

THE LEARNING CURVE

A guide to evaluation for youth organisations

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The research team welcomes comments and questions related to this publication and the overall Youth Impact project.

Youth Impact Website

Presentation of the project & research dimensions

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INTRODUCTION

This online guide aims to offer guidance and assessment tools for youth workers, in the peacebuilding field, to be able to better plan, monitor and evaluate their work and learn from it.

Click on one of the sections below to dive right in, or scroll down to find out more about how to use the guide.

What is the Guide for?

To understand and explain the impact and success of your work

To learn how to apply monitoring and evaluation tools to your work

To assess your knowledge and practice in the area of monitoring, evaluation and learning

To strengthen learning throughout your organisation

Why?

Youth organisations often prioritise action to reflection. Yet, they find it hard to explain what they have achieved. With limited time and resources for reflection, they struggle to become more strategic and improve the quality of their work.

How do we escape this trap? How do we harness the creative potential of youth organisations as learning organisations?

This Guide aims to offer orientation for young peacebuilders on how to:

reflect on their own working practices at the organisational and project level

plan, monitor and evaluate their daily and strategic peacebuilding work

generate learning outcomes from the work they do as peacebuilders

Thus, the Guide is directed at an audience of young peacebuilding practitioners interested in further strengthening their competences in monitoring and evaluation. The main aim is to enhance the peacebuilding efforts by assessing key dimensions of their work.

How does it work and where to start?

This Guide proposes two intertwined steps:



1. Assessing your knowledge and practices on three levels:

[Assessing your knowledge](#) - a quiz to review your knowledge in monitoring, evaluation and learning.

[Assessing your projects](#) - a tool helping you to assess your monitoring, evaluation and learning practices when implementing projects.

[Assessing your organisation](#) - a tool helping you to assess your monitoring, evaluation and learning practices on six dimensions of your organisation's work.



2. Learning and improving your knowledge and practices on three levels:

[Learning the basics](#) - a short introduction to key terms and concepts on monitoring, evaluation and learning.

[Learning for projects](#) - a step-by step explanation with advice and resources on how to improve your monitoring, evaluation and learning practices at the project level.

[Learning for organisations](#) - a step-by step explanation with advice and **resources** on how to improve your monitoring, evaluation and learning practices on six dimensions of your organisation.



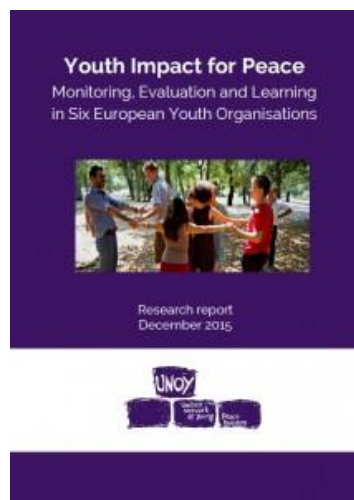
Last but not least, the most relevant resources about monitoring, evaluation and learning for each of the levels in Assessing and Learning can be found in the [Resources](#) section.

Design your own learning path

As you design your own learning path, feel free to follow the Guide step by step starting with Assessing your Knowledge or to start with any of the assessment tools or suggestions for learning. It is up to you which path you take, how much time you invest and to what extent you want to use the opportunities included in this Guide.

Run a Quick Scan! If you want to get a fast impression of where you and your organisation stand with your monitoring, evaluation and learning practices you can opt for the “quick scan”!

The Learning Curve. A guide to Evaluation for Youth Organisations is a tool to support young peacebuilders in improving their practices with the aim to make their peacebuilding work more sustainable.



The guide has been developed in the context of a long-term partnership called Youth Impact: Strengthening Organizational Capacities to Build Peace in Europe - funded by the Erasmus+ Programme - implemented by the International Secretariat of the United Network of Young Peacebuilders in partnership with five European UNOY members, namely Service Civil International (SCI), Fundació Catalunya Voluntaria (FCV), Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR), Centro Internazionale per la Promozione dell'Educazione e lo Sviluppo (CEIPES) and European Intercultural Forum (EIF).

This guide is based on an in-depth research and analysis conducted by the six organisations mentioned above. The research focused on the current monitoring, evaluation and learning practices in youth peace organisations in Europe, and identified what needs to be done to improve them.

Access the Research Report [here](#).

This Guide is

A tool to learn about necessary elements of planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning

A tool to assess current practises in monitoring, evaluation and learning in order to identify strengths and weaknesses.

A repository of good practice in the field and available tools, tips and resources to improve youth peacebuilding work.

This Guide is not

an exhaustive website on how to conduct monitoring and evaluation and how to learn from it. There are many good quality publications accessible online and offline. Instead, we hope that this Guide will support youth organisations to institutionalise monitoring and evaluation and will establish and implement monitoring and evaluation systems as part of their subsequent projects and programmes.

ASSESSING YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES

In this section we will share with you three ways to assess your knowledge and practices on monitoring, evaluation and learning.



For improving our work, we find it a good starting point to first assess our current knowledge base and practices. Thus, we invite you to check your understanding of monitoring, evaluation and learning as well as to analyse your practices at the project and organisational levels.

Once you have assessed your current knowledge and practices, we suggest you to visit the section on [Learning](#) to learn how to improve your work on project and organisational level in the field of monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Assess your knowledge

Before we decide what more we need to learn, it is always wise to have a self-summary of what we already know. This way we can target the missing information better and save time, by having a clear understanding of the concepts we are dealing with.



This questionnaire will test your overall **knowledge about monitoring, evaluation and learning**. These 15 questions will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. Read it carefully, and choose the most appropriate answer. Check the correct answers at the end of the quiz.

<p>Evaluation is...</p>	<p>an exercise completed a certain time prior and after the activity and focusing on the perceived personal development of the participants.</p> <p>a systematic assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program or policy, its design, implementation and results.</p> <p>an ongoing collection of information during a project/program to prove results.</p>
<p>Monitoring is...</p>	<p>an ongoing process of tracking progress of a project usually via periodic meetings, reports and status updates.</p> <p>a set of specific tools and procedures designed to collect information during the project used for its final evaluation and reporting.</p> <p>the systematic collection and analysis of information during the implementation of a project or program to make necessary changes when needed.</p>
<p>Evaluation happens ...</p>	<p>after the project</p> <p>during and after the project</p> <p>at all phases of the project since the planning phase.</p>
<p>An indicator is...</p>	<p>a quantitative measure (e.g. number of participants) that shows the progress of your project.</p> <p>a tangible and measurable indication that visualises results and helps to assess progress towards the achievement of results.</p> <p>a set of descriptions that you collect during your evaluation process to support your reporting.</p>

Efficiency means...	<p>producing desired outcomes or effects with the planned, ideally sustainable resources (i.e. financial, human).</p> <p>the success in producing the desired outcomes and reaching set objectives.</p> <p>a measure of the extent to which an activity is reaching set objectives/goals, regardless of the amount of resources used to achieve them.</p>
When an evaluation is conducted after a training session or program in order to assess its overall effectiveness it is technically called:	<p>final evaluation</p> <p>summative evaluation</p> <p>learning evaluation</p>
When you study an issue/context and describe with indicators the current situation before an intervention or planned action, it is technically called a ...	<p>background study</p> <p>original situation study</p> <p>baseline study</p>
A focus group discussion/interview is:	<p>a social science research method to gather information about the opinions and experiences of a group of people about a topic through a facilitated group discussion.</p> <p>a facilitated group discussion to gather information from stakeholders in the preparatory phase of a project.</p> <p>a meeting of stakeholders to discuss the focus of a project and necessary amendments.</p>
The aim of evaluation is:	<p>determining success of a project.</p> <p>accountability to the community and donors.</p> <p>learning for improvement and accountability.</p>
The main persons capable of monitoring, evaluation and learning are:	<p>trained professionals who have key experiences on this field.</p>

	<p>project leaders, external evaluators and representatives of donors.</p> <p>participants, project leaders, internal and external evaluators.</p>
Evaluation is led by:	<p>participants who took part in the project/program planning phase.</p> <p>those involved in the project/program who have evaluation listed as part of their responsibilities.</p> <p>participants of the project/program who have shared responsibilities for the duration of the project/program.</p>
Which of the following ones can be considered an outcome?	<p>number of activities organised during the project phase.</p> <p>number of participants in year x, who successfully completed the training.</p> <p>number of participants reporting having used their skills the six months after the activity.</p>
Complete the sentence with the correct answer. A theory of change is...	<p>a theoretical approach adopted by the organisation that helps them to monitor external circumstances in the surrounding society.</p> <p>an explanation of how the organisation interacts directly and indirectly with its stakeholders.</p> <p>an explanation of how social reality works in a specific context making explicit why it is assumed the planned intervention will lead to the desired results.</p>
Complete the correct sentence. Changes in attitudes and behaviour...	<p>can be measured through a survey in the long-term.</p> <p>can be assessed by a variety of tools and techniques.</p> <p>cannot be measured in the short term.</p>
Impact evaluation ...	<p>assesses the changes that can be attributed to a particular intervention, such as a project, program or policy. A proper or rigorous analysis of impact requires a</p>

counterfactual analysis or in other words, the analysis of what the situation would have been in the absence of the intervention.

assesses all the effects of a project, program or policy in the long term. Impact evaluation requires systematic data gathering before, during and after the intervention.

assesses the effects that can be attributed to a particular intervention, such as a project or program on its participants' behaviour. Impact evaluation requires triangulation of research methods.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!

The correct answers are:

1. - b

6. - b

11. - b

2. - c

7. - c

12. - c

3. - c

8. - a

13. - c

4. - b

9. - c

14. - b

5. - a

10. - c

15. - a

Read the detailed explanations for every question below.

1. b) Evaluation is a systematic assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program or policy, its design, implementation and results. Evaluation starts in the planning phase, defining objectives and criteria of evaluation (What will be important for us to decide whether the project has been successful or not?). The project team will ultimately decide the focus and scope of evaluation and the necessary information that needs to be collected.

2. c) Monitoring is the systematic collection and analysis of information during the implementation of a project or program to make necessary changes when needed. Periodic formal and informal meetings are only one way of collecting information to monitor the development of a project. Monitoring both helps make adjustments during the implementation as well as contribute to final, summative evaluations.

3. c) Evaluation happens at all phases of the project since the planning phase. In this initial phase project and learning objectives are defined as well as criteria and methods for monitoring and evaluation.

4. b) An indicator is a tangible and measurable indication that visualises results and helps to assess progress towards the achievement of results. Indicators can be both quantitative (e.g. number of participants, number of projects completed) and qualitative (e.g. description of the level of understanding of an issue, kind of empowerment of participants). Information on indicators is collected both for monitoring and final evaluations.

5. a) Efficiency is a measure of how resources (money, time, staff, expertise etc.) are converted into results. It is an economic term which signifies that the organisation or project uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. Efficiency should not be confused with effectiveness. Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which an activity is reaching its set objectives/goals, regardless of the amount of resources used to achieve them.

6. b) The term summative refers to a summit (important) or summing-up assessment. It is focused with the outcome of a program, such as possible changes in attitude and behaviour of the learners. This is in contrast with formative evaluation which takes place during project implementation and is focused on shaping and improving the training or program.

“The distinction between formative and summative evaluation has been well summed up by Bob Stake: ‘When the cook tastes the soup, that’s formative; when the guests taste the soup, that’s summative.’”

7. c) A baseline provides a starting point from which a comparison can be made. It is conducted prior to the beginning of the intervention and is the point of comparison for monitoring and evaluation data. Baseline studies provide a set of evidence and insights on the starting situation of the target group and the context of the intervention. It is an instrument that can be used to test hypotheses of an intervention (assess results) and to plan an intervention (refine indicators to be monitored).

8. a) A focus group is a data collection tool that can be used when projects or programs are designed, monitored or evaluated. It involves a small and selective group of individuals, often between 6-10 persons who usually have specific characteristics which

makes them valuable resource persons to consult. The discussion is structured around selected topics/questions. Focus groups are very good at providing in depth information about opinions, attitudes and to answer 'why' questions.

9. c) The aims of evaluation should not only be one or the other, but rather both. In fact, they overlap and reinforce each other significantly, since to be accountable implies the requirement to learn from success and failures. An organisation or project often has multiple accountabilities; to the communities in which you work, to funders, to partners and to ourselves. Evaluation makes it possible to understand the extent to which organisations live up to their commitments to each of these groups. On the other hand, the purpose of evaluation is learning for improvement, namely by wanting to know why something worked or did not work, learn from it and improve in the future. Based on specific learnings certain decisions can be made, for example to continue with a program or project or to change the strategy.

10. c) Evaluations can be conducted by a range of different actors including: donors, external evaluators, peers, participants, project leaders and by a combined group. Who will monitor, evaluate and/or learn within an organization or project depends on the timeframe, available resources and the purpose of the evaluation. Even as the relevant expertise of the person (or group) involved, which may include relevant skills and knowledge of the topic of the project or context. While an external evaluator is often seen as credible by different stakeholders, involving staff may be important for knowledge building and consolidating institutional memory.

11. b) Evaluation is led by those involved in the project/program who have evaluation listed as part of their responsibilities. Usually, it is a project officer, but not necessarily. Ideally, it is a team effort coordinated by a person. The evaluation framework, criteria and methods are decided in consultation with partners and involve participants and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. community leaders and donors) as much as possible.

12. c.) An outcome refers to the effects produced as the result of completed activities (outputs: e.g. publications, seminars). Outcomes can be observed in the short-term, medium-term and long-term. Short term learning outcomes can be: improved knowledge, changed attitudes and developed skills. Medium term outcomes can be: new actions, changed behavior, improved practices or policies. Long term, or ultimate impacts are visible in conditions that are influenced in the social, economic, civic or environmental context.

13. c.) A theory of change serves as a tool to design, monitor and evaluate peacebuilding activities and social change initiatives more broadly. It makes explicit a basic explanation of how reality works, meaning the assumptions on the factors that enable or

constrain a desired change. For example, if we assume education to be a key factor in improving employability of young people, we may decide to strengthen educational programs.

14. b.) Changes in attitudes can be detected right after the first activities. The scope and level of change may differ greatly from person to person. Assessing changes in attitudes is challenging, both as an exercise of individual reflection and as a social science challenge. To assess our own changes in attitudes as individuals, participants or learners, we need a reflective attitude and ideally, enough time and space for analysing our own attitudes and how these change. Often in peace education seminars we look at how open we are to the ideas of others for example. If a project team wants to assess how a group's attitudes change over time, a set of surveys, observations and interviews can be designed. These need to gather information consistently and against pre-intervention measurements (a baseline study or a pre-seminar survey about perceived attitudes). Some attitudes can change in the short term, yet, it is hard to predict completely when and how attitudes may change.

15. a.) There is a bit of truth in each answer. However, the most accurate is a. Impact is the ultimate desired change of the identified social or individual problem, that can be attributed to the achievement of project outcomes. For example, improved relations among two communities which had been tense thanks to a facilitated dialogue process.

Impact evaluation often requires counterfactual analysis that is, showing that without those dialogue skills, local conflicts would not be resolved peacefully. Counterfactual analysis answers this question: what would have happened, had there not been any intervention? Impact evaluation often includes control groups, that is, the observation of a group or situation that has not been part of the project so as to compare it with the group or situation which did. A control group can help complete a counterfactual analysis.

It is not b, because impact can be assessed in the short and medium term, though it is true that most often, the ultimate desired changes can take time to be achieved and observed.

It is not c, because impact can be assessed on different aspects of the social reality, not only on the participants' behaviour. For example, it can assess the changes in institutional practices or improved health services in a community. Impact evaluation can benefit from a triangulation of methods, but may only rely on one, for example, a survey.

What does my result mean?

If you have responded correctly to less than 4 questions, it means that your knowledge and understanding of the concepts of monitoring, evaluation and learning **requires more clarification**. It is recommended to study more the articles and information listed in the Improve your knowledge section.

If you have responded correctly to 5-9 questions, it means **your knowledge is good**. Perhaps some definitions were unclear, or the whole procedure of monitoring, evaluation and learning is still too interconnected and therefore difficult to see every bit holistically. It is advised to go through the definitions and see the differences between project level and organisational level that you can find in the Learning section.

If you have responded correctly to more than 10 questions, it means **your knowledge is very thorough**. You have probably participated in the monitoring, evaluation and learning cycle due previous employment or projects. To improve your effectiveness and see how you can put your experiences into practice, you can further assess your knowledge on project and organisational level. Doing so can help you determine the best practices and toolkit, filling the gap that you or your organisation might need to achieve desired goals.

RUN A QUICK SCAN!



What is a “quick scan”?

It is a short and general assessment of your current evaluation and learning practices. It is a set of **15 statements** containing indicators of good practice. These statements form a basic checklist of activities that will show how seriously your organisation takes evaluation and learning. They will indicate whether your practice is advanced (“you are there”) or whether you need to strengthen some parts of it. For better results, involve your team in this assessment!

EVALUATION AT THE PROJECT LEVEL	
The organisation writes complete project and program plans, including a context/problem analysis and defines objectives and indicators of progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway d. Almost there e. We’re there
The organisation manages and monitors its projects and programs in a participatory way, open to feedback of all relevant stakeholders and makes changes as a result of that.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway d. Almost there e. We’re there
The organisation develops theory/ies of change when planning and evaluating its projects and programs (makes explicit their understanding and assumptions of how	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway

reality works and thus, how the intended change is possible).	d. Almost there e. We're there
ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND NORMS	
Monitoring, evaluation and learning are valued at all levels in the organisation, as ways to improve performance and accountability.	a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway d. Almost there e. We're there
There is openness to discuss results and also failures within the organisation. There is a culture of feedback.	a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway d. Almost there e. We're there
PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING	
The organisation has a strategic plan which is detailed and includes clear objectives and progress indicators.	a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway d. Almost there e. We're there
The organisation has an evaluation plan linked to its strategic plan or an overall performance monitoring framework.	a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway d. Almost there e. We're there

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The organisation regularly keeps, shares and uses research and lessons identified when implementing its activities.

- a. Long way to go
- b. Some way to go
- c. We are halfway
- d. Almost there
- e. We're there

The organisation values reflection and learning and thus creates spaces for it.

- a. Long way to go
- b. Some way to go
- c. We are halfway
- d. Almost there
- e. We're there

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The members of the organisation (staff, volunteers) have competences to implement monitoring and evaluation activities.

- a. Long way to go
- b. Some way to go
- c. We are halfway
- d. Almost there
- e. We're there

The organisation supports its members (staff and volunteers) to be able to contribute to monitoring and evaluation activities, for example, through specific training.

