

African Wars in the 21st Century

Workshop Report:

*Bridging the Gap Between
Policy and Action in Post-
Conflict Recovery*



IPSS



NYU

SCHOOL OF
PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

Center for Global Affairs



Joint Civil-Military Interaction
Network Building for Crisis Response

Contributors

SEPTEMBER 2025

Lead Authors

Dr. Olajumoke (Jumo) Ayandele
Jesutimilehin O.Akamo

Contributing Authors

Abysinia Kasu
Damon Hamman
Rebecca Fainberg



Imprint

New York University
Centre for Global Affairs
7 E 12th St, New York, NY, 10003
Phone: +1 212 992 8380

Addis Ababa University
Institute for Peace and Security
Studies (IPSS)
IPSS, CBE Campus, Addis Ababa
University, Sidist Kilo, Addis Ababa
Phone: +251 111 245 660
Email: info@ipss-addis.org

About the Authors

Lead Authors

Dr. Olajumoke (Jumo) Ayandele is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Practice at New York University's Center for Global Affairs. She is also a Public Voices Fellow—a collaboration between The OpEd Project and NYU's Office of the Provost & Office of Global Inclusion, Diversity, and Strategic Innovation. Prior to assuming her current role, Dr. Ayandele was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at NYU's Center for the Study of Africa and the African Diaspora (CSAAD) and a Non-Resident Fellow at the Center for Global Affairs.

Dr. Ayandele's research interests revolve around comprehending the dynamic relationship and intersection between African governance, human development, and political stability. Her research has earned her numerous awards and grants. A distinguished African Security Scholar, Dr. Ayandele maintains collaborative partnerships with international and regional decision-makers, as well as governmental institutions, to advance human security initiatives and programs that contribute to a peaceful and secure Africa.

She is an Advisory Board Member for the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a member of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) Global Research Network, and a member of the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON). Dr. Ayandele holds a Ph.D. in Global Affairs from Rutgers – The State University of New Jersey, an M.P.A. in International Development Policy and Management, and a B.A. in Economics (Hons.), both from New York University.

Jesutimilehin O.Akamo is the Coordinator, Research and Policy Analysis Unit, Africa Peace and Security Programme (APSP), Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He is a member of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), and an Associate Expert at the Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli (LUISS) Mediterranean Platform - Africa Nexus, Rome, Italy. He obtained his first and second degrees from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Contributing Authors

Abysinia Kasu is a Fulbright Scholar and M.S. Candidate in Global Security, Conflict, and Cyber Crime at New York University, currently serving as a Master's Thesis Fellow with the Red Cross. She is also a Research Assistant at NYU and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies in Addis Ababa, contributing to cross-regional studies on security and technology policy academic trajectory and research reflect a strong commitment to integrating cyber-security perspectives into broader frameworks of peacebuilding and international conflict resolution.

Damon Hamman is a Master of Science candidate in Global Affairs at New York University, specializing in transnational security, human-rights-based research, and conflict analysis. He has served with the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, where he developed AI-driven tools to advance sustainable development monitoring and supported diplomatic engagement with African missions. At the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, he co-authored policy briefs and research methodologies on inclusive governance, climate-security, and post-conflict recovery. His academic and professional work centers on leveraging data, diplomacy, and human security frameworks to inform global policy and peacebuilding. He completed his undergraduate BCom Economics and international trade degree at the North West University in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

Rebecca Fainberg is a humanitarian professional and graduate student at NYU, pursuing a Master's in Global Affairs with a concentration in International Development and Humanitarian Assistance. She brings over a decade of diverse experience, from leading copyright enforcement and advocacy in the music industry at Sony Music Entertainment to coordinating relief operations, logistics, and community outreach with NGOs in Tel Aviv. Rebecca has participated in post-conflict recovery and climate resilience initiatives, including workshops with the African Union in Addis Ababa and fieldwork in Tanzania. Passionate about peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, and global policy, she is committed to fostering sustainable solutions for vulnerable and displaced communities.

Foreword

At a time when Africa faces increasingly complex and interconnected crises, the need for transformative, African-led approaches to peacebuilding has never been more urgent. The African Union's revised Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy (2024) reflects a renewed commitment to sustainable recovery, inclusive governance, and long-term resilience in conflict-affected societies. However, translating this comprehensive policy vision into practice requires more than political will—it demands coordinated action, institutional innovation, and context-specific strategies grounded in local realities.

The expert workshop, *African Wars in the 21st Century: Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Action in Post-Conflict Recovery*, was convened in this spirit. Organized jointly by the Center for Global Affairs at New York University and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) at Addis Ababa University, this high-level convening brought together a diverse community of scholars, policymakers, civil society leaders, military professionals, and international partners. Over two days of rigorous, open dialogue, participants reflected critically on the gaps between policy and implementation, the evolving role of regional and national actors, and the tools needed to advance peace and reconstruction in fragile contexts.

This report captures the insights, lessons, and recommendations that emerged from these discussions. It offers a roadmap for how the PCRD policy can be more effectively operationalized—through inclusive learning, robust coordination, and strategic investment in local capacities. More broadly, it affirms the importance of fostering communities of practice across the continent to drive homegrown, sustainable responses to Africa's peace and security challenges.

As partner institutions, we remain committed to supporting this agenda. We hope this report serves not only as a reflection of the workshop's outcomes but also as a catalyst for ongoing collaboration, knowledge exchange, and policy innovation. It is our shared belief that Africa's future will be shaped not only by how we respond to conflict, but by how we rebuild in its aftermath—with purpose, with vision, and with the people at the center.

