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LPI's Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PME&L) Tool

"I know it's what we've been working toward, but it is so unexpected. Get those M&E people in here. I want to know exactly how it happened."

Working Draft for Application
March 2011

LPI's Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PME&L) Tool

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Life & Peace Institute, Uppsala

LPI's Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PME&L) Tool
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Disclaimer:
This tool serves primarily as an internal guideline for the Life & Peace Institute's (LPI) engagement in conflict transformation. The methodology described is currently in a phase of application and testing with the purpose of learning about the strengths and weaknesses of the suggested approach. Identified lessons learnt will be incorporated at a later stage, meaning that the content of the document will be subject to changes. While the document often refers to LPI directly, the tool can be of use to other actors engaging in the domain of conflict transformation/peacebuilding and capacity building of local actors. Comments, ideas and suggestions are welcome and can be sent to Charlotte Booth (charlotte.booth@life-peace.org), phone: + 46 (0)18 66 01 35.

Life & Peace INSTITUTE

The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) is an international and ecumenical centre that supports and promotes nonviolent approaches to conflict transformation through a combination of research and action that entails the strengthening of existing local capacities and enhancing preconditions for building peace.

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This tool builds on the work of other organisations, researchers and practitioners related to planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning. Many of them have directly contributed in one way or another to LPI's own efforts. In this regard I specifically would like to mention Dr. Reina Neufeldt (Joan B Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies), Peter Woodrow (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects – Reflecting on Peace Practice Project), Christoph Spurk (Institute of Applied Media Studies at Zurich University), Dr. Thania Paffenholz (Centre on Conflict Development and Peacebuilding at the Graduate Institute of Geneva) and Dr. Isak Svensson (Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University).

As can be seen from the reference list in Chapter 10, many useful and relevant manuals, articles and books within the field of peacebuilding, results-based management and other PME&L approaches have enabled us to compile this tool. I would in particular like to highlight the comprehensive guide *Designing for Results* by Cheyanne Church and Mark M. Rogers (published by Search for Common Ground) as well as *Reflective Peacebuilding* by John Paul Lederach et. al. A special thanks goes also to Mark M. Rogers for adding a humoristic twist to our PME&L publication with his cartoons.

This document would not exist without the hard work and innovation in the application of the tool by LPI's staff at all levels. Lessons that have emerged and will continue to emerge from the application of the methodology will enable LPI to continuously improve its performance in PME&L. I would like to acknowledge current and previous staff in the Programme Unit at LPI's head office for their research, summarising of lessons learned, writing and editing of this and the previous versions of the PME&L tool, among them Adrian Calvo-Valderrama, Catrin Rosquist, Charlotte Booth, Hannah Tsadik, Jérôme Gouzou, Kristina Patring and Dr. Tarekegn Adebo. Specific thanks to all of LPI's staff in the field who have brought theoretical ideas down to the level of capacity building and conflict transformation work on the ground.

Last but not least, a very special thank you to Kristina Patring and Charlotte Booth, who are not only the editors of this edition, but also two of our main "PME&L champions", who with never-ending enthusiasm and conviction have supported and encouraged the rest of us to keep learning and improving when it comes to PME&L.

Jenny Svensson
Programme Director
Uppsala, 14 February 2011

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1. Introduction to LPI's PME&L tool

1.1 Background

Since the beginning of 2008, LPI has embarked on a process of developing its programme management systems. A tool for Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PME&L), which builds on the approach of results-based management and insights in the field of peacebuilding evaluation, has been developed as a draft. The PME&L tool is currently being applied by LPI in its annual planning, monitoring and evaluation processes as well as by its field offices in the majority of their programme planning, monitoring and reporting. It is seen as a living document that will be adapted and reviewed in order to integrate lessons learnt from its application.

1.2 The structure of this tool

This tool introduces the key steps for PME&L with a special emphasis on conflict transformation engagement. Learning is – as illustrated below – at the centre of all these stages and takes place throughout the process. For each of the major stages, there are a number of learning questions to address. The stages interact with each other, e.g. monitoring will in many cases also mean re-planning.

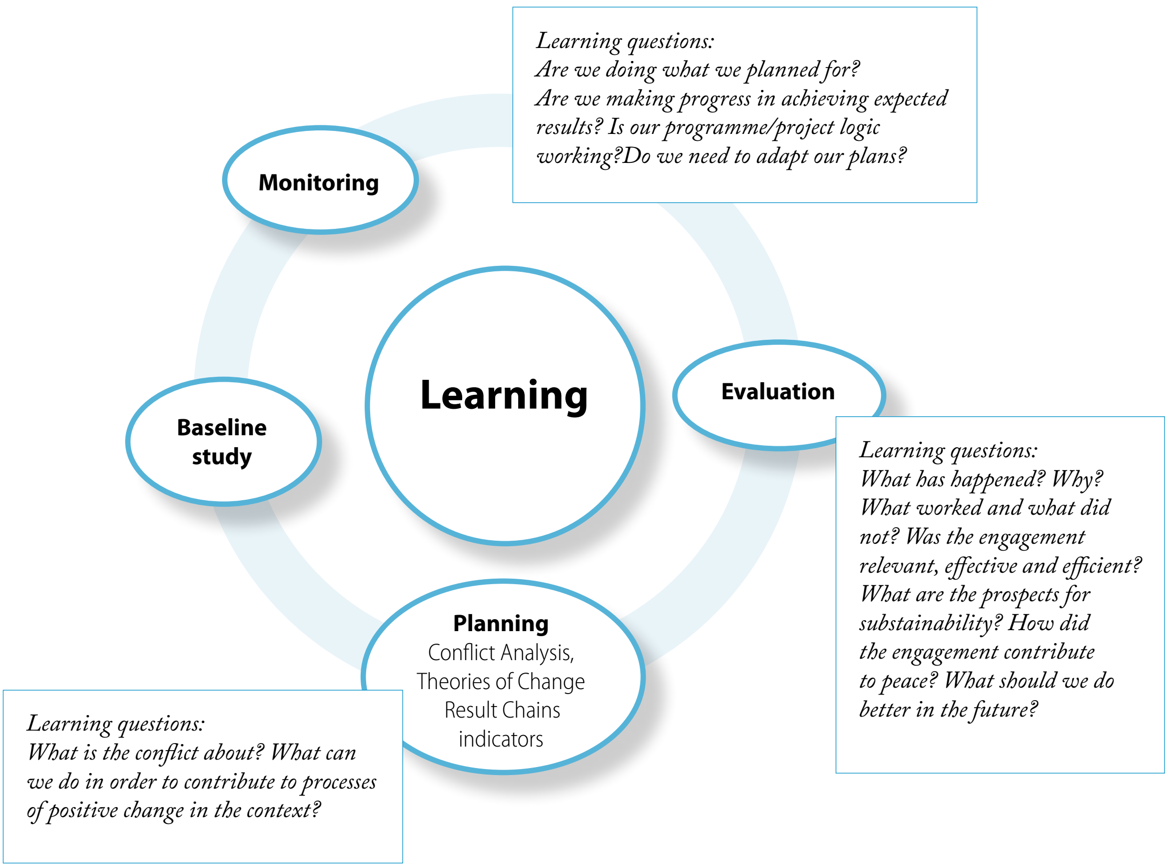

Figure 1: **Cycle of PME&L**

After reflecting on challenges and opportunities for doing PME&L with a results-based focus in conflict transformation, the chapters will describe the key steps in planning (conflict analysis, theories of change, results chains and indicators), baseline studies (which are the intersection of planning and monitoring), monitoring as well as evaluation. The conclusion will then provide a few practical suggestions for getting started with the application of these steps in peacebuilding work.

