

Strengthening the police in Africa

Support to the reform process of national and regional police structures

What is the initial situation?

In some sub-Saharan African countries, the police face difficulties to protect citizens from violence, crime, and terrorist threats. **Human rights and rule of law principles are often inadequately anchored in national and regional authorities and institutions.** Deficits of transparency, control and accountability in the security sector undermine the legitimacy of the police vis-à-vis citizens, resulting in low levels of trust. **Police officers are sometimes even perceived as a threat.**

Furthermore, structural deficits such as a **lack of training, expertise and standardised operating procedures, as well as poor infrastructure in the police institutions,** facilitate violations of the law by security forces. Cooperation between police departments, forensics and the judiciary is not well structured, which leads to a high crime rate and low clearance rate, as well as considerable legal uncertainty among the population. The **lack of service provision is particularly noticeable in remote rural areas,** where the police is often absent.

In such contexts, the state's monopoly on power is limited and may be **filled by traditional authorities and informal security actors.** This can result in cross-border threats to the security and stability of individual countries and regions, such as the spread of transnational organised crime, e. g. human trafficking, smuggling of drugs and illegal arms. At the same time, training and operational areas for terrorist organisations are emerging.

Programme title	Programme to build and strengthen the police structures in selected partner countries in Africa
Country and regional components	Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Kenya and African Union
Commissioned by	Federal Foreign Office
Cofinancing	European Union for The Gambia
Lead executing agencies	National ministries of the Interior, AU commission
Overall term	January 2023 to June 2026
Budget (2023-2026)	20,5 Mio EUR including 4 Mio EUR EU funding

What is the goal?

The police of the partner countries and the African Union (AU) are well placed to assume greater national, regional and international responsibility for security, thereby reducing the risk of violence, serious crimes and transnational organised crime, based on efficiency and the rule of law. The protection of women, girls and disadvantaged groups is prioritised.



Pictures from left to right:
AU strategic planning for AMISOM
New construction of a model police station in The Gambia

Pictures from left to right:

Forensic laboratory in Abidjan,
Côte d'Ivoire

Premiere of the film "Supastaz"
in Kenya

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How do we work?

GIZ has been supporting police reform processes in Africa on behalf of the German Federal Foreign Office since 2009. To date, it has cooperated with 27 national and regional partners. The current "Programme to build and strengthen police structures in selected partner countries in Africa" comprises **three country components in Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Kenya and a regional AU component**.

The programme is based on the German government's guidelines "Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace" (Federal Foreign Office, 2017), which place the legitimate state monopoly on the use of force to protect citizens at the centre of its work. The structures and institutions of the security sector should ensure that police work is geared towards protecting the security of citizens.

All processes are developed together with the partner institutions according to their respective needs and are based on existing national or international strategies. The focus here is on compliance with legal norms, in particular the **implementation of international human rights standards in police work**. In accordance with the "Guidelines for Feminist Foreign Policy" (Federal Foreign Office, 2023), special emphasis is placed on **gender equality and the protection of women and children** in all components.

This results in three fields of action: (1) Strengthening police prevention and victim protection, particularly in the area of sexual and gender-based violence; (2) Supporting law enforcement agencies by improving infrastructure and providing basic and advanced training; (3) Expanding regional networking and cooperation between law enforcement agencies.

What have we achieved so far?

The police programme has been able to make an impact at several levels thanks to its long-standing existence and diverse partners. Cooperation at supra-regional level (for example at AU and AFRIPOL) has led to improved coordination and performance.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid provision of personal protective gear and the creation of short, multilingual video instructions on how to behave in everyday police work situations have contributed to maintaining operational capability on the ground.

Activities, such as an "SGBV awareness caravan" throughout The Gambia, broad participation in the "16 days against violence against women and girls" in Côte d'Ivoire, and the award-winning film *Supastaz* about the disappearance of children in Kenya, have enabled the public to get involved in various aspects of police gender work.

Flagship projects, like the ISO certification of the forensic laboratory in Abidjan and the construction of four model police stations in the greater Banjul area, co-financed by the European Union, helped to align local working conditions with international standards.

What more do we want to do?

Enhanced forensic services and technology improve the provision of services along the criminal justice chain, thus, strengthening the rule of law in criminal proceedings from investigation to possible conviction. This leads to more effective investigation, particularly in cases of sexual and gender-based violence, through increased crime clearance rates and effective victim protection.

AU and AFRIPOL enhance their ability to counter transnational organized crime and terrorism, ultimately strengthening the state's monopoly on the use of force.

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Photo 2: GIZ/ Gambia
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