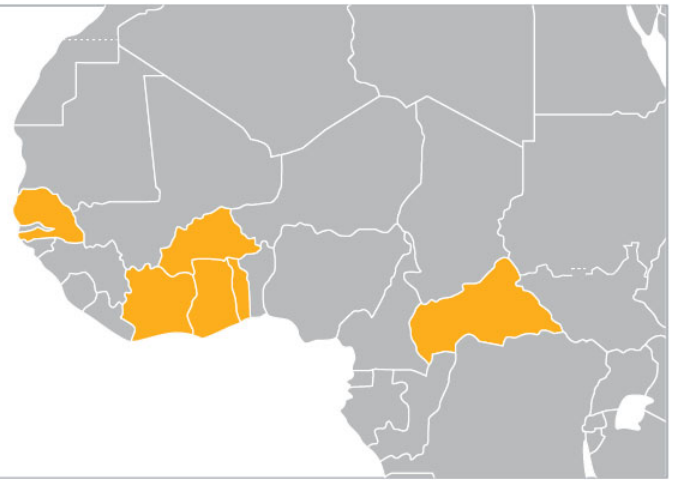




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Prevention of violent extremism in West and Central Africa: Review and analysis of the conceptual, political, legislative, ideological and operational frameworks for the engagement of Defence and Security Forces (DSF) in the prevention of violent extremism (PVE)

CONTEXT

For nearly 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, still broadly prioritised by African States, have gradually been supplemented by more comprehensive approaches involving political and civilian stakeholders in the action taken by Defence and Security Forces (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.

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 of the way that extreme violence undermines DSF 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 ON PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE REGION

In 2016, the initiative of the Regional Conversations on 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 FDFA Human Security Division (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 States' representatives involved in these annual seminars.

This DCAF project, instigated by the FDFA and implemented in close collaboration between the FDFA and the CHEDS, is a key component of this approach. It seeks to lay the technical groundwork for a future regional workshop organised by the CHEDS and FDFA, similar to those indicated above. The workshop will consist of several discussions which will examine in detail the conceptual, political, legislative, ideological and operational structures underpinning DSF commitment to a PVE approach, and will bring together a selected number of DSF actors and political stakeholders. It will enable West and Central African DSF to enhance their role in PVE and improve their understanding of the wide range of possible responses to extreme violence. It will also clearly define the support network, including the necessary political support to carry out their tasks, in reference to the structures and mandates by which they are governed.

The following six countries are considered by this study: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, Central African Republic and Togo.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The aim of this project is to review and take stock of the conceptual, political, legislative, ideological and operational framework in place to promote the engagement of West and Central African DSF for the prevention of violent extremism. This task will be performed by a team of regional consultants who will work alongside 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, ideological and operational structures for DSF present in the sub-region (illustrative and non-exhaustive)
- To conduct an analytical assessment of their effective or potential scope in relation to the DSF engagement to PVE
- To identify needs (shortcomings) of existing structures or capacity building operations
- Specifically, to learn from experiences of individual countries under consideration, and 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 provide CHEDS and HSD/FDFA with relevant materials to organise and prepare for future workshop(s)
- To offer technical expertise as part of the upcoming workshop(s) programme (coordination of sessions, panel by DCAF experts and other associated experts)
- To launch a taskforce, with the potential to be convened on a recurring basis, which would enable the conceptual, political, legislative, ideological and operational framework relating to DSF and PVE present in the sub-region to be continually monitored and regularly assessed

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION: NOVEMBER 2019 TO EARLY 2021

The project covers a series of case studies in the six target countries. The short fieldwork assignments and direct interviews with key players will not only seek to establish a collection of documents, it will also help 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 engagements 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 legal PVE-based structures have been successfully integrated into DSF activities, and the wiggle room that DSF have conceptually and in action

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

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