Prof. Carolyn Kissane
Associate Dean
New York University
Centre for Global Affairs (NYUCGA)

Ms. Lettie Tembo Longwe
Interim Director
Africa Peace and Security
Programme (APSP)

Table of Contents

Introduction and Regional Observation	1
Opening Remarks	4
Workshop Sessions	6
Ways Forward	22
About the Workshop	23

A CONVENING ON AFRICAN WARS IN THE 21ST CENTURY:

Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Action in Post-Conflict Recovery

Introduction and Regional Observation

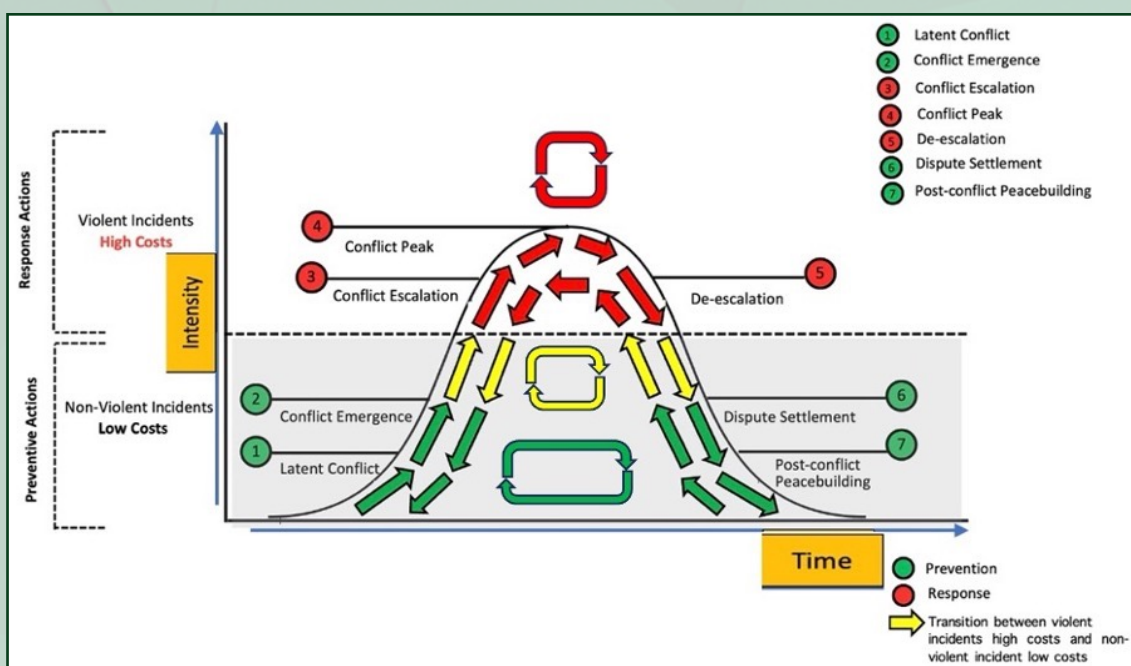
The African Union's (AU) Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy was originally adopted in 2006 and it remains one of the continent's most ambitious frameworks for consolidating peace, rebuilding institutions, and promoting inclusive development in the aftermath of conflict. A review of the Policy began in 2021 and the revised version was adopted in 2024. As a core component of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the PCRD policy provides a strategic and normative foundation to support conflict-affected states as they transition from crisis to stability. It is designed to restore state functionality, facilitate national reconciliation, and lay the groundwork for long-term resilience.

The revised PCRD framework expands the scope of the policy from six to nine pillars by incorporating three critical areas of emphasis: youth, children, and the climate–environment–conflict nexus. These additions reflect the AU's evolving recognition of the complex and interconnected drivers of conflict, such as demographic pressures, environmental degradation, and regional spillovers. In contrast to its earlier iteration, the updated PCRD framework adopts a holistic, integrated approach that spans the entire conflict continuum—from early warning and prevention to response, recovery, and reconstruction (see Figure 1).

Despite these innovations, persistent gaps remain between the PCRD framework's ambitions and its on-the-ground implementation. Many Member States continue to struggle with translating policy commitments into concrete actions, constrained by institutional fragmentation, resource limitations, and a lack of coordination across local, national, and regional actors. In many cases,

interventions remain donor-driven and reactive, rather than rooted in inclusive, locally informed, and adaptive strategies. Addressing these challenges requires more than technical adjustments—it calls for a renewed commitment to context-sensitive implementation, institutional learning, and sustained multi-stakeholder engagement.

Figure 1: The Conflict Continuum and Intervention Opportunities under the AU PCRD Framework



Source: Akamo, J. O. (2024). *Africa Peace and Security Architecture Impact Assessment Report 2023*. IPSS Impact and Analytical Report. <https://ipss-addis.org/download/apsa-impact-assessment-report-2023/>. The AU and REC Conflict Typology is a consensus approach adaptation of the Heidelberg Conflict Typology; *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Oliver Ramsbotham et al. (2016). Cost Parameters adapted by the World Bank and project core team based on internal AU and REC costings, *World Development Report 2011*, and *UN World Bank Pathways Report 2018*.

In response to these challenges, a high-level expert workshop was convened from July 1–2, 2025, at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa. Organized by the Center for Global Affairs at New York University, in collaboration with the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) and the Joint Civil-Military Interaction (JCMI) Research and Education Network, the workshop brought together a multidisciplinary group of African scholars, policymakers, civil society actors, military professionals, AU Commission staff, and international development practitioners.

Unlike conventional policy forums, this workshop prioritized actionable dialogue over abstract analysis. Participants worked collaboratively to identify operational models and practical strategies that respond to the evolving and often fluid nature of post-conflict transitions on the continent. Discussions underscored the importance of people-centered approaches that emphasize inclusion, legitimacy,

and resilience over security-driven, short-term fixes. Emphasis was placed on generating solutions that are grounded in local contexts and informed by intergenerational, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral perspectives.

This report presents a synthesis of those discussions. It highlights key session themes, identifies regional trends, and outlines actionable recommendations to support the effective implementation of the revised PCRD policy at the national, regional, and continental levels.

Ultimately, the findings of this report reinforce the urgent need to invest in institutional reforms, context-specific tools, and inclusive mechanisms to ensure that the PCRD policy evolves beyond its aspirational vision to deliver tangible, lasting impact in post-conflict settings across Africa.

