a long series of hearings organized by parliament. The outcome was that significant changes were made to the laws' content, including stricter limits on the intelligence service's police powers, controls over its access to databases, and enhanced legal supervision, by restricting which court is permitted to approve warrants. DCAF's contribution has been instrumental in fostering a legal framework that upholds democratic resilience, strengthens institutional accountability, and safeguards human rights.

The work undertaken to directly improve the intelligence laws was complemented by DCAF's efforts to support the development and empowerment of CSOs so that they are capable of increasing community awareness on security topics and inputting societal voices into national debate on the issues. Moldovan civil society had a lack of expertise and capacity to engage in a sustained and meaningful manner in policy analysis and to advocate for increased security sector accountability, therefore DCAF worked to develop and reinforce Moldovan capacity to provide assessments and oversight of security sector organizations, through

supporting a network of CSOs, notably in the first comprehensive independent report on SSG in Moldova in 2024. The CSO assessments contributed and led to media and public debate on the issues they identified, informing and contributing to parliamentary discussions on legislation, the new National Security Strategy, and other sectoral policy documents, demonstrating an improving level of civilian involvement in the oversight of the security sector.

While the programme has supported significant changes in Moldovan oversight of security sector actors, there are limits to the absorption capacities of the partners, which indicate risks for sustained outcomes of the reform efforts. International interest in Moldova has resulted in an increase in aid efforts; however, this comes with a predictable diversity of priorities and interests that could fragment the focus on key reforms.

North Macedonia

Serious issues regarding abuse and lack of intelligence oversight were clearly identified in North Macedonia as a result of the 2015 wiretapping scandal. Much of DCAF's work on intelligence oversight has built upon the impetus for reform that this scandal created, along with the need to demonstrate more comprehensive governance of the security sector as a result of the country's efforts to join NATO and the EU. DCAF's approach has included consultations with stakeholders across the political spectrum, which has been critical in maintaining a consistent effort across government transitions.

DCAF's recent work has built upon previous support to oversee special investigative measures (SIM) – a component of the criminal code covering telephone and electronic interceptions, which have been the focus of previous abuse. Stronger oversight measures have successfully been developed and institutionalized into training across the justice sector, both the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors of the Republic of North Macedonia and with active judges and prosecutors. This has resulted in the judicial system now performing its control role as intended, as evidenced by the rigorous ex ante control process for accepting SIM applications. The system now ensures compliance with all legal requirements and democratic principles, while rejecting applications that lack adequate justification.

Strengthening oversight of intelligence and security has also involved working with the media to report on developments in the sector. With the support of DCAF, the frequency and quality of media coverage of intelligence and security issues have increased during the reporting period. This influence is also evident in the selection process for the Council for Civilian Supervision (CCS), which complements parliamentary oversight. The parliamentary working body initially proposed candidates for the CCS, but most were unqualified and perceived as politically affiliated with the governing parties. Due to pressure from the media, particularly from the partners that DCAF collaborates with, as well as broader advocacy from the DCAF programme and its donors, the process was halted. A new selection process will be conducted to ensure the appointment of qualified and impartial personnel.

With the support of DCAF the frequency and quality of media coverage of intelligence and security issues has increased during the reporting period.

DCAF's work in North Macedonia has also supported progress on issues of police integrity, from providing training and mentoring on integrity, to supporting the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Mol) with developing and publishing its integrity plan, including regularly reporting on its progress as regards implementation. While overall investment by senior Mol leadership into the

planning and monitoring of integrity as an issue represents a significant change, the strength of the outcome can also be seen through the increase in internal complaints to the Department of Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional Standards regarding poor behaviour by police officers. The greater willingness of police officers to identify and then report integrity violations is a significant step in developing a stronger internal culture of police integrity that can be self-sustaining.

North Macedonia is also at the forefront when it comes to implementing the necessary legal, organizational, and technical changes that align with EU standards to enable the automated exchange of information on DNA, fingerprints, and vehicle registration to counter organized crime activity in the Southeast Europe (SEE) region. DCAF has long supported this effort under the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe (PCC SEE), which has seen progress through national approval of the PCC Prüm Agreement that was signed with several other PCC SEE countries. North Macedonia has completed much of the required preparation and is on track to evaluate its system in 2025.

Ukraine

DCAF's recent support to Ukraine has focused on strengthening accountability and professionalism, even in the midst of war, by responding to targeted requests from Ukrainian partners. This agile approach is key to providing relevant, timely support that builds



Photo: DCAF/Ukraine Ministry of Defence

a foundation for longer-term engagement as conditions in Ukraine continue to evolve. One key area of emphasis has been adherence to IHL, which is both a critical element of SSG and increasingly complex to manage as a result of the characteristics of modern battlefields, creating dilemmas not envisioned during the original development of IHL. In Ukraine, these have included issues related to drone and cyber operations, along with more traditional issues such as the witnessing of war crimes, preservation of evidence, and respect with regard to terms of surrender, all of which have been highlighted as concerns for which clearer guidance is required.

Initially, DCAF produced a series of publications on specific IHL issues in response to the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) requests, as it was encountering IHL challenges on the battlefield. These reports have played a key role in shaping commanders' guidance and orders, making it easier to apply IHL norms effectively in practice. The MOD has since established an International Law Division, responsible for overseeing adherence to IHL. DCAF has worked with the MOD and local partner League of Officers to develop and deliver training on the front lines of the war, focusing on challenges on the battlefield to ensure key concepts are fully understood in the context of modern conflict. The training programme has been aligned with the NATO Standardization Agreement on IHL and has also emphasized specific concepts such as the importance of command responsibility in cases of IHL violations in other conflicts.

With DCAF's support, the International Law Division has been developing a database to analyse typologies of violations and to better tailor training. Interviews with security actors in Ukraine have indicated that increased awareness achieved through training, coupled with stronger MOD oversight, has contributed to improved implementation of IHL by Ukrainian forces, an impression that is reinforced by reports from IHL trainers. The Ukrainian government was also able to develop a comprehensive report on their IHL compliance in 2024, facilitated by greater awareness and more rigorous tracking across units engaged in operations.

Western Balkans

In the Western Balkans, DCAF's cybersecurity programme supports national authorities in implementing the EU's Network and Information Security (NIS2) Directive, which provides a clear framework for

strengthening cybersecurity and incident response capabilities. Previously, national cyber emergency response teams (CERTs) in the Western Balkan region have had limited communication and technical expertise. In this context, DCAF has focused on not only supporting development of the legislation required to establish effective cybersecurity structures and facilitate cooperation, but also organizing regional seminars and bilateral exchanges to share best practices.

The regional dimension of the project has been particularly helpful in building momentum for regional changes by connecting cybersecurity officials from different countries. For example, Montenegro's Ministry of Public Administration visited neighbouring countries to learn about cybersecurity legislation and subsequently received support in drafting its own law. The resulting draft law, finalized in 2023 and adopted by the Montenegrin parliament in late 2024, established a new national cybersecurity structure with a dedicated agency and clearly defined incident response procedures.

Regional training sessions have also helped to create informal networks, enabling national CERTs to share information and approaches and facilitating unprecedented cross-regional cybersecurity collaboration among Western Balkan countries. This has led to more effective technical-level problem-solving, such as quickly addressing regional phishing attacks. Participants in the project have also supported one another in joining relevant professional associations. For example, Serbia has now joined the Forum of European Supervisory Authorities (FESA), demonstrating the value of developing strong professional connections throughout the region.

DCAF has also supported stronger oversight of cybersecurity, with an approach that goes beyond the technical dimensions often associated with this field and focuses on the importance of cybersecurity for all. Specifically, DCAF has supported local research institutions in the Western Balkans with conducting research on overlooked cybersecurity challenges related to gender and LGBTQ rights, which were previously unrecognised by public and private sector practitioners. As a result, through targeted advocacy, these institutions have engaged policymakers and decision-makers, using research presentations, social media, and traditional media campaigns, to push for legal change and raise awareness about these critical cybersecurity dimensions.

Middle East and North Africa

In a region that has been deeply affected by conflict over the past two years, DCAF has continued working with partners in Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory, and Yemen, as well as in Libya, Morocco and Tunisia (through the Trust Fund for North Africa – TFNA⁷). In conflict-affected contexts, work has often had a greater emphasis on ensuring key national and international stakeholders understand community security needs. More broadly, work in the region has also aimed to address deficits in accountability through a focus on internal and external oversight measures.



DCAF has several long-term partnerships in the region that have built trust and expertise in the context of the security sector.

DCAF has several long-term partnerships in the region that have built trust and expertise in the context of the security sector. The conflicts that have occurred recently have resulted in significant changes in local and regional power dynamics in many of the countries, which in some cases have represented an opportunity to advocate for and progress needed security sector reforms.

Lebanon

The SSG/R situation in Lebanon remains highly volatile, with the country's efforts at reform being strongly hindered by absence of political will caused by long-term government paralysis and lack of a confirmed president, the conflict with Israel since 2024, and the continued impact of the large population of Syrian refugees who remain in the country.

Within this context, DCAF has continued its efforts to support key enabling aspects of the security sector. One core aspect has been consistent work with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to strengthen their Civil-Military Directorate (CIMIC) function. The LAF play a key role in Lebanese society in providing humanitarian assistance and contributing to effective state support for disaster- and conflict-affected areas of Lebanon. The CIMIC function in the country, in common with many armed forces, however, had not been effectively positioned and used to carry out its core coordination role in enabling alignment of military support to humanitarian aims with the needs and efforts of other government agencies and

with available donor support. The need for the LAF to effectively and efficiently carry out this role has been exacerbated by the significant displacement caused by the conflict with Israel.

