

SECURITY SECTOR REFORM (SSR) IN GUINEA-BISSAU

Africa Briefing Report
Egmont Palace, Brussels – 28 January 2008

February – 2008



List of Abbreviations

DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of Western African States
EU	European Union
EDF	European Development Fund
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
MFDC	Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Introduction

After many years of political instability and three failed attempts of DDR, there is a renewed effort in Guinea-Bissau to get DDR and SSR right. With a national strategy and action plan on SSR in place, Guinea-Bissau has attracted a lot of attention from the international community. Many donors, the European Union (EU) among others, are sending experts to assist in the SSR process in Guinea-Bissau. While there are favourable circumstances for SSR in Guinea-Bissau such as a willingness and commitment displayed by the national authorities, a number of difficulties and challenges were highlighted during the briefing. The Army, which is by far the most powerful actor in Guinea-Bissau, has to be brought into the reform process. In addition, the large numbers of donors and experts have to be absorbed, organized and most off all coordinated.

DDR and SSR are increasingly dealt with together which has become an automatism of donors. Over the past years, real progress has been made on the concepts of DDR and SSR. Among the donor community there is an emerging consensus that DDR and SSR have to be included in the framework of the broader governance agenda and that long term perspectives have to be taken into account. Yet, while the theories of DDR and SSR are well-developed implementation remains a challenge.

SSR: A difficult business

Most SSR programmes are developed without detailed knowledge and analysis of the respective situation on the ground. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, there is a **lack of knowledge among the donor community at times**. Hence, the danger of developing SSR policies that are not in tune with the actual situation on the ground. A firm understanding of what is happening in the field is needed. Without that kind of contextualised information, SSR programmes will not be able to identify the “right locals” needed for local ownership.

A further difficulty arises from the **sensitivity of the security sector**. DDR and SSR both touch the key governing functions of the state that are very closely linked to its sovereignty. In addition, DDR and SSR work with soldiers who are attached to their uniform and weapon and often have no alternative other than to be a soldier. Thus, the international community is faced with a difficult institutional situation. It touches indeed upon domains that are extremely protected and where the military has a firm grip on power. One of the primary similarities between many African countries is the fact that political power equals military power. There is a complete merger of the two notions. Whoever controls the military controls the country and this is also the case in Guinea-Bissau. Hence, when engaging in DDR and SSR processes, donors touch upon extremely delicate balances of power and are not able to offer soldiers an alternative source of power be it economic or political. It has to be taken into account that a mere reduction of military forces, for instance, is insufficient. Democratic control over the military has to be organised. Parliament has to be able to review the defence budget and make the necessary changes to it.

In most cases, SSR has to be conducted in **post-conflict and fragile states** where the state has no capability to exercise its core functions, lacks technical capacity and often has little political legitimacy. While, in the case of Guinea-Bissau, political legitimacy of the government is not in question, there is a fundamental lack of capacity. In this regard, Guinea-Bissau is a fragile state which is not able to control its territory, which lacks operationally effective armed forces, and where the police is not able to fulfil its core functions due to the omnipresence of the armed forces.

SSR programmes tend to focus on the national level while ignoring the **regional context**. Guinea-Bissau, like many other African countries, is confronted with that regional instability on a daily bases, and yet so far SSR programmes lack the appropriate instruments that take the regional context into account.

Another important difficulty arises from the fact the donors have repeatedly **engaged in SSR and DDR simultaneously**, often blending the two together, and worse, even confusing the two. This ignores the distinct different rhythms of the two processes. For instance, demobilised soldiers that have taken part in DDR programmes are used to establish a new police force as part of the SSR process. This however ignores the simple facts that a soldier will never be a policeman and that, in an unstable political situation, making a policeman out of a soldier will create the problems and the wars of tomorrow. Yet, the international community repeatedly makes this mistake.

So far there has not yet been a proper analysis on what exactly has gone wrong in previous DDR attempts. However, the government of Guinea-Bissau and donors will embark on a fourth DDR exercise without having asked themselves what and why things have gone wrong in the past. As a result, there is a real risk that the same people that have benefited from previous

programmes will be targeted again with little chances of success. Particularly the crucial, long-term reintegration of those demobilised appears to be neglected. Reintegration requires the creation of alternative livelihoods and economic alternatives. In this regard, UNDP is planning to conduct a study on the conduct of the previous DDR processes in Guinea-Bissau as well as a new analysis on the labour market which is looking in depth at the reintegration aspect.