1.3 What is results-based management?

LPI has decided to adopt as far as possible a PME&L methodology that uses results-based management (RBM). It is "a management philosophy and approach that emphasizes development results in planning, implementation, learning and reporting".[1] RBM is therefore one way of conceptualising planning, monitoring and evaluating of projects or programmes. One of the most famous RBM approaches is the logical framework approach (LFA).[2]

The RBM "philosophy" is focused on results throughout all stages of a project/programme: Within RBM, we *plan* for producing results, we *monitor* progress towards achieving the results (which might also include adjusting planned results), we *evaluate* whether, to what extent and why/why not results were produced. So, *what is a result*? A result is a *change* that can be described or measured and that is produced by a cause (i.e. results are effects of a cause). However, it has to be said that in complex social environments and processes, positive changes are often not the result of one identifiable cause. Instead, several interdependent factors might produce a certain change in a circular manner. In projects or programmes, results could be expected (planned) or unexpected (not planned for).

Some of the key elements of RBM are:[3]

- RBM starts in the planning phase of a project/programme. Realistic expected results on different levels (results chains) are defined based on thorough analysis.
- Planning activities that are contributing to expected results implies a backwards logic – first think about where you want to go and then decide on the best path to get there.
- Participation of stakeholders is an important ingredient of RBM, as experience shows that this improves the quality, relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of projects and programmes.
- The progress towards achieving results is monitored by using appropriate indicators.
- Results information is used to make effective management decisions.
- Knowledge is increased and practice improved through learning.
- Risks are identified and managed.
- Results are documented and shared.

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1 Canadian International Development Agency CIDA, *RBM Handbook on Developing Results Chains. The Basics of RBM as Applied to 100 project examples*, CIDA: December 2000, p. 5. <http://www.unssc.org/web1/programmes/rcs/cca_undaf_training_material/teamrcs/file.asp?ID=143> (accessed 28 January 2011).

2 For a summary of LFA see Örtengren, K, *The Logical Framework Approach*, Swedish International Development Agency: Stockholm, 2003. <http://www.sida.se/shared/jsp/download.jsp?f=SIDA1489en_web.pdf&a=2379> (accessed 28 January 2011)

3 Adapted from: CIDA, *RBM Handbook on Developing Results Chains*, p. 6.

1.4 Challenges for using a results-based PME&L approach in conflict transformation

In the field of peacebuilding, there is often a good degree of skepticism towards employing formal – and in particular results-based – tools for PME&L initiatives. It is sometimes perceived as a merely donor-driven methodology to safeguard accountability and hence is often seen as more of a burden than a useful and relevant tool. There are indeed specific challenges tied to applying RBM in complex societal settings, in particular in situations of conflict. These challenges can be briefly summarised as follows: [4]

- RBM relies on the assumption that there is a linear logic and a cause and effect relationship between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact. This seems to contradict the understanding of development – and peacebuilding the more so – as a complex and circular social process.
- Peacebuilding takes place in rapidly shifting settings that simultaneously demand both immediate action and thoughtful efforts to deal with key driving forces of conflict or "root causes". Creative strategies that are effective in the moment of crisis and take long-term changes into consideration are necessary.
- Unexpected new violence can destroy months or even years of peacebuilding efforts. Patience is a key quality of peacebuilders.
- Connected to the above, the dynamic nature of conflict and post-conflict situations implies the need for re-planning, which might also entail that previously planned activities or results are not feasible or relevant anymore. Peacebuilding requires the building of relationships and trust – phenomena that are not easily measured in objective and quantitative ways. Also, the focus on results bears the risk that the process that led to the achievement of results is not reflected upon and included in learning efforts.
- An oversimplified understanding of RBM/LFA conveys the message that a specific development result can be attributed to an agency/initiative. A more critical understanding, however, acknowledges that this is hardly the case and thus suggests that one should think in terms of contribution to a result, as many actors and factors are contributing to social change.
- RBM focuses on expected results and thereby risks failing to see unintended consequences, both positive and negative ones.
- Another major concern is that RBM is alien to many cultures. It can be a challenge to introduce RBM to local partners in a way that builds ownership. Often, it is difficult to translate this approach to many

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4 Not all criticisms can be presented exhaustively here, so for more information please refer to Earl, S., Carden, F. and Smutylo, T., *Outcome Mapping. Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programmes*, IDRC: 2001. <http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9330-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html> (accessed 29 May 2009) and Bakewell, O. and Garbutt, A., *The Use and Abuse of the Logical Framework Approach*, Swedish International Development Agency: Stockholm, November 2005. <http://www.sida.se/shared/jsp/download.jsp?f=LFA-review.pdf&a=21025> (accessed 30 June 2009). With specific reference to peacebuilding please see: Lederach, J. P. et. al., *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring, And Learning Toolkit*, The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame and Catholic Relief Service South East Asia Regional Office: Notre Dame, 2007, pp. 1f. <http://kroc.nd.edu/sites/default/files/reflective_peacebuilding.pdf> (accessed 26 March 2009). Anderson, M. B. and Olson, L., *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*, The Collaborative for Development Action: Cambridge, MA, 2003, p. 9. and Neufeldt, R. C., '"Frameworkers" and "Circlers" – Exploring assumptions in peace and conflict impact assessment', *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation*, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management: Berlin, 2007, pp. 5ff. <http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/neufeldt_handbook.pdf> (accessed 30 June 2009).

languages. Connected to this, despite aiming to increase participation, the application of RBM in a participatory manner seems to pose challenges.

- Due to weak or lacking infrastructure and statistical documentation, the collection of baseline and monitoring data is very difficult. When this is reinforced by insecurity, data collection can be physically impossible, possible on a smaller scale than planned or delayed.

1.5 How does LPI deal with these challenges? Some core principles

It is important to keep these challenges in mind when working with the PME&L tool. The application process within the organisation (and exchange with other actors) can be seen as an opportunity to learn how to face these challenges in a better way. For this reason it is also important to document experiences when working with the tool (What works well? What doesn't? What is difficult? Why?). LPI can strive to improve its own PME&L practices and share these experiences with other organisations.