DCAF's support to LAF CIMIC has focused on mentoring and enabling the leadership to adopt a strategic approach to assessment and engagement, both within the LAF system and with key local and international partners, so that CIMIC can provide LAF with an integrated plan and approach that aligns with the work of other civilian and humanitarian capabilities.

The result of the cumulative support has been that LAF HQ has used CIMIC for the first time to contribute to the LAF plan for responding to the crisis in southern Lebanon. CIMIC has worked with Lebanese government agencies, such as the Ministry of Health, to receive and share information regarding gaps and damaged health facilities, and then to conduct joint activities to address these issues and provide health and other types of assistance to areas of need. This has resulted in positive responses from the community, with community representatives now contacting LAF CIMIC directly to communicate their needs.

⁷ The Trust Fund for Security Sector Development Assistance in North Africa (TFNA) was established in 2012, in response to the 2011 uprisings in North Africa. Its aim is to improve the security of people by facilitating SSG/R assistance to Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. In such dynamic and challenging contexts, the fund is an effective and efficient tool for adaptive, flexible, and needs-driven programme design and implementation.

LAF CIMIC has also become significantly more effective as a partner to international organizations, establishing an information-sharing relationship with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) since 2024.

Progress in strengthening the capability of CIMIC has been constrained by limited partner capacity and the complexity of the mandate for supporting coordination across a diverse set of partners. This has resulted in gaps in maintaining coordination systems consistently; for example, a donor group that DCAF created to enable better coordination has not met regularly since DCAF reduced its secretariat role. In theory, CIMIC would, in a number of contexts, facilitate the flow of requests to the appropriate government capability. However, it is currently unclear whether this is occurring consistently. The capacity of Lebanese government institutions to provide support to affected communities is unclear and limited, which somewhat complicates assessment of the extent and effects of coordination.

A key aspect of DCAF's engagement under the TFNA has been to assist its Moroccan partners in complying with international norms and standards, including improving oversight of detention facilities as a method of addressing the conditions in prisons. DCAF supported this through a 2022 report on conditions in detention, which identified the scale of overcrowding and pretrial detention. In fragile justice systems, the link between pretrial detention, overloaded and slow court processes, and overcrowded prisons is well established as a core aspect of problematic justice and human rights outcomes. Directly addressing this link, DCAF engaged with national partners in a dialogue promoting the adoption of a law on alternatives to detention, and this law was ultimately adopted by the Moroccan parliament in June 2024. While the adoption of this law represents a significant outcome of DCAF's support, positive effects depend on implementation of the alternative pathways by judges and the legal system – a change that will require continued support.

Morocco

DCAF is engaged in supporting Morocco in its reform objectives to strengthen a range of security and justice outcomes, building from the principles enshrined in the 2011 constitution. Reform of justice and the advancement of women's rights constitute essential guiding principles, but effective change in these areas is proving a slow process. DCAF has worked, however, to support effective practices.

Yemen

After years of conflict in Yemen, state and society are fractured, with deep mistrust among political parties and their armed wings. Civilians have been profoundly affected by armed violence and related restrictions to movement. In support of the UN-led peace process, DCAF's work in Yemen focuses on laying the foundations for future governance of the security sector by building trust among conflict actors through addressing shared



Photo: DCAF

security concerns. DCAF hosts periodic dialogue in safe locations that bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including key security institutions, tribal leaders, and CSOs that would not otherwise be able to meet to discuss security sector issues. DCAF also engages with relevant regional actors and coordinates with international partners, including the UN Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen.

Over time, participation in periodic dialogue has expanded, moving from a limited group of approximately 10 participants to nearly 60 participants in 2024, representing a broad cross-section of Yemeni society and conflict actors. The dialogues are the first time that several of these representatives have met their opposing counterparts since the early stages of the conflict.

These periodic dialogues have identified a number of concrete security issues that are of common concern to Yemeni stakeholders and that have had a significant impact on civilians, such as the closure of roads by armed actors. Given the sensitivity of this topic for ongoing negotiations, DCAF worked with stakeholders to reframe concerns around freedom of movement and provided expert input, including research papers, to help shape local stakeholder thinking around potential options.

The discussions on this topic, occurring at a time when DCAF was one of a very limited number of international partners working on this issue, contributed to the opening of sections of two key roads (Marib–Sanaa and Taiz–Al-Habawn). The impact of this on the Yemeni civilians in those areas was significant, with reports confirming that a trip that had previously required two days could now be made in a few hours.

The volatility of the situation in Yemen means that progress in certain areas could be easily reversed. Each dialogue session has required a thorough assessment of the risks to participants, continued adaptation of agendas and approaches in response to a rapidly changing context, and careful coordination with international partners to ensure complementarity with ongoing high-level negotiations. At the same time, these results speak to the value of DCAF's inclusive and people-centred approach, which creates space for Yemeni stakeholders to openly discuss and propose solutions to issues directly impacting the immediate security of local communities and longer-term security arrangements framing peace negotiations.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Over the past two years, DCAF has engaged with partners across the Sub-Saharan region, notably through projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, the Gambia, Madagascar, the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger), Somalia, and Zambia. This effort has included new projects in places such as Ethiopia and Somalia and continuations of longer-term partnerships such as those found in the Gambia and the Sahel. Key areas of emphasis have included the role of oversight actors such as civil society, the media, and local communities; gender equality in security institutions; internal controls of security forces; strengthening the rule of law through professionalisation of security forces; and analysing the financial sustainability of SSR programmes.

DCAF's work in Sub-Saharan Africa occurs in a context of limited state capacities, notably impacting on the ability to not only provide consistent security and justice capabilities to populations, but also to improve weak or underdeveloped oversight systems with regard to providing feedback and accountability. The area has also experienced significant changes in its international security partnerships over this time period, with western military presence withdrawing or being replaced by Russian mercenary forces in several countries, and with increased investment into the security sector coming from non-traditional donors with different traditions regarding governance and accountability.



Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) abundant mineral resources are vital for development but often remain linked to conflict, insecurity, and human rights violations. DCAF supports the DRC to implement the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs) more consistently by strengthening political buy-in and expertise, supporting corporate due diligence efforts, and promoting multi-stakeholder dialogue. The DRC is a country with strong resource-extractive industries that mostly do not report according to the voluntary principles. Public and private security forces protecting company properties have frequently engaged in problematic interactions with local communities.

DCAF supports the DRC in implementing the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs) more consistently by strengthening political buy-in and expertise, supporting corporate due diligence efforts, and promoting multi-stakeholder dialogue.

To address the issues, DCAF has supported national stakeholders in developing a national action plan (NAP) to prioritize implementation of the voluntary principles and has worked with the Ministry of Interior, which has adopted a decree regulating private security. These efforts support the policy context and develop government buy-in regarding the need to support accountability in business and security. While there has been some progress at the policy level, with the adoption of a new decree regulating private security companies, the NAP, which has been drafted, has not yet been adopted.

National-level initiatives are complemented by DCAF partners promoting multi-stakeholder dialogue in the South Kivu, Haut-Katanga, and Lualaba provinces. Through these dialogues, provincial governments, extractive companies, private security firms, and civil society address and improve the impact of security arrangements on local communities in both large-scale and artisanal mining operations. This has resulted in some companies increasing their numbers of local security employees and using more regular local stakeholder consultations, helping reduce conflict and human rights abuses. Importantly, it appears that the working group mechanism

has enabled growing trust, as evidenced by local government and multinational companies seeking training and security advice

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, recent conflict and ongoing violence in parts of the country have created a challenging context for reform, in which many donors are reluctant to work in the security sector, and much of the support provided by donors tends to be humanitarian assistance rather than institutional reform. The tensions between the federal and regional levels also complicate reform processes that are attempting to develop a coherent overall system of security governance. DCAF has been one of the few international partners to continue efforts to support SSR and has built on previous work with the Ethiopian Federal Police (EFP) to improve the justice system's approach to criminal investigations, using the integration of forensic evidence into court processes as a method of improving the functioning of the justice system.

Forensics is a useful focus in Ethiopia as it has allowed DCAF to address two core challenges of the justice system. Firstly, coordination and collaboration between justice actors have been weak, contributing to slow and inefficient progression of cases and many delays in access to justice. Secondly, in the absence of useful forensic and investigative evidence, the court systems have focused on confession-based prosecutions, which are more problematic for justice outcomes and contribute to perverse incentives in the investigating police organization. DCAF has used forensics to support systemic change, from stronger police crime-scene management and forensics capacity, through to educating prosecutors and judges to increase their willingness to accept and use forensic evidence. DCAF supported the police and criminal justice institutions in developing Ethiopia's first whole-system forensic reform strategy that looks at issues of management, demand, accountability, and capability in advancing the use of forensics. The strategy has focused on the efficiency and sustainability of this capability, helping the police to refine the organizational structure of their forensics department and positioning scientists at the forefront, implementing investigation doctrine that uses smaller forensics teams in line with international norms, and developing a more affordable procurement and reform strategy for key tools and forensic infrastructure. The forensics department has also been relocated to the

Ethiopian Police University, which has used its own budget to invest in a new forensics centre that provides additional technical capacity. The result of this has been improvements in the alignment of police, prosecutors, and the courts on case management and court processes. Evidence has shown that demand in the courts for forensic evidence is growing, police are increasing the volume of forensic samples that are collected and processed, and practitioners are able to use this information in the courts to establish the facts of a case. Through joint needs-identification workshops, prosecutors have asked the EFP to work together on joint SOPs in this area, although work on these procedures has not yet begun. The police forensics unit has been able to start prioritizing its caseload and address the significant backlog of case evidence, however, which is an important step towards more efficient court processes.

