

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Internal mid-term evaluation of the project 'Partnership for effective and sustainable AU Liaison Offices (AULOs)'

INTRODUCTION

This summary presents the findings of an internal mid-term evaluation of the project 'Partnership for effective and sustainable AU Liaison Offices (AULOs)'. The goal of the three-year project (1 January 2013–31 December 2015) was to strengthen the AULOs' effectiveness in delivering objectives and mandates in the five pilot countries: Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire, leading to improved peace and human security. The mid-term evaluation took place from May to August 2015. The aim of the evaluation was to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation, and identify achievements against expected results and objectives.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The project was funded by the government of Sweden (SIDA). The aim of the three-year project was for the African Union Commission's Peace and Security Department (PSD) and International Alert to work together to strengthen the capacity of some AULOs to deliver on their stated objectives and country-specific mandates, emphasising their role in promoting the ratification and domestication of AU legal instruments, specifically the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). The project sought to strengthen AULOs' capacity to engage with multiple actors, including civil society, academic institutions, the media and parliamentarians, to raise the AU profile and knowledge of the role of the AULO in target countries.

The project was originally focused on three pilot countries: Liberia and Sierra Leone (for which there is one AULO) and South Sudan. Owing to two crises that began in these countries – the Ebola crisis in west Africa in early 2014 and the outbreak of civil conflict in South Sudan in late 2013 – in consultation with the donor and the AU PSD, it was agreed to expand the project to cover the AULOs in Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire.

The project was designed around the following objectives:

Objective 1: Build capacity among AULO staff in five pilot AU member states (Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire) through targeted training on reporting on conflict trends and fragilities, thus contributing to the effective running of the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS).

- **Associated activities:** Training of AULO staff on conflict-sensitivity, peace economy, gender mainstreaming, communication and reporting.

Objective 2: AULOs to become an essential partner for host governments, international and national actors for the promotion of peace and security in the respective countries.

- **Associated activities:** Facilitating seminars with parliamentarians, workshops with host governments and private companies, meetings with international agencies and a participatory mandate review.

Objective 3: Shared values and the provisions of the ACDEG disseminated, leading to ratification and domestication of AU instruments into national legislations in pilot countries.

- **Associated activities:** Charter popularisation, information and awareness-raising campaigns, facilitating national-level debates on the AU's role and an exchange workshop, including the development of action plans.

Objective 4: Inclusion of women and gender issues in the ratifications, implementations and domestications of the ACDEG, emphasising AU gender policies.

- **Associated activities:** Gender analyses and development of AULOs' gender strategies.

Since the implementation of objective 4 only started in 2015, this objective did not form part of the mid-term evaluation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

There has been considerable variation in achievement across the project's objectives. There has also been considerable variation in achievements towards the project activities, results and objectives between the different AULOs. The project was implemented in a diverse and challenging context, and did respond flexibly to a changing environment, specifically the outbreak of Ebola in west Africa and the internal conflict in South Sudan.

Objective 1: Build capacity among AULO staff in five pilot AU member states (Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire) through targeted training on reporting on conflict trends and fragilities, thus contributing to the effective running of the CEWS.

- Following the trainings, participants felt they demonstrated an understanding of evolving approaches to conflict, conflict-sensitivity and peacebuilding.
- Whether internal AU reporting has improved as a result of training was difficult to assess, as reports are confidential.
- While there was punctual engagement with the AULOs on specific activities such as trainings, there was no constant ongoing engagement, which makes sustainable capacity-strengthening more difficult to achieve.
- Trainings had more obvious positive outcomes related to objective 2, by bringing together the different project stakeholders, specifically AULO staff and CSO representatives.

Objective 2: AULOs to become an essential partner for host governments, international and national actors for the promotion of peace and security in the respective countries.

- The project has helped to enhance the visibility of AULOs.
- Understanding of the AULOs' mandates and responsibilities among CSOs has improved.
- The project has played a role in building relationships between AULOs, CSOs and governments.

Objective 3: Shared values and the provisions of the ACDEG disseminated, leading to ratification and domestication of AU instruments into national legislations in pilot countries.

- This has been the most relevant and successful project component to date.
- Promoting the charter corresponds very well with AULOs' mandates, as it is based on fundamental principles (democracy, human rights, rule of law).
- The charter provided an entry point for AULOs to work on a variety of key issues with CSOs and host governments.
- The project has contributed to increased awareness of the charter, especially among CSOs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- More strategic, targeted engagement that considered specific country contexts.
- Increase regularity of activities and in-country accompaniment to further increase the visibility of AULOs.
- Conduct training needs assessments to improve the relevance of training modules and enable tailoring for different groups of participants.
- Increase engagement specifically with CSOs to add another dimension to the project by helping to support and accompany their specific advocacy efforts around the ACDEG.
- Further clarify Alert's role as supporting the agenda, to improve the sense of AULOs' ownership of the project and subsequently its sustainability.