The PME&L tool tries to capitalise on the opportunities of RBM, while keeping its challenges in mind and trying to adapt PME&L practices in order to mitigate key criticisms. LPI's *"core principles"* for working with PME&L tool can be described as follows:

Learning is the main purpose of the PME&L tool. LPI wants to learn from its engagement, detect "flaws", build on what really works and share these experiences with others. The PME&L tool provides a learning infrastructure: Through its focus on analysis and data collection, RBM provides unique learning opportunities, both within the project/programme and about the context we work in. Engagement should always be accompanied and guided by an inquisitive momentum, i.e. asking the right questions, including those we are uncomfortable with. Learning also implies a commitment to share with other actors in the field of peacebuilding, which LPI refers to as "Cross-fertilisation of theory and practice".[5] *Accountability* to partners, beneficiaries and donors comes with this learning.

Analysis and understanding function as foundations for decision-making. The PME&L tool assumes that proper analysis and understanding are the key ingredients for successful – relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable – projects/programmes and is a precondition for managing complexity and volatility. PME&L enables the planning and implementation of projects/programmes that respond to the needs in the context and address key driving forces and causes of conflict.

Social change is a complex, non-linear process where many actors and factors, on different levels, work together (and oppose each other). Hence, LPI does not attempt to *attribute* change to its engagement, but instead acknowledges that it can only try to *influence* this process and, together with its partners, *contribute* to positive change.

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5 "Cross-fertilisation of theory and practice" is one of three Strategic Priorities defined in LPI's Strategic Plan for 2010-15: "LPI engages in knowledge transfer, and makes the conflict transformation knowledge and experiences of LPI and its partners available for peacebuilding practitioners and research communities. At the same time, it gathers relevant theories and experiences from other contexts and organisations and communicates them within LPI and to its partners." (Life & Peace Institute, Strategic Plan 2010-2015, LPI: Uppsala, 2009. <http://www.life-peace.org/sajt/filer/pdf/LPI%20Strategic%20Plan%202010-2015.pdf> (accessed 20 January 2011).

Working in conflict contexts requires a certain degree of *flexibility and adaptability* in project/programme implementation. Changes to programme design and implementation should always be informed by sound analysis.

PME&L is a participatory undertaking and works best if carried out with LPI's partners and adapted to the local context where LPI's programmes are located. At the same time, this participatory process can serve a capacity building function in relationships with partners. Partners are not "objects" to an intervention, but agents of change in their contexts. PME&L can serve as one methodology to facilitate their engagement as change agents.

"I'm vexed Jimmy. Result chains, frameworks, theories of change – makes me wonder how we ever used to do peacebuilding."

1.6 The PME&L tool and LPI's two "legs": conflict transformation and capacity building

LPI's working approach consists of two interdependent components:

- The conflict transformation approach (the four dimensions of change, analysis and action)[6]
- Capacity building for conflict transformers as a tool for conflict transformation.

This means that LPI is in fact standing on two legs: the first is its knowledge and experience in conflict transformation, and the second is its knowledge about how to build the capacity of organisations working in conflict

6 LPI has adopted the approach of conflict transformation, based on the work and writing of John Paul Lederach and others. The key tenets of the approach are described in more detail in chapter 2. For further reference please see: Lederach, J. P., *The little book of Conflict Transformation*, Intercourse (PA), 2003, pp. 3-33. Lederach, J. P. and Maiese, M., *Conflict Transformation*, in: Burgess, G. and Burgess, H., *Beyond Intractability*, University of Colorado: Boulder, October 2003 <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/transformation/?nid=1223> Lederach, J. P. et. al., *Reflective Peacebuilding*. See also Paffenholz, T., "Civil Society and Peacebuilding", in: Paffenholz (ed.), *Civil Society and Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment*, Boulder, CA: 2010, pp. 43-64.

transformation. The latter does not only mean building capacity within conflict transformation, but often also includes building the capacity of whole organisations and local structures that need to be sustainable once LPI has phased out its accompaniment. On the local level this means that LPI works more as a capacity builder and a facilitator than a direct conflict transformer. From the national and international perspective, however, LPI also becomes a conflict transformer through its work with capacity building in conflict transformation, policy work and awareness-raising as well as cross-fertilisation of theory and practice.

For this reason it will be necessary for LPI to do PME&L on several levels.

1) *LPI carries out PME&L within its own field programmes.* In most cases, the focus will be on capacity building (both of conflict transformation skills and other areas of organisational development), rather than on direct conflict transformation activities in the context. Consequently, it will be difficult to include the four dimensions of conflict transformation in the PME&L work that is done at this level. However, when engaging in e.g. policy work and awareness-raising, it might be possible to track changes in the four dimensions, meaning that it will be important for LPI to know how to adapt the PME&L tool to work within the four dimensions of conflict transformation.

2) *LPI's partners do conflict transformation, accompanied by LPI.* As the partners, with support from LPI, do PME&L in their conflict transformation work, they will, most likely, have the opportunity to learn about the four dimensions of conflict transformation. As described later in this tool, this link can be established when developing theories of change for conflict transformation activities. There might also be partners that do not work explicitly with the four dimensions of conflict transformation. In that case the PME&L work will have to be adapted to the nature of the partner's engagement.

3) Finally, it should be possible for LPI to draw conclusions from the *aggregated results of the PME&L* work that has been performed, both on its own capacity building efforts and on the conflict transformation work implemented by partners. These conclusions should then enable LPI to see the extent to which it is helping to transform conflicts on a country programme level (peace writ large).

Consequently some levels of the PME&L work will include learning and measuring the effects that LPI's and its partners work have in a particular context, i.e. changes along the four dimensions of conflict transformation. Other levels on which PME&L will have to be done will be more concerned with the overall capacity building work of LPI. These levels will not need to include the four dimensions of conflict transformation. As a capacity builder, LPI has an indirect effect on conflict transformation in the context. This reflects one of LPI's core principles, i.e. that local actors, be it civil society organisations, churches or traditional structures, initiate and own change processes in their context, while being closely accompanied by LPI.

An early PME&L session

"Maybe we ought to aim a little below life's eternal question."

2. Conflict analysis

2.1 Introduction

Conflict analysis is the systematic study of a given conflict with the purpose to reach a better understanding of the causes of conflict and the societal changes brought about by it.[7] Conflict analysis is not an end in itself, but serves as a basis for developing conflict transformation strategies. The main purpose is to identify strategic entry points for conflict transformation. Without a clear understanding of what the conflict is about and why incompatibilities exist, no appropriate strategies of how to contribute to positive social change can be developed.[8]

Conflict analysis is conducted on two levels:

1) Conflict analysis is part of planning and monitoring (see chapter 7) LPI's programmes, i.e. it is an element in the process of PME&L.

2) Conflict analysis is a central activity in the programme's implementation, carried out together with partners.

