



AFRICAN UNION

AFRICAN UNION POLICY GUIDELINE

ON THE ROLE OF THE AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE

**IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND NATURAL DISASTER
SUPPORT**

Foreword

The African Union (AU) Guideline on the Role of the African Standby Force (ASF) in Humanitarian Action and Natural Disaster Support has been developed pursuant to the provisions of the African Union Constitutive Act, the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, ASF Doctrine, the Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff College, and other international instruments on humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction¹. The role of the ASF in support of humanitarian action and natural disasters support is expected to contribute to, when required, to the overall efforts to prevent and effectively respond to complex emergencies on the continent.

The Guideline broadly outlines the strategic focus and scope on the use of the assets and resources drawn from the ASF in responding to complex humanitarian crisis or emergencies, created either by armed conflicts, natural or human induced disasters. The strategic focus is to build the continental capacity to support and contribute to strategic humanitarian and disaster relief efforts including preparedness, preventive or actual crisis response and recovery.

The Guideline is primarily complementing relevant humanitarian policy documents under the purview of the Department of Political Affairs, which is responsible for humanitarian matters in the African Union. The AU is expected to achieve the objectives of Humanitarian Action and Natural Disasters Support in cooperation with the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), humanitarian actors and other relevant stakeholders within the context of the AU Humanitarian Policy Framework.

The Guideline is a document that should be studied closely by RECs/RMs, Member States, civil society organizations, institutions and individuals that will be involved in requesting, receiving or coordinating assets and resources of the ASF in its humanitarian crises and natural disaster support roles.



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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

¹ Including the AU Humanitarian Policy Framework.

Key References

- a) The Constitutive Act Of The African Union, 2000
- b) Protocol Relating To The Establishment Of The Peace And Security Council Of The African Union, 2002
- c) African Union Humanitarian Policy Framework, 2015
- d) African Union Disaster Management Humanitarian Policy, 2015
- e) Policy Framework For The Establishment Of The African Standby Force And The Military Staff Committee, 2003
- f) African Standby Force And African Capacity For Immediate Response To Crises Revised Roadmap Iii, 2015
- g) African Union Convention For The Protection And Assistance Of Internally Displaced Persons In Africa (Kampala Convention) (2009)

Acronyms

AGA	African Governance Architecture
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ASF	African Standby Force
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
HANDS	Humanitarian Action and Natural Disasters Support
HARDPD	Humanitarian Affairs, Refugees and Displaced Persons Division
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OSOCC	On-site Operations Coordination Centre
PKF	Peacekeeping Force
PSC	Peace and Security Council
PSO	Peace Support Operations
RECs/RMs	Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms
SAR	Search and Rescue
SARS	South Asia Respiratory Syndrome
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SOMA	Status of Mission Agreement

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Introduction

1. This African Union (AU) Guideline on the Role of the African Standby Force (ASF) in Humanitarian Action and Natural Disaster Support is premised on the need to develop appropriate measures to facilitate humanitarian action in complex humanitarian crisis or emergencies, such as those created by armed conflicts, natural and human induced disasters, and to determine to what extent the ASF can be employed in supporting efforts to address those situations and their effects. The Guideline is primarily complementary to relevant humanitarian policy instruments including the Humanitarian Policy Framework under the purview of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), which is responsible for humanitarian matters in the African Union.
2. The African Union (AU) is expected to achieve these tasks in cooperation with the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and other humanitarian stakeholders. In accordance with the outcomes of the Humanitarian Action and Natural Disasters Support (HANDS) Technical Validation Meeting held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 1 to 3 September 2015, this document is to become an Annex to the AU Humanitarian Policy Framework.
3. In addition, the AU normative framework governing the linkage between the ASF and HANDS is rooted in the Protocol Establishing the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (the PSC Protocol). Article 13(f) of the PSC Protocol highlights one of the functional aspects of the ASF as being the facilitation of “humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of civilian population in conflict areas and support efforts to address major natural disasters”. Similarly, Article 15 of the Protocol seeks to further emphasize the relationship between the ASF and humanitarian action. It is against this background and in the wake of serious humanitarian crises in various parts of the world, notably the one created by the Haiti Earthquake of 2010, that a declaration was issued by the Heads of State and Government at the Fourteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, which called on the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) to ‘...examine the modalities of establishing an African humanitarian mechanism to provide a rapid response, in a coordinated, harmonized and efficient way, to serious humanitarian

situations which could occur in Africa and in other parts of the world’...”. In this vein, the AUC in a collaborative effort by the Department of Peace and Security, and the Department of Political Affairs, initiated the HANDS programme in 2012.

