

CAPACITY BUILDING BEST PRACTICE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVED REGIONAL PEACEBUILDING

CONTRIBUTORS: LINNÉA GELOT (FOLKE BERNADOTTE ACADEMY), MIKAEL ERIKSSON (NORDIC AFRICA INSTITUTE AND THE SWEDISH DEFENCE RESEARCH AGENCY) AND MARINA CAPARINI AND YEONJU JUNG (SIPRI)

OVERVIEW

The African Union (AU) is rapidly emerging as a global peacebuilding actor. It has a formal role in the UN Charter as a regional consultation body with which to initiate conflict management efforts during threats to international peace and security. There are great expectations of the future role of the AU in continental peace and security. This session examined the role of the AU and its Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Discussion revolved around issues of financing, inclusivity and ownership. Participants suggested how best practices could be replicated and strengthened to enhance peacebuilding and development in Africa. Recent reform proposals by states and policy groupings in the AU and its RECs were discussed to highlight the opportunities they present for peacebuilding and development practice in Africa. The primary aim was to identify concrete achievements and the potential for continued capacity building and policy dialogue efforts across Africa.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The 2016 AU Summit's proposal for an AU Peace Fund represents a key opportunity to develop African ownership of peace operations and peacebuilding on the continent. It is a way not only to give responsibility to member states for the implementation of AU decisions, but also to create a common understanding among member states of what external actors see as financial problems, while at the same time creating an equitable partnership. This self-funding will ensure that African states are able to control their own agenda.

Through its proposed funding framework for peace and security, the AU is considering various other fundraising mechanisms, such as from private sector mining companies, airlines, or banking and telecommunications systems. As part of its efforts to increase self-financing, the AU aims to fully implement a 0.2 per cent import levy on member states by 2018. Participants agreed that the AU cannot be effective if 60–70 per cent of its funding comes from external partners, but noted that continental ownership should not be contingent on its ability to self-finance.

Participants agreed that it was possible that the AU might become independent, but several issues were raised regarding Africa's ownership of peacebuilding—not least the lack of stakeholder engagement and funding. The development and implementation of Agenda 2063, for example, have not been inclusive and have failed to secure stakeholder buy-in. In general, member states are not familiar with the content of AU resolutions and proposals, and the 2063 dream is not commonly shared or understood by ordinary people. Funding difficulties are likely to arise among states that belong to the AU and its RECs. For instance, the 15 member states that comprise the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are expected to contribute to both organizations. As a number of them are considered fragile states, it is unclear whether they will be willing or able to meet their financial commitments to the AU. Furthermore, since each of the AU's five major contributors—Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria and South Africa—are grappling with political, economic and/or security challenges, it is unlikely that African states' contributions will be sufficient to manage the security challenges faced by its members.



Despite these challenges, several past and ongoing initiatives featuring long-term visions and action plans suggest progress. For example, the engagement of ECOWAS in Burkina Faso and Gambia demonstrated how sub-regional prevention coupled with strong political leadership by neighbouring states could enable effective peace-building. The AU and RECs continue to support preventive diplomacy and mediation in various ways. The AU is conducting training on mediation for women and, together with the Intergovernmental Authority for Development, it is seeking to strengthen mediation units to support envoys. ECOWAS has an operational mediation unit in place as well as a normative framework for engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs). CSOs play an important role in holding national governments accountable and supporting policy implementation. For example, Gambian civil society's mobilization of local communities ahead of the elections was instrumental in securing a peaceful resolution to the 2016 political crisis. Lastly, the UN Office in Central Africa is developing a regional action and capacity building plan based on experiences from Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Initiate a genuine discussion on values between the AU and its partners wherein both groups' perspectives are equally weighted.

- While bilateral partners and the international community should recognize Africa's authority to take the lead in its own affairs, so too must regional actors acknowledge their responsibility to define their own security and development.
- A better balance would help to mitigate the negative impacts of donor-driven agendas and dependence on external financing.

2. Develop ongoing technical and political capacity building initiatives at different levels among key state and non-state actors to improve ownership.

- Capacity building of country representatives to the AU would increase the likelihood that decisions made at the headquarters are transmitted to and implemented by individual member states.

3. Increase coordination to avoid duplication and increase effectiveness.

- Coordination should be horizontal, between regional institutions, and vertical, between donors and their (sub-)regional partners; and should occur at different levels in both cases.

4. Prioritize policy assessments to promote stronger institutions.

- In the African context, the political culture does not oblige public servants to provide feedback to the public.
- To strengthen the RECs, significant effort should be made to conduct policy assessments on the impact of funding as a means of ensuring transparency and accountability among public servants.

5. Identify ways to increase the involvement of youth, women and CSOs in the development and implementation of Agenda 2063.