

SAHEL NEWSLETTER



Welcome to our newsletter highlighting DCAF's latest activities in the Sahel region. Dive into this edition to stay informed on our projects supporting a more accountable and effective security sector.

BURKINA FASO



Raising civil society's awareness on the proliferation of SALW

In Ouagadougou, from 6 to 7 March, DCAF, in partnership with the Permanent Secretariat of the National Arms Control Commission (SP/CNCA), organised an awareness-raising workshop on the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) for women's associations, women with disabilities and other partner civil society organisations. The session, attended by 29 women and two men, was organised at the request of the women, who expressed their willingness to participate in the fight against SALW proliferation. They wanted to gain the knowledge and tools to better protect themselves, their families and their communities. Women are both actors in and victims of armed conflict, and therefore also need to be informed and equipped. Thanks to the support of DCAF, women's associations are now cooperating with the CNCA, in particular for the collection of illicit weapons in their areas. These new synergies demonstrate the effectiveness of involving women in the governance of the security sector.



Campaign to raise awareness on misinformation and hate speech

As part of its "Civic Space" programme, DCAF has launched an awareness-raising campaign for journalists, web activists and community, religious and traditional leaders in Burkina Faso's 13 regions. The two-session campaign raised awareness among these actors of the need to combat misinformation and hate speech in the media and on social media. The proliferation of fake news, which further weakens the social fabric already affected by the security crisis proves the need for the activity. Fake news is amplified by the effect of social networks, hence the need to raise awareness and empower the actors, who will share their new knowledge with their respective communities and audiences. According to the presenters, all citizens are potential agents of disinformation and hate speech, from the production to the dissemination of messages. The first session, attended by 47 people, including 5 women, took place in Tenkodogo from 8 to 10 April. The second was held in Bobo-Dioulasso from 28 to 30 April and was attended by 49 people, including 10 women.



Steering the integrity module for the National Police

Following the official handover of the manual in March, DCAF is supporting the Continuous Training Department of the Police (DFC) in training police officers in integrity modules. The first session took place from 8 to 10 April in Kaya and was attended by 30 police officers, including five women. The second session was held in Bobo-Dioulasso from 28 to 30 April and was attended by 30 police officers, including six women. The pilot sessions enabled the manual to be tested, shortcomings to be identified, and adjustments to be made before further dissemination. After this stage, DCAF will carry out follow-up actions to ensure that the objectives have been achieved before the DFC pursues the training sessions autonomously. The participants have already expressed their satisfaction with these modules and would like the training to be extended to all district police stations.



Awareness-raising workshop on GBV, its consequences and the role of the security forces in its prevention and response

On 8 March, International Women's Rights Day, the Association of Women Survivors of Gender-Based Violence (AFSVBG) organised an awareness-raising workshop on the theme "Women survivors of GBV mobilised with the security forces through One Stop Centres", in collaboration with DCAF. The day provided an opportunity to raise community awareness of the psychological, social and economic impact of GBV, while informing participants about the role of One Stop Centres in providing integrated support, rehabilitation and justice services for GBV survivors. Three panels led respectively by the security forces (Police, Gendarmerie and Civil Protection), members of the AFSVBG and participants created spaces for in-depth discussions on the topic. More than 300 people, mostly women from the Bamako district, participated in this event. The day attracted a wide range of stakeholders, including local administrative, customary and religious authorities, representatives of NGOs and international partners, demonstrating the importance of the issue.



Community mediation training

In 2024, DCAF supported the creation of the Association of Women Survivors of Gender-Based Violence (AFSVBG), which welcomes, accompanies, helps and guides victims of GBV. Since then, members of the AFSVBG have begun to work in the field of community and intra-family mediation. To support the association in these efforts, community mediation training has been organised for 11 of its members, all of whom are women. The training focused on conflict transformation, as well as negotiation, communication and mediation techniques. By intervening before interpersonal conflicts escalate, the AFSVBG is helping to reduce the level of violence in their communities. In addition, the visibility of the association's survivors in their role as mediators helps to reduce the stigmatisation of GBV victims and boost survivors' self-confidence.



Developing the Civil Protection gender action plan

In 2024, DCAF supported the Civil Protection in carrying out a self-assessment of gender mainstreaming within the organisation. Following this assessment, the General Directorate of Civil Protection organised a workshop from 22 to 26 April to draw up an action plan to respond to the challenges identified. Heads of department, deputy directors and representatives of the various regional Civil Protection directorates formed the group of 24 people, including nine women, responsible for developing the plan. According to the representative of the General Director of Civil Protection, the goal was to design an exemplary action plan that incorporates the aspirations of all Civil Protection personnel. "An issue that has been around for decades is finally finding a path of hope," he said. He thanked DCAF for its commitment from the early to advanced stage of the process. The workshop resulted in a document containing a contextual analysis, a summary of the main findings of the study on working conditions and obstacles to the recruitment and promotion of women, concrete action to be taken, a proposal for indicators by theme, monitoring tools and concrete recommendations for the effective implementation of the plan.

NIGER



Session of the MAV-DH project consultation framework on sustainability mechanisms

Since January 2024, DCAF has been supporting the establishment of a mechanism for monitoring cases of human rights abuses and violations (MAV-DH) in the Tahoua region. This mechanism collects data on security incidents, human rights violations and GBV through community relays. This information is then analysed within a regional consultative framework that brings together all the actors in the criminal justice chain, ensuring a coordinated and effective government response to the incidents identified. To ensure the initiative's sustainability, a meeting on 1 March brought together 36 participants, including 4 women, to establish communal watch mechanisms run by young people from local organisations, under the responsibility of the authorities. The aim was to ensure that the local authorities take ownership of the process and that data on security incidents and human rights violations is collected, processed and monitored effectively. The meeting provided an opportunity to propose a local model, define regional monitoring procedures and specify the roles of the stakeholders, to ensure the sustainability of the human rights monitoring system in Tahoua.



Facilitation of the GBV consultation framework involving stakeholders managing cases of GBV in Tahoua and Maradi

In Niger, gender-based violence (GBV) is all too often neither reported nor adequately dealt with, due to a lack of reliable mechanisms for documentation and coordination between stakeholders. In response to this structural shortcoming, DCAF and SOS FEVVF organised a two-day training course for 32 key players in Tahoua from 29 to 30 April. The aim of the workshops was to equip CSOs and other front-line workers with the skills they need to rigorously document cases of GBV, provide effective support to survivors, and build functional bridges with the security and justice services. But beyond training, it is the local dynamics that we are seeking to transform. Better documentation means making the invisible visible. It means producing credible data that can be used to challenge decision-makers, adjust public policies and ensure that every survivor is taken seriously. It also means creating collective pressure so that impunity ceases to be the norm. These workshops are therefore a lever for bringing about systemic change: more inclusive security governance, CSOs that are better equipped to play their role as citizens' watchdogs, and a faster, more coordinated response to GBV that focuses on the needs of survivors.

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