



African Union

Knowledge Management Framework for Mediation Processes

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Foreword

The African Union (AU) has over the years consistently sought the peaceful resolution of violent crises and conflicts across Africa. The AU's interventions have been mainly through efforts led by a Special Envoy appointed by the African Union Commission, by the Commission itself, by the Panel of the Wise and any other ad-hoc mechanism. Despite many positive steps, the AU has not yet established appropriate arrangements to capture the knowledge and experiences accumulated through these mediation processes. Capturing lessons learned is the foundation for any reflection on how to improve future interventions.

Towards this end, the African Union Commission in collaboration with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (the HD Centre) has developed this Knowledge Management Framework. The Framework sets out guidelines on how to collect and share information on the AU's mediation interventions in order to strengthen our mediation practice. The Framework includes various stages: sharing knowledge during a mediation process; documenting the mediation process; and gathering lessons learned. It provides specific step-by-step procedures and indicates the human resources already existing or required to undertake the outlined tasks.

The knowledge retained from AU mediation processes will contribute to following best practices and avoiding previous mistakes. It will provide space for the application of the lessons learned and will inspire innovative thinking on new approaches to mediation. It will also ensure that the AU's mediation experiences will be documented over time and will provide a learning platform not only within the AU but also among other mediation actors, including the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms, as well as the newly established "Pan African Panel of the Wise".

I am very happy that, after consultations and extensive interviews with the AU Special Envoys, Special Representatives and Heads of Liaison Offices, Peace and Security Department staff and Desk Officers, the Framework is ready for implementation. I encourage all AU staff to pay keen attention to the Framework as it is expected to contribute positively to our mediation work. This is a living document that will be updated regularly to ensure that it continues to meet the AU's knowledge management needs, and serves our overall objective of enhancing our preventive action and peaceful and timely resolution of disputes and conflicts.

Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security, African Union

Acknowledgement

This Knowledge Management Framework (KMF) for mediation processes has been developed by the African Union (AU) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre). It forms part of a programme of work between the two organisations aiming to strengthen the AU's mediation capacity. The KMF will be used by the AU Commission and field staff to bolster the AU's capacity to collect, analyse and share knowledge from its work on peace processes. The experiences and knowledge accumulated from these AU interventions are an important source for lesson-learning and a tool for improving practice.

The Framework has been developed through an incremental process that included consultations and brainstorming with a working group consisting of current and former AU staff, experts on the AU and African peace and security issues, and the UN liaison representative to the AU. Based on these consultations, a draft was prepared and a piloting process conducted, which applied the draft Framework to the 2005 Darfur mediation process. The piloting process enabled a critical assessment of the Framework, which led to the final draft. The working group undertook a final review with a focus on implementation.

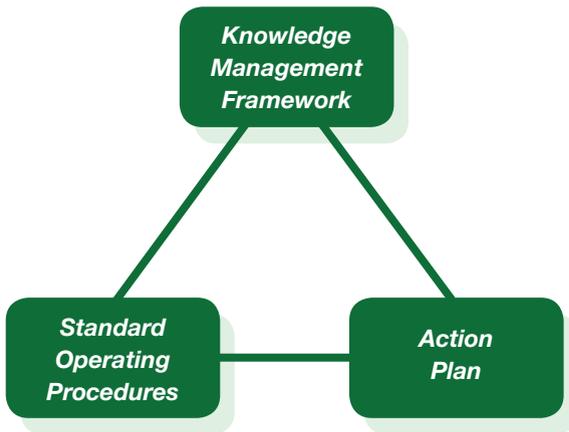
The HD Centre is an independent mediation organisation, based in Geneva, Switzerland, dedicated to improving the global response to armed conflict. It attempts to achieve this by mediating between warring parties and providing support to the broader mediation community. The HD Centre is driven by humanitarian values and its goal to reduce the consequences of violent conflict, improve security, and ultimately contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflict.

The Knowledge Management Framework was developed by the HD Centre's Mediation Support Programme. The Programme's main objective is to strengthen the practice of mediation globally while also supporting the HD Centre's own mediation work. Its collaboration with regional organisations and mediators includes lessons-learned exercises and contributions to strategy development, as well as deployment of expertise to peace processes.

