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POLICY BRIEF

African Union's Quick Impact Project Implementation: Lessons Learned From Somalia

Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Division
Peace And Security Department
African Union Commission

Summary

An important element of the African Union's (AU) activities is its ability to deliver tangible peace dividends to address immediate needs of populations affected by conflicts. The AU usually does this through implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and Peace Strengthening Projects (PSPs) in countries emerging from conflict or undergoing difficult transitions, as has been the case in the Central African Republic (CAR), Guinea Bissau, Liberia, and Madagascar. The AU also implements QIPs during Peace Support Operations (PSOs) in order to build confidence in the Mission, its mandate and the peace process, thereby consolidating peace and improving the environment for effective mandate implementation.

> “QIPs have built confidence in AU’s field missions and have enhanced civil-military relations in the context of PSOs, particularly AMISOM.”

In 2013, the African Union Commission (AUC) developed a QIPs/PSP Policy and Guideline to guide its implementation of QIPs as an important tool of PSOs. Since the introduction of the Policy, QIPs have built confidence in AU’s field missions and have enhanced civil-military relations in the context of PSOs, particularly in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

In June 2018, the Peace and Security Department (PSD) evaluated the impact of its QIPs in Somalia, with a view to documenting lessons and best practices that could guide future planning and implementation processes. The evaluation found that QIPs played a critical role in generating local support within the context of AMISOM’s mandate implementation. Given the ongoing implementation of the Somali Transition Plan with an anticipated drawdown of uniformed personnel by 2020, QIPs will be of greater importance in legitimising the roles of the civilian and police components of the mission, and promoting recovery and development initiatives.

The evaluation mission also found that, there was a low absorptive capacity of funds disbursed for QIPs in Somalia, notably due to late disbursement of funds, non-flexible procurement system, and clan rivalry between contractors and beneficiary communities especially if the two are from different clans. Other challenges encountered included inadequate gender mainstreaming into the QIPs, high project costs and adverse security conditions which often led to changes in planned activities. Despite these shortcomings, the projects were generally effective and accepted by the beneficiary communities.

Going forward, for a more effective implementation of the QIPs, policy makers should take the following measures into consideration: an effective implementation of the AU Policy and Guideline on QIPs; gender mainstreaming into QIPs selection, design, implementation and monitoring; and resolution of the issues responsible for low absorptive capacity of the project funds.

Key Points

QIPs are small-scale, low-cost projects that are planned and implemented within a short-time frame, usually a period of six months during peace processes or PSOs.

- QIPs are designed to have an immediate impact, contributing to post-conflict stabilisation or recovery in conflict zones especially those in transition.
- Successful implementation of QIPs requires integrated planning and implementation involving all components of a Mission (Civilian, Military and Police), with the inclusion and participation of communities, as well as local authorities.
- AU QIPs have been implemented in CAR, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Somalia and South Sudan among others.
- In 2016, the AUC disbursed US$ 969,493 to the AU Liaison Offices and AMISOM. The disbursements ranged from $50,000 (Liberia) to about $400,000 (Somalia).
- Only 19.3 percent of the funds disbursed to Somalia in 2016 were expended, due to a number of factors which included late disbursement of funds, non-flexible procurement system, weak banking system in the country, clan rivalry between contractors and beneficiary communities from different clans.
- Gender was not adequately mainstreamed in the QIPs due to the lack of a gender sensitive approach.
- High costs and adverse security conditions notwithstanding, the QIPs were generally effective.
- Monitoring and evaluation are critical to the effective implementation of QIPs and provide the foundation for accountability.