This chapter of the PME&L tool mainly focuses on the first level, i.e. on conflict analysis conducted by LPI with the purpose of providing information for planning and monitoring of projects/programmes. While the chapter is

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7 Definition taken from LPI, Programme Proposal 2008-09, LPI: Uppsala 2007.

8 Among others, Thania Paffenholz and Luc Reychler emphasise the significance of conflict analysis for designing peacebuilding interventions. The identification of peacebuilding needs relies on conflict and peace analyses. See Paffenholz, T. and Reychler, L., *Aid for Peace. A Guide to Planning and Evaluation in Conflict Zones*, Nomos: Baden-Baden, 2007.

not deliberately developed for the use in capacity building/learning processes, the tools provided can be adapted to fit various needs and situations.[9]

As mentioned before, conflict analysis serves the purpose of identifying the most relevant and effective strategies for conflict transformation. As the Reflecting on Peace Project (RPP) of CDA Collaborative Learning Projects notes, the link between analysis and programming is often insufficient:

> "Programming is not linked to analysis. In a seeming contradiction, RPP found no clear link between whether and how a program did conflict analysis and its effectiveness. Among the RPP cases, there were effective programs that did very little analysis, and less effective programs that did extensive analysis. Why? The evidence suggested one explanation: that even when practitioners do analysis, they often fail to link their program strategy to it. (…) As another explanation for the seeming contradiction, RPP found that some programs – often effective ones – are grounded on informal analysis that draws on the long experience of local people or long-time observers of the conflict."[10]

For LPI this means:

- It is not enough to do extensive conflict analysis; the way the analysis is done determines whether it can contribute to effective and relevant programme strategies.
- The risk of doing conflict analysis with a view to confirm existing programme strategies has to be avoided. There is a need to stay open when doing analysis and asking the right questions (e.g. about the real relevance of LPI's engagement).
- LPI can draw on its long experience and forms of informal analysis conducted, for instance, in the relationships with partners. A formalisation of analysis can occur through documenting informal analysis activities (such as conversations) and through using structured processes for such exchanges.

Where does conflict analysis fit in LPI's PME&L process? Conflict analysis provides the basis for planning programmes and projects. Therefore, it should ideally constitute the first step in the PME&L process. In the logical flow, it precedes the reflection and development of theories of change. Conflict analysis provides the "understanding of the context of the intervention" that is necessary in order to decide on vision of success, target group and the most relevant and effective tools for change.

An earlier draft of this paper was criticised, for mainly two reasons: Firstly, it was regarded as too complex and not focused enough to be useful in practice, especially for the work with partner organisations. While partners are not the main target group of the paper, this revision tries to keep it as simple and focused as possible. Secondly, it was questioned whether the conflict transformation approach of LPI – the four dimensions and the link between analysis and action – was sufficiently reflected in the conflict analysis chapter.

9 For training in conflict analysis capacity, please refer to the learning processes developed on <www.peacepaces.com/page/Conflict+analysis%3A+Methods+and+tools>

10 CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, *Reflecting on Peace Practice Participant Training Manual*, CDA: Cambridge, MA, 2009, p. 3. <http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/manual/rpp_training_participant_manual_rev_20090104_Pdf.pdf> (accessed 27 July 2009).

While this revised paper will try to address these weaknesses, it has to be stressed that the further development of a tailor-made LPI conflict analysis methodology will have to be the result of a continuously concerted effort on different levels within LPI and should bring together the experiences of conducting conflict analysis in the field. This document should therefore be seen as a starting point and an invitation to contribute to the further development of LPI's conflict analysis methodology.

Conflict analysis can be done in many different ways and numerous frameworks and guidelines have been developed.[11] The frameworks set different analytical foci, have strengths and weaknesses and can be more useful in some contexts than in others. This chapter does not aim to present all of these frameworks, but instead will introduce two analytical frameworks. Before that, a definition of conflict will be given.

2.2 What is conflict?

LPI has decided to use the following definition of conflict:

> **A conflict is a *social situation*, in which a minimum of two actors (parties) pursue *incompatible* goals/objectives (or perceive them as being incompatible).**[12]

The *advantages/strengths* of this definition are: it is simple, clear-cut and very open and therefore applicable to all the contexts where conflicts exist. Moreover, the definition includes all the principal elements of conflict (the actors, their objectives, and the incompatibility that characterises their objectives) and thereby captures the dynamic nature of conflict.

Four main categories of incompatibilities/conflicts can be distinguished:[13]

a) *Conflicts of interest*
These are conflicts related to material and/or immaterial resources that are limited. Conflict actors compete for these resources.
Examples: conflicts over land, mining sites, etc.

b) *Conflicts over values*
Two worldviews clash and each side has the respective aim of imposing one over the other. These conflicts are not related to resources, but to symbolic representations.
Examples: conflicts between customary law and the legal code, conflict between two religions or ideologies, identity conflicts.

c) *Conflicts over means*
The parties to the conflict agree on the issue/problem but not on which solution that would be appropriate for addressing the problem. The parties continue to oppose each other over the means that should be applied to solve the problem.

11 For a good overview of existing conflict analysis frameworks see Conflict Sensitivity Project, *Conflict-sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: Tools for Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment*, Africa Peace Forum, Center for Conflict Resolution, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, Forum on Early Warning and Early Response, International Alert, Saferworld, 2004 <http://test.alertinternational.co.uk/sites/default/files/RP_Chapter2.pdf> (accessed 28 January 2011).

12 See Wallensteen, P., *Understanding Conflict Resolution. War, Peace and the Global System,* 2nd edition, Sage: London, 2007, p. 16.

13 This categorisation is taken from LPI, *Grille d'analyse DRC,* unpublished document 2007. Similar typologies can be found in Rittberger, V. and Zürn, M., "Transformation der Konflikte in den Ost-West Beziehungen: Versuch einer institutionalistischen Bestandsaufnahme", Politische Vierteljahresschrift, vol. 32, pp. 399-424, or Mitchell, C. R., *The Structure of International Conflict*, MacMillan Press/St. Martin's Press: London/New York, 1981, p. 42.

d) *"Unreal" conflicts (self fulfilled or performative)*
   Conflicts for which – seen objectively – no problem or incompatibility exists between the parties, but still everybody (or a few among them) is convinced that it does and – due to a serious lack of communication between the parties – the conflict finally escalates. These conflicts are above all linked to a lack of or a bad communication between the parties, a lack of available objective/impartial information and the development of negative images/ideas and stereotypes.
   Examples: conflicts that escalate following false rumours.

It is important to keep in mind that in a given conflict, one can in most cases find several of these conflict types at the same time. Also, conflicts may change their nature over time and transform from one type to another.

2.3 Two analytical frameworks

Below two frameworks for conflict analysis are presented. The first framework uses the problems, actors and dynamics triangle, while the second provides an attempt to do conflict analysis through the lens of the four dimensions of conflict. These frameworks can be used separately, but can also be seen to complement each other and might therefore be used in an overlapping manner when suitable.

