



**IMPROVING SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AND
GOVERNANCE IN ECOWAS MEMBER STATES:**
an overview of the training workshop in Guinea-Bissau



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African Security Sector Network (ASSN)

Formed in 2003, the **African Security Sector Network (ASSN)**, headquartered in Accra (Ghana), is a pan-African network of practitioners and organizations working to promote effective and democratically governed security sectors across Africa.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACSSRG	High Commission for Reform and Governance of the Security Sector
ANP	National People's Assembly
ASSN	African Security Sector Network
AU	African Union
CIRSDS	Interministerial Commission for Defence and Security Sector Reform
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMGFA	General Staff of the Armed Forces
EU	European Union
EPSAO	ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture and Operations
HDI	UN Human Development Index
SSRG	Security Sector Reform and Governance
TGB	National Television
UN	United Nations

1. Introduction

In the process of implementing the "Draft Five-Year Implementation Plan of the ECOWAS Policy Framework for Defence and Security Sector Reform and Governance 2019-2023," the "Training Workshop on Security Sector Reform and Governance (SSRG)", organized by ECOWAS in collaboration with the African Security Sector Network (ASSN), was held in Bissau from January 24 to 26, 2022. This Workshop is part of the ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture and Operations (EPSAO) Project.

Since the country's total liberation from Portuguese colonial rule in 1974, Guinea-Bissau has undergone several security and defence sector reform processes led by succeeding governments, with support from international partners. Despite positive developments, the country still has a pressing need to stabilize and consolidate the sector's institutions. The weak participation of citizens in general, and communities, in security dialogue and recurrent politico-military conflicts, have not fostered democratic governance of the defence and security sector. Indeed, the country has experienced several political-military conflicts since independence, including coups d'état, some of which culminated in the overthrow of four heads of state, as well as palace coups with strong military involvement that have reversed the constitutional order, keeping the country in chronic political and institutional instability. The intervention of militarized forces in national political life is evident, often resulting in the persecution of political activists, beatings, and assassinations.

Of the previous reform processes in the sector, we can point out that reforms within the Guinea-Bissau armed forces began in the mid-1970s, with the support of bilateral and multilateral partners. The first was dedicated to the demobilization and reintegration of combatants of the armed struggle for national liberation, supported through bilateral cooperation (the former Soviet Union, China, and Portugal). This was followed by others of a more reformist and modernizing nature under the framework of multilateral (UN, EU, AU), and bilateral (Portugal, Angola) cooperation. These previous security and defence sector reform programmes experienced many administrative and political bottlenecks, sometimes due to the rigid procedures of international organizations, which lacked a clear strategy for national ownership. These programmes functioned as projects, each with very high levels of funding, almost all of which was consumed by international technical assistance, including infrastructure, vehicles, travel, etc. The state of Guinea-Bissau often only had representatives in the management structure of the programme, when it should be the opposite, that is, the State having a national executing structure, responsible for managing the programme and accountable to the government, the parliament, and the citizenry. The international technical assistance should be limited to the technical framework, counseling, and training. The proof is that none of these programmes have ended, having been unilaterally suspended by the financial institution or forced to close their doors due to the frequent abrupt changes in the constitutional order in the country.

The modernization of the security and defence forces is currently underway in the country and is being accompanied by ECOWAS, which has maintained a regional stabilization force in Bissau since the "*failed coup attempt*" in early 2022. It should be noted that many Bissau Guinean activists and political analysts consider the presence of foreign military forces in the

national territory inappropriate and without legal backing, violating the principle of sovereignty and respect for local legislation. Among others, the requirement by law of approval by the National People's Assembly (ANP) was not observed by either the government or ECOWAS.¹ The latter, knowing the national legislation well, did not bother to respect the mandatory procedures and rushed the deployment of forces, responding to the request of the Guinean government, which is unconstitutional without the ANP's validation and also violating community provisions. On the other hand, the composition of the contingent sent to Bissau clearly shows the positioning of countries with geopolitical interests in the area.

This training workshop on SSR, hosted by ECOWAS, brought together various national institutions, including representatives of ministries and defence and security forces, civil society representatives, and partners. In a dynamic dialogue, stakeholders were able to examine the state of the sector, identify progress and shortcomings, and outline recommendations and perspectives on the "ECOWAS Policy Framework for SSRG".

In line with the objective of the proposed publication, this paper articulates and presents the needs, priorities, stakeholders, trends, progress, outcomes, challenges, and opportunities of the SSRG at the national and regional levels recorded during the Bissau training workshop.