Opening Remarks

The workshop began with welcome remarks from representatives of the African Union's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Centre and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS). Both institutions underscored the strategic significance of the AU's revised PCRD policy and the urgent need to accelerate its implementation across the continent. Speakers reaffirmed the AU's commitment to African-led solutions and emphasized the workshop's value as a timely platform for translating policy into practice through interdisciplinary dialogue, regional collaboration, and stakeholder engagement.

Building on these remarks, Dr. Olajumoke (Jumo) Ayandele of New York University's Center for Global Affairs provided an overview of the initiative's purpose and offered context on the current policy landscape. She noted that while the PCRD policy remains one of the most forward-looking instruments under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), its true potential lies in effective implementation—especially in countries navigating prolonged recovery and institutional fragility. Dr. Ayandele stressed that the workshop aimed to generate actionable, context-specific strategies to support peacebuilding, inclusive governance, and sustainable development, both within and beyond the AU's designated PCRD-priority states.

As the opening session unfolded, several key themes and insights emerged:

- The revised PCRD framework—now encompassing nine pillars with the inclusion of youth, children, and the climate–environment–conflict nexus—signals a critical evolution in the AU's understanding of conflict's complex, interlinked drivers. However, turning this comprehensive vision into tangible results remains difficult. Persistent challenges such as weak institutional coordination, inconsistent national ownership, and limited integration across peacebuilding, governance, and development sectors were noted as key barriers.
- The AU PCRD Centre, headquartered in Cairo, was recognized as pivotal to advancing implementation. As a hub for training, technical support, and knowledge exchange, the Centre is mandated to promote policy coherence and capacity building among national governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and civil society actors. Participants highlighted the need to **strengthen and adequately resource the Centre** so it can serve as an effective engine for operationalizing the revised PCRD framework.
- **Regional ownership and leadership** were also identified as essential to achieving PCRD objectives. Rather than serving solely as implementers of AU frameworks, regional actors must play a co-creative role in shaping localized, adaptive strategies that reflect political, social, and cultural realities.

Strengthening coordination between the AU, RECs, and member states was seen as vital to overcoming fragmented interventions and fostering coherence across the **peace–development–humanitarian nexus**.

- Finally, the **importance of inclusive, community-rooted approaches** was emphasized. Deepened engagement with civil society organizations, women's networks, youth peacebuilders, and traditional authorities was deemed indispensable to ensuring that PCRDR processes are locally owned, legitimate, and sustainable. Inclusion was framed not only as a principle of equity, but also as a strategic necessity for achieving long-term, transformative impact.

These opening reflections helped set the tone for the roundtable's subsequent sessions, which delved more deeply into the practical challenges and opportunities of operationalizing the AU's PCRDR policy. Collectively, the discussions reinforced a shared commitment to moving the framework beyond rhetoric and toward becoming a **transformative tool for African agency**—advancing a peaceful, resilient, and inclusive future for post-conflict societies across the continent.

Workshop Sessions

Workshop sessions explored how to translate the AU's revised PCRD policy into actionable strategies that respond to the realities of post-conflict contexts. Discussions centered on inclusive governance, climate resilience, sustainable financing, private sector engagement, and adaptive learning systems. Each theme was designed to move beyond theory, offering practical insights to strengthen implementation, coordination, and regional ownership of the PCRD across the continent.



Session 1: From Paper to Practice – Making the PCRD Work on the Ground

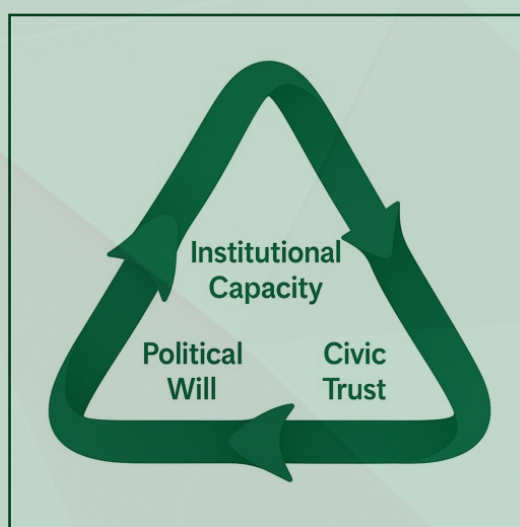
The first session opened with a focused discussion on a longstanding challenge: how to translate the African Union's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy from a high-level framework into tangible, context-sensitive action. The conversation invited reflections on how the revised nine-pillar framework could be operationalized across diverse conflict and post-conflict settings, and how sequencing strategies must adapt to the fluid and complex realities on the ground. The session also examined the institutional tools, political mechanisms, and technical capacities needed to bridge the gap between policy ambition and effective implementation. Central to this discussion was the critical question of how the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and national and local actors can balance competing priorities in resource-constrained environments—without resorting to generic, top-down interventions.

In conceptualizing the session's theme—*From Paper to Practice*—participants surfaced several key insights:

- **Implementation Must Be Rooted in Local Realities:** There was broad consensus that the original 2006 PCRD framework lacked alignment with the lived experiences of communities emerging from conflict. The revised framework's broader scope—spanning pre-, during-, and post-conflict phases—requires a fundamental rethinking of how and when interventions are designed and delivered. Emphasis was placed on **grounding implementation in robust situational data, cultural understanding, and genuine community buy-in**. Participants also underscored the importance of integrating peacebuilding with other sectors, particularly education and civic engagement, to ensure that strategies are context-specific and locally led.
- **The Triangle of Implementation:** A recurring theme throughout the session was the dynamic relationship between **political will, civic trust, and institutional capacity**, referred to by many as the “triangle of implementation.” While no single element was deemed most important, participants widely

acknowledged their interdependence. Some emphasized that political will is critical for aligning national governments, the AU, and RECs to drive coordinated action. Others argued that political will without civic trust results in short-lived legitimacy. Still others noted that institutional capacity—especially within the AU PCRD Centre—is essential to sustain both political and societal engagement. The consensus was that in fragile settings marked by weak governance structures, early and sustained investment in capacity-building is vital to establish the foundations for lasting peace.

