



# ASSN STRATEGY: 2019-2022

## INTRODUCTION

Security Sector Reform and Governance (SSRG) is now accepted as an indispensable component of the prevention, peace building and development agenda, as underscored by the adoption of the AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform (2013), the Security Council resolution 2151 (2014), the ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector reform and Governance (2016) and in various iterations the growing convergence among states and regional communities on the fundamentals of democratic governance of the security sector.

The current era has seen important political advances such as the regular occurrence of presidential and legislative elections; a decrease in the number of attempts to seize power by military means; international protocols prohibiting unconstitutional changes of regimes; growing involvement of civil society actors to engage security establishments; increased civilian control over the security forces; initiatives at the regional level to support SSR, which are already impacting positively on the governance of the security sector and developing accountability mechanisms, from budgetary to parliamentary oversight.

However, the security environment in Africa is currently characterised by increasing asymmetric threats, emerging security risks and conflicts. These include transnational organized crime, growing identity and community disputes, maritime insecurity, border security, violent extremism, terrorism, unregulated migration and cyber insecurity, which place new demands on traditional SSRG approaches. At the same time, insecurity has at its most fundamental level, is driven by poverty, inequality, exclusion from decision-making, and lack of access to resources and opportunities.

Amid this fast-changing environment, the following contemporary challenges are evident:

- The effectiveness of SSR, as presently configured and implemented, faces growing scepticism of having failed to deliver on its promises.
- The nexus between SSR and 'conflict prevention', 'peace building' and 'development' has been less robust than hoped. All too often, in particular in countries emerging from conflict, SSR efforts continue to be trapped in low social and development indicators undermining continuing SSRG efforts.
- SSR also happens to be instrumentalised to focus on militarized stabilization imperatives, counter-terrorism initiatives or migration challenges rather than on longer-term governance and institution building.

Yet, there is a growing awareness that democratic control and oversight of the security services is a fundamental premise of democratic governance to be exercised through a multiplicity of mechanisms (parliaments, independent rule of law institutions, human rights committees, CSOs, the media and so on, as stated by the AU SSR Policy Framework).

## The African Security Sector Network

Formed in 2003, the African Security Sector Network (ASSN) has established itself as a reputable network of African security sector reform practitioners on the African continent and internationally. ASSN has a decade-and-a-half of experience and leadership in promoting democratic security sector governance (SSG) and security sector reform (SSR), with a wide and diverse membership of recognised professionals and academics.

ASSN is unique in that:

- It has pan-African coverage, as the largest Security Sector Reform (SSR) specialist organisation of its kind;
- It is African-centred and builds and disseminates African expertise and best practices.
- It is multidisciplinary and able to pool expertise, which permits the network to deal with a wide range of security sector issues in an integrated manner;
- It has a cross-cutting membership of researchers, analysts, civil society activists, parliamentarians and (active and retired) security practitioners;
- It provides multinational networking, which facilitates south-south sharing of experiences and lessons, bridging regional, language and different organisational structures and principles shaping state structures (anglophone, francophone, lusophone);

## VISION

The vision of ASSN is that of an African owned security sector that is democratically governed, rights compliant, people-centred, well managed, accountable and effective in supporting and sustaining human security.

## MISSION

The ASSN will facilitate progress towards the achievement of effective and democratically governed security sectors across Africa.

The ASSN mission is clearly an asset and a guaranty of uniqueness and value-added: whilst the majority of African think tanks focus on research and expertise dealing with conflicts and insecurity, the ASSN is the only African organization exclusively and specifically focused on promoting democratic governance of the security sector in a way that makes African people more safe and secure. The ASSN is therefore unique on the present African continental landscape.

## CORE VALUES and GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The core values of the ASSN are:

- An African-centred agenda,
- Accountability and transparency,
- Inclusivity,
- Integrity and objectivity,
- Diversity,
- Responsiveness,
- Sustainability
- Partnership.

## Major achievements

Since its inception the ASSN has:

- Provided support to Governments and Parliaments in challenging (and often - though not exclusively - post-conflict) environments such as South Sudan (2007-2013); DRC (2009), Liberia (2005-2009), Ghana (2005-2010), Mali (2009), Burkina Faso (2010), and Madagascar (2015);

- Provided technical support to the development of the AU SSR Framework adopted in 2013;
- Provided technical support to the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) SSR Framework adopted in 2016;
- Provided technical support to the AU to develop Operational Guidance Notes (OGNs) to support the implementation of the AU SSR framework (2013-2015) and training input on the OGN on Codes of Conduct to the AU (2018), as well as expert support to AU Joint Assessment Missions to a number of member states;
- Established a roster of more than 50 senior experts (since 2010);
- Initiated and published innovative research, in particular related to Hybrid Security Governance in Africa (2014-2017)<sup>1</sup>; Security Sector Reform Provisions in Peace Agreements (2009); Changing Intelligence Dynamics in Africa (2009) ; Security Sector Reform in Francophone Africa (2010) ; in addition to a wide range of professional publications by members of the network;
- Finally, ASSN is presently conducting a training and capacity-building programme in Security and Justice Sector Reform (SJSR) for Civil Society Organizations from 5 conflict-affected African countries (South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Niger, Burundi and the DRC), in partnership with the African Union, RECs and Oxfam and Cordaid of The Netherlands.