I. Introduction

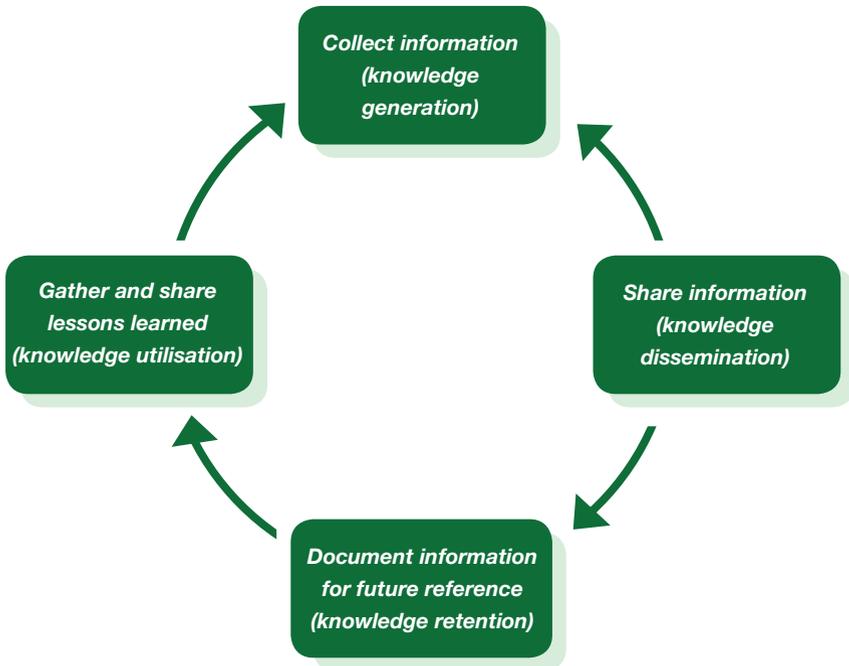
With the 2009 ‘Plan of Action to Build the AU’s Mediation Capacity’ (hereafter, the Action Plan), agreed by the Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Division and the Commissioner for Peace and Security, the African Union launched a critically important initiative to support its mediation activities more systematically. As part of the multi-track steps to operationalise the Action Plan, the AU has undertaken the compilation of ‘Standard Operating Procedures for Mediation Support’, approved in 2010. Together, these documents provide a sound basis upon which the AU is building its mediation support capacity.

Another pillar of this process is the completion of a Knowledge Management Framework (KMF), which will enable the AU to keep a complete record of its mediation efforts.



The purpose of the KMF is to provide guidelines for:

1. Collecting and sharing important information among AU headquarters, field offices and teams, and mediation partners during the course of each AU mediation process.
2. Documenting AU mediation processes during their implementation and after their completion, so such data are easily retrievable by the AU and others it may designate.
3. Gathering lessons learned in each AU mediation effort in order to improve performance, share successful strategies, and educate future mediators who are new to the AU.



This KMF offers protocols for attaining each of these goals, along with suggested templates for collecting and archiving information. In each section, following the guidance, steps are designated as either Minimum (i.e., **must** be implemented for the KMF to function), or Optimal (i.e., **should** be implemented when possible, for the most successful operation of the KMF). A summary of the 17 steps is included below as Annex A.

II. Sharing knowledge during a mediation process

As discussed in the AU Standard Operating Procedures for Mediation Support (SOPs),¹ there are many instances in the course of a mediation process when the AU Special Envoy or Special Representative is in the field and needs access to knowledge and information from AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. This might involve discussing sensitive information about various stakeholders in the conflict or receiving updates on changing dynamics regionally or globally that might affect mediation strategy. The SOPs recommend a quarterly review of mediation strategy to be conducted by the Senior Analyst on the mediation team, as well as periodic briefings at Headquarters by the Special Envoy or Special Representative.² However, more immediate knowledge-sharing between field and Headquarters is often required as the process unfolds, particularly involving strategy insights from AU Headquarters to the field team.

KMF Step 1

The mediation team must be able to make immediate contact with Headquarters, as needed, for the duration of the mediation process. (Minimum)

Options for accomplishing this:

- a. A secure phone line from the local Liaison Office to the primary Desk Officer at Headquarters who is designated to follow the case.

¹ AU Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Division/HD Centre (December 2010) African Union Standard Operating Procedures for Mediation Support (draft for review).

² AU SOPs, Section IX.

- b. An agreed-upon communication link (email, skype or other) and schedule of contact between the Senior Analyst on the mediation team and the primary Desk Officer at Headquarters.
- c. An agreement from the Commissioner for Peace and Security, made during the initial briefing of the Lead Mediator at Headquarters, to be responsive to requests from the mediator in a timely manner, as needed.
- d. The identification of a back-up person (a second Desk Officer) to the primary Desk Officer at Headquarters, in case immediate action is needed and the primary Desk Officer is out of the office.