Coordination of activities is key to any successful SSR programme as donors tend to have a different understanding of SSR which often leads to difficulties in terms of cooperation on the ground. Yet, if multiple donors with different priorities are engaged in an un-coordinated manner, SSR is doomed to fail. With around 50 different experts to be on the ground in Guinea-Bissau proper coordination and a division of labour will be vital.

National efforts

After three failed attempts of DDR, Guinea-Bissau shows strong commitment to get SSR right. Guinea-Bissau is restructuring the whole security sector and developed a national strategy for SSR in November 2006. This first national plan defines a set of measures to restructure and reorganise the defence and security sector.

The present situation of the security sector in Guinea-Bissau is not adapted to the present needs. The Army is oversized, the personnel is aging and composed of a number of competing services that do not comply with the law. Furthermore, the Army lacks training, has no resources and shows resistance to innovation. The police force is ill-equipped, lacks clearly defined competences and can rarely fulfil its functions due to an omnipresence of the Armed Forces. The judiciary lacks, among others, capacity,

financial autonomy and does not comply with the principle of separation of power. In this regard, the national strategy for SSR aims at downsizing the Army with new and clearly defined structures; it aims at modernising and restructuring the police force from nine to four bodies with better defined competences; and plans to build capacity in the judiciary.

In order to develop clear and concrete actions for SSR, Guinea-Bissau has adopted an Action Plan, initially covering the period of 2007-2009 (a second plan will follow for the period of 2009-2011). The Action Plan will implement a responsible structure, eventual sources of financing, a new framework for intervention of the government and a modernization and transformation of the security sector. The Action Plan is budgeted at 184 million USD, with a considerable contribution provided by the EU. In addition, Guinea-Bissau has created a new institutional framework implementation of the process, placed under the responsibility of the Prime Minister. It is composed of an Inter-Ministerial Committee, a Piloting Committee, a Technical Coordination Committee, and a bureau supporting the execution, implementation and follow-up of the national strategy.

The ESDP SSR mission in Guinea-Bissau

The international community has shown strong commitment to Guinea-Bissau. In 2006, an international contact group, co-chaired by Portugal and ECOWAS, was established. Furthermore, Guinea-Bissau was put on the agenda of the UN Peace Building Commission in December 2007.

As far as EU efforts are concerned, the EU will contribute to SSR in Guinea-Bissau by deploying a civilian ESDP mission, starting in April for a period of 12 months, to assist the

government of Guinea-Bissau in the reform process. The EU participation has to be seen in the context of a history of involvement in Guinea-Bissau. Guinea-Bissau has already benefited from some SSR programmes under the 8th and 9th EDF and will receive funds for SSR from the 10th EDF. Under the 9th EDF, assistance to Guinea-Bissau was focused on some justice reform programmes, technical assistance and the training of magistrates. Under the 10th EDF, a package of 27 million Euros under the focal sector of 'Conflict Prevention' is foreseen which will include justice and public administration programmes.

In general, this ESDP mission also has to be seen in the context of an increasing focus on SSR and SSR related issues from the side of the EU since December 2005..

Scope of the mission

The ESDP SSR mission in Guinea-Bissau will be comprised of 15 experts. It will be a targeted intervention aimed at creating the conditions for the implementation of the national security strategy. It will be based on the principle of local ownership, supporting the implementation of the strategy chosen by the national authorities themselves. The mission will undertake the following actions:

- advise on the detailed resizing and restructuring of the Armed Forces;
- assist in the development of a doctrine for the Armed Forces;
- support the development of a legal framework for the restructuring of the police force from nine into four bodies;
- advise on the planning and development of an effective criminal investigation capacity;

- advise Interpol National Central Bureau in Guinea-Bissau;
- advise and training for the judicial police;
- advise prosecution services; and
- advise on issues such as the mainstreaming on good governance standards in the reform process.

For the EU, SSR is part of a broader approach which includes the rebuilding of social and economic infrastructure in Guinea-Bissau.