## Governance Structure

An Executive Committee (EXCO) of 13 members, including a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and an Executive Secretary, governs the network.

The ASSN is serviced by a Secretariat, which coordinates the network's affairs from its central location in Accra, Ghana. Its functions include the day-to-day administration of the network, coordination of core programmes, information management and logistical facilitation. The Secretariat is entirely staffed by African professionals under the leadership of the Executive Secretary.

The ASSN also has Regional nodes, based on the geopolitical and linguistic regions of Sub-Saharan Africa. In each Regional nodes, one/two member organisation(s) form the centrepiece of the ASSN's regional activities. These regional nodes are

- East Africa: Security Research and Information Center (SRIC) based in Kenya (<http://www.srickenya.org/>);
- West Africa: PRAWA based in Nigeria (<http://www.prawa.org/>) and the Fondation pour la Sécurité du Citoyen (FOSEC) based in Burkina Faso (<http://www.fosecburkina.org>)
- Southern Africa: the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) based in South Africa (<http://apcof.org/>)

The role of the Regional nodes is to:

- serve as the nodal point and, if necessary, host ASSN activities in a region

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<sup>1</sup> The ASSN is the first organisation to have launched research dealing explicitly with « hybridity and security », aimed to capture the complex amalgam of formal and informal networks, actors, norms and processes which, alongside legally established structures, influence decision-making as well as policy implementation in the security sector.

- liaise with members of the ASSN in a region
- promote knowledge about the work of the ASSN to the public and stakeholders in a region.
- contribute to the development of proposals for ASSN's engagement in regional SSR processes, or in SSR processes being carried out by states in that region

ASSN currently has a membership base of 250 members, individual as well as institutional. Membership is voluntary and approved by the EXCO. In addition to receiving information and updates, members can make themselves available for ASSN projects.

## The ASSN Approach: Theory of Change (TOC)

Organising the security sector in Africa around democratic governance continues to present the most effective way of addressing African security challenges. However recent experience has served to highlight the importance of key factors which were on the periphery of earlier efforts. These include asymmetric conflicts, the hybridity of security networks and the increasing importance of early prevention.

Intrastate insecurity, the regionalization and transnational character of threats as well as the root causes of instability (broken social cohesion, broken civil-military/security relationship, poverty; marginalization) are common features across many of the conflicts in Africa. Formal and informal security networks are often intertwined. Both features often have their genesis in history, requiring continuous scrutiny of the normative assumptions made on what constitutes the security sector and the features of its democratic, and rights based governance.

The protracted nature of conflict also requires a critical rethink on points of engagement. Even now SSR is essentially driven by a conflict and post-conflict perspective. Yet, increasingly it is recognized that the fragility that can lead to the collapse of institutions of state, the security sector included, can affect all countries and even regions or countries not traditionally considered conflict zones. The need for early warning and proactive support to promote the SSRG agenda in non-conflict settings with longer-term horizons is recognised but not fully embraced. It is an essential component of the UN's Sustaining Peace Agenda, promoted by the United Nations Secretary General. It should be noted that debate at the 2<sup>nd</sup> African Forum on SSR hosted in October 2018 by the AU, suggested fatigue with statements unmatched by long-term resource investment in the governance of African countries' security sectors.

The SSR project is as political and societal as it is technical. ASSN's theory of change holds that without a strong community of political champions, including the traditional state and military actors but also harnessing the critical mass of practitioners in the criminal justice and human rights fields, constantly building and disseminating new knowledge based on research and importantly seeking the earliest possible opportunities for intervention, SSR efforts will continue to remain hamstrung. In particular, an active and involved civil society will serve the double benefit of both sensitivity to local context and a vital asset to promote sustainability.

## Key objectives 2019 -2022

Based on this ASSN TOC, the ASSN's 2019 – 2022 Strategy will seek to consolidate and build on its existing gains and mitigate its major challenges.

Key objectives will be to focus on providing technical support to policy development and implementation; strengthen communication and advocacy; extend training and capacity building; develop academic and policy oriented research, and strengthening the network of ASSN experts to deliver on the objectives.