- a. Long way to go
- b. Some way to go
- c. We are halfway
- d. Almost there
- e. We're there

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	
The organisation monitors and evaluates its financial management and learns from these practices to improve it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway d. Almost there e. We're there
The organisation has clearly assigned personnel responsible for financial management at organisational and operational levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway d. Almost there e. We're there
EXTERNAL RELATIONS	
The organisation monitors, evaluates and learns in dialogue with their partners, donors and other relevant stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway d. Almost there e. We're there
The organisation periodically accounts to relevant stakeholders. This implies informing stakeholders about the work done and the results achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Long way to go b. Some way to go c. We are halfway d. Almost there e. We're there

Thank you for completing the Quick Scan!

We suggest using this table to summarise the main issues that you identified for each category and to reflect on your monitoring, evaluation and learning practices.

Assessment	Issues identified
We're there	
Almost there	
We are midway	
Some way to go	
Long way to go	

What's next?

For an in-depth scan or assessment of your monitoring, evaluation and learning practices, go to the [Assess your projects](#) and/or [Assess your organisation](#) sections.

For a basic introduction to the topic, go to the [Learn basic concepts](#).

For more detailed information and tools, go to [Learning for projects](#) or/and [Learning for organisation](#)

ASSESS YOUR PRACTICE AT THE PROJECT LEVEL



INTRODUCTION

Why?

To get a better understanding about which elements of your project cycle are strong and should be maintained and which need to be further developed, revised or reviewed.

How does it work?

The assessment tool looks at the stages and key activities in the project cycle (planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting) and to which extent reflection, learning and reporting take place throughout this cycle.

This tool operates with five specific criteria that were identified as the most essential for defining sustainable and reliable monitoring, evaluation and learning practices within project work:

- Relevance and innovation
- Planning and design
- Monitoring
- Learning
- Reporting and accountability

For each **criteria** two analytical levels – norming and doing - are distinguished helping you to better understand different aspects of monitoring, evaluation and learning in project work.

- **Norming** refers to the institutionalised and explicitly formulated organisational procedures ensuring that the organisation has agreed on and outlined specific practices as guidelines for its members in their daily work.
Example: the organisation has developed a written strategic plan that contains organisational goals, success indicators and a corresponding time frame.
- **Doing** refers to the actual action the organisation undertakes in the respective dimension.

Example: if and how often the organisation actually makes use of its strategic plans and uses them as the basis for its operations.

Specific quality **indicators** are listed in the assessment tool, which will help you to measure your practices per criteria. The indicators are measuring the availability of documents, relevance, utilization, effort and efficiency in their work.

After you have read the indicator you can assess this aspect by marking if your organisation is: **not even close, has a long way to go, is midway, almost there or already there**. These scale is used throughout the entire assessment. In addition, some examples of possible sources are displayed to verify the indicators more easily. You are encouraged to customise the tool by adding your own data sources.

As a result of this assessment process you will have an overview of where your organisation stands in terms of all **analysed** criteria and indicators. Then you can start to reflect on the assessment by summarising the main strengths and weakness in terms of Norming and Doing and making a concrete action plan based on your conclusions!

How long will it take?

A three-hour sessions may be enough to identify your main strengths and weaknesses for these 5 criteria. Yet, you need to plan a series of sessions if you want to analyse in more depth your practice and design a strategy to improve your practices at the project level.

Step by step:

Step 1. Print out one exemplar of the assessment tool for each person that will be involved in the self-assessment at the project level of your organisation (RECOMMENDED)

Step 2. Read the **Getting ready for the assessment** section below (RECOMMENDED)!

Step 3. Start assessing by 'marking' for each indicator of the criteria that you selected, if your organisation is: Not even close, Has a long way to go, Halfway, Almost there or Already there

Step 4. Analyse your results

Step 5. Reflect on your results

Step 6. Make an action plan for improvement

Step 7. Go to **Learning for Projects section** of the guide to find concrete tips and tools per each of the 5 criteria that you can use while you make and implement your action plan.

Getting ready for the assessment



Assessing monitoring, evaluation and learning practices at project or organisational level requires **preparation**. You will need to gather information about your work and create spaces for reflection and analysis of this information.

A team effort. Rarely, one person has all the answers and therefore a complete overview of organisational practices, so we emphasise that assessment is a participatory team effort.

Preparation is essential. A good preparation is key to make the most of an assessment exercise. Before starting the assessment, we suggest that you consider the following questions:

What? Is it clear what the assessment is about? What can we expect from this exercise?

It is important all engaged in the assessment understand what it is and that you clarify your individual and organisational expectations. This assessment will help you assess how you evaluate your work and how you learn from it. It will help you to identify your strengths and weaknesses in this area. Please, read carefully the explanations about the scope of the assessment and how it works.

Why? Why should you assess your monitoring, evaluation and learning practice?

You need to clarify your motivation to engage in an assessment exercise. You may be motivated if you:

- Want to understand and explain the impact of your work (to yourself and to others), that is, if you need to answer this question “what does success look like?”
- Want to improve how you monitor and evaluate your work
- Want to assess your knowledge and practice in this area
- Want to strengthen learning throughout your organisation

Who? Who should participate in the assessment?

This assessment is an opportunity for learning for **all those involved in the organisation**. This includes staff, volunteers, members or supporters and participants or beneficiaries of the organisation's activities.

One person or a small team can lead the process and involve all stakeholders. They can:

- help explain why it is needed and motivate everyone in the organisation,
- explain what the assessment is about,
- provide any necessary information for those interested to be able to participate meaningfully,
- clarify expectations,
- convene and facilitate a meeting to examine the various aspects of the organisation's evaluation and learning practice.

The idea is that all those engaged in the organisation's work could contribute to and benefit from such a learning process. The assessment covers various dimensions or areas of work of the organisation, from its planning and decision-making processes to the management of finances. Though there may be different levels of knowledge and understanding, the idea is to create a space for information sharing and exchange of views. If necessary, an external resource person or experienced evaluator can help clarify concepts and facilitate the process. The advantage is that an external person may not be personally involved and may help keep the reflection processed focused.

A quality assessment needs to take into account everyone's views on the organisational work. If only management or lead staff take part, they may lose important observations and insights. Thus, a participatory process needs to be planned according to the needs and possibilities of the organisation. Often, there are time and financial constraints, but the idea is that everyone is encouraged to share their opinions and learn from the process.

Sometimes it could be challenging to address the problems in an organisation where there are many contrasting needs and expectations from the staff members. It is key to ensure that they all are acknowledged.

How? What methods can you use to organise an assessment process?

You will need methods to:

- **gather information** about how you evaluate your work and about your learning activities. These can be collecting documentation such as evaluation reports or plans of the organisation, interviewing or doing a survey among current and past members of the organisation.
- **share and discuss** experiences and opinions about the current evaluation and learning practices. We suggest participatory facilitated meetings to go through the dimensions and criteria proposed in the assessment. The agenda of the meeting would be basically be drawn from the list of dimensions and criteria proposed by the assessment tool. For example, evaluation at the project level as a first dimension, with key criteria such as Relevance and Innovation, Planning and Design, etc. Basically, the facilitator would clarify what the dimension refers to and what the criteria means. These are explained in the tool, yet, if necessary, these needs to be further clarified.
- **Optionally, to decide an action plan** to improve your practices.

When? What is the best moment to engage in an assessment process?

Any moment is a good time, but we suggest that you plan assessment activities when most can participate and can dedicate some quality time for it. For example, avoid the period before a big event or when you are too busy. It is hard to make time, but quality time for reflection is an investment to improve the quality of your work.

The decision on when to conduct the assessment will depend on:

- Your motivation and organisational needs
- How in-depth you want the assessment to be
- The kind of information you already have or whether it is necessary to gather documentation and opinions
- Your time availability



Source: CIVICUS Toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation, Janet Shapiro

It is important to note that there may be several sessions or meetings which can be planned in a longer period of time. Assessment can be part of already planned organisational planning or reflection meetings.

Assessment and learning is an ongoing process. You reflect, adapt, implement, and you repeat this cycle in a number of iterations or rounds.

A quick scan can be done in an afternoon session of three hours or a day, but a more in-depth and participatory organisational assessment may take more time. Often, a process can take up to one or two years if you want to make changes to your practices and monitor their implementation. A timeframe shorter than one year may not be enough for the different strategies and initiatives to be implemented and have a visible effect. In brief, a three-hour sessions may be enough to identify roughly your main strengths and weaknesses. Yet, you need to plan a series of sessions if you want to analyse in more depth your practice and design a strategy to improve your practice.

What are the resources needed/costs involved?

- Printed copies of assessment sheets at the project's level or/and at the organisational level.
- Access to Internet in case you need to get further information on the topic
- Flipchart paper, post-its and markers, A4 paper, pens.
- Lots of motivation
- Time, at least a three hours session for a first session.
- Space to meet. Ideally, comfortable, with light and no distractions or noise.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in Projects and Programmes

This refers to the activities implemented to assess efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, innovation and learning in projects and programmes.

1	Criteria 1 - Relevance and Innovation						
	The organisation aims to implement projects and programmes that are relevant and innovative. Social relevance is understood as meeting the needs of participants and the communities in which they live. Innovation is understood as the search for new ways and methods of doing youth peace work with the aim of improving its relevance and effectiveness.						
Indicator		Possible Data Sources	Assessment				
1.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation has project planning guidelines which include instructions about:	<i>Project's planning guidelines</i>					
1.1.1	1) an analysis of needs and the social relevance, context and conflict analysis						
1.1.1	2) search for innovative approaches, methods and activities.						
1.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
1.2.1	The organisation ensures social relevance when planning and implementing projects and programmes by using needs, social context and/or conflict analysis in participatory consultations with stakeholders.	<i>Meetings minutes, project plans</i>					

1.2.2	The organisation ensures innovation when planning and implementing projects and programmes by applying tools that encourage creativity, like brainstorming, promote the use of new technologies and motivate the members to be updated on new developments in their field of specialisation.						
1.2.3	The organisation generates new ideas and innovations based on creative thinking sessions and learning from past experiences for all new projects/ programmes.	<i>Documents with identified learning points of success and improvement from previous projects</i>					
2	Criteria 2 - Planning and Design The organisation writes complete project/programme plans which include clear context analysis (if possible a baseline study), general and specific objectives with output and outcome indicators, timing, resources, methods, task allocations, risks assessment which are relevant for each specific type of peace work: educational, peace processes, advocacy campaigns, social development, etc. The plans develop (or revisit) a theory of change.						
	Indicator	Possible Data Sources	Assessment				
2.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
2.1.1	The organisation has a quality standards for the design and planning new projects/ programmes, with the following features: 1. work plan template with specific tasks, deadlines, persons assigned per tasks, resources, references 2. planning tools such as a logical framework or alternative versions to it.	<i>Project planning guidelines and related tools: work plan template</i>					

2.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
2.2.1	The organisation designs and plans projects/programmes according to the quality standards guidelines.	<i>Projects and programmes proposals</i>					
3	Criteria 3 – Monitoring The organisation ensures participatory management, monitoring in the implementation of projects/programmes. Monitoring is done through output and outcome indicators and allowing some flexibility for collection of information on unintended effects of the activities. Monitoring allows for adjustments and revisions of plans.						
	Indicator	Possible Data Sources	Assessment				
3.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
3.1.1	The organisation has project/programme planning guidelines that ensure participation and consultation of relevant stakeholders and a risk assessment.	<i>Project planning guidelines include tools for participatory management and monitoring</i>					
3.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
3.2.1	The organisation manages and monitors projects and programmes according to objectives and indicators as stipulated in the project plan so as to strengthen or adjust actions in a participatory way, sharing responsibilities with other stakeholders	meetings minutes, interim/evaluation reports indicate use of work plan, monitoring according to indicators, action taken					

4	Criteria 4 – Evaluation The organisation organises spaces for reflection and evaluation throughout their planning, implementation and follow-up phases of all projects and programmes.						
	Indicator	Possible Data Source	Assessment				
4.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation has project/ programme planning guidelines with the following features:	<i>Project planning guidelines</i>					
4.1.1	1) a section on how to promote evaluation and learning during implementation of projects and programmes						
4.1.2	2) examples of session outlines						
4.1.3	3) tips on how to provide and receive feedback						
4.1.4	4) other practical tools.						
4.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
4.2.1	The organisation creates spaces for evaluation and learning using multiple and appropriate methodologies.	<i>Results from evaluation activities with participants, notes of evaluation meetings with staff and stakeholders</i>					
4.2.2	The organisation assesses the learning of its team members and participants during projects, especially educational ones through evaluations before an action (ex-ante) or afterwards (ex-post).	<i>Evaluation forms, observation notes</i>					

4.2.3	The organisation uses self-evaluation certificates (i.e. Youthpass) during educational projects and programmes.	<i>Certificates issued</i>					
5	Criteria 5 – Reporting and Accountability Projects and programme activities and results are shared for transparency and accountability purposes.						
	Indicator	Data Source	Assessment				
5.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
5.1.1	The organisation has project planning guidelines which include indications for internal and public evaluation and reporting.	<i>Report templates, reports published on website</i>					
5.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
5.2.1	The organisation reports on project/programme results to all relevant stakeholders and creates spaces to discuss results, including sharing about mistakes and shortcomings.	<i>Reports published on website, minutes meetings</i>					
	Overall Assessment						

Analyse your results

Reflect about your assessment and summarise the main issues you have identified in the categories of Norming and Doing.

Criteria	Norming	Doing
Relevance and innovation		
Planning and design		
Monitoring		
Evaluation		
Reporting and accountability		

Next step – Action Planning

As a next step we suggest creating an Action Plan to address the identified main shortcomings in your organisation. Below you can find a template for an Action Plan.

What is an organisational action plan?

An action plan is an opportunity to realise the changes you want to see in our organisation. It serves as an additional exercise to make your organisation's vision and mission more concrete. An action plan outlines the strategies and actions needed to meet the capacity goals and objectives of your organisation.

Why develop an action plan?

Developing an action plan is a critical exercise in ensuring organisational success. An action plan could project a sense of credibility to your organisation, increase work efficiency and effectiveness and ensure accountability. In addition, the action plan serves as a tool to mobilizing the team members to take initiative and share responsibility for resolving gaps/challenges and improving the issues that require change.

How do I develop an action plan?

First, collect the analysis from the end of each section and summarise the ideas and development plans you marked down in the table. Next step is to clarify the changes that need to happen based on the assessment results. Is it to mainstream innovation into your programming? Or are you working on improving reporting and dissemination? Your goal will provide the basis of your action plan. Try to prioritize them and collect into bigger units the interconnecting action steps. Your action plan should also include the strategies and the respective actions you will have to take to in order to achieve your objectives. For each action step or change to be accomplished, list the following, with a due date for each:

- What actions or changes will occur-by when?
- Who will carry it out-by when (or for how long)?
- What resources are needed-by when?
- Communication: who should know what and when?

Action Plan Template

Actions	Responsible	Timeline	Resources and Support Available/Needed		Potential obstacles or opponents	Communication Plan for Implementation
What needs to be done? By when?	Who will take actions? Who will offer support, feedback or guidance?	By what date will the action be completed?	Resources Available	Resources Needed (financial, human, technical or other)	What resistance might surface in the organization? How?	What members and other organizations should be informed about/involved with these actions?
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Finished with the assessment? Go to [Learning for Projects](#) section to take concrete actions to improve your project/program work.

ASSESS YOUR PRACTICE AT ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

INTRODUCTION



Why?

To get a better understanding about which elements of your organisational monitoring, evaluation and learning practices are strong and should be maintained and which need to be further developed, revised or reviewed.

How does it work?

The **assessment tool** looks at your organisational capacities in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL).

This tool operates on six dimensions that were identified as the most essential for defining good monitoring, evaluation and learning practices within project work:

- Organisational Culture and Norms
- Planning and Decision-making
- Knowledge Management
- Human Resources
- Financial Management
- External Relations

Each dimension is structured among specific criteria. For each **criteria** two analytical levels – norming and doing – are distinguished helping you to better understand different aspects of monitoring, evaluation and learning in your organisation.

- **Norming** refers to the institutionalised and explicitly formulated organisational procedures ensuring that the organisation

has agreed on and outlined specific practices as guidelines for its personnel in their daily work.

Such as, the organisation has developed a strategic plan, it is written and contains organisational goals, success indicators and a corresponding time frame

- **Doing** refers to the actual action the organisation undertakes in the respective dimension
Such as, if and how often the organisation actually makes use of its strategic plans and uses them as the basis for its operations.

Specific quality **indicators** are listed in the assessment tool that will help you to measure your practices per criteria. The indicators are measuring the availability of documents, relevance, utilisation, effort and efficiency in their work.

After you read each indicator you can assess this aspect by indicating (marking) if your organisation **is not even close, has a long way to go, is halfway, is almost there or is there**. These are the scales used throughout the entire assessment. In addition, some examples of possible sources are displayed to make it easier for you to verify the indicators. You are encouraged to add your own data sources.

As a result of this assessment process you will have an overview of where your organisation stands in terms of all **analysed** dimensions and indicators. Then you can start reflecting on the assessment and summarise the main strengths and weaknesses you identified in terms of Norming and Doing and make a concrete action plan based on your conclusions!

How long will it take?

A quick scan of the six dimensions can be done in one session of two-three hours, but a more in-depth and participatory organisational assessment may take more time. Often, a process could even take up to one or two years if you want to make changes to your practices and monitor their implementation.

Step by step:

Step 1. Print out the entire assessment tool or only the assessment of one or more dimensions for each person that will be involved in the self-assessment of the organisation (RECOMMENDED)

Step 2. Read the **Getting ready for the assessment** section below (RECOMMENDED)!

Step 3. Start assessing by filling in (marking) if your organisation is: not even close, has a long way to go, is halfway, is almost there or is there for each criteria that you want to assess.

Step 4. Analyse your results

Step 5. Reflect on your results

Step 6. Make an action plan for improvement

Step 7. Go to the **Learning for Organisations** section of the guide to find concrete tips and tools per dimension that you can use while you make and implement your action plan.

Organisational Culture and Norms

This refers to the beliefs and values that guide organisational practices either in people's mind-sets or agreed as principles of the organisation.

