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The African Union and Security Sector Reform
A review of the Post-Conflict
Reconstruction & Development (PCRD) Policy

Nowhere in the world has human security in all its aspects proved more elusive than on the African continent. Africa has been the stage of some of the longest-running wars in the world, and basic security has proved elusive for both individuals and nations. No wonder, then, that the issue of conflict management has been at the top of Africa's political agenda since 2003. Importantly, Security Sector Reform (SSR) is now recognized as essential to recovery from conflict, peace building, state building, and conflict-prevention. Over the past decade, the security sector has emerged as a vital element in national and international policy in conflict-affected societies as it is influenced by the broader human security agenda. There is a pressing need for democratizing security institutions in Africa, and incorporating a strong and comprehensive SSR package into the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture can provide a framework and stimulus to this process.

The Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) reflects the African Union's desire to be the lead actor in reconstruction efforts on the continent. The AU has sought to address SSR by finding a significant niche within the policy, which was adopted in 2006, to handle SSR processes on a case-by-case basis. Most SSR actors in Africa consider the development of the PCRD and the incorporation of SSR to be critical to any successful peace building initiative. The AU already has many SSR related elements in place and is currently developing an SSR policy, yet there is an urgent need to complement this process by developing sub-regional SSR strategies. There is a great need for African scholars and policy makers to rethink strategies to develop a continental framework for SSR. The AU, as a continent-wide organization engaged in conflict prevention and management, should take a higher profile in post-conflict peace building activities in general and SSR in particular.

