



# Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa 2021 - 2024

## Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa has been a long-standing geographical priority area for DCAF and its engagement on the continent has steadily grown year on year in the past decade. The multitude of security, governance, humanitarian and development challenges that persist or are emerging on the continent can frequently be linked to the poor effectiveness, efficiency and/or accountability of security sector institutions and overall weak systems of security sector governance.

Trends and lessons gathered from across the continent reaffirm the relevance of SSG/R in Sub-Saharan Africa to peace, stability and development but have also shown that more needs to be done to finance, support, coordinate and conceptualize effective SSG/R approaches. Considering the range of needs and strong demand from African actors and international partners for DCAF support, it is likely that during the time frame of the Strategy (2021-24), DCAF programmes on the continent will continue to grow in size, scope and number.

Close to half of the countries in Africa are by some measures categorized as highly fragile. In addition to the protracted, if not exacerbated, security challenges in the Sahel region, a large number of internal conflicts have the potential to destabilize wider sub-regions. In particular, growing indicators of instability or fragility in a number of populous countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan,

Mozambique, DRC, Nigeria and other countries of the Gulf of Guinea point to a need for more concerted and effective preventive action across all regions of the continent. As such, it is clear that the SSG/R agenda will grow in prominence and relevance across the continent in the coming years.

## Key security opportunities and challenges

The range of perceived and actual security threats to both the State and local populations remains highly contextual across the sub-continent; nonetheless, most countries in SSA are facing some form of serious or acute security challenges. If left unaddressed, the high level of violence or criminality in the countries have shown to be potential triggers of conflict, contribute to collapse of the State system and instability at national, regional and international levels, and undermine wider socio-economic development efforts.

The security environment and security governance challenges in sub-Saharan Africa in the coming years will undoubtedly be influenced by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Overall, the dynamism of the threats and the likely changes in the prevalence of certain threats over time point to a need for highly adapted and contextual strategies for support, requiring flexibility in support and in depth understanding of the local political economy and broader context.

## Traditional and non-state security and justice providers

With persistent, and in some cases diminishing, ability by the State to deliver public services to rural and urban populations in many of the countries most impacted by insecurity, there has been a growing call to more closely look at the role of non-state providers of security and justice services, including traditional justice mechanisms. To date, insufficient programmatic and policy attention has been given to these critical actors in the security sector.



mon amie t'es aussi perdue!  
aaah bon ma copine je suis dans les affaires

In Guinea, DCAF supported a local NGO with an awareness raising campaign to improve the COVID-related health and safety practices of private security forces. Photo: CECIDE.

## Private security

Across Africa, reflecting a wider global trend, there has been a significant growth in commercial private security, including in sensitive areas such as critical infrastructure protection and surveillance. While this development may fill gaps in inadequate public security provision, it also raises several important challenges for SSG/R. These include disproportionate use of force due to inadequate training and vetting, a blurring of roles between public and private security, as well as inadequate oversight as a result of weak legal and regulatory regimes.

## Human security vs. state security

The range of potential security issues includes growing irregular migration in a number of sub-regions in Africa, escalation of terrorism and violent extremism, human trafficking, financial crimes, and drug trafficking. The challenge, however, is that a focus on a single issue or a divergence of priority between national and international partners may at times divert needed attention or resources from equally important security challenges in other areas. In this regard, it is important that high profile issues, (by Government or the donor community) do not overshadow the primary concerns of local populations.

## Digitalisation / social media

There are also a growing number of security challenges that are emerging which will need to be more closely considered in future SSR/G programming across the continent. With increased digitalization in virtually all aspects of life in sub-Saharan Africa, there is a need to forecast the emerging security threats stemming from digitalization but also explore means of improved security sector governance in this critical space. There are growing opportunities to explore the role of social media in terms of improving security sector governance or strengthening access to information or accountability in the security sector.

## Representative and inclusive institutions

Persistent, and at times growing, ethnic tensions and fragmentation of the political space across many African countries highlights the need for SSR/G programming to create inclusive and representative security sector institutions in the framework of a democratically controlled security sector. The lack of inclusive institutions has often undermined their responsiveness to local needs, impacted on their perceived legitimacy, and has fuelled mistrust.