1	Criteria 1 - Dialogue and peaceful conflict transformation							
The organisation's internal monitoring, evaluation and learning practices reflect a culture of dialogue and peaceful conflict transformation.								
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment					
1.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there	
	The organisation has an ethical code with the following features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • commitment to a culture of dialogue • commitment to conflict transformation • steps and procedures of conflict transformation in the organisation • supporting resources on internal dialogue and conflict transformation. 	<i>Code of conduct and/ or ethical guidelines</i>						
1.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there	
1.2.1	The organisation identifies conflicts and tensions and addresses them constructively.	<i>Existence of materials on conflict transformation, third-party mediators appointed if needed</i>						
1.2.2	The organisation uses transversal communication channels that ensure a flow of information about the roots and background of conflict, the actors involved and underlying interests.	<i>Testimonies</i>						

1.2.3	The organisation keeps a record of lessons identified from internal conflict transformation processes.	<i>Documents with a description of lessons learnt</i>					
2	Criteria 2 - Diversity The organisation respects and fosters diversity. The monitoring, evaluation and learning practices reflect sensitivity for diversity (gender, cultural, age, educational background, etc.) in its methods and analysis, with an emphasis on the needs, interests of youth and types of youth participation. This means adapting the language, methods, space and timing according to characteristics of the group e.g. using questionnaires in several languages to allow people with different language skills to express their opinions and using verbal and non-verbal methods.						
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
2.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation commits explicitly to respect and foster diversity in its monitoring, evaluation and learning practices and methodology.	<i>Organisational documents, monitoring, evaluation and learning guidelines, code of conduct</i>					
2.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
2.2.1	The organisation's monitoring, evaluation and learning practices and methodology are conscious about diversity.	<i>Evaluation reports</i>					
2.2.2	The organisation involves a diverse and wide spectrum of participants during internal monitoring and evaluation activities.	<i>Evaluation reports including a list of participants with profiles</i>					

2.2.3	The organisation uses evaluation activities that are sensitive to diversity and are adapted to different needs (e.g. disability, language).	<i>Evaluation reports including description of evaluation methods and approach</i>						
2.2.4	The organisation generates evaluation reports which show how diversity issues were dealt with in accordance to procedures in its methodology and implementation plan.	<i>Evaluation reports</i>						
3	Criteria 3 – Safety and responsibility							
	The organisation’s monitoring, evaluation and learning practices aim to ensure safety of its personnel and responsibility in terms of the possible negative consequences that the organisation’s work could have on conflict dynamics, based on ‘Do no harm’ principles.							
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment					
3.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there	
	The organisation has a safety and responsibility policies in place.	<i>Safety policy</i>						
3.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there	
	The members of the organisation are aware of and regularly apply their safety and responsibility policies.	<i>Do no harm" principles, nr of sessions held on safety throughout the year</i>						
4	Criteria 4 – Learning							

	The organisation's monitoring, evaluation and learning practices show a culture of constructive feedback and learning.							
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment					
4.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there	
	The organisation has developed written measures to institutionalise learning in form of a knowledge management policy, including for example keeping a record of lessons identified.	<i>Knowledge management policy explicitly refers to a culture of feedback and learning</i>						
4.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there	
	The organisation's activities have a learning component, including reflection on mistakes and ideas for improvement.	<i>Internal reports and minutes of organisational meeting</i>						
5	Criteria 5 – Culture of sustainability							
	The organisation's monitoring, evaluation and learning practices include a consideration of the social and environmental impact of the organisation's work.							
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment					
5.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there	
5.1.1	The organisation has organisational policies that reflect a culture of sustainability.	<i>Organisational policies</i>						
5.1.2	The organisation has a sustainability plan, which includes specific measures covering institutional, programmatic, financial and external environment.	<i>Sustainability plan</i>						

5.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation regularly applies and reviews its sustainability measures.	<i>Minutes of organisational meeting</i>					
	Overall Assessment						

Analyse your results

Reflect about your assessment and summarise the main issues you have identified in the categories of Organisational Culture and Norms.

Criteria	Norming	Doing
Dialogue and peaceful transformation of conflicts		
Diversity		
Safety and responsibility		
Learning		
Culture of sustainability		

Collect your ideas

Reflect about your analysis, and propose action steps that would fill the gap between the current situation and the desired outcome.

Criteria	Proposed action
Dialogue and peaceful transformation of conflicts	
Diversity	
Safety and responsibility	
Learning	
Culture of sustainability	

Planning and Decision Making

This refers to all organisational processes that: 1) identify medium and long-term goals, based on context and needs assessments, 2) formulate written principles, rules, and guidelines to reach its long-term goals, 3) formulate strategies and create the means to achieve them and 4) make collective strategic decisions.

1		Criteria 1 - Strategic planning						
1		The organisation has a written strategic plan - with a minimum duration of three years - accessible internally and externally which guides the work of the organisation and serves as an instrument for monitoring and evaluation.						
		Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
1.1	Norming			Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
1.1.1	The organisation developed a strategic plan that is written and accessible.	<i>Strategic plan accessible in internal data base and publically available (e.g. on webpage)</i>						
1.1.2	The strategic plan is based on an analysis of the social and political reality in which the organisation works and on an organisational SWOT analysis.	<i>Minutes of strategic planning meeting with completed SWOT and/or context analysis</i>						
1.1.3	The strategic plan contains time-bound strategic and operational goals of the organisation.	<i>Strategic plan</i>						
1.1.4	The strategic plan contains an explicitly formulated theory of change for the operations of the organisation.							
1.1.5	The strategic plan contains output and outcome indicators for the strategic and operational goals of the organisation.							

1.1.6	The strategic plan contains means of verification using indicator.						
1.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation frequently makes use of and consults the strategic plan for monitoring, evaluation and learning at organisational and operational level	<i>Minutes of strategic planning meeting, projects and programmes in line with strategic plan</i>					
2	Criteria 2 - Decision-making The organisation applies transparent, inclusive, accessible and applicable decision making processes - both internally and in cooperation with stakeholders - for all necessary decisions on operational and organisational level.						
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
2.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
2.1.1	The organisation has guidelines for its internal and external decision-making processes.	<i>Guidelines for decision-making</i>					
2.1.2	Guidelines are accessible internally to the members and externally to all stakeholders.	<i>Guidelines are available website</i>					
2.1.3	Guidelines detail requirements for inclusive decision-making processes, depending in the type of processes include members, partner organisations and beneficiary communities.	<i>Guidelines for decision-making</i>					
2.1.4	Guidelines detail how the decision-making procedures are evaluated and reviewed periodically to ensure they are applicable for the changing context of the organisation.						

2.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
2.2.1	The organisation consults the guidelines for decision-making processes and/or a standardised procedure and uses this for all decision-making processes on operational and organisational levels.	<i>Minutes of decision-making meetings</i>					
2.2.2	The organisation uses decision making processes that are transparent, inclusive, accessible and applicable.	<p><i>On organisational level: reports of the decision-making meetings include information on the involved decision-makers and the report is shared with all relevant actors (internally and externally), e.g. in a network mailing list as part of annual reports</i></p> <p><i>On operational level: notes of decision-making meetings include information on the involved decision makers and the notes are accessible for all those affected by the decision</i></p>					
2.2.3	The organisation regularly monitors and reviews its decision-making procedures to evaluate if they are transparent, inclusive, accessible and applicable.	<i>project reports, annual reports</i>					
2.2.4	The organisation regularly evaluates its decision-making procedures to assess effectiveness and efficiency of the processes at operational and	<i>Report of strategic planning meeting</i>					

	organisational level and feedback those learning outcomes into a periodical review of its decision-making procedures.						
3	Criteria 3 – Support measures The organisation implements support measures to facilitate its strategic planning and internal decision-making processes in terms of inclusion and effectiveness. These support measures may include a travel fund, telephone/ connectivity fund, translations, accessibility to online and offline spaces (including consultation processes that could take place on Google Drive and/ or over Skype calls), available financial resources for monitoring, evaluation and learning and hiring of professional facilitators for internal decision-making processes.						
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
3.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation has developed statutes (or another written document) that include support measures for planning and decision-making processes. The statutes details type of support measures and the frequency of their use.	<i>Organisational statutes</i>					
3.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation ensures quality planning and decision-making through various support measures.	<i>Policies or description of support measures</i>					
	Overall Assessment						

Analyse your results

Reflect about your assessment and summarise the main issues you have identified in the categories of Planning and Decision making.

Criteria	Norming	Doing
Strategic Planning		
Decision-making		
Support Measures		

Collect your ideas

Reflect about your analysis, and propose action steps that would fill the gap between the current situation and the desired outcome.

Criteria	Proposed action
Strategic Planning	
Decision-making	
Support Measures	

Knowledge Management

This refers to processes to acquire, organise, interpret, develop, use and share knowledge related to peacebuilding, youth work and organisational management which support monitoring, evaluation and learning activities. In this part, we cluster knowledge management activities as 1) developing knowledge, 2) using knowledge and 3) sharing knowledge.

Criteria 1 - Developing knowledge								
		Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
1	The organisation has the capacity to identify its knowledge needs and resources, to find, to create and to organise relevant knowledge. Knowledge is developed in a plurality of forms and building on all stakeholders' experiences and lessons learned, especially of those young people involved.							
1.1	Norming			Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
1.1.1	The organisation has a knowledge management policy which outlines actions to assess knowledge needs and develop knowledge.		<i>Guidelines and knowledge management policy documents</i>					
1.1.2	The organisation has tools available to assess knowledge needs and develop knowledge e.g. research projects.		<i>Action plan template</i>					
1.2	Doing			Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
1.2.1	The organisation implements planned actions for knowledge development such as research projects, with detailed tasks, timeline and resources.		<i>Number of planning meetings per year, annual action Plan</i>					
1.2.2	The organisation uses tools to regularly update its knowledge base.		<i>Filing system and data base</i>					

1.2.3	The organisation has members who regularly update its knowledge base.	<i>Appointed person regularly updates knowledge data base</i>					
1.2.4	The organisation engages in research activities.	<i>Number of research projects and products</i>					
2	Criteria 2 - Using knowledge The organisation has the capacity to process, analyse, interpret and apply knowledge in decision-making processes and during the implementation of its activities, especially knowledge emerging from lessons learnt and evaluation reports.						
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
2.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
2.1.1	The organisation has a knowledge management policy which requires actions to use existing knowledge and review lessons learned.	<i>Guidelines and knowledge management policy documents</i>					
2.1.2	The organisation has tools available to use existing knowledge and review lessons learned.	<i>Action plan template</i>					
2.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
2.2.1	The organisation plans special activities to analyse previous knowledge.	<i>Number of activities per year</i>					
2.2.2	The organisation reviews lessons identified in planning new projects.	<i>Reports, Check-list of project planning processes</i>					
2.2.3	Personnel uses data base and resources regularly.	<i>Number of downloads from the organisation `s data base</i>					

3	Criteria 3 – Sharing knowledge The organisation has the capacity to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, internally and externally.						
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
3.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
3.1.1	The organisation has a knowledge management policy that requires actions to share knowledge.	<i>Guidelines and knowledge management policy documents</i>					
3.1.2	The organisation has tools available to share knowledge, e.g. reports.	<i>Action plan template</i>					
3.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
3.2.1	The organisation updates its webpage with its knowledge-related activities	<i>Webpage</i>					
3.2.2	The organisation updates its social media platforms with its knowledge related activities	<i>Social media accounts e.g. Facebook, Twitter</i>					
3.2.3	Internal organisational meetings have a knowledge sharing dimension	<i>Minutes of organisational meetings</i>					
3.2.4	Meetings with partners and donors have a knowledge-sharing dimension	<i>Minutes of meetings of partners or donors</i>					
	Overall Assessment						

Analyse your results

Reflect about your assessment and summarise the main issues you have identified in the categories of Knowledge Management.

Criteria	Norming	Doing
Developing knowledge		
Using knowledge		
Sharing knowledge		

Collect your ideas

Reflect about your analysis, and propose action steps that would fill the gap between the current situation and the desired outcome.

Criteria	Proposed action
Developing knowledge	
Using knowledge	
Sharing knowledge	

Human Resource Management

This refers to managing human resources (recruitment, training and support of personnel) of an organisation to ensure quality monitoring, evaluation and learning activities.

1	Criteria 1 - Recruitment of personnel and responsibilities consider monitoring, evaluation and learning needs							
	The organisation looks for members who have relevant competences and motivation to address monitoring, evaluation and learning needs of and within the organisation.							
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment					
1.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there	
	The organisation has a human resource policy which requires recruiting members with monitoring, evaluation and learning competences and/or motivation to address monitoring, evaluation and learning needs.	<i>Human resource policy, job descriptions</i>						
1.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there	
	The organisation recruitment takes into consideration monitoring, evaluation and learning competences and needs.	<i>Call for applications, organigram of responsibilities</i>						
2	Criteria 2 - Training includes monitoring, evaluation and learning							
	The organisation includes MEL in trainings for its personnel.							
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment					
2.1	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there	

2.1.1	The organisation facilitates trainings in monitoring, evaluation and learning competences.	<i>Reports</i>					
2.1.2	The organisation facilitates training in knowledge management.						
3	Criteria 3 – Support and supervision for monitoring, evaluation and learning responsibilities						
	This refers to actions that aim to support and review the work of an organisation’s members in view of their personal and professional learning, including to what extent they have developed MEL competences, and the quality of their contributions to the assigned MEL tasks.						
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
3.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The human resource policy includes support and supervision for monitoring, evaluation and learning responsibilities.	<i>Human resource policy documents</i>					
3.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation supports and regularly supervises monitoring, evaluation and learning responsibilities.	<i>Supervision meetings minutes</i>					
	Overall Assessment						

Analyse your results

Reflect about your assessment and summarise the main issues you have identified in the categories of Human Resource Management.

Criteria	Norming	Doing
Developing knowledge		
Using knowledge		
Sharing knowledge		

Collect your ideas

Reflect about your analysis, and propose action steps that would fill the gap between the current situation and the desired outcome.

Criteria	Proposed action
Developing knowledge	
Using knowledge	
Sharing knowledge	

Financial Management

Financial management refers to how organisations manage, monitor and evaluate their organisational and operational budgets in view of costs efficiency and effectiveness and the allocation of specific financial resources for monitoring, evaluation and learning activities.

1	Criteria 1 - Responsible personnel						
	The organisation has clearly assigned members responsible for financial management at organisational and operational levels.						
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
1.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
1.1.1	The organisation has identified detailed financial responsibilities in job descriptions.	<i>Job description</i>					
1.1.2	The organisation has financial procedures with an overview of assigned financial responsibilities per position.	<i>Financial procedures</i>					
1.1.3	Financial procedures include the double-check principle, with specific persons assigned to do so for all expenditures of the organisation.	<i>Financial procedures</i>					
1.1.4	Financial procedures require that budgets and accounts must be approved by an assigned financial manager.	<i>Financial procedures</i>					
1.1.5	Project documents state persons assigned in charge of financial management.	<i>Application form, internal partnership agreements</i>					
1.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there

1.2.1	The organisation makes use of clearly assigned personnel who are responsible for financial management at organisational level and within the frame of projects.	<i>Monitoring reports (stating the planned and actual expenses and incomes of the organisation)</i>					
1.2.2	Assigned personnel compiles a final financial project report and internal file on lessons learned about financial management for each closed project.	<i>Final financial project reports, internal document on lessons learned about financial management</i>					
1.2.3	Assigned personnel prepare annual financial reports and an internal file on lessons learned about financial management on the organisational level.	<i>Annual financial reports, internal document on lessons learned about financial management</i>					
2	Criteria 2 - Financial planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning The organisation has a sound financial planning, monitoring and evaluation scheme that allows the integration of learning outcomes to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation`s operations.						
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
2.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
2.1.1	The organisation has written documents detailing the financial monitoring and evaluation procedures for organisational and operational levels.	<i>Financial management guidelines and/ or project plan that include monitoring and evaluation measures for financial aspects</i>					
2.1.2	The document includes information on the frequency of monitoring moments of project budgets and organisational budgets.						

2.1.3	The document requires an annual evaluation of a budget year.						
2.1.4	The document outlines financial milestones (short and long-term).						
2.1.5	The document details methods and tools to be used to ensure learnings are integrated in future financial planning.						
2.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
2.2.1	The organisation uses resources and needs assessments in order to plan its operational and organisational budgets.	<i>Planning document for projects and the organisation include SWOT analysis and financial implications</i>					
2.2.2	The organisation periodically monitors its running budgets and adapts its expenditures accordingly.	<i>Financial documents per project</i>					
2.2.3	The organisation periodically reviews and evaluates its operational and organisational budgets, both in regards to efficiency and effectiveness.	<i>Final financial project reports, annual organisational budget</i>					
2.2.4	The organisation makes use of the financial evaluation results and creates applicable learning outcomes for new financial management procedures as well as for new budget proposals at project and organisational level.	<i>Notes of strategic review meetings, new project proposals</i>					
	Overall Assessment						

Analyse your results

Reflect about your assessment and summarise the main issues you have identified in the categories of Financial Management.

Criteria	Norming	Doing
Developing knowledge		
Using knowledge		
Sharing knowledge		

Collect your ideas

Reflect about your analysis, and propose action steps that would fill the gap between the current situation and the desired outcome.

Criteria	Proposed action
Developing knowledge	
Using knowledge	
Sharing knowledge	

External Relations

This refers to activities in order to engage stakeholders: partners, donors, participants and communities, in joint monitoring, evaluation and learning activities. This implies an interactive processes of learning, monitoring, evaluation and accounting about methods applied and results achieved.

1	Criteria 1 - Learning with others						
The organisation implements specific learning activities with relevant stakeholders.							
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
1.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation has monitoring, evaluation and learning policies and guidelines which foster joint learning activities with other relevant stakeholders.	<i>Monitoring, evaluation and learning policies and guidelines</i>					
1.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation implements specific learning activities with relevant stakeholders by:						
1.2.1	- informing members about events organised by other organisations, encouraging and preparing them to participate	<i>Organisational action plans, notes that describe that these are routine practices</i>					
1.2.2	- creating spaces to learn with other stakeholders, e.g. networking meetings						
1.2.3	- improving organisation's work with lessons identified	<i>Minutes of evaluation meetings</i>					

2	Criteria 2 - Monitoring and evaluating with others						
	The organisation engages relevant stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation activities.						
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
2.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation has monitoring, evaluation and learning policies and guidelines which stipulate joint monitoring and evaluation activities with other relevant stakeholders whenever possible. These include criteria and a decision-making processes established for the stakeholders' participation.	<i>Monitoring, evaluation and learning policies and guidelines</i>					
2.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation engages relevant stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation activities via:						
2.2.1	- Regular meetings with stakeholders to take into consideration their opinions, feedback and suggestions.	<i>Partnership agreements that detail the number and type of stakeholders involved</i>					
2.2.2	- Meetings to share monitoring, evaluation and learning practices and results with relevant stakeholders.						
3	Criteria 3 - Accounting to others						

The organisation accounts to relevant stakeholders.							
	Indicator	Examples of Data Sources	Assessment				
3.1	Norming		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation has monitoring, evaluation and learning policies and guidelines requiring periodic accounting to relevant stakeholders. This implies foreseeing ways to inform stakeholders about the work done and the results achieved.	<i>Monitoring, evaluation and learning policies and guidelines</i>					
3.2	Doing		Long way to go	Some way to go	We are halfway	Almost there	We are there
	The organisation creates opportunities for discussion on the results of its projects and activities, with spaces to ask questions and engage in quality dialogue about them.	<i>Activity reports, reports available on website of the organisation</i>					
	Overall Assessment						

Analyse your results

Reflect about your assessment and summarise the main issues you have identified in the categories of External Relations.

