



# SAFESEAS COMMENTARY



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## HOW TO IMPROVE THE DELIVERY OF CAPACITY BUILDING? INSIGHTS FROM A COORDINATION MEETING

How can capacity building training for maritime security be better coordinated in West and Central Africa? This was the core question of a recent meeting – ‘Strategic Dialogue Workshop On West and Central Africa Maritime Security Training Capacity’ – held from 25 – 28 February 2020 in Accra, Ghana.

The focus of the gathering was the Gulf of Guinea as this region has become a blue crime hotspot due to the prevalence of criminal activities, such as piracy, illegal fishing, oil bunkering, smuggling of arms and drugs, and human trafficking. These crimes called, according to the organizers of the dialogue, for firm interventions, and building the capacity of actors and partners in this region. This commentary highlights some of the issues that were discussed during the meeting.

### Crime fighting

The workshop was organized by INTERPOL, UNODC, and the U.S. State Department to serve as a forum to gather and exchange ideas for building and strengthening the capacity of various actors active in the maritime domain in the region. Furthermore, the goal of the workshop was to discover knowledge gaps at partner organizations, to get an overview of the kinds of training programs run by other organizations and to gain more insights into the training needs and priorities of participating organizations/nations. In addition to the delegates from regional states, the meeting was attended by representatives from, among others, the European Union, the U.S. State Department, US Naval Forces Africa, US Africa Command, UNODC, INTERPOL,

International Maritime Organization, the EU's Gulf of Guinea Inter-Regional Network (GoGIN) Project, Regional Centre for Maritime Security of Central Africa, Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC), and the Danish Embassy in Ghana. In their opening remarks the representatives emphasized crime fighting at sea and the development of a legal framework for the entire Gulf of Guinea to enhance prosecutions across the region as a priority; with the Yaoundé Architecture serving as the point of departure for dialogues and collaborations.

According to the INTERPOL, the rise of crimes at sea in the Gulf of Guinea has not only generated interest in the region from international organizations and their partners, but also from criminals and crime syndicates that aim to benefit from the lack of region-wide jurisdiction to combat these crimes. The participants cited cases in which criminals and pirates had been apprehended only for them to go free, due to a lack of solid legal framework for prosecutions or due to tempering with the crime scene. These situations therefore amplified the need for capacity building in investigative areas. In light of this, the INTERPOL and Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC), floated the notion of 'Capacity Building in the Investigative Area/Crimes' and 'Train the Trainer-concept', which were met with enthusiasm as the mood was that these concepts had the potential to enhance the spread of knowledge and ideas in institutions, thus strengthening the capacity of the local, national and regional partners. While there was a lot of discussions on crime fighting at sea and prosecution, there was no mention of crime prevention. However, the representative of the Danish Embassy pointed out that his country believes in 'crime prevention on land rather than in crime fighting at sea. We need to know why these crimes happen and what we can do about it.'

## Harmonization

During the workshop the lack of coordination of training, lack of overview of training content and participants of courses, and lack of overview of the providers of training, were issues that were raised. The speakers observed that their organizations provided and participated in a wide variety of trainings, but lacked an overview of who had organized or participated in which workshops, trainings and seminars. There was also a lack of overview of the content of the various courses. The observations amplified calls for 'harmonization', that is 'bringing skills and knowledge together,' which will then result in 'harmonization of standard operations procedures', 'harmonization of course content', and 'harmonization' of training contents, training programs and list of participants.

One major proposal at the event for how to achieve harmonization was the development of a co-ordination database which details courses on offer, course content, organizer and registered participants. To gain insights into which training programs are on offer, participants suggested 'Tracking the Training' - which gives insights into the offered programs and ideally, who participated in them. Tracking is key as it helps to eradicate duplication of training efforts and eliminate the number of people attending the same course more than once. Finally, 'Tracking the Training', according to the participants, could record the host of training capabilities of regional centres and national assets.

Organizers and participants agreed that such harmonization processes would lead to better results of training programs. It would also achieve a better overview of attendants leading to the eradication of duplication as there have been instances where one person had attended the same training more than once with different providers. Participants also emphasized the need for harmonizing standard operations procedures through 'Simulation Trials/Operations' that provide insights on what works and what does not, so that these can be improved or included in the existing capacity building training material. Moreover, such simulations are practical and have the potential of tapping into and drawing from local resources. By drawing from local resources, the UNODC noted, that the financial burden on donors will be reduced.

In sum, the workshop made some important proposals on how coordination of training activities might be improved. The discussed harmonization measures could indeed be important steps in this

regard. Yet, one needs to be cautious about the limits of any coordination attempts insofar as coordination problems are often not primarily technical problems. They might be the outcome of different interpretations, priorities and divergent political interests between providers and receivers of training or between agencies. The AMARIS project will closely follow future coordination activities in Ghana and the region as part of its Work Package 3. As evidence from other regions indicates, increasing transparency on capacity building activities will also be in West and Central Africa a very important step in improving delivery and its efficiency.