It should be noted that conflict analysis will to a certain extent always depend on the perspective of those conducting the analysis. This chapter does not provide guidance on how to implement conflict analysis in community-based participatory processes.

The problems, actors and dynamics triangle

This triangle and its corners illustrate the architecture of a conflict. This means that a conflict is the result of the interaction of actors, problems and dynamics. These three elements are interdependent, i.e. they have a mutual influence on each other. *Problems* are the incompatibilities that exist within a given conflict between the actors. Problems are what the conflict is about and are often also termed "causes". *Actors* constitute the human infrastructure of a given conflict. Actors can be individuals or groups (on local, national or international level,

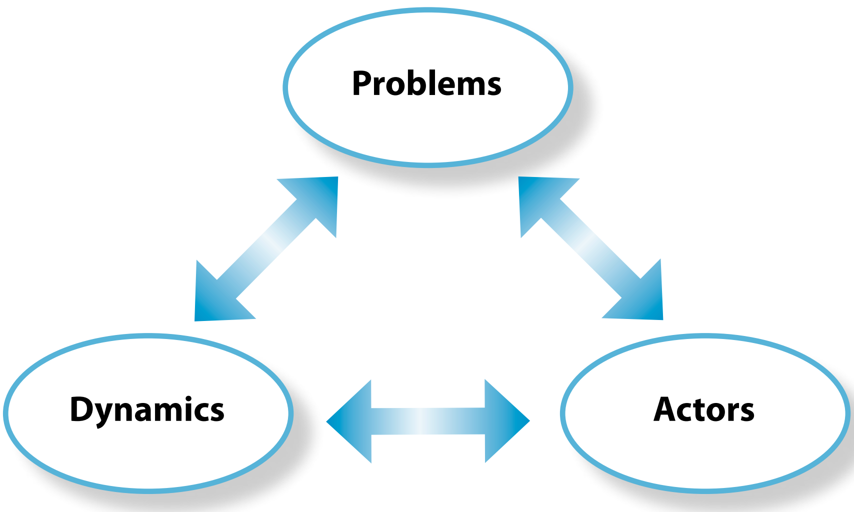

Figure 2: **The Problems-Actors-Dynamics triangle**

e.g. a state). Actors expose manifest behaviours and have latent attitudes.[14] Actors differ in their needs and interests, as well as in their room of manoeuvre and power bases. *Dynamics* refer to the way the conflict changes: Does it for example intensify (escalate), or does it lose intensity and become less violent (de-escalate)? Does the conflict shift to another level, for instance from national to local? The dynamics of a conflict result from the way that actors and problems interact. In order to understand the overall interaction within the triangle, each corner has to be analysed first, and here a number of questions can be helpful.

a) Actors

Let's start by taking a closer look at conflict actors, the human infrastructure of conflicts. First, we can ask: *Who is involved in the conflict?* Here, it makes sense to take on a wide perspective, looking beyond the primary conflict actors. While primary actors oppose one another directly in pursuing their goals (their goals are or are perceived to be incompatible, are using violent behaviour, and have a direct stake in the outcome of a conflict), secondary actors have an indirect stake in the outcome of the conflict. Often, they are allies or sympathisers with primary parties, but not direct adversaries. Also, actors can be found on different levels (just as the conflict can incorporate local, national and international levels).

Conflict actors could include the national government, state security forces, (armed) opposition groups, local and national political leaders, political parties, traditional and community leaders, refugee and displaced communities, local civil society, criminal organisations and networks and the private sector. Also, external actors need to be screened, such as conflict mediators, Diaspora, neighbouring governments, donors, other interested governments, transnational corporations and international NGOs.

Some actors will be sticking out as key actors. For these, you can explore further:
– What are the goals and interests of the key actors?
– What are the attitudes and behaviours of the key actors?
– How do they perceive the situation and how do the perceptions of the groups differ?
– What is the composition/internal cohesion of the actors? (Who is the leader? What is the perception of the leaders, how do they see the conflict and what are their interests in the conflict? What are the leaders' actual capacities to safeguard cohesion of their groups?)

Questions related to power

- What constitutes the power (the capacity to affect the context) of an actor?
- Is the power related to access to resources? If so, what resources?
- What is the mobilisation base of the actor (popular legitimacy, relations between actor and communities)?

14 See here Galtung, J., *Peace by Peaceful Means. Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilisation*, International Peace Research Institute: Oslo 1996, pp. 71f. Galtung developed the ABC triangle. According to Galtung, a conflict consists of behaviour (B), assumptions (cognitions) and attitudes (emotions) (A) and a contradiction (C). While the B-component is manifest (behaviour is by definition observable), both A and C are latent. Conflicts take the form of a triangle and there are flows and interactions between the three corners of the triangle which illustrate the dynamic nature of conflicts.

- What tools/strategies have been developed by the group in order to exert influence?
- How is power distributed within the conflict system? Are there symmetries and asymmetries of power?

b) Problems

As mentioned before, problems are often also referred to as "causes of conflict". The basic question to ask here is "What is the conflict about?" One way of exploring causes of conflict is to distinguish structural and escalating factors that interact on different levels, from local, to national and international (micro, meso and macro).

Structural factors are pervasive, long-term factors that have become built into the *structures* of a society. They are underlying factors for violent conflict, meaning that they represent preconditions for violent conflict. There are also structural factors conducive to peace (see section d)).

How far does the social structure provide preconditions for (violent) conflict?

- Is it homogenous or heterogeneous/fragmented?
- What do the relations between majority and minorities look like?
- What social cleavages exist (long-standing ethnic/religious/clan/ economical or other divisions)?
- Can patterns of social exclusion be identified?

How far does the political system provide preconditions for (violent) conflict?

- What is the quality of governance? Variables to look at are conception of power, elite behaviour, patrimonialism/clientelism, traditional and modern political practices, political exploitation of identity, monopoly of power of the state, institutional capacities to meet basic needs (national and local level) and legitimacy of the state.
- Security sector: control and capacity of state security forces (Are they weak? Controlled by elite and used for maintaining system of power? etc.). Existence of non-state armed actors?
- Is there state respect for human rights and the rule of law?
- Is there equal political participation of citizens?
- Is there room for political competition, political opposition, political parties?
- How are the centre-periphery relations?

How far does the economic system provide preconditions for (violent) conflict?

- Resources: who profits, how are profits allocated?
- Are there inequities/disparities, marginalisation of certain groups/regions existing in the economic system?
- What is the influence of the global economic system?

What factors in the regional/international environment were/are conducive to violent conflict?

- International support.
- Inter-state conflicts, regional instability.
- Poorly-controlled/contested borders, transnational flows (weapons, resources, combatants etc.).

Escalating factors can intensify the underlying causes of conflict. Time-wise they are closer to the outbreak of violence. In most cases, only the combination of structural and escalating factors can make a conflict escalate into violence.

