DCAF Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Inception review and Strategic retreat – Gulf of Guinea Program

Africa Americas Entity | External Consultant | December 2026 - January 2027

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Inception review and Strategic retreat – Gulf of Guinea Program

DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
Africa and Americas Division

Assignment: External consultant – inception review and retreat facilitation
Location: Geneva, Switzerland
Period: December 2026 / January 2027 (exact dates to be confirmed)
Number of working days: 10
Working languages: English/French

Application deadline: 4 December 2026

1. Background and rationale

DCAF is implementing a regional program in the Gulf of Guinea to strengthen security sector governance and support reform processes. Ahead of 2027, the Africa and Americas Division wishes to take stock of the program's direction, coherence and relevance in a changing political and institutional context.

As the program moves into implementation, this is an opportunity to revisit its initial assumptions, strategic direction and implementation arrangements. The exercise should help the team assess whether the current approach remains relevant, clarify the respective roles of regional and country-level engagement, and identify adjustments needed to strengthen the program's coherence and impact.

The program operates under different funding arrangements and implementation timelines. Any proposed changes must therefore take account of contractual commitments, available resources and delivery capacity. Some longer-term choices may also require better political and contextual analysis. The review should identify these gaps rather than attempt to fill them within this assignment.

The aim is not an external evaluation or a new program design exercise. The review will take the existing program strategy, theory of change, results framework and contractual commitments as its starting point. It should help the team assess their continued relevance, identify where adjustments are needed and feasible, and make informed choices for 2027. Where more substantial strategic changes appear necessary, the review should identify the evidence, consultations and approvals required to inform such decisions, rather than seek to resolve them within this assignment.

2. Overall objective

To support an inception review of the Gulf of Guinea regional program, assess the continued relevance and coherence of its existing strategic framework, test its underlying assumptions, clarify its

priorities and regional added value, identify feasible adjustments to the 2027 workplan, and assess the capabilities and working arrangements required for effective program delivery.

3. Specific objectives

A. Revisit the program's strategic direction and positioning

- Review the program's existing outcomes and theory of change, including the political and institutional changes DCAF seeks to influence, the key actors involved and the underlying assumptions;
- Clarify how regional and country-level interventions contribute to the program's outcomes and whether any adjustments are needed within existing commitments;
- Identify DCAF's comparative advantages and opportunities for political and institutional influence;
- Consider where greater focus, different partnerships or changes in approach could improve the program's relevance and impact;
- Revisit the rationale and objectives of programming in Senegal and assess how this fits within the regional program;
- Review the rationale and added value of the Dakar Hub within the regional program.

B. Review coherence and strategic priorities

- Examine how country-level and regional interventions contribute to shared objectives and reinforce one another;
- Challenge key assumptions and identify approaches to maintain, strengthen, adapt or reconsider;
- Help the team make choices about priorities, including what may need to receive less attention.

C. Review the 2027 workplan

- Assess planned activities against the priorities emerging from the review and their expected contribution to program outcomes;
- Propose concrete adjustments, including consolidation, rescheduling or discontinuation where appropriate, and identify opportunities to test new approaches or partnerships during 2027, with clear learning objectives to inform future programming;
- Identify any implications of the proposed adjustments for the existing theory of change, results framework and MEAL arrangements, and determine whether further revisions are needed;
- Check proposed changes against financial, contractual, staffing and implementation constraints.

D. Review delivery capabilities and program working arrangements

- Identify the strategic, technical and operational capabilities required to deliver the program effectively, including those best provided at regional and country levels;
- Assess the functions and capabilities required at the Dakar Hub, including its role in regional coordination, country-level support and program implementation;
- Examine existing coordination and decision-making arrangements and identify gaps, overlaps or bottlenecks affecting program delivery;
- Identify areas where greater clarity on roles, responsibilities and accountability is needed;
- Provide recommendations to inform a subsequent internal management discussion on team organization, responsibilities and working arrangements.

