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Evaluating Au Initiatives in Regional Approaches to Rehabilitation During Post-Conflict Situation

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ABSTRACT

Africa's post-conflict rehabilitation initiatives heavily rely on the AU. Its main goals are socioeconomic rehabilitation, peacebuilding, and government restoration. The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) framework are two of the primary frameworks utilised in AU interventions in post-conflict rehabilitation that are critically evaluated in this study. The study evaluates the AU's achievements, difficulties, and constraints in post-war rehabilitation by analysing case studies from South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Somalia using a qualitative research methodology. The results show that although AU-led projects have contributed to peacekeeping and stability, their effectiveness is often undermined by institutional inefficiencies, financial constraints, political divisions, and security threats. Best practices and possible areas of collaboration are highlighted by comparison with other regional and international organisations like the United Nations, ECOWAS, and the European Union. The study comes to the conclusion that in order to maximise the longevity and efficacy of AU-led post-conflict rehabilitation projects, it is vital to strengthen AU financial independence, improve engagement with local and international partners, and promote inclusive governance.

INTRODUCTION

Violent conflicts have plagued Africa for a long time, with disastrous political, economic, and humanitarian consequences (Dakuyo, 2026; Onyejegbu, 2025). In addition to destabilising individual countries, these conflicts—which range from civil wars and insurgencies to ethnic and political violence—have also boosted regional instability by having an impact on surrounding states (Kapalbaeva, 2026; Ezugwu *et al.*, 2023). These wars have a significant impact because of their widespread migration and sharp fall in social and economic growth. Thus, attempts to promote peace on the continent depend more and more on post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. Regional approaches to healing and rehabilitation are now essential because many of these conflicts are global in scope. As the main continental organization, the African Union (AU) has taken on duties related to post-conflict recovery, peacekeeping, and peace mediation (De Leon, 2025; Okorie, 20224). The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) framework are two important institutional frameworks that guide the AU's post-conflict recovery initiatives. These frameworks seek to address the root causes of conflict, promote enduring peace and development, and aid in the reconstruction of communities devastated by war (De Zeeuw, 2022). The AU's participation in post-conflict reconstruction is informed by the broader history of African-led peacebuilding initiatives. The AU's shift to active engagement is a significant improvement in regional conflict resolution when compared to its predecessor,

the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which placed a major focus on non-interference in member nations' domestic affairs (Dires, 2024). In order to strengthen its capacity to react swiftly and recover from conflicts, the AU has created instruments such as the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Peace and Security Council (PSC). However, a comprehensive approach that integrates security, humanitarian aid, and sustainable development plans is necessary because to the complexity of African conflicts, which involve resource-driven disputes, ethnic tensions, and governance challenges. Despite these noble intentions, AU efforts in post-conflict reconstruction have often faced significant challenges. The success of AU-led initiatives has been hampered by financial constraints, political disagreements among member countries, poor management, and enduring security concerns (Raji & Babatunde, 202). Additionally, the AU's dependency on outside funding—primarily from international organisations and donors—raises concerns about the sustainability and independence of its recovery efforts, according to Mncube (2023). Because peacebuilding efforts must address both immediate security concerns and long-term socioeconomic and governance constraints, the complexity of post-conflict situations makes AU assistance more difficult. By evaluating the efficacy of the African Union's (AU) rehabilitation frameworks, such as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) framework, this article seeks to critically evaluate the AU's post-conflict recovery efforts. This research offers insights into the efficacy of AU-led rehabilitation

