



## **SUMMARY REPORT OF THE MONITORING, EVALUATION, LEARNING & REPORTING TRAINING HELD FOR AU STAFF MEMBERS IN THE PEACE & SECURITY DESK**

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**Lenana Guest House & Training Centre, Nairobi, Kenya**

**Designed, facilitated and reported by Coalition for Peace in Africa**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>COPA</b>	Coalition for Peace in Africa
<b>M &amp; E</b>	Monitoring & Evaluation
<b>MERL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning & Reporting
<b>PCIA</b>	Peace and conflict impact assessment
<b>TOC</b>	Theory of change
<b>OM</b>	Outcome Mapping
<b>PB&amp;CT</b>	Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation
<b>PSOD</b>	Peace and Security Department
<b>PCRD</b>	Post conflict reconstruction development

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## **1.1. Background Information**

In Africa, a number of countries have at one time or another experienced violent conflicts either internally, externally or both. One notable characteristic of African conflicts is that they rarely respect borders and quite often spill over to neighbouring countries. Good examples would be the case of Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Northern Uganda conflicts. That many of the African countries have had conflicts is not to mean the continent has not enjoyed relative peace in an equally large number of countries.

In an effort to promote peaceful coexistence, different actors have engaged in interventions targeting actors at different levels. Key among these institutions have been the African Union which has been sending peacekeeping troops in warring countries as well as supporting partners to implement activities aimed at promoting dialogue and cohesion at the top and the community levels.

One challenge about peacebuilding initiatives is that they often present problems when it comes to assessing the extent to which they have brought change (positive or negative) to the target groups. The changes are hardly visible as most of them are immeasurable and often involve dealing with attitudes, behaviours and levels of interactions. Proposed changes may not even be attainable within a project period. For this reason, many actors in the peacebuilding field shy away from engaging in monitoring and evaluation of their initiatives for fear of negative appraisals. However, it is for this very reason that those engaged in peacebuilding initiatives ought to engage in consistent monitoring and evaluation to assess changes being realized from the interventions (positive or negative), determine if the implementation is still on course and whether proposed activities still address felt needs of the beneficiaries.

The African Union through her Peace and Security department continues to engage in peacebuilding initiatives targeting actors at different levels most notably in the Sudan, South Sudan, Mali, Somalia, the DRC, and Ivory Coast among other countries. Some of the initiatives are in the form of peacekeeping missions. It is therefore imperative that these initiatives are managed by officers who have

the knowledge, the skills and the confidence necessary to ensure that the stated objectives and activities lead to the desired outcomes and address the real needs of those affected by the conflict. It is also important that the lessons learned in the implementation process are replicated in other areas that might be suffering similar conflict experiences. It is against this background that the African Union organized the 5 day training on MERL for her line officers.

### **1.2. Information about the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting & Learning (MERL) Training**

The five day MERL training targeted participants working as programme and political officers in the Peace and Security department of the African Union and who by essence are involved a great deal in projects designing, implementation, evaluation and reporting.

#### **1.2.1. Training objectives**

1. Build participants understanding of the concepts of monitoring, evaluation, impact assessment and their applicability in the peacebuilding field
2. Enhance participants' knowledge of theories of change and how they relate to project designing and execution
3. Equip participants with skills on how to conduct evaluations for peacebuilding projects
4. Build participants knowledge and skills of project indicators and outcome mapping

#### **1.2.2. Expected Results**

1. Participants knowledge of the applicability of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessments in peacebuilding would be enhanced
2. Participants would have a clear understanding of how project designing links with achievements of desired changes
3. Participants would be equipped with information necessary to help them prepare for project evaluations

4. Participants would be able to propose peacebuilding activities that would positively impact on beneficiaries

#### **1.2.3. Main areas of focus:**

1. Understanding the crux of impact assessments
2. Introduction to Theories of Change (TOC)
3. Introduction to conflict transformation
4. Understanding Monitoring & Evaluation (M& E)
5. A look at Decision mapping
6. Indicators and Outcome Mapping in peacebuilding
7. Evaluation preparation
8. Ethics in MERL

