



## The Network for Peacebuilding Evaluation Thursday Talks

### “How do I know? Strategic planning, learning, and evaluation in peacebuilding”

**Sylvia Servaes, FriEnt Working Group on Peace and  
Development**

#### **Part 1: Overview**

On February 5, 2015 the Network for Peacebuilding Evaluation was pleased to welcome the working group on peace and development FriEnt, as they presented on their recent publication, "How do I know? Strategic planning, learning, and evaluation in peacebuilding."

Results orientation in its current practice may be more of a hindrance than a help for achieving better results in the field. However, there are experiences in international and local organizations that point to a learning orientation beyond the established structures and procedures, a more systematic use of lessons learned and results of multiple experiences, and a more adventurous use of alternative methods that allow for taking into consideration the complexity and dynamics of (post-) conflict situations.

**About the Speaker:** Sylvia Servaes is desk officer at Misereor for Consultation on justice, peace, and human rights in the Great Lakes Region and serves as a Team member on behalf of Misereor in the Working Group on Peace and Development/ FriEnt. Her current subjects include questions of impact and results measurement in peace building. Together with Natascha Zupan she has compiled the publication "[How do I know? Strategic planning, learning and evaluation in peacebuilding](#)".

#### **Presenter Remarks:**

Sylvia's presentation was structured to include:

1. *Background*
2. *“What do we need?”*
3. *FriEnt Kenya Roundtable Example*
4. *Lessons Learned*

### *1. Background*

FriEnt translates into the Working Group on Peace and Development. They are a network of a broad range of members of peacebuilding and development organizations and state and non-state actors. FriEnt supports networking and contributes to conflict-sensitive development cooperation. Each member organization sends a colleague to represent them in the working team, and they work on countries, regions, and subjects that are important to all, in order contribute to peace and development. For more information visit their website at <http://www.frient.de/en/home.html>.

Results orientation has been a popular conversation topic within the network, so FriEnt conducted two workshops and the conclusion drawn was that results orientation may be more of a hindrance than a help for achieving better results in the field.

### *2. “What do we need?”*

FriEnt considered institutional set-up for learning, creative methods, and a learning community to be necessary in their discussion. Institutional set-up for learning would go beyond the established structures and procedures and instead be used systemically and incorporate us of multiple experiences. A more adventurous approach should be taken when using alternative methods and the complexity and dynamics of post-conflict or conflict situations should be taken into consideration. For example, one could apply some of the systemic approaches that are around most significant changes or scenario analysis. Lastly, partner relations and new forms of communications should be considered in greater detail in order to create debates about strategies and practices which include peer reviews or peer communication between differently situated organizations.

### *3. FriEnt Kenya Roundtable Example*

An example used in the approach “How do I know? Strategic planning, learning, and evaluation in peacebuilding,” is FriEnt’s experience with their country roundtable on Kenya where they have experience in all three of the “*What do we need*” fields. The starting points of the Kenya Roundtable include: short term escalation within long term reforms, extremely diverse assessments by different actors, and influential factors vary greatly over a short period of time. FriEnt was approached by its member organizations claiming that they are confronted with short term escalations within these long term reforms, and that all member organizations had programs that were laid out for long term work that targeted root causes of violence in 2007 and 2008 for example. The member organizations were puzzled by all of the above mentioned challenges and for the Institutional set up element, FriEnt provided a wide range of peacebuilding and development actors and state and non-state actors, and a space for meeting on equal footing.

To assist member organizations face their challenges, FriEnt provided the systemic scenario analysis method during their Kenya Roundtable. What the scenario analysis method helped with in addressing the three challenges was helping: focus on actors and conflicting interests as drivers and spoilers of key events within a process of crises mitigation, reflecting and combining diverse viewpoints and assessments became possible, and that tracing rapid

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change of factors and their importance. The scenario analysis method also helped make the Roundtable more discursive. It allowed member organizations to meet on an equal footing and provided a careful selection of stakeholders of different backgrounds, a safe space for joint critical reflection, and honest identification of issues and for raising difficult questions, and lastly, time to build trust to really learn from each other.

