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ACTION

AIRA MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY & LEARNING(MEAL) POLICY

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Acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organization
ED	Executive Director
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
MIS	Management Information System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSC	Most Significant Change
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OL	Organizational Learning
PM	Program Manager
PO	Program Officer
RBM	Result Based Management
SP	Strategic Plan

Definition of Basic Terms

Activity	The process by which resources, including money, technical support, and other inputs, are mobilized to create specific outputs.
Base-line study	An assessment of how things were before a development project started, can be used to compare or measure progress.
Benchmark	Standard by which one can judge one's performance or accomplishments. The performance levels attained recently by other organizations with comparable missions, or what can be inferred to have been accomplished under the circumstances, are referred to as benchmarks.
Beneficiaries	People, organizations, or groups who benefit directly or indirectly from development interventions, whether or not they are targeted.
Data Collection tools	Data collection is the systematic gathering and measurement of information on certain factors, which enables one to analyze outcomes and respond to pertinent queries. This can be done in many ways, such as through surveys, focus groups, observations, and so on.
Evaluation	The systematic and objective assessment of a project, program, or policy, including its design, implementation, and outcomes, whether it is ongoing or finished. The goal is to assess the objectives' applicability and fulfillment, as well as their effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. An evaluation should give reliable, useful information so that both donors and recipients can use what they've learned to make better decisions.
Goal	The objective behind a strategy or an activity is its goal. A goal, when used metaphorically, is a person, group, or organization's mission.
Indicator	A quantitative or qualitative component or characteristic that offers a quick and accurate way to gauge success, represent the changes brought on by an intervention, or assist in judging how well a development actor is performing.

Inputs	Materials, human resource, and funds allocated to development interventions
Monitoring	A continuous process that uses the systematic gathering of data on certain indicators to inform management and the primary stakeholders in an ongoing development intervention about the level of progress and success in achieving goals as well as the efficiency with which funds are being used. Related concepts include indicator performance monitoring.
Outcome	These are short-term or long-term changes as a result of the project's intervention. The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs.
Outputs	Changes that happen as a result of a development intervention that are important for getting to the outcomes in terms of products, capital goods, and services can also be part of the outcomes. Almost every day, we talk about immediate outcomes that will become immediate outcomes in a few months.
Programme	A program is a portfolio of initiatives coordinated and managed as a single entity with the goal of success, results, and advantages for the company.
Project	A project is a transient organization created to provide particular outputs in accordance with time, cost, and quality constraints. It should always be planned, carried out, and evaluated in accordance with a case that has been approved and balances the costs, advantages, and project risks.

AIRA

SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT was founded in 2006 and registered with the Department of Social Services and Development as a Community Based Organization (CBO) mandated to spearhead socio-economic self-reliance as well as a transformative sustainable development agenda. It was later registered as a civil society organization (CSO) in 2011 by a group of indigenous people with representation from the seven sub-counties in greater Turkana and Marsabit County. Our main activities have revolved around good governance and human rights, education and child protection initiatives, and natural resource management. We also deal with civic education and promote peace building and conflict mitigation.

In 2011, it was registered by the Kenya NGO board as a national organization with a mandate to steer local peace initiatives with the view of reducing tensions among cross-border communities. With the achievement of peaceful co-existence with the communities in 2014, AIRA expanded its mandate to include protection, livelihoods, governance & social accountability, and climate change adaptations & mitigations.

Vision

For a peaceful, just, and resilient communities.

Mission

To promote social cohesion and lasting solutions to poverty and injustices for vulnerable and displaced communities.