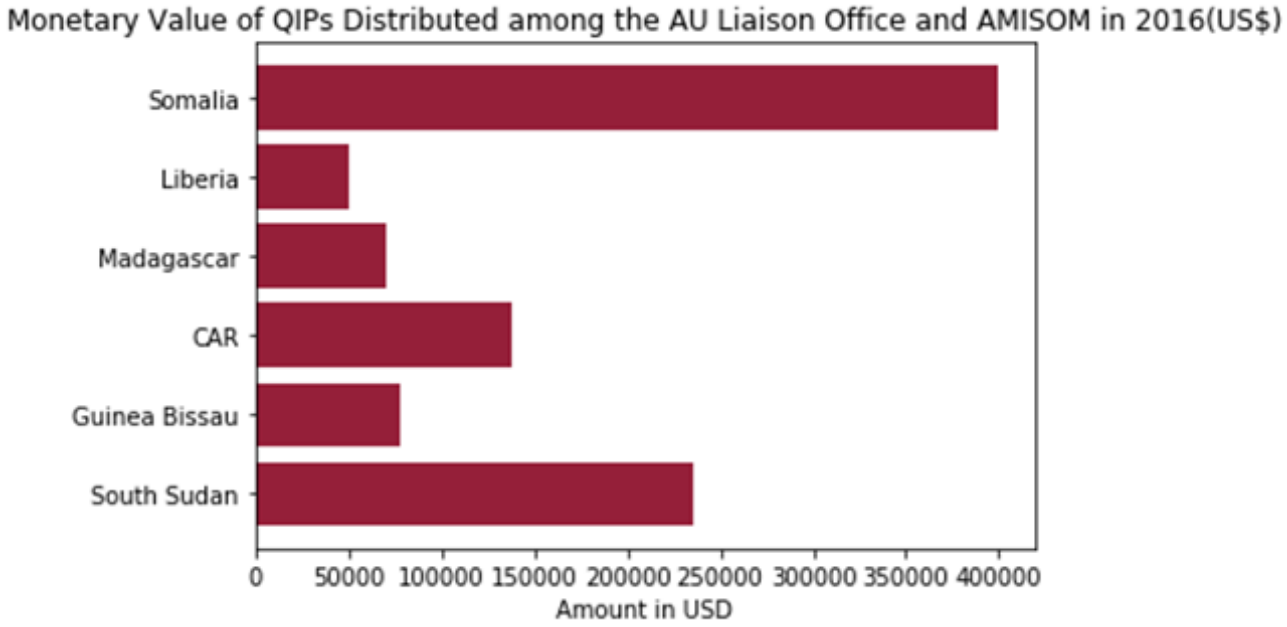
Background

The AU, through its Peace and Security Department, has been implementing Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in a number of post-conflict countries as well as those undergoing difficult transitions, notably the Central African Republic (CAR), Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar and Somalia.

QIPs are small-scale, low cost projects that are planned and implemented within a short-term frame usually a period of six months to have an immediate impact contributing to post-conflict stabilization or recovery .They are increasingly used all over the world by military actors during PSOs to build confidence in a mission, the mandate or the peace process by responding to needs expressed by local communities, thereby improving the environment for effective mandate implementation.

The AUC has made commendable efforts, through its Inter-departmental Task Force on PCRD, to ensure that coordination, efficiency and effectiveness in QIPs/PSPs implementation are enhanced by setting up the necessary mechanisms that are outlined in the QIPs/PSPs Policy and Guideline which include a Steering Committee at the AU Headquarters.

Since 2012, the AUC has been disbursing funds to all the AU Liaison Offices and AMISOM to implement QIPs. In 2016, the AUC disbursed USD 969,493 to the Liaison Offices and AMISOM as shown in the chart below.



Source: Final Report of an Evaluation of Quick Impact Project Implementation by the African Union Mission in Somalia in 2016/2017

The funds disbursed to AMISOM were for the provision of clean and safe water to the Out-Patient Department community outside the AMISOM hospital within the Base Camp in Mogadishu; provision of hospital requirements for Ayuub community health centre in Marka, Mogadishu; renovation and purchase of office equipment for Caterpillar Police Station in Kismayo; construction of a school in Ceele Jaale; support to the local administration in Afgooye District in Lower Shabelle; rehabilitation of Warsheikh mother child hospital; and strengthening of the oversight capability of the Interim South West Administration Parliamentary committees. It should be underlined that AMISOM has, since 2013, completed 127 projects, whereas 23 others are ongoing and many others have been lined up in the Mission Implementation Plan for support.

