Strengthening the capacities of Sahelian governments towards more effective border management and collaboration

Working with the Governments of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad, IOM and UNOCT seek to strengthen border management in the Sahel region and reinforce trust between communities and the authorities, especially in remote border areas.

Budget
$7,500,000.00

Pillar
Pillar II –Measures to prevent and Combat Terrorism

Project Status
Concept

Implementation Period
2021-2023

UN Org
IOM

UN Global CT Compact Partners
UNOCT

Countries
Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Mali

Current Donors
This project is currently unfunded.

Description of the Project

In response to the multifaceted challenges of the Sahel region, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) proposes **a regional and integrated approach that empowers border management actors of four countries (Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad) and supports them in strengthening their capacities to efficiently and securely manage their borders through greater community engagement, enhanced operational capacities, information sharing, and fostering regional cooperation at various levels,** thereby improving the overall security at the borders and more specifically that of the communities living in these border regions and beyond.

The growing insecurity in the border regions of all four targeted countries has increased the need for a coordinated, cross-border and community-focused approach. The proposed intervention is designed based on the understanding that **trust between (border) communities, and between communities and authorities is an essential factor in strengthened border management.** Given the cross-border nature of many of the factors that contribute to regional insecurity, the proposed intervention strongly emphasizes the importance of establishing cross-border collaboration platforms and the organization of a regional workshop on border management.

The proposed project responds to recommendations raised in the CTED assessments for Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger (conducted in 2018) and Chad (conducted in 2014). The project will focus on the border regions of Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mali. IOM will implement activities on both sides of their border, specifically in the regions of Diffa and Agadez for Niger, and on the region of Lake Chad, Kanem and Tibesti for Chad. The project will be implemented in close collaboration with the four governments and communities living in the border areas, and actively seek to identify and explore areas for cross-border cooperation.

In the short term, the project will strengthen Governments' and partners', including IOM's, understanding of the perception that border communities have of their authorities. Building on these findings, context-specific activities will be implemented to build trust between the communities and authorities, while simultaneously working with the governments to equip them and develop their capacities to effectively manage their borders and facilitate cross-border cooperation. This project also falls within the framework of the **UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS)**, which aims at addressing structural problems in the Sahel that make the region vulnerable to conflict through three pillars: governance, resilience, and security.

Rationale

The security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin (LCB) remains a significant concern to the region's governments, as well as to the United Nations. The insecurity in the four countries targeted through this intervention would help to mitigate "the risk of a further move of terrorist violence towards coastal States [...] and threatens to undo achievements in democratic governance in the subregion". The tri-border area between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger (commonly referred to as the Liptako-Gourma area) has been the hotbed of violent extremist organization activity in the Sahel. An increased risk of inter-communal conflict has further increased the number of people in need in the area. Furthermore, Niger and Chad have been experiencing unprecedented levels of violence from the Lake Chad Basin-crisis with frequent attacks on security forces and civilians. This has led to high numbers of displacement, a decrease in economic opportunities, and additional strains on already limited natural resources.

These factors have all contributed to a very low capacity of State and border management actors to build trust and confidence between the communities in these border regions, state structures as well as security forces. The security, development, and humanitarian crisis in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin cannot and will not be resolved by focusing on only one component.

Community Engagement & Policing (CEP) contributes to creating an environment in which communities and local stakeholders are not seen as part of the problem but as part of the solution. In particular, in border areas, it enables a decentralized approach in which legitimate law enforcement entities establish a proactive relationship with border communities, including informal community leaders, to help avert cross-border crime, identify security issues and build ownership of regional challenges. This community-focused approach is complemented by activities that strengthen the governments' capacities in border management. To support decentralization and ensure that security forces are better able to control cross-border movements, they will be supported in expanding the technical and material resources to control the border through the Migration Information Data Analysis System (MIDAS). This Border Management Information System, officially adopted by the four targeted countries for land border crossing points, collects biographic and biometric data of cross-border travellers and shares this data automatically with their respective capitals.

The project responds to UNSC resolution 2391 which states that ongoing military efforts to counter terrorism in the Sahel "can only be effective if accompanied by the implementation of inclusive regional strategies encompassing security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian issues". The need for an integrated and coherent approach among the international community was further reiterated by the UN Security Council in a recent resolution (S/RES/2531), where it requested the Secretary-General to foster adequate coordination and exchange of information between the different organizations on the ground and in the region. The project aims to implement some of the recommendations of the CTC/CTED assessments of countries in the region with regard to border management, in terms of capacity building, ensuring interconnectivity of MIDAS with the Interpol I24/7 and infrastructure.

Outcomes

To contribute to the objective of strengthening the capacities of Sahelian Governments to limit the spread of cross-border violent extremism, the project will focus on three key outcomes:

Outcome 1: border communities and security forces can better communicate to enhance community engagement in safety and security at the border areas;

Outcome 2: the Governments of the four targeted countries are better equipped with modern infrastructure and material resources to effectively manage their borders; and

Outcome 3: cross-border regional platforms are in place to foster collaboration and information sharing between border management key actors.

