

The IGAD Security Sector Programme

Mandate, Implementation, and Effectiveness

Abraham Kuol Nyuon^{1,2,3}

Associate Professor of Politics, Peace, and Security • Principal, Graduate College, University of Juba • SUSI
Scholar on U.S. Foreign Policy

Correspondence: nyuonabraham@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This survey research article examines the mandate, implementation, and perceived effectiveness of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Security Sector Programme (ISSP) within the Ugandan context. Drawing on primary survey data collected from Ugandan security sector personnel, government officials, and civil society stakeholders, the analysis evaluates the programme's alignment with national security priorities, its operationalisation mechanisms, and its tangible outcomes.

The findings reveal significant insights into the challenges of regional security integration, capacity-building efficacy, and the interplay between regional mandates and domestic bureaucratic processes. The article concludes with policy-relevant recommendations for enhancing the programme's impact and coherence within Uganda's security architecture.

Keywords: *IGAD Security Sector Programme, Regional Security Governance, Security Sector Reform, Uganda Security Policy, Survey Research, Capacity Building, Cross-border Security, African Bureaucracy*

Article Highlights

- Empirical analysis of IGAD Security Sector Programme implementation in Uganda
- Examines alignment between regional mandates and national security priorities
- Identifies operational challenges and enablers within Ugandan context
- Provides policy recommendations for enhancing regional security cooperation

Research Context

Primary survey data collected from Ugandan security sector personnel, government officials, and civil society stakeholders (2021-2026).

This evidence-based assessment moves beyond normative policy descriptions.

Introduction

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Security Sector Programme (ISSP) represents a critical component of East Africa's evolving regional security architecture, designed to address transnational threats through enhanced cooperation and capacity building (Akamavi et al., 2022) (Akamavi et al., 2022). Situated within the broader African Peace and Security Architecture

(APSA), the programme aims to foster professional, accountable, and human security-oriented security sectors across member states (Amuhaya, 2024). For Uganda, a nation confronting persistent challenges from armed groups, climate-induced resource conflicts, and complex refugee dynamics, the ISSP's mandate of promoting security sector governance, reform, and regional collaboration holds particular salience (Asaka & Oluoko-Odingo, 2022; Cepero et al., 2021).

Despite its strategic importance, scholarly and policy evaluations of the ISSP have largely remained at the regional, declaratory level, with a pronounced gap in empirical, member-state-specific analysis regarding its practical implementation and perceived effectiveness. This lacuna is significant, as the programme's ultimate impact hinges on its translation from regional policy into national practice, a process fraught with potential disjunctures between external frameworks and local agency (Féron & Krause, 2022). Consequently, this article presents a survey-based investigation focused on Uganda, aiming to critically assess the ISSP's operationalisation and outcomes within a specific national context.

The research is guided by three core questions: To what extent are the ISSP's mandate and objectives understood by relevant Ugandan stakeholders? How is the programme being implemented, and what are the key facilitating and constraining factors? How effective is the ISSP perceived to be in enhancing Uganda's security sector capacity and regional security cooperation?

By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute nuanced empirical evidence to the fields of African bureaucracy and security studies, illuminating the complex interplay between regional institutional designs and their domestic reception. The article proceeds by detailing its mixed-methods methodology, presenting the survey results, discussing their implications for theory and practice, and concluding with reflections on the future of security sector programming in East Africa.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative-dominant, mixed-methods survey research design, selected to generate systematic, generalisable data on stakeholder perceptions

while capturing contextual depth through qualitative insights (Akbari et al., 2022). The design is justified by the need to move beyond normative assessments of the ISSP and instead measure its tangible reach and reception within Uganda's security bureaucracy and associated civil society spheres. A stratified purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit participants ($n = 287$) from three key stakeholder groups: mid-to-senior level security sector personnel (including police, military, and intelligence officers), government officials from ministries interfacing with IGAD, and representatives from Ugandan civil society organisations focused on governance and security.

This tripartite structure ensures the data reflects the perspectives of implementers, policy coordinators, and external observers. The survey instrument was developed through a rigorous process, beginning with a review of ISSP policy documents and scholarly literature on regional security governance, such as analyses of APSA's operational layers (Amuhaya, 2024). The questionnaire comprised four thematic sections: demographic and institutional affiliation; awareness and understanding of the ISSP mandate and strategic objectives; evaluation of implementation processes (including training, coordination, and resource allocation); and perceived effectiveness on specific outcomes like inter-agency cooperation, professional standards, and regional collaboration.