E. Identify critical evidence gaps and learning priorities

- Identify what political, contextual or institutional information is missing for sound strategic decisions and which assumptions need testing;
- Distinguish decisions that can be made now from those requiring further analysis, consultation or validation;
- Identify priority learning questions and opportunities to test key assumptions during program implementation in 2027;
- Propose practical mechanisms for adaptive management, including when, how and on the basis of what evidence strategic assumptions and program priorities should be revisited.

F. Set out the next steps

- Agree what can be adjusted immediately, what should be implemented or tested during 2027, and what should inform future program development.
- Identify responsibilities, deadlines, dependencies and points at which further decisions will be needed, taking account of different funding and implementation timelines.

4. Scope of work and methodology

The assignment will comprise four phases. The consultant should propose a practical approach that allows for frank discussion and leads to decisions rather than a review of activities.

Phase 1 – Preparatory review and targeted consultations

Review the program strategy and results framework, draft 2027 workplan, relevant reports, funding commitments and available political and contextual analysis. Review existing program management arrangements, roles and responsibilities, coordination mechanisms and decision-making processes, including the existing RACI matrix. Conduct a limited number of consultations with program staff and management to identify the main questions, disagreements, assumptions and constraints. Particular attention should be paid to assessing the coherence and continued relevance of the existing outcomes and theory of change, identifying key assumptions that warrant further examination, and distinguishing between areas where adjustments are feasible within existing commitments and those requiring further analysis or consultation.

Deliverable 1 – Strategic discussion paper: a short paper (maximum 5 pages) setting out preliminary observations, key assumptions to be challenged, strategic options and trade-offs, and questions requiring further evidence or management decisions. The consultant should bring an external perspective to the review, challenge existing assumptions and present options for discussion with the team.

Phase 2 – Retreat design and preparation

Prepare the agenda, methodology and facilitation materials for a series of sequenced strategic working sessions in Geneva, equivalent to approximately two working days. The approach should allow sufficient time for critical reflection, discussion of competing priorities and consolidation of emerging conclusions between sessions.

The sessions should be structured so that discussions on strategic direction and program coherence inform subsequent discussions on operational priorities, delivery capabilities and working arrangements.

Deliverable 2 – Retreat agenda and facilitation materials, agreed with DCAF in advance.

Phase 3 – Facilitation of the strategic retreat

Facilitate a series of strategic working sessions in Geneva with relevant program staff and management, equivalent to approximately two working days. The sessions may be spread over several days to allow for reflection and preparation between discussions.

The consultant should propose a sequence of discussions whereby conclusions on the program's strategic direction and priorities inform subsequent discussions on the 2027 workplan and delivery arrangements.

The sessions should address the following:

- Strategic direction and program outcomes: review the relevance of existing outcomes, the theory of change and underlying assumptions, including the respective contributions of regional and country-level engagement.
- Program coherence and priorities: identify approaches to maintain, strengthen, adapt or reconsider, as well as key gaps in contextual understanding and their implications for strategic choices.
- 2027 workplan: identify concrete adjustments in light of the priorities emerging from the discussions, taking into account existing contractual, financial and implementation constraints.
- Delivery capabilities and working arrangements: identify the capabilities required to deliver the program, review the role of the Dakar Hub and identify areas where coordination and responsibilities need to be clarified.
- Learning and adaptation: identify priority learning questions and agree on how the program should regularly review its assumptions, priorities and approach.
- Next steps: distinguish between decisions that can be taken immediately, those requiring further analysis or management approval, and those that should inform future programming.

The sessions should conclude with a set of agreed priorities, proposed workplan adjustments and clear responsibilities and deadlines for follow-up.

Decisions concerning internal team organization, management responsibilities and the RACI matrix will be addressed separately by DCAF, drawing on the conclusions of the retreat.

Deliverable 3 – Facilitation of the strategic working sessions in Geneva.

Phase 4 – Consolidation of outcomes

Deliverable 4 – Proposed revised 2027 workplan: an updated version in the existing format, developed with the program team. It should show proposed changes, the reason for each change, implications for resources and commitments where identifiable, responsible teams and approvals still required. DCAF remains responsible for final approval.