Criteria	Norming	Doing
Learning with others		
Monitoring and evaluating with others		
Accounting to others		

Collect your ideas

Reflect about your analysis, and propose action steps that would fill the gap between the current situation and the desired outcome.

Criteria	Proposed action
Learning with others	
Monitoring and evaluating with others	
Accounting to others	

Next Step – Action Planning

As a next step we suggest creating an Action Plan to address the identified main shortcomings in your organisation. Below you can find a template for an Action Plan.

What is an organisational action plan?

An action plan is an opportunity to realise the changes you want to see in our organisation. It serves as an additional exercise to make your organisation's vision and mission more concrete. An action plan outlines the strategies and actions needed to meet the capacity goals and objectives of your organisation.

Why develop an action plan?

Developing an action plan is a critical exercise in ensuring organisational success. An action plan could project a sense of credibility to your organisation, increase work efficiency and effectiveness and ensure accountability. In addition, the action plan serves as a tool to mobilizing the team members to take initiative and share responsibility for resolving gaps/challenges and improving the issues that require change.

How do I develop an action plan?

First, collect the analysis from the end of each section and summarise the ideas and development plans you marked down in the table. Next step is to clarify charges that need to happen based on the assessment results. Is it to develop a culture of learning and sustainability? Or are you working improving knowledge management? Your goal will provide the basis of your action plan. Try to prioritize them and collect into bigger units the interconnecting action steps. Your action plan should also include the strategies and the respective actions you will have to take in order to achieve your objectives. For each action step or change to be accomplished, list the following, with a due date for each:

- What actions or changes will occur-by when?
- Who will carry it out-by when (or for how long)?

- What resources are needed-by when?
- Communication: who should know what and when?

Action Plan Template

Actions	Responsible	Timeline	Resources and Support Available/Needed		Potential obstacles or opponents	Communication Plan for Implementation
			Resources Available	Resources Needed (financial, human, technical or other)		
What needs to be done? By when?	Who will take actions? Who will offer support, feedback or guidance?	By what date will the action be completed?			What resistance might surface in the organization? How?	What members and other organizations should be informed about/involved with these actions?
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Finished with the assessment? Go to [Learning for Organisations](#) section to take concrete actions to improve your organisational development efforts.

LEARNING AND IMPROVING YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTISES

In this section we share with you three opportunities - corresponding to the three areas of the Assessing section - to improve your knowledge and practices on monitoring, evaluation and learning.



After you have assessed your practices in the [Assessing](#) section, here you will find specific tips, advice and concrete resources on how to improve your monitoring, evaluation and learning practices at the project and organisational levels.



You can also find all provided resources and suggested tools for improving your practices in the [Resources](#) section.



[Improve your knowledge](#) - A short introduction to key terms and concepts on monitoring, evaluation and learning

[Improve your practice at the project level](#) - A step-by step guide with advice and resources on how improve your monitoring, evaluation and learning practises at the project level.



[Improve your practice at the organisational level](#) - A step-by step guide with advice and resources on how to improve your monitoring, evaluation and learning practises on six dimensions of your organisation

IMPROVE YOUR KNOWLEDGE



This introduction will help you to have a first understanding of the topic or a recap if you are already familiar with it.

Evaluation: a basic definition

Evaluation is the act of appraising, assessing or valuing something. Though we may not realise it, we do it all the time in our daily activities, we comment on what we like, what we find effective or frustrating.

In this guide, it refers broadly to the systematic gathering of information to help organisations reflect about the value of their activities. Are activities useful? Of quality? Meaningful? Effective? What do young people learn through them?

Evaluation has two main purposes:

- **Learning to improve practice**, that is, reflecting on what happened and incorporating lessons learned to new activities. For example, this can be a team meeting reflection or doing a survey to find out about the opinions of those involved in an activity.
- **Accountability**, that is, informing others and answering questions about the activities implemented. For example, reporting or explaining results in a meeting with relevant stakeholders. Accountability is needed to assess the degree to which organisations follow up on their commitments and values.

The scope of evaluation: What do we evaluate?

Evaluation can focus on different aspects of the activities. It can focus on degree of participants' satisfaction with an activity, it can focus on the individual learning process or on the various effects the activities have in the communities where they take place. The scope of evaluation is to be decided by those that evaluate. You decide! Evaluation can assess activities in terms of their effectiveness, their efficiency and their ethics. In the next sections, we explore what these concepts are about.

Efficiency

Is about producing desired outcomes/effects with a minimum of resources (i.e. financial, human).

Effectiveness. What do we mean by “results”?

Evaluation can assess the results of an activity against pre-set goals. Or in other words, to what extent have those goals been achieved?

The definition of results depends on the type of goals set. These can include different types of effects or changes in the social reality.

- **Outputs:** new activities, projects and services that are implemented or delivered as planned. There are as many examples of outputs as different type of activities, projects or services (seminars, training courses, counselling sessions, publications, etc.).
- **Outcomes:** actual changes as a result or consequence of any output. Examples are changes in attitudes, like being more open to the ideas of others, or developed skills, like conflict transformation, cultural expression or digital competence.
- **Impact:** sustainable changes in social reality that can be reasonably attributed reached outcomes. An examples of impact can be the reduction of violence in particular setting or community.

Results are related to the achievement of cultures of peace and respect for human rights. In youth peace work, evaluation looks

at effects in terms of changes at all levels of social reality, including individual, group and societal levels that contribute to peace. One of the biggest challenges for evaluation is to attribute more clearly and directly the desired effects to the planned actions. Assessment is difficult because many factors are at play, influencing violent attitudes and behaviours. Many of these factors are beyond the direct control of our organisations, for example, the influence of violent armed conflicts or

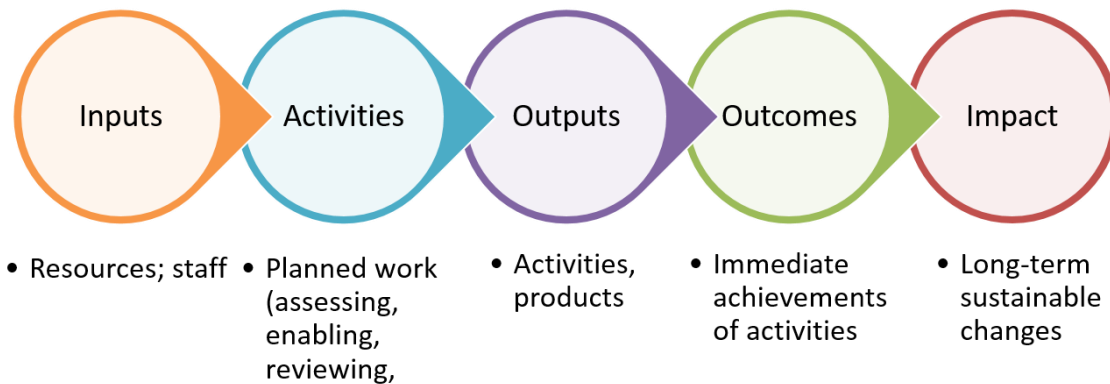


Figure 2: Impact chain

economic challenges. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges for evaluation is to attribute more or less clearly and directly the desired effects to the planned actions.

Evaluation pre-supposes there is a logical link between our efforts and how these affect social reality. This is often referred to as the “**impact chain**” and underlies project’s planning and design. It is also called the “**theory of change**”. This means our basic explanations and assumptions of how reality works and how we think our efforts may change that reality positively. Articulating a theory of change offers a clearer picture of the intended result from an action and explains how activities and results are connected with each other.

You can find out more about theories of change in [Peacebuilding with Impact: Defining Theories of Change](#) (CARE International, 2012).

What will tell me if I am achieving my goals? Indicators!

Indicators are tangible and measurable markers that visualise results at all these levels. They help to assess the progress towards the achievement of the expected results. There are two main types of indicators: quantitative (i.e. number of participants, percentage of young people with conflict resolution skills) and qualitative (i.e. presence of an attitude of dialogue, quality of interactions).

Ethical dimensions: Accountability and Responsibility

Our actions may have intended and unintended negative effects. Responsible youth peace work should be aware of possible negative effects and risks. As a general principle, any work involving (young) people should consider their well-being and safety as a central concern. Practical tools have been developed in the context of peace and development work to help organisations assess possible risks and negative effects. One of them is called the “Do No Harm” framework. It is a tool of conflict analysis and risks mitigation. Learn more about “Do No Harm”

Read more:

- [From Principle to Practice A User’s Guide to Do No Harm](#) - Wallace, Marshall - 2015

Misunderstanding Do No Harm

Two misunderstandings of the “do no harm” principle have themselves caused harm. These confusions are not to be taken lightly.

First, some believe the principle focuses solely on the potential harm and negative impacts of an intervention. They believe the principle is unconcerned with how to improve a situation or with positive impacts. *This is completely mistaken.*

The principle of do no harm is a holistic perspective that is equally focused on both harm and benefit. The concept of “harm” in the phrase has no meaning without an effort to provide benefit. The warning of the words "do no harm" reminds us to think before rushing to do good, not to stop us from considering the good altogether.

People and organizations who claim to be using do no harm as a principle solely to avoid harm miss the important and crucial positive factors that exist. This ignorance leads to interventions that disable and destroy local capacities. This too is harm of the worst sort.

Second, some have claimed the principle “do no harm” justifies their avoidance of action. They have concluded that if there is the slightest possibility that they may do harm, then they should do nothing at all. *Again, this is completely mistaken.* We do not avoid harm by failing to act. Doing nothing when people are in need is clearly to do harm.

Source: <http://brevity.consulting/publications/books/from-principle-to-practice/>

Learning in youth organisations: what's the added value?

Learning means reflection on our observations and experiences by drawing lessons and improving our next actions. A lot of learning happens in youth organisations using non-formal education methods and experiential learning. Nevertheless, it happens in very special ways and thus, we argue that youth organisations are exceptional learning organisations.

Through youth work, youth engage in intense peer-to-peer learning processes, they are exposed to new ideas and experiences. Youth-led activities tend to be effective as young people know better the realities of their peers, their language codes and needs, and thus, more appropriate and relevant activities can be organised. Youth-led activities build on the positive energy and creativity of youth. Their time-availability allows for intense engagement. Therefore, lots of learning happens in short-periods of time. Last but not least, changes in attitudes and behaviour have an enormous impact at a young age. Young people's choices and attitudes towards learning may be influenced positively and have long-lasting and multiplying effects in the long term.

At the same time, these opportunities are often not harnessed due to lack of proper planning, high-turnover of staff and poor knowledge transfer.

Learn more!

- [T-kit 10 - Educational Evaluation in Youth Work](#) - Council of Europe - 2007
- [What is good youth peace work? A guide for evaluation](#) - UNOY Peacebuilders - 2005
- [Course Monitoring, Evaluation Accountability and Learning](#) - Save the Children - 2009

IMPROVE YOUR PRACTICE AT THE PROJECT LEVEL



This section is a step-by-step guide to help you improve how you monitor and evaluate projects and learn from them. It is based on quality criteria and it is organised in five sub-sections. As stated in the definition, evaluation starts with the very same conception of the project, from the planning phase to the conclusion.

This part is structured in the following sections:

1. Relevance and innovation
2. Planning and design
3. Monitoring
4. Final evaluation
5. Reporting and accountability

A note about quality and MEL at the project level

Most of youth and peace work is project based. This means that activities are organised and carried out to reach a specific aim. This requires careful planning and preparation involving specific skills. Most learning in youth peace organisations happens in the context of projects. However, evaluation is often understood in a limited way, as a general reflection of how the project went. Often, evaluation and learning are not seen as priorities, emphasis is rather put on the actions and practical logistical aspects. Yet, evaluation and learning are crucial for making quality projects and thus contributing to reach the organisational mission and vision.



But what does quality mean? And what is the role of monitoring, evaluation and learning in ensuring quality? Quality depends on what we define, or in other words, what we consider “good” and “valuable”. This depends on the overall organisational context, the practice in the fields of youth work and peacebuilding and ultimately on personal and organisational preferences. Evaluation is in itself an exercise to define and ensure quality. It is deeply rooted in values and traditions of practice.

A quality project is defined in the context of these guidelines as a project that is:

- **Ethical** - it makes explicit shared and agreed principles which should guide all actions of the project, for example, respect for diversity.
- **Relevant and meaningful** for the group or community with whom the organisation works.
- **Innovative** - based on past experiences, but drawing on creative methods and tools and developing new ones.
- **Effective** - manages to reach its proposed goals with the most appropriate methods and tools.
- **Efficient** - makes the best use of available resources.

RELEVANCE AND INNOVATION



Project design and planning starts with a good understanding of the project's context and defining the needs and preferences of the groups and communities with whom the organisation works. In other words, a project is relevant and meaningful for those involved if it manages to meet their needs and preferences. Additionally, making projects relevant implies efforts towards innovation. Innovation seeks for new ways, routes and adaptations in response to the changes of the context. This is a key starting point if the project aims to be of added-value. Here we propose a number of steps and tools to ensure relevance in your project planning.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

A first step in project design is to understand the social and political context in which it will take place. This understanding is necessary in order to better relate to the communities and groups that you will work with.

Guiding questions to analyse your project's context

What is the political, economic, social and cultural context?

Who are the main actors related to your work?

What are their interests, goals, positions and capacities?

How are the relationships among actors?

What conflicts can you identify in your context?

A context analysis seeks an understanding of the entire historical, political, economic and social scene. You can deepen your context analysis, with a conflict analysis. Conflict analysis tools are specifically designed for peacebuilding work. For example, they can help you analyse the causes and effects of conflicts and how actors behave in a conflict setting. Both a general context analysis and, more specifically, conflict analysis can help you situate your project’s ideas and goals into the broader social reality where it will be implemented.

You can read more about...

- **Conflict analysis:** [Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding Toolkit](#)
- **Conflict Analysis Framework:** [Stakeholder Mapping](#) Section 6.2 (p.45- 47)
- **Mapping Political Context:** [Mapping Political Context. A Toolkit for Civil Society Organisations](#)

DEFINING NEEDS

Defining needs is key in ensuring the project's relevance. **But who defines them and how?** It is important to state explicitly who defines the needs, with whom/for whom and how these needs are perceived and expressed in practice. Participatory planning is crucial. This means involving all relevant individuals and groups in decision-making at all stages of the project.

We propose a basic needs analysis tool.

Which groups/individuals expressed their needs?	What needs were expressed?	When and how were they expressed?
Example: young girls in neighbourhood x.	A space to meet safely Job-related skills	Informal interviews girls club meeting

You can read more about...

- Learning needs assessment: [Learning Space Toolkit](#)
- Participatory needs assessment: [Salto Youth Inclusion Resources](#)

BUILDING ON PAST EXPERIENCES

Your project is likely not to be the first of its kind. There may have been other projects that are similar to yours in terms of topic or have been implemented in the same community. Find out about previous projects implemented by your organisation and by others. What can you learn from them? What has worked well in the past? What challenges and risks did those projects encounter?

Checklist:

- Have you consulted with previous staff members or resource persons?
- Have you consulted with community/youth leaders about their past experiences with similar projects?
- Have you read previous evaluation reports?
- Have you read research reports about the issues the project is about?
- Have you researched what other projects have taken place in the area you are working in?

INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE



Innovation does not happen on its own. Innovation takes efforts. It needs time to think creatively about new methods and approaches. It needs to be planned in your project's design phase.

Here are a few tips for organising a brainstorming session with your team:

- All participants are encouraged to contribute fully, guiding each other in developing a wide variety of potential solutions
- Eccentric/strange/unconventional ideas are welcomed and built upon
- Arts and culture are integrated into the ideation process

You can read more about...

- **The role of imagination and creativity** in the book [The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace](#) by John Paul Lederach
- The role of creativity in the imagination of sustainable solutions in the [Systemic Conflict Transformation: Guiding principles for practitioners and policymakers working on conflict](#)
- **Brainstorming as a tool for creativity:** [Mindtools](#)
- **Causal maps:** [IHMC Cmap Tools](#)

PLANNING AND DESIGN

Once needs are defined, then it is crucial to elaborate a project plan. This plan needs to have clearly defined objectives. These will give direction to all activities and should be as clear, specific and time-bound as possible. Evaluation is difficult when there are no standards or objectives against which to assess progress. You need to define what the success of your project might look like. Basic criteria for a quality project are: ethics (done respecting the values that you stand for), efficiency (responsible use of scarce resources) and effectiveness (capacity to reach set goals).



In brief, careful planning is necessary to ensure quality evaluation. This section will take you through central actions when planning the evaluation of a project:

- Setting the project's goals and objectives
- Defining your starting points or baseline
- Developing indicators
- Planning, monitoring and evaluation tasks
- Assessing risks

SETTING THE PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are general intentions that guide your work, for example, promote dialogue in a community. Objectives are more tangible and should help you guide your actions in the short-term. Objectives can be seen as a series of steps that will lead you to realise your broader goals. For example, you can have a general goal and a series of specific objectives.

Setting specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound objectives are key for effective project management. These are often called **"SMART" indicators**. A variation of it is that objectives should be agreed-upon, that is, result result from a participatory decision-making process. If there is no agreement on the objectives, the motivation to implement them will be limited. At the same time, peacebuilding projects often have objectives that are too ambitious, broad and vague. Unclear or poorly defined objectives make project implementation and thus, evaluation more difficult. Here we offer a brief guide to setting objectives.

Specific – What will you do exactly? Who will do it and with whom?