> “Since 2012, the AUC has been disbursing funds to all the AU Liaison Offices and AMISOM to implementing QIPs.”

In order to assess the impact of the QIPs, the AUC conducted an evaluation mission to Somalia, from 1 to 7 June 2018 with a view to generating a comprehensive feedback on the relevance, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the projects, and documenting the best practices, successes achieved and lessons learned in order to inform future QIPs implementation.

This Policy Brief is, therefore, based on the above evaluation. It focusses on the successes and challenges of the QIPs implementation by AMISOM in order to document lessons and best practices identified that could guide future planning and implementation processes of similar projects of the AU.

Evaluation of AU QIPs in Somalia

The mission evaluated the three completed projects, based on the following criteria:

- methodology of project selection and design;
- effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation in relation to management arrangements;
- results/impact of the projects; and
- challenges encountered, good practices, success stories and lessons identified.

Photos showing progress on project implementation

AU Special Representative to Somalia and Head of AMISOM, Amb. Francisco Madeira, (C), visiting an AU QIP in Mogadishu

Delivery of hospital requirements at Ayuub community health centre, Marka

Handover of hospital requirements by AMISOM to health centre administrators and community leaders in Marka

Project: Provision of clean water to out-patient department community at the AMISOM hospital within the base camp

Photos showing the first platform of the water storage facility during construction

Water Project for the Outpatient Department (OPD) community near AMISOM Base Camp

Photo showing the evaluation team with community members

Methodology and Stakeholder Engagement

In Mogadishu, the evaluation team met with AMISOM Deputy Special Representative and representatives all components of the mission; community leaders, women and youths at the Out-Patient Department; Whereas in Kismayo, they met with representatives from the Jubbaland State including the senior commanders of the Jubbaland State security forces, community leaders, women, youth, and business people. About 20 percent of the participants, in general, were women.

The evaluation team used several methods to gather quantitative and qualitative data. These were a desk review of relevant documents, field based meetings and consultations with project beneficiaries in Mogadishu and Kismayo, interviews and focus group discussions to solicit direct feedback on the selection, design, implementation, and monitoring of the projects. The discussions, which were very participatory, also sought feedback about the outcome and impact of the projects including sustainability, ownership and gender issues in communities, and their proposals for suitable interventions to address them.

Lessons Identified

Overall, the process of project identification, selection and design of the projects complied with the AU QIPs/PSPs Policy and Guideline. The institutional arrangements within the organisational structure of AMISOM are functional and enhancing QIPs/PSPs implementation.

The three projects implemented were identified, selected and designed with the involvement of the different components of AMISOM and beneficiary communities, including their leaders, women and youth. Consequently, the projects were found to be relevant and beneficial to the critical needs of the targeted communities.

QIPs play an important role in generating local support for the implementation of the mandate of AMISOM. Within the context of the Somali Transition Plan with a drawdown of the uniformed AMISOM personnel, QIPs will be of greater importance in legitimising the role of the Civilian and Police components of the mission, and laying the foundation for recovery and long-term development efforts.

AMISOM has a clear comparative advantage over other actors in implementing QIPs in areas that have been newly recovered from Al Shabaab. This is more so because other humanitarian actors do not have immediate access to these areas to implement QIPs before obtaining security clearance from the UN Department of Safety and Security. However, the limited capacity of the Engineering Units in AMISOM, unlike in UN Peacekeeping Missions, has limited the former's ability to exploit this comparative advantage.

AMISOM made an effort to mainstream gender throughout the project implementation cycles. Women were represented on the management committee of the OPD Community water project. Similarly, in the Caterpillar Police Station, provisions were made for a separate office, Cell and washrooms for women. Nonetheless, gender was not adequately mainstreamed in the other QIPs due to the lack of a gender sensitive approach from project conceptualisation, implementation and post-completion. Consequently, men still dominate women in terms of leadership and management of these projects.