Figure 2: *The Triangle of Implementation*



Source: *African Wars in the 21st Century Addis Ababa Workshop, 2025*

- Institutional Realities of the PCRD Centre:** on the theme of institutional capacity, participants examined the operational limitations of the AU PCRD Centre in Cairo. While the Centre's implementation rate increased from 60% in 2023 to 65% in 2024, its 2025 budget of \$470,000 was reduced to \$350,000 for the 2026 fiscal year. As of mid-2025, the Centre operated with only six staff members—including one director, two senior analysts, one HR officer, and one administrative assistant—raising concerns about its ability to deliver on its expanded mandate. Participants highlighted the **urgent need to bolster the Centre's financial and human resources** so it can serve as a strategic coordinator and enabler, rather than a direct implementer. The conversation also highlighted the lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities across the AU system, RECs, member states, and civil society organizations. The absence of a unified implementation framework was identified as a major barrier. Case examples from Somalia and Liberia illustrated how fragmented interventions and overlapping mandates have led to inefficiencies, duplication of effort, and diluted impact.

Despite these structural and operational challenges, participants emphasized the importance of adaptive, inclusive, and well-sequenced approaches to realize the transformative potential of the revised PCRD framework.

Informed by the deliberations, the following key recommendations emerged:

- 1. Ensure sequencing strategies are grounded in root-cause analysis.** Participants agreed that effective intervention requires a clear understanding of the underlying drivers of conflict, whether stemming from political exclusion, natural resource competition, climate shocks, or organized crime. A one-size-fits-all approach is likely to yield mismatched or counterproductive outcomes. As such, **robust data collection and mapping of local capacities**, including disaggregated indicators such as language, literacy levels, and perceptions of state legitimacy, are essential to informing conflict-sensitive planning, design, and delivery.
- 2. Center local ownership in all aspects of planning and implementation.** Participants underscored that peacebuilding efforts must be co-created with communities, not imposed upon them. Engaging traditional leaders, women's groups, youth networks, and civil society organizations from the outset is essential to ensuring legitimacy, relevance, and sustainability. **Trust cannot be manufactured through top-down processes**—it must be built through long-term engagement, responsiveness, and mutual accountability.
- 3. Strengthen strategic communication and visibility of the AU's peacebuilding role.** Participants emphasized that the AU and its organs must do more to communicate their contributions to peace and recovery, particularly in communities directly affected by conflict. While political sensitivities may at times limit visibility, **it remains essential to amplify success stories and increase awareness of the AU's value-added**, thereby building trust in the institution and reinforcing its legitimacy as a continental peace actor.
- 4. Align the PCRD's implementation with broader AU development frameworks.** To ensure coherence across the AU system, participants recommended that the operationalization of the PCRD framework be strategically aligned with Agenda 2063 and its Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan. This alignment would help streamline priorities, foster synergy between long-term development goals and immediate peacebuilding needs, and enhance institutional coordination within and across AU organs.



Session 2: Rebuilding Trust: Inclusive Governance and Recovery

The second session focused on the often-overlooked but critical challenge of rebuilding trust in fragile and post-conflict settings—both between citizens and the state, and among communities themselves. Participants were invited to reflect on what inclusive and accountable governance looks like in these contexts and how “trust” can be operationalized not as an abstract aspiration but as a measurable, context-specific objective. The session explored strategies for meaningfully engaging marginalized communities, restoring essential public services, and rebuilding the social contract through mechanisms grounded in local legitimacy. Central to this discussion was a pressing question: how can the implementation of the PCRD framework foster sustained civic trust in regions long marked by institutional failure and social fragmentation?

- Defining Trust in Practice:** Participants began by unpacking the concept of trust, noting that it is too often treated as a vague ideal rather than a concrete, operational goal. In contexts where governments have repeatedly failed or abandoned their populations, restoring trust becomes an especially profound challenge. The discussions emphasized that **trust is not monolithic**; it varies across conflict phases and among actors. For instance, the type of trust required between warring factions—such as Sudan’s RSF and SAF—is fundamentally different from the trust needed to reestablish everyday governance and public services within communities. Nevertheless, participants agreed that across all contexts, trust encompasses both civic and political dimensions and must be built through inclusive, deliberate, and responsive engagement. Without a strong foundation of trust, policy implementation risks becoming disconnected from the people it is intended to serve.
- Rebuilding State-Society Relations through Civic Inclusion:** The conversation then shifted to the practicalities of restoring state-society relations. Participants emphasized that trust-building cannot be achieved through top-down directives alone; instead, **recovery efforts must prioritize civic inclusion and community ownership**. Rebuilding the social contract, they argued, requires working with institutions and actors that already enjoy local legitimacy. Excluding these stakeholders from the process risks reinforcing existing grievances and perpetuating cycles of mistrust. Moreover, participants highlighted the importance of understanding how concepts such as “governance” and “legitimacy” are interpreted differently at local, national, and regional levels. Recognizing and integrating these diverse perspectives is key to ensuring that post-conflict interventions are both effective and sustainable.
- Inclusive Governance and Power-Sharing:** Expanding on the theme of inclusion, participants explored how post-conflict governance must go beyond elite-level power-sharing arrangements to ensure that historically marginalized

groups—particularly youth and women—are fully integrated into decision-making processes. While elite pacts may create the appearance of stability at the national level, they often fail to address persistent divisions and exclusions within communities. Several examples were shared from countries such as Burundi and The Gambia, where incremental reforms—such as restructuring security forces or incorporating local voices into policymaking—paved the way for broader civic engagement. These cases underscored the **importance of sequencing reforms** thoughtfully and tailoring governance models to specific contexts. Genuine power-sharing, participants concluded, involves not only representation but also the redistribution of authority to communities so they can shape recovery priorities and outcomes.