Measurable – How will you know that results has been achieved? What will indicate you to what extent you have made progress?

Agreed-upon – Were objectives the result of a participatory decision-making process? Do all involved understand and agree on the objectives?

Realistic – How do you know that it will be feasible? How does it relate to the organisation's "[theory of change](#)" or the general assumptions on how reality works in the specific context? How challenging is it to address a certain problem or conflict?

Time-bound – Are actions planned in relation to the available time and bound by benchmarks or deadlines?

An example of a SMART objective is:

“By year two of the project, the organisation’s team of trainers (6 persons) will have trained 50% of the Social Work university students (150 students, ages 18-21) in the University of Peaceland and the University of Changeland on intercultural communication and social mediation competences”

When defining objectives, you need to take into consideration the specific type of social change or peace work that you want to engage in. Educational projects emphasise learning criteria, that is, what and how much have the participants learned in terms of competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes). Peacebuilding interventions tend to focus on the improvement of relations and levels of trust, also changes in attitudes towards the “other”. Advocacy and campaigns emphasise the level of understanding of and support towards an issue that is new on the agenda or that is contested or debated. Social development work may emphasise criteria of accessibility to basic human rights, such as health or housing to name a few examples.

You can read more about...

- **how to define goals and objectives:** [DME for peace module](#)

DEFINING YOUR STARTING POINTS

Before your start implementing your project is it important to determine what the original situation is. For example, if you want to promote attitudes of respect towards different religions among young people in a certain neighbourhood, then you need to determine what the current situation is. You can hold informal interviews, use existing national or local level statistics and discuss

the data with your team. You can summarise your findings in a short description. However, the more accurate the picture, the better your ability will be to monitor progress in relation to attitudinal change. A survey of attitudes can be a good tool to understand and measure this change. This can also be called “baseline study”. A baseline study can consist of a qualitative research on a case study, for example, about violence in a school or city district. Alternatively, it can consist of a quantitative study on measuring the types and levels of violence in specific context.

A good baseline will help you to compare and assess what has changed over a period of your project. Also, you should be able to tell whether the change was as a result of your intervention and how useful it was. A baseline could also serve to adjust and/or redefine a project from the start. Baselines are not always necessary in comparative analysis. Also it's difficult to conduct baselines and process the gathered information in when working in complex and dynamic social contexts. Some baseline information may already exist through the context/conflict analysis of the project, or secondary data like reports or statistical data of other organisations and institutions. If it is/was not possible to conduct a baseline study you can reconstruct a description of the original situation retrospectively, for example, through storytelling, interviews or documentation.

You can read more about ...

- How to do research on a case study: [DME for peace module](#)
- How to do basic quantitative research: [DME for peace module](#)

DEVELOPING INDICATORS

An indicator is a simple and reliable sign or pointer of changes in an aspect of reality. Indicators are a means to measure change, so they are central in monitoring and evaluation. Indicators can be quantitative or qualitative. For example, the number of incidents of physical violence is an example of a quantitative indicator. The quality of relations and trust among persons or groups of people is a qualitative one.

Indicators are approximations of reality, they do not reflect a full picture of reality. Therefore, they are limited. A careful choice of indicators based on an in-depth knowledge of the cultural and social context is key. Since reality is complex, a mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators is recommended. While quantitative indicators may tell you *how much* is happening (or not), qualitative indicators may tell you *how* it is happening and *why*.

You can read more about...

- How to develop peacebuilding indicators: [Designing for Results](#)

- How to develop SMART indicators:
 - [GAIN Peacebuilding Indicators](#)
 - [Note on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Indicators](#)

- Examples of Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) Indicators [A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Peace-Building](#) Annex I (p. 56-57)

- The difference between output, outcome and impact and performance indicators:
 - [A quick guide to developing national ESD indicators.](#)
 - [Asia-Pacific Guidelines for the Development of National ESD Indicators.](#)

PLANNING MONITORING AND EVALUATION TASKS

Monitoring and evaluation tasks need to be integrated into your project plan or as an appendix of it. Based on your project's objectives, you need to decide what you want your evaluation to focus on. These are some guiding questions to help you develop your evaluation plan:

- What will the focus of the evaluation be? What will be the key criteria of evaluation? How important will efficiency, effectiveness and ethical dimensions be?
- Who will take the lead, contribute to and participate in evaluation activities?
- What is the time frame of the evaluation? When will evaluation activities take place?
- What material resources will be necessary to implement evaluation tasks?
- How will the evaluation results be utilised and by whom?

One tool for developing an evaluation plan is the “**Quality Assurance Plan**”. Basically, it is an excel sheet which includes the objectives of the project, output and outcome indicators, assigned persons to complete tasks and deadlines. You can see an example [here](#).

You can read more about:

- **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plans** (Templates) in [Word](#) and [pdf](#) formats
- [Monitoring and Evaluation Plan Module](#) - Search for Common Ground

ASSESSING RISKS

Any intervention or action in the social reality can never be completely neutral. Well-intended projects may cause unintended negative effects and harm. Evaluation is a sensitive endeavour, especially in contexts where there are debates about the role of certain organisations or tensions about what are the best approaches in youth work and/or peace work. For example, some organisations may fear losing funding or support, or fear disclosing sensitive information that may be used in power games. As any project needs to be aware of possible risks and negative effects on the persons and groups involved, the evaluation activities need also to be risks and conflicts-sensitive. There are tools to ensure both your project’s activities and its related evaluation activities are conflict sensitive and follow the principles of “Do No Harm”.

You can read more about...

- **Conflict sensitivity:** [blog about Conflict sensitivity for Peacebuilders](#)
- **The ‘Do No Harm’ Framework:** read [the Guide](#) online or [read a tip sheet](#) developed by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

MONITORING



Once a project plan, including an evaluation plan is ready, it is important to set out how you will keep track of your project's developments and achievements. You need to specify how exactly you will monitor your project.

Here are a few guiding questions:

- What information do I need to gather to assess progress on the set indicators?
Decide the type of monitoring appropriate for you (for example, results, process/activities, participation of beneficiary/stakeholders, context/situation, financial, organisational)
- How will I collect information?

Methods can be systematic observations in a project diary, observations shared in periodic team meetings, a survey or self-assessment questionnaires.

- How often will I gather and analyse information for monitoring purposes?
- Who will be responsible for the monitoring tasks?



Tips for good practice in monitoring:

- Keep it focused to your specific audience and intended use (necessity and sufficiency).
- Be systematic, and follow your indicators and assumptions.
- Keep an eye on unintended consequences in your project and the wider context, including any changes in your context/conflict/risk assessments. Use this information to adjust project activities/plans.
- Keep it timely, so that the information is used to make informed decision during project implementation.
- When and if possible, be participatory. Involve your stakeholders in the process. It can build better understanding and ownership and also reduce costs. Information collected during monitoring does not serve only the project management team. When possible, it should also be shared with beneficiaries, donors and any other key stakeholders.

You can read more about...

- a detailed example of a Monitoring Checklist: [DME Workshop Handout](#)

MONITORING AT THE TEAM LEVEL: TIPS ON HOW TO GIVE AND TAKE FEEDBACK

Honest and constructive feedback is fundamental in team work. Feedback can be given in a private conversation or shared during a team meetings. There should be trust among team members and an agreement that sharing opinions and suggestions for improvement is welcome and useful. The aim of giving feedback is to be helpful, to improve the behaviour, attitudes or performance of an individual or group.

When giving feedback remember to:

- Praise positive aspects of the person's behaviour and performance, acknowledge efforts. Comment on facts and behaviours, not on other aspects of personality or characteristics of the person involved.
- Feedback should be specific, supported by examples. Give specific suggestions for improvement.

- Feedback should be timely. Wait for the opportunity to share feedback, when the person may be ready to receive it.

When taking feedback remember to:

- Be open about what others have to say, do not feel attacked or defensive.
- Listen carefully, try to understand how others perceive you and your behaviour, treat it as valuable information which will help you to improve.
- Ask questions to clarify information.
- Thank the person for their time and willingness to give you their feedback.
- Reflect about the given feedback and think for yourself about what it means for you.

FINAL EVALUATION



Once the project is concluded or close to the end, a final evaluation can be organised. A final evaluation reviews the overall project cycle, draws conclusions and extracts lessons learned from the experience. Commonly, in the context of youth work, a team meeting is organised to discuss the achievements and learning points. Often, based on information gathered via participants' evaluation forms. Here we give you guidance on tools to evaluate outputs (completed activities/efforts) outcomes (effects of completed activities), impact (long lasting changes).

EVALUATE YOUR EFFORTS OR OUTPUTS

These are typical questions that you can ask when assessing to what extent your efforts and activities corresponded to your plans and expectations.

- Did you manage to implement all planned activities?
- How many activities were organised?
- How many persons were reached? How many participated?

EVALUATE OUTCOMES

Outcomes have been defined as the results of completed activities. These can mean changes in attitudes or improved skills. In the context of educational activities it is important that you collect information about what participants have learned and about attitudes that may lead to changed behaviour. One way of collecting this information is via surveys. One could conduct a survey right after the activity has finished so that participants can reflect on their learning when memories are still fresh. A second survey can be conducted a few months after the activity to assess to what extent new developed competences have been applied and exercised in practice. Additionally, you can also include questions about new implemented actions or projects, level of cooperation among participants (for example, have they stayed in touch? Have they organised follow-up projects together?)

EVALUATE IMPACT

Projects may have different types of impacts in a broad sense, that is, various types of effects on persons and groups. Yet, impact evaluation means something else if defined in more technical terms. It is defined as the measurement of sustainable and long-term changes in the original problem or conflict addressed by the project. For example, if the starting point of the project was the increase of violence and hate speech in a school district, then the impact would be the reduction of that violence as a result of a project intervention (peace education, peer mediation, counselling). This change needs to be clearly attributed to the project's intervention. A rigorous impact evaluation requires a control group to compare the project group with. The control group allows for a counterfactual analysis "would this change have happened if there would have not been a program?" Counterfactual analyses focus on what would have happened with the beneficiaries of a program in the absence of the program.

You can read more about

- **Rigorous Impact Evaluation in Peace Education:** in the book [Peace Education Evaluation: Learning from Experience and Exploring Prospects](#) by Del Felice, C., Karako A. and Wisler, A. eds.
- **Evaluating the Impacts of Peacebuilding Interventions:** [Paper Saferworld](#)
- **UNICEF's** [Overview of Impact Evaluation](#) + [Impact Evaluation Video Series](#)
- **InterAction's** [Impact Evaluation Guidance Note and Webinar Series](#)

REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY



Sharing project results with participants, partners, donors and community organisations related to the project is essential for transparency and accountability purposes. Often, projects are implemented with public funding, donations and contributions from different groups. It is important to keep them engaged and informed so as to sustain their trust and support in future similar projects. We suggest the following ways of sharing results: reporting, including making reports available on the organisation's web-page, and creating spaces for dialogue and discussion on project results. Here we offer you some tips to take into consideration when planning these activities.

REPORTING

- Write short stories which capture the main conclusions of your project. Use testimonies and key facts as evidence.
- Include conclusions and lessons identified during the project.
- When you write your report, keep your audience in mind. This will help you select the most relevant pieces of information and language.
- Include a title page with the name of the project, the name of the organisation and contact details
- Include a table of contents if it is a long document
- Include an executive summary. This is very important as it is what most people will surely read!
- Watch your tone: you can be an advocate, a critic or a detached reporter. A report should be analytical and critical yet, empowering and motivating for the continuation of work.
- Keep confidentiality of informants unless otherwise agreed.

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH DIALOGUE

Reporting is important, yet engaging in dialogue about project results requires the creation of exchange and discussion spaces. This can take the form of a workshop or session in which project results are presented and there is a space for questions and answers. When you prepare your presentation:

- Think of the main idea you want to convey and focus your presentation on this one main idea. Often, we try to squeeze too much information in a single document. Sometimes less is more.
- Be honest and self-critical, yet confident about the results of your project and the reasons why you engage in your work. Your enthusiasm will be contagious.
- Choose carefully your facts and illustrations to support your argumentation
- Share a story or example to clarify your idea.
- Summarise your main point at the end and specify on which topics you would like feedback or dialogue about.
- Offer a contact detail or follow-up details.
- Thank the audience for listening!

A SUMMARY: FORMS OF EVALUATION ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO PROJECT PHASES

Project Phases	Forms of MEL activities
Planning	Needs assessment Socio-political context analysis Identification of opportunities and risks Definition of a theory of change, objectives, progress indicators and a MEL activities plan to gather and analyse information
Implementation	Formative evaluation (e.g. monitoring, team meetings)

	Summative evaluation (e.g. participants evaluation forms, final report)
Follow-up	Impact and transfer (e.g. impact assessments, feedback from alumni) Re-visiting the theory of change
On-going	Elaboration and sharing of lessons learned Organisational reflection and strategic planning

You can read more about...

- Educational projects Reporting and Accountability: [T-Kit on Educational Evaluation in Youth Work](#)
- A youth peace reflection tool: [What is good Youth Peace Work: A guide for evaluation](#)

IMPROVE YOUR PRACTICE AT ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

This section offers guidance to improve your monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) practices at organisational level. MEL practices concern all aspects of the organisation's work. This guide focuses on six dimensions of an organisation:

1. Organisational culture and norms
2. Planning and Decision Making
3. Knowledge management
4. Human resources management
5. Financial management
6. External relations

A note about quality and MEL at organisational level.

This section focuses on internal and external organisational dimensions because organisations are not only what they produce (their projects and actions), but they are also what they do to make their projects happen, and in the end, reach their organisational goals and mission. This means its internal decision-making and management practices as well as the way they work with other stakeholders in their context. The chosen organisational dimensions are based on existing organisational analytical frameworks, mainly the [framework developed](#) by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Universalia Management Group (see figure 2).



Figure 2: Framework of organisational assessment

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND NORMS



INTRODUCTION

Culture includes the system of attitudes about work, values, beliefs, underlying norms present in the organisation. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to as every organisation is unique because of its history, mission and vision, strategies, approaches, members, organisational structure and management style and local culture/context in which it operates. Nevertheless, an organisational culture which expresses the values of the organisation in practice is key to drive the organisation forward in support of its mission, vision and strategy.

In this guide, five main criteria are proposed to assess organisational culture and norms supportive of monitoring, evaluation and learning in youth peace organisations:

- Dialogue and peaceful transformation of conflicts within the organisation
- Diversity
- Safety and responsibility
- Culture of learning
- Culture of sustainability

In the following paragraphs, guidance and proposals are offered on how to promote internal organisational evaluation, reflection and learning practices.

DIALOGUE AND PEACEFUL TRANSFORMATION OF CONFLICTS

Conflict is natural part of life. Conflicts often arise within organisation at many levels: between individuals and between teams or units. If addressed constructively and cultivating dialogue, conflicts can be opportunities for personal and organisational learning and growth. Below are a few proposals which could contribute to an organisational culture based on dialogue and positive transformation of conflicts.

CREATING A CODE OF CONDUCT

A code of Conduct is a set of conventional principles and expectations outlining a range of social norms, rules and responsibilities that are considered binding by the individuals that are part of an organisation or a group. Develop a Code of Conduct or ethical guidelines which show awareness and commitment to peace values applied to internal practices. These document(s) should guide all aspects of the organisation's work and their projects. Ideally it would include the following aspects:

- Written commitment to a culture of dialogue
- Written commitment to internal conflict transformation procedures
- Procedural guide for conflict transformation in the organisation
- List of resources on and conflict transformation, dialogue processes, nonviolent communication, etc.

Read more about...

- Code of Ethics & Conduct for NGOs: [Compliance Manual](#)

REVIEWING AN EXISTING CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Reflect about the context, through which you define your organisational culture. Clarify with your team the attitudes and behaviors that are valued most and are expected from the members of the organisation.
2. Build awareness about organisational culture and engage in reviewing and improving your strategies and plans based on the shared understanding of the organisational culture. Start by clarifying the key challenges you have as an organisation, the underlying frustrations/grievances about the way things (don't) work and are hindering it to reach its full potential. Also think of the strengths you have which allowed you to build your vision or strategy and capitalize on them to further improve your organisational culture.
3. Measure your organisational culture and engage the organisation to see the full picture. The current practice in organisations is that they are covering only a fraction of culture by doing surveys on team engagement and satisfaction or organisational climate. Use a comprehensive research-based tool with a solid benchmark database.

4. Engage the organisation in a session of feedback and prioritisation to understand your culture assessment results and to outline 1-3 key improvements to be made to sustain strengths and improve weak aspects holding the organisation back. It happens that organisations obtain the feedback, but there is no follow-up.
5. Monitor your progress and refine actions. Try to develop habits and routines rather than one-time actions/events. Take some time to assess how your meeting times/schedules, communication strategy, measurements, progress tracking formats, team/organisational structure or other aspects which are helping you improve those 1-3 priorities that you identified.

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF DIALOGUE AND THE ABILITY TO TRANSFORM (INTERNAL) CONFLICTS

Promoting a culture of dialogue and abilities to transform conflicts constructively requires working on developing peace knowledges, attitudes and skills. For example, these may include the following:

Knowledge	Attitudes	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the social, cultural, political and economic context of the organisation and the background of the team members • Knowledge of languages • Knowledge of peacebuilding and conflict transformation literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for the opinion of others • Honesty • Responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical analysis • Conflict analysis • (non-violent) communication • Mediation and negotiation • Leadership and participatory management

STRATEGIES FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN ORGANISATIONS

A strategy to transform an internal conflict needs to be based on an in-depth understanding of the conflict. Conflicts can be between individuals, between teams or departments, or even among organisations which are part of a federation or network.

Possible sources of conflict

- *Different goals.* Conflicts over goals in individual work units are a natural part of any organisation, but depends how they are handled/transformed.
- *Interdependence of work.* Refers to the degree of which departments rely on each other for information, compliance, assistance or resources. It could also refer to the degree to which employees are dependent on each other and interfere each other's work.
- *Ambiguous rules and misunderstanding of information.* Job specifications and task responsibilities are vague and/or unclear. There could be disagreement regarding responsibilities for tasks and resources. This could lead to conflicts between managers and other members.
- *Incompatible personalities.* Two or more people do not get along or have differences in personality, attitudes, values, and beliefs.
- *Power dynamics and differences in status.* One member questions the influence of another member. Conflict could escalate because of somebody challenging the status quo and trying to increase their own power or status in an organisation.
- *Communication Breakdown.* Could arise from lack of or poor opportunities to communicate, insufficient communication skills, different perception of conflicts
- *Scarce Resources.* Groups, teams or departments could compete for scarce or declining resources including money, supplies, people or information.
- *Competitiveness in the organisational structure/practices.* Conflicts may surface because of the focus on competitive performance.
- *Lack of accountability.* No one is willing to take responsibility for problems when they arise.