4. This guideline contributes to the policy frameworks of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and of the African Governance Architecture (AGA). It does also draw some elements from other regional and international humanitarian regimes.

Rationale

5. The AU Humanitarian Policy Guideline has been drafted to enhance, coordinate, and consolidate the existing humanitarian response mechanisms with the objective of effectively addressing the growing challenges that arise when the African Union is called upon regarding such crises.
6. This Policy Guideline provides for a range of areas where the AU could give its support to RECs/RM and Member States, as outlined in its strategic focus:
 - a. Coordination
 - b. Protection
 - c. Promotion of International Humanitarian Law
 - d. Mixed Migrants
 - e. Disaster Management, Preparedness and Response
 - f. Inclusive Peace Processes
 - g. Recovery and Development
 - h. Enhancing Capacity and Fostering Partnership
 - i. Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization
 - j. Early Warning
 - k. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
 - l. Communications and Advocacy

7. The reference to the potential role of the ASF can be found under the coordination focus, which mentions that coordination of humanitarian action should be “multi-dimensional and a shared responsibility involving a variety of actors and stakeholders, tools and mechanisms”, and especially under the “humanitarian civil military coordination” section: “It is essential that the dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors is established in order to protect and promote humanitarian principles, enable humanitarian access, encourage coordination, and when appropriate pursue common goals. *As a last resort and under civilian leadership, the use of military and civil defence assets (MCDA) may be required to carry out humanitarian activities, particularly within, but not limited to, the framework of the African Standby Force (ASF) and its structures.*”
8. It is against this background that the AU has developed this Guideline on the Role of the ASF in Humanitarian and Natural Disaster Support, to complement the AU Humanitarian Policy Framework. This document heavily draws upon the ASF resources, assets and capabilities as part of a potential response mechanism, and to augment the coping capacity and resilience of RECs/RMs, Member States and communities, in collaboration with other relevant humanitarian actors on the continent.
9. This Guideline is expected to outline in what areas and under what circumstances the ASF may facilitate and support the response to complex humanitarian crisis or emergencies.

Strategic Vision

10. The Strategic Vision is to contribute to strengthening humanitarian action in Africa by further exploring the role of the ASF and the employment of its assets and resources - including personnel and other technical capabilities- in the prevention or response to humanitarian crisis.

Purpose, Scope and Applicability

11. The purpose of the Guideline is to establish a strategic approach in providing ASF assets and resources in support of humanitarian action to preserve, protect and save lives, alleviate suffering enhance physical security and in full respect of human dignity and within appropriate provisions of national sovereignty and direction.
12. The Guideline aims at defining in what ways the ASF can complement and support humanitarian action of RECs/RMs and Member States, and provides an overview of the means and methods available for support, given the ASF capability to rapidly respond and deploy in crisis and emergencies.
13. Utilising its multidimensional components comprising of civilian, police and military capacities, the ASF will prepare for and put at the disposal of the prevention and response operations as well as early recovery and post conflict reconstruction, as deemed appropriate on a case by case basis, such capabilities within its holding.

Objectives

14. The objectives of this Guideline are to outline areas and /or activities for which the ASF could provide support including through the employment of its assets and resources, in accordance with a political mandate by the Peace and Security Council of the AU or other relevant policy organs:
 - i. Security of populations, protection of government installations and infrastructures, especially in times of disruption of States security services, in consonance with the adherence to International Humanitarian Law.
 - ii. The creation of appropriately secure and enabling environment to allow for response actions of other humanitarian actors.

- iii. The augmentation of the capacities of the RECs/RMs, Member States, for effective preparedness and response to natural or man-made disasters.
- iv. Logistical support: strategic airlift, equipment, communication, ground transportation, provision of food and non-food items for the affected populations.
- v. Humanitarian Civil-military coordination.
- vi. Support for early recovery and post conflict reconstruction through provisions of technical capabilities and personnel.