Potential escalating factors are:

- Increase in poverty levels, decrease of living standards, political exploitation of social dissatisfaction.
- Political exploitation of identity, repressive action against certain groups (often using the military).
- Increase in clientelistelic/patrimonialistic practices.
- Security: "privatisation of violence", formation of armed groups, deterioration of personal security.
- Regional: civil wars in the region, increase in flow and availability of weapons (especially Small Arms and Light Weapons, transnational actors operating in the area (transnational networks of violence), destabilising role of neighbouring countries.

Triggering factors are single events, acts and their anticipation that will set-off or escalate violent conflict. Examples are: elections (manipulation), politically motivated killings, arrests (opposition), economic shocks/rapid deterioration of economic and social situation, etc.

c) Dynamics

Conflicts are not static; they are constantly changing. This is due to the multitude of actors positioning themselves towards the problems in the conflict.

- What is changing and how (escalation, de-escalation)?[15] What is not changing?
- What patterns of how the conflict changes/evolves can be identified?
- How does change happen in the context that we work in? (What events, processes or forces motivate and drive change within the context?)
- How will the conflict situation develop in the future?
  This can be explored by conducting a *scenario analysis*, where critical uncertainties are identified.[16]

d) Peace analysis

The analytical tool described so far puts its focus on conflict (on problems in the conflict, conflict parties, conflict dynamics). Actors and processes of peace also need to be considered:

- Who are *actors promoting peace* and what relations do they have with conflict actors? What is their relative influence in the system?
- *What* structural factors for peace *exist*?

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15 See here Mitchell, C. R., "Conflict, Social Change and Conflict Resolution. An Enquiry", *Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 5*, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management: Berlin, 2005, pp. 13-25, here pp. 10-13. <http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/mitchell_handbook.pdf> (accessed 24 August 2009).

16 For a more detailed guideline for how to conduct a scenario analysis, please see LPI, Scenario Planning Guide, unpublished concept paper, 2009, available on request. Very useful is also: Steyart, S. and Lisoir, H. (eds)., *Participatory Methods Toolkit. A Practitioner's Manual*, King Baudouin Foundation and the Flemish Institute for Science and Technology Assessment: 2005, pp. 163-174. <http://www.cris.unu.edu/sbook.175.0.html?cHash=4fd03ade56&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=467> (accessed 20 January 2011).

- What *conflict transformation/peacebuilding efforts* are ongoing (on different levels)?

e) Gender perspective[17]

Few conflict analysis frameworks take gender properly into account. When gender is addressed, it is usually treated under social issues, rather than mainstreaming gender throughout the analysis. In many of the existing frameworks, there is a tendency to confuse gender with women. Most conflict analysis approaches focus on the causes of conflict, and women are not seen as agitators or general protagonists in promoting conflict and violence. Consequently, gender as a variable for analysis is ignored or considered to be of secondary importance.

Yet, there are clear indications across conflict-affected societies worldwide that men's social (gender) identities can be used and manipulated to promote violent action. When "youth unemployment" is mentioned in relation to conflict, it is implicit that youth equals men, and that young men can be easily mobilised. Despite the general acceptance of these linkages, it is rarely presented as a "gender" issue.

To carry out a gender-sensitive conflict analysis it is important to use:

- information *about* women and men, and gender relations
- information *from* women and men

The information *about* women, men and gender relations implies that an understanding of tensions in gender relations (e.g. gender-based violence, radicalisation of unemployed men) can improve the understanding of a conflict. It also highlights the varying capabilities of women and men to engage in peacebuilding.

To obtain information *from* women and men separately implies an understanding that women, because of their structurally different position from men even within the same class or ethnic group, perceive social, economic, environmental and political changes somewhat differently than men, and may react differently to some social phenomena. In relation to all types of data collection it is always important to also remember challenges that might appear in relation to different kinds of social muteness. Due to different perceptions of class, status and gender relations there is always a risk that not everyone in a group will volunteer their opinion. Thus women might be silent or adapt their opinions if interviewed in the company of men, and individuals perceived to have a lower status might be silent if interviewed with those perceived to have higher status.

f) How to move from analysis to strategy?

There is not one way for moving from analysis to strategy. What seems to be needed is a process of reflection and discussion. The questions below could be used to guide such a process:

- What forces (be it actors or issues) need to be transformed? Why could that lead to a significant change in the context?

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17 See here: UNIFEM, *Gender and Conflict Analysis*. UNIFEM Policy Briefing Paper: 2006. and Anderlini, S. N., *Mainstreaming Gender in Conflict Analysis: Issues and Recommendations*, , Social Development Papers. Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction, Paper No. 33, The World Bank: 2006. <http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2006/02/13/000090341_20060213143713/Rendered/PDF/351500Mainstreaming0gender0WP3301Public1.pdf> (accessed 28 January 2011).

- What actors could make a difference in the conflict, i.e. function as agents of change? Why?
  – How could actors' destructive behaviour be transformed?
  – How could constructive actors be strengthened?
- What are LPI's capacities to engage with these processes? Where are our comparative strengths, also vis-à-vis other peacebuilders?
- How can we link up with other efforts?

Theories of change, discussed in the next chapter of this tool, provide a very good tool to move from an understanding of the conflict to the development of relevant conflict transformation strategies.

Conflict analysis and the conflict transformation lens – an attempt for an analytical framework

a) Conflict transformation as a conceptual approach[18]

Conflict transformation as a conceptual approach emphasises the link between conflict and change. Both conflict and change are a normal part of human life. Conflict is continuously present in human relationships and these relationships are constantly changing. Conflict transformation refers to change, and change can be understood in two fundamental ways:

> *1) Analysis: Changes brought about by social conflict.* In order transform conflict and build something constructive, we first need to reach a thorough understanding of what changes the conflict brought about and which ones of these need to be transformed.
> *2) Action: The change that conflict transformers/peacebuilders hope to create.* What do we hope to build? How do we reach that goal?

Changes brought about by conflict (*analysis*) and intended changes (*action*) in order to transform conflict can be located in four dimensions, looking at *where* the changes occur.

The personal dimension

Change in the personal dimension generally occurs in two categories: Firstly, *attitudes* can change. Attitudes are ways that people think and feel about (often unconsciously), as well as approach, a given topic, situation or relationship. They are not obvious. Secondly, *behaviour* – the way people actually act, respond, express themselves and interact – can change.

The relational dimension

The relational dimension of change refers to people who have direct, face-to-face contact, that is, people who meet, interact with and are interdependent on in everyday settings (family, school, work, neighbourhood, and local communities). It also includes relationships that are not everyday in nature but that are important in reference to a wider conflict setting (meeting of local or national leaders, representatives of groups in conflict).

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18 This is based on Lederach, J. P., *The little book of Conflict Transformation*, pp. 3-33. Lederach, J. P. and Maiese, M., *Conflict Transformation* and Lederach, et. al., *Reflective Peacebuilding.*

Personal and relational changes take place at individual, interpersonal and community levels, with a more immediate and local scope.

