

REPORT ON THE PILOT PHASE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON  
CITIZEN CONTROL OF PUBLIC SECURITY ACTION IN WEST AFRICA

# CITIZEN SECURITY

TOWARDS CITIZEN CONTROL OF PUBLIC SECURITY ACTION IN AFRICA

*The Case of Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background to the Initiative

Since 2018, the Laboratory of Analyse of Societies and Powers / Africa - Diasporas at Gaston Berger University in Saint-Louis, Senegal (**UGB LASPAD**) has undertaken a series of studies as part of an action research programme on citizen control of public security action in West Africa. In collaboration with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Peace and Security Centre of Competence Sub-Saharan Africa (**FES PSCC**) and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding - Senegal (**WANEP**), a team of researchers led by Dr Rachid Id Yassine conducted an exploratory study, under phase one, in three West African countries (Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau), to develop, test and consolidate a multipartite mechanism for citizen control of public security action. During this pilot phase, a **citizen security barometer** was developed (*Citizen Barometer of Security*: [www.citizen-security.org](http://www.citizen-security.org)).

### Summary of the findings

Supported by some forty security sector actors and experts, an international, multidisciplinary research team conducted a study on perceptions of security governance in **3 neighbourhoods in 8 towns in Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau (Senegambia)** (Dakar, Saint-Louis, Tambacounda, Ziguinchor, Banjul, Bwiam, Bissau, and Farim), in which **1480 people were interviewed** by a team of 15 interviewers deployed on the ground in **March 2019**. The study was conducted on the basis of a survey of around sixty questions, administered directly and targeted based on a balanced representation by gender and age, as well as a satisfactory

representation of levels of education and socio-professional categories.

The data gathered was analysed and processed to produce a **citizen security index (CSI)** that charts community perceptions of the security situation. On a scale of -10 to +10, **Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau have a CSI of 6.35**, meaning that citizens felt that the **security situation was good**. However, with a CSI of 5.38, Bissau-Guineans had a more negative perception of the security situation in their country than their neighbours in The Gambia (CSI of 7.25) or Senegal (CSI of 6.16). Citizens' perceptions in some of the 24 neighbourhoods surveyed reflected a mediocre security situation, namely in Saré Guillèle in Tambacounda (3.37) or Bairro Militar in Bissau (2.93), whereas the situation was perceived to be excellent in Kankuntu, Bwiam (8.71).

Among the major trends revealed by the study, the report shows a positive situation overall; for instance, a solid majority of citizens stated that they **felt safe in their neighbourhood (60.5%)**, that they felt they **lived well in their neighbourhood (62.8%)**, and that over the past twelve months they had **not been assaulted (81.3%)**. The study also confirmed a strong public interest in security issues, to the point where the interviewees called for a more active role for citizens. Respectively 93.9% and 91.8% thought that citizens could play a useful and effective role in security matters. 76.7% also felt that citizen control of public security action was necessary or even indispensable.

## Analysis of the issues

The report also covered the theoretical and practical prerequisites for an effective, sustainable and usable mechanism for **citizen control of public security actions**. In a state governed by the rule of law, security is theoretically treated as an individual right guaranteed by the state, which is responsible for its implementation, not least because it has a monopoly on legitimate violence. However, the **right to security is not an enforceable right**, as this would imply that the government has an obligation not only of means but also of result, if the right to security was formally constituted as a fundamental right.

According to the report, it was clear that the security situation in contemporary societies could not be improved solely through the actions of governments or civil society organisations. Security is a concern that involves society as a whole, especially when it is viewed more holistically, as in the case of human security. The research conducted points towards the construction of **citizen security** understood as a retroactive co-production process, whereby human security is co-produced by citizens and for citizens.

The paper therefore posits that the establishment of a citizen security barometer is scientifically, politically and socially desirable. It also reviews the understanding and challenges involved in this tool, and addresses its potential and uses in terms of empowerment of security actors or in peace education actions. Its institutionalisation would make it possible to link it with official security statistics and thereby reduce the gap between public actions and real security needs.

From a geographic standpoint, it would be particularly useful to integrate it into the regularly updated territorial

administration system. It could be beneficial for the ECOWAS member states as part of the security

framework used by governments to respond to joint or individual threats. With that aim in mind, LASPAD will place its know-how at the disposal of the various actors with a view to improving the effectiveness of security policies.

## Key Recommendation

The main objective of this action-research programme is to contribute effectively to strengthening the security of the state and its citizens through democratic governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. For this purpose, **four areas of activity making use of the barometer** have been identified:

- Developing knowledge tools;
- Disseminating standards and promoting good practices;
- Providing scientific, legal and technical expertise; and
- Building the capacities of individuals, civil society organisations and public institutions.

Only a holistic approach to human security can simultaneously address threats, build resilience and develop the significant potential of West African societies.

To implement this approach, the citizen security barometer should be institutionalised through a citizen security observatory that would mandate academics to produce and process reliable and objective data, with the proactive cooperation of government authorities, defence and security forces and civil society organisations. If human security is envisaged from the perspective of the people and jointly with the people, then it will become citizen security and will truly be “a shared concern!”.