## Private sector and business

In addition, opportunities exist to better connect SSG/R and business and human rights communities. Across Africa, the private sector has a major impact on security and development. The extractives sector in particular - with its footprint in fragile contexts and strong reliance on both public and private security - has a major impact on the security of the state and communities.

## Linkages between SSR and complementary agendas

Some of the issues that have remained highly impactful on SSR processes across sub-Saharan Africa, but have yet to be fully reflected in SSR programming, are electoral cycles, transitional justice, election security as well as conflict resolution and peace processes. The practitioner communities working on election security and peace mediation are often distinct from those working on SSR, though working in parallel with similar stakeholders and aims. With a growth of reform programmes around these issues, there is an opportunity to reflect on how to better link and integrate such processes with SSR.

## Limited engagement with incentives

Despite the range of security sector issues and challenges, the demand or advocacy for reforms linked to SSG remains weak or inconsistent. Too often, national decision-makers, whether political authorities or senior security officials are not incentivized to engage into a genuine policy dialogue or to effectively commit to addressing some of the difficult systemic or structural issues. International partners and programmes often are not able to meaningfully engage with the incentives for political or security actors for credible change.

## Weak oversight

Commonly external oversight actors, whether state or non-state, are not empowered to play an effective oversight role. In certain instances oversight institutions can suffer from the same lack of inclusiveness or representation as the institutions they oversee. In many contexts there is an opportunity to bring a greater voice to such actors through capacity building, facilitating exchange platforms with security institutions, or providing strategic guidance on how best to engage or support in SSR. Equal consideration though should be placed on influencing reforms that target the efficiency, and governance systems of these actors.

## Affordability / sustainability

Lessons identified from decades of support to SSR/G across Africa have consistently highlighted that inconsistent attention or consideration is given to affordability of reforms or the financial implications for sustaining reform efforts. There is a need to ensure that public finance management and funding for SSR/G become mainstream reform issues.

## DCAF's approach

DCAF recognises that national actors hold the primary responsibility for undertaking SSR and therefore focuses on accompanying national efforts and processes in a way that reinforces local ownership. DCAF also cooperates with and supports international actors with whom DCAF shares a common objective. The choice of concrete thematic areas, objectives, partners and approaches is shaped in an agile way through an ongoing dialogue which will always involve the beneficiary at all stages of the process, from initial scoping, through assessment, design, steering of implementation, result monitoring and reporting.

The most significant added value of DCAF in sub-Saharan Africa is that it remains one of the few and unique organisations fully dedicated to promoting and supporting reforms focused on security sector governance with national stakeholders and international partners. DCAF is also one of the few organisations working simultaneously through a multi-layered approach - internationally with the international community on policy, capacity-building and coordination, at sub-continental level with the African Union on policy and operational guidance, regionally with RECs and between states, nationally and locally - promoting integration of efforts across the different levels.

The wide spectrum of support has not decreased the compliance gap between policies/laws and the behaviour of security institutions, or translated into improved public trust of the security institutions.

A key aim DCAF's approach is to re-balance technical and political engagement. While the intent is not for DCAF to become a political actor in Africa, considering the political nature of SSG/R in Sub-Saharan Africa whereby even relatively minor governance reform issues can be influenced by political factors, there is a need to more actively engage with or consider the political incentives for reform in programming. In practice, this will mean building closer partnerships with our donor partners and organisations focused on advocacy and political engagement while also more systematically including political analysis in programme design.

DCAF's approach also focuses on strategic outcomes and aims that help to strengthen accountability and efficiency in the security sector. Under such an intervention logic, there is an understanding that helping to ensure greater accountability and efficiency in the security sector will reinforce and directly contribute to improved effectiveness of the security sector in tackling pressing security challenges. A central focus on strengthening accountability in the security sector can help create demand for reform, incentivize reform, and create a deterrent effect on misconduct. Support to efficiency through management related reforms can often be a determining factor in translating gains in capability and equipment into effectiveness.