Implementation of the QIPs in Somalia underscored the importance of monitoring and evaluation as critical foundation for accountability. Effective M&E guide implementation and align QIPs to build on positive aspects of implementation.

The experience in Somalia demonstrates that early recovery and stabilisation programmes are a function of security. QIPs can optimally be implemented, evaluated and sustained in areas that are adequately safe and secure.

Successful implementation of QIPs requires integrated planning and implementation involving

all the civilian, military and police components of a mission, with the inclusion and participation of communities, as well as local authorities. Overall, and in this regard, AMISOM is a success story worth emulating by other AU Liaison Offices and Field Missions.

Challenges

Only three of the seven earmarked projects were implemented, due, among other things, the fact that funds were remitted to AMISOM very late, in October 2016, and the Mission was expected to complete the projects by 31 December 2016, within three months from receiving the funds from the AUC. Besides the late disbursements, other bottlenecks included the non-flexible procurement system vis-à-vis projects of construction and renovation; weak banking system; and cultural sensitivity as well as clan rivalry between contractors and beneficiary communities. Consequently, only 19.3 percent of the funds disbursed in 2016 were expended.

Project costs were higher on the whole, and high insecurity conditions often led to changes in planned activities. Moreover, project sustainability remains a key issue for QIPs implementation in Somalia.

A late call for projects by the AU Headquarters, challenging procurement processes and delays in releasing funds after the approval of projects led planned project deadlines to be missed. The three quotation procurement rule is unsuitable for Somalia's fragile situation with shortage of competent and qualified service providers.

In fragile and unstable countries such as Somalia where systems and procedures are dysfunctional, competitive bidding may not work. Consequently, there are often challenges to meeting deadlines. Therefore, there is a need for flexibility and special considerations by the strategic headquarters (the AU Commission) and partners in the application of procurement rules and regulations as well as the enforcement of deadlines.

In Somalia, where clan and other dynamics are entrenched, qualifications for award of successful contractors are not determined by the rule of the book but by local interests, notably of elders, local communities and local administration. It is, therefore, important to be sensitive to such dynamics when designing QIPs and awarding contracts in Somalia. There is inadequate internal standard operating procedure for QIPs implementation in a fragile environment such as Somalia.
There is no comprehensive project tracker to articulate overall outcomes, output and impacts of the AU's QIPs in Somalia.

Although the projects were completed and handed over to the local beneficiaries, the latter still expect AMISOM to continue sustaining the projects.

> "The three quotation procurement rule is unsuitable for Somalia's fragile situation with shortage of competent and qualified service providers."

Recommendations

There is a strong and compelling need to improve coordination between the strategic headquarters and AMISOM on the implementation of QIPs/PSPs especially in the areas of project management, finance, procurement, reporting, monitoring and evaluation. The various processes needs to be streamlined as outlined in the QIPs Policy.

There is need to critically think over QIPs implementation and aim to address critical areas where the issue of incorporating a gender-lens in implementation becomes central to countering the long-term effects of conflict on gender dynamics in Somalia.

The AU and AMISOM should establish a strategy to ensure a consistent transfer of ownership of projects to local communities. One such strategy could be to convince the communities, through their elders and local authorities, to contribute labour and local materials to the projects. Meanwhile, sustainability of projects could be enhanced by building technical or institutional capacities of beneficiary communities during implementation of projects so as to prepare them to ultimately take over the projects.

The AU should ensure that lessons from Somalia and elsewhere on the continent are captured through a properly defined knowledge management framework. This is critical, as it would contribute significantly to informing and shaping the design of future QIPs/PSPs for other missions including Liaison Offices.

Visibility of the AU through strategic communication: The timely implementation of QIPs and PSPs for affected populations has a strong communication effect and can strengthen the positive image of the mission's interventions. However, to benefit fully from strategic and operational communication effects, QIPs and PSPs planners in the mission should make use of public information officers or similar capacities to effectively publicise and sensitise the affected populations on these efforts. Deliberate efforts should be made to enhance AU's visibility on implementation of QIPs through appropriate publicity. The requisite funds for such publicity should be provided in the QIPs budget.