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projects and offers suggestions for improving regional recovery strategies through an analysis of case studies from South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Somalia. The study's conclusions will add to the larger conversation about regional peacebuilding strategies and the future of AU initiatives in post-conflict Africa.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two main theories: Uses and Gratifications Theory and Catharsis Theory. When taken as a whole, they contribute to the understanding of how films might affect behavioural and psychological effects. Aristotle is credited with developing catharsis theory, which Sigmund Freud and Breuer later developed (1895/1966). According to the hypothesis, people who engage with emotionally charged creative forms like drama and film might experience psychological relaxation and emotional release. The audience can confront similar repressed feelings in a non-threatening way by witnessing a character go through grief, loss, or metamorphosis (Gruenewald & Witteborn, 2022). Films provide a contemplative setting for processing emotions without confrontation in the post-conflict setting, where victims frequently retain unresolved emotional baggage.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz & Blumler, 1974) highlights how audiences actively choose media to meet particular social and psychological needs. These include gathering information, developing one's own identity, integrating into society, and letting go of emotions. As media consumers, victims may favour films that speak to their problems and real-life experiences. They may be able to reframe their own stories and create healthy coping strategies by watching Nollywood films that feature crime, punishment, redemption, or social justice (Bhatiasevi, 2024).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study evaluates the efficacy of AU-led post-conflict rehabilitation initiatives using a qualitative research technique. Analysing non-numerical content, such as texts, policies, and case studies, is the main goal of qualitative research. This was carried out in order to fully comprehend the efficacy of AU's post-conflict rehabilitation initiatives. It makes use of a wide range of secondary data sources, such as scholarly papers, policy documents, AU reports, and case studies of AU actions. In order to comprehend the effects of AU-led initiatives in post-conflict contexts, this study critically evaluates existing literature and policy frameworks using a document analysis methodology. AU operations in South Sudan, Somalia, and the Central African Republic are examined using a comparative case study methodology. These examples were chosen because they provide insight into several aspects of AU-led post-conflict recovery, including as peacekeeping operations, government reconstruction, and socioeconomic rehabilitation. Policy assessments, expert analysis, and reports from international organisations including the World Bank,

the United Nations, and African regional bodies are used to supplement data collecting. Using a theme approach, the analysis concentrates on important aspects of post-conflict rehabilitation, including social reconciliation, political governance, economic recovery, and security stabilisation. The study finds trends, difficulties, and best practices in AU interventions by contrasting a number of case studies. To improve the validity and reliability of the results, the study also employed triangulation techniques and acknowledged any biases in secondary data sources. This study's qualitative design guarantees a thorough examination of AU tactics and their efficacy in post-conflict African nations.

Thematic analysis was pioneered by Braun and Clarke (2006) and elaborated in later works. Their key contribution was to present a systematic six-phase process (familiarization, coding, theme review, etc.) for making sense of textual data. In this study, we use their reflexive thematic analysis idea: we examine literature and examples, code for recurring ideas (e.g. "release of emotion," "role model on screen," "feelings of empathy"), and organize them into coherent themes (like the sections below). This fits our goal of exploring subjective experiences and meanings.

One noted weakness of thematic analysis is its subjectivity. Coding and theme identification depend on the researcher's perspective. Even with clear guidelines, the interpretation of data can be influenced by one's biases (Prime, 2024). It is also argued that thematic analysis may lack replicability if different analysts code differently. In our context, this means the identification of themes in cinema may vary by perspective. However, by explicitly grounding themes in theory and citing evidence from various sources, we aim to mitigate bias and increase trustworthiness. For example, when we claim films aid emotional regulation, we back it with empirical studies (e.g. Fernández-Aguilar *et al.*, 2019) and theory (catharsis) rather than relying on intuition alone. In all, we conduct a conceptual review using thematic analysis. We surveyed research on rehabilitation, and analyzed themes that link film use to rehabilitative outcomes. The findings are structured into five substantive thematic sections below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Civil Society Organisations' Function in AU-Led Post-Conflict Rehabilitation

In post-conflict settings, civil society organisations (CSOs) play a crucial role in assisting AU-led initiatives. According to Ramirez (2024), CSOs contribute to peacebuilding by supporting human rights and transitional justice, providing humanitarian relief, and taking part in community-focused reconciliation programs. Their presence in the neighbourhood enables them to address local problems and build trust in affected communities—a capability that is sometimes absent from large-scale institutional initiatives (Larkin & Rudolf, 2024). CSOs also serve as watchdogs, making sure the AU and local governments carry out their post-conflict