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13443186>

Surface : 32.125 Km²

Population : 2,083,089 (Source : <https://population.un.org/wpp/>)

¹ ANP competencies in the treaties involving Guinea-Bissau (art. 85) and the organization of national defence (art. 86), emanating from the Constitution of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

2. Understanding and ownership of the SSRG at the national and regional levels

The presentation of the ECOWAS vision and the SSRG policy allowed for a better perception and understanding of the security and governance challenges of the sector at both the national and regional levels. While many of the participants had already benefited from training and sensitization sessions, seminars, and training under the UN peacebuilding programmes, the occasion highlighted the need for reform, the objectives, building blocks, principles, and targets of the SSRG; as well as the role of ECOWAS in the SSRG process and in promoting ownership mechanisms by member states. Awareness raising, communication, and management appear as fundamental and indispensable for a better understanding of the importance and value of the SSRG. Ownership of the Guinea-Bissau SSRG at the national level has been incipient and not very dynamic, mainly due to the inertia of the coordination structure and the lack of political will from government leaders. The participants, frustrated by the breakdowns in the sector's governance principles, better understand the gravity of the situation and the urgency of implementing deep and lasting reforms in the security and defence sectors.

3. Training and dissemination of the SSRG

The issue of training and dissemination outside the military structures are the biggest challenges for the SSRG. In effect, information has been kept very closed within the internal circuits of the defence and security forces, with the public being only sporadically informed and thus leading to low levels of training of non-military actors.

In terms of dissemination, the structure of the General Staff of the Armed Forces (EMGFA) has a communication service and broadcasts programmes on national television (TGB), which allows the public to follow the activities developed within the military forces, including the security and defence sector reforms as a whole: military and paramilitary.

4. Implementation of the SSRG in the ECOWAS political framework

Since the adoption of the ECOWAS policy framework in 2016 and its launch in November 2021, it was only during the Bissau workshop that many security sector actors became aware of this important ECOWAS policy instrument for member states. Little information was circulated about the state of implementation in Guinea-Bissau, especially towards non-state actors. Basically, only the military structures and some state departments have monitored implementation due to the lack of effective national coordination mechanisms. In general, the programmes operate with external financial support, on a project basis, often obeying the strategies and operating rules of the funding institution, and with budget limitations. Despite the limited involvement of CSOs in the SSRG processes, they have been very active and proactive, particularly at times of political-institutional crises, in the mediation of community conflicts, and in defence of victims of violence of any kind, particularly through women's and youth organizations.

However, the workshop brought knowledge and background information on ECOWAS policy, as well as the state of implementation of the SSRG policy in member states. The workshop also served to introduce actions for Guinea-Bissau in the implementation plan, with concrete actions identified by security actors and stakeholders.

5. Key areas and perspectives for the next phase of SSRG support and implementation

During the workshop the key areas for Guinea-Bissau were not explicitly established, however, we selected some in accordance with the information, relevance, and urgency for certain strategic areas in the ECOWAS policy framework for the SSRG.

The activities we propose to consider are awareness and communication; management and coordination; legislation and democratic control; training and capacity building of human resources. These are key areas to ensure a dynamic, effective, transparent, democratic oversight and participation of all stakeholders.

Management and coordination were identified as the weakest elements in the SSRG process in Guinea-Bissau. However, it is the consensus of the majority that they constitute the building blocks for ensuring good governance of the security sector and civilian oversight, namely by parliament and civil society organizations, in particular the integration of women and youth.

The issue of the Interministerial Commission for Defence and Security Sector Reform (CIRSDS) being placed under the Prime Minister's authority, considering the inoperativeness and inefficiency observed over the years, should be reviewed. The numerous responsibilities of the head of government, the lack of budgetary allocation, the weak representation of civil society, and the administrative bureaucracies end up making the operation of the CIRSDS unfeasible. A more autonomous structure and another type of more efficient supervision should be considered, such as the creation of a *"High Commission for Reform and Governance of the Security Sector (ACSSRG) under the supervision of the ANP²"*.

Awareness raising and communication, so important for the promotion of the strategies and purposes of the SSRG's direct target groups (military, police, and paramilitary) as well as those who represent sovereign bodies, traditional forces, and society at large are practically excluded from awareness raising and communication efforts, which are instead limited to the barracks of uniformed personnel. There is only one 30-minute weekly programme produced by the General Staff of the Armed Forces (EMFGA) that airs on national television (TGB). Therefore, it is crucial to encourage education and outreach efforts about the SSRG instruments, local norms, and especially the ECOWAS Military Code of Conduct among the many stakeholders.