Core Values

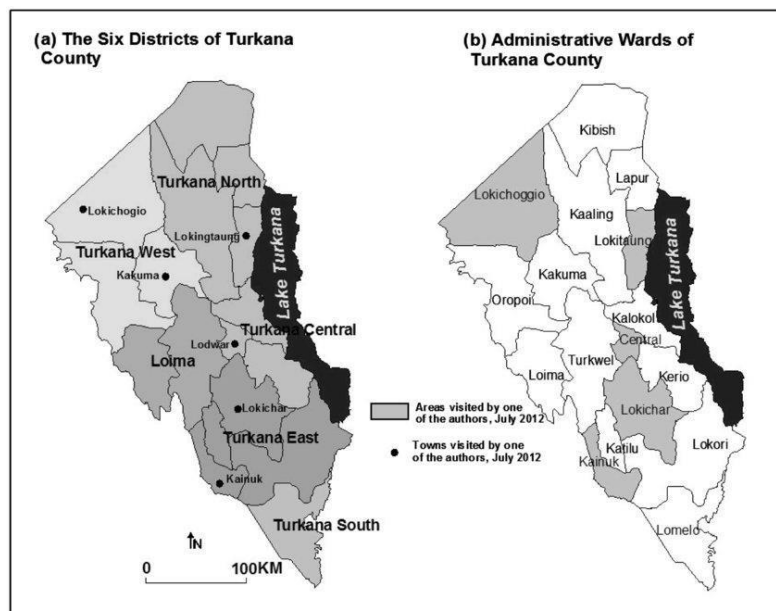
- Commitment
- Equity

- Inclusiveness
- Integrity
- Human Dignity
- Accountability and Transparency

Strategic Areas

- Peace building and conflict transformation
- Protection and Education
- Livelihoods
- Governance and Social Accountability
- Emergency Response

Theory of Change and Logic Model

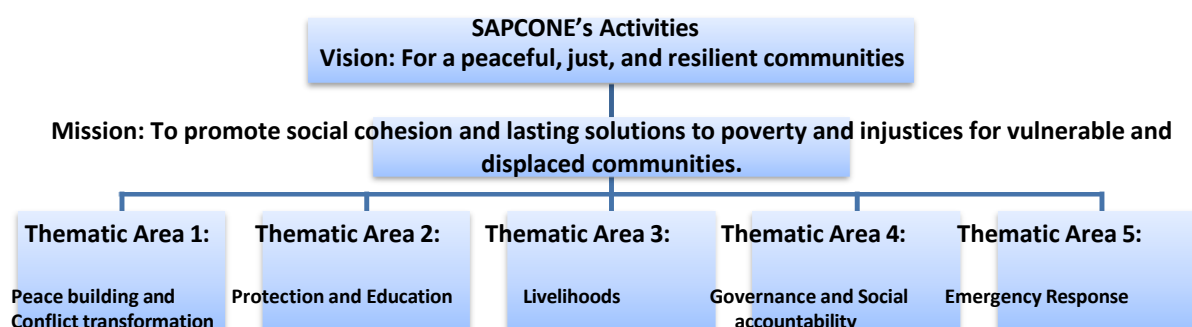


AIRA's primary goal is to enhance the capacity of communities in the cross-border clusters to anticipate, withstand, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses. This requires locally led development, strengthened social cohesion, expanded and inclusive livelihood and economic opportunities and conflict-sensitive, equitable sharing of resources.

The theory of change posits that:

- if the design, management, and implementation of activities is locally led and co-created by local actors,
- if social cohesion and intercommunity trust is strengthened,
- if livelihood and employment opportunities are expanded and made inclusive of marginalized groups,
- if platforms for collaborating and learning in cross-border clusters are strengthened,
- THEN local ownership of interventions is fostered; conflict risk is mitigated, and trust is bolstered; inclusive livelihood and economic opportunities are increased; and, ultimately, the resilience capacities of cross-border communities are advanced.

Results Framework



2. Introduction

AIRA is governed by a strategic plan (AIRA 2021-2025 Strategic Plan), and an effective MEAL system must be in place to guarantee successful adoption and high-quality service delivery. At each step of the monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning process, AIRA is guided by this paper. The personnel can use it to clarify their position within the AIRA MEAL system. It shows what the organization needs in terms of data flow, roles, collecting and distributing data, and other important areas.

