

MOBILE EDUCATION AND TRAINING TEAM



Frank Larsson, SWEDINT/NCGM

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Course Director Frank Larsson is watching a group of participants as they work. The discussion is animated, hands drawing figurines in the air, someone protesting, someone laughing, someone else raising his voice.

- Attendez, attendez, ce que je veux dire . . .

Their uniforms show where about half of the participants come from. Flags and patches from Burkina Faso, Guinea, Senegal, Chad, Ivory Coast, Mali. French speaking West African countries and members of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States. The other half is civilian, some in colourful dresses that wouldn't look amiss at an opera premiere.

What is going on here at Ecole de Maintien de la Paix Alioune Blondin Beye is however as far from highbrow theatre as can be. The school educates troops for peacekeeping missions, for example in the ongoing conflict in Mali. Several of the thirty participants are taking part in the UN mission MINUSMA.

Frank Larsson normally does his work at SWEDINT/NCGM in Kungsängen, Sweden. Late this summer he and a couple of colleagues flew down to Mali in order to hold a Civil Military Relations course, CMR, in Bamako. Part of SWEDINT/NCGM's mission is to educate on-site, and in Africa the foremost collaborations are with East African Standby Force in Nairobi and ECOWAS in Bamako.

"The biggest challenge has been holding the course in French", says Frank Larsson. "Normally it's in English but it has gone surprisingly well and what we may have lost in understanding somewhere down the line, we have gained twice in energy. There is more nerve in this group of people. We're in a mission area and you can sense that. Many of them have experience from conflicts in the region and we, who are here leading the course, also learn things."

SWEDINT/NCGM has held CMR courses since 2006 with focus on support to the UN and the African Union, with participants from military, civilian and police organisations. By gaining knowledge about and understanding of each other, conditions are created for coordination and cooperation between different organisations engaged in peacekeeping. Preparations for holding the course here in Mali started already in January 2015.

"We call it METT", says Frank Larsson, "Mobile Education and Training Team. Obviously we can use our resources quite effectively by sending three people to run the course down here, instead of flying in all these officers, police and civilians to Kungsängen. It doesn't suit all courses, but for this course Mali was perfect."

Mobile training teams from SWEDINT/NCGM have recently educated on site in Kenya, Uganda, Bosnia- Hercegovina, Croatia and Serbia, overall with good results. The evaluation of the CMR course in Mali remains, but Frank Larsson is convinced that they are on the right track.

"The next logical step is a Training of Trainers course, and the goal is for them to hold their own CMR courses here and in other places in the region. As I see it, it's just a matter of time."