#### *4. Lessons learned*

The hope and goal of FriEnt member organizations was to receive suggestions and indications of where to they can make changes in their own programs. They learned that quickly changing situations put a question mark over the impact hypotheses of long term programmes, and that other actors may have to come in. Lastly, what this may mean for the monitoring and evaluation cycle and any adjustments that may need to be made, such as reacting to short term changes but not necessarily having to change long term reforms or initial expectations but for example acknowledging the new actors having to come in and reforming accordingly.

## **Part 2: Question & Answer**

**Melanie Kawano-Chiu (moderator):** Did the group have a further discussion about their program activities or actions on the side? What does it mean that your program may be completely different and what are the implications of that?

**Sylvia:** Exactly, that is a discussion that we still have to have and hopefully a different experience than that. My colleague on the Kenya Roundtable is organizing another event which she plans to implement a similar process. What was difficult from this experience was that while most of our development and peacebuilding organizations are caught up on these long term projects, question what to do like switching up their projects when things are changing so fast. This is a difficult situation to lead with our member organizations because it is probably linked up to our institutional set-up.

**Kerry Abbot (attendee):** This brings to mind work I have done in Lebanon and Somalia, fast-changing situations. I wonder though how much of your efforts are linked to talks, as if conflict resolution is a rational process. How does this link into your agency partner's development work, which could reinforce the Peace building initiatives? Also, are your partners able to put aside their own ideologies (religious, etc.) and meet the parties where they are instead of trying to convince them of Western views (on ICC for instance)?

**Sylvia:** This is interesting because we get into the underlying assumptions. Yes, because of the format of the Roundtables. We were not in one spot but all of these conversations have taken place in Germany and part of them in Kenya, but in very particular set-ups of talks and workshops. This has not been an issue in terms of ideologies but an issue in terms of institutional set-up.

**Melanie (moderator):** I think it is challenging to put aside your own ideologies and frameworks and identifying what may be biased in you as an individual especially when the

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systems in which we operate and what our donors are asking for but again being able to present to our colleagues and partners is so results oriented which is in itself Western oriented so I think it can be very challenging. What did creating the safe space look like?

**Sylvia:** It was a whole process of checking with our member organizations, trying to find out what their challenges were, trying to find out what partners on the Kenyan side will be there and really negotiating because all of these organizations are on different levels, who are also competitors around funds.

**Emmanuelle Siou (attendee):** I worked a little while at the ICC, and I know that its work is partly perceived as a form of colonialism in African countries. Thus how did the people you met perceive it? And coming from the “West“, were people hostile in that regard, and if yes how did you manage to change that image and instead portray yourself as a valuable and a partner they could trust?

**Sylvia:** Our member organizations have their partner organizations like church organizations have their Kenyan partner organizations. For example, if we look at church organizations in Kenya, they could already be considered Western because of people who are Catholic or Protestant. But in the context of the Kenya Roundtable, the ICC was not discussed as “oh well this is old Westernization.” The discussion raised the issue that politicians used this to rally people behind them and the partner organizations realized that people need to have trust in their own Kenyan institutions.

**Melanie (moderator):** What seems most important is the safe space that you created for the member organizations.

**Maya Reggev (attendee):** I missed Melanie's introduction so please ignore if it was explained, but it would be great to understand the framework of these roundtables - why was it set up? What was it targeting?

**Sylvia:** All of our member organizations were concerned with Kenya and the thematic framework was country elections affecting member organizations' peace building programs.

**Melanie (moderator):** How did donors for example react to your conclusion of results orientation hindering your work more than helping it?

**Sylvia:** This was a conclusion from our two workshops instead of this compilation. But this compilation uses them as examples of experiences we have had to come to this conclusion. With this publication, we attempted to give more examples of how results orientation may hinder the peace building process.

**Kerry Abbott (attendee):** My main concern from development experience is that the expectations and values of donors do not consider the development stage of the partners-- which is why I link development with conflict resolution and do not find talks in isolation that useful--or transferable back to the society as a whole. I have seen leaders who became alienated from their people when they took on too many foreign ideas. It is a gradual process--as it was in our countries, over centuries, often. But you have some excellent development

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agencies who can develop reinforcing strategies and incentives for peacebuilding--if the ideas do not force interactions that are not natural or acceptable at this stage.

**If you have any follow-up questions, please post them on the Thursday Talk Discussion Forum here.**