Drawing on the session's deliberations, participants articulated a set of strategic recommendations to guide future PCRD implementation:

1. **Clarify and operationalize trust as a locally defined, measurable objective.** Rebuilding trust begins with defining what trust means in specific communities and conflict phases. This includes identifying local priorities, grievances, and indicators, such as perceptions of safety, access to services, and institutional accountability. Trust should be treated not merely as a goal, but as a precondition for effective and sustainable implementation.
2. **Invest early in restoring basic services as visible markers of state legitimacy.** The provision of essential services—such as schools, clinics, and civic infrastructure—should be prioritized in the early stages of recovery. These services function as visible demonstrations of state presence and responsiveness. To be effective, they must be co-designed and delivered in partnership with local communities to ensure both relevance and ownership.
3. **Center traditional and local institutions in peacebuilding strategies.** Local knowledge systems, traditional authorities, and grassroots organizations are not peripheral—they are central to the legitimacy and sustainability of recovery efforts. Their participation must be embedded across all phases of planning, implementation, and monitoring. Mechanisms for inclusion must go beyond symbolism to grant youth, women, and other historically excluded groups meaningful roles in shaping recovery and governance.
4. **Adopt adaptive, community-driven feedback mechanisms.** Standard monitoring and evaluation tools are often inadequate in capturing the dynamic and evolving nature of trust in post-conflict settings. Participants called for participatory approaches—such as community scorecards, grievance redress mechanisms, and real-time feedback loops—that enable iterative learning, strengthen accountability, and allow for course corrections as conditions change.



Session 3: Future-Proofing Recovery: Climate, Environment, and Resilience

This session examined the critical intersection of climate change, environmental degradation, and post-conflict recovery within the African Union's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) framework. Participants engaged in a forward-looking dialogue on how to integrate environmental risks and climate resilience across all phases of recovery—from prevention and response to reconstruction. The session underscored that environmental stressors such as droughts, flooding, land degradation, and desertification not only undermine livelihoods but also exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and fuel renewed instability. Discussions focused on how to mainstream adaptation strategies across the PCRD pillars and promote locally led, sustainable approaches that reflect community priorities and ecological realities.

- Environmental Stressors as Catalysts of Fragility:** Participants emphasized that climate-related hazards—such as extreme weather events and diminishing natural resources—are not merely environmental or development concerns; they are direct drivers of fragility and conflict. In regions such as the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, escalating competition over scarce land and water has intensified communal tensions and displacement. The revised PCRD policy marks a significant step forward in recognizing these dynamics as integral to peace and security. Without **intentional investment in environmental recovery and climate adaptation**, however, post-conflict communities risk recurring cycles of crisis. As such, climate resilience must be treated not as a peripheral issue but as a foundational component of PCRD.
- Institutional Capacity and Policy Gaps:** Participants also examined the readiness of national and regional institutions to embed climate resilience in recovery planning. While the revised PCRD acknowledges environmental risks, these issues often remain siloed within technical ministries and are not adequately prioritized within broader peacebuilding agendas. This fragmentation undermines the coherence and effectiveness of recovery efforts. To address this, participants called for **targeted training for PCRD staff and national actors** to ensure environmental risks are integrated into planning, budgeting, and monitoring systems. **Enhanced coordination across sectors**—particularly among ministries of environment, agriculture, infrastructure, and security—was highlighted as essential for building climate-resilient recovery frameworks. **Aligning national adaptation plans with PCRD strategies** was also recommended as a way to improve synergy and policy coherence.
- Financing Climate Resilience:** A major challenge identified was the difficulty that fragile and conflict-affected states face in accessing climate finance. Complex application procedures, limited proposal-writing capacity, and rigid eligibility criteria often exclude the very contexts most in need of support. Participants proposed that the AU's PCRD Centre should serve as a

technical support hub to assist member states in developing joint proposals in collaboration with local actors. Stronger partnerships with regional development banks—such as the African Development Bank—were suggested as a way to bundle recovery and climate adaptation financing into integrated models. It was further emphasized that **funding mechanisms must be flexible and accessible** to community-based organizations and local governments, not just national authorities or large international implementers.

- **Grounding Adaptation in Local Knowledge:** Finally, a strong consensus emerged around the need to **base climate adaptation strategies in the lived experiences, knowledge systems, and traditional practices of local communities**. Externally driven models often fail when they overlook community-based techniques that have supported resilience for generations. In areas such as northern Kenya and Madagascar, for example, communities have employed rotational grazing and local soil conservation methods to maintain ecological balance and food security. Participants emphasized that rather than replacing these systems, adaptation strategies should seek to strengthen and institutionalize them. There was also a call to empower local leaders and residents as environmental monitors, recognizing their unique ability to track seasonal trends and ecological changes. Such locally grounded approaches were seen as more legitimate, cost-effective, and sustainable in the long term.

The observations from this session underscore a clear imperative: environmental degradation and climate vulnerability must be placed at the center of how post-conflict recovery is designed, financed, and implemented. **To advance this agenda, participants proposed the following priority actions:**

1. **Support Community-Based Adaptation and Local Knowledge.** Traditional and locally driven adaptation practices—such as rotational grazing, water management, and environmental monitoring—should be formally recognized, strengthened, and scaled. Recovery strategies must **prioritize inclusive participation**, ensuring the full engagement of women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and displaced communities in all stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring.
2. **Expand Access to Climate Finance Through Targeted Support.** The AU's PCRD Centre should support member states in accessing global climate finance by helping to co-develop high-quality, fundable proposals in collaboration with local communities. Strategic partnerships with institutions such as the African Development Bank should be leveraged to develop integrated financing models that align climate adaptation with recovery priorities.
3. **Strengthen Institutional Coordination and Expertise.** Effective climate integration requires stronger coordination among relevant ministries—particularly those responsible for environment, agriculture, infrastructure, and

security—as well as enhanced technical capacity within the AU and RECs. The PCRD Centre should serve as a central coordination and capacity-building hub, facilitating inter-ministerial collaboration, curating region-specific guidance, hosting a deployable roster of climate experts, and delivering targeted training to embed climate resilience across all PCRD pillars.