Legislation and democratic control are two pillars of good governance in the Defence and Security Sector. In Guinea-Bissau, many of the regional and international legislative packages to prevent and combat relevant crimes (drug trafficking, money laundering, piracy, cyber crime,

² The ANP is the only sovereign body, in the parliamentary-based political system adopted in the Constitution of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, in a position to guarantee the democratic control of the SSRG.

etc.) need to be domesticated and mainstreamed. Most notably, civilian control of the SSRG is practically non-existent, despite the existence of a parliamentary commission for defence and security in the ANP ³.

Most criminal complaints are presented and made public within the parliament. For its part, civil society has primarily protested instances of violence and human rights abuses committed by armed personnel working for government security and defence agencies.

In all prior reform projects in the industry, the areas with the highest growth have been human **resource capacity building and training**. A process of modernizing operational services and administration has started, and the majority of the security and military forces' personnel have profited from training and capacity building in many specializations. To improve the effectiveness of the stakeholders, training and capacity building are still urgently needed. This is notably true for the state's civilian institutions and the civil society organizations involved.

6. Conclusion

Guinea-Bissau continues the path of cyclical crises, leading to permanent political-institutional instability, sudden changes in the constitutional order, increased insecurity, and institutions that are increasingly fragile and losing credibility. The social situation worsens, and the country is relegated to the bottom of the UN Human Development Index (HDI). Guinea-Bissau is thus at the mercy of organized crime, particularly drug trafficking, which earned the country the status of the first "*narco-state*" in West Africa more than a decade ago.

The ECOWAS Policy Framework for SSRG thus plays a crucial role in providing a roadmap for the reform, organization, and modernization of the security and defence sector in Guinea-Bissau. Its materialization into an updated operational plan, with a view to implementing necessary changes, could contribute to institutional stabilization, control, and supervision of the armed forces, which must submit to the civilian power, to the institutions of the Republic, and to the Constitution.

For this to happen, the SSRG must be assumed with responsibility and political will by national sovereign organs, the armed forces must assume a republican posture and the political forces should engage in dialogue and peaceful coexistence in the political arena. At the international level, ECOWAS, should engage in a peaceful, pedagogical, and consensual path in the search for lasting solutions and forgo the geopolitical strategy games of some member countries sending, under the guise of the organization, military personnel that bring little or nothing to the stabilization of the country and are an affront to its population.

³ Permanent Specialized Committee on Internal Administration, Local Government and National Defence - paragraph b, no. 3, art. 44 of the Rules of Procedure of the PNA.

Annex: Logical framework

This logical framework aims to summarize the contributions shared during the training workshop in a concentrated and specific manner. The record of opinions, proposals and recommendations is thus expressed in a table that seeks to match the themes examined with the issues identified and proposed for inclusion in the "Draft Five-Year Implementation Plan of the ECOWAS Policy Framework for Defence and Security Sector Reform and Governance 2019-2023."

	Understanding Ownership	Training Disclosure	Implementation	Key Areas	ECOWAS Memory
Needs Priorities	<p>Stakeholder Awareness;</p> <p>Training of SSRG specialized agents;</p> <p>The implication of traditional power, religious entities, and socio-professional associations;</p> <p>Broaden reform actors, including traditional power, partners, and others, with a view to strengthening human security more broadly in the sectors of health, food security, rights; and in combating violence and crime;</p>	<p>Periodic training and monitoring of stakeholders on peace and security;</p> <p>Organize national restitution workshops after an international training, in order to operationalize and follow up on the recommendations;</p> <p>Promote the dissemination of the ECOWAS Military Code of Conduct;</p> <p>As provided for in the ECOWAS Policy Framework for the SSRG, organize a series of national dialogues;</p> <p>Identify, and map training plan according to needs;</p>	<p>Redefine the remit of the Interministerial Commission for Defence and Security Sector Reform;</p> <p>Ensure greater transparency in management and civilian control by institutions such as Parliament, the courts and CSOs;</p> <p>Provide the CIRSDS with its own budget;</p> <p>Provide the State with material, financial and human resources for the control and monitoring of maritime, air and land spaces;</p>	<p>Establish fishing activity regulations concerning the use of all fishery resources;</p> <p>Acquire aerial equipment for surveillance, search and rescue;</p> <p>Rehabilitate the maritime signaling and make it effective and adequate (beaconing);</p> <p>Formation and regular training of prison guards;</p> <p>Prison facilities are insufficient and precarious, in need of rehabilitation and modernization;</p>	<p>Develop an "ECOWAS of the Peoples; "</p> <p>Equal treatment of member states;</p> <p>Dissemination of the ECOWAS Military Code of Conduct;</p> <p>Encourage national dialogues in countries in crisis and/or institutional instability;</p> <p>The political instability in Guinea-Bissau to be dealt with by ECOWAS in a fair, transparent and equitable manner, taking into account the principle of equal treatment of the member states of the Organization;</p>