The day-to-day contact will be supplemented by in-person briefings by the Mediator and team members at AU HQ, every 4–6 months depending on the situation (as specified in AU SOPs for Mediation Support, Section IX (c)).

III. Documenting AU mediation processes

A written record is the most effective way to ensure that the important steps in each AU mediation process are documented for both evaluation and for future learning and reference. To that end, the AU SOPs for Mediation Support provide for several documents to be prepared before, during and after the initiation of an AU mediation effort:

- a. A briefing book for the Lead Mediator.
- b. Terms of Reference for the Lead Mediator.
- c. Strategic and operational plans, completed by the Lead Mediator and Senior Analyst at the outset of a mediation effort.
- d. Written outputs from reviews.
- e. Updates of mediation strategy.

- f. An After Action Review (AAR), to be completed by the Lead Mediator and/or Senior Analyst.
- g. Written reports from end-of-assignment debriefings.
- h. Assessment of completed AU mediation process.

KMF Step 2

These documents will be kept as an archive, in both hard copy and electronic form, available through the AU CMD. A cataloguing system will be devised to make these documents easily searchable and accessible to those authorised and interested in reviewing them. This can be established through the existing registry unit of the AU Peace and Security Department (PSD), or a new autonomous system operated by a focal person. (Minimum)

KMF Step 3

A CMD staff person will be hired/reassigned and trained at Headquarters to keep this document file and catalogue current, tracking down missing documents and updating the directory on a monthly basis, and being available to assist mediation team members in accessing materials from this file as soon as such material is requested. CMD Desk Officers will also provide briefings to this staff person to ensure that all files are kept up to date. (Minimum)

The authority of the staff person to obtain these documents must be supported and reinforced by the Director of the Peace and Security Department.

Training for this staff person will include:

- a. Orientation to mediation processes, and review of the AU SOPs for mediation support.
- b. Procedures for maintaining and securing hard-copy files.
- c. Procedures for scanning documents for electronic filing.

- d. Developing a system for organising and maintaining electronic files on a secure server.

KMF Step 4

Designate a person within each mediation team to gather and maintain a file of the notes taken at each mediation-related meeting, for the mediation team to keep track of progress and prepare interim and final documents for the archive. (Minimum)

IV. Gathering lessons learned

In addition to keeping a record of AU mediation efforts, it is crucial to analyse these processes to determine which strategies were successful or ineffective, and what lessons can be learned to inform AU mediators in future. In addition, the AU can be more active in publishing accounts and analyses of its mediation efforts to share its learning with other organisations and to claim credit for its successes. Finally, the AU can increase its mediation capacity by using the experience of its senior mediators to educate and train the next generation of mediators.

KMF Step 5

At the conclusion of each mediation process, as specified in the AU SOPs for Mediation Support (Section XI), the Lead Mediator will be debriefed at Headquarters (or other location of their choice) by a professional Mediation Specialist within/hired by AUPSD to ensure confidentiality. The debriefing process is designed to capture the Mediator's reflections on the mediation's strengths and weaknesses, plus lessons learned. The Guidelines for structuring the interview process are attached as Annex B. The results of the debriefing should then be written up and added to the written/electronic archive as specified in KMF Step 2 above. (Minimum)

KMF Step 6

The same debriefing will be held with all members of the mediation team. This can be a group interview or a series of individual discussions. The interview reports will also be added to the written/electronic database. The debriefing of the Senior Analyst should particularly focus on the strategy assessments conducted during the mediation process, and any insights or lessons learned from mid-course corrections. The results of such debriefing(s) will be written up and added to the written/electronic archive as specified in KMF 2 above. (Minimum)

KMF Step 7

When a mediation process extends for more than one year, the debriefing of the mediator and team should take place at regular intervals during the process, not only at its conclusion. Once per year would be best, if possible. This debriefing should also be done whenever the mandate of the mediation is renewed. This will provide both the mediator and the team with an important opportunity to reflect on what is going well and what might need to be changed as the process continues, and should include attention to both substantive and procedural aspects of the mediation. The debriefing will be conducted by the same Mediation Specialist designated in Steps 5 and 6 above. (Optimal)

KMF Step 8

At the conclusion of the mediation process, a written lessons-learned assessment will be conducted of the entire mediation process. The results of this assessment will be for internal use only, to add to the AU's learning. See Annex C for suggested criteria for evaluation. (Minimum)

Options for conducting the lessons-learned review:

- a. To be done by an impartial professional consultant who is familiar with the AU and with the challenges of conducting mediation in Africa.

- b. To be done by convening a day-long discussion with the mediation team and mediation experts, to review the process and share insights and learning. One of the mediation experts will write up a summary of the discussion for inclusion in the archive (see Step 2).