The Gambia

DCAF became involved in the Gambia shortly after the transition from authoritarian rule in 2017. Since then, there has been notable progress, including in areas of governance, respect for human rights, and transitional justice, and DCAF's programme has consistently supported institutional strengthening of the Gambian Police Force (GPF). Border management issues are of growing concern due to the country's increasing role as a hub for irregular migration and drug trafficking, making clear the need to update security sector laws and responses to address these issues effectively. In addition to the police, DCAF now works with the Gambian Immigration Department (GID), with a specific focus on multi-agency coordination and management of border issues.

DCAF's support to the police has contributed to several key results. In the area of gender, the programme has built on the favourable environment enjoyed during the previous phase of the project, including the Inspector General's active support. Through the Gender Promotion Initiative, DCAF supported the GPF in conducting a detailed review of the skills required for police officers to be promoted, working closely with the Inspector General and other senior leaders. Female officers then received coaching and skill building in technical areas, including crime scene investigations, as well as leadership and decision-making, to prepare them for more senior positions. As a result, 15 women were promoted to leadership positions. The initiative has been well received; the Minister of the

Interior has indicated an interest in replicating this work in other parts of the security sector. Gender has also been incorporated in broader police doctrine. From a 2023 GPF-focused survey, 86 per cent of respondents believed that there was greater gender inclusivity in the force because of DCAF's support.

Female officers received coaching and skill building in technical areas including crime scene investigations, leadership and decision making to prepare them for more senior positions. As a result, 15 women were promoted to leadership positions.

The police doctrine DCAF helped to develop has now been launched, and the police have incorporated key principles and aspects in training and standard operating procedures (SOPs). This is part of a longer-term effort to support professionalisation of the GPF, aligned with programme efforts to support stronger internal and external oversight mechanisms, which will include working with the Ombuds, the national human rights commission, and civil society actors. DCAF has also worked with the GPF on crisis management tools related to decision-making and proportionality in managing incidents. Together, these efforts have contributed to positive changes in police behaviour that can be seen in 2023 survey data that shows a 7 per cent increase in the effectiveness of the GPF as compared with 2019.

DCAF's work with the GID has made progress on the critical aspect of updating the Gambia's approach to integrated border management (IBM). The 2024 signing of service-level agreements formalised the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of the key security organizations in IBM, with the change in approach being reinforced through training of senior leadership across agencies and the conduct of joint exercises. According to the 2024 GID staff survey, 84 per cent of respondents believe that internal and inter-agency collaboration and cooperation are strong or very strong, driven by improved awareness of a more integrated approach to border management. Officials have reported improved intelligence sharing and response capacity through the implementation of joint meetings and communication channels between the GID and Customs. DCAF's surveying of organizational and community attitudes has also measured improvements



Photo: Muhamed Lamin Touray

in the perceptions of the GID in the areas of effectiveness (57% in 2024, from 40% in 2019) and fairness (51% in 2024, up from 39% in 2019).

Sahel

In the Sahel, the past several years have been characterized by multiple coups, shrinking civic space, and high levels of violence and conflict. International involvement in peace and security is increasingly contested in the region, which, coupled with undemocratic transitions of power, has resulted in growing donor reluctance to engage with security sector actors. In this context, DCAF has carefully calibrated its support, increasing programmatic emphasis on oversight actors and local communities while remaining engaged with security forces in areas of gender, security community dialogue, and internal oversight.

DCAF has carefully calibrated its support, increasing programmatic emphasis on oversight actors and local communities while remaining engaged with security forces in areas including gender, security community dialogue, and internal oversight.

In **Burkina Faso**, communities and the state are deeply affected by violent extremism. DCAF's work in recent years has focused broadly on accountability of the security sector, and specifically on bringing a human rights and gender perspective to the preventing violent extremism (PVE) efforts and on countering corruption in the sector, which continues to undermine trust in the state. Multiple coups have also been accompanied by growing restrictions on civic space. In this complex context, DCAF has taken several steps to ensure continued political support for its programme. For example, DCAF has set up periodic consultations with political leadership from the Presidency and Prime Minister's office, as well as with ministries involved in the programme. DCAF has also set up a 'committee of advisers' that brings together civilian and uniformed government representatives and stakeholders from outside the government to debate SSG/R issues and discuss the orientation and results of the programme.

Strengthening the role of women leaders has been an important part of DCAF's approach. To give one example, DCAF has worked in 3 regions to train 120 women leaders (from civil society, security and defence forces, and local governments) on conflict resolution. These efforts are anchored in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, addressing the need to build the skills of women who have credibility and a leadership role in their communities but who have no formal training in mediation and conflict resolution. Following the training,

the women formed WhatsApp groups where they have been able to exchange news on and approaches to addressing local conflicts and security risks. One young leader, a university student, returned to her community after the training and learned that girls were being taken to the bush for female genital mutilation. She alerted the local authorities, who were able to intervene to mediate on behalf of the girls, demonstrating the value of a decentralized approach that responds to the most immediate community needs.

At the national level, DCAF has focused on addressing concerns regarding corruption in the security sector. Since 2019, DCAF has provided technical and methodological support to the Supreme Authority for State Supervision and Anti-Corruption (ASCE-LC), enabling the conduct of a series of audits in security sector institutions, the Prime Minister's office, the Presidency, and the National Assembly. These audits resulted in the publication of a comprehensive report in 2024, which included a number of findings and recommendations for a range of government institutions.

Importantly, when cases related to their reports were accumulating without being processed in the courts, ASCE-LC pursued judicial measures which resulted in clearing the backlog. Also, a formal letter was issued to the Director General of the National Police regarding enforcing implementation of 19 recommendations. A number of these have since been implemented, including filling vacant posts for criminal justice, public security, and intelligence; clarifying public security service roles and functions; and elaborating a programme of continuing education for members of the police.

In the current context in **Mali**, DCAF has taken a decentralized approach, working with local security committees, intended to build bridges between the security institutions, administrative authorities, and the population and ensure that the security needs and priorities of local communities are addressed. DCAF supported the establishment of two regional committees (in San and Bamako) and six communal committees (in Bamako). The effectiveness of these committees has largely depended on the leadership of the governors/mayors and has been influenced by the political situation in the country. As a result, they have not completely succeeded in enabling sustainable community-level

systems of accountability. However, the broader aim of promoting more responsive security provision has produced results in some contexts, demonstrating the potential of such approaches.

DCAF has taken a decentralized approach, working with local security committees, intended to build bridges between the security institutions, administrative authorities, and the population and ensure that the security needs and priorities of local communities are addressed.

For example, DCAF worked with a group of CSOs and funded a series of small-scale projects focused on giving local stakeholders a greater say in their own security, providing them with links to the local security actors and supporting local focal points within those security organizations. These efforts, along with the organization of other events at which community members have had an opportunity to meet with security officials, have enabled them to seize opportunities to express their needs and have them addressed.

As one example, when the Gendarmerie hosted an open day as part of the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, local community members described specific neighbourhood concerns that led to changes in Gendarmerie patrolling to address these concerns. Similarly, female victims of domestic abuse who had been turned away by the security forces were able to explain their situation. Perpetrators were apprehended after the open day, and the survivors were able to benefit from the services of a One Stop Center (OSC)⁸. This shows that although the role of the formal community consultative committees has been more limited than hoped, the process around establishing these committees has contributed to a climate in which community members feel more empowered to voice concerns.

DCAF's efforts to focus on enabling community-level security within a context of democratic reversal and reduction in the accountability of security forces illustrate the opportunities and challenges associated

⁸ One Stop Centers (OSCs) are holistic structures linked to police institutions, which provide comprehensive support to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), offering medical, psychological, legal, and social assistance under one roof.

with SSG/R. The diversity of outcomes demonstrates that a lack of political will for reform has direct effects, including on community levels of governance, which can be hard to counteract. Despite this, it remains possible to support changes in the behaviours of security providers that make them more responsive to community needs and result in better security for the community.

In **Niger**, prior to the coup in 2023, DCAF supported the strengthening of oversight mechanisms, including the Security and Defence Committee of the National Assembly and the National Police inspections department. DCAF worked with the National Assembly committee to assess its capacities and role and to ensure an effective handover of key portfolios following elections. DCAF also supported committee members in planning and conducting monitoring missions to assess the impact of national security laws on the population. In one notable example, members of the Security and Defence Committee conducted monitoring missions to assess the impact of measures instituted as part of a state of emergency in areas plagued by attacks against civilians and security forces. One of the findings from the mission was that the ban on motorcycle traffic and the curfew imposed at night created hardship and economic losses for communities. As a result, the Security and Defence Committee successfully advocated for the Ministry of Defence to reduce these restrictions in areas of the Tillabéri region which had been the most affected.

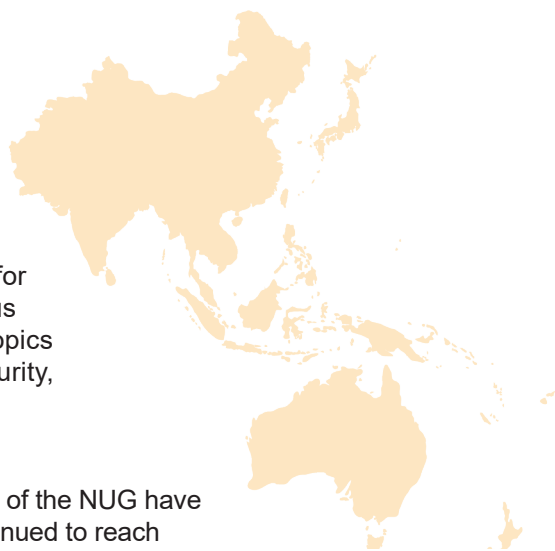
Although the coup happened shortly after this outcome and removed this form of parliamentary accountability, there are indications that some of the adjustments made to the curfew and travel restrictions were sustained. This suggests that DCAF's efforts helped strengthen the link between community security needs and security sector institutions in a sustainable way. Yet, the coup has fundamentally undermined democratic oversight and civil-military relations, illustrating the limitations of DCAF's role in supporting accountability and governance of the security sector in such fragile contexts.