Particular challenges for SSR in Guinea-Bissau

With regard to SSR in Guinea-Bissau, several key challenges were presented:

- Today, we witness an explosion of interest in Guinea-Bissau. Many traditional donors, who have not been involved in Guinea-Bissau before, such as the UK, are present because of the simple fact that there is SSR. In addition, new partners such as China and Brazil have also arrived. Two challenges come along with the huge number of experts and donors descending on Guinea-Bissau. Firstly, it requires an **absorption capacity**. How will Guinea-Bissau be able to absorb the flood of experts? How will they lead the donor community? How will they organise them? Secondly, there is an absolute need for **coordination and coherence** at the level of the donor community. So far there is no mechanism in place to coordinate the arrival of around 50 experts in Guinea-Bissau. Who will take the lead?
- One of the illustrations of the need to coordinate is the “war of experts” which has been seen in so many African countries. What role will they play? What is their contribution to DDR and SSR efforts? What are the selection criteria? Are they able to speak Portuguese in order to be able to communicate effectively with local authorities? Is it really the appropriate response to send 50 experts to Guinea-Bissau?
- In Guinea-Bissau no distinct centres of power exist. While one of the targets of SSR is the Army, they are also the ones that hold exclusive power in the state. This leads to a situation where the Army basically has to reform itself. Yet, any real reform of the Army will equal a loss of its power and

influence and, hence, is perceived as threatening. Under these circumstances, SSR has to be conducted with great care. If SSR in Guinea-Bissau is to be successful, the right pace of reform has to be found and confidence-building measures have to be in place. Otherwise it will aggravate mistrust among the military with a risk of renewed violence and regional instability. To push for a reform of the Armed Forces with all force in an unstable political situation would be a recipe for failure.

- While there does not appear to be a great risk of regional instability that could impact on the SSR process, Guinea-Bissau has maintained links with the *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance* (MFDC) in Senegal of which some have joined the Armed Forces of Guinea-Bissau. This might lead to future problems if tensions grow and thus has to be factored in.
- A further fundamental challenge with regard to Guinea-Bissau is the problem of drug-trafficking which is likely to complicate matters for SSR. The phenomenon of drug-trafficking and the huge amounts of money it has brought into the country have given no incentive whatsoever to do “real” SSR. Given the current lack of economic alternatives great emphasis has to be given to sustainable economic development.
- The donor community has to be aware of the fact that neither SSR nor DDR alone will bring long term stability to the country. Furthermore, the interest in and funding for DDR and SSR on part of the donor community has to be complemented with investment in the human capital of Guinea-Bissau alongside social and economic infrastructure.

Africa Briefing

Security Sector Reform in Guinea-Bissau

Orange Room, Egmont Palace, 28 January 2008

18.00 – 20.00

CHAIR:

Prof. Dr. Koen Vlassenroot (Director Central Africa Programme – EGMONT, Professor Ghent University).

PANEL:

- **Dr. Baciro Dja** (Director of the Instituto da Defesa Nacional, coordinator SSR Technical Committee)
- **Sophie da Câmara Santa Clara Gomes** (Senior DDR Advisor, UNDP)
- **Genoveva Hernandez** (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU)
- **Vincent Foucher** (Researcher CEAN-CNRS)

Mission Statement

The 'Observatoire de l'Afrique' is a network of independent experts and institutes coordinated by the Central Africa Programme of the Brussels based EGMONT – Royal Institute for International Relations. The network aims at encouraging discussion between African and European experts on African security and political issues. This project was initiated to remedy the non-existence of a comprehensive forum for academic and professional exchanges on African issues of relevance for CFSP and ESDP, including a wide range of African stakeholders. The overall aim is to create a forum for open, constructive dialogue and debate, and provide useful conclusions to a wide range of policy makers.

This project is based on an Internet platform www.obsafrique.eu providing permanent debate, publications and relevant information on three policy-relevant conferences per year. Of these seminars, one is to be held in an EU capital, another in Africa and the third in Brussels. The target audience for these debates include: policy makers at different levels, including the EU institutions, the AU, diplomatic staff, MFA and MOD officials and representatives of key think tanks and academia. In addition, a number of punctual meetings (Africa Briefings) will be organized that aim at providing insights into relevant political and security issues in Africa.

The Observatoire is developed in association with the 'Délégation aux Affaires Stratégiques' (DAS, Ministry of Defence – France). EGMONT is an independent think-tank based in Brussels.

Associated Members

The Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos et Internacionais (IEEI, Lisbon), the Conflict Research Unit (Clingendael Institute, The Hague), Chatham House, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS, Pretoria), the University of Bologna, the Conflict Research Group (Ghent University), the Center for Policy Research and Dialogue (CPRD, Addis Ababa) and the Pole Institute (Goma, DRC).