# Objectives



## Reaffirm the value of democratic governance in addressing current and emerging security challenges.

### Supporting policy and regulatory reform as a foundation of reform

A starting point for reform are clear policies and legislation that describe the core mandates, aims, values and principles for the security sector as well as a clear vision and strategy for reform. As such, when regulatory and policy frameworks are weak, it will remain a key aim of DCAF to support national stakeholders to develop such foundational documents.

In its support to strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks in the security sector DCAF will apply a multi-pronged approach. When possible, DCAF will apply its convening power, or leverage that of its partners, to bring together a range of stakeholders to debate and discuss core security issues at state or local level and develop joint understanding of needs and priorities that can inform national policy and strategy development. Equally, there is an opportunity for DCAF to influence the debate by providing key data or analysis when it is lacking to help demystify or change perceptions of security agencies concerning the reform needs or perceptions of the public.

### Management reform, leadership and strengthening command systems

One of the continued challenges security sector institutions face, despite robust reform programmes or external support, is an inability to manage the reform process and to effectively direct limited resources to priorities or needs. Often, weak management systems and command and control systems in the security sector undermine gains in capacity and influence the extent to which improvements in capability translate to operational effectiveness in addressing security challenges. This not only includes weak institutional management systems (e.g. the policy and management roles of Ministries of Interior) but also within the security agencies themselves. DCAF focus will be to help strengthen performance based management, leadership skills at various levels, ensuring institutions have the requisite

internal regulatory framework, supporting organizational or institutional re-organization, and supporting development of effective strategy and budget formulation systems.

### Exploring what works in SSG

While undoubtedly the SSR practitioner and donor communities widely acknowledges that governance of the security sector should remain a central focus of overall SSR processes, there is yet an insufficient evidence base to build the business case for why security sector governance reforms are critical to tackling emerging security challenges. To continue to build a contextually appropriate and relevant approach to tackling security sector governance reform challenges and promoting more impactful programming, DCAF will invest in and prioritise lesson learning and documenting evidence of “what works” in the area of SSG/R across the continent.

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### Local security sector governance structures/mechanisms

In contexts of protracted conflict or fragility, state centric approaches can have limited impact on the safety and well-being of local populations, and are often insufficiently calibrated to address the unique needs of vulnerable groups. Too often there is an elite capture of the process to define reforms, implementation, and the resources available for reform. Therefore, in the coming strategy period DCAF will prioritize innovative approaches which balance a focus on state reforms with engagement with communities



and local governance structures as key agents of change.

## Focus on media as a key oversight actor

Democratic governance requires individuals to be able to participate effectively in decision-making, to evaluate the performance of their government and in some cases to drive demand for reform. With an important social function in making the views of diverse parts of a society or a country known, the media can be a conduit for national dialogue on policy issues. DCAF will engage with both media actors and security and defense spokespeople to support a deeper understanding of the role of the media in providing public information on security sector governance and public security, and in combatting rumor, sensationalized reporting and misinformation. Strengthening the

effectiveness, empowerment, strategies, and inclusiveness of media engaged in covering security issues will also be a priority.

## Strengthening external accountability

This can both incentivize behavioural change in the security sector and stimulate demand for reform. DCAF will seek to gradually expand the range of support it offers to oversight institutions to include institutional reform support, advice and support in building more inclusive and representative oversight bodies, research and policy dialogue between institutions on the continent, and support to empower these institutions through capacity building on substantive SSG/R related issues. Where relevant, improving accessibility of public complaints mechanisms managed by external oversight bodies will remain a key area of support.



## Enhance engagement in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

### Focusing on policing

One of the primary interfaces between communities and the State are the police, who often remain the most visible and accessible part of Government in many countries. It is important to note that the police are often the leading agency in dealing with the most prevalent crimes effecting communities and local populations, including gender-based violence.