The coup also marked a turn in DCAF's programming to strengthen the focus on human security needs, with the promotion and protection of human rights becoming an important axis. As part of this focus, DCAF facilitated a working group composed of CSOs engaged in human rights monitoring across Niger, enabling the group to develop a human rights monitoring guide and to harmonize data collection and reporting methodologies. DCAF also worked with CSOs and regional authorities to establish a human rights monitoring mechanism to address human rights violations in the Tahoua region. This has complemented a long-standing focus in Niger on addressing GBV, which began through addressing sexual harassment and a culture of silence around GBV within the police as part of Niger's National Strategy on Prevention and Response to GBV (2017-2021). This work has gradually expanded to more broadly improve responses to GBV, with a more recent focus on convening multi-stakeholder groups to identify barriers to effective responses and developing a system-wide approach to supporting victims of GBV which incorporates psychosocial, legal, and medical aspects.

As a result of an increased focus on monitoring human rights and strengthening system-wide responses to GBV, in 2024 local CSOs were able to inform local authorities about 87 cases, 39 of which resulted in the National Police opening a judicial investigation file and the provision of medical care for survivors. Forty-seven per cent of DCAF's partners involved in addressing GBV have reported being more satisfied with the handling of such cases by the police service responsible for dealing with them. CSOs have also provided more holistic, structured support to victims, including legal assistance, psychosocial support, and access to appropriate medical care.

Asia-Pacific

During the reporting period, DCAF has supported partners in Myanmar and engaged regularly with members of the Asia-Pacific SSG Network, which includes members of CSOs, academia, and government institutions from over 20 countries in the region. Support for the network has involved a combination of continued focus on key principles of SSG/R with periodic discussions of topics of growing importance to members, including climate security, maritime security, and cybersecurity.



Myanmar

In Myanmar, the coup in 2021 and intensified conflict in the following years have resulted in most international actors withdrawing from the country. DCAF has remained engaged, however, by offering the Myanmar SSG Academy a series of online training sessions designed to influence the development of Myanmar's future post-conflict security sector. Courses have covered key aspects of democratic governance of security and integrated topics of specific interest to Myanmar, including approaches to organizing and overseeing security in a federal system.

Senior members of the National Unity Government (NUG), including ministers and members of parliament, have attended the training, as have members of more than 15 ethnic armed organizations, some in senior positions. Following the training, influential members of the NUG have made public statements supporting democratic SSG/R.

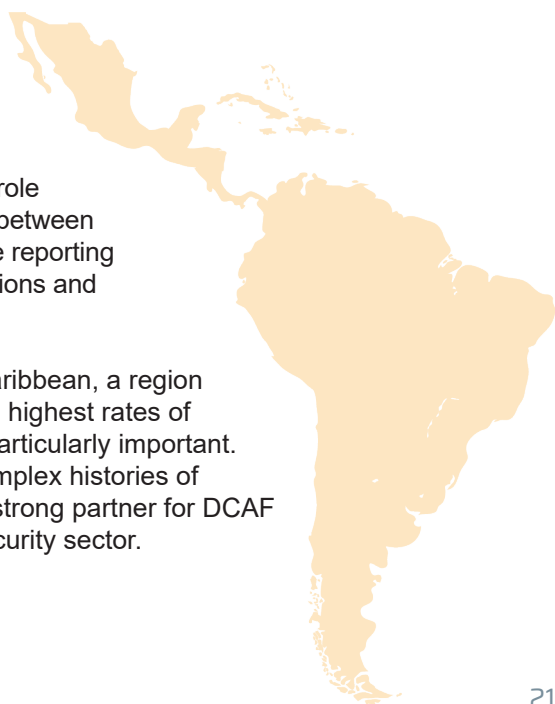
Members of the NUG have also continued to reach out to DCAF for advice as they plan their future governmental structure and have developed a handbook on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). A group within the NUG's Ministry of Defence has also been mandated to study examples of SSR and DDR across conflict countries; DCAF has drawn on members of the Asia-Pacific regional network to share relevant experience.

With the conflict in Myanmar currently ongoing, it is uncertain which groups will be best positioned to influence the post-conflict security sector and set the rules of governance and accountability. Within this context, DCAF's engagement with security sector actors such as the NUG is intended to shape future outcomes by raising awareness of key principles and good practices and ensuring that the need to consider governance of security is well established at an early stage of any post-conflict processes.

Latin America and the Caribbean

In Latin America and the Caribbean, DCAF has supported institutional reform of the National Police in Honduras and Colombia, as well as a regional programme on the media's role as an oversight actor. In addition to improving relationships between journalists and security forces, areas of emphasis during the reporting period have also included gender equality in security institutions and police use of force.

DCAF is a relatively new actor in Latin America and the Caribbean, a region that is affected by high levels of gang violence and has the highest rates of homicide in the world, making a focus on citizen security particularly important. It also has diverse and capable civil society actors with complex histories of engagement with the security sector. This has provided a strong partner for DCAF to work with, as a direct form of civilian oversight of the security sector.



Regional programme on media oversight of the security sector

Despite progress in democratic governance, many countries in Latin America face high levels of violence against journalists, especially those reporting from rural 'silent zones' controlled by organized crime or during protests. Legal frameworks exist to protect freedom of expression, but inconsistent enforcement and high levels of impunity leave media professionals and social leaders vulnerable to threats and (self) censorship. Building on earlier work with the National Police and journalists in Colombia, DCAF is now implementing a regional programme to strengthen media oversight and reduce violence against journalists in Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and Peru.

In Colombia, DCAF has facilitated dialogue among the National Police, journalists, CSOs, and the Ombuds Institution regarding the rights of journalists and their role as oversight actors. New guidelines on respecting journalists' rights have been co-developed with the police, and journalists and social leaders have been trained on reporting and the use of digital tools. The work in Colombia has resulted in clear changes in police behaviour. More police now call headquarters for guidance on their interactions with journalists they suspect have breached the law, contrasted with the past practice of immediate arrest. There have also been instances of internal accountability in the police, such as when officers were dismissed for acting inappropriately towards journalists at a crime scene, a decision that was accompanied by a public apology to the journalists from the Director General of the police. In another sign of the changing relationship between the police and the media, DCAF's local partner Foundation for Freedom of the Press has been able to successfully advocate for the release of journalists from detention.

In Honduras, DCAF has facilitated relationship building and collaboration between local partner Association for Democracy and Human Rights (ASOPODEHU) and the National Police, with a focus on addressing specific risks faced by journalists. The police now consult ASOPODEHU more regularly on issues related to journalists' rights. ASOPODEHU also intervened in a specific case involving a journalist who allegedly received threats from public officials and then encountered resistance in filing a formal complaint. Following ASOPODEHU's advocacy, the National Police Director

instructed the police to accept the journalist's statement. This indicates a potential improvement in the collective role of the media and police in strengthening the rule of law, although additional monitoring is required to understand whether it represents a more systemic change.

The programme has aimed at enhancing sustainability by strengthening regional coordination at two levels. Firstly, regional exchanges on preventing human rights violations and improving complaint handling processes have been facilitated by Colombia's national human rights institution (NHRI) and those from other countries involved in the programme. Secondly, DCAF has supported the creation of a working group on human rights defenders and social leaders in the Ibero-America Federation of Ombudsmen, with the aim of increasing visibility within this regional network of challenges faced by journalists and social leaders.

Honduras

Years of gang violence, narcotrafficking, and one of the highest rates of femicide in Latin America have consistently affected the rule of law and the credibility of the state in Honduras. DCAF's work with the Honduran National Police (HNP), which began in 2018, has supported modernization, moving from a police force that had its origins in a more militarized structure to emphasizing key aspects of good governance, including strategic planning, gender, use of force, complaints and control systems, education, mentoring, and tracking changes in public confidence in the police.

In a context in which police use of force has been criticized in the past, DCAF has supported the development of a model and manual on police use of force, which has now been incorporated in Honduran legislation following approval from the Minister of Security. All police have been trained on the new model, as has the Department of Police Disciplinary Affairs (DIDADPOL). In 2023-24, this was systematized by the police and is contributing to improvements in the public's perception of police behaviour and professionalism. Evidence can be found in a regular community survey on public confidence in the police, based on confidence measures co-designed by DCAF and the HNP. The study has found improvements in citizens' satisfaction with police performance (3% increase), and a 5% reduction in observations of physical mistreatment by police.



Photo: National Police of Honduras

In the area of gender, DCAF has focused on strengthening the role of women in the police, complementing work by other partners which focuses on addressing GBV in society more broadly. DCAF and the HNP worked together to create the first institutional gender policy, based on evidence from a gender self-assessment that DCAF supported. The policy has been approved by the Director General and adopted by the police's Strategic Directorate and at ministerial level. This led to a request from DIDADPOL to develop its own gender policy, which was also approved in 2024.

DCAF's consistent engagement on gender in policing has included supporting male as well as female gender champions, collaborating with the Police University to introduce its first diploma on gender equity, training for operational police commanders, and working with the police on public observance of specific commemoration dates related to women and violence against women. A changing perception of the police force as an attractive employment option for women

can be seen through the increase in female recruits, from 24% to 60% of the total incoming class of new recruits in 2024.

DCAF's programme in Honduras concluded in 2024. While future monitoring will be important to assess longer-term sustainability of results, it is promising to see that aspects of the programme have been reflected in the new 2025-2030 Police Strategic Plan. The confidence survey has also been integrated as a key measure in the plan. Together with the inclusion of gender and other programme areas of focus in the Police University curriculum, these developments point to institutionalization of important changes.