#### **1.2.4. Training Methodology**

The training was very participatory, combining both theory and practice with both participants and facilitators engaging in discussions, sharing of experiences and individual sessions comprising presentations, work groups and exercises in the form of role-plays and case studies that helped participants to demystify the MERL practice

## **2.0 Summary of the Content**

### **2.1. The Crux of Impact assessment**

This session aimed at enabling participants get a clear understanding of what impact assessment is, its deviation from a normal evaluation and the various determinants that are used to gauge if a peacebuilding initiative have resulted in positive impact or not. Six **key determinants** of positive impact on initiatives were identified as:

1. The extent to which the initiative addressed beneficiaries' interests

2. The extent to which the initiative stopped or contributed to the stopping of key driving factors of war/conflict
3. The extent to which the intervention enhanced beneficiaries' capacities to address the problem on their own
4. The extent to which the initiative contributed to the creation of reformed political institutions
5. The extent to which the intervention resulted in increased feelings of personal and communal security
6. The extent to which the intervention motivated people to shun violence and use dialogue

## **2.2 Introduction to Theories of Change (TOC)**

This session was aimed at enabling participants make linkages between proposed project activities and the expected changes. There must be a logical connection between the two. In essence, the activities should serve as the link or the bridge to the attainment of the desired changes. This link is what is known as the Theories of Change (TOC). TOC are put together at the designing stages of a project and in a nutshell they provide a broad overview of the problem that the proposed activities are set to address, the desired process of addressing the problem and the expected changes. They can therefore be said to be broad vision statements for projects. In peacebuilding interventions, TOC are hard to define as most of the proposed changes are hardly visible or noticeable.

## **2.3 Understanding Conflict Transformation**

The session was aimed at levelling participants understanding of conflict and peacebuilding and involved analyzing the various meanings of peace and conflict and the dynamics involved in each. This session also introduced participants to values applicable in the field of conflict transformation such as inclusiveness, addressing of root causes and promotion of justice for all. The linkage between human security and conflict transformation was also made. Human security was said to be more inclusive and holistic in that it looks at peace not merely as the

absence of war or violence, but by the degree of security achieved in areas of food, health, economic, environmental, personal, community and political safety.

#### **2.4 Understanding Monitoring & Evaluation**

The session sought to differentiate between monitoring and evaluations as well as expound on the various forms of evaluations and their applicability in projects. Both were said to be integral parts of project management but while monitoring was a continuous process done throughout the life of a project, evaluation was said to be a one time event done at the middle or the end of a project to assess the extent to which objectives were met. The main tool of use in M & E was said to be TOC developed during projects designing. M & E also focused on the various impediments to both as well as their main areas of focus. Some impediments were identified as lack of necessary resources, time pressure, apprehensions regarding the outcome, and confidentiality issues. Common things addressed by both monitoring and evaluation were identified as project objectives, efficiency, theories of change and levels of achievements of objectives. Some of the tools of evaluation discussed included the use of questionnaires, baseline surveys and story telling.

#### **2.5. Decision Mapping**

The session involved analysing projects with the aim of identifying the decision making structures, the individuals represented in those structures and highlighting their objectives and roles. Every project was said to comprise 3 key individuals namely the owners, the evaluators and the implementers. Each of the 3 have different objectives to achieve in a project and this explains why in an evaluation, the 3 will look out for the achievement of different things depending on their objectives. Therefore when carrying out an evaluation, the evaluator must first do decision mapping of the particular project.

In any project, the owners were said to be the vision bearers. These are the people who have the right to determine the direction a project should take. They

also contribute resources to ensure the project takes place. In an evaluation, owners would mostly be concerned with the issue of assessing cost effectiveness. On the other hand, evaluators are outsiders to a project in most instances. Their primary objective is to assess the extent to which project objectives were met and the quality of the technical and financial support provided/employed.