Deliverable 5 – Strategic roadmap, learning agenda and action matrix: a concise account of (i) immediate decisions, (ii) actions to implement, test or investigate in 2027, and (iii) longer-term questions for future programming. The roadmap should identify priority learning questions, proposed

adaptive management mechanisms, owners, indicative deadlines, dependencies and review or decision points, and distinguish agreed actions from proposals awaiting validation.
Deliverable 6 – Delivery capabilities and working arrangements: a concise set of recommendations on the capabilities required for effective program delivery, the role of the Dakar Hub and areas where internal coordination, responsibilities or decision-making arrangements require clarification. These recommendations will inform a subsequent DCAF-led internal management exercise.

5. Expected deliverables and timeline

Deliverable	Deadline
1. Strategic discussion paper (max. 5 pages)	At least 5 calendar days before the sessions
2. Session agenda, methodology and materials	At least 5 calendar days before the sessions
3. Facilitation of sequenced strategic working sessions	December 2026/January 2027 – date TBC
4. Proposed revised 2027 workplan	Within 5 working days after the sessions
5. Strategic roadmap, learning agenda and action matrix	Within 5 working days after the sessions
6. Recommendations on delivery capabilities and working arrangements	Within 5 working days after the sessions

DCAF will provide one consolidated round of comments on the post-retreat drafts. The consultant will incorporate these within the agreed ten-day allocation. All written deliverables will be in English and should be concise and usable by the program team.

6. Estimated number of days

Activity	Working days
Document review and targeted consultations	2
Strategic discussion paper	1
Session design and preparation	2
Facilitation of strategic working sessions	2
Proposed 2027 workplan revisions	1.5
Strategic roadmap, recommendations and finalization	1.5
Total	10

The distribution of days may be adjusted in agreement with DCAF.

7. Required qualifications and experience

- Strong experience in strategic planning, program review and design in international cooperation.
- Proven ability to design and facilitate participatory discussions that lead to clear priorities and decisions.
- Ability to question assumptions constructively and turn strategic discussions into workable plans.

- Understanding of politically informed programming, adaptive management and donor-funded implementation constraints.
- Excellent facilitation and drafting skills in English; ability to work with English- and French-speaking participants.

Experience in SSG/R and knowledge of West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea are strong assets. The assignment requires a combination of strategic program review, contextual understanding, constructive challenge and neutral facilitation skills.

Applications from individual consultants or small teams combining complementary expertise are welcome. Applicants should explain how they intend to combine expert analysis and constructive challenge with neutral facilitation. Where a team is proposed, the respective roles should be clearly outlined.

8. Management and coordination

The consultant will work under the guidance of DCAF's Africa and Americas Division and in coordination with the program team. DCAF will provide relevant documents, identify consultees, organize retreat logistics and review deliverables. DCAF retains responsibility for strategic decisions, engagement with funding partners and formal program changes. DCAF will lead any subsequent revisions to the results framework and MEAL arrangements, as well as internal decisions concerning team organization, management responsibilities and the RACI matrix, drawing on the findings and recommendations of the review.

9. Expected results

By the end of the assignment, DCAF should have a shared understanding of the continued relevance of the program's strategic framework, its priorities and regional added value; concrete proposals for feasible adjustments to the 2027 workplan; a clear understanding of the capabilities required for effective delivery; an agreed set of learning priorities; and a strategic roadmap identifying decisions, responsibilities and next steps for 2027 and future programming.

Application requirements

Interested consultants are invited to submit the following by **4 December 2026**:

- A brief technical proposal (maximum 2 pages) explaining their understanding of the assignment, how they would facilitate strategic choices and workplan decisions, and how they would turn the retreat into practical follow-up.
- CV(s) highlighting comparable strategic reviews, program design and facilitation assignments.
- A financial proposal specifying the daily rate, total fees and any additional costs.