The African Union and Security Sector Reform (SSR): towards a Horizontal SSR Assistance: @PKO Now! No.60

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October 11, 2013

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Africa and Conflicts

In April 1998, Kofi Annan, then the UN Secretary-General published a report "the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa" (A/52/871 - S/1998/318) as per a request by the UN Security Council. The report describes the conflict situation in Africa as follows:

"Since 1970, more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa, the vast majority of them intra-State in origin. In 1996 alone, 14 of the 53 countries of Africa were afflicted by armed conflicts, accounting for more than half of all war-related deaths worldwide and resulting in more than 8 million refugees, returnees and displaced persons."[1]

It has been 15 years since the publication of the report, and sadly the situation described in the statement have not yet ameliorated in Africa. However, there have been constructive and encouraging developments since the establishment of Peace and Security Council (PSC) within the African Union (AU) in 2003.[2]

Positioning SSR within the African Union Policy

With the establishment of African Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC), the AU - PSC has assumed responsibility for promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa.[3] Its

commitment to the aforementioned responsibilities was transpired into policies. In 2004, Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy was issued, followed by the adoption of Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) in 2006. The PCRD is "intended to serve as a guide for the development of comprehensive policies and strategies that elaborate measures that seek to consolidate peace, promote sustainable development and pave the way for growth and regeneration in countries and regions emerging from conflict."[4]

The PCRD as a strategic and normative framework, elaborates in detail how to achieve consolidated peace. The policy does not use the term SSR - Security Sector Reform - within its text, however its security section[5] articulates the core value and activities of SSR in every sense. Medhane Tadesse[6] precisely summarizes the relationship between SSR and PCRD as "the AU has sought to address SSR by finding a significant niche within the policy [aka PCRD]", which reflects the AU 's acknowledgement of the importance of SSR in post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable development.[7]

Two years after the issuance of the PCRD, the AU Member States decided to further the SSR efforts by encouraging "the Commission [PSC] to develop a comprehensive AU Policy Framework on SSR, within the context of the Policy Framework on Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development" at the Tenth Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in February 2008. (Assembly/ AU /Dec.177(X), pg4)[8]

Strategic SSR Partnership between the AU and the UN

In 2007, the UN Security Council held an open debate on the role of the Security Council in supporting SSR, which produced the very first Security Council Presidential Statement on SSR.[9] Since then, the UN has identified SSR is "a core element of multidimensional peacekeeping and peacebuilding, essential for addressing the roots of conflict and building the foundations of long-term peace and development."[10]

At operational level, SSR has been specified as one of the core UN peace operation mandates, and currently (as of writing of this article) 11 out of 32 UN peacekeeping

operations (PKOs) and field-based political missions are mandated with SSR, operating in Burundi, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and West Africa - all in the African continent.[11]

While the cooperation between recipients and providers of external support advances, the recipients feel the external support can be imposing. As Dylan Hendrickson[12] analyses that "there is a common perception of SSR as a foreign-driven, often political process, informed primarily by Western experiences of how security institutions should be governed,"[13] a general perception of SSR activities, particularly in developing countries is rather unfavorable. Since security domain lies at the very core of national governance, sovereign nations are inclined to be incredulous of external pressure on any reform on security sector, and this view is shared by African nations as well. Moreover, Hutchful and Fayemi[14] argue in a OECD survey study that security reforms in African countries, in many cases, " SSR has been forced on states by external forces, either as part of the process of rebuilding societies torn by conflict, or as part of a process of fiscal reform (or both)."[15]

In this backdrop, Permanent Missions of Nigeria and South Africa co-hosted a "High-level Forum on African Perspectives on SSR "[16] in May 2010 with approx. 80 high-level participants from 55 Permanent Missions and 11 UN entities. At the forum, the strategic SSR partnership between the AU and the UN was launched.

Changing Dynamics: AU Policy Framework on SSR

At the opening of the 2010 high-level forum, a Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the UN on behalf of the two co-chairs, affirmed that "African countries are not only recipients of SSR assistance, they are increasingly providing this support."[17] As rightly noted in the account, the dynamics of SSR practice on the ground, particularly in Africa has been changing.