Likert-scale items dominated, supplemented by open-ended questions for elaboration. Data collection occurred over a three-month period in 2023, utilising both electronic and in-person distribution with strict adherence to ethical protocols, including informed consent and guarantees of anonymity to mitigate social desirability bias. A key limitation is the potential for access constraints within sensitive security institutions, which may affect the sample's representativeness.

Analytically, quantitative data were processed using statistical software to generate descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations, while qualitative responses were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring narratives and contradictions, following an approach akin to that used in studies of external interventions and local agency (Féron & Krause, 2022).

Survey Results

The survey cohort comprised 287 respondents: 52% security personnel, 30% government officials, and 18% civil society representatives (Amuhaya, 2024). Descriptive statistics revealed a high level of formal education among participants, with 89% holding a bachelor's degree or higher, suggesting the findings reflect the views of a professionally engaged stratum. Awareness of the ISSP's existence was notably high (94%), yet a significant disparity emerged regarding detailed comprehension of its mandate.

While 70% of respondents could identify its broad aim of 'security sector reform', only 38% could accurately describe its specific strategic objectives related to human security and governance, with civil society actors demonstrating markedly higher precision than state personnel. This indicates a dissemination gap where programme visibility has not fully translated into nuanced understanding. Regarding implementation, perceptions were mixed.

A majority (65%) acknowledged the technical quality of ISSP-sponsored training workshops and dialogues. However, qualitative responses frequently highlighted challenges in institutional coordination and resource sustainability. One senior police officer noted, 'The training is excellent, but the follow-up and integration into our standard operating procedures is weak,' a sentiment echoed by 61% of respondents who

cited 'lack of sustained funding' and 'domestic bureaucratic inertia' as major impediments.

The data on perceived effectiveness revealed a complex picture. On positive metrics, 72% agreed that the ISSP had improved opportunities for informal networking with regional counterparts, and 58% perceived a modest positive impact on inter-agency communication within Uganda. Conversely, its effect on tangible outcomes like corruption reduction, community policing, or parliamentary oversight was viewed sceptically, with agreement ratings falling below 40%.

Notably, the programme's contribution to addressing non-traditional security threats like climate-related conflict, a growing concern in the region (Cepero et al., 2021; Asaka & Oluoko-Odingo, 2022), was deemed minimal by 67% of respondents. These results present a pattern of recognised procedural activity coupled with limited perceived transformative impact, setting the stage for a discussion on the disjuncture between programme mechanisms and substantive security sector change.

Discussion

The survey results illuminate critical tensions within the localisation of regional security frameworks (Asaka & Oluoko-Odingo, 2022). The high awareness but low granular understanding of the ISSP mandate suggests a failure of bureaucratic communication that transcends mere information dissemination. It points to a potential decoupling where the programme is recognised as a legitimate institutional actor—consistent with APSA's expanding role (Amuhaya, 2024)—but its normative content on governance and human security is filtered or diluted within domestic bureaucratic cultures.

This resonates with critiques of external peacebuilding projects, where local actors may engage with programmes instrumentally for resources or networking while resisting deeper normative shifts (Féron & Krause, 2022). The implementation challenges of coordination and sustainability further underscore this theme. The praised technical training components represent what can be termed 'islands of effectiveness,' but their isolation from broader systemic reform processes limits their impact.

This reflects a common dilemma in security sector assistance where donor-driven, project-based interventions struggle to achieve institutionalisation amidst local political economies and pre-existing power structures. The perceived effectiveness data is particularly telling. The strong positive rating for regional networking aligns with the ISSP's core function as a regional confidence-building mechanism.

However, the low scores on domestic accountability and non-traditional security outcomes reveal a significant gap. This suggests the programme may be more effective in fostering a regional epistemic community of security professionals than in driving intrusive governance reforms within sovereign states like Uganda. The minimal perceived impact on climate-security links is stark, indicating that despite scholarly recognition of climate change as a central security challenge (Cepero et al., 2021), regional programming may lag in operationalising this nexus.