DCAF has increasingly been engaged in a number of areas of police reform, and by 2020 all long-term DCAF operational programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa had police components. This includes direct engagement with the police and/or the Ministries that are tasked with representing, managing or overseeing the police. Consistent with other complementary objectives outlined in this strategy, DCAF support to police reform will remain focused on core governance issues where there is otherwise typically lesser attention by other police programmes in the region.

### Internal oversight / accountability

Often the most efficient, accessible, and in some cases also effective, means of dealing with misconduct issues are internal oversight systems within security institutions. This includes inspections, audit units, complaints

handling mechanisms, chain of command, or other units tasked with dealing with conduct. DCAF will continue to build its offer and capacity in this area, including developing a strategic repository of lessons learned and good practice, training and advisory packages in methodologies for investigations of complaints or disciplinary processes. Programmes will also be designed to move beyond misconduct or criminal wrongdoing cases to include institutional inspections looking at broader issues of accountability (e.g. performance).

### Broaden support and focus on non-state security actors

Charting an impactful and sustainable approach to reform requires exploring the potential and roles of non-state security and justice providers, local security mechanisms, traditional structures, and civil society in security sector governance. Relatively few programmes in the sub-region directly or substantively provide support to non-state security and justice providers, whether traditional structures, or private security companies, despite the reality that for a majority of citizens on the continent this is the primary interface or access to security or justice services at community level. When contexts and resources provide an enabling environment DCAF will seek to engage in processes to help define or strengthen local level security



## Strengthen contributions of SSG/R to international policy and practice.

### Regional and sub-regional policy frameworks

DCAF and the AU/RECS/EU have had a long-standing partnership in the development of guidance and policies for SSG/R on the continent. The EU SSG Facility, which DCAF is leading, is a tool specifically designed to operationalize a policy - the Nov. 2016 EU-wide Strategic Framework on SSR - in particular across the African regions where the EU is an increasingly active strategic partner in the field of security. While to some extent the focus has rightfully shifted from policy development towards implementation, there are still opportunities for DCAF to work alongside these actors in dissemination, training, and implementation of these important policy or guidance frameworks.

The UN, EU, the WB and other multilateral and bilateral donors are becoming more active and relevant in supporting substantive elements of reform in a number of African countries. DCAF will also strengthen partnerships with key multilateral and bilateral donors working on the continent and offer targeted support including advice on improving approaches to security assistance, building the capacities of their operators in the field and managers and decision-makers in capital/HQ, convening their regional and thematic experts for better coordination, synergy and collaboration and to diffusing knowledge, lessons-learned and best practices.

DCAF will strengthen partnerships with key multilateral and bilateral donors working on the continent.



Dr Isatou Touray, Vice-President of The Gambia, at DCAF for discussions on the ongoing SSR process. DCAF's programme there has tested several new approaches to ensuring data-driven, locally owned reforms.

### Agenda 2030

SDG 16 commits states to achieving peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions. Fulfilling this goal and its targets will require states to ensure their security sectors are democratically governed. Recognizing the role SSR plays in this regard, much of DCAF's work in Sub-Saharan Africa in the coming period will make a key contribution to the implementation of SDG 16. Equally, in line with the spirit of Agenda 2030, DCAF will seek through its programmes to ensure that SSG/R processes and reforms are complementary and directly reinforce broader development objectives.

### Partnerships with multilateral institutions

Importantly, the African Union and RECs are also becoming more active in directly supporting reforms in a number of countries on the continent. DCAF will work closely with the AU and RECs to support this work, leverage the influential political role and access of regional institutions, and help to ensure SSG/R policy can be translated into practice on the ground. Work with IGAD and SADC will be particularly important as DCAF expands its engagement in East and Southern Africa.

### Sharing lessons learned in SSG/R

Over the next four years, capturing and sharing lessons from the field will be a high priority for DCAF and a valuable contribution to international policy and practice. DCAF's wide network of partners and diverse portfolio of projects facilitates the development of unique insights which can shape international policy and practice in areas such as Women, Peace and Security, the integration of security actors in peace processes, and the implementation of Agenda 2030.

