



Measuring Progress in conflict prevention: GPPAC's adaptation of Outcome Mapping

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OMideas is an Outcome Mapping Learning Community (OMLC) initiative to generate new knowledge around the use and development of the OM methodology.

The papers in this series are authored by members of the OMLC, a global community of OM users dedicated to mutual learning and sharing of experiences around OM.

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is faced with two major challenges in their monitoring and evaluation: Firstly they have to deal with the complex causal mechanisms involved in conflict prevention work and secondly they have to navigate the dynamic nature of networks through which they intervene. This paper describes how Outcome Mapping has helped them manage these challenges.

GPPAC is a worldwide network of civil society organisations (CSOs) working on conflict prevention. GPPAC aims for a shift from reaction to prevention of armed conflict, by facilitating collaboration between CSOs, state actors, Regional Intergovernmental Organisations, the UN and other relevant stakeholders.

GPPAC's work is coordinated by a Global Secretariat, based in the Netherlands, and by fifteen core member organisations in different regions around the world designated as Regional Secretariats. In addition, the network has several (global, regional) governance and programmatic bodies involving the membership in the planning and implementation of its work. GPPAC is supported with core funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with additional grants from other government donors and some foundations.

GPPAC is often asked to demonstrate that its work results in significant and lasting change in terms of preventing violent conflict and consolidating peace building efforts 'on the ground'. This is not an easy task. The paths and processes that can contribute to peace are many, diverse, and often unpredictable



A human peace sign to celebrate International Day of Peace September 2012

or opportunistic; this makes for an uneasy fit with planned timeframes. Adding to that the complex nature of a global network, GPPAC was required to look for other approaches to measure its progress.

Why Outcome Mapping?

Outcome Mapping was relevant for GPPAC first and foremost because of its **non-linear approach**. Within a network, linearity is problematic. Global networks like GPPAC are complex, fluid systems that "are constantly changing and adapting to their environment"[1]. Procedures for planning, monitoring and evaluation therefore need to be able to adapt to these changes and to take unexpected results into account. Due to the complexity of the GPPAC network and the environment within which it works, the cause-effect relationships between activities, outputs and outcomes are often unknown beforehand, and can sometimes be difficult to grasp even after the outcomes have been achieved. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to predefine specific results. The change brought about through the different elements of a network often becomes more evident in retrospect.

In addition, thinking about **'contribution not attribution'** is of great value to GPPAC. In a global network, where a multitude of actors interact to achieve change, it is usually impossible to attribute this change to an intervention by a single actor. Much of the added value of the network also lies in how it contributes to the work that members are already doing, which increases the attribution problem further. It is therefore more useful to consider the specific contribution of GPPAC and its members towards the outcomes.

Finally, by focussing on **boundary partners and changes in their behaviour**, the OM approach helps to find ways of measuring progress towards the long-term goals in conflict prevention. The tracking of changes in behaviour of key actors (in GPPAC's case, key institutions) make this progress more visible. It can help address the common challenge of our field, which is to 'prove you contributed to something [i.e. conflicts] not happening'. This in turn helped GPPAC to respond to donor requirements.

Developing a Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (PMEL) system

Coinciding with the network's first Global Work Plan, GPPAC started using the Outcome Mapping approach in 2006, and has since gradually been adapting and adjusting its PMEL system. As an initial step, network members from across the world participated in developing intentional designs with progress markers for the network's five programme areas [2]. For each programme, up to three outcome challenges were formulated, focussing on key boundary partners, such as the UN, Regional Intergovernmental Organisations and governments. The intentional designs were drafted largely following the OM Manual. Key OM principles and terminology were shared in written guidelines and in internal workshops with staff and network members.