KMF Step 9

In-depth analyses of individual mediation processes, as well as comparative studies of two or more cases, should be completed by research experts in order to provide important contextual dimensions to lessons learned. (Optimal)

Ideas for this type of analysis include:

- a. Focus on a significant case with international dimensions, such as Somalia or Sudan, to understand how the interests of international actors affect AU mediation efforts.
- b. Comparative analysis of cases in the same region of Africa, to see if similar patterns emerge in terms of challenges faced or successful strategies employed.
- c. Comparative analysis of cases employing either one lead mediator or a 'contact group' approach, to identify the conditions under which each type of mediation strategy may be most effective.
- d. Analysis of conditions under which high-level, high-profile mediators are most effective, and the strengths and weaknesses of their strategies.

KMF Step 10

A yearly in-person gathering of AU Envoys and Special Representatives and their teams should be held, to allow for more personal sharing of lessons. (Minimum)

Such a gathering should include:

- a. Discussions organised around both common challenges and specific conflicts.
- b. The ground rules of confidentiality, to encourage honest sharing of experiences.
- c. A meeting summary of insights and lessons, without attribution, to be distributed to all AU envoys and special representatives; these summaries become part of the written/electronic archive at CMD as specified in KMF Step 2 above.

KMF Step 11

Encourage/provide incentives for Lead Mediators to write about their experiences in publishable form. These memoirs can then be used for teaching purposes, along with the case studies developed in KMF Step 10 above, in AU training programmes and in university-level academic courses in Africa and worldwide. (Optimal)

Options could include:

- a. Provide a 3- or 6-month extension of the mediator's contract, after the conclusion of the mediation process, to write up the narrative of the process. A research assistant should be provided to assist the mediator in writing up the narrative.
- b. Encourage graduate-school programmes in Africa to provide students to work with mediators to write articles about their processes.
- c. Explore external funding support to provide a 'residency' programme for former AU mediators, to come to Addis Ababa for 3–6 months and write an article or analysis of their case. (The UN is experimenting with such a programme for UN mediators.) Mediators would also be available during this residency to meet with AU staff to share their experiences.

KMF Step 12

Provide an internal, secure, AU intranet site for online sharing of advice, soliciting of information or other postings of relevance and interest to AU mediators. This site should be accessible to staff both at Headquarters and outside Addis Ababa. (Minimum)

Participants need a recognised email address and organisational password to access the site. Mediation team members can use the site to request information/advice from former AU mediators or other AU personnel. This may also be a forum for posting the searchable electronic files of previous AU mediation cases, links to useful mediation information, and any other data relevant to the AU mediation function.

KMF Step 13

Conduct in-depth interviews with all current and former AU mediators, to get the value of their wisdom and experience in negotiation challenges that may be specific to Africa. Produce a reference manual, analogous to the UNITAR publication for UN mediators, that provides guidance on AU mediation practice. (Optimal)

Topics of specific interest to African mediations may include: managing tribal allegiances; understanding how and when to reference indigenous mediation and conflict resolution practices; dealing with historical legacies of colonial powers and imposed borders; defining evolving African definitions of transitional justice, democracy and power sharing; and the role of civil society in governance.

As in the assessment in KMF Step 9 above, these interviews and the analysis and compilation of results should be done by an impartial expert, but one who has knowledge of the AU and of African mediation.

KMF Step 14

Skills enhancement programmes conducted for AU mediators and mediation support staff will incorporate these various lessons-learned documents as teaching tools. This includes in particular the analytic case studies and first-person narratives generated by the mediators themselves in the context of their debriefings, and any articles they write for publication. (Minimum)

KMF Step 15

At least once every three years, a mediation specialist employed by CMD should review all of the documents generated by the steps listed above, and develop an evolving summary of lessons learned. (Minimum)

This summary will then be incorporated into updates of the following:

- a. The skills enhancement programmes for mediation support.
- b. The AU Mediation SOPs.
- c. The mediation tools available to AU mediators.
- d. The briefing pack for all newly appointed AU Envoys and Special Representatives.

KMF Step 16

The AU CMD will make some/all of its learning documents available to organisations outside the AU, especially those with whom the AU often partners in its mediation efforts. This might include posting on an AU/CMD website along with news of current mediations in progress or results of successful mediation efforts. (Optimal)

KMF Step 17

The Knowledge Management Framework itself will be reviewed on a regular basis, for updates and revisions as needed, based on lessons learned. (Minimum)

Annex A

Summary of steps in the Mediation Knowledge Management Framework

Steps in implementation (Minimum required steps in bold)

Step 1: Put procedures in place for the mediation team to make immediate contact with Headquarters, as needed, for the duration of the mediation process.