Legal and Institutional Basis

15. The use of the ASF in HANDS finds its legal basis as follows:

- I. Article 7 of the PSC Protocol states that “(...) in conjunction with the Chairperson of the Commission, the PSC shall support and facilitate humanitarian actions in situations of armed conflict or major natural disasters”. Furthermore, Article 15 declares “that the PSC shall take active part in coordinating humanitarian action in order to restore life to normalcy in the event of conflicts or natural disaster”.
- II. Similarly, in the 2008 Memorandum of Understanding in the Area of Peace and Security, between the African Union and the Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution agreed, among others, “to coordinate efforts undertaken at regional and continental levels in order to minimize the humanitarian impact of conflicts”.
- III. Article 13 (f) of the PSC Protocol provides for the functional aspects of the ASF, namely as a tool for the facilitation of “(...) humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of civilian population in conflict areas and support efforts to address major natural disasters”. Relatedly, Article 15 recalls that the ASF, “(...) shall be adequately equipped to undertake humanitarian activities in their mission areas under the control of the Chairperson of the Commission” and “shall facilitate the activities of the humanitarian agencies in the mission areas”. Pursuant to Article 15 of the PSC Protocol, ASF Revised Road Map III also noted the need to, in consultation

with the Humanitarian Affairs, Refugees and Displaced Persons Division (HARDPD) within the Department of Political Affairs, develop this Guideline for the employment of the ASF in support of HANDS operations across crises situations as articulated in the ASF policy Doctrine, based on scenarios 1 to 6, which range from the deployment of a mere political mission to a rapid intervention (see Strategic Focus below).

- 16. Once mandated by relevant policy organs, the use of the ASF in HANDS will be covered by the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) or Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA). Depending on the mandate authorized for its use, and on the characterization of the situation (armed conflict, natural or human induced disasters), appropriate statutory mission documents will be established, in conformity with international law, AU instruments and relevant international and regional Guidelines on humanitarian and natural disaster relief, as well as on civil- military coordination.
- 17. Following this guidance, the roles of the ASF can be considered in terms of support to humanitarian action, such as by creating a secure environment, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance, protection of civilians, humanitarian disaster relief operations, and training, in full respect of civil military coordination and humanitarian principles.
- 18. Support by the military component of the ASF should be envisaged as a last resort, especially in times of armed conflict. The role of the military in the facilitation of humanitarian assistance, does not contravene the promotion of core humanitarian principles in crisis situations.

Principles

19. The role of the ASF in HANDS maybe guided by the following principles:

- i. **Humanitarian Principles:** Humanitarian action should aim to follow the principles

of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. ASF should take those principles into consideration when operating along humanitarian actors.

- ii. **State Responsibility:** The primary role and responsibility of member states to protect and assist affected populations within their territory.
- iii. **Compliance:** Any action conducted by the ASF in HANDS shall comply with established international norms and standards including guidelines and codes of conduct.
- iv. **Non-indifference:** The AU and its Member States will act in conformity with the relevant provisions contained in the Constitutive Act of the AU.
- v. **Solidarity:** African customary extension of hospitality/egalitarianism and solidarity with people in situation of need and distress is institutionalized as an integral part of humanitarian response.
- vi. **Accountability:** Transparency and accountability must apply to all humanitarian actions.
- vii. **Participation and ownership:** Participation of affected populations/communities is the cornerstone of the planning and decision-making process for humanitarian action.
- viii. **Subsidiarity and complementarity:** These principles will govern the actions of AUC, other organs of the AU, REC/RMs, Member States, UN and other actors and stakeholders.
- ix. **Gender mainstreaming:** All activities must take into account the gender dimension of humanitarian action; and also include vulnerable persons such as the elderly and persons with disabilities considerations.

Strategic Focus

20. The strategic focus of the Guideline is a departure from that listed in the AU Humanitarian Policy Framework; that outlines the scenarios, areas of intervention, means and methods of the ASF for the purpose of HANDS.
21. **ASF Scenarios as enshrined in the policy framework of the ASF (2003)**
 - A) **Scenario 1:** AU/Regional Military advice to a Political mission.
 - B) **Scenario 2:** AU/Regional observer mission co-deployed with UN mission.
 - C) **Scenario 3:** Stand-alone AU/Regional observer mission.
 - D) **Scenario 4:** AU/Regional Peace support force under Chapter VI and preventive deployment missions.
 - E) **Scenario 5:** AU PSO for complex multidimensional operations –low level spoilers (a feature of many current armed conflicts).
 - F) **Scenario 6:** AU intervention in graves circumstances – e.g. Genocide situations where international community does not act promptly.
22. These ASF scenarios are linked to peace and security issues essentially, and do not mention the role of the ASF in HANDS, in terms of prevention, response to humanitarian crisis and early recovery. Hence, they may not be necessarily the basis for intervention in HANDS, although ASF might already be deployed under one of those scenarios when requested to support in HANDS.
23. Since the PSC Protocol provides for the use of ASF in facilitating, “humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of civilian population in conflict areas and support efforts to address major natural disasters” it will serve as the main basis to depict areas of intervention and activities.