Next, a monitoring system was set up, to allow GPPAC to track the changes it influenced (or not) in its boundary partners. As the OM manual didn't provide what the network needed to establish the monitoring system, GPPAC developed its own guidelines based on the OM ideas. Network members from the fifteen regions have since been reporting on an annual basis on outputs and outcomes (defined as changes in behaviour). These outcomes are discussed during 'monitoring meetings' to reflect on the progress that GPPAC is making and to learn from it for GPPAC's future work (see box opposite). The results of the monitoring system are used to make programmatic changes.

In 2009, the first evaluation using Outcome Mapping was done, in collaboration with an external evaluator. Each outcome was presented in an outcome description, along with its significance, GPPAC's contribution and its sources (see Annex 1 for an example).

Monitoring meetings

Once a year, GPPAC's Global Secretariat gathers regional and programme reports and spends a day reflecting on the information and feedback collected. The conclusions of these reflections inform strategic decision making and prioritisation (for instance on budget allocation) of the Board, Programme Steering Committee and the ISG.

An example where these types of reflections led to a change in approach was when the Awareness Raising programme toned down its sole focus on the International Day of Peace (IDP), in favour of more on-going media engagement as well as capacity building towards such engagement. The assessment of IDP events had shown the importance of the media in projecting GPPAC messages about conflict prevention, whilst also laying bare capacity needs in terms of CSOs working with the media.

The following questions illustrate how the Global Secretariat prepares the Monitoring Day reflection, which is facilitated by the PMEL manager, where programme staff (having had prior discussions with network members) participate:

Regarding outcomes:

Were the outcomes of your programme what you had expected or not?

Are there 'trends' you can see in the outcomes? Trends can be apparent in the following areas:

- internal outcomes (i.e. within the network) versus external outcomes (changes in external actors)
- outcomes that emerge mainly in certain regions rather than others
- outcomes that emerge among certain targeted actors rather than others
- outcomes that are significantly different than last year's
- any other trends that you may see

Are there any outcomes that can be used for best practices/lobby and advocacy purposes?

If your programme has not produced enough outcomes, why not? Any of the following reasons could apply:

- outcomes have not had time yet to emerge (ask yourself whether there are signs of emerging outcomes)
- the programme approach is not effective (enough)
- we are focussing on influencing the wrong actors

Regarding the relation between outputs and outcomes:

Which (type of) outputs can be identified as having led to the outcomes?

What strategies or outputs do we need to add or to give up (those that have produced no outcome or require too much effort or too many resources relative to the results obtained)?

A distinction was made between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ (or political) outcomes. Internal outcomes are those that demonstrate a change in network members - such as increased collaboration, the application of new skills, or joint decision making. These outcomes are considered as important stepping stones for a strong network capable of influencing external actors as a collective. ‘External’ or political outcomes reflect changes in actors which are beyond the direct sphere of influence of the programme. GPPAC’s external outcomes have for example reflected the degree to which international or regional organisations and state actors have considered, adopted or acted upon civil society recommendations in the peace and security field.

A final evaluation by external evaluators is currently being done encompassing the period of GPPAC’s first Work Plan. The outcomes collected, as well as the lessons and challenges experienced during both the monitoring and evaluation stages have informed the formulation of a new strategic plan and an adjusted, ‘hybrid’ PMEL system, as described below.

Challenges of using an OM-driven M&E system

Over the years, GPPAC has been adapting the way it uses Outcome Mapping within its PMEL system. At the end of the first strategic planning period, it was concluded that making a fully-fledged intentional design at the programme level with a global network was time- and money-consuming, whereas the actual benefits were minimal. In a network, where spaces to meet and discuss planning are limited, and the context is rapidly changing, planning has to be kept light. Networks members now mainly focus on developing and agreeing on common outcome challenges and strategies. Experience also showed that developing progress markers was resource intense. Though they were useful while developing the intentional design, they were hardly used during the monitoring stage. This was partly related to the overall complexity of the network, encompassing a matrix of five programmes and fifteen regions. Tracking progress markers on all of these levels proved too complicated. GPPAC therefore shifted the emphasis from the intentional design to monitoring the changes in the boundary partners.