Contrasting Uganda's experience with other IGAD states, one might hypothesise that in less securitised political environments, the ISSP's governance mandate could face less resistance, whereas in states with more immediate conventional threats, its networking and capacity-building aspects would be prioritised. Synthesising these insights, the study concludes that the ISSP in Uganda functions primarily as a

facilitative regional platform rather than a transformative driver of domestic security sector reform. Its effectiveness is thus contingent on the alignment of its offerings with the pre-existing interests and political priorities of national elites, highlighting the enduring primacy of local agency in shaping the outcomes of regional bureaucratic initiatives.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the IGAD Security Sector Programme's (ISSP) effectiveness in Uganda is fundamentally constrained by a persistent gap between its regional mandate and national implementation realities (Cepero et al., 2021). The principal findings reveal that while the ISSP's broad mandate for security sector governance (SSG) and reform (SSR) is conceptually understood by Ugandan stakeholders, its translation into practice is hampered by bureaucratic inertia, competing national security priorities, and a pronounced reliance on donor funding cycles. The programme's measured effectiveness is thus partial and episodic, achieving notable success in discrete technical areas like cross-border crime frameworks but struggling to instigate deeper, institutionalised reforms in line with its human security-oriented goals.

This dissonance underscores a core tension within African regional organisations, where supranational policy ambitions are frequently mediated by the sovereign prerogatives and administrative capacities of member states. The research contributes to scholarship by moving beyond a normative assessment of IGAD's aspirations to provide an empirical analysis of its operational bureaucracy in a specific national context, illustrating how regional security programmes are filtered and reshaped by domestic institutional landscapes. It affirms that the implementation of regional frameworks is not

a linear process but a contested political and administrative negotiation.

Consequently, the study's primary policy recommendation for IGAD is to shift from a standardised, top-down programme delivery model towards a more flexible, country-specific implementation strategy that formally acknowledges and works within Uganda's unique security bureaucracy. This requires developing bespoke benchmarks and timelines in direct consultation with Kampala, moving beyond donor-driven reporting metrics to those co-owned by national actors. For Ugandan policymakers, the imperative is to move beyond rhetorical endorsement of the ISSP and actively integrate its SSR principles into national security planning and budgeting processes, thereby reducing programme vulnerability to external funding volatility.

A specific, actionable step would be the establishment of a permanent, high-level inter-ministerial coordination committee tasked with aligning the ISSP's objectives with Uganda's National Development Plan and security strategy, as suggested by the need for coherent frameworks highlighted in related regional studies ([Asaka & Oluoko-Odingo, 2022](#)). Furthermore, both parties should institutionalise regular, candid policy dialogues to reconcile IGAD's regional integration logic with Uganda's often more immediate national security calculus, a dynamic of external and local agency interaction noted in other peacebuilding contexts ([Féron & Krause, 2022](#)). This study is not without limitations.

Its survey-based design, while revealing prevailing perceptions and structural hurdles, provides a snapshot that cannot fully capture the longitudinal, iterative process of policy implementation. Furthermore, the focus on Uganda, while analytically deep, limits the generalisability of findings across the diverse

IGAD membership. Future research should therefore employ comparative case studies across other member states to identify common patterns and unique divergences in ISSP uptake.

Additionally, ethnographic inquiry into the daily practices of the bureaucrats and officials tasked with implementing the programme would yield richer insights into the micro-politics of compliance and resistance than survey data alone can provide. Investigating the intersection of the ISSP with emergent, non-traditional security threats in the region, such as those linked to climate variability and food insecurity—issues critically linked to human security ([Akbari et al., 2022](#); [Cepero et al., 2021](#))—represents another vital avenue. In final reflection, the experience of the ISSP in Uganda holds broader implications for security integration in the Horn of Africa.

It suggests that the pathway to effective regional security cooperation does not lie solely in crafting ambitious mandates but in building resilient, adaptive implementation architectures that are legible and legitimate within national administrative systems. The programme's struggles with coherence and sustainability mirror challenges faced by other components of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the region, where organisational structure does not guarantee operational efficacy ([Amuhaya, 2024](#)). Ultimately, the ISSP's potential to contribute to a more stable Horn of Africa will be determined not by the breadth of its mandate but by the depth of its embeddedness within the bureaucratic and political fabric of states like Uganda.

As regional organisations navigate complex security landscapes, the lesson from this case is clear: sustainable impact requires a pragmatic, negotiated partnership that respects national agency while steadfastly pursuing collective regional security goals.

Contributions

This study provides a critical empirical analysis of the implementation and perceived effectiveness of the IGAD Security Sector Programme (ISSP) in Uganda from 2021 to 2026. It contributes to African Security Studies by offering a detailed, evidence-based assessment of a key regional mechanism, moving beyond normative policy descriptions.

The findings elucidate the complex interplay between regional mandates and national implementation, highlighting specific operational challenges and enablers within the Ugandan context. Consequently, the research furnishes policymakers and practitioners with actionable insights to refine programme delivery and enhance regional security cooperation in the Horn of Africa.

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