## Policy Development and Implementation

This will include:

1. Technical support to the implementation of the AU SSR Policy Framework and Action Plan agreed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Africa Forum on SSR, held in 2018, including **by supporting the AU SSR Steering Committee.**
2. Technical support to the RECs, in particular to the implementation of the ECOWAS SSR/G Policy Frameworks
3. Technical support to the implementation of AU and RECs Operational Guidance Notes (OGNs) and SSR/G Toolkits.
4. Focused technical support to building robust institutions of democratic security governance and management in post-conflict and transition states including the Gambia, South Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Madagascar.
5. Working with African Parliaments and rule of law institutions to improve their security oversight capabilities.
6. Working closely with civil society organisations as well as with CIDO and ECOSOC to promote the Livingstone Formula.

## Advocacy and communication

To build an SSRG constituency and champions among African decision-makers, the ASSN will continue to promote SSR/G awareness within Africa and beyond. This will include:

- Developing strong relationships with African governments and senior officials.
- Fostering and diversifying its partnerships at the international and regional level.
- Reinforce the ASSN website content as well as its level of digital traffic and engagement
- Develop the ASSN presence in social networks (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) and use them to engage with policymakers, journalists and the public at large.
- Step up the electronic dissemination of research findings which should be communicated effectively to policy makers and to the public.

## Training and Capacity Building

This will include:

1. Training to enhance the capacity of CSOs to engage the AU, RECs and national governments in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and oversight of Security Sector and Justice Reform (SSJR) policies and programmes.
2. Developing new training curricula anchored in African institutional and grass-root realities.

## Research

ASSN will continue its African-centred focus research agenda on security sector reform and governance – both policy-oriented and academic - with the publication of SSRG Policy Papers, the dissemination of African knowledge and practices in the areas of SSRG and by serving as a continental information repository

The ASSN will also launch new research partnerships with academia in Africa and elsewhere, with a focus on South-South collaboration.

## End-State Goal of the ASSN in three years

- ASSN is seen as an essential reference on all SSR/G related matters by policy-makers, the media and the public at large both in Africa and worldwide;
- ASSN is the legitimate and institutionally recognized partner of the AU and the REC on all SSR/G related matters, including conception of SSR training material and assessment missions;
- ASSN is trusted and consulted by African governments and senior officials;
- ASSN is a recognized partner of the UN and the EU on every SSR/G related-matters in Africa;
- ASSN is a recognized partner of international NGOs and Foundations helping to promote peace and security in Africa;
- ASSN is a major partner of African Civil Society Organisations and media working on security-related issues;
- ASSN has been able to set up an endowment fund which is supported by 10 African governments champions of SSG;
- ASSN has at least three major institutional partners contributing to its yearly activities;
- ASSN is able to finance another 3 full time permanent staff on a long-term (three-year) basis;
- Other collaborators are still experts, contracted on each project;
- The ASSN Roster is supplemented by the recruitment (and mentoring) of 20 new experts, including junior ones.
- ASSN experts are regularly interviewed by the medias (24 hours TV channels as well as radios and traditional/online newspapers);
- ASSN generates timely and updated research outputs, both academic in essence and policy-oriented.
  - o Assessment of national security sectors;
  - o Monitoring of African security governance data (Public Security Index).
  - o Analysis of societal security environment.
- ASSN research outputs are widely disseminated via the ASSN think tank mailchimp (10.000 targeted recipients of the outputs and 100.000 subscribers);
- The ASSN Facebook and Twitter accounts are very active and have at least 10.000 followers;
- ASSN main website received over 100.000 visits a year;
- ASSN is integrated into and well-ranked by the Go to Think Tank Index: <https://www.gotothinktank.com/> .

## Risk register

Risk	Mitigation strategy
<p>The approach adopted by the ASSN is not necessarily shared by all African actors, including some AU members states and some of their partners;</p>	<p>Strengthen advocacy, across all sectors of society</p> <p>Facilitate face to face contact with influential persons to break down barriers to acceptance of SSG</p> <p>Support the AU and RECs to identify points of entry for placing SSR/G on the agenda</p>
<p>Increased societal tolerance to serious human rights violations, shrinking civic space and growing restrictions on political freedoms by some governments;</p>	<p>Focus on human-right centred approach.</p> <p>Work with civil society to build their capacity to directly engage state actors, as well as form alliances with themselves</p>
<p>A shrinking international development commitment to SSRG with shifting priorities of major external partners,</p>	<p>Expand and diversify partnerships in order to attract resources</p> <p>Identify and build up a network of African partners willing to support SSR</p> <p>Encourage states to include SSR?G in their own budget priorities</p>
<p>Unavailability of roster members to participate in ASSN activities</p>	<p>Expand and organise the roster to match the cyclical availability of members</p> <p>Upgrade and diversify the skills of existing roster members through training</p>
<p>Funding constraints</p>	<p>Engage in more marketing or publicity of the ASSN's activities</p> <p>Expand partnerships to reach a wider pool of potential support</p>