Another challenge was the donor requirements. GPPAC had been able to use its OM framework to report to donors, or to fit the OM information into donor frameworks, during its first strategic planning period. However, due to a trend in the donor landscape where log-frames with SMART indicators were increasingly upheld as the single tool for reporting, it became more difficult to keep using OM without having two separate systems; one for internal monitoring and one to fulfill donor requirements. This again led to explorations on how a ‘hybrid’ system could serve both purposes.

Many issues also became evident in the reporting and during evaluation, as reflected in the uneven quality of monitoring information. Many network members focused too much on the OM jargon instead of the underlying concepts, making the formulation of the outcomes sometimes forced; and too much focus went into the format rather than the content. Another core challenge continues to be the fluid nature of the network membership, which makes it difficult to retain the knowledge on OM concepts. This affected the ability to identify and substantiate the outcomes that were reported through the PMEL system, in a context of limited resources. Participation in the GPPAC network is mainly on a voluntarily basis. Network members have their own organisational priorities, which often leaves little time to participate in a network-wide PMEL system. Adding to that, issues such as language barriers and the limited funding available for reflection, GPPAC needed a simplified approach to go forward.

What have we learned?

In spite of the challenges, Outcome Mapping has enabled GPPAC to show results that are closer to reality, as well as to stimulate a learning environment within the network. By focussing on outcomes and changes in behaviour, it encouraged members and staff to reflect more broadly on plans and results as part of the bigger picture beyond the ‘project box’. It also made it possible to address the particularities of the network as a unique organisational form, recognising and identifying network-specific results – for example what we mean by network building and sustainability. Considered altogether, the outcomes gathered allowed for identifying trends across the network and drawing from different contexts, in particular with regards to strategies employed in the different programmes. By analysing the types of outcomes achieved across different programmes, we were able to identify the added value of the network – laying bare what key functions GPPAC should focus on to maximally support its members. This was key to informing the Strategic Plan 2011-2015.

At the heart of the revised PMEL approach was the realisation that all programmes together contribute to the outcomes – and so should not be compartmentalised in different intentional designs. There was a need for an overarching and much simpler framework, which could then be adapted and elaborated further at different regional and programme levels where necessary, which also could be used when donors requested log-frames and SMART[3] indicators.

Towards an ‘OM hybrid’

In its most recent strategic plan (2011-2015), GPPAC merged elements of the log-frame with its OM approach. Six broad outcomes were defined in a participatory manner by the network as indicators towards a

goal and a purpose formulation. Network members now report on progress towards these outcomes, which are tailored/specified further in regional plans. 'Progress markers' of sorts were developed for each of the global outcomes (see Annex 2), but only for the purpose of developing the baseline information for the new Strategic Plan, against which evaluations could measure progress further down the line (as opposed to being used for on-going monitoring purposes). In addition, some SMART indicators were defined and used by the secretariat to report to donors. Hence, GPPAC still focuses on boundary partners and outcomes as behavioural change, but it has (hopefully) simplified and consolidated its M&E system. Contrary to the previous period, revised PMEL documentation now makes minimal use of OM-specific vocabulary – while still using the underlying concepts and ideas that these terms hold.

Another new development has been the use of the Peace Portal (www.peaceportal.org), an open online platform, for its PMEL activities. Members upload their reports, questions and comments in a closed online community and can view each other's reports. The Portal is also being adapted further to develop a database where outcomes can be collected on a more on-going basis and systematised.

In sum, the core principles of OM remain as relevant to GPPAC as it was when it was first adopted. However, to cope with the inherent complexities and challenges of the network, more flexibility was needed in terms of its use. Whether the new revised PMEL system is an im-

provement in this sense remains to be seen. The challenges of ensuring good quality outcome information remain, as the resources and space for reflection are scarce. Nevertheless, GPPAC will keep the 'OM lens' in its PMEL activities to shape its collective learning, whilst striving for grounded information about GPPAC's contribution to the conflict prevention and peace building field.

