

# OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE NOTE ASSESSMENT SERIES CASE STUDY: **Improving Coherence and Coordination Through a Joint Multi-Actor Assessment in Guinea**

## BACKGROUND

Since its independence in 1958, Guinea has only been ruled by autocratic regimes. The former President Lansana Conté left a legacy of abusive security forces, a collapsed economy and lack of trust among a divided society. In December 2008, the army took control of the country within hours of the death of Conté. It had militarised the public administration and used state resources to consolidate its power. The mistrust between junta leaders and other sections of the military and the growing ineffectiveness of the security forces soon became major threats for the country's future. It culminated in the September 2009 massacres when the army killed, wounded and raped hundreds of civilians during an opposition rally. Following the assassination attempt against Captain Dadis Cammara, and his removal from power, General Sekouba Konate was appointed as the acting Head of State. Strongly encouraged by the international community (mainly through the International Mediator, the President of Burkina Faso, and the Groupe International de Contact pour la Guinée – [GICG]), Konate agreed to share power with opposition parties and other components of the Guinean society and to lead the country to democratic elections. During that transitional phase, Konate requested the support of the international community to reform the army and the rest of the security sector.

Several major international actors were interested in being involved and supporting the security sector reform (SSR) process requested by the Guinean authorities: the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), France, the U.S., Spain, Germany, Russia and China. The scope of their motivations was very broad, ranging from stabilising the region, improving development, democracy and human rights, strengthening their diplomatic influence, fighting drug and human trafficking or grasping at control of natural resources.

The United Nations responded to a request by the ECOWAS Commission to set up a joint multi-actor security sector assessment mission in response to the request of the Guinean transitional authority including the interim president, General Konate. The purpose of the mission was the “diagnosis of the security sector” in Guinea.



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## SPECIFIC LESSONS OF THIS CASE STUDY INCLUDE:

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### LESSON 1 – JOINT MULTI-PARTNER ASSESSMENTS:

- Contribute to improved coordination between international actors, build coherence of the SSR holistic approach, and quality of the political dialogue with the national authorities – in line with the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness.
- Create an opportunity to gather more resources and therefore contribute to enlarge the scope of the assessment (come closer to the holistic nature that should characterise SSR assessments).

### LESSON 2 – ROLE OF MULTILATERALS

- Leadership of “neutral” multilateral organisations (UN) contribute to facilitating coordination.
- Involvement of regional organisations (ECOWAS and AU) contribute to legitimacy and acceptance by national partners and enhance context based knowledge.

### LESSON 3 - CLASSIC ASSESSMENT APPROACH MUST BE ADAPTED TO THE MULTIPLICITY OF PARTNERS:

- Early dialogue and coordination between international partners; special attention to team management, communication and reporting rules; specific arrangements on implementation, monitoring and follow up.

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## THE ASSESSMENT MISSION

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The joint assessment was set up in close connection with the GICG and AU who were invited by ECOWAS and UN to join the process. ECOWAS had nominated General Cissé as its special envoy on SSR in Guinea, who was placed as head of the joint ECOWAS/UN/AU mission. In this arrangement, the UN provided technical expertise while ECOWAS had the formal lead of the mission. UN representation was composed of United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the SSR unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP-BCPR). Further to this technical expertise, the mission was funded through the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

Some of the international partners, like the European Union and the U.S., were not immediately involved in the process. They were eventually embarked as the need for coordination among partners in SSR was needed at an early stage so as not to jeopardise the implementation phase. Bilateral actors such as France Spain, and German relied on the EU representation with France and Spain providing in country experts via the EU delegation in Conakry. Russia and China had shown interest in the process but decided not to contribute.

The first step of the process consisted of a preliminary mission carried out by the leader of the assessment team (appointed by ECOWAS) and UN representatives to get the approval to proceed from the main political and military authorities, assess their political willingness and consult them on their expectations. Other actors such as ministries, security forces, political parties, and representatives from civil society were also consulted and informed of the mandate of the mission. The regional reputation (and the fact that he was a “brother in arm”) of the team leader amongst the Guinean military was a key factor to facilitate dialogue, collect information and get their approval for the assessment.

Following the initial contact mission, The Terms of Reference (ToR) were proposed by the UN and ECOWAS to the Guinean authorities.