One useful method to address conflict is mediation/facilitation of dialogue. Here are some basic tips that you can use within your organisation:

- Understand the conflict. Before you engage, make sure all the perspectives of the issue have been taken into account.
- Acknowledge the problem. Perceptions on the issue may vary across various members. Acknowledge the frustrations, grievances and concerns from the start.
- Be patient and take time. Take time to evaluate all information. Thoroughly evaluate your decisions before you act upon them and ensure you are not creating more harm.
- Focus on the problem, not the person. Avoid passing judgement of people based on your preconceived ideas. Focus on identifying and

resolving the conflict, not on changing the person.

- Set conflict transformation guidelines. Before announcing a formal meeting between the parties in conflict, have them all agree to a few guidelines. Guideline may involve a certain communication process, restorative practices, reconciliation measures.
- Keep the communication open. Ideally all parties involved should resolve the issue among themselves. Allow all parties to express their points of view, but also share your personal opinion. Facilitate the meeting by supporting them to identify root cause of the conflict

Read more about...

- **Structured Dialogue:** [Toolkit for International Youth NGOs](#)
- **Appreciative Inquiry:** [Sample Tool](#)
- [Principles of Conflict Transformation](#)

DIVERSITY

Different people have different roles and responsibilities in organisations, which can be shaped or changed during situations of tension and conflict. It is important to consider how your internal norms and procedures will impact on different people (gender, race, age, sexual orientation, physical or intellectual ability, religion or socioeconomic status, etc.) differently. By mainstreaming diversity, your organisation will be more likely to contribute to equity, enhanced team spirit and organisational sustainability.

The following are some tips on embracing and practicing diversity in your organisation:

- Be open about the tensions between the need to value and accept different views and opinions and the aspiration for shared organisational values. Discuss openly about the necessary conditions which will change the position of the organisation towards people who are different.
- Question organisational policies and practices that may be exclusivist or discriminatory.
- Involve diverse groups in problem solving and identifying opportunities. Look at the issues and opportunities empathically before making decisions.
- Challenge your own and other's assumptions and seek to understand diversity from a wider perspective beyond just ethnicity or gender issues.
- Be mindful about your instinctive thoughts, speech and behaviors for unexamined assumptions and stereotypical expressions.
- Be vocal and take attitude when other colleagues are not being valued or their ideas and perspectives are not heard or considered. Pay attention to the fact that some colleagues need recognition of their differences while others do not.
- Be sensitive when it comes to joking about diversity and differences. Take a stand and inform the others when the jokes are offensive to you.
- Consider becoming a mentor to a new member who come from a different background and different experiences.

Read more about managing diversity in organisations:

- [Managing Cultural Diversity in Non-Governmental Organisations](#)
- [Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments](#)
- [Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue](#)

SAFETY AND RESPONSIBILITY



The health and safety of the members of the organisation is a fundamental aspect of its functioning. Without the right conditions and basic knowledge of these aspects we could be putting team members and participants' health and life at risk. There are a few things you should consider and verify with the local authorities in charge of safety at the workplace or in the spaces where activities take place:

- The organisation has a plan of early warning and evacuation of people and goods in case of emergencies
- Permanent staff members are instructed to respond in case of emergencies and are able to offer first aid. The permanent staff participates in periodic trainings on the topic.
- The organisation is aligned to and implements the needed legislation on security and health.

CULTURE OF LEARNING

Whatever the monitoring and evaluation methods you will opt for, reflection and learning will not happen unless there is an enabling environment for it. Therefore, it is important to create an organisational culture of learning that includes the following.

- The time and space for exchange, reflection and learning is considered valuable for the members in terms of time and other resources spent on it and is not considered a burden
- Individuals share the same vision and mission and feel motivated to help achieve them
- Individuals feel that their ideas and suggestions are valued and are being followed upon
- Critical reflection on personal, team and organisational performance is included in job descriptions and stipulated in performance assessments
- Knowledge is shared, rather than hoarded as a means of increasing personal power
- The question "why?" is not discouraged or taken as institutional subversion

- Mistakes and failures are seen as learning opportunities, rather than something that has to be blamed on someone and therefore to be hidden or denied
- Communication from subordinates to managers is encouraged, and where managers listen to their staff;
- The benefits of working with other stakeholders are seen as outweighing the loss of institutional control and autonomy involved.

Read more about...

- [Learning Communities, Chapter 3.](#) (p. 7-11) in Reflective Peacebuilding – A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit (2007) The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame.



Example of a practical method to create an open space for learning at the start of each week at the International Secretariat of SCI.

CULTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY

More and more organisations are starting to realise the added value of developing a focus on sustainability. They inspire and engage their members, partners and stakeholders to make sustainability a priority in their projects as well as part of the organisational work.

When developing a sustainability strategy consider the following steps:

1. Set a baseline against actions/areas that (will) embed sustainability
2. Compare your results with other organisations you look up to
3. Allocate time and necessary resources to address the key obstacles which prevent the team to embrace sustainable actions
4. Seek new opportunities to build on current commitment and engagement in sustainability
5. Evaluate the impact of sustainability initiatives

Source: Tim Cotter, [Defining And Building A Culture Of Sustainability](#)

Read more about organisational sustainability...

- [Going the Distance. Step-by-Step Strategies to Foster NGO Sustainability](#)
- [Embedding sustainability in organizational culture. A How-to Guide for Executives](#)
- [CARE International's guidelines for corporate engagement.](#)

PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING



Within this guide Planning and Decision Making is referred as all organisational processes that

- identify medium and long-term goals, based on context and needs assessments
- formulate written principles, rules, and guidelines to reach its long-term goals
- formulate strategies and create the means to achieve them
- make collective strategic decisions

Following this definition three main criteria were identified as essential for good practices of youth peacebuilding organisations. Those are:

1. Strategic planning
2. Decision making
3. Support measures (for planning and decision making)

Below you can find advice and resources for improving your planning and decision making in your organisation.

1. STRATEGIC PLANNING

In simple words, strategic planning is a planned process in which an organisation defines what it aims to achieve and how it is going to achieve it.

For an organisation a strategic plan is the fundamental starting point for all its operations. A strategic plan guides the direction of the organisation by defining explicitly its purpose of existence and by providing mid-term goals and measurable success indicators. Having clear indicators or markers allows the organisation to assess whether goals are being reached.

With a strategic planning process, any organisation will be able to know:

- what it wants to achieve in the long-term - **Vision**
- which principles guide its work - **Values**
- how it wants to bring about change, what is it doing - **Mission**
- what specifically the organisation wants to see changed based on the identified problems - **Overall goal**
- what the organisation wants to achieve in short to mid-term - **Immediate objective**
- which results the organisation aims to reach – **Key results areas**

Once these aspects of a strategic framework are defined, the organisation can start to engage into a process of action planning. This process consists of identifying concrete activities that will lead to the achievement of the overall goal of the organisation's operations.

Read more about...

- A step by step Strategic planning process: [CIVICUS TOOLKIT: Strategic Planning](#)
- A step by step Action planning process: [CIVICUS TOOLKIT: Action Planning](#)

A successful with any strategic planning is based on a few components:

1. an in-depth *context and conflict analysis* which is accompanied by an assessment of the *organisation's capacity* to work in the given context.
2. includes a *clear formulation of goals* and immediate objective.
3. includes a *theory of change* outlining the assumptions that underpinned the logic of how the envisioned change is to be reached, by which intervention and why these interventions are expected to have the intended effect.
4. includes *indicators* for success and the corresponding *means of verification* that provide the data source for assessing if the indicators were matched.
5. is explicitly formulated and written down in a *coherent strategic planning document* (see examples below in the read more about section) accessible internally for the members, staff and volunteers of the organisation and externally for all relevant stakeholders working in the same field as the organisation.

Read more about...

- **Conflict analysis and assessment of organisational capacity**
[Conflict Analysis Framework: Field Guidelines and Procedures, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict](#)

Chart on how to link organisational self-assessment, conflict analysis and strategic intervention (p. 97) in [Multi-Stakeholder Processes for Conflict Prevention & Peacebuilding: A Manual, Chapter 7.5 Conflict Assessment, Peacebuilding Planning and Self-Assessment, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict](#)

- **Assessing organisational capacity**
[Organisational Capacity Assessment - An introduction to a tool- Kepa](#)
- **Using a Theory of Change**
[Guidance for designing, monitoring and evaluating peacebuilding projects: Using theories of change, CARE](#)
[Change and Indicator Development in Conflict Management and Mitigation, USAID](#)
- **Indicators and Means of Verification**
[Designing for Results, Chapter 4, Search for Common Ground](#)
[Creating Indicators, Chapter 7. \(p.37-41\) in Reflective Peacebuilding – A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit Lederach](#)
- **Methods and tools for data collection on change**
Monitoring Changes: Methods and Tools, Chapter 3. (p. 43-51) in [Emerging Practices in Design, Monitoring and Evaluation for Education for Peacebuilding Programming, Search for Common Ground](#)
- **Examples of Strategic Planning Documents**
[Children & Youth Global Strategy for working with Children and Youth in Transforming Conflict, Search for Common Ground \(2009\)](#)

[Strategic Plan 2012-2016, Commonwealth Foundation \(2012\)](#)

[GPPAC Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict \(2011\)](#)

2. DECISION MAKING

Decision making refers here to all organisational processes that allow the organisation to make a qualified choice between different options regarding operational and organisational decisions. These decisions can be concerning:

- strategic planning
- local or international partnerships
- funding decisions
- project and programme development
- internal structures
- management procedures
- communication strategies and policies

For Decision Making to be effective and contributing to the organisation's vision, the following features are helpful:

- transparent
- inclusive
- accessible
- applicable



Legally registered organisations have a legally binding statute which usually details and regulates the relations and decision making powers for an association between its different bodies for example, the general assembly and the board. Although, organisations

often do not have established guidelines or procedures addressing operational and organisational decision making processes that go beyond those legally required procedures in the country of the seat of the organisations.

Thus, we recommend a few simple steps that help you to detail and norm those decision making processes in your organisation.

Steps for Designing Decision Making Processes

1. Set-up an office meeting with all colleagues and board members to **discuss the procedure of creating guidelines for the decision making processes** in your organisation. Be aware that this might be a process that requires long term commitment. Do not overload your team and give sufficient time and structure for this process. Several meetings might be needed and review and feedback loops shall be included.
2. During the meeting, **create a list of decision making processes that re-occur in the organisation** for decisions on operational and organisational level, for example, planning processes for strategic planning or projects, internal communication processes, management procedures, funding decisions or partnerships on local or international level.
3. **Create working groups** that work on the identified decision making processes. Bear in mind that there might be many decision making processes so start by focussing on the most urgent or most important ones. Set a time frame for each working group to deliver a draft guidelines for the decision making procedures they work on.
4. Provide each working group with a set of **guiding questions** (see below) for setting up draft guidelines or the respective decision making process.

5. Ask every colleague and board member to **review the draft** decision making guidelines.

6. Set a meeting to **agree on the final version** of the respective guidelines during which you review all comments and concerns and finalise the guidelines.

7. **Publish the decision making guidelines** for the respective decision making process internally in your knowledge management system (if existing) or ensure accessible for all your colleagues by other means, and on your webpage to make it transparent and accessible for your partners, donors and beneficiaries.

Once you have agreed on your decision making processes, make sure the respective guidelines are used by your team, regularly reviewed and if needed adapted to your changing work environment and developing internal practices. Therefore, we recommend you to review the guidelines and evaluate your corresponding practice and the use and usefulness of the guidelines at least once per year during an office meeting.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DESIGNING DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

When creating your guidelines for decision-making processes please bear in mind the following aspects:

Transparency

- How do you make sure that the decisions taken are transparent?
- Are the roles and responsibilities for everybody involved in the decision-making process clearly defined and conflicts of interests minimised?

- Is it clear for everybody how the decisions are taken?
- How do you want to agree on the decision if disputes or alternative proposals appear e.g. consensus versus majority?
- Can decisions be taken if not everybody who is supposed to attend the decision-making meeting is present?
- Who needs to be informed about the decisions taken?
- How do you plan to inform all the actors involved in the decision-making process/the organisation?

Inclusiveness

- Who should be involved in making the decision e.g. office staff, board members, volunteers, beneficiaries, local partner organisations, local activists, experts, donors?
- Why should those actors be involved?
- How can you ensure that everybody who should be involved in the decision-making process is available and present during the decision-making meeting?
- Is the decision making process in line with your principles and ethical guidelines?
- Is everybody involved who is affected by the decision to be taken?

Accessibility

- How can you make the decision-making process accessible for all involved individuals e.g. in terms of timing, space, language?
- Do you need an external facilitator for the decision-making process to foster the accessibility of the process by reducing power imbalance between the different participants due to their positions in the organisation?
- What are the benefits of an external or internal facilitator?
- Which factors would help you to make the decision making process as accessible as possible for everybody?

- How do you ensure that the decision is accessible for those affected?

Applicability

- Is the decision making procedure applicable and feasible for the decisions to be taken?
- Is the time you need for the decisions to be taken appropriate for the relevance of the decision in terms of its effects on your work?
- How do you ensure that the length and complexity of the decision-making process does not delay important decisions to be taken on time?
- How do you address that some of the participants of the decision-making meeting have more information on the topic and are more affected by the decision taken than other members of the decision-making body?
- Which measures do you use to ensure that the decisions taken can easily be integrated in the daily routine and practices of the organisation?

3. SUPPORT MEASURES

This includes any policy, structure and procedures that supports the planning and decision making processes in an organisation by making these processes more inclusive and effective.

Inclusiveness refers here to the extent to which the organisation manages to ensure a high involvement of all relevant stakeholders in their planning and decision making processes. Effectiveness means that the planned goals are achieved, resulting in the expected effects or changes.

A wide range of support measures contribute to inclusiveness and effectiveness of the organisation's planning and decision making processes and some of those are listed below:

Policies

- Organisational statute that is binding by law and provides organisational bodies with clear rights and responsibilities
- Organisational guidelines for planning and decision making processes which detail for example who is involved in the decision making, the minimum number of members of an assembly or society that must be present at any of its meetings to make the proceedings of that meeting valid, the method of decision making (consensus vs. majority), the frequency of decision making etc.
- A code of conduct or ethical guidelines detailing how conflicts are handled within the organisation and which principles and values underpin the operations of the organisation (see [Culture and Norms section](#))

Structures

- A knowledge management system granting access internally to all relevant organisational documents including lessons identified, reports, organisational guidelines, statutes and ethical guideline
- Travel funds or/ and funds to cover Internet/ telephone costs for stakeholders or beneficiaries to join planning and decision-making processes.

Procedures

- Obligatory translation of key organisational documents in relevant languages if working in multilingual settings
- External facilitation of internal planning and decision making meetings or workshops to ensure unbiased facilitation of crucial planning and decision making processes
- Obligatory involvement of a diverse group of stakeholders and beneficiaries in planning workshops
- Annual dedicated financial resources for monitoring, evaluation and learning (see [Financial Management section](#))

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION



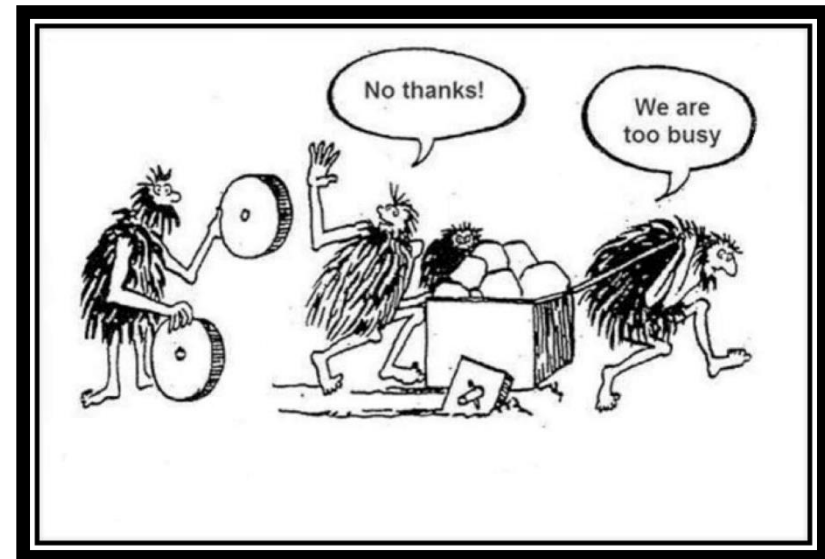
Knowledge is vital to make any peace activity a meaningful, responsible and effective one. Knowledge is what we are aware of, understand, interpret and use to make decisions. Knowledge informs our daily actions, for example, we know how to ride a bicycle to more advanced and professional set of actions, for example, designing a peace program in all its complexity. We base our actions on our understandings of reality and on the methods and tools we know of. If our knowledge on these is limited or inappropriate, our actions may not yield the expected results or may even cause more harm than benefits to the communities with whom youth and peacebuilders work.

There are various forms of knowledge. We know through our personal first hand experiences, what we observe and interpret, including what we experience through our formal, non-formal and informal education.

Knowledge in the context of peace work is the result of reflected experiences coming from practice in a specific field of work and context (practitioners knowledge) or it can be the result of systematic observations or measurements, reasoning and experimentation (scientific knowledge in the field of peace studies).