Assisting international partners

As a small organization in the complex ecosystem of international actors, DCAF plays a critical role in providing a specialized base of expertise in governance and accountability for the security sector. This is true when considering bilateral donors, as well as an ongoing need to partner with and influence key multilateral organizations such as the UN, the EU, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the African Union. In order to have positive global effects across the wide range of contexts and partnerships DCAF works in, it is important that DCAF leverages its expertise to strengthen and reinforce other international actors and to ensure that good practices are identified and widely adopted, and that better governance is seen as a core aspect of more effective security sector organizations.

DCAF leverages its expertise to strengthen and reinforce other international actors, to ensure that good practices are identified and widely adopted, and that better governance is seen as a core aspect of more effective security sector organizations.

DCAF continues to strengthen the ability of bilateral donors and multilateral organizations to effectively support nationally led SSR processes. Support in this area has taken different forms over the past two years, including scoping studies and advice on programme design and monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL), professional development and training, documenting and sharing lessons to drive innovation, and other strategic support to DCAF's International Partners Group.

Bilateral donors

Assessing maritime security governance in the Gulf of Guinea

Maritime security is an increasingly important and complex aspect of SSG/R, with the conflict dynamics in some key regions being driven by trade flows and illicit behaviours in the maritime domain. Due to the interconnected nature of the maritime domain, these dynamics can have human security implications well beyond the specific region, but maritime aspects of security have often been under-considered by SSG/R programmes. Not only is the Gulf of Guinea a gateway for illegal trafficking, including narcotics from Latin America, but also poor maritime security has a direct impact on local

livelihoods through illegal, unreported, and undocumented fishing. In this region, the management of these dynamics is a shared regional problem, and effective security provision must address a complex set of potential security issues and government agency remits. The Yaoundé Architecture was established by the African Heads of State in 2013 to facilitate effective regional responses to the problem of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

DCAF was asked to assess the current state of maritime security governance and to evaluate the extent to which the Yaoundé Architecture had been implemented, in support of Irish, French, and German efforts

to strengthen the effectiveness of the regional approaches. Much of the international support to the region has focused on strengthening operational capacity, which represents a key constraint of security capability. However, the governance of this system also drives the effectiveness of the outcomes, and this aspect had been less actively considered up until the DCAF assessment.

DCAF used the assessment process to create opportunities for international and national partners to make efforts to improve maritime security governance. This included several regional briefings for international and national partners to discuss the assessment findings and consider options to strengthen their efforts. It contributed to some progress in the working groups under the G7++ Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, especially on finance, which had previously been unproductive; and to a French supported effort to develop a whole of government group (including military, police, border, and civil ministry personnel from the Western African countries) to identify and develop practitioner-led solutions. The assessment included some civil society and private sector groups, such as fishery cooperatives and local women's organizations involved in fishing – strongly affected by security governance failures and corruption – providing them with a pathway to engage in national discussions of the Yaoundé Architecture. Finally, this process demonstrated the relevance of good SSG/R for the maritime domain and will enable DCAF to apply insights from the study to other maritime security contexts.

Capacity development support to international partners

DCAF has provided a wide range of specialist training sessions to government and multilateral partners to support their staff's understanding and implementation of SSG/R globally. Most partner staff work in organizations and ministries where SSG/R is a niche responsibility and where the cross-cutting nature of the SSG/R remit requires multi-departmental or team alignment. DCAF is a small actor that relies on effective implementation and strong coordination with its international partners; the investment into training international staff is one particular way of ensuring that the international system works more effectively to conduct comprehensive SSG/R efforts.

In 2023 and 2024, DCAF conducted SSG/R training with staff from the governments of

Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The training brought together mixed audiences (from those governments, international organizations, and partner countries) based both in headquarters and in the field. The training served to promote a joint understanding of what effective SSG/R entails and how it works across different contexts.

Post-course surveys found that participants were able to apply their learning to their roles, especially noting their understanding of and ability to work across a wider range of government and CSOs to build an approach to SSG/R grounded in the needs of the diverse critical partners. Many participants pointed to the strong integration of gender into the training and noted that this aspect had been specifically useful to them for working in the sector. Moreover, several participants had an opportunity to deliver relevant SSG/R training in their work environment and had been able to utilize DCAF's content to improve the quality of this training.

Strengthening the climate, environment, and security link

DCAF has worked to explore and strengthen the linkage between climate and environment risks and SSG/R outcomes with the ministries of foreign affairs of several of its key partners, including Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland. The majority of donor climate and environmental security work has been focused and managed through the environmental divisions of their development organizations; beyond seeing climate change as a threat multiplier, the overlap and relevance of climate security aspects have been under-researched and only minimally integrated into stabilization or SSG/R efforts.

DCAF worked to address this gap through a multi-country stocktaking of the security sector's role in supporting climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and environmental protection. The intent was to describe climate change and environmental degradation as a human security issue spanning the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and analyse the potential contributions and responsibilities that security sector actors could have in relation to supporting national efforts on climate security. Through this, the project identified entry points for SSG/R efforts to support more people-centred, effective, and relevant security institution responses.

The influence of DCAF's work has been significant, with staff from governments in Germany, Sweden, and the UK, as well as from countries not directly covered by the stocktaking study, all reporting on the relevance of the studies for the development of their climate and environmental security

projects. While the development of climate and environmental security as an important aspect of SSG/R is at an early stage, the information obtained by this effort has been a useful contribution by DCAF to increased awareness and international investment into the area from the SSG/R community.

Multilateral organizations

Reinforcing the Swiss tenure on the UN Security Council

Switzerland's 2023-24 tenure on the UN Security Council (UNSC) provided an opportunity for DCAF to inform and influence the formal debates that occurred, notably in the context of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. The UN plays a significant role in influencing SSR in many of the countries where DCAF operates. DCAF provided analytical support to the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the two years of their tenure, preparing briefings covering SSG/R, WPS and Gender, and the justice system, prior to the UNSC debates on mandate renewal and review. DCAF's support built from an analysis of the use of SSR language throughout UN peace operation mandates, using this historical basis to ensure that the good practices Switzerland advocated for were grounded in accepted and used wording. This support was notable in the case of the Council's deliberations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) mandate renewal, which

occurred in the context of elections in South Sudan, where the UN's role in supporting the security sector to provide a safe space for communities was a critical aspect.

Supporting EU security sector governance and reform

The EU is a major influence on the security sector in a wide range of countries, through its work under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, EU delegations, and the EU SSR Taskforce. DCAF has been an important partner to the EU, from its initial support during the development of the EU's 2016 SSR Framework to the creation of the EU SSG Facility through which DCAF has deployed experts to support EU missions and delegations to better integrate SSG/R concepts and approaches. In the reporting period, this included assessing the EU's engagement with the security sector in Georgia and a multi-country assessment of the EU's support for the Accra Initiative across West African coastal states.



Photo: UNIDIR

A critical aspect of CSDP missions is that many of the civilian and military staff assigned to them come with a limited amount of experience in SSG/R. DCAF supported a system-wide training requirements analysis for civilian (2019-2020) and military (2022-2023) support with regard to SSR and DDR in the EU's CSDP missions. These exercises involved assessing the current training capabilities that were relevant to preparing staff for these roles and identifying gaps and issues with the system that needed to be addressed to improve the relevance and effectiveness of this training. The two training needs analyses were highly influential with the European External Action Service, with all recommendations being adopted into their policy on training and contributing to the EU training programme for missions. This change should result in better preparation and support for the SSR capabilities in EU missions, which is a valuable outcome given the scale and influence of EU CSDP missions.

Working with the OSCE

DCAF has a long-standing partnership with the OSCE, having supported their first comprehensive mapping study of the OSCE's role in SSG/R in 2014. A number of recommendations from this study have been implemented, including the creation of the SSR focal points network and the development of the *Guidelines for OSCE Staff on Security Sector Governance and*

Reform in 2015. Given the significant scale of OSCE missions supporting SSG/R across the region, supporting a coherent and coordinated approach remains a key priority. DCAF played a pivotal role in the 2022 update to the guidelines, and assessed the impact of this through a review of the guidance implementation in 2023 with the OSCE SSR focal points. The review found that the guidelines continued to be used by staff to plan and implement SSG/R projects. OSCE staff used the guidance to conduct needs assessments to plan for the OSCE approach, and SSR concepts in the identification of entry points and inclusive approaches. The guidance was used by the SSR focal points to develop and provide SSG/R training in several missions to sensitise and prepare OSCE staff to carry out their roles more effectively.

DCAF's partnership with the OSCE has also led to the development of new training, focused on the intersection between climate and security. Security aspects of climate change have been a developing issue for multilateral organizations, with environmental degradation driving conflict dynamics in several regions. The OSCE recognises this risk as significant in the Central Asia region, and in 2024 DCAF worked with its Centre for Conflict Prevention, the Bishkek programme office, and the OSCE Academy for Central Asia, bringing together mixed government, media, and CSO groups to sensitise them on the security context of environmental issues.

Other multilateral platforms

Strengthening Ombuds institutions for the Armed Forces

DCAF has continued its support to Ombuds institutions as part of its efforts to improve oversight of the security sector. Since 2009 DCAF has co-hosted, together with different national Ombuds institutions, the annual International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (ICOAF). ICOAF convenes Ombuds representatives from over 70 countries to share experiences regarding oversight of the armed forces. The conference has increasingly aimed to support greater cross-regional exchanges, although there is considerable variance in Ombuds structures across regions, with Ombuds functions outside of Europe often having broader remits rather than focusing

specifically on the armed forces. DCAF has provided legal and policy advice, helped to promote norms and good practices, and ensured inclusion of topics of emerging importance on the ICOAF agenda, including mental health and psychosocial support, gender, and the impacts of climate change.