The participation of multiple stakeholders created an opportunity to gather important resources

and to bring together a great diversity of expertise to carry out the assessment mission. The fact that important resources could be mobilised contributed enlarging the scope of the assessment and to come closer to the holistic nature that should characterise SSR assessments.

A technical team of about 15 people was deployed in the second stage of the mission. Under the responsibility of the head of mission, and under the supervision of a technical coordinator, it was composed of a mix of experts with diverse backgrounds (military, police, gendarmerie, justice, civil society, governance). Most of the experts were originated from the West African region and several were public servants in the security forces of their own countries. This strong regional and corporatist anchorage played a key role in facilitating dialogue, collecting information and getting the support of Guinean authorities. The majority of the team was contracted by the UN and ECOWAS for the purpose of the mission but some, working locally, were detached by their embassies or organisations.

This diversity and the important number of team members was also the result of every stakeholder willing his own expert in the team. It could have been perceived as a source of discrepancies. This was not so much the case since most of the experts did not behave as appointees from their stakeholders but as members of a single team. This cohesion was facilitated by the leading figure of the team leader but it would also have benefited from more clarity in the definition of coordination, communication, drafting and decision processes. In principle, a centralized selection process could also reinforce the relevance of the expertise scope to the needs of the assessment mission.

The draft report submitted to Guinean authorities did not go through a pre validation process between all international partners involved in the mission. It would probably have caused important delays. Responsibility rested with the UN and ECOWAS (represented by their envoy) had to give their green light before submitting the report to national authorities.

Following the publication of the report, the Guinean authorities decided to prepare for the establishment of a high level national coordination committee to pilot the SSR process in Guinea ("Comité national du pilotage"). The UN and ECOWAS have been discussing their support to this process by setting up an international body in the same format as the "Assessment team": one "political" coordinator with a good reputation in the region and a respected military background, assisted by a technical team involving experts appointed by the international partners.

Some partners, such as the EU and the UN, have already started to identify programmes in the justice sector that could be implemented inside the framework defined by the multilateral mission. This programmatic work was led in close coordination with other international partners. It benefited from a strong political interest by the Guinean authorities, mostly due to the confidence building process initiated during the multilateral assessment.

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## **ADDED VALUE AND LESSONS LEARNED OF THIS JOINT ASSESSMENT**

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The dialogue between international partners and the Guinean authorities on the SSR assessment was initiated at an early stage. It contributed to a better communication and coordination of actions.

The coherence of the SSR approach was also greatly enhanced by this collective process. The quality and effectiveness of the political dialogue with the national authorities were improved by the limited number of interlocutors (a small, well coordinated group in the assessment team, representing the international partners) and channels of communication.

The multiplicity of (sometimes contradictory) interest within the international partners group was

counterbalanced by the fact that coordination was assumed by multilateral organisations (UN and ECOWAS) that were considered as more neutral than bilateral stakeholders.

The involvement of regional organisations (ECOWAS and the AU) contributed to a better understanding of the dynamics at stake in the country and the region. It also facilitated the acceptance of the observations and conclusions of the final report by national authorities.

Some difficulties encountered during the course of the assessment mission highlighted the need to better adapt the standard assessment procedures to the complexity of multi partners' missions:

- Before the mission: identify and invite international stakeholders that could support/influence the process, confirm long term commitment of partners to support the process, define a common strategy, establish a steering committee (but keep the mission flexible), define jointly the ToR, identify the leading partner (coordination and focus point to lead dialogue with national authorities), select jointly the head of mission (political) and the technical team leader, define decision processes (approval of the report).
- Team management, communication and reporting: define methodology, define team members' responsibilities (writer, thematic responsibilities), organise regular team meetings, define communication and drafting processes, define filing processes, define reporting processes to the international partners (what and when).
- Implementation, monitoring and follow-up: define a common follow-up/implementation/monitoring strategy (on the basis of the assessment report that should clearly define priorities, sequencing and calendar baring in mind the challenges of different international actor interests, accountability chains, and budget scheduling), identify/install a joint body responsible for the implementation/monitoring/evaluation, highlight the actions that must be carried out by national authorities and define a common diplomatic agenda of the international partners (definition of conditionalities to be fulfilled by the authorities, means to monitor their fulfilment).

**THIS CASE STUDY WAS PRODUCED BY RENAUD GALAND OF ISSAT.**