

Enhancing Security Sector Accountability in Mali



Context

Located at the heart of the Sahel region, Mali is confronted with multiple interconnected peace and security challenges, with major impact on human security, regional stability, and international security. Decades of poor governance have undermined human security, while leaving its institutions ill-prepared to face current threats of violent extremism and organised criminality, which have grown exponentially over the past few years and are no longer contained in its northern or border regions. In the wake of what is broadly considered the most disruptive political and security crisis it has faced since independence, Mali is challenged with finding its way back to peace and internal stability.

Despite the support of foreign troops, Malian armed forces have neither defeated armed groups nor restored security and order. At the same time, the heavy-hand approach to fight violent extremism and associated measures have caused an alarming number of human rights violations on the civilian populations. These cumulative events have created an unfavourable environment to address urgent needs for governance reforms in Mali, with mass

protests and political tensions culminating in successive coups organised by the military in 2020 and 2021.

Overall, the significant security threats, the evident entanglement between politics and the security sector, poor effectiveness of security institutions, and prevalence of human rights abuses being committed by security actors reaffirm the continued relevance of the SSR agenda in Mali and of broader conflict prevention efforts; yet, with poor impact being achieved through traditional approaches to reform in the security sector, it is clear that, at this important cross-roads, a fundamentally different approach to SSR is needed in Mali.

Despite this challenging context, some encouraging developments in the area of SSR/G have taken place, including the set-up of regional consultative security committees, and the endorsement of the national SSR strategy by the Council of Ministers. DCAF has designed a holistic approach to support both Malian authorities and civilian partners in their efforts to increase accountability of the security sector.



DCAF in Mali

DCAF is a foundation under Swiss law and a member state-based organisation which seeks to enable lasting peace and sustainable development by contributing to improved security for states and its people. The Republic of Mali is a member of DCAF's Foundation Council.

The Sub-Saharan Division (SSAD) of DCAF has been engaged in supporting national partners in Mali since 2014, implementing the national project **Enhancing Security Sector Governance (SSG)** funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of

Netherlands between 2017 and 2021. A second phase of the project, funded by the Netherlands and Germany, was launched in August 2021.

Since 2019, DCAF is also implementing a regional project **Enhancing Security Sector Governance (SSG) in the Sahel** with activities in Mali. Two projects funded respectively by Switzerland and Canada are also currently being implemented, with a focus on the operational engagement of the **security sector with and for the population, and on climate change, women, peace & security.**

VISION	An accountable and effective Malian security sector based on the Rule of Law provides human and national security and creates an environment conducive to sustainable peace and development.			
MISSION	To assist Malian partners & international actors supporting them to improve the accountability of their security sector through nationally owned, inclusive, and participatory reforms based on international norms & good practices (rule of law, human rights, gender equality).			
OBJECTIVES	In Mali, DCAF aims to:	Engage national security actors to commit to and implement SSG/R processes.	Strengthen active participation of external actors in SSG/R and oversight mechanisms.	Promote professionalism and accountability of the security sector.
STRATEGY	DCAF's engagement contributes to strengthening democratic processes, by SSR/G	Strengthening dialogue and coordination with high-level stakeholders on SSG/R, and supporting a policy framework conducive to SSR/G.	Empowering human rights defenders, the media, and civil society organisations (CSOs) to take responsibility for security issues and monitoring the performance of security forces and use of force.	Equipping institutions with best practices in governance and service delivery, and increasing personnel compliance with internal procedures, codes of conduct, and human rights principles.

Approach and activities

To achieve our three objectives, the following measures are implemented, in line with DCAF's fields of intervention:



› OBJECTIVE 1:

Engage national security actors to commit to and implement SSG/R processes.

› APPROACH:

To strengthen dialogue and coordination with high-level and local stakeholders on SSG/R, and supporting a policy framework conducive to SSG/R.