3. Framework

The relationship between immediate effects of actions and the organization's vision is depicted in the following matrix. It demonstrates how each action advances the achievement of the final objective. All MEAL activities are supported by this structure.

Additionally, it exemplifies the planning process, which begins at the impact level and descends to the activity level. Aside from the implementation, which begins at the activity level and moves up to the effect level, AIRA has also developed their MEAL RBM log frame in this manner. The level of the outcome and impact demonstrates why we take certain actions, whereas the level of the output and activity outlines what we do and how we wish to accomplish it.

	Planning	Implementation	
Vision			WHY
Mission			
Programme goals			
Programme outcomes			
Programme outputs			WHAT
Activities			HOW

3.1 Result Framework

The Result-Based Management (RBM) log frame is the primary tool in AIRA's MEAL system. It was created in accordance with the various programs (Education, Protection, Peace, Livelihood, and Humanitarian), which were divided into the strategic areas (Peacebuilding and conflict transformation, Protection, Livelihoods, and Governance & Social Accountability), as stated in the Strategic Plan. The RBM log frame relates to the period from 2016 to 2020 covered by the strategic plan, whereas the updated log frame refers to 2022 to 2026.

Format MEAL RBM Framework

Project:									
Problem Statement:									
Goal:									
Strategic area	Outcomes	Baseline	Target for current year	Outcome indicators	Outcome tools	Activities	Output	Output	Timeline

3.2 Work plan

To guide them in carrying out the activities, each employee develops an individual annual work plan (which may be a departmental work plan) based on the RBM framework. All individual work plans are approved by the executive director, who is in charge of creating the organizational work plan.

Work Plan Format

Annual Work Plan								
Strategic area	Outcome	Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Sub-activity	Output	Initial targets	Intermediate outcomes

4. Monitoring

The AIRA MEAL team is assisted by this MEAL planning tool in considering how monitoring and evaluation plans and goals will actually play out after the implementation of the project activities. In this manner, it directs the execution and evaluation of organisational MEAL activities. A written logframe for the project is required, along with indicators.

Performance Monitoring: The main focus of AIRA's monitoring efforts is project performance monitoring. AIRA track its actual performance against defined monthly, quarterly, and annual targets of all indicators in the indicator performance tracking table featured in the next section using both quantitative and qualitative data gathering and sourcing methodologies. AIRA is able to make wiser decisions about current and upcoming projects thanks to performance monitoring. Here are the necessary actions that AIRA staff ought to do to guarantee effective activity performance monitoring.

- Create a plan for monitoring and evaluating your projects (see the above example)
- Real-time performance tracking-You may keep track of each team member's progression and distribute resources appropriately by monitoring performance in real-time. The MEAL department wants to avoid using outdated information.
- Evaluate project reports- Was the project finished on schedule? Or did something unexpected happen? Staff may identify where schedules diverged and be able to determine how the team is doing in relation to its goals by reviewing reports.
- Enhance workflow processes- The MEAL department investigates further to determine why a project did not meet its deadline. Which of the setbacks were they? How did they finally get resolved? To keep track of incidents and the mitigations for them, it is important to use the incident management tracker.

Focus on learning and improving- The organisation is continuously concentrating on learning and developing since staff understand there is always room for development. That's the extra benefit of tracking project operations in real-time.

Context Monitoring: The arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) in the Elemi Triangle are undergoing rapid change, making livelihoods susceptible to shocks and stresses while fueling interethnic violent conflict. AIRA will carefully monitor and record relevant external elements such as socioeconomic, political, climatic, and technological factors that may have an impact on how well activities progress. The effects of climate change have pressure traditional livelihoods and methods in Kenya and Ethiopia regions of focus, causing chronic stresses such as environmental degradation, conflict, droughts, and floods. The past desert locust and COVID-19 outbreaks exacerbated the effects, putting participants' capacities to absorb, predict, and respond to risks in ways that support cross-border social cohesion at scale in grave danger.