The structural dimension

The structural dimension refers to systems and structures – how relationships are organised and who has access to power – from the level of family and organisations to communities and whole societies. It includes the *analysis* of social conditions (changes in social conditions) that give rise to conflict (structural causes of conflict) and the way that conflict effects change in the existing social structures: changes in the structure of power, in the distribution/allocation of economic resources and in social institutions (such as traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution). In the *action* perspective, conflict transformation openly promotes nonviolent mechanisms that reduce adversarialness, minimise and ultimately eliminate violence, and foster structures that meet basic needs and maximise participation of people in decisions that affect them.

The cultural dimension

Cultural patterns and understandings about conflict, responses to conflict and peacebuilding are always present. Violent conflict causes deep-seated cultural change, for example the norms that guide patterns of behaviour between elders and youth, or women and men. Compared to the structural dimension, the cultural dimension refers to even deeper and often less conscious patterns related to conflict and peace. Culture is fundamentally about how people make sense of things, in other words, culture is the process of how meaning is constructed and shared.

Structural and cultural changes have a broader and longer-term scope and impact and include processes that impact institutions and wider social, political and economic patterns.

In reality, the boundaries between the four dimensions are not as clear-cut as the above description might suggest. The four dimensions are interrelated and influence each other (e.g. individuals and groups build relations with one another, attitudes and behaviour are determined by cultural norms and values and regulated by structures, structures develop in interaction of individuals and groups, etc.) Change in one dimension will often result in change in other dimensions.

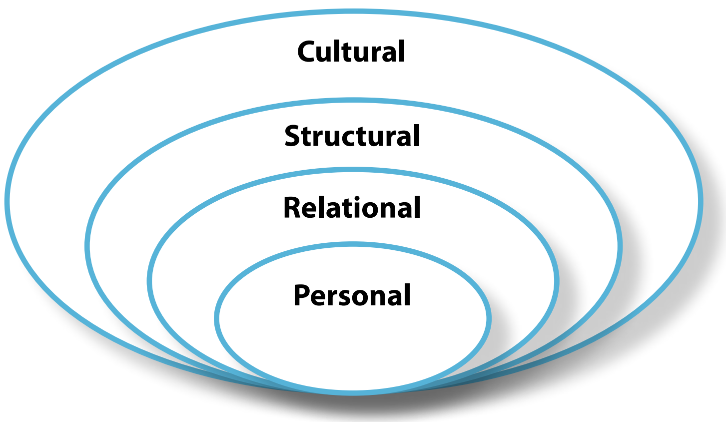

Figure 3: **The four dimensions of change**

b) Analysing the four dimensions of conflict

Personal dimension[19]

Conflict can bring about change in the personal dimension regarding two main categories: attitude change and behaviour change.

Attitude change

- How has the conflict affected the attitudes of people?
- What attitudes currently increase the likelihood of destructive patterns of conflict (e.g. superiority, lack of respect, fear of contact with the other side/ sides in the conflict, prejudice or bias)? Do attitudes exist that promote constructive patterns of conflict?
- How do attitudes differ between individuals on different "sides in the conflict"?
- What attitudes need to and can be changed? If this attitude/these attitudes would change, what difference would it make to the situation?
- How could this change be produced?

Behaviour change

- What behaviours contribute to destructive patterns of conflict?
- What behaviours contribute to constructive patterns of conflict?
- What destructive behaviours could be changed (for instance reaching out to other groups, listening well, avoiding negative stereotypes in language, increasing contact with the "other sides", reconsidering perceptions)? What difference would such a change make in the situation?
- How could this change be produced?

For conflict analysis, this dimension poses a feasibility challenge: In order to collect data, a survey approach would be appropriate, which would be a time-consuming and cost-intensive undertaking.

Relational dimension

The focus here is on the actual relationship patterns between individual people that interact – this is different from a relational pattern that is *structural* in nature. Many aspects of relationships are relevant for conflict transformation, but of particular interest are communication patterns, cooperation, actual decision-making and conflict handling mechanisms.

Communication patterns

Analysing the *extent* to which and *how* people communicate with each other, is an important indicator of how people, parties to the conflict, etc. relate to each other.

- What is the level of contact between or among the different parties? Is it regular, open, avoiding, restricted? What changes can be identified due to the conflict?
- How could the communication styles between people be described?

19 The questions for the four dimensions have been adapted from Lederach et. Al., *Reflective Peacebuilding*, pp. 20-23.

- Do people have the capacity to express themselves accurately in conversation without fear, judgement or restriction?
- Do people have the capacity to listen, that is, to hear accurately the concerns of others, without judgement?

Cooperation or confrontation

- Where can you find cooperative/confrontational relationships, between whom? To what extent has this changed due to the conflict?
- What is the level of cooperation – for instance on achieving vital common goals – among and between "opposing sides"?
- What is the level of confrontation between opposing sides?

Decision-making

- Who is taking decisions in day-to-day relationships? Who is not involved? Has this changed due to the conflict?
- How are decisions taken? In a transparent and fair manner?

Conflict-handling mechanisms

- What happens when conflict arises in people's relationships? Has this changed due to the conflict?
- Who are the key people who fulfil the peacemaker role in relationships? What qualifies them for that role (influence of the cultural dimension)?

> In order to analyse the relational dimension, you could use a *mapping* technique.[20] Start by identifying the major parties in the relationships. Use a big sheet of paper to illustrate it. Then describe how these parties relate to each other: (How) Do they communicate? Is there cooperation? Or is there confrontation? Who is taking decisions? In order to see the changes that have been brought about by the conflict, you can produce a similar map reconstructing the status of relationships before the conflict (or during specific conflict stages).

Box 1: **Conflict mapping**

Structural dimension

The structural dimension refers to *systems and structures – how relationships are organised and who has access to power and resources* – from the level of family and organisations to communities and whole societies. It moves beyond actual relationships and looks at relational patterns that affect whole groups. *Structural patterns* describe the way things happen over and over again. The time horizon includes both present and historical dynamics. The structural

20 This builds on the Conflict Mapping Approach of Paul Wehr. For more information please refer to <http://www.peacepaces.com/page/Content%3A+Conflict+Mapping> (accessed 28 January 2011).

dimension also includes *existing structures*, such as formal institutions (ideally) established to meet shared goals and serve the "common good".

Structural change is encompassing and complex. It can be approached by looking at the following elements:

Social conditions

- What social conditions and changes in social conditions have worked as preconditions for conflict or have given rise to conflict?
- Are there, for instance, consistent patterns of marginalisation and exclusion in access to power and resources? Are there historic patterns of racism, sectarianism, or ethnic marginalisation?
- What social cleavages exist (long-standing ethnic/religious/clan/economic or other divisions)?
- How have the relations been between majority and minorities changed?
- In what way has the conflict affected change in the existing social conditions: changes in the structure of power, in the distribution/allocation of economic resources?