<p>Stakeholders Trends</p>	<p>Broaden reform actors, including traditional power, partners, and others, with a view to strengthening human security more broadly in the health, food security, and human rights sectors; and in combating violence and crime;</p> <p>Need for a National Dialogue Council, including traditional and local power, to facilitate national ownership and strengthen solidarity;</p> <p>Strengthen compliance with the gender parity law in the Defence and Security sector to enable the rise of women to decision-making positions;</p> <p>Promote a civil society observatory on the SSRG, which is able to follow the evolution of the reform</p>	<p>Armed Forces Police Parliament State Departments Public Ministry Courts Civil Society All interested parties</p>	<p>Design elders' reflection groups and promote dialogue at local and regional levels related to violent extremism, radicalism, etc.</p> <p>Create neighborhood boards (made up of youth, women, elders, etc.) that will address issues of education, health, safety, and other community and local concerns;</p>		
<p>Progress Results</p>	<p>Stakeholders have become more aware of the threats to individuals and populations, the imperative to strengthen the capabilities of actors in the security sector, and the need to consolidate security and defence institutions in member states;</p> <p>In Guinea-Bissau there is an Inter-ministerial Commission for the Reform of the Defence and Security Sector (CIRSDDS) under the Prime Minister, integrating state institutions and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs);</p> <p>Provide the commission with its own budget and redefine its oversight to ensure greater transparency in management and civilian oversight by institutions such as Parliament, the courts, and CSOs;</p>	<p>The Armed Forces General Staff (EMGFA) has a communication service and broadcasts Programmes on national television (TGB), which allows the public to follow activities developed within the military, including security and defence sector reforms.</p>	<p>Notable progress in the demobilization situation of the Defence and Security forces, especially the military with regard to retirement and pensions;</p>		<p>Consolidate the security and defence institutions in the member states;</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Challenges Opportunities</p>	<p>Nationalize and vulgarize the legislative packages to prevent and combat currently relevant crimes (e.g., drug trafficking, money laundering, piracy, cybercrime, etc.) at the regional level;</p> <p>Develop a proximity policy, by improving the credibility and legality of security institutions, facilitating constructive exchanges, and developing a relationship of trust between the armed forces and the civilian population;</p> <p>Apply the principles, emphasizing the promotion of national solidarity and international partnership; the defence and respect of national sovereignty and territorial integrity;</p> <p>Ensure regional integration;</p> <p>Encourage national ownership;</p> <p>Integrate the gender dimension in peace and security Programmes and initiatives;</p> <p>Take human rights into account;</p> <p>Promote cooperation in joint patrolling among ECOWAS member states;</p> <p>Involve women's and youth organizations, which are very active in Guinea-Bissau.</p> <p>Foster the principle of the proximity of the security forces to the citizens, namely by developing community policing actions and projects;</p>	<p>Prioritize training of longer duration, as well as in the Portuguese language, for a better understanding and interactive training;</p> <p>Establish a legal framework for information facilitation between security institutions;</p> <p>Establish a discussion platform, through new technologies, to continue the process of dialogue and implementation of the SSRG;</p>	<p>Make more efficient the sanctions applied in relation to clandestine foreign vessels with illegal fish seized in our maritime space, as well as the exploitation of fish resources on land;</p> <p>Engage other responsible multilateral and bilateral institutions as strategic partners for Guinea-Bissau;</p> <p>Protect the threatened ecosystem (marine pollution, destruction of mangroves);</p>	<p>Building a high-security (planned) prison;</p>	<p>Ensure regional integration;</p> <p>Promote cooperation on joint patrols among ECOWAS member states</p> <p>Apply the principles, emphasizing the promotion of national solidarity and international partnership; the defence and respect of national sovereignty and territorial integrity;</p>
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