24. Overall, this Guideline as well as a political mandate will provide the necessary guide through which the ASF can be deployed to support humanitarian responses in armed conflict, natural and man induced hazards and subsequent disasters.

Areas of Intervention, Means and Methods

a. Situation of armed conflict:

25. The ASF may rapidly intervene, when mandated, either on request of a member State or in the case of grave circumstances, and progressively deploy multidimensional peace support operations. However, extreme circumstances, where no other alternative exists to alleviate the suffering of the population, might justify the use of the military in such relief operations: As stated in the AU Humanitarian Policy Framework: “As a last resort and under civilian leadership, the use of military and civil defence assets (MCDA) may be required to carry out humanitarian activities, particularly within, but not limited to, the framework of the African Standby Force (ASF) and its structures. The AU will ensure that any use of military and civil defence assets in humanitarian action is limited in time and scope and takes place in accordance with humanitarian principles and the Oslo guidelines, the MCDA guidelines and other relevant applicable norms, frameworks and standards.”

26. The protection of the civilian population and the “facilitation of humanitarian assistance” should generally be included in the PSC mandate authorizing the deployment, and will be guided further by the concept of operation of the PSO.

b. Situation of Natural, and Human Induced Disaster:

27. The continent has experienced different types of disasters resulting from a diversity of hazards, such as droughts, fires, floods, locust and army worm invasions, collapsed buildings, and epidemics. To meet the needs of communities affected by any such hazards, the ASF can support natural and human induced disaster relief operations by performing the following roles:

- a. Establishment of an On-site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC), including communications;
- b. Ensuring security;
- c. Assisting in facilitating provision of Relief – Escorts;
- d. Conducting search and rescue (SAR);
- e. Providing logistics support;
- f. Providing medical support;
- g. Providing transportation;
- h. Other relevant mandated tasks.

28. In addition, according to the type of natural disaster, specific roles can be played by the ASF.

Drought and Desertification

29. Drought and desertification are caused by harsh climatic conditions due to a rainfall deficit compounded by human activities resulting in higher sea surface temperatures, increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide and greenhouse effects. Drought is a recurrent phenomenon that affects large areas and numbers of people in a given country, with cumulative effects that include soil erosion, decreasing ability to cope with future droughts, impoverishment of rural communities, drying up of water bodies, extensive crop failure and death of livestock.

30. ASF Response to Drought. ASF may be called upon to:

- a. Provide and treat water;
- b. Construct dams;
- c. Provide logistical support for veterinary and agricultural services.

Floods

31. Floods are flash, river and coastal inundations from intense rainfall associated with seasonal weather patterns. They are also caused by the effects of tsunamis, hurricanes, typhoons, tropical cyclones, human manipulation of watersheds, drainage basins and floodplains. The effects of floods include the displacement of families, loss of lives and property, waterborne epidemics, food shortages and destruction of infrastructure.

32. ASF Response to Floods. ASF may be called upon to:

- a. Open communication routes by undertaking construction works;
- b. Conduct evacuation;
- c. Carryout first aid and minor treatments;
- d. Provide and treat water;
- e. Provide temporary shelter;
- f. Undertake flood fighting operations.

Landslides

33. This is the down-slope movement of soil and rock resulting from the following; earthquakes, tremors, heavy rains, changes in direct water content, removal of lateral support, loading with weight, weathering, human manipulation of water courses and slope composition. The effects of landslides include displacement, destruction of lives, property and infrastructure.

34. ASF Response to Landslides. ASF may be called upon to:

- a. Open communication routes by undertaking construction works;
- b. Clear debris;
- c. Conduct evacuation;
- d. Provide temporary shelters;
- e. Provide and treat water.

Earthquakes and Volcanic Activities

35. The effects of earthquakes include death and injury, displacement of persons, destruction of property and infrastructure. Due to high population density and the large number of high-rise structures, major cities would be the most affected.

36. ASF Response to Earthquakes and Tremors. ASF may be called upon to:

- a. Conduct evacuation;
- b. Open communication routes by undertaking construction works;
- c. Clear debris;
- d. Provide temporary shelters;
- e. Provide and treat water.

