

Strengthening Civil Society Oversight Capacity for the Private Security Sector in Africa

Background

Private security is burgeoning in Africa with a growing demand for services ranging from protection of individuals and facilities to training of public security forces and counter-piracy. However, this is taking place under the radar of democratic oversight. The private security industry in many African states is poorly regulated, creating a permissive environment for human rights abuses and posing wider security and sustainable development risks.

The Private Security Observatory

project seeks to strengthen civil society actors in Africa in order to play a full role in a more inclusive and participatory approach to governance of the private security sector. This role will be strengthened both at the national level and through increased engagement in international multi-stakeholder processes that seek to regulate the global private security industry.

The Private Security Governance Observatory was established in 2014 to support the CSO oversight

of the private security industry. The Observatory has two objectives:

- 1) to enhance the oversight role of civil society at the national level; and
- 2) to create strong links between African civil society and multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA).

The work of the Observatory is facilitated through an online platform which enables sharing of experiences between CSOs.

SHRIM Support

The SHRIM supported the Observatory in 2017, in order to increase its impact in three ways:

- Expansion of its geographical spread and membership in Francophone Africa;
- Launching the Anglophone Observatory;
- Reinforcing the capacities of CSOs through trainings and outreach.

The Project

Thanks to the project, the capacities of the CSOs were reinforced through the following activities:

- The organisation of a workshop in Mali in September 2017 on the status of private security regulation in Africa;
- The drafting of the Practical Guidance Tool for CSOs "The Role of Civil Society Organizations in the Good Governance of the Private Security Sector";
- The upgrading of the Observatory online platform, and the launch of the English version;
- The organization of workshops that enabled the launching of the Anglophone network, in Ghana in May 2017, and in South Africa in November 2017.



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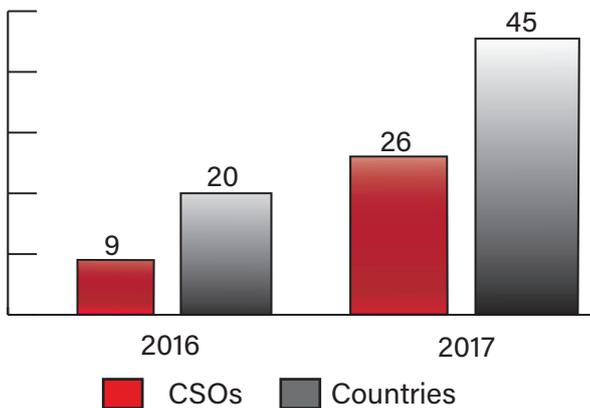


Results

Support from the SHRIM has resulted in measurable growth of the Observatory network. The reach of the Observatories grew extensively both in term of number of CSOs but also geographical spread. From 20 members at the beginning of the project, there are now 53 Observatory members, in 18 countries in Africa.¹

¹ Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Ghana, Togo, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria.

Increase in Number of CSOs and Countries over the Course of the Project



Thanks to this workshop, I acquired knowledge that will have a positive impact on communities' rights. I intend to share what I have learnt with the other CSOs of South Kivu who could not participate in these activities.

Mr. Blaise Bubala, representing l'Action des Chretiens Activistes des Droits de l'Homme Ashabundad, ACADHOSHA, D.R. Congo

The support of the SHRIM was instrumental in empowering local CSOs to improve oversight of the private security sector in their respective countries. Thanks to this support, CSOs have started to organize events on a national level on their own initiative, fostering a dialogue about challenges, and engaging with actors from the private sector, government and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). The involvement of NHRIs has led to a complementary initiative in Mali where the NHRI has requested to organize meetings with local CSOs to discuss, on a regular basis, human rights concerns around private security. Having raised awareness of international initiatives such as the Montreux Document and ICoCA, many CSOs have also become members of ICoCA and are taking an active role in international meetings such as the Montreux Document Forum.

Observatory, Regional Workshop Bamako, Mali, September 2017