Implementers are the people who do the actual execution of the activities. They are internal to a project their main objectives is to assess if their efforts have had the desired results, if they are effective and whether the risks they take are worth.

Understandably, in an evaluation, the objectives and needs of the 3 must be addressed.

## **2.6. Indicators**

The session aimed at building participants understanding of the concepts of indicators, their applicability, the various types, the qualities and how and when they are set up in a project. Indicators were said to be simple information that signal changes in an intervention. They help to perceive differences, improvements or developments relating to a desired change (objective or result) in a particular context. They help in identifying /verifying the outcome.

Indicators could be qualitative or quantitative. Some qualities of good indicators include reliability, realistic, verifiability and easy to collect. In peacebuilding, what guides indicators is the situation. A good indicator in one situation may mean absolutely nothing in another. Indicators are set at the beginning of a project by the stakeholders including the intended beneficiaries.

## **2.7. Outcome Mapping (OM)**

The session was aimed at introducing participants to outcome mapping as it relates to monitoring and evaluation of projects. In an evaluation, engaging in outcome mapping means focussing on the extent to which the project initiative achieved the outcomes that were set out at the designing stage. **Outcomes are**

**defined as changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups, and organizations with whom a program works directly.**

One uniqueness of outcome mapping is its **notion that outcomes do not necessarily have to result or to be caused by a project's activities**. It is not based on a cause–effect framework; rather, it recognizes that multiple, nonlinear events lead to change. This means that outcome mapping does not attempt to attribute outcomes to any single intervention or series of interventions.

### **2.8. Evaluation preparation in peacebuilding**

The session was aimed at building participants capacities to prepare for evaluations in their projects. It also gave insights into the various types of evaluations as well as factors to consider in deciding if an evaluation should be internal or external and finally the various issues to put into consideration when assessing a peacebuilding project.

Some of the considerations include: the issue of appropriateness (was the intervention strategy the best for the situation), the issue of strategic alignment (were proposed activities in line with the organizations' mission, vision and objectives), the issue of management and administration (how well was the project organized and implemented), the issue of cost accountability (the manner in which funds were utilized and reported), the issue of the implementation process (what was the merit of the 'process' utilized), the issue of output identification (tallies the immediate, often-tangible results of the activities undertaken e.g. . the number of trainings that have been conducted), the issue of outcome identification (examines the long term changes experienced or achieved. e.g. . a decrease in violence to an increase in collaboration between communities) the issue of impact assessment (investigates the consequences or changes resulting from an intervention in the conflict situation or in a component of that situation) and finally the issue of adaptability to change (reviews whether the changes created by the project can adapt over time to shifts in the context and to different stresses and demands).

In doing an evaluation, it is also worth considering the intended audience of the feedback. For the AU, these are mainly the member states and the funder agencies. Audiences could be primary or secondary.

### **2.9. Ethics in Monitoring and evaluation**

The session looked at the various ethical issues and dilemmas faced by different actors in an evaluation. Some of the major ones were identified as:

1. Protection of people-This refers to the maintenance of confidentiality and anonymity of the sources of information. To give information, there should be informed consent of the giver at all times.
2. Freedom from political interference from the implementing organization donor team and evaluation team.
3. Developing particular interests that will determine how things are suppose to be done.

### **4.0 Strengths**

Given that all participants were practitioners already engaged in the field, it made it easy for them to relate the theoretical knowledge in the training with practice on the ground

### **5.0 Recommendations**

It is important for the AU to develop a follow up strategy for alumni of her sponsored trainings to enable assess in time if the skills and knowledge have translated to positive results on the ground and in the office

### **6.0. Conclusion**

The training went on well with the participants showing great commitment to the process. Many of the participants also expressed the need for the AU to follow them up after the training to gauge how they are fairing as well as to determine other capacity gaps.