AIRA will develop mechanisms inside the MEAL system for successfully recognising, analyzing, reporting, and utilizing contextual information collected from primary and secondary sources to track external contextual elements. By selecting the most suitable trigger points for contingency and scenario planning, all sources will adapt future programming. When any suggested option is activated, AIRA will use context data to project potential scenarios and suggest evidence-based courses of action. The project intervention and processes include the default collection of context data.

5. Evaluation

1. **Internal Evaluations:** Internal evaluations are evaluations conducted by the activity implementer or sub-contracted by the activity implementer. Internal evaluations are not required, but implementing partners may conduct an internal evaluation.

This section of the MEAL plan identifies all evaluations that the implementing partner plans to manage over the life of the activity. For each internal evaluation, the plan should include (at minimum):

- the evaluation (performance or impact),
- purpose and expected use,
- evaluation questions,
- estimated budget,
- planned start date, and
- estimated completion date.

The evaluation plan should also clarify the expected level of CBCR involvement, such as reviewing an evaluation statement of work (SOW) or draft report.

2. **Plans for collaborating with external Evaluators:** Project evaluation parameters include: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact will be conducted in partnership with the lead partner and AIRA's role will be to support the development of the TOR, developing the tools for the evaluation literature to support desk reviews, community mobilization, availing staff, planning for logistics.

6. Qualitative Reporting

Writing articles on its primary beneficiaries has been a tradition for AIRA when it comes to qualitative reporting. Because of how this has changed over the years, "success stories" are now included in monthly progress reports, external reports, and on a number of social media sites.

The intention is to continue using that strategy in the future to maintain consistency while also searching for new innovative approaches to qualitative reporting. Additionally, rather than just writing about the results, emphasis will be placed on reporting on how to achieve success.

Thanks to the monthly progress reports, AIRA is able to compile a database of more than 40 stories each year. Having "ready-made stories" for reporting and publishing purposes is adequate.

7. Learning Organization

The project will make conscious attempts to highlight new lessons and evidence from day-to-day implementation in addition to cooperating and adapting. The programme will mostly rely on information from normal monitoring while also creating particular learning questions in areas that need more intense attention. AIRA is dedicated to growing and changing to increase the program's effectiveness, efficiency, and impact. These methods of learning will be used by the programme:

1. **Internal learning:** As stated in the project design, the programme will have quarterly workshops for reflection and learning, in which participants will include members of the implementation team, local partners, the community, and the government. Primary lessons on what has worked well, what has not, and what we need to change because of these lessons are provided by internal learning. It offers the software its first chance to pick up new information and adjust. To make decisions about programming, the programme will also use internal data from monitoring. By deciding based on evidence, the programme can better adjust lessons for programming. Internal best practices and lessons learned will be recorded and disseminated to external partners via the proper channels, such as meetings of the County Steering Group.
2. **External Learning:** The programme team will accomplish this by aggressively engaging with partners—with whom AIRA either collaborates or who work on projects with comparable technological complexities—and learning from their methods, best practises, and lessons discovered. The AIRA context will examine these lessons, and the programme will apply them correctly if it thinks doing so will increase efficiency, effectiveness, and impact. The programme will also participate in learning opportunities to comprehend the work of other partners. AIRA will once more be informed of potential areas for improvement by the lessons learnt from various projects.

Error detection and correction are part of organizational learning (OL), which has the general objective of enhancing an organization's effectiveness. Through OL, AIRA creates better methods for providing services and setting up its daily operations. Individuals within the organization must learn on their own for organizational learning to happen, but organizational learning is more than just the sum of what these people learn.

Team learning is a component of organizational learning. Team capability to accomplish organizational goals is aligned through team learning. When there is team learning, information flows, feedback is openly given, and creative problem-solving is possible. Learning about organizations and working in teams is a component of every MEAL activity. AIRA assists with that by:

- Providing forums for discussion (monthly progress meetings)
- Encouraging employees to consult with coworkers who possess diverse skills
- Staff sharing of informational resources
- Including graduate assistants and volunteers in more difficult jobs to offer opportunities for learning at various levels.
- With all the staff and volunteers, brief "learning" sessions will be held every Friday. Staff and volunteers will lead these sessions based on what they know best and what they are good at.