Session 4: Catalyzing Change — Private Sector, Innovation, and Tech-Driven Solutions

This session examined how to expand the range of actors involved in post-conflict recovery by engaging the private sector, innovators, technology developers, and infrastructure providers. Discussions focused on identifying the types of incentives, protections, and enabling environments required to attract responsible investment in fragile contexts; the role of digital infrastructure, fintech, and data systems in enhancing accountability and service delivery; and strategies to prevent digital solutions from reinforcing exclusion or deepening inequality. Participants emphasized that recovery efforts must shift from donor-driven models to inclusive, sustainable ecosystems where the private sector and local entrepreneurs play a proactive role.

- Unlocking Private Investments in Fragile Settings:** A central theme of the session was the persistent hesitancy of private investors to operate in post-conflict environments. Participants noted that businesses require clear incentives and risk guarantees to justify investments in infrastructure, services, or innovation. While the potential for long-term returns exists, renewed instability, lack of insurance, and weak regulatory frameworks deter meaningful engagement. Both international firms and local entrepreneurs face significant barriers, ranging from limited credit access to inadequate legal protections. Participants emphasized that without mechanisms to **de-risk investment and ensure long-term predictability**, private capital will continue to bypass high-need recovery zones.
- Local Entrepreneurship as a Driver of Recovery:** emphasized that local businesses—particularly youth-led and women-led enterprises—should be viewed as central actors in post-conflict recovery, not merely recipients of aid. Local tech startups, for instance, have the capacity to develop context-specific solutions such as mobile payment systems, digital identification tools, and early warning networks. Examples from Somalia and Ethiopia highlighted how community-based fintech and youth cooperatives, when supported with seed capital and digital infrastructure, can offer scalable, high-impact solutions. Investing in local innovation ecosystems was framed as a strategy for both economic revitalization and civic trust-building.
- Bridging the Digital Divide:** While digital innovation holds transformative potential, participants warned of risks if technological solutions are designed without inclusive access in mind. Many fragile areas still lack the foundational infrastructure—electricity, internet connectivity, or mobile coverage—needed for digital services to function effectively. Moreover, the rollout of tools without community input risks deepening existing social and economic divides. Participants strongly advocated for community co-design, inclusive testing, and investments in basic connectivity as prerequisites for equitable digital transformation.

- **Navigating Incentives and Governance Challenges:** The conversation also explored the broader political economy of recovery. Participants asked: What truly incentivizes peace when conflict may benefit powerful actors financially? Some suggested that peace dividends must be tangible and shared through employment, market access, and protection, particularly for actors formerly engaged in violence. Others raised concerns about over-reliance on private actors to deliver essential services, cautioning that accountability and equity must not be compromised in pursuit of efficiency.

To create more enabling environments for responsible private investment and technological innovation in fragile and post-conflict settings, **participants recommended the following priority actions:**

1. **Create Robust Legal and Risk-Mitigation Frameworks.** The AU, through the PCRD Centre and in collaboration with member states, should strengthen legal and regulatory protections that de-risk private investment. This includes ensuring property rights, stable investment climates, transparent procurement processes, and access to fair dispute resolution. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) should integrate risk-sharing tools—such as partial loan guarantees and insurance schemes—to encourage responsible investment in critical infrastructure and services.
2. **Position the PCRD Centre as a Regional Enabler and Convenor.** The PCRD Centre should clarify its role in supporting private engagement by acting as a regional hub for technical assistance, convening multi-stakeholder dialogues, and disseminating practical guidance on engaging the private sector in post-conflict recovery. It should also offer policy tools that support national governments in aligning private sector contributions with PCRD priorities.
3. **Invest in Local Innovation Ecosystems and Inclusive Digital Infrastructure.** National governments and regional institutions must actively support local startups and entrepreneurs—particularly those led by youth and women—through early-stage capital, business development services, and digital literacy training. At the same time, expanding access to electricity, internet connectivity, and mobile infrastructure is essential to unlocking technology's potential. All digital tools should be co-designed with communities to ensure relevance, accessibility, and equity.
4. **Protect and Empower Domestic Technology Sectors.** Member states should implement policies that support the growth of domestic tech sectors, including intellectual property protections, anti-monopoly regulations, and procurement incentives that prioritize local firms. By doing so, they can ensure that home-grown innovation is not crowded out and that technology solutions reflect local needs and contexts. This will also help build resilient digital economies and foster long-term peace dividends through inclusive growth.



Session 5: The Question Concerning Sustainability: How to Finance PCRD in Africa

This session tackled one of the most persistent challenges raised throughout the workshop: how to sustainably finance the African Union's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) work amid shrinking donor support and unpredictable external aid. Participants emphasized that sound policy frameworks alone are insufficient—recovery requires reliable, diversified financing that reinforces resilience, local ownership, and institutional legitimacy. Discussions focused on embedding PCRD into national budgets, exploring innovative funding models, and clarifying the financial role and strategic direction of the Cairo-based PCRD Centre.

- Evolving Donor Landscape and the Case for Diversification:** Participants acknowledged the end of the era of automatic donor funding, noting the impact of shifting global priorities, donor fatigue, and rising geopolitical competition. These trends demand a shift from dependency to self-reliance. African institutions must streamline internal processes, deliver measurable results, and adopt transparent, accountable financing strategies. This includes actively involving communities—particularly youth and women—in the design and oversight of recovery frameworks to strengthen legitimacy and trust.
- Balancing Member State Contributions and Centre-led Strategy:** A core point of debate was the feasibility of relying on consistent financial support from all 55 AU Member States. While national ownership was viewed as essential, many participants expressed skepticism about its practical implementation, citing the absence of enforcement mechanisms. This prompted calls for the PCRD Centre to develop a proactive financial strategy anchored in its unique value proposition. Rather than waiting for member contributions, the Centre should demonstrate relevance through results-oriented programming, enabling it to attract funding from foundations, development banks, and private actors.
- Strategic Partnerships and Financial Innovation:** Participants agreed that the Centre must position strategic partnerships as central to its financial model. Citing the example of Youth for Peace Africa, participants showed that impactful programs can be delivered with minimal budgets when backed by credible partners and technical support. Suggestions included partnerships with NEPAD, the African Development Bank, and other regional actors. While institutional rules may limit commercial operations, participants stressed the need for the Centre to think more like a results-oriented nonprofit, offering training, advisory services, and piloting new financing models such as equity-based incubators.
- Linking Financing to Governance and Impact:** Finally, participants highlighted that financing must be tied to good governance, transparency, and tangible outcomes on the ground. Proposals such as **diaspora bonds**, blended

finance, and localized pooled funds were viewed as promising, provided they are supported by strong oversight and monitoring systems. The potential of technology, including AI, was also discussed as a way to streamline application processes and improve tracking and transparency. Ultimately, participants stressed that sustainable financing must not only secure resources but also reinforce civic trust through inclusive participation and impact accountability.