ICOAF convenes Ombuds representatives from over 70 countries to share experiences regarding oversight of the armed forces.

Contributing to the development of international policy and practice

Developing international policy and good practice remains one of DCAF's core contributions to the field of SSG/R. Over the past two years, DCAF has continued to research key issues related to good governance of security and to shape international policy agendas related to peace, security, and sustainable development. DCAF has leveraged its long relationships with key multilateral partners, notably the UN and the OSCE, to influence the development of global policy agendas on SSG/R.

DCAF remains an important international contributor to knowledge products and policy processes, and is notably strong in its contribution on gender issues and the intersection of business and security as a result of the dedicated organizational capacities it has in these areas.

Policy and research

During the reporting period, areas of emphasis for policy research and influencing included contributing to the UN Pact for the Future and analysing and highlighting the role of SSG/R in reaching SDG 16⁹ targets. DCAF has also worked with the World Bank, to influence its thinking on approaches to SSG/R issues, and continued its long relationship with the OSCE. Another key effort involved working with national Ombuds institutions, through both national-level projects and the ICOAF.

Linking good security sector governance and SDG 16

While the inclusion of a goal on peace, justice, and strong institutions in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 16) represented a significant milestone for the SSG/R community, the relative separation of security sector focused reforms from broader development work requires investment to ensure that the SSG/R area is well aligned and integrated into global policy frameworks and support. DCAF has worked consistently in complex conflict-affected environments, where a growing number of international actors has been shaping and influencing the security and development context, to keep SSG/R on the international agenda and ensure that the provision of security supports sustainable development.

An important aspect of this has been working to strengthen the capacities of independent

DCAF has worked consistently in complex conflict-affected environments – to keep SSG/R on the international agenda and ensure that the provision of security supports sustainable development.

oversight institutions, such as national Ombuds, as these are often an overlooked element of the security sector given their typically broad remit, and they can provide a key element of external accountability where they are enabled to be effective through financial and structural independence. DCAF has worked with countries to promote successful action by national Ombuds in their oversight of security sector actors, while enabling them to better contribute to achieving SDG 16.

⁹ SDG 16 states: 'Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'.

The programme made significant progress in 2023-24, collaborating closely with the Kenyan Ombuds Institution (The Commission on Administrative Justice) to enable it to effectively oversee Kenyan security actors, particularly in borderland regions concerning ethnic discrimination. The Ombuds identified an issue with the involvement of Kenyan security agencies in the approval process for national identity cards. Security organization-led review processes were accused of being used to delay or stop the issuing of national identity cards to some ethnic groups, undermining the legal identity of these individuals.

With the support of DCAF, the Ombuds Institution conducted a public inquiry in 2024 into the identity card issue and made recommendations on adjusting the process to reduce opportunities for corruption and ethnic discrimination, including changes to the security assessment stage. The findings were published and widely promoted, engaging civil society and the national and international media. This encouraged state authorities to take action, and the government introduced policies to make the process more transparent and equitable, including removing the security forces' role in approving national identity card applications. This has contributed to a significantly faster process for the issuing of identity cards, along with an increase in the number of ID cards issued in the affected areas, which has gone some way to addressing a real problem of legal identity for individuals in border communities, and in allowing them access to basic government services. Importantly, this effort has helped to demonstrate the diverse ways in which there can be a direct link between the activities of security sector organizations and the rights of the population, the effects that oversight actors can have on this, and the ways that addressing this can contribute to sustainable development outcomes.

The progress in Kenya is notable in that it has demonstrated the importance of working with a capable and empowered national actor. In contrast, the programme's work in Niger was ended by the coup, which dissolved the national partner capability, thus removing that oversight actor. Programme support in Tunisia has made limited progress, as an increasingly restrictive political climate has limited the ability of the national partners to implement more robust activities that would provide a greater degree of independent oversight of the security sector.

Supporting UN security sector governance and reform policy

DCAF has continued to work to influence UN policy by advocating for the inclusion of SSG/R good practices. As the cornerstone of international multilateral security efforts, the UN has recently been making significant efforts to update its approach to reflect the realities of supporting peace in a complex multipolar world.

A major focus of recent UN policy development has been the New Agenda for Peace, issued by the Secretary-General in 2023, and the Pact for the Future, which was agreed by member states in 2024. Alongside international partners, DCAF has developed and advocated for the inclusion of SSG/R principles, such as good governance and the need for effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions, within the wording and focus of the Pact for the Future.

An important aspect of this has been ensuring that a focus on national prevention strategies was integrated into these documents, as there was significant resistance around the inclusion of prevention wording due to concerns around how this might be implemented in practice, including in enabling interventions that infringe on sovereignty. The development of such high-level policy frameworks is primarily a political process. As a result, while DCAF developed knowledge products aimed at supporting the dissemination of good practices in SSG/R, important efforts were made to work with key partners to address and reduce concerns around the language and concepts, ensuring they were included in the document rather than blocked or removed. This effort proved broadly successful, with key language and concepts around inclusive approaches to institution building and national prevention strategies being included as core components of building and sustaining peace. The rule of law and principles of good governance were represented across the policy, as was intended.

Gender and security

Gender remains a key pillar of DCAF's support to partners, with gender focal points throughout the organization playing a role in sharing knowledge and institutionalizing DCAF's focus on gender at the programmatic level. In 2023 and 2024, 59 per cent of the projects for which RBM reports were submitted identified gender as a significant or principal objective. In countries including the Gambia, Honduras, and Mali, security sector leadership have requested that work on gender be expanded to include additional institutions, a sign of appreciation for DCAF's consistent, long-term, locally tailored support to gradually changing institutional culture in this area.

In addition to in-country work to strengthen the role of women in national security institutions, DCAF continues to influence global norms through unique research, including collaborating with the UN on the 2024 report *Towards Equal Opportunity for Women in the Defence Sector*. This first-ever global report on the role of women in defence institutions covered 55 countries, resulting in a geographically diverse set of observations, challenges, and good practices, and the identification of seven 'accelerators' related to institutional culture.



Photo: DCAF

The Elsie Initiative

DCAF's work on the Elsie Initiative continues to build upon the success of the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) methodology it developed together with Cornell University GSS Lab, which is now the international standard used to assess barriers to women's participation in peace operations. The barriers to participation remain significant, with women representing 8.2% of deployed UN soldiers and 21% of UN police by the end of 2024. While these numbers reflect significant improvements in the representation of

women in peace operations, further gains are primarily constrained by the continued limited representation of women in national security institutions that provide peacekeepers. It is clear that improving the participation of women is fundamentally about improving gender equality in the security organizations they serve in. DCAF's work with partners has focused on addressing this issue through expanding the number of countries that conduct MOWIP assessments of their armed forces and/or police, and then working to support implementation of organizational changes required to advance gender-responsive organizational cultures.

The Elsie Initiative has demonstrated progress in both aspects of the programme's focus. The status of MOWIP as the global standard for such assessments has been reinforced, with a further six countries conducting and publishing assessments in 2023-24. DCAF has worked closely in partnership with South Africa to promote and spread the importance of the process, contributing to keeping it on the UN and regional agendas, and spreading the number of countries investing into it. Moreover, DCAF has worked with several countries to build upon the MOWIP assessments to address institutional gender constraints. DCAF's approach has been to work with change champions in each institution to leverage incentives such as international norms and national action plans, and with external partners, such as CSOs, to encourage institutional change. This has included an increased emphasis on soft-skills training to assist change champions in addressing resistance to reforms. It has

contributed to some institutional changes, such as progress in resourcing and enabling the implementation of the new gender strategy in Senegal.

These successes have come within the context of significant programme learning about addressing resistance. The programme's learning has been driven by its adoption of and investment in an outcome harvesting approach with its key partners, which identified the institutional-level changes that were occurring, and enabled assessment of pathways to address resistance that impacted on the programme outcomes. This approach identified the need to focus more on how changes in *policy* – encouraged by international actors – were matched and enabled by changes in *practice*, including the critical role of building and maintaining engagement with institutional leadership to ensure their support in implementing new approaches.

Business and security

DCAF's work on business and security continues to support the development and promulgation of norms as well as implementation of these norms at the national level. These initiatives are particularly relevant at a time when both regulations and shareholder expectations have been shifting to demand greater transparency and accountability.

In addition to working with national institutions, companies, and local communities, DCAF partners with several multi-stakeholder platforms and networks, including the Montreux Document Forum¹⁰, the International Code of Conduct Association¹¹, and the Africa Private Security Governance Observatory¹², the latter being a network of CSOs throughout 21 countries that aims to strengthen governance of private security across the region.¹³

International Committee of the Red Cross

DCAF's long-term partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) focuses on engaging with the business sector to improve conflict prevention, human rights due diligence, respect for IHL, and responsible security management. It has focused on improving the range of resources available for responsible security management and human rights due diligence, with the aim of changing company behaviours to better address human rights risks. This has been

necessary because security companies have raised significant human rights issues in conflict contexts, and because the role and importance of security and conflict in the overall business and human rights domain was not well recognised and articulated in global standards.

DCAF's programme focused on advocating and supporting improvements to the Global Reporting Initiative¹⁴ (GRI), one of the most widely used international standards for sustainability reporting. DCAF's work has led to strengthened reporting requirements in GRI

¹⁰ <https://www.montreuxdocument.org>

¹¹ <https://icoca.ch>

¹² <https://www.privatesecurityobservatory.org>

¹³ The work of DCAF's Business Security Division in the DRC has been integrated within the Sub-Saharan Africa section, under 'Supporting National Partners'.