8. Audience Analysis

The audience analysis and information dissemination methods are shown in the following table.

Audience	Information needed (WHAT is the information required)	Use (WHY is the information required)	Frequency (WHEN is the information required)	Format (HOW the information will be communicated)
External Audience				
Beneficiaries				
Institutional Donors				
Individual Donors				
Ministries				
Partner Organizations				
Internal Audience				
Board				
Staff				
Graduate Assistant/Volunteers				

9. Data Collection, Analysis & Reporting

9.1 Data Collection

AIRA has established protocols regarding performance indicator reference sheets (PIRS), starting with the creation of participant lists, checklists, questionnaires, and observation checklists that will guarantee that both regular programme data, which is primarily gathered through the weekly report, monthly intentioned assessments, quarterly reports, and feedback meetings, as well as periodic data collected through FGDs and key informant interviews (KIIs), is captured appropriately. Data collection shall respect gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). The project will make sure that data is gathered accurately and on time and that contamination is reduced by ensuring quality control procedures are in place. Similarly, emphasis will be placed on the data's completeness, validity, and adherence to the current issues. AIRA will digitally store the information gathered.

Based on the indicators listed in the RBM log frame for each of the programs, the programmer designs data collection tools. To keep the tools current, they must be revised yearly. The collection of data pertaining to each program is the responsibility of the program officer. So that the information is up-to-date, it must be collected and checked within a month of the event. AIRA staff may always be aided by volunteers or partner groups in the collection and entry of data. As a result, people involved in the collection must receive precise instructions on what is required of them in terms of confidentiality and data quality standards. Feedback must be supplied right away if the quality of the data is not what is desired. The PO in charge should be able to support parties who need help collecting accurate data. When a situation requires the assistance of the ED or MEAL specialist, the PO should do so. This document's annex contains a table that lists all of the current data collection tools.

9.2 Data Analysis for Strategic Information and Reporting

AIRA retrieves data from My SQL Server for cleaning before analysis. The analysis tools in use include Microsoft Excel and SPSS, which are flexible, cost-effective, and dynamic systems well-suited to the data needs of the project. Dashboard configuration empowers the AIRA teams to identify

the project performance questions most relevant to the objectives and recognise the role of data analysis. The retrieved data from My SQL database is analyzed and used by the AIRA management team to make informed decisions. Similarly, the analyzed data identify trends, analyze behaviors, provide recommendations, and improve intervention strategies and approaches. The analyzed data can as well be used to make predictions, measure performance, and inform management decisions.

Data analysis takes place at various levels.

The Program Officer analyzes and provides commentary on the data collected at output level in the monthly progress reports. The program officer is supposed to make decisions about the daily operations using data. The Program Manager can intervene and help the PO if necessary. In the semi-annual RBM review report, the program manager analyzes data on production and, in the end-of-year report, also on outcome level. The Program Manager presents the review report to the PO; together they go over the progress and accomplishments and, as necessary, consider potential interventions.

The PO and PM determine if a third party must participate in the analysis at every stage or if only the report is shared if a third party is participating in a program or project. The approach previously outlined is different when it comes to gathering and analyzing baseline and end-line data. Whenever such data must be gathered, that will depend on the project and be decided upon. Data analysis must be completed within one month of the activity.

9.3 Responsibilities and Timeframe

The duties and deadlines for the deliverables are briefly summarized in the table below.