Participants thus concluded the session with the following recommendations:

1. **Institutionalize PCRD Priorities in National Budgets.** AU Member States should embed PCRD objectives into national planning and budget frameworks to ensure long-term sustainability, continuity, and local ownership. Integrating these priorities into core governance mechanisms will reduce reliance on short-term donor support and anchor post-conflict recovery as a fundamental element of national development. This shift also enables governments to plan recovery efforts more strategically and align resource allocations with long-term peace dividends.
2. **Clarify and Strengthen the Role of the PCRD Centre.** The Cairo-based PCRD Centre must clearly define its strategic mandate and demonstrate its added value as a convener, technical advisor, and innovation hub. This includes mobilizing resources, coordinating implementation efforts across AU organs and Member States, and serving as a platform for piloting new initiatives. One proposal includes launching an **AU PCRD Peace-Tech Incubator**, which would support African startups developing technologies for conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction, such as early warning systems, solar-powered water solutions for displaced populations, or digital ID tools for refugees. The Centre could hold modest equity stakes in these ventures, generating revenue through dividends, reinvestment, or licensing solutions to regional or national governments. This model not only enhances financial sustainability but also stimulates youth innovation, attracts private investment, and builds a pipeline for South–South peace technology transfer.
3. **Diversify Funding Sources through Innovative Mechanisms.** The AU and Member States should explore financing tools beyond traditional aid, including **diaspora bonds**, public-private partnerships, and joint initiatives with development banks. Piloting **localized pooled funds**—governed through strong oversight mechanisms—could allow for flexible, context-responsive funding at the community level. In addition, a proposed **Peace Commodity Index** could be introduced to assess and incentivize the private sector’s contribution to peacebuilding. This tool would rank companies based on criteria such as conflict sensitivity, inclusive employment, public infrastructure support, and ethical governance, with scoring adjusted to reflect the country’s stage in the PCRD process. Such an index would recognize best practices, reward responsible business models, and position peace as both a public good and a measurable market outcome.

4. **Ensure Accountability, Transparency, and Measurable Impact.** Sustainable financing must be paired with transparent governance and results-based programming. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems—including real-time feedback loops and participatory impact assessments—will be essential for demonstrating value, building funder confidence, and empowering communities. Inclusive governance mechanisms must ensure that women, youth, and marginalized groups are not only beneficiaries but key stakeholders in designing and overseeing recovery efforts. This will reinforce civic trust and strengthen the legitimacy of PCRD initiatives over the long term.



Session 6: Knowledge Management Systems: Rethinking Learning, Monitoring, and Adaptive Implementation

This last session tackled a core challenge in post-conflict recovery: bridging the gap between policy frameworks and real-world impact in fragile and rapidly evolving contexts. Participants explored how adaptive, learning-centered approaches—grounded in local participation, flexibility, and real-time feedback—can enhance the effectiveness of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) interventions. **The discussion centered around three guiding questions:**

1. What types of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems work best in fragile, fast-changing contexts?
 2. How local communities can meaningfully participate in defining what success looks like and in tracking progress.
 3. What institutional cultures and tools are needed for adaptive implementation, so that lessons learned can drive real-time course corrections?
- **Bridging the Policy-to-Practice Gap:** The session opened with a reflection on why African-led PCRD initiatives, despite having numerous frameworks and pilot projects, often struggle to produce sustainable outcomes. Participants agreed that conventional M&E systems tend to prioritize donor compliance over contextual relevance. Designed in a top-down manner, these systems often lack the flexibility to respond to changing realities on the ground and rarely reflect the perspectives of affected communities. This sparked debate over whether the African Union (AU) should create a standardized PCRD M&E framework for coherence across Member States or allow for context-specific models. While opinions varied, there was consensus on the need to balance regional alignment with local adaptability.
 - **Designing Context-Sensitive Monitoring Systems:** Participants emphasized the importance of M&E systems that are responsive to rapidly evolving conditions in fragile settings. Success indicators that are relevant at project inception may become obsolete within months due to shifting political, social, or environmental dynamics. One example shared from South Sudan illustrated how quarterly community feedback sessions were used to adapt training programs in real time. Participants agreed that while accountability to donors remains important, rigid reporting requirements can stifle innovation and learning. Donors were called upon to support more flexible, adaptive frameworks that create space for experimentation and mid-course correction.
 - **Community Participation and Real-Time Feedback:** There was strong consensus that communities must be engaged not merely as data sources but as co-owners of M&E processes. Genuine participation builds trust, enhances program relevance, and strengthens accountability. Tools such as community scorecards, town halls, and mobile feedback platforms were cited as useful for collecting real-time, localized insights. Participants also

highlighted the critical role of local intermediaries—including youth groups, women's associations, and elders—in generating qualitative data often overlooked by formal surveys. However, questions arose around the extent of community authority: should communities have decision-making power in shaping indicators and evaluating success, or remain in an advisory role? While views diverged, many supported models of shared governance that elevate community voices without compromising technical rigor.