¹⁴ <https://www.globalreporting.org>

14: Mining Sector 2024, the standard that holds extractive companies to account and requires transparency for how they manage security responsibly, how they ensure that their activities do not contribute adversely to conflict and human rights violations, and how they ensure respect for IHL.

DCAF's long-term partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross focuses on engaging with the business sector to improve conflict prevention, human rights due diligence, respect for IHL, and responsible security management.

The new standards, adopted in February 2024, are starting to influence company behaviour. Countries such as Colombia are making reporting a legal requirement, rather than a voluntary code. Mining companies with operations in Colombia are preparing their GRI sustainability reports with new disclosures related to security, human rights, and IHL. DCAF's theory of change is that as norms around sustainability reporting shift to include strengthened security and conflict requirements, companies will improve their actions, policies, and processes to avoid reputational risks and ensure market competitiveness.

02

Thematic achievements and strengths

Across the varied geographic, security, and institutional contexts in which DCAF works, several key themes emerged from reporting data. Each of the four themes below highlights different strengths of DCAF's approach to supporting SSG/R and the relevance of these approaches to the complex contexts in which reforms take place.

Supporting reform in volatile and conflict-affected contexts

DCAF plays a unique and important role in areas affected by volatility, violence, and conflict, working with local, national, and international stakeholders on incremental improvements to security sector accountability and effectiveness. Inclusive and long-term approaches to engagement have allowed DCAF to support partners in laying the foundations for future changes even where the current context is not conducive to traditional institutional reform.

DCAF's recent work in the occupied Palestinian territory illustrates the importance of this approach and is broadly dedicated to strengthening governance of the Palestinian security sector and reinforcing its legitimacy by responding to citizens' needs, as well as supporting and promoting national reconciliation and overcoming the Palestinian political and institutional divide. Through long-term engagement, DCAF has become a trusted partner for security institutions, oversight actors, and local communities.

When the Gaza war began in 2023, DCAF was engaged in a process of consultations with communities across the West Bank and Gaza that was intended to influence Palestinian Authority security institutions to be more responsive to community security needs – it was ultimately aimed at developing a shared vision on security governance by

the authorities across the Palestinian divide. Given the paradigm shift induced by the Gaza war, it was not possible to pursue the original plan of developing a new national security policy applicable for both Gaza and the West Bank. Throughout 2024, DCAF continued to update the research in light of the rapidly evolving context and share findings with international partners and organizations in order to influence thinking on the future of Gaza.

The influence of DCAF's report on the state of security and justice institutions in Gaza during the war is demonstrated through its use by Palestinian and international partners, including reportedly in the Minister of Justice's briefing to the Prime Minister and the UN. DCAF has also conducted assessments of the security and justice sectors, as well as perceptions by communities, and included in its reports an analysis not only of formal institutions and communities, but also of informal armed actors that play a critical role in influencing the security landscape. Bringing the Palestinian experience and reality to international discussions is central to shaping the future of the security sector in Gaza and the West Bank.

Other projects also demonstrate the value of agile, partner-focused approaches. In



Photo: DCAF

Yemen, one of DCAF's key contributions has been its ability to convene a wide range of stakeholders, including tribal leaders and members of multiple armed groups. Periodic dialogues have focused on practical measures required to improve the security of local communities, which has proven to be a common interest among parties to the conflict. In Myanmar, DCAF has remained engaged throughout a period in which most international actors have ceased programming. As a result, opposition groups now seek DCAF's advice on future approaches to security provision and governance. DCAF's ability to stay engaged over time has been critical to this influence,

and positions SSG/R in the discussions that occur prior to the end of the conflicts.

In the Sahel, DCAF has adapted its approach in response to a series of undemocratic transitions of power. Work with communities, oversight actors, and security forces has helped to keep community security needs on the agenda as security and politics have both become more militarized. As in other contexts, DCAF's long-standing relationships with security institutions and consistent engagement have also positioned DCAF as a trusted partner, able to bridge the gap between different parts of the security sector in a context of shrinking civic space.

Strengthening implementation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the security sector

DCAF's approach to SSG/R has always been grounded in a focus on democratic governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The latter has been an area of increasing emphasis over the past two years, as evidenced by a growing number of projects involving NHRIs, IHL, IHRL, and the rights of members of security forces. DCAF's focus on sectoral reform complements the role of other organizations focused on human rights by building the institutional capacity needed to ensure adherence to human rights obligations and to exercise meaningful oversight.

In Lebanon, for example, DCAF has worked to strengthen the efforts of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) by supporting its analysis and advocacy in such areas as demanding the release of prisoners and facilitating connections among the NHRC, Ministry of Justice, internal security forces, and CSOs. More than 40 prisoners have been freed so far, and the NHRC has seen an increase in requests for its support. Although court fees for releases remain an obstacle for many prisoners, DCAF has facilitated engagement between the NHRC and a network of local CSOs to identify sources of funding to cover fees.

NHRIs are key stakeholders in DCAF's regional media programme in Latin America, which focuses on the relationship between police and journalists but also leverages oversight actors, including NHRIs. Specifically, the programme has facilitated regional

exchanges among NHRIs on topics such as the prevention of human rights violations, strengthening early warning systems, and the processing of complaints, in order to contribute to a climate in which the rights of journalists and social leaders are respected. DCAF's work in the Sahel has also involved NHRIs, although the role of these bodies in several countries has been severely constrained following a series of coups, highlighting the potential limitations of working with these institutions in a global context in which authoritarianism is on the rise.

In Ukraine, DCAF has provided innovative support to the Ministry of Defence to update IHL guidelines and training in response to specific challenges faced on the modern battlefield.

Military adherence to human rights obligations has been an area of particular emphasis. In Ukraine, DCAF has provided innovative support to the Ministry of Defence to update IHL guidelines and training in response to specific challenges faced on the modern battlefield. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, DCAF has worked with the military to raise awareness on the rights of conscripts – which have historically been subject to inhumane treatment – through surveys, visits to units, and workshops.

DCAF also has a history of engagement with human rights in the business and security area, having worked in partnership with the ICRC to develop tools and resources on responsible security management and human rights due diligence. It has contributed to global efforts to improve company responses to the need for heightened human rights due diligence in areas of conflict.

Located in Geneva, DCAF is well placed not only to work on human rights at the national level, but also to shape international policy and practice with recommendations that are grounded in the experience of security institutions and the communities they serve. As one example, DCAF was able to draw from findings of the SDG 16 project to support local partners in strengthening recommendations they made as part of the Universal Periodic Review process.

Implementing the ‘practice – policy loop’

DCAF continues to prioritize strengthening the connections between lessons learned in the field, policy influencing, and future research agendas. The structure of DCAF is designed to enable it to cover both policy development and the implementation of good practice in the field. While the implementation of existing policy and good practice is evident across a number of DCAF’s programmes, one example in particular highlights the importance of critically analysing implementation in order to adapt policies (both within and beyond the organization).

The DCAF study *Security Sector Reform and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*¹⁵ critically examined whether and how peacetime SSR efforts focused on gender equality and GBV impact responses to CRSV during times of armed conflict. By analysing support provided by DCAF and other international partners in Mali and Ukraine, the study found that peacetime capacity building on GBV does prepare the ground for more effective responses to CRSV. It also highlighted the limitations of technical support and training focused mainly on transfer of knowledge and skills, as well as the need to focus on values,

attitudes, and institutional norms and to reach beyond security and justice institutions to engage with NGOs, community networks, and other structures that are critical for GBV and CRSV responses.

The inclusion of experts from Mali and Ukraine in the research has positioned them to use the findings in their work with security institutions and other stakeholders beyond the two country contexts. DCAF also consulted with a group of international organizations working on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and in the humanitarian sector to refine the recommendations of the study and begin building a community of practice that is well placed to influence international policy and practice related to strengthening responses to GBV and CRSV. The findings of the study are further being used to inform programming, such as in the new DCAF project on ‘Advancing WPS and Gender Perspectives in IHL’. This example shows the potential of where DCAF is able to leverage its presence on the ground, its network of partners, and its policy expertise to create a learning loop that directly links policy updates to practical experience.

Building coalitions to support change

As a relatively small organization, DCAF works strategically to build coalitions for sectoral change, working not only with security providers but also with internal accountability mechanisms, parliaments, the media, independent oversight bodies, and communities themselves. A number

of the projects mentioned in the previous section illustrate the value of DCAF’s role in convening and working with stakeholders across the security sector – with CSOs to help catalyse public debate, with parliamentarians to propose and champion legislative amendments, with security agencies on

¹⁵ <https://www.dcaf.ch/ssr-and-conflict-related-sexual-violence-understanding-impacts-peacetime-gbv-capacity-building>

specific technical reforms, and with the judiciary to institutionalize stronger oversight mechanisms. SSR is a highly complex undertaking that often faces entrenched interests and involves institutions that wield significant power and operate behind a veil of secrecy. Building and sustaining momentum for change requires not only working with a wide range of stakeholders, but also bringing them together to develop collaborative approaches that leverage different interests and authorities.

Coalitions and partnerships can take different forms. In the case of the Asia-Pacific SSG Network, DCAF has developed relationships with institutions in more than 20 countries, periodically bringing partners together to discuss issues related to SSG that might otherwise not appear on the agenda in contexts that have historically not been open to significant reforms. Several partners have transitioned into new roles that have given them the opportunity to influence national-level processes based on expertise developed through their membership in the network. In Timor-Leste, DCAF's local partner was selected to contribute to Timor's Universal Periodic Review of its human rights record. Various members of the network are increasingly sought out as experts and have also advised one another based on relevant regional knowledge and experience. It has also enabled some unlikely connections, such as when Taiwan's network member invited their Chinese counterpart to speak at regional security courses at a local university; and China's network member invited counterparts from across the network to speak to audiences of Chinese students.

