

## **THE ROLE OF ECOWAS IN SECURITY SECTOR & JUSTICE REFORM AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS INFLUENCING EFFECTIVE SSR**

### **1. ECOWAS regional approach to SSR**

Insertion of security as insurance for and complement to regional integration and economic development objectives

Opportunity to collectively define and create common security standards across states whilst still taking into consideration the peculiar social and political context and needs of individual member states

ECOWAS regional approach to SSR is hinged on *governance* and *human security*—putting the people front and central, in line with ECOWAS Vision 2020 which seeks to transform the region from an ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of people

Human security: seven dimensions of security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security

SSR is essentially a time-bound and donor-driven process targeted mainly at post-conflict states; SSG sets the stage for SSR and continues when SSR has ended

Emphasis on subjecting security actors to civilian democratic control in the aftermath of a history of civil wars and military authoritarian rule

Preference for building capacity for continuing control and oversight beyond any time-bound reform programme or professionalization of the security forces

Continuing development: the shifting boundaries of the concept of security to fit the context of the ECOWAS region and the realities of its peoples

### **2. ECOWAS' role in supporting Security Sector and Justice Reform**

The role of ECOWAS in SSR can be clearly distinguished on two levels:

#### **a. Political and strategic role:**

Through its political institutions and organs, including the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers, Council of the Wise, special mediators, the ECOWAS Commission and special representatives of the president of the ECOWAS Commission:

- adopting norms and standards of democratic security governance which are shared by all member states

- adopting resolutions which affect political development and the security sector of member states
- mediating peace accords between and among warring factions and stakeholders in a conflict
- convening and partaking in donor conferences to source funding, commit resources to support SSR and monitor progress
- negotiating and signing status of mission agreements with national governments for SSR programmes.

b. Technical and operational support:

The active role of ECOWAS has been even more visible at the technical and operational level. Technical and operational activities include:

- supervisory roles: assessment and fact-finding missions, election observation, monitoring compliance with state obligations and evaluating impact of policies
- complementary roles: support in implementation of specific SSR-related activities, training and capacity building, joint exercises, practical disarmament and stabilization, humanitarian assistance and institution building.

### 3. SSR support to member states

a. ECOWAS' lead role in DSSR in Guinea Bissau: ECOMIB

In a challenging environment where several partners were less than enthusiastic to engage for the long term and support the SSR process; withdrawal of MISSANG created a gap that needed to be filled.

ECOWAS set up an integrated peace support operation mission in December 2012 with initial mandate of 6 months, extended for 12 months, to be further extended for 6 months

Under the MoU for Implementation of the DSSR Programme, ECOWAS agreed to contribute the following:

- commit US\$63 million to the DSSR process as a financial contribution in the form of subsidy
- reinforce the security of institutions and the protection of the national bodies in charge of criminal investigation
- head the Technical Assistance Mission and coordinate its activities
- designate the heads of the three components of the mission (civilian, police and military) in collaboration with the government of Guinea-Bissau
- undertake the recruitment and deployment of the required staff for the implementation of the programme
- contribute to the rehabilitation of the barracks and police cantonments.

Justice sector reform targets include training and sensitizing judicial officers, securing independent finance and administration for the judiciary so as to make it free of political influence, and establishing courts and tribunals all over the country and not just in Bissau.

b. ECOWAS support to SSR in Liberia

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government of Liberia, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia and political parties of 2003 provided the basis for post-conflict SSR.

ECOWAS has directly supported Liberia through implementation of a DDR programme, establishment of Monrovia's arms-free zone, establishment of a governance reform commission and support to the organization and monitoring of general elections in 2005 and 2010.

Still maintaining a light political presence in Monrovia, ECOWAS reopened the Office of the Special Representative of the President of the ECOWAS Commission in 2013 and continues liaison through the ECOWAS national unit in Monrovia.

The Liberian SSR programme and wider implementation of the CPA have recorded some achievements including regular capacity building for members of the national parliament in oversight of the security sector, gender and police reform.

c. ECOWAS support to SSR in Côte d'Ivoire

The ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, which started in 2002, was designed to end the war and monitor the ceasefire, thereby creating a healthy space for peace negotiations and humanitarian operations.