› ACTIVITIES:

- › Innovative advisory and mentoring accompaniment to provide strategic reform advice to operational units dealing with local community threats (with a focus on Consultative Security Committees).
- › Technical support to security actors to communicate and reach out to national audiences on SSG/R processes.
- › Research, revision, and compilation of the legal framework that defines the roles and responsibilities of security and defence forces.
- › Promotion of normative principles in SSG/R through dissemination of legal framework of the Malian security sector and security forces codes of conduct.



› OBJECTIVE 2:

Strengthen active participation of external actors in SSG/R and oversight mechanisms.

› APPROACH:

To empower human rights defenders, the media, and CSOs to take responsibility for security issues, and monitoring the performance of security forces, and use of force in protecting the population.

› ACTIVITIES:

- › Support the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) and other CSOs' monitoring of human rights violations by security forces and related human rights advocacy.
- › Partnership with leading research institutions to conduct perception studies on security needs and building of related dialogue forum to develop engagement solutions restoring trust between security forces and the population.
- › Organisation of community-based dialogue led by civil society organisations to map out security issues and identify problem-solving action.
- › Organisation of skills training and networking opportunities for professional journalists to investigate and report on SSR issues.

› OBJECTIVE 3:

Promote professionalism and accountability of the security sector.

› APPROACH:

To equip institutions with best practices in governance and service delivery, and increase personnel compliance with internal procedures, codes of conduct, and human rights principles.

› ACTIVITIES:

- › Hands-on technical support to the inspection services of security forces (ISSPC) to carry out control and audit missions.
- › Expert advice to inspectors to elaborate and implement procedures and related tools to verify compliance of security personnel with internal rules and mitigation risks.
- › Support to the police and gendarmerie to become more inclusive and to promote gender equality within the two institutions.



Key achievements

DCAF's intervention in Mali have laid the essential groundwork to enable national stakeholders to contribute and implement a reform of the security sector that is holistic, coherent, and inclusive. To date, key milestones reached are as follows:

DCAF has provided multi-faceted support to the SSR Commissariat to promote a holistic vision of SSR, to support the drafting of framework documents, to develop communication tools, to strengthen its capacities and to link it with other relevant institutions. As part of this engagement, DCAF also successfully supported, in partnership with other key international partners, the elaboration and validation of the national SSR strategy.

At the request of the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection (MSCP), DCAF provided support for collecting and compiling all legislation governing the interior security sector. This responds to a need for a better overview of existing legislation, so that legal gaps or inconsistencies can be identified and addressed through the Ministry's ongoing reform process. The compilation is also available on the website of the MSCP, facilitating public access to legal information.

DCAF technical assistance has allowed the inspection services to develop and practice new procedures with increased professional skills of inspectors to identify and intervene to address problems. More specifically, the trainings and tools provided to the ISSPC, including the creation of a pre-disciplinary investigation manual, equipped the inspectors with substantive technical knowledge on how to conduct internal control missions, and represent a key milestone in corrective measures implemented by inspection bodies and in strengthening compliance of security personnel.

Through participatory research and analysis, DCAF's work contributed to creating and systematically documenting baselines which inform reform needs. Data were collected and analysed through consultative processes, which also provided partner institutions and organisations real life learning opportunities. The participatory methodology allowed members of our partner institutions to reinforce their knowledge of their own institutions and strengthen their competencies in areas such as gender analysis, institutional assessment, and legal gaps analysis.

DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is committed to making people more secure through accountable and effective security and justice. We help national and international entities to deliver security that respects human rights, upholds the rule of law, and is democratically controlled, by:



Helping to improve the way national security sectors are governed



Guiding the development of sound, sustainable security governance policies



Promoting locally owned reforms that are inclusive, participatory, and gender responsive

DCAF's engagement consists of:



Providing technical expertise to nationally led SSG/R processes



Capacity building for state and non-state actors



Publishing research and knowledge products



Promoting internationally recommended good governance practices



Advising on security sector-related legal and policy questions

DCAF Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

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