recovery responsibilities. They promote gender-inclusive methods to peacebuilding, facilitate dialogue between disparate groups, and provide specialised expertise in governance and development projects (Damonte, 2024). In places like South Sudan and the Central African Republic, where community organisations have been essential to peace negotiations and reintegration initiatives, the collaboration between the AU and CSOs has been particularly evident. (Bolleyer, 2021) noted that despite their vital contributions, CSOs encounter obstacles such as scarce funding, security risks, and political opposition from national governments. CSOs' operations are restricted because many governments view them as foreign actors with foreign objectives (Njoku, 2022). The efficacy of rehabilitation programs may also be hampered by poor coordination between CSOs and AU institutions, which may lead to resource allocation that is wasteful and duplication of effort. Post-conflict rehabilitation efforts can be more successful if AU-CSO relationships are strengthened through institutionalised engagement frameworks. By establishing official channels for CSOs to take part in post-war reconstruction initiatives and policy development, the AU can help with this. Giving CSOs financial and logistical support can help them fulfil their missions more successfully.

AU interventions' historical background

The AU's role in post-conflict rebuilding has changed dramatically over time as a result of institutional changes and lessons learned from past conflicts. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established in 1963, marking the beginning of regional efforts to resolve conflicts. However, the OAU's rigorous adherence to a non-interference policy limited its capacity for peacebuilding (Nwokoroeze, 2024). But after joining the AU in 2002, a new period of increased involvement in post-war reconstruction and conflict settlement began (Guercio & Massidda, 2024). Peacekeeping missions in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Darfur are among the AU's notable historical initiatives. AMIB, the AU's first peacekeeping mission, was launched in Burundi in 2003 and later became a UN operation (Rufyikiri, 2021). Similarly, by holding peace negotiations and deploying regional forces, the AU played a crucial role in stabilising the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Despite challenges with operational capability and funding, the AU's engagement in Darfur through the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) (Okorie, 2024) marked a significant shift to a more aggressive regional security role. Current AU rehabilitation initiatives have been influenced by these past experiences, which also highlight the need for increased institutional capacity, long-term financial sources, and more cooperation with foreign partners. The significance of comprehensive and multifaceted approaches to post-conflict recovery that concurrently address security, governance, and socioeconomic reconstruction is highlighted by the lessons learned from these interventions.

The AU's post-conflict rehabilitation framework

To guide its efforts in post-conflict recovery across the continent, the African Union (AU) has put in place a comprehensive framework. According to Okorie (2024), the framework recognises that achieving lasting peace requires more than just putting an end to hostilities; the AU's approach integrates social cohesion, security, governance, and economic revitalisation. In order to ensure that post-war societies may effectively reconstruct, the institutional processes established under this framework aim to address both the immediate and fundamental causes of conflict (Njoroge, 2023). The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which focuses on conflict management and prevention, and the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) framework, which provides a framework for sustainable recovery efforts, are two crucial components of this framework.

CONCLUSION

Although the AU has significantly improved post-conflict rehabilitation, there are still many obstacles to overcome. The effectiveness of its actions is nevertheless hampered by institutional inefficiencies, political division, financial dependence, and security threats. To enhance post-conflict rehabilitation efforts throughout the continent, these structural, financial, and political constraints must be addressed. A more comprehensive and long-term strategy is required to improve the AU's capacity for rehabilitation. Building resilient post-conflict societies will require prioritising inclusive governance, fostering collaboration with local and international actors, and strengthening financial independence. The AU will be better equipped to contribute to long-term peace and security in Africa by putting strategic reforms into place and enhancing stakeholder cooperation. Based on the findings, the study call for:

1. Leverage Nollywood and local content: Work with Nollywood filmmakers to create short films specifically for victims. These could depict Nigerian victims' experiences and paths to reform, making the content very relatable. Authentic local stories are more persuasive than foreign films.
2. Establish film screening programs: Government should set up regular film nights, using projectors in common areas. NGOs and volunteers can help source Nollywood films with positive themes (e.g. redemption, entrepreneurship, family values). This would create a structured activity for victims to learn and unwind.
3. Develop cinematherapy curriculum: Design a curriculum blending films with psychosocial goals. For example, show a film about job training during vocational classes.
4. Create media production training: Partner with film professionals to offer victims hands-on media skills. This could range from basic video editing workshops to role-playing camera operations. Such programs teach tangible skills and change identity (as practitioners rather than

prisoners).

5. Facilitate guided discussions: After screenings, trained facilitators (counselors or educators) should lead discussions. Questions like “How did the character overcome challenges?” or “What would you do in that situation?” help victims reflect.

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