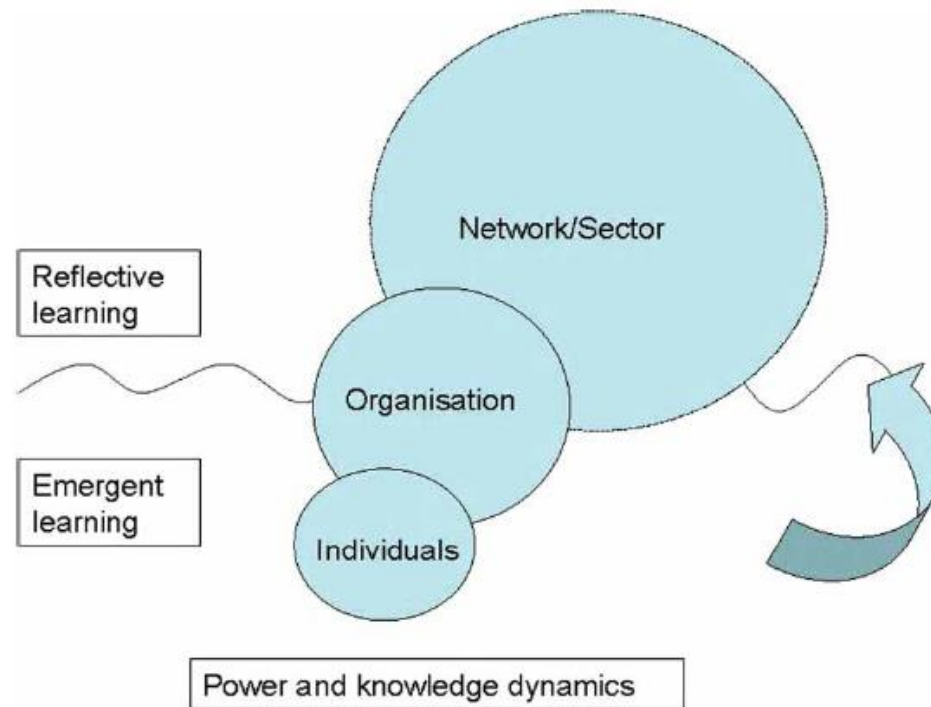
Knowledge management includes the processes to acquire, organise, interpret, develop, use and share knowledge related to peacebuilding, youth work and organisational management which support MEL activities.

A knowledge based-organisation is the one that can identify its knowledge needs, develop knowledge to meet these needs, use it and be able to share it with others, especially in organisation with a high turnover and scattered working teams. It is assumed that an organisation that is able to develop



and apply knowledge tends to be more effective. If an organisation is able to keep and share knowledge is more sustainable and impactful in the medium and long term.

Knowledge development can happen at the individual level, at the organisational level or within a sector or network. Knowledge developed can be part of planned activities (reflective learning) or happen spontaneously in unplanned ways (emergent learning)



Source: Del Felice and Solheim (2011) adapted from Kelleher (2002) and Parkinson (2010).

We offer here a guide to put in place or improve knowledge management activities. We divide this guide in three sections according to the good practice criteria identified in the assessment tool:

- 1) developing knowledge,
- 2) using knowledge
- 3) sharing knowledge.

1. DEVELOPING KNOWLEDGE

An organisation that is able to develop knowledge is an organisation that has the capacity to identify its knowledge needs and resources, to find, to create and to organise relevant knowledge. Knowledge can developed in a plurality of forms (not only scientific knowledge but also practical hands-on knowledge) and needs to build on all stakeholders experiences and lessons learned, especially of those young people involved.

A starting point is identifying knowledge needs. Key questions that organisations need to ask are:

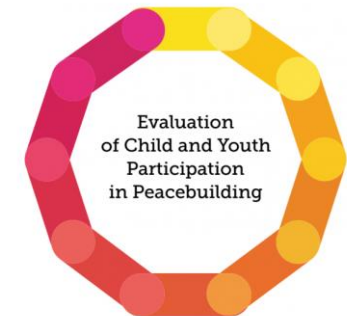
- What knowledge do we need? About what?
- Why do we need this knowledge? For what purposes?
- How can we obtain or create that knowledge? Where is it? Who has it? What activities would allow us to develop it?

The organisation can have several tools available to assess knowledge needs for example:

- Needs assessment exercises can include specific questions on learning and knowledge needs.
- Application forms for trainings or other activities can include specific questions on learning and knowledge needs.
- Satisfaction surveys or evaluation forms can include specific question about new learning and knowledge needs identified after a project.
- Interviews with new volunteers or staff can request information about knowledge needs.

Once knowledge needs are identified, a series of activities can be planned to develop knowledge for the organisation in general or in the context of specific projects. Knowledge development activities can be:

- **Storytelling**, organising meetings to share stories of resilience and hope can be a powerful way to develop knowledge out of young people's experiences. Everyone has a story to tell and a lot can be learned from sharing them. A story can be also told in the form of a mural or a theatre play.
- **Special research projects**, in collaboration with other organisations, universities or think tanks. These are projects that aim mostly to fill in a gap in knowledge or improve understanding about a topic. See for example, The Global Evaluation of Children and Youth In Peacebuilding, a collaborative research project in which several organisations pooled resources and expertise. See more information [here](#).
- **Study sessions**. These are specific seminars in which a topic is explored and discussed, often bringing a variety of inputs and perspectives. See for example, [study sessions](#) supported by the Council of Europe Youth Directorate.
- **Development of a data base**. Data can be gathered and regularly updated to support the overall activities of the organisation. Data can be mean information and statistics about youth characteristics and preferences, data about available fundraising opportunities, about new publications on specific topics.



Note that key to action is having the necessary human and material resources. Specific persons need to be responsible for implementing them and adequately prepared and skillful to do so. This is linked to human resources management which is addressed in a separate section.

2. USING KNOWLEDGE

Having knowledge but not using it or applying it is almost the same as not having it. Technically, we say we have knowledge when we are able to reflect about it and apply it to concrete situations. For example, know how to facilitate a dialogue program, a meeting or workshop. An organisation uses knowledge when it has the capacity to process, analyse, interpret and apply knowledge in decisions and the implementation of activities, specially knowledge emerging from lessons learnt and evaluation reports.

An organisation can use existing knowledge in several ways:

- Reviewing previous reports and lessons learned when planning new projects. This can be indicated as a requirement in a project planning checklist.

- Planning special activities to discuss lessons before taking important strategic decisions. This can be integrated to the formal agenda of strategic planning meetings.
- Having a number of resource persons and former personnel who can be consulted on special occasions. This group can be formalised as “advisors” or “pool of trainers”.
- Personnel needs to be trained in the use of the data base and be made aware of existing materials of the organisation, for example, publications, and be encouraged to consult them and use them in their work.

3. SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Youth and peace organisations cannot work in isolation. Challenges are too big to address them alone. Developing and updating knowledge is one of them, so sharing knowledge is important to the sustainability of the wider sector of organisations working for peace. A knowledge-based organisation needs to be able to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, both internally and externally.

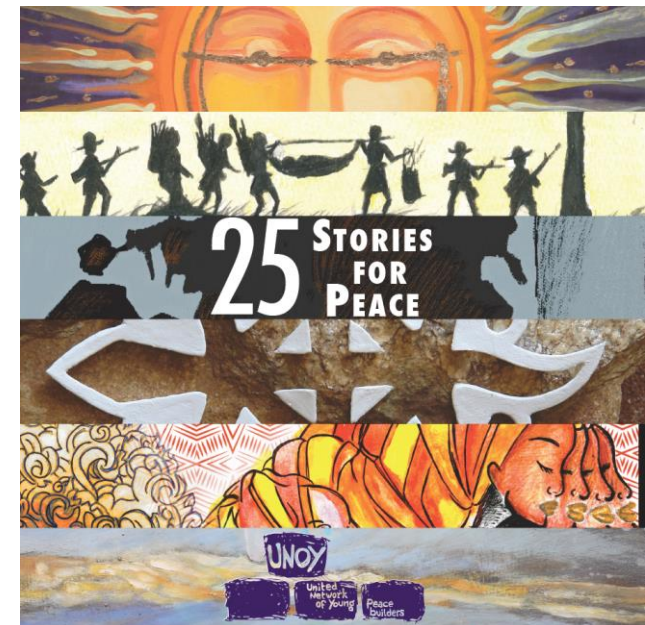
Given the often high turnover of personnel in youth organisations, knowledge sharing within the organisation is key. Often, learning in one project cycle is intense, it is gathered in a report but that learning often remains only and mainly in the team directly involved in the project. This is natural and to be expected. Learning is personal. Yet, lessons learned can be extracted and explained through written reports or through internal sharing or storytelling and training.

Knowledge sharing activities can be:

- Oral storytelling and presentations.
- Workshops and training sessions.
- Internal organisational meetings.
- Meetings with partners, donors and stakeholders.

Knowledge sharing tools can be:

- Toolkits, and publications, like the book ‘25 Stories for Peace’ in which young peacebuilders shared their stories.



- Written reports, articles, essays, charts, theories and infographics summarising key information .A web page with updated information.
- A website, blog and social media platforms describing activities and sharing testimonies.

An example of knowledge sharing are the annual young peacebuilders fora



To sum up, do we need a knowledge management policy?

Having a knowledge management policy may sound too pretentious. Often, big and established organisations do not have one. Yet, we suggest that having a document which records how the organisation is conscious about the importance of knowledge in its activities and how it actually aims to manage it, is a sign of strength.

We suggest a knowledge management policy should guide and advise organisations to implement the following actions.

- to assess knowledge needs periodically and in the context of new projects
- to develop knowledge through specific activities, such as research projects, or integrating knowledge development dimensions to other activities, for example, interviews or focus groups during trainings or exchange programs.
- to use existing knowledge and review lessons learned when making key strategic decisions and in the context of project planning and evaluation.
- to share knowledge within the organisation and with relevant stakeholders.

Read more about...

- **Good practices in youth work data base.** The Council of Europe and European Union's partnership on youth has developed a database of good examples of practice in youth work and training, youth participation and youth policy development. <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/good-practice1>
- **Youth organisations as learning organisations.** This [article](#) describes in detail how knowledge is developed and shared within a youth network - Del Felice, C. and Solheim, L. -2011
- **The 3 types of Knowledge: explicit, tacit and embedded.** <http://www.knowledge-management-tools.net/different-types-of-knowledge.html>

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION



To ensure that youth organisations are learning organisations, that is, organisations are able to monitor and evaluate their work and learn from it, it is necessary to work with people to make it happen. If personnel are not motivated nor prepared to undertake evaluation and learning activities, then efforts are bound to fall in an empty void.

A learning organisation manages its human resources to ensure quality monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) activities. This includes finding the adequate and motivated persons, training and supporting them while implementing evaluation and learning activities. In this section, we explain how to ensure the three basic criteria of a quality human resources management with a strong MEL dimension:

- Recruitment of personnel and responsibilities consider evaluation and learning needs
- Training includes monitoring, evaluation and learning
- Support and supervision for monitoring, evaluation and learning responsibilities

RECRUITMENT OF PERSONNEL AND RESPONSIBILITIES CONSIDER MEL NEEDS

Bigger organisations, often have an evaluation officer, however, it is unlikely that this happens in most youth organisations. Project coordinators and volunteers need to share responsibilities to complete MEL tasks. It is important that the organisation looks for members who have relevant competences and motivation to address MEL needs of the organisation, as one of their responsibilities. This can be reflected in the call for applications which specifically mention motivation and experience in MEL and in an organogram which requires that at least one or some members of the team can take up leadership MEL activities.

TRAINING INCLUDES MEL

Though some staff and volunteers may have experience with monitoring and evaluation, induction, job-specific and periodic training, additional trainings should be organised to strengthen personnel MEL competences, specially, related to knowledge management.

Training in MEL could include:

- Reading this guide, especially completing the assessments proposed in the “Assess” sections, either to assess one’s individual level of knowledge on the subject or the quality of organisational practices.
- Organising a short seminar or include MEL sessions as part of the overall induction programme.
- Facilitating that personnel attends specialised trainings offered in the subject, for example for more advanced forms of evaluation, such as impact evaluation.

SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION FOR MEL RESPONSIBILITIES



Ongoing actions should support and review the work of personnel in view of their personal and professional learning, including to what extent they have developed MEL competences, and the quality of their contributions to the assigned tasks.

To sum up, what should you include in your human resources policies to strengthen its MEL dimension?

- A requirement for recruiting members with MEL competences or/and motivation to address MEL needs (see examples of an M&E job description and a MEL advisor recruitment brief below)
- Suggestions to organise ongoing training activities, in the induction phase and in relation to project-specific skills and knowledge.
- A requirement to support and supervise members in the implementation of MEL responsibilities

Read more about...

- **Human resources management** in youth organisations (pages 20-24) in the report [Training on Organizational Management focusing on Voluntary Service & Youth NGOs](#) - Youth Action for Peace and European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe - 2005
- [Organisational Management T-Kit](#) (including human resources management). Council of Europe - 2000
- Example of [M&E job description](#) - IFRC
- Example [brief Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Advisor](#) - Care International

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION



To be a sustainable organisation, it is not enough to only monitor and evaluate your projects, strategic processes, personnel and knowledge. It is essential to also monitor and evaluate your operational and organisational budgets. Having a continuous stream of income and making the most of it is an essential element of the stability of your organisation's work. In doing so, cost efficiency and effectiveness are important to keep in mind along with the allocation of specific financial resources to monitoring, evaluation and learning activities.

In short, financial management entails planning, organising, controlling, monitoring and evaluating the financial resources of an organisation to achieve its overall objectives.

In this section, we explain how to ensure the two basic criteria of a quality financial management with a strong MEL dimension:

- responsible personnel
- a sound financial planning, monitoring and evaluation scheme, which includes:
 - accounting
 - budgeting
 - control
 - reporting

Below you can find advice and resources for improving your organisational practices related to these two identified criteria in the field of financial management.

RESPONSIBLE PERSONNEL

In order to have an effective financial management an organisation needs to establish a suitable internal environment. Such environment depends to a large extent on the size of the organisation. In all situations it is essential to assign concrete responsibilities to positions/people related to the financial management at the organisational and the operational level.

Guiding questions that can help an organisation to create a suitable environment for financial management:

- Who is legally accountable for the overall financial management of the organisation? (eg. Treasurer, chair of the board)
- Who is overseeing the overall financial management of the organisation? (eg. Treasurer)
- Who is responsible for the overall financial management of the organisation on a day-to-day basis? (eg. Director)
- Who is implementing the overall financial management of the organisation on a day-to-day basis? (eg. Financial Coordinator).
- Are all these detailed responsibilities per position listed in the respective job descriptions?
- Is the overview of assigned financial responsibilities included in the written financial procedures of the organisation?
- How are the responsible persons for financial management held accountable? Is there a double-check principle for expenditures on project and organisational level included in the procedures?
- Are the responsible persons developing financial reports (project reports, annual reports)? Are these reports shared with other people in the organisation?
- Are the lessons identified about the financial management aspects of each project and/or annually of the entire organisation internally shared, discussed and used in the development of new (projects) applications and plans?

Tools:

[Course Handbook. Practical Financial Management for NGOs- Getting the Basics Right \(FM1\) Part 1](#) Chapter 2 Getting Organised (p.13-22), 2009, Terry Lewis

FINANCIAL PLANNING, MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING



There are many tools to use in order to manage financial resources of an organisation and create a sound financial management system that includes monitoring, evaluation and learning. We have identified the following four tools:

1. ACCOUNTING

Accounting for the money you have raised as an organisation is a crucial part of the financial management process. This does not solely refer to the accounting or bookkeeping system that an organisation uses, and it is not only about the money itself. It also refers to the ways to show how the money was spend and, most importantly, if and how it helped the organisation achieve its goals.

Suggested steps:

- Make sure that appropriate financial procedures and reporting standards are in place. Include the following elements (amongst others):
 - Frequency of monitoring moments of the project and overall budget (i.e. monthly, bi-monthly, trimestrial, mid-term, etc.)
 - Past year budget evaluation
 - Financial milestones (short and long-term)
 - Details on methods and tools used to include learnings in future financial planning

- Create a separate account category for each project.

Read more about...

- **Accounting** for it, Section 7. (p. 62-67) [T-Kit 9 Funding and Financial Management](#) - Council of Europe - 2014
- **Getting Organised** Chapter 2 (p.13-22) [Course Handbook. Practical Financial Management for NGOs- Getting the Basics Right \(FM1\) Part 1](#) Terry Lewis - 2009

2. BUDGETING

The process of budgeting simply entails the following; calculating the expenditures, calculating income, compare income and expenditures and analyse the income and expenditures in order to create a cashflow (the total amount of money being transferred into and out of an organisation) forecast.

Suggested steps:

- Use resources and needs assessments in order to plan its operational and organisational budgets
- Make sure that the budget forecast is part of the annual planning process of the entire organisation
- Ensure that there are clear responsibilities for preparing, managing and implementing the annual budget plans (see also the previous section about responsible personnel)

Read more about...

- Section 5.1. **How to prepare a budget?** (p.38 -39)in [T-Kit 9 Funding and Financial Management](#) - Council of Europe - 2014
- Chapter 3: **Financial Planning** (p. 23-39) in [Course Handbook. Practical Financial Management for NGOs- Getting the Basics Right \(FM1\) Part 2](#) - Management Accounting for Non-governmental Organisations - 2009

3. FINANCIAL CONTROL

Financial control systems are meant to provide sufficient security for the finances and assets of the organisation. The systems provide checks and balances which helps an organisation to prevent fraud or misappropriation or deviations from accepted policies and procedures. Examples of these systems are inventory controls, which means a system that records assets which are generally consumable or saleable and internal and external audits. In short, if there is a situation of financial control it means that the financial resources are correctly and effectively used.

Suggested steps:

NOTE: It depends on the scope of the organisation, the financial and human resource available if these steps are feasible, especially related to an external audit.

- make sure there is a stock/inventory control system in place which is followed
- running budgets are monitored periodically and expenditures are adapted accordingly.
- annual external audits are conducted and review the financial management practices
- recommendations derived from the audits are implemented

Read more about...

- [T-Kit 9 Funding and Financial Management](#), 5) **Handling Cash** (p.57-58) -Council of Europe - 2014
- [Course Handbook. Practical Financial Management for NGOs- Getting the Basics Right \(FM1\) Part 1](#) Chapter 2 **Getting Organised** (p. 13-22)- Terry Lewis - 2009

4. FINANCIAL REPORTING

The final element of a sound Financial monitoring, evaluation and learning scheme is by producing financial reports in order to assess the progress and results of the financial affairs for the organisation. If the previous suggested steps have been taken, which means that sufficient accounting, budgeting and checks have taken place, it is 'relatively' easy to create a financial report. Remember that a report should be timely, accurate and relevant!

Suggested steps:

- Make sure that the reports are done in a timely manner (based on what is committed to in the financial procedures)
- Include a balance sheet in the financial reports of specific projects and the organisational budget
- Ensure that financial transactions are backed up by relevant supporting documents
- Review and approve the financial reports by assigned personnel such as the board of the organisation/financial committee (based on what is committed to in the financial procedures)

Tool:

[Course Handbook. Practical Financial Management for NGOs- Getting the Basics Right \(FM1\) Part 2](#) Chapter 5: Financial Reports, 2009, Terry Lewis

How to allocate specific financial resources to monitoring, evaluation and learning activities of the organisation?