Outputs/Indicative Activities

The project will implement the following indicative activities:

- carry out perception studies in several targeted regions (Kayes and Sikasso in Mali; and in Lake Chad region, Kanem and in the North, in Tibesti region in Chad) to develop activities in response to the concerns and needs identified;

- enlarge and strengthen the network of Community Prevention Committees (CPCs) in Diffa region and the Eastern part of the Agadez region along the Bilma-Dirkou-Madama corridor (Niger); Kayes and Sikasso regions (Mali); the Lake Chad, Kanem and Tibesti regions in Chad, along the border with Niger and the Sahel, North, South West, Centre West, Centre South regions in Burkina Faso;

- carry out sensitization activities in all targeted regions to build mutual trust, based on the local contexts and the outcomes of the assessments and previous activities carried out in these regions.

- support relevant actors of the Governments with joint preparations for future cross-border crises by developing and carrying out table-top simulation exercises in which community representatives also play a prominent role.

- strengthen the capacities of the Governments to manage their borders by providing training opportunities and in-kind support (material and infrastructure)

- enlarge the current network of border posts that are connected to MIDAS that can comprise the fixed network of land border posts and also mobile means in some areas where alternative routes are frequently used and the interoperability between MIDAS and the INTERPOL I24/7 in Niger and Chad will be further extended to the new installations;

- deliver training on border security and management topics more broadly: topics to be covered in these training include, but are not limited to, document fraud; human rights; transnational organized crime, cross-border terrorism threats, and responsible use of biometrics at border which will be developed and delivered in cooperation with UNOCT/UNOCT through its Border Security and Management Unit (BSM). Core components of the curriculum will focus on the integration of gender in border management.

- support the rehabilitation of border posts in Kayes and Sikasso regions (Mali), and in Lake Chad and Tibesti regions (Chad) (to allow a permanent presence and safe location for border agents.

- platforms will be established through which the national actors can more easily work together with their counterparts on the other side of the border and effective data sharing mechanisms will be discussed;

- establish cross-border coordination platforms in several of the targeted border regions, organize cross-border meetings for better cross-border coordination in cases of cross-border crime, and capitalize on bilateral agreements signed between neighbouring countries to develop data sharing mechanisms between law enforcement authorities to assist in joint investigations and in identifying some cross-border criminal modus operandi and networks;

- organize a regional workshop which will bring together high-level stakeholders from the four targeted countries to exchange views and best practices on regional border management, specific attention to gender in border management, community engagement and countering violent extremism in the Sahel. This regional workshop will be organized jointly with UNOCT/UNOCT-Border Security Management Programme and will include key national stakeholders, as well as representatives of some of the targeted communities to share their perspectives and other regional actors, including the GS-Sahel, ECOWAS, UNOWAS, the EU, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and other relevant UN agencies.

Human Rights Mainstreaming

A comprehensive and regional human rights risk assessment will be conducted prior to starting activities under Outcomes 2 and 3, which focus on supporting the security forces of the four targeted countries. This assessment will be conducted as part of IOM's internal application of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP), which obligates the Organization to conduct an HRDDP risk assessment in relation to projects providing support to non-UN security forces.

The assessment, in line with IOM's HRDDP methodology, will analyze, inter alia: the general state of human rights compliance in country; the record of the intended recipient(s) in terms of compliance or non-compliance with international humanitarian, human rights law, including the violation of political rights, and refugee law, including any specific records of grave violations; the records of the recipient(s) in taking or failing to take effective steps to hold perpetrators of any such violations accountable; the legislative framework and its adequacy in addressing potential and ongoing violations and use as a corrective function; and the feasibility of putting in place effective mechanisms to monitor the use and impact of the support provided. The analysis will conclude with an assessment of the risk that the receiving entity might commit grave violations of international humanitarian, human rights law, particularly violations of political rights, or refugee law.

The assessment will also include the identification and implementation of possible mitigation measures to be integrated into the project and communicated to the recipients of support to minimize the risk of violations occurring. The report will be shared and validated by all the IOM Missions in the four countries, as well as the Regional Office, before the activities under Outcomes 2 and 3 start. Human rights will also be a core component of the training for officials deployed to border posts.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender considerations have been at the heart of the development of the proposed intervention. All four countries have low rates of women in their respective police forces which naturally limits the extent to which gender is given consideration in border management. In addition, the Community Prevention Committees that will be supported will pay special attention to the inclusion of women and youth representatives to ensure that the voices of the entire community are heard. In those areas where there may not be specific platforms, attention will be given to creating these platforms to ensure that women's and youth's voices are heard in the consultations. In the closing workshop, a session will be specifically dedicated to gender considerations and best practices in border management.

Addressing gender mainstreaming in border management is fundamental and thus clearly recognises the critical role that all members of the community play in peace building and maintaining social cohesion. Paying special attention to the role of women, men, girls and boys deepens our understanding and analysis of context-specific attitudes, status, safety needs, rights and opportunities to thus support the design of gender-sensitive responses to protection and conflict resolution. Additionally, gender mainstreaming within the border agencies will lead to a more representative and equitable Border Force that would impact positively on administrative and operational aspects of border management as well as protection of migrants and communities, such as reduction in corruption, decrease in human rights violations at the border, enhanced safety and protection due to improved investigation abilities, increased detection and protection of victims of human trafficking and smuggling (who are often female).

Therefore, a component dedicated to gender mainstreaming will be included in the training sessions (including Gender-Based violence, trafficking and smuggling of people) as part of the standard curriculum. It must be noted that gender mainstreaming is not simply a "numbers game" of women hired, but encompasses all aspects of policy, institutional practices, training and operations. In the countries where it exists, the project will actively reach out to the Association of Female Police Officers.