- **Building an Adaptive Learning Culture:** Beyond tools and systems, the session underscored the need for a cultural shift in institutions implementing PCRD. M&E is too often treated as a compliance exercise rather than a driver of continuous learning and program improvement. Participants stressed that adaptive learning must be institutionalized, requiring a willingness to acknowledge what is not working and the courage to change course. Creating safe spaces for honest reflection, peer review, and iterative decision-making was seen as critical, particularly in politically sensitive environments.
- **Strengthening Regional Knowledge Exchange:** Participants highlighted the fragmentation of knowledge across countries and regions as a barrier to collective progress. Successful local-level innovations often remain siloed, limiting their broader impact. To address this, participants proposed that the PCRD Centre establish periodic “learning labs” to convene AU organs, RECs, Member States, and researchers for cross-country knowledge sharing. Digital platforms could also be leveraged to document, disseminate, and scale promising practices, provided they remain accessible to frontline actors and communities. These mechanisms were seen as vital to building a shared continental body of learning on post-conflict recovery.

These discussions revealed that improving PCRD implementation requires more than technical fixes—it demands a fundamental reorientation toward inclusive, flexible, and learning-centered approaches. **To move from insight to action, participants put forward the following key recommendations:**

1. **Develop Adaptive and Context-Responsive M&E Systems.** Traditional M&E approaches are often ill-suited to fragile, fast-changing environments. Systems must be flexible, capable of real-time adaptation, and aligned with evolving local priorities. This requires shifting from fixed metrics to dynamic, context-sensitive learning frameworks.
2. **Center Community Participation in Monitoring Processes.** Local communities should play a central role in defining success, co-creating indicators, and tracking progress. Participatory tools—such as town halls, community scorecards, and mobile feedback systems—should be institutionalized to ensure inclusive, transparent, and accountable recovery efforts.
3. **Foster a Culture of Continuous Learning.** The PCRD Centre should champion

learning-driven implementation by embedding adaptive learning across all its operations. This includes normalizing failure as part of innovation, encouraging honest reflection, and using lessons learned to inform timely course corrections. Moving beyond compliance-based reporting is essential to achieving durable outcomes.

4. **Strengthen Knowledge Sharing Across Regions and Institutions.** The AU, through the PCRD Centre, should invest in cross-country learning platforms such as learning labs and accessible digital knowledge hubs. These spaces would allow Member States and regional actors to exchange experiences, replicate successes, and build a common knowledge base for effective peacebuilding and recovery across the continent.

Ways Forward

The discussions and reflections from this workshop underscore the urgent need to narrow the implementation gap between policy and practice in Africa's post-conflict recovery landscape. As the African Union (AU) and its Member States move forward with operationalizing the revised Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy, it is critical to establish mechanisms that are inclusive, adaptable, and responsive to the complex realities of fragile and conflict-affected contexts. This calls for greater institutional clarity, improved implementation tools, and sustained opportunities for knowledge exchange among local, regional, and continental actors.

Effective implementation of the revised PCRD policy requires a shift away from top-down, compliance-driven models toward learning-centered, participatory, and context-sensitive approaches. Embedding flexibility within monitoring and evaluation systems, empowering local actors, and integrating real-time feedback loops will help ensure that recovery efforts remain relevant, accountable, and impactful.

The Cairo-based PCRD Centre has a pivotal role in steering this transition. As a continental platform, the Centre must articulate a clear and distinct mandate—emphasizing convening, technical support, coordination, and innovation—while avoiding duplication of efforts already underway by regional economic communities (RECs), national institutions, or civil society organizations. A clearly defined value proposition will strengthen the Centre's ability to mobilize resources, cultivate strategic partnerships, and deliver tangible outcomes aligned with the PCRD pillars.

Ultimately, the sustainability of PCRD implementation depends on building enduring platforms for shared learning and collective action. This convening reaffirmed the value of honest, technical dialogue beyond formal declarations and highlighted the need for ongoing regional exchanges, digital knowledge hubs, and structured feedback mechanisms to ensure that insights from local recovery efforts inform continental strategy.

The authors of this report remain committed to supporting African scholars, policy practitioners, and community actors in deepening research, practice, and analysis in this field. Future convenings will continue to prioritize inclusive, community-engaged dialogue that centers human rights and equity in framing sustainable peace and security responses. It is hoped that these findings serve as a foundation for future research, collaboration, and innovative policy development across Africa's post-conflict recovery landscape.

About the Workshop

The workshop, “African Wars in the 21st Century...,” is part of a broader project focused on understanding and evaluating the effectiveness of African security frameworks and civil-military relations within contexts of fragility and post-conflict recovery. These workshops aim to convene scholars, policy analysts, civil society actors, and representatives from international organizations to examine the evolving landscape of security threats and the opportunities for African states to reimagine human security and stabilization mechanisms. This particular convening centered on the African Union’s Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy, exploring how it can be more effectively implemented to address the root causes of conflict, promote sustainable peace, and rebuild institutional trust in fragile states. The objective was to gather diverse perspectives, encourage critical reflection and debate, and propose actionable solutions to ensure that recovery efforts remain context-specific, inclusive, and responsive to realities on the ground. By convening a wide range of voices, the workshop provided a platform for reimagining sustainable, African-led approaches to post-conflict recovery.

Participants represented the following institutions:

- African Union Commission – Directorate of Governance and Conflict Prevention (GCP), Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (DPAPS), African Union Commission
- CIO Africa
- Embassies of Mali and Sudan in Addis Ababa
- Enderase Youth Association
- Ethiopian Mediation and Arbitration Center (EMAC)
- Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)
- International Centre for Tax and Development (ICTD)
- New York University, Center for Global Affairs
- Permanent Mission of the European Union to the African Union
- Social Science Research Council (SSRC)
- The Joint Civil-Military Interaction (JCMI) Research and Education Network
- United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
- United Nations Office to the African Union

See <https://www.aw21project.com/> for more information.

Imprint

New York University
Centre for Global Affairs
7 E 12th St, New York, NY, 10003
Phone: +1 212 992 8380

Addis Ababa University
Institute for Peace and Security
Studies (IPSS)
IPSS, CBE Campus, Addis Ababa
University, Sidist Kilo, Addis Ababa
Phone: +251 111 245 660
Email: info@ipss-addis.org