The Ouagadougou Peace Agreement (OPA) was facilitated by President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, who was then chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. Notably, instead of committing to security sector "reform", the parties affirmed their willingness to achieve political, administrative and military "normalization" in the country.

Although Part III of the OPA makes provision for restructuring and reorganizing the defence and security forces, what was settled for was mere integration of the two forces into one joint operational structure still under two parallel chiefs of staff.

ECOWAS maintains presence via the Office of the Special Representative of the President of the ECOWAS Commission. Also, ECOWAS sent an election observer mission to the 2010 presidential elections, supported joint police operations between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso.

With the support of the UN Operations in Côte d'Ivoire and the French government, a more comprehensive SSR/DDR process has been ongoing in earnest since April 2012. In 2013 Côte d'Ivoire authorities developed a national SSR strategy to address issues including human security, allocation of resources for various security institutions, democratic oversight of the security sector, post-conflict reconstruction and linkages between SSR and DDR.

#### d. ECOWAS support to SSR in Mali

Mali provided a wake-up call that often we support SSR in reverse: the need for comprehensive SSR is often realized only after the situation has broken down, instead of SSR serving to prevent a breakdown. ECOWAS' diplomatic missions and support to political dialogue in Mali has been largely under-acknowledged because military involvement in Mali has been the most visible.

However such political dialogue and move towards national reconciliation created the space for return to constitutional rule and democratic transition within a short period. It also holds the key to resolving the wider crisis in northern Mali crisis and the Azawad National Liberation Movement separatist question.

In support to the democratic process, ECOWAS sent 250 observers to Mali's general elections in July and August 2013, the largest contingent deployed by any organization.

A noteworthy initiative by ECOWAS is the review of its intervention in Mali, with a view to helping the organization and the region to improve its conflict management and resolution capacity. The process started with an internal ECOWAS review process in November 2013 and extended to a broader "Mali After-Action Review" in February 2014 in Akosombo, Ghana.

ECOWAS conducted a post-crisis assessment of its diplomatic, political, military, humanitarian, technical and institutional support to Mali. The assessment provided an opportunity to draw lessons, correct mistakes and build on the positives of the intervention, match political will with resources and reconsider relations with partners such as the United Nations, African Union and European Union.

#### **4. Regional dynamics: Opportunities for further developing the capacity of ECOWAS to play a leading role in SSR**

Crisis resilience and shock-absorbing capacity, vis-à-vis limited financial and human resources, factors affecting political decision to support SSR in member states (global financial meltdown, the Ebola crisis)

Human capacity building and development of ECOWAS SSR Unit to better support implementation in member states

ECOWAS acting as a key player for multilateral resource mobilization and coordination of partner assistance to member states

Porous borders and poor border security and management structures and capacity; need to adopt a more developmental approach to border management (border communities)

Political momentum for shared values and goals on SSR through insistence on constitutional convergence principles and use of smart sanctions

Developing capacity to conducting assessments, monitoring and evaluation, supporting harmonization of national laws and policies, and conducting joint operations

Currently finalizing ECOWAS Regional Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance, Implementation Plan and Toolkit for SSRG, to support member states.

## **5. Opportunities to more actively promote the work of relevant actors in national SSR processes**

Too much focus on defence reform; need to focus more on security and intelligence reform. Need to focus more on personnel management in the armed forces and security services especially recruitment; some capacity cannot be built

Also, SSR should go beyond short-term technical training and equipment to address reorientation of armed forces and security services towards respect for constitutional democratic control, relations with civilian populations and conduct in peace times

Too much focus on post-conflict states with weak institutions where reform can more easily take firm roots; SSR need to focus equally on states with stronger security institutions where incentives to reform (transparency and accountability) are minimal

Beyond national borders, concerted efforts should target combating trans-border organized crime, terrorism, maritime piracy, cybercrime and money laundering, human and drug trafficking, smuggling of illicit goods, the flow of small arms and light weapons

Support and integration of non-state security providers and grassroots governance structures, traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, promotion of the rule of law and access to justice

Supporting national dialogue, beyond post-conflict stabilization which often reinforces the status quo, towards homegrown demand for better governance and reconfiguration of political and social relations for a more egalitarian society.