INTERNALLY		
Deliverable	Responsible	Frequency/Timeframe
Creation of a personal work plan	PO	Yearly, end of September
Approval of work plans	ED	Yearly, Beginning of October
Development of annual departmental budgets	PO	Yearly, mid-October after approval of work plans
Data collection	PO	Continuous (as per activity)
Data compilation (spread sheet and file maker)	PO	Continuous (within one week after activity or latest before next reporting time)
Monthly progress report	PO	Monthly, 15 th of each month
Summary of monthly report	PM	Monthly, end of month
Monthly Review meetings	PM	Tuesday after 15 th of each month
Semi-annual RBM review report (output level), progress on annual targets)	PM	July
End year RBM review report (output and outcome level, achievement of annual target)		December
Annual report	ED	March
EXTERNALLY		
What	Responsible	Frequency, deadline
Donor Reports	ED and respective PO	As per reports Calendar

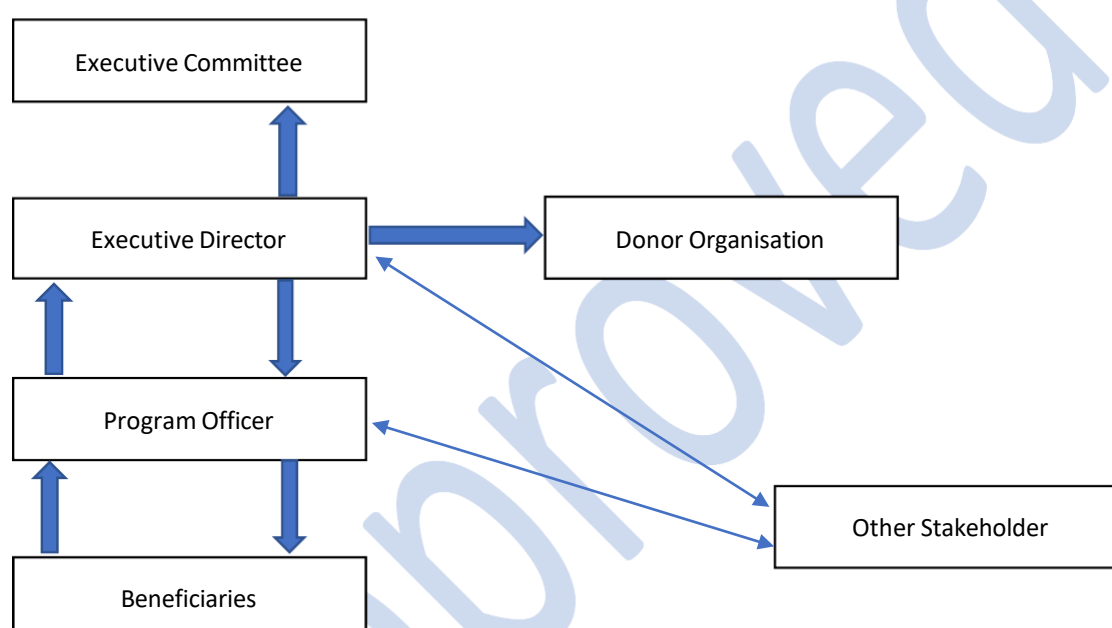
Data dissemination may require involving stakeholders, depending on the project. It might also require formal reporting to the stakeholders on a regular basis.

1 0. Data Management & Quality Assurance

10.1 Data Management & Flow

Data can be gathered and collected from a variety of sources using a variety of methods. Some methods are hands-on and highly participatory, while others are more exclusive and rely on the opinion of one or two specialist sources. Usually, it is best to use more than one data collection method. The program officers will make sure that relevant tools are developed progressively and all data is gathered and recorded into the database within the predetermined time range. Typically, either File maker or Excel spreadsheets are used to store data. The matrix that follows shows how information is shared between the organization's beneficiaries, funders, and other important parties. The role of stakeholders varies from project to project, but for some AIRA projects, they may need to be involved in the different stages of MEAL.