The utter manifestation of the changing dynamics is the document titled "African Union Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform" adopted in January 2013 at the 20th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

This policy document, built on the international normative frameworks established by the UN, provides guidance for the AU, Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and partners for the implementation of SSR in Africa.[18] The Policy Framework clearly states that it is "a major step in addressing the lack of African ownership of current SSR approaches. The African Union has a unique responsibility to lend an African character to and African ownership of SSR processes in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building contexts in Africa."[19]

Toward a *Horizontal* SSR Assistance

One of the core messages of the Policy Framework on SSR is an unyielding resolution by the African countries to take up the ownership of security sector reform. This is not surprising as the AU has been taking leadership over African issues since its inception, and incorporation of SSR into the very fabric of the African Union policies and strategies is yet another accomplishment.

The expected challenge however, is how to translate the spirit of the Policy Framework into practice. The Policy Framework as guidance, respects each African nation's "national ownership, national responsibility and national commitment" in implementation of security sector reform activities.[20] It encourages AU Member States of intra-African cooperation on SSR experience, providing horizontal SSR assistance.

The AU Policy Framework on SSR is the very first document developed as a comprehensive regional SSR policy in the world. Prior to this document, there has been no regional policy framework on SSR, and for this reason, its implementation would bring an inspiration to many SSR practitioners, and a manifestation of African solidarity and partnerships.

End Notes

[1] Report of the Secretary-General (1998) The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, A/52/871-S/1998/318, p.3, par.4

[2] The Protocol Relating to the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union entered into force on 26 December 2003, after being ratified by the required majority of Member States of the AU . The African Union. October 2013. Accessed October 4. http://www.au.int/en/.

[3] The African Union. October 2013. "Functions of the PSC." Accessed October 4. http://www.au.int/en/organs/psc.

[4] The African Union. 2006. "The Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD)." Section I (Introduction), Para. 1.

[5] Ibid.Para. 23 - 26.

[6] Dr Medhane Tadesse is an Associate Professor of History at the King's College London's Conflict, Security & Development Group (CSDG) and academic specialist on peace and security in Africa. He serves as a SSR advisor to the African Union.

[7] Tadesse, Medhane. 2010.The African Union and Security Sector Reform - A review of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction & Development (PCRD) Policy. Addis Ababa: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

[8] The decision to develop the SSR policy framework was encouraged by already existing statements on the importance of SSR : 1) UNSC Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2007/3) of 20 Feb 2007; 2) UNSG Report (A/62/659-S/2008/39) of Jan 2008, lays down the UN approach to SSR ; 3) the UNSG Report (A/63/881-S/2009/304) of 11 June 2009, recognizing that SSR is a priority in the immediate aftermath of conflict; and 4) UNSC statement of 16 July 2010 (S/PRST/2010/14) notes that effective SSR programmes are an important element of conflict prevention.

[9] Security Council Presidential Statement (21 February 2007), "Statement on Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Role of the Security Council in supporting security sector reform" (S/PRST/2007/3)

[10] UNDPKO . 2012.The United Nations SSR Perspective. New York: the United Nations.

[11] UN Department of Political Affairs. 2013.Mandates for peacekeeping operations and field-based political missions.The document, published on 1 February 2013 lists total of 31 missions, yet does not contain the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as MINUSMA was established in April 2013. Hence, the list of countries provided

in the text is the original work of the author.

[12] Dylan Hendrickson, an expert in the field of SSR and of Africa, is a Senior Research Fellow in the Conflict, Security and Development Group, King's College London.

[13] Hendrickson, Dylan. 2006. "Overview of Regional Survey Findings and Policy Implications for Donors." In Security System Reform and Governance. OECD Publishing, 56. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264007888-3-en]

[14] Dr Eboe Hutchful is Director of African Security Dialogue and Research (ASDR), in Accra, Ghana. Dr Kayode Fayemi is Director of the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), in Lagos and London.

[15] Hutchful, Eboe and J. Kayode Fayemi. 2006. "Security System Reform in Africa (Annex 4.A1)." In Overview of Regional Survey Findings and Policy Implications for Donors, edited by Dylan Hendrickson. In Security System Reform and Governance. OECD Publishing, 71.

[16] The Forum was funded by the Netherlands with technical support from the SSR Unit in the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI), DPKO.

[17] UNDPKO/OROLSI SSR Unit. 2011.African Perspectives on Security Sector Reform Final Report. New York: The United Nations DPKO.

[18] The African Union. 2013.African Union Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform.

[19] *Ibid.* Section A2. Rational and Scope, item 10.

[20] *Ibid.* Section B16(c) "National ownership, national responsibility and national commitment"