## Other thematic priorities

### Climate change

One of the topics that will remain high on the DCAF agenda will be to study the interlinkages between climate change and security. With evidence that the changing climate is having significant influence on insecurity in many countries where DCAF works, DCAF will endeavour to continue to study and explore how SSG/R can help reinforce, or is impacted by, climate change efforts.

### Intelligence reform and oversight

Drawing from the increasing range of experience DCAF has developed in this area, key lessons and good practice in intelligence reform in sub-Saharan Africa will be developed.

### Business and security

Efforts to enhance SSG/R efforts through linking business actors, governments and communities will become increasingly important for DCAF programming, particularly in fragile contexts.

## Implementation

### Programming and financing

To ensure that DCAF maximizes its potential impact and effectiveness, there is a need to continue to commit and earmark resources to lessons learning and monitoring across all programmes. Another aim will be to promote more multi-year programmes to allow realistic timescales to achieve meaningful impact at national levels but also to ensure greater predictability in support for DCAF's partners. Overall, DCAF aims to grow the average size and budget of programmes in the sub-region. This should help to reduce the administrative burden associated with the management of an increasing number of small-scale programmes.

### Geographic coverage

West Africa and the Sahel and the multilateral institutions operating in this region have been important geographical and institutional focus areas for DCAF and will continue to be in the coming years. Nonetheless, with a view towards meeting increasing demand and opportunities for support in other areas of sub-Saharan Africa, DCAF aims to gradually increase its geographical footprint across the continent.

There has been an increased focus and interest in SSR/G in East Africa, namely Ethiopia, and Sudan, but also persistent demands for support in Somalia, Kenya and South Sudan. Equally, with potential opportunities for reform emerging in Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, and Mozambique, it is envisioned that Southern Africa may over time become a greater focus area for DCAF.

In West Africa, there are opportunities for DCAF to explore ways of filling some of the vacuums of support that have been created with a winding down of SSR/G programmes in former countries of focus such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. While it is likely that with shifting donor priorities available financing for SSG/R will remain limited, it is important that some attention to SSG/R is maintained in these countries to help sustain many of the hard-fought reform gains.



Security sector reform training of the 2020-2021 graduating class of the G5 Sahel Defense College in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

### Strengthen partnerships

DCAF will develop and strengthen relations with local embassies and country offices of IGO to ensure that programmes are reinforced through political engagement by the embassies on issues identified as obstacles to reform and to ensure that through this partnership DCAF can also provide more timely and relevant support to our partners. DCAF will also seek to build coordinated advocacy and engagement strategies with the donor community at country levels.

DCAF aims to grow its network of strategic Africa based NGO/think tanks to advise on local priorities and entry points for reform,

provide advice on programme formulation, feed into the analysis or assessments of strategic reform needs in particular countries, and contribute to sharing lessons and experiences across the region. At the same time, DCAF will develop an informal advisory body composed of SSR experts, practitioners and think tanks from across the continent that can help to inform DCAF's strategy and operations on the continent.

### Staffing and deployment

The value of DCAF's field presence, which has grown in recent years, has been further underscored by COVID-19. Field offices not only provide valuable local expertise and insights, but also played a key role in ensuring continuity of operations throughout 2020. The role of field offices, in combination with remote advising, will remain central in the coming years, with the added advantage of minimizing DCAF's carbon footprint by reducing the need for travel. Additional field offices, some of which may serve as regional hubs, will be considered as DCAF's operations continue to expand.

### Evolution in the context of COVID-19

Throughout the global COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21, DCAF has adapted its operations continually to provide the best possible support to partners in security institutions facing a rapidly evolving situation. E-learning and remote advising have become an increasingly important part of DCAF's offer; these forms of support will be further expanded and enhanced in the coming years, as they offer an excellent way to engage more frequently with a wider range of stakeholders.

A central focus on strengthening accountability in the security sector can help create demand for reform, incentivize reform, and create a deterrent effect on misconduct.



DCAF is dedicated to making people more secure through accountable and effective security and justice.

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