Data Flow Chart



1 0. 2 Data Quality Assurance

AIRA regularly does a DQA exercise to check the quality of the data and make sure the system meets standards for validity, integrity, precision, reliability, and timeliness. At a minimum, AIRA set protocols that will ensure proper data entry is conducted with no or, at worst, minimal errors, and the data to be processed is cleaned, ridding the data of unusually abnormal outliers and providing the project with credible and unique data. Data management is supported by the MEAL protocols laid down to manage and keep track of all project information. This will pave the way for tracking all project outcomes and outputs, including financial performance and the number of people reached, allowing for easier analysis of the overall performance of the project. For this project, an online program will be set up for the management platform. Like all other projects, quarterly performance reviews and physical verifications of outputs at project sites will also be carried out.

The internal DQA is led by the MEAL team. To determine the quality of the data, the MEAL team conducts a desk review of routine monitoring indicators, searching for outliers or other results that do not seem right. In addition to the desk review, the team interviews a randomly picked sample of activity beneficiaries to confirm participation and compare hard copy activity records to reported

numbers in the AIRA database. The reports from the internal DQA exercise are shared with responsible team after completion. An efficient MEAL system must always guarantee quality (data collection, transfer, compilation, analysis, and storage). This can be accomplished if all participants are aware of their roles and duties, the tools and database are current, and all tasks are completed within the allotted timeframe.

A variety of quality checks are conducted:

- The quality of the data collected and compiled by volunteers is periodically but randomly checked by program officers. Feedback provided months after the data was obtained is ineffective, so it should take place within a fair amount of time. The frequency of completion can vary depending on the task.
- In order to provide an RBM review report, the Program Manager must have timely access to quality data. The PM will determine how frequently to review the data and data analysis. But apply that to all projects and programs. Once more, it must be completed in a reasonable amount of time to allow for easy correction.
- All machines are backed up in accordance with computer policy, and data is shared and saved in G-Drive (Staff Share).
- Data (including financial documents and all program/project-related materials) must be kept for a minimum of seven years under Kenyan law.

11. Data Dissemination & Use

Both internally and externally, data is disseminated and used. Depending on the project or program, external stakeholders may receive and use data. If that is the case, make it clear as soon as possible what information will be shared with stakeholders and what their roles and duties will be. Many other channels, including email, mail, meetings, etc., can be used for dissemination. The confidentiality of any data shared with stakeholders must be protected or explained as necessary, and it must be produced and published in a professional manner (e.g., adhering to branding policy). No data may be released without prior approval under AIRA's rigorous data protection policy.

12. MEAL Resources

12.1 Coordination & Staff

Almost all of AIRA's small personnel participate in MEAL activities. All employees must comprehend the fundamentals of monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning in order to do this. Other than that, each employee's MEAL obligations must be clearly stated in each job description. The Executive Director has primary duty. However, once a Program Manager is hired, this may change. The PO must make sure that volunteers and junior staff have the necessary MEAL abilities. If necessary, a training session must be started and/or extensive instruction must be given. A MEAL officer must be hired by the end of the year to assist the organization's MEAL operations.

12.2 Financial Resources

Some projects might need money for MEAL activities (incl. base and end line). That must be taken into account in the annual budget, and every written proposal must include budget items for MEAL (e.g., base and end line).

12.3 Software

The File Maker database was replaced by a customized MIS (Management Information System) for AIRA i.e., My SQL. The database is extensive and offers several degrees of access for use in performing various tasks. The Administrator has the authority to add or remove other users because they are the database's master user and custodian.

Next steps and recommendations

- Its purpose was to record the existing MEAL procedures. But because AIRA is a learning organization, it has to update its MEAL procedures every year to stay professional and make sure it's using the most up-to-date methods.
- Considering the following inputs in the future,
The "Most Significant Change" (MSC) concept was introduced. This method is based on a qualitative, participatory approach and involves all stakeholders in all parts of the evaluation. It is a change from traditional quantitative, expert-driven evaluation methods to a qualitative, participant-driven method that focuses on the human impact of a program. Although it takes more time and money, this method of describing impact is more thorough.

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of forms and tools

Approved