Regional approaches are important in connecting partners that have similar institutional contexts and face similar challenges. In the Western Balkans, DCAF's cybersecurity programme supports national authorities in implementing the EU's Network and Information Security (NIS2) directive and includes a focus on regional exchanges among national representatives and legal experts, who now independently exchange information on cyber incidents. They have also supported one another in becoming members of the global CERT association¹⁶ and other networks. Exchanges among legal experts have proven particularly fruitful and have supported regional progress when drafting required national legislation.

DCAF's support to networks such as the Asia-Pacific SSG Network and the Africa Private Security Governance Observatory has also been a source of learning. The costs of supporting networks, including periodic meetings, are relatively low compared with traditional projects and can represent a strategic investment that creates momentum for change. At the same time, more substantial support is likely required to help partners apply expertise gained through the network to implement reforms at the local and national levels.

¹⁶ The Global Certification Forum (GCF) is an independent certification scheme for mobile phones and wireless devices that is based on 3GPP standards – https://www.globalcertificationforum.org_

03

Key performance indicators

DCAF collects data against two KPIs in its monitoring system, to assess and measure the extent to which the organization is successfully implementing approaches consistent with these factors.

Gender

DCAF programmes and projects report against the OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker, a measure designed to assess the extent to which aid is allocated in support of gender equality. The rating scale has three levels:

- 0 (gender was not a relevant programme focus);
- 1 (gender equality was a significant objective); and
- 2 (gender equality was the principal objective).

DCAF uses this as a KPI to assess the extent to which gender is being treated as a core element of its support, due to the centrality of gender as an issue in SSG/R.

RBM reports for 2023-24 identified 18% of its programmes as holding gender marker 2, with gender equality being the principal objective of the support. A further 41% of programmes were rated gender marker 1, with gender being a significant objective.

SDG 16

SDG 16 sets the goal of 'Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'. The inclusion of a focus on security governance and justice under a specific SDG was a major outcome for organizations such as DCAF who focus on development and reform in this context. DCAF programmes report on which of the SDG 16 targets are being supported by their work, with the great majority of programmes supporting changes of relevance to several of those targets.

The 2023-24 RBM reports demonstrate that DCAF programmes cover all of the SDG 16 targets, but have a significant focus on four of them. These are:

- 71%** of programmes supported Target 16.6 (Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels);
- 57%** supported Target 16.a (Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime);
- 54%** supported Target 16.3 (Promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all); and
- 51%** supported Target 16.7 (Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels).

A further three SDG 16 targets were relevant to some programmes, but were more niche aspects of DCAF's support and, as a result, were less commonly part of the efforts of its programmes. The details are as follows: 'Significantly reducing all forms of violence and related deaths everywhere' (Target 16.1, 16% of programmes), 'Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements' (Target 16.10, 14% of programmes), and 'Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development' (Target 16.b, 12% of programmes).

04

Looking ahead: Implementation of DCAF's 2025-2030 strategy

The results achieved in this programmatic period have highlighted the unique role DCAF plays in supporting a range of partners, across a range of contexts, to strengthen good governance of security. Challenges faced in providing this support also point to specific organizational skills and approaches that may be particularly important as DCAF implements its new strategy for the period 2025-2030. Relevant areas of emphasis and lessons from 2023-2024 are highlighted under each of DCAF's strategic objectives for the coming period.

Objective 1: Empower national partners to promote and strengthen democratic SSG based on international norms and good practices and develop responses to new security challenges that place good governance at the core.

DCAF has been a leader in advocating for democratic governance and accountability as a key aspect of SSR and capacity building. In a global context of democratic backsliding, it is critical to be able to demonstrate the value of this approach, and specifically to illustrate how democratic governance and oversight of security can change the behaviour of security sector actors, which in turn can lead to better security for communities. Several stories of change from 2023-2024 have demonstrated

that this is indeed possible; building on and expanding such results could be an important focus for 2025-2030. This requires an approach to project design and monitoring that captures not only institutional outcomes or improvements, but also how these contribute to reduced abuses or violations, better responses to local security needs, and other outcomes which illustrate that investments into accountability contribute to better security for people and communities.

Objective 2: Identify and capitalize on innovative and secure entry points to advance good SSG in highly adverse environments, such as those marked by substantial democratic reversal, extensive civilian violence, and open violent conflict.

Outcomes from 2023-2024 demonstrate that it is possible to realize targeted improvements to SSG even in some of the most volatile and conflict-affected contexts. Many of the results that have been achieved in these areas have been people-centred, focusing on shaping the behaviour of security sector actors in ways that result in improved security for local communities. This is logical given the difficulty of supporting more traditional institutional reforms in conflict contexts, and provides a useful foundation for carefully considering the kinds of changes that might realistically be achieved in similar settings in the coming strategy period.

The stories of change described above also point to the challenges of sustaining progress, which in many of these contexts is likely to be limited and may be easily reversed. DCAF's 2025-2030 strategy highlights key learning around the need to engage even earlier in complex contexts to influence change. Performance over the past two years illustrates the ways in which DCAF has indeed been able to remain engaged with partners

throughout the continuum from conflict to peace and vice versa. The next strategy period offers an opportunity to systematically analyse the openings and eventual outcomes created by DCAF's persistent, long-term engagement in these contexts, as well as the risks. This should include how DCAF demonstrably adapts its programmes in conflict contexts to seize opportunities, reduce or avoid investments that do not support good governance of the security sector, and remain a credible partner for good practice.

As noted under the thematic achievements, DCAF has also increased its engagement on the implementation of both IHL and IHRL, particularly in contexts with high levels of violence and conflict. It is worth analysing the focus, approaches, outcomes, and challenges of related projects more systematically. This could facilitate learning and support exploration of opportunities to further strengthen these approaches, for example through more consistent engagement that brings together security forces and oversight actors.

Objective 3: Engage with security sector actors to promote gender equality and intersectional approaches in addressing discrimination and injustice through SSG.

The outcomes described in this report illustrate the extent to which gender is being integrated in DCAF's support to national reform processes. A range of gender-related

outcomes have been achieved, particularly in DCAF's work with national police in different regional contexts. DCAF's study on SSR and CRSV has also identified valuable lessons

related to what does and does not work well in shifting institutional norms and values in this area, several of which could inform a further strengthening of DCAF's programme design and implementation in the coming years.

In a global context in which achievements in gender equality are at risk of backsliding, it will also be important to maximize DCAF's ability to leverage processes such as the Elsie

Initiative. DCAF continues to offer a unique, cross-regional perspective on challenges and opportunities for women's meaningful engagement in the security sector, but supporting tangible improvements in gender outcomes requires an integrated approach that utilizes this capacity consistently as well as a learning approach to programme implementation that enables adaptation to challenges as identified.

Objective 4: Influence international engagement on SSG.

In 2025-2030, DCAF aims to support partners in putting international policy into practice and to use knowledge acquired from practice to shape policy. Over the past two years, experience from DCAF's work on gender and security has highlighted the value of being able to 'close' the policy-practice-policy loop by implementing key elements of international agendas, analysing what has and has not worked well, and feeding these insights back to an international community of practice to shape future policy. As its new strategy indicates, DCAF is well positioned to work in this way, an aspect of its approach that is appreciated by policy makers.

DCAF implements a wide range of projects in a wide range of contexts, leading to diverse outcomes. This is both a strength and a necessity in a field as complex and political as SSR. It also means that operationalising the policy-practice loop is not always straightforward. For the coming strategy period, it is worth considering which partnerships and policy agendas can be best informed by DCAF's considerable field experience, and which aspects of policy influencing can in turn lead to outcomes in line with DCAF's mission to 'advance the security of all people through nationally owned, inclusive, and participatory security sector reforms based on international norms and good practices'.

Cross-cutting areas:

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning:

Designing for and documenting outcomes remains challenging in a sector characterized by complexity and secrecy. It is also a key part of DCAF's commitment not only to its donors, but also to the partners that benefit from its work. In the next strategy period, regular outcome-focused reflections will be important to ensure that the breadth and depth of changes taking place in DCAF's partners are fully understood. Investing in additional capacity for outcome harvesting and repeated population surveys could also be valuable, in order to evaluate change at the impact as well as outcome level and to better demonstrate the value of DCAF's sector-wide focus on governance and accountability.

Partnerships and networks: The period of transitioning from DCAF's previous strategy to the 2025-2030 strategy has been characterized by significant volatility in the geopolitical landscape. As donor priorities and available budgets continue to evolve, it may be increasingly important for DCAF to be able to demonstrate the value of SSG/R to broader agendas in areas including human rights, stabilization, peacebuilding, trade and development. This may mean working with

new partners, particularly when addressing cross-cutting issues such as climate change and environmental harm. It may also be useful for DCAF to strengthen its approach to building and supporting networks, which can offer an important opportunity to expand and amplify results. Potential areas for emphasis in the next strategy period include building a focus on financial (and other aspects of) sustainability into network-related projects; critically analysing the level of effort required for an organization such as DCAF to provide persistent, strategic support to networks; and designing monitoring frameworks that can better capture network outcomes.

The 2023-2024 Programmatic Review highlights how DCAF's work continues to evolve, responding to changing national and regional contexts and partner needs while maintaining its traditionally strong focus on good governance and accountability. This report also illustrates the continued potential for learning from the wide range of partners and processes that DCAF supports. Realizing this potential will help DCAF to build on its strengths in a way that supports achievement of the ambitious goals set forth in its 2025-2030 strategy.



Maison de la Paix

Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

☎ +41 (0) 22 730 94 00

✉ info@dcaf.ch

🌐 www.dcaf.ch

