



Happy New Year and welcome to DCAF's newsletter dedicated to our latest activities in the Sahel region. To lead you in this new edition, it is important to lay emphasis on the fact that the Sahel region has been central to many socio-political changes and security challenges on the African continent, particularly, in west Africa. The ongoing situation in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger highlights the fragility of the security system in this region. However, encouraging initiatives are emerging that aim to enhance both security and social development, largely driven by civil society's engagement on vital issues such as gender equality and human rights. In 2024, DCAF concentrated its efforts on the governance of the security sector through training, exchange sessions, and practical workshops. Through this newsletter from the Sub-Saharan Africa Division, we seek to showcase these ongoing efforts and their significant impact in the Sahel region. Therefore, we invite you to browse through this edition to stay informed about our projects supporting the development of a more accountable and effective security sector.

BURKINA FASO



Training in mediation and conflict management

From January 21 to 23, SP/ONAPREGECC (the Secrétariat Permanent de l'Observatoire National de Prévention et de Gestion des Conflits Communautaires), in collaboration with DCAF, organized a training session for women community leaders on mediation and conflict management. The training enhanced women's skills and knowledge in managing community conflicts, allowing them to engage more effectively. A total of 47 women community leaders participated in the session. This training, held in Bobo-Dioulasso, marked the third and final stage after sessions in Kaya and Tenkodogo, equipping 120 women across the three regions with essential mediation techniques and conflict management strategies. Experts shared negotiation methods and tailored mediation techniques that addressed their local realities. This approach helped participants recognize their roles as mediators and peacekeepers within their communities. By empowering women, the training strengthens DCAF's mission to place them at the forefront of governance and conflict resolution, ultimately improving governance in the security sector.

MALI



Promoting local civil society initiatives

As part of its efforts to enhance civil society involvement in security sector governance, DCAF supported six programs proposed by civil society organizations (CSOs) that took place in November and December. Through a call for proposals, DCAF selected initiatives from La Fédération Nationale de Jeunes Filles et Femmes pour leur Autonomisation (FENAJFA), the Regroupement des Associations Féminines (RAF), the Mouvement Conscient pour l'Avenir (MCA), the Union Malienne des Aveugles (UMAV), the municipality of Ouezzindougou, and the Association des Jeunes pour le Développement de Sangarébougou (AJDS). Some of these initiatives focused on security and security sector reform (SSR), establishing forums for dialogue on communal security for women and youth, with authorities and security forces (FDS) participating at times. The other two activities tackled road safety through debates, radio broadcasts, training on the highway code, best practices, and raising awareness about the risks faced by people with disabilities. In addition to these activities, DCAF's support for these initiatives empowered civil society members, particularly youth and women, to actively engage in co-producing safety and participating in the governance of the security sector.



Training session for trainee officers in SSGR , gender and leadership

In November and December, DCAF organized three training modules for second-year trainees at the Security Forces Staff College (EEMFS). A total of 35 trainees participated, including nine women. The modules focused on security sector governance & reform (SSGR), gender and security, and leadership and management. DCAF contributed its thematic expertise to enhance the existing curriculum at the Defense and Security Forces Schools. The newly established EEMFS trains security force officers from various branches in Mali, and DCAF's involvement in their training supports the sustainable professionalization of these institutions. The module content draws on best practices and international standards, includes regional comparisons during exercises, and emphasizes contextualization to address the national realities trainees will encounter in their future roles.



Finalized Civil Protection gender self-assessment

The Directorate General for Civil Protection (DGPC), in partnership with DCAF, conducted a gender self-assessment of its institution. The process began in June when the institution's gender focal point formed a working group. After defining the assessment's scope and training the data collection team, they gathered data from over 180 individuals across all ranks within the institution and civil society. This effort led to the creation of an internal report that evaluates various issues from a gender perspective, including personnel, accountability and control, community relations, and institutional culture. From December 26 to 29, the Gender Committee, which includes 18 members—six of whom are women—attended a workshop where they presented, finalized, and validated the internal report. Based on this report, the team will develop a Civil Protection gender action plan to address the areas for improvement identified during the self-assessment.

NIGER



Consultation session at Tahoua

On January 5, the NGO MOJEDEC (Mouvement des jeunes pour le développement et l'éducation civique) and DCAF participated in a consultation session with local authorities from Tahoua. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the monitoring mechanism for the protection and promotion of human rights in 13 communes in the Tahoua region. A total of 45 people attended the session, including four women. Discussions emphasized the active involvement of local partners, particularly civil society, in implementing the report's recommendations. The discussion particularly highlighted a 6,8% decrease in incidents since the last consultation. This meeting exemplifies the productive dialogue that civil society organizations and local authorities can foster when working together. For the next session, members of the consultation framework have developed a plan to monitor identified cases of gender-based violence and incidents of human rights abuse or violation. They also intend to support communities on these issues.



Regional assessment of activities

From 16 to 22 January, CONGAFEN (Confédération des Organisations Non Gouvernementales Féminines du Niger), in collaboration with DCAF, carried out an evaluation mission in the regions of Maradi and Tahoua. The mission was conducted across four communes and their respective capitals and evaluated the impact of the activities carried out, with an emphasis on local stakeholders' engagement and the tangible changes achieved in these communities. To implement this, the teams organized interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and technical services in these two regions, comprising of traditional chiefs, religious leaders, women's associations and organizations, the regional federation of disabled people, youth structures, students and civil society organizations working on the thematic of security. A total of 226 people participated in the mission, including 50 women. Through interviews and community consultation sessions, the teams observed that stakeholders were actively continuing their efforts to raise awareness and encouraging local population participation in security sector governance.



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