Further reading

Assessing Progress on the Road to Peace: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities; Goele Scheers (Ed.), GPPAC 2008; available on www.gppac.net.

Mapping the Road to Peace: the GPPAC journey with Outcome Mapping; Presentation by Jenny Aulin to the OM Lab, Beirut 6-9 Feb. 2012; available on www.outcomemapping.ca.

Notes

[1] Networks and Capacity, Suzanne Taschereau and Joe Bolger, ECDPM, Discussion Paper No. 58C, February 2007, p.4. Available at www.ecdpm.org.

[2] Between 2006-2010 the programme areas were: Awareness Raising; Network & Capacity Building; Interaction & Advocacy; Early Warning & Early Response; Peace Education.

[3] SMART refers to Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

About the authors

Goele Scheers has been the GPPAC Coordinator Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning from 2006-2012. In this capacity, she developed a PME system based on Outcome Mapping for the GPPAC network, and supported the network members around the world in applying it. She is now about to leave GPPAC and look for new opportunities.

Jenny Aulin is currently GPPAC Programme Manager for Action Learning (on Preventive Action and Human Security). Before taking on this role, she was GPPAC's Coordinator for Donor Relations, working closely with GPPAC's Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Manager in adapting the OM approach to the needs of the GPPAC network and its donors.

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Annex 1: Internal and External GPPAC Outcomes

This annex presents examples of outcomes extracted from the GPPAC Evaluation 2006-2011. The blue text corresponds to pieces in the results matrix in Annex 2.

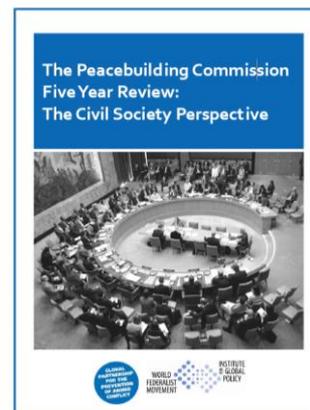
Interaction & Advocacy (external) outcome

Outcome: In 2008, the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) incorporated civil society recommendations in its semi-annual review of peacebuilding in Burundi regarding the importance of accountability and human rights training for the security services. This reflected civil society concerns about human rights abuses in Burundi in 2007-2008.

Sources: interviews with and reports from Heather Sonner (WFM-IGP), Emmanuel Nshimirimana (Biraturaba), Bintou Keita (BINUB), Raymond Kamenyero (FORCS), CSO working group Burundi, COSOME, CASOBU, Society of American Friends (AFSC), Peacenet

Significance: The review is a valuable tool for civil society to encourage both the Burundian government and its international partners to attach conditions to their technical and resource support to the security services, particularly the intelligence service, to address on-going human rights abuses. As a result of the PBC's recommendations, international actors pledged support for security sector reform. This fact demonstrates the rapid response capacity of the CSOs and their ability to speak with one voice, as well as the recognition by the PBC of the CSOs role in the country peacebuilding process.

Contribution: GPPAC member WFM-IGP based in New York, along with the Biraturaba Association, the GPPAC national focal point in Burundi, organised briefings for the PBC with Burundi-based civil society organisations and international civil society experts on Burundi, followed up by a position paper and lobbying aimed at the draft 2008 report of the PBC. The added value of GPPAC was in connecting the New York UN arena with the local and national level in Burundi. While WFM-IGP's advocacy in New York was strengthened by channelling the voices from local organisations in Burundi, the Biraturaba Association and its Burundi network was able to directly access the policymakers in the international arena.



PBC

Network Building (internal) outcome

Outcome: In 2011, GPPAC US members and partners formed the Human Security Collaborative as an alliance to inform and influence US foreign and security policy from a conflict prevention and peacebuilding perspective. As part of this initiative, a Washington DC Liaison function was set up to monitor relevant policy developments, build relationships and create entry points for advocacy and dialogue on behalf of the network.