Procedural patterns (decision-making)

- How are decisions taken and by whom? Has this changed due to conflict?
- Do people have equal access to information and understanding of decision-making?
- Are there groups who are (or perceive they are) consistently left out of political and economic decisions and processes that affect their communities?
- Do all societal groups have an equal say in processes that affect the wider community?
- What patterns of dealing with conflict/conflict handling mechanisms can be identified?

Quality of governance, conception of power and institutional patterns

- What is the quality of governance from local, to regional and national level?
- How is power distributed in the system? What conception of power is predominant among the elites? How can the elite behaviour be described: patrimonialism/clientelism, political exploitation of identity?
- Are the wider procedural patterns identified reflected in the function and maintenance of key social, political and economic institutions, particularly in the ones established to serve the wider public?
- What are the capacities and performance of existing institutions on local and national level? Is there trust in primary service institutions by the groups that they are meant to serve? If not, why?

It is important to explore how structures were characterised before the conflict: Did structures work as preconditions for conflict? What changes in the structures of society were induced by conflict?

Cultural dimension
The cultural dimension refers to even deeper, and often less conscious, patterns related to peace and conflict. The relationship between culture and conflict is complex and so is cultural change. Culture is hard to grasp and therefore also difficult to analyse. Let us therefore start by examining *what culture is and how it relates to conflict*.

"Culture is many things: It is a set of lenses through which all parties of a conflict necessarily see. Resulting from the lenses' omnipresent, we are usually unaware of their existence. Culture is also the medium in which behavioural patterns and values grow and are passed on from one generation to the next. Deep-rooted conflicts become embedded in cultural stories and myths and thus more resistant to transformation. Finally, culture shapes and reflects identity formation and the way we make and assign meaning."[21]

LeBaron introduces three metaphors to facilitate an understanding of culture. First, culture is a lens: "Culture colours everything we see. It is impossible to leave our cultural lenses at the door to a process (…) Our cultural legacy gives us a range of behaviours to choose; it gives us 'common sense' of conflict and how to approach it."[22] Secondly, culture acts as a medium for our behaviour and values. Culture defines the social identity of a group and creates values and norms. Lastly, LeBaron compares culture with an intimate relationship: "Culture like intimate relationships or deep friendships, is dynamic, multidirectional, and interactive. It is constantly changing, adapting, reshaping and engage[d] in a continuous exchange with other cultural systems."[23]

Diana Francis provides another interesting definition of culture: "What I mean by culture is the patterning of assumptions about life, its realities and requirements, and intrinsic or accompanying values and norms."[24]

Based on these two definitions, it can be concluded:

- Culture is complex and multi-dimensional. It is a social construct in itself. There are many different cultures, which makes cultural differences inevitable.
- Culture is an important medium for the creation of norms and values for human social life. As such, culture tends to determine what we perceive as normal, appropriate and expected.
- Culture is linked to identity – it is a means to make sense of our existence and our place in life.

Culture is constantly changing as the result of social interactions. It is a social construct. This also means: Cultural change can be influenced, even though cultural change is often very slow and a long-term process. As culture is omnipresent we can assume that it is also an important factor in conflict situations. LeBaron contends, "Cultures affect the ways we name,

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21 LeBaron, M., "Transforming Cultural Conflict in an Age of Complexity", *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation*, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management: Berlin 2001, p. 3. http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/lebaron_hb.pdf.

22 Ibid., p. 4.

23 Ibid., p. 9.

24 Francis, D., "Culture, Power Asymmetries and Gender in Conflict Transformation", *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation,* Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management: Berlin: 2004, p. 2. <http://www.berghofhandbook.net/uploads/download/francis_handbook.pdf> (accessed 8 August 2009).

frame, blame, and attempt to tame conflicts."[25] This means that culture both influences how individuals and groups perceive and understand conflict and how they approach and deal with it.

At the same time, culture – in the form of cultural differences – can be seen as a cause of conflict. Diana Francis describes the relationship between culture and conflict from the perspective that the aspect of domination is inherent to the notion of culture, i.e. culture is often about domination of one group over another. Cultural differences can therefore exacerbate emerging hostilities in conflict situations as one culture wants to dominate the other and "the otherness" is often on both sides perceived with fear. In such a configuration, cultural differences often reflect power asymmetries – one culture being more powerful than another culture. Consequently "[t]he desire to dominate or escape from domination is a constant motivation for organized violence, whether for control in existing territory or for territorial expansion (territory here being both literal and metaphorical)."[26]

While culture can contribute to violent conflict, conflict can in turn lead to cultural change. An oft-cited example is the impact conflict has on gender norms and values in a society.[27] Another example is how the phenomenon of child soldiers can profoundly change norms and values regarding relationships between generations, e.g. eroding respect for elders.

The preceding paragraphs highlight that culture, like conflict, is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, and that these characteristics can be found in the relationship of conflict and culture as well. This makes an analysis of the cultural dimension of change and conflict challenging. As for the other dimensions, *some questions can provide a starting point for analysis*:

- What cultural patterns can be identified that have an impact, whether positive or negative, on how conflict is understood, approached and handled?
- What aspects of conflict between groups are affected by cultural and world-view differences?
- In what way are (have) existing cultural patterns (been) influenced by conflict and its consequences (such as displacement, loss of life, disrupting of families)?

c) From analysis to action:

Analysing change produced by conflict, acting to transform conflict

The approach of conflict transformation – as described in the introductory section of this resource kit – builds on linking analysis and action. After having analysed the four dimensions of change, the move to strategy and action needs to be explored. There is no standard formula for making the move from analysis to action, but the following framework can be used to structure a reflection process:

25 LeBaron, M., "Culture and Conflict", in: Burgess, G. and Burgess, H., *Beyond Intractability*, Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado: Boulder, Posted: July 2003. <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/culture_conflict/> (accessed 10 August 2009).

26 Francis, D., "Culture, Power Asymmetries and Gender in Conflict Transformation", p. 5.

27 See here the description of Francis, "Culture, Power Asymmetries and Gender in Conflict Transformation", p. 5.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Personal</th><th>Relational</th><th>Structural</th><th>Cultural</th></tr>
<tr><td>Analysis</td><td>Attitudes
Behaviours</td><td>Communication
Patterns cooperation or confrontation
Decision-making
Conflict-handling mechanisms</td><td>Social conditions/ structures
Procedural patterns
Quality of governance, conception of power, institutional patterns</td><td>Cultural patterns that seem to have an impact on how conflict is understood, approached and handled
Cultural differences as conflict causes?
Cultural change due to conflict?</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="4">How do the four dimensions work together?
Do changes in one dimension also have a changing effect on other dimensions?
If so, how can these interdependences be described and what effect do they have on the conflict?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reflection, Discussion, Sharing, Theories of change</td><td colspan="