There is a need to enhance the absorptive capacity of the projects by taking the following measures:

- ensuring early and timely disbursement of funds;
- developing a flexible and context-specific procurement system;
- modifying the bureaucratic processes that characterize peace time actions to suit emergency needs of quasi-war zones where people's lives are at risk;
- Introducing a flexible financing arrangements, instead of strict adherence to mandatory requirement of bank accounts when Somali has a weak banking system and people do not utilise banking services in emergency situations;
- Factoring in sensitivities towards clan-based business rivalry between contractors and beneficiary communities when awarding contracts for QIPs.

The AU should prepare internal standard operating procedures and/or position papers that could shape the future direction of QIPs/PSPs implementation. The recently published Guidelines Note for the Implementation of the PCRD Policy is a step in the right direction.

Conclusions

The evaluation was timely and relevant, given the increasing focus on QIPs by the mission as it starts to implement the Somali Transition Plan. The AU, through AMISOM, would need to continue using QIPs and PSPs as tools to respond to the different needs for stabilisation and recovery, and to also ensure sustainability of support. Successful integration of QIPs requires integrated planning and implementation involving all the Civilian, Military and Police components of a mission, with the inclusion and participation of communities as well as local authorities.

Generally, QIPs have been an important tool/aspect of AMISOM as they assist the Mission in its tasks and increases the well-being of the population thereby creating a cordial relationship between the Mission and the local communities. Moreover, synergy between the population and the public authorities seems to be essential because stabilisation and capacity building could only be properly implemented if the population starts to trust its political representatives. QIPs could be an important bridge to connect these two actors if well managed by the AUC and its Liaison Offices and missions. QIPs need not only be about infrastructural development but should redefine its purpose to include the development of a climate of trust among all actors involved in order to notice a tangible change in the confidence building and long-term stabilization efforts.

Notes

Baker, J. (2007) "Quick Impact Projects: Towards A 'Whole of Government' Approach" Patterson Review, Vol. 8, The Norman Patterson School of International Affairs.

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About The Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Division

The Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (CMPCRD) is one of the Divisions in the Peace and Security Department that supports the efforts of the African Union Commission to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts as well as support the reconstruction and development endeavours of countries emerging from conflicts and/or difficult transitions.

The CMPCRD comprises two Units, namely; Crisis Management and Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD). Under the Crisis Management Unit, the Division manages conflicts through monitoring of political, security and humanitarian situations across the continent, and implements decisions adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC). The Division oversees all AU-led and/or supported mediation efforts including providing backstopping support to the High Level Representatives and Special Envoys of the Chairperson of the Commission. In order to enhance the effectiveness of African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), CMPCRD is also in charge of the operationalization of the recently established Mediation Support Unit (MSU).

The PCRD unit, which is responsible for the implementation of the AU's PCRD policy, develops frameworks for the implementation of the policy, leads Post-Conflict Needs Assessments and implements Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and Peace Strengthening Projects (PSPs). Through the African Solidarity Initiative (ASI), the Division also supports efforts of the Commission to mobilize in-kind and financial contributions, in collaboration with concerned countries and other Member States, Regional Economic Communities, as well as the relevant African institutions, to support post-conflict reconstruction activities and efforts in the African countries concerned. CMPCRD liaises with the RECs/RMs, multilateral institutions including the United Nations system, the African Development Bank, bi-lateral development agencies and African and non-African Civil Society Organizations on the implementation of the AU's mandate for crisis management and reconstruction efforts.

The Division also supervises and coordinates the activities of the AU Liaison Offices in Member States emerging from Conflict or those undergoing difficult transitions thereby contributing towards effective stabilization that lays the foundation for social justice and sustainable peace, in line with Africa's vision of renewal and growth. Through the implementation of its mandate, the CMPCRD supports the overall vision of the Commission to Silence the Guns by 2020 and assist in the effective implementation of Agenda 2063.

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