When you are planning your MEL activities for the entire organisation (for example after the Strategic Plan has been finalised) or for a specific project or program, make sure that you include a realistic planning of the financial resources needed in order to conduct the MEL activities. To be as realistic as possible it is helpful to make three different budget lines, for monitoring, evaluation and learning separately. This planning activity reduces the risk that running out of financial resources when the evaluation and reporting phases are starting.

It is often challenging to source and secure financial resources for monitoring and evaluation of outcomes of projects and programmes and to use the lessons learned identified. Since there is (often) not a specific project where the costs relate to and can be charged to directly.

Tips to address this challenge:

1. Draw financial resources together from different projects
2. Create a separate monitoring and evaluation fund, facility or project associated with an outcome or a programme to which all the constituent projects would contribute through transfer of some project funds. This facility could be located in the same entity that manages the outcome or programme.
3. Mobilise funds from partners directly for an outcome or programme monitoring and evaluation facility
4. Allocate required funds annually for each outcome on the basis of planned costs of monitoring and evaluation from overall programme budget to the facility or fund

Read more about...

- **3.3 Resources for Monitoring and Evaluation** (p. 90-91) in [Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), United Nations Development Programme - 2009
- [Going the Distance. Step by Step. Strategies to Foster NGO Sustainability](#), 2012, FHI 360 and USAID
- [Organisational capacity assessment. An introduction to a tool](#). Annex I & II p. 23-43, 2009, Mundia

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION



Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME) is an approach to performance review with all stakeholders from the same intervention (local citizens, policy makers, funding agencies and nongovernmental organisations). They work together to decide how to assess progress, conduct data collection and analysis, and take action on their findings.

- **Participatory monitoring** is mainly concerned with short-term performance assessment of outputs and outcomes;
- **Participatory evaluation** is primarily focused on longer term outcomes and impacts.

Both activities encourage mutual learning and knowledge production by stakeholders and adjustment of the design or operations of the intervention in light of what is learned (Encyclopedia of Evaluation. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation). In this section we are looking at what are some participatory methods and activities that organisations could be using **to monitor and evaluate** with their partners, **to learn** from and together with them and finally **to be accountable** to each other.

An external relations strategy should consider the following aspects:

Relations with stakeholders

- your organisation is perceived credible
- your organisation is considered a relevant partner and resource
- your organisation has good relations with the private sector for technical assistance, fundraising and human resources

Relations with other organisations

- your organisation networks and shares its resources with other organisations locally, nationally and internationally
- your organisation actively represents and promotes coalitions and networks
- your organisation engages in national and global advocacy campaigns

Relations with government (local, regional, national)

- your organisation has instruments to influence government policies in specific area of work
- your organisation has contacts with influencers and decision-makers
- your organisation can engage policy-makers in dialogue/consultation processes
- your organisation's' outputs and recommendations are integrated into government plans and policy work

Relations with donors

- your organisation is perceived as financially credible
- your organisation is considered a relevant partner and resource
- your organisation has built in practices/procedures for identifying and contacting donors as well as managing a donor network.

- your organisation has a diverse funding base/network.

Relations with the wider public/community

- your organisation engages with the community on various occasions.
- your organisation's mission and vision are understood correctly by the stakeholders.
- your organisation provides relevant information about the activities that reach the surrounding community (i.e. newsletters, annual reports, etc.)
- your organisation is seen in a positive light among the stakeholders

Relations with the media

- the organisation has a strategy on working with the media.
- the organisations has and maintains its relations with different media and communication outlets
- the organisation constantly monitors the way it is portrayed in the media
- the media consults your organisation on issues related to your work

MONITORING AND EVALUATING WITH OTHERS

1. Determine who and to what extent in/from/does your external environment support the development of evaluation capacity? (i.e International agencies and units promote and encourage innovation, professional networks/communities promote monitoring and evaluation, stakeholders might provide support for evaluation)
2. Decide who participates in your project and form a multi-stakeholder platform to lead the process (a consortium, committee, task force, or working group), engage them in the entire project cycle and ensure their ownership of the process.
3. Engage stakeholders in regular communication about the monitoring and evaluation progress with your target audience



4. Send draft versions of the reports to the relevant stakeholders for review and comment
5. Edit the report to include points of clarification or reaction statements.
6. Present written and oral reports to donors and stakeholders.

LEARNING WITH AND FROM OTHERS

1. Clarify concepts of “participation” and “participatory monitoring and evaluation” with your partners and stakeholders
2. Identify appropriate methodologies that suit everyone's' needs and capabilities.
3. Reflect together on past work, examine current realities, revisit your goals and objectives and define future plans by recognising the different needs and of your stakeholders and negotiate their interests.
4. Develop a plan to build capacity for participatory monitoring and evaluation in your organisation. Such as:
 - a. collaborating, joining and/or building networks and sharing knowledge and experiences with external partners
 - b. participating in communities of practice
 - c. identifying good practices from other organisations in the field
 - d. use their work as a standard for comparison
5. Scale up participatory monitoring and evaluation and promote institutional learning

Read more about...

- **An example of a plan to build capacity of participatory monitoring and evaluation** - [Use of Results](#) (p.5)- USIP - 2012

ACCOUNTING TO AND WITH OTHERS

1. The current good practice in the NGO field is on accountability based on performance. Thus, a greater emphasis placed on achieving results and objectives beyond the traditional reporting (narrative and financial) and auditing.
2. The growing scarcity of funds leads to a demand for greater accountability and demonstrated impact or success based on social responsiveness and ethical responsibility.

3. The ongoing trend towards decentralisation and delegation of responsibilities and authority from central to lower levels of government is contributing to new forms of oversight to ensure transparency, ownership, empowerment and accountability towards the community.
4. Organisations and youth movements are affirming their growing capacity and experience to act as decision makers and implementers in driving and sustaining change.

Read more about...

- Monitoring and sharing lessons about partnerships (4.2) and building strategic partnerships - [“Pathways to Partnerships” toolkit](#)
- [Networking and Relationship Building for CSOs](#)
- Building partnership between youth peace organisations - [Partners for Peace Toolkit](#)

RESOURCES

In this section we have gathered for you resources and tools that we find useful to improve knowledge and practices on monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The resources and tools are structured along the three dimensions used throughout the guide and correspond to **Learning the basics**, **Learning for Projects** & **Learning for Organisations**.



BASIC CONCEPTS

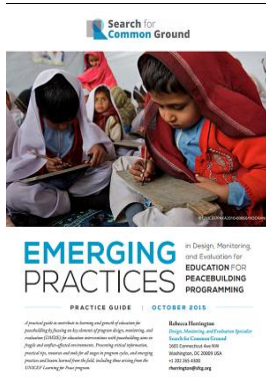
ABOUT MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

PEACEBUILDING & CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION



[Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transformation 20 notions for theory and practice](#) Berghof Foundation Operations GmbH - 2012

MONITORING



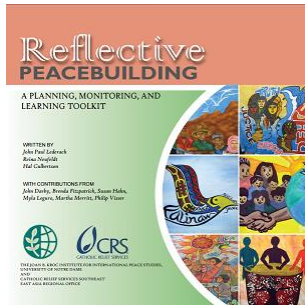
[Monitoring Changes: Methods and Tools, Chapter 3.](#) (p. 43-51) in Emerging Practices in Design, Monitoring and Evaluation for Education for Peacebuilding Programming, Search for Common Ground - 2015

EVALUATION



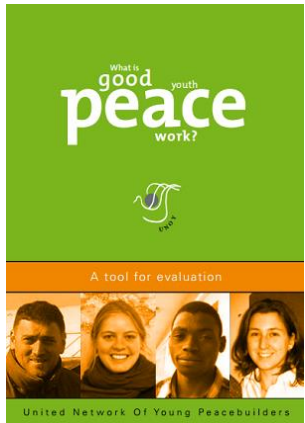
[Evaluation Flashcards. Embedding evaluative thinking in organizational culture](#) - Otto Bremer Foundation - 2013

LEARNING

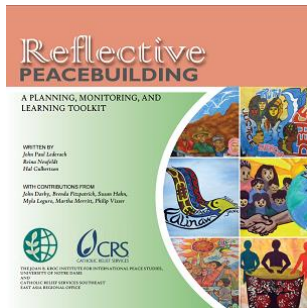


[Learning Communities](#) , [Chapter 3.](#) (p. 7-11) in Reflective Peacebuilding – A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit - The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame - 2007

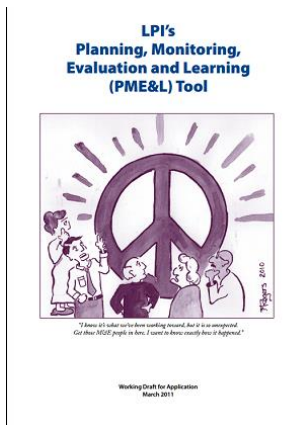
BASIC TOOLKITS



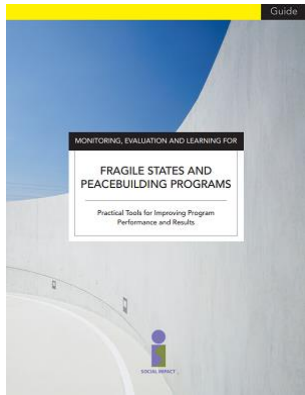
[What is good youth peace work? A guide for evaluation](#) - UNOY Peacebuilders - 2005



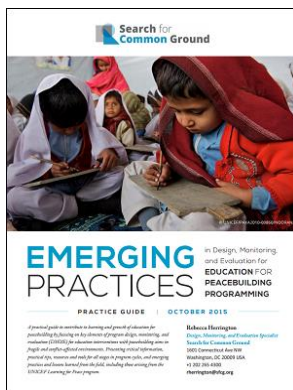
[Reflective Peacebuilding – A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit](#) - The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame -2007



[LPI's Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning \(PME&L\) Tool](#) - Life & Peace Institute, 2011



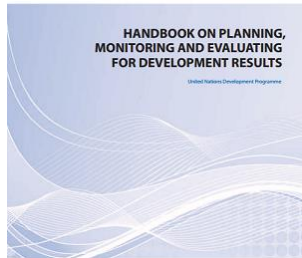
[Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Fragile States and Peacebuilding Programs Guide.](#) - Social Impact



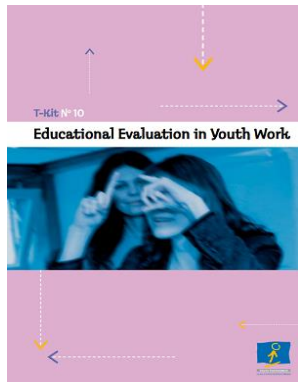
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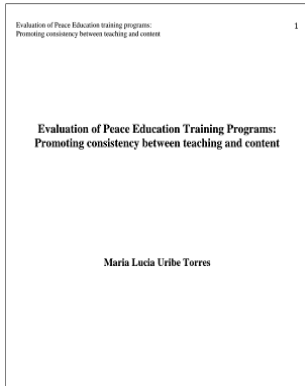
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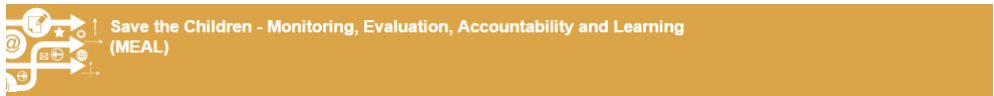


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TOOLS & RESOURCES FOR PROJECTS

ABOUT MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING AT THE PROJECT LEVEL

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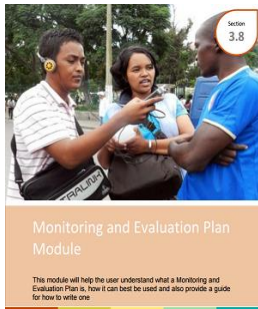
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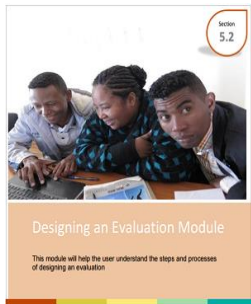


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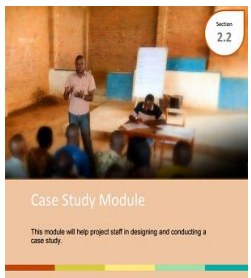
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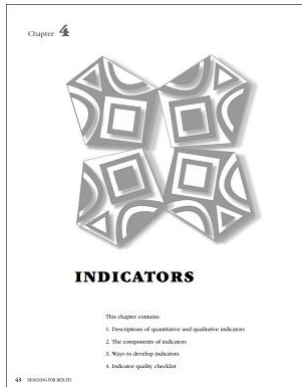
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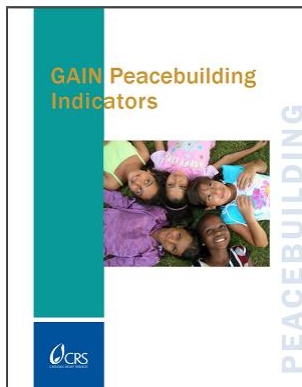
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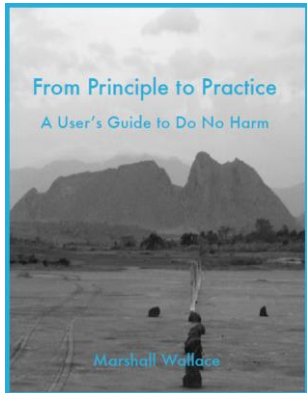
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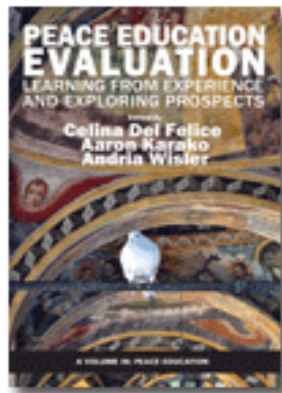
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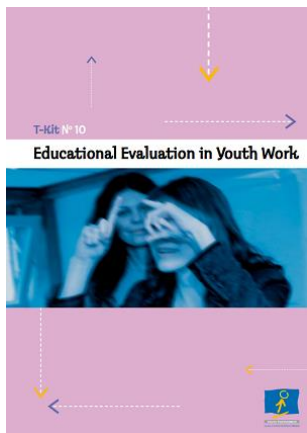
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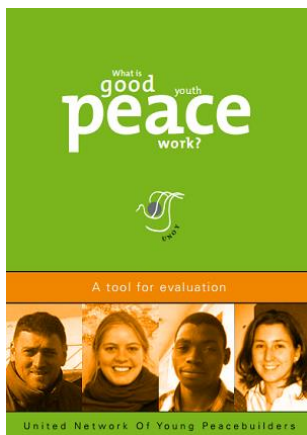
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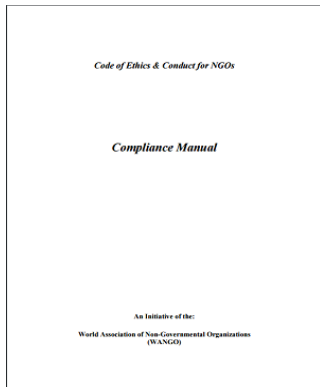
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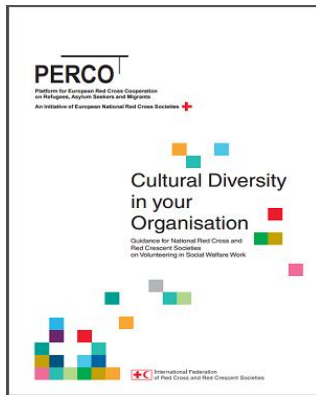
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ABOUT MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING AT THE ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

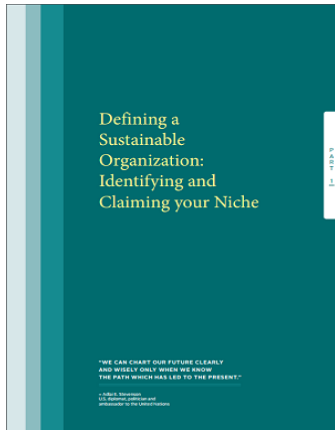
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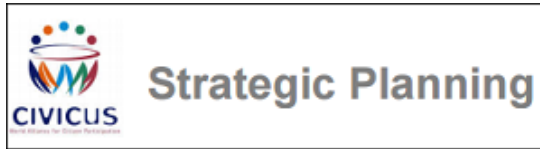


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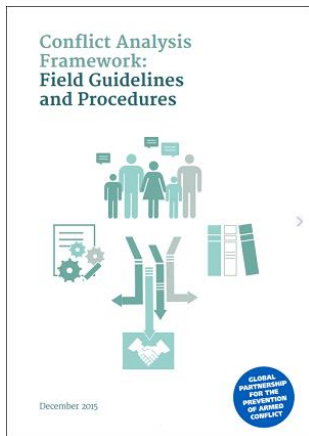
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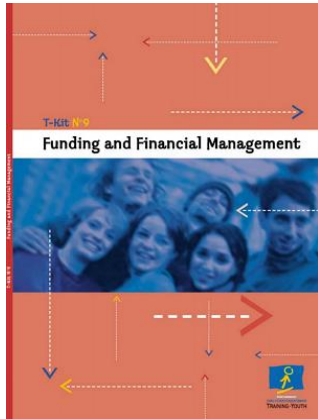
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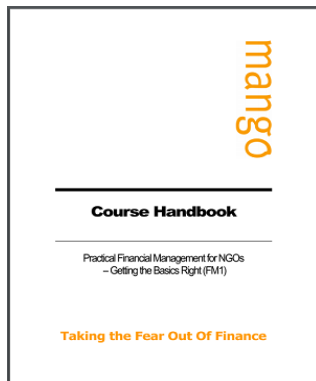


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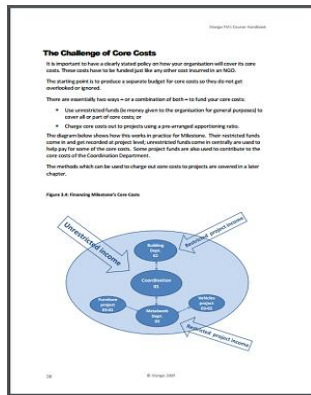
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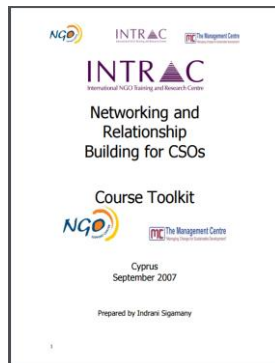
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