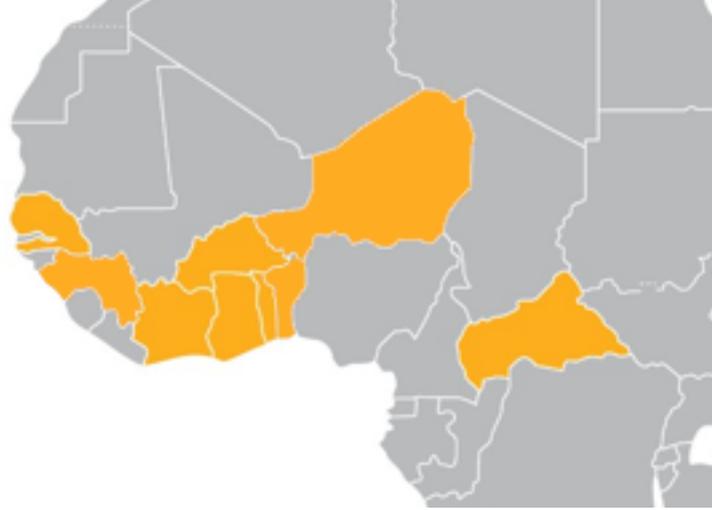




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20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



## Prevention of violent extremism in West and Central Africa

**A Swiss FDFA, DCAF and CHEDS project (November 2019 - April 2021)**

**Systematically reviewing and analysing the conceptual, political, legislative and operational frameworks for the engagement of Defence and Security Forces (DSF) in the prevention of violent extremism (PVE)**

### CONTEXT

For almost 20 years, the scourge of violent extremism has plagued West Africa, the Lake Chad Basin and Central Africa. West African nations located on the Gulf of Guinea currently face a growing threat.

The response to this situation has evolved in recent years. Policies based solely on a military and security-led response, which are still broadly prioritised by African States, have gradually been supplemented by more comprehensive approaches involving political and civilian stakeholders in the action taken by DSF. There is now a broad understanding not only of the root causes of violent extremism, based on the documented work of research groups and knowledge of the reality faced by local populations, but also of the need to actively tackle these causes to prevent further cycles of violence.

The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) and the Centre for Advanced Defence and Security Studies (CHEDS) in Senegal see the need to raise awareness on the way that extreme violence challenges DSF mandates and experiences, to clearly set out how DSF can engage in an approach aimed at the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE), to strengthen the commitment and build the capacity of DSF in this regard and to properly monitor the framework promoting DSF engagement to PVE.

### BUILDING ON THE EXPERIENCE OF REGIONAL CONVERSATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE REGION

In 2016, the initiative of the Regional Conversations for PVE identified the importance of the role played by DSF in this preventive approach. This observation prompted the "Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE)" programme of the Swiss Human Security Division of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (HSD/FDFA) to establish a partnership with the Centre for Advanced Defence and Security Studies (CHEDS) in Senegal.

A series of regional seminars on PVE, predominantly involving DSF representatives and organised by the CHEDS and FDFA, has been held in the past three years. These high-level meetings have given greater exposure to the issue within West and Central African DSF and helped to effectively mobilise representatives of States involved in these annual seminars.

The present project builds on that process and intends to bring a more systematic knowledge basis on which to pursue that ongoing dialogue. A unique and innovative aspect of this project is the tripartite joint venture between the Swiss HSD/FDFA, the Centre for Advanced Defence and Security Studies (CHEDS) in Senegal and the DCAF, as a way to enlarge and consolidate this effort.

The project will specifically conduct a systematic review and assessment of the conceptual, political, legislative and operational frameworks for the engagement of DSF in the prevention of violent extremism in nine West and Central African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

Through an extensive and inclusive consultative process, this project helps improving the knowledge about how much this prevention approach is a reality in the DSF mandates and actions and identifying the existing policy, operational and capabilities gaps for DSF to undertake that role. It is helping to develop targeted political prevention strategies and a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, through the comparative analysis of approaches and experiences.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

The aim of this project is to conduct a systematic review and taking stock of the conceptual, political, legislative and operational frameworks in place for the engagement of West and Central African Defence and Security Forces (DSF) in the prevention of violent extremism (PVE). This task is performed by a team of regional consultants who will work alongside the core team of DCAF, Swiss FDFA and CHEDS experts.

The aims and expected results are as follows:

- To construct a systematic knowledge base of the conceptual, political, legislative, and operational structures for DSF in the sub-region (illustrative and non-exhaustive)
- To conduct an analytical assessment of their effective or potential scope in relation to DSF engagement to PVE
- To identify needs (shortcomings) of existing frameworks, structures, operations or training
- Specifically, to learn from the experiences of individual countries under consideration generally, to take stock of the needs, obstacles or useful practices brought to light by policies or texts underpinning DSF engagement to PVE
- To help to identify prospective areas in which DSF can strengthen their engagement to PVE
- To lay the technical groundwork for a future Regional Conversations workshop organised by the CHEDS and FDFA, (development of materials, coordination of sessions, panel by DCAF experts and other associated experts)
- To organise three roundtables in the region to present and reflect on the practical lessons and needs of targeted countries
- To conceptualise ways in which (i) the evolution of selected conceptual, political, legislative, and operational frameworks relating to DSF and PVE present in the sub-region can be followed, (ii) the progress made through the study and the Regional Conversations can be captured and (iii) the dialogue around the political and operational policy recommendations can be broadened

## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project covers a series of case studies in the nine target countries. The short fieldwork assignments and direct interviews with key players will not only seek to establish a collection of documents, but also to:

- Analyse the content of these documents in light of effective or potential DSF commitment to PVE
- Determine the extent to which training courses within DSF address PVE and any related needs
- Assess the reality of DSF commitment based on documented texts and highlight any known difficulties, different perceptions according to uniformed personnel, the advantages and disadvantages of these texts for DSF
- Identify positive experiences and initiatives whereby these policy and legal PVE-based frameworks have been successfully implemented into DSF activities, and the wiggle room that DSF have in reality conceptually and in action
- Generate a dialogue around best practices and lessons from target countries in relation to PVE and DSF engagement

A comparative analysis will then be conducted to stimulate the work of the upcoming CHEDS and HSD/FDFA workshop(s).