Sources: Regional and programme reports; Strategy documents and feedback from GPPAC members and partners: the Kroc Center for International Peace Studies at Notre Dame University, the Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP), and 3P Human Security

Significance: The enhanced presence in Washington DC and on Capitol Hill made a difference to GPPAC advocacy strategies, helping network members from other regions to navigate the US political landscape, and enabling GPPAC delegations to access congressmen, policymakers, politicians and relevant think tanks. For instance, GPPAC Northeast Asia representatives gained access to engage with key US stakeholders involved in the Six Party Talks on nuclear disarmament, whereas a delegation from Mexico could extend their advocacy beyond the country's borders when raising human security concerns with regards to the military approach to organised crime and the 'war on drugs'.

Contribution: The Human Security Collaborative was shaped as a result of years of interaction as part of the GPPAC umbrella, and was informed by the strategic planning reflection on how GPPAC members could best complement each other in terms of policy and advocacy in different arenas.

Annex 2: GPPAC Planning Table 2011-2015

This annex presents GPPAC's Planning Table to demonstrate how OM is integrated with their log-frame.

Outcomes	Progress Markers	Means of Verification
<p>Goal:</p> <p>Armed conflict is prevented by peaceful means through systematic and effective collaboration at all levels between CSOs, state actors, RIGOs, the UN and other relevant actors</p>	<p>UN, RIGOs and state actors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> consult and adopt recommendations from local CSOs in decision-making and conflict prevention policies and actions, taking into account related public manifestations UN and RIGOs develop standards for effective coordination and government engagement for preventing conflicts Develop good practices in conflict prevention suggested by or in alliance with CSOs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> invitations to UN, RIGO and government meetings; lists of participants of events organised by CSOs; documents of UN, RIGO and government agendas, policy positions, policies and resolutions adopted that include CSO and public recommendations outline of the standards; list of governments that approved the standards documentation and/or M&E reports that demonstrate UN's, RIGOs' and state actors': engagement in capacity-building events in conflict prevention; conflict prevention budget and staff allocations; conflict prevention departments or units created; conflict prevention policies, programmes or projects implemented; monitoring mechanisms established
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>Civil society organisations collaborate in designing and implementing conflict prevention strategies and catalysing partnerships with relevant stakeholders</p>	<p>GPPAC members and CSO partners:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> initiate and implement conflict prevention interventions and Preventive Action plans in collaboration with GPPAC members through effective network structures improve their own practice based on regional and international learning exchanges and tools tailored to context collectively lobby and raise awareness on multiple levels based on a common agenda 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> checklist of criteria defined describing type of engagement expected from GPPAC members and structures; case studies of the interventions developed; documentation of Preventive Action Plans trajectory practices identified (e.g. tools, strategies) and documented through M&E reports documented lobby and awareness-raising initiatives implemented simultaneously
Outputs	Indicators of Achievement	Means of Verification
<p>Policy & Advocacy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> GPPAC advocacy agenda defined and strategies to influence global, regional and national policy processes developed Liaison posts at (R)IGOs set up GPPAC advocacy initiatives implemented GPPAC members knowledge, analytical capacity and advocacy skills for engaging with international organisations and governments are enhanced 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> common advocacy agenda developed; type of strategies developed per theme # of Liaison posts set up; # of reports, briefings, contacts via Liaisons # and description of advocacy initiatives # of GPPAC members trained in advocacy and quiet diplomacy approaches; # and description of documented lessons learned and best practices in engaging with policymakers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> list of endorsements; documented strategies Liaison post agreements; Liaison reports lobby initiatives related documents; M&E reports lists of participants; training materials; documented lessons learned
Public Outreach	...	
Network Strengthening & Regional Action	...	
Action Learning	...	