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Preventing Violent Extremism, Radicalisation and Small Arms Proliferation in the Sahel and adjoining Coastal Countries in West Africa

\$ Budget: 491,490 USD

🕒 Duration: March 2023- March 2024

Development Challenges

West Africa is experiencing an unprecedented surge in terrorism and violent extremism by militant Islamist groups operating in the sub-region. The activities of the groups in Burkina Faso, Mali and Western Niger has increased by 70 percent since 2021, continuing an uninterrupted escalation and spread of violent incidents in the region since 2015. Violent extremists have moved progressively to Burkina Faso, (from Mali) which now accounts for 58% of all violent extremists' attacks in the Sahel. Such activities are spreading gradually to littoral countries, such as Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, and Togo, with increasing concerns about its potential expansion towards the Gulf countries including Ghana.

Violent extremist groups use weapons from looted military barracks in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and stockpile leakages from mines for their activities. They also use Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) for their attacks where the tools of fabrication may result of the artisanal production of gold. The spread of violence involves the deterioration of social cohesion between different communities. Research by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) on the links between violent extremism, organized crime and local conflicts in the Liptako-Gourma region reveals that terrorist groups in the Sahel region are using weapons from looted military barracks. Weapons had been sourced from Libya's plundered arsenals post the Arab Spring, since 2013. However, these sources have been declining and new sources from weapons diverted from poorly controlled national stockpiles as well as attacks on isolated military barracks indicates that violent extremists are getting their weapons from looted military barracks in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Small arms and light weapons- SALW, and their ammunitions as well as other materials are then seized and used in terrorist activities.

Response mechanisms have also not invested well in intelligence and connecting seemingly innocuous events to each other, collaboration and information sharing among countries on this transboundary threat has been limited. Finally, the impact and role of gender in violent extremism and terrorist threats in the subregion has not been adequately explored and understood.

Project Objectives

The objective of the project is to improve knowledge and information-sharing among security personnel and civil society actors. This also includes community leaders and local gun manufacturers, and local initiative actors contributing to improving security, in preventing and countering terrorism, violent extremism, small arms proliferation, diversions and trafficking in seven (7) countries in West Africa namely: Benin, Togo, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. Activities include capacity development, training of trainers and a regional policy and experience sharing seminar.

Project Outputs

Improved knowledge and information sharing among security personnel, stockpile managers and armorers, local initiatives contributing to security improvement, and civil society in preventing and countering terrorism, violent extremism, and small arms proliferation, diversions and trafficking.

Improved knowledge among policy makers and practitioners (stockpile managers) on emerging dynamics of violent extremism, terrorism and SALW dynamics in West Africa.

Partnership

Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KA IPTC)
Accra Initiative

Contribution to SDGs