Industrial Hazards and Pollution

37. Mining accidents, oil spills, radiation, air and water pollution are potential hazards to life and property. The risks of fires and explosions are ever present in industries, fuel and chemical storage depots. Dumping and disposal of chemical waste may also contribute to industrial and pollution hazards. The effects of industrial hazards include loss of lives, injuries, pollution, and environmental degradation, destruction of property, infrastructure and disruption of social and economic activities.

38. ASF Response to Industrial Hazards. ASF may be called upon to:

- a. Conduct evacuation;
- b. Decontaminate affected areas;
- c. Provide temporary shelters;
- d. Carry out fire-fighting;
- e. Enforce quarantine;
- f. Provide and treat water.

Diseases and Epidemics

39. Major epidemics affecting the continent include HIV/AIDS, cholera, malaria, typhoid, meningitis, tuberculosis and food poisoning. Continuous surveillance against the extremely lethal viral haemorrhagic fevers such as Ebola, yellow fever, Rift Valley fever, South Asia Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and avian influenza is being undertaken to generate more effective and sustainable response to reduce its effects. The effects of diseases and epidemics include death and disruption of social and economic activities.

40. ASF Response to Diseases and Epidemics. ASF may be called upon to:

- a. Conduct immunization;
- b. Enforce quarantine;
- c. Conduct evacuation;
- d. Provide logistical support to health institutions;
- e. Provide water purification functions;
- f. Provide temporary shelters;
- g. Other mandated tasks

Responsibilities

41. The institutional arrangements at regional and national levels shall essentially provide for effective participation and coordination of the stakeholders at the various levels of implementation.
42. ASF assets and resources will be mostly used to facilitate, assist and support the efforts of humanitarian organizations and agencies.
43. In extreme circumstances, the military, police and civilian components of the ASF may have to take direct responsibility for the delivery of assistance in order to save lives when alternative civilian humanitarian capacities are unable to respond to the situation. As stated in the ASF Doctrine, the military component may take responsibility for specific humanitarian functions but only as a last resort, and as deemed appropriate on a case by case basis.
44. However, commanders and the heads of components should be aware of taking on extra tasks that are not specified in the mandate, beyond their capabilities and the higher authority's intent of action as a last resort.

Institutional Linkages, Management and Implementation

45. The implementation of this Guideline will be complemented with existing relevant AU frameworks and policies, and in strong coordination with existing mechanisms and international, regional and national entities. Clear implementation of the Guideline will be achieved based on a three-tier level of responsibilities in facilitating and supporting HANDS identified as follows:

a. African Union Commission

46. It is envisaged to establish an AU Disaster Management Committee (comprising representatives from the Office of the AU Chairperson, and Departments Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Social Affairs, Rural Economy and Agriculture, Infrastructure and Energy, and the Office of the Legal Counsel) at the African Union Commission. It shall have the overall oversight responsibility to ensure effective and efficient implementation of HANDS Guideline. The Department for Peace and Security will manage the preparation, training and capacity building requirement of the assets and resources to be dedicated for HANDS, and the management of their mobilization, employment and deployment in close collaboration with the Department of Political Affairs.

b. Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms

47. The RECs/RMs will ensure effective linkages at the regional and national levels. The Humanitarian Unit/Section/Division or Department at the REC/RM level will take the lead and coordinate the REC/RM support in collaboration with the standby force of that REC/RM.
48. At the regional level, RECs/RMs will work with regional and national emergency management leads in collaboration with appropriate Ministries with respect to policy direction and implementation of norms and standards on natural disaster and complex humanitarian emergencies. Sector ministries will provide guidelines to ensure that the work plans contribute to the attainment of the Guideline.

c. Member States

49. Member States are responsible in implementing this Guideline through their relevant entities at the national level.

Amendment and Review

50. Any proposals for amendments or review of this Guideline shall be submitted to the Peace and Security Department.

51. The Peace and Security Department shall convene a meeting of stakeholders to consider the proposals for review and amendment. Thereafter, the proposals shall be forwarded to the Office of the Legal Counsel for review.

52. The amendments shall become effective when issued by the Commissioner, Peace and Security.

Entry into Force

53. This Guideline shall become effective on the date that it is issued by the Commissioner, Peace and Security.



The background features a stylized map of the African continent in a light tan color. To the left of the map, there is a vertical green decorative element consisting of a series of interconnected, leaf-like shapes. Several curved lines in shades of green and tan sweep across the page, creating a sense of movement and design.

Contact

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