Step 2: Keep a set of required documents (such as the briefing book for the lead mediator, terms of reference for the Lead Mediator, strategic and operational plans, written outputs from reviews) in both hard copy and electronic form, available through the AU CMD. Devise a cataloguing system to make these documents easily searchable and accessible to those authorised and interested in reviewing them.

Step 3: Maintain the document file and catalogue (Step 2) current, updated at least monthly.

Step 4: Designate a person within each mediation team to gather and maintain a file of the notes taken at each mediation-related meeting.

Step 5: Debrief the Lead Mediator at the conclusion of each mediation process.

Step 6: Debrief all members of the mediation team at the conclusion of the mediation process.

Step 7: When a mediation process extends for more than one year, debrief the Lead Mediator at regular intervals during the process (at least once per year).

Step 8: Conduct an assessment at the conclusion of the mediation process to identify lessons learned.

Step 9: Commission in-depth analyses of individual mediation processes, as well as comparative studies of two or more cases.

Step 10: Convene a yearly in-person gathering of AU Envoys and Special Representatives and their teams, to allow more personal sharing of lessons learned.

Step 11: Encourage/provide incentives for Lead Mediators to write about their experiences in publishable form and/or share their experiences with AU staff.

Step 12: Provide an internal, secure, AU intranet site.

Step 13: Conduct in-depth interviews with all current and former AU mediators to obtain insights/reflections on mediation experience.

Step 14: Conduct skills enhancement programmes for AU mediators and mediation support staff, drawing upon the KMF materials.

Step 15: Review all of the documents generated by the steps listed above every three years, and develop an evolving summary of lessons learned.

Step 16: Make some/all AU learning documents available to organisations outside the AU, especially those with whom the AU often partners in its mediation efforts.

Step 17: Review the Knowledge Management Framework itself on a regular basis, for updates and revisions as needed, based on lessons learned.

Annex B

Guidelines for debriefing mediators

Adapted from the Peacemakers Toolkit on Debriefing Mediators, US Institute of Peace.

1. Prepare for the interview by reading up on the conflict situation and the mediation process. Review AU briefing materials and other sources of data, such as ICG reports, UN reports, news accounts, etc.
2. Choose a quiet, comfortable venue for the interview where the mediator can feel relaxed and not rushed or distracted. Plan on at least two interviews.
3. Do not come in with a long list of questions. Instead, prepare a brief list of open-ended questions, and encourage the mediator to talk at length. Be a good listener, ask questions of clarification as you go along, and do not be judgmental! The purpose is to learn, not to evaluate or criticise.
4. In the first interview, encourage the mediator to narrate the process chronologically, beginning with his/her entry into the mediation process and covering each stage until his/her exit. Allow him/her to focus on whatever details he/she believes are important, not cutting him/her off or getting impatient. When it seems appropriate, ask the mediator to reflect on why he/she did things, whether in hindsight he/she would do it that way again, and what he/she learned from the process.
5. In the second interview, follow up with more specific questions to fill in details and cover any parts of the process that were not discussed previously.
6. Remember that this is not an evaluation, but rather a reflection on the process by those who were most closely involved with its operations. The questions should therefore not be judgmental or critical, but formulated to enhance inquiry and learning.

Annex C

Lessons learned review: assessment of finalised AU mediations³

Key elements in the assessment process include:

- (a) Identify the objectives and 'theory of change' that the mediation strategy incorporated. The theory of change is the set of assumptions about what changes needed to occur in order for violence to stop or be managed and a settlement reached, and what the mediator's plan was for creating those specific changes.
- (b) Identify and account for missing data from the initial conflict assessment and from the mediation process itself.
- (c) Using available data, including but not limited to the debriefings of the mediation team, examine the mediation effort using the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact:

Relevance: The relevance criterion is used to assess the extent to which the objectives and activities of the mediation responded to the needs of the conflict parties.

Effectiveness: Effectiveness is used to evaluate whether a mediation process has reached its intended objectives.

Efficiency: This criterion is used to assess how economically resources/ inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) were converted to results.

³ Adapted from OECD: DAC Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation and the DAC Network on Development Evaluation (2008) 'Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities: Working Draft for Application Period'.

Sustainability: Sustainability is defined as the continuation of benefits from a mediation process after it has been completed. It includes the probability of continued long-term benefits and resilience to risk over time in terms of financial, institutional, human resource, management and other elements.

Impact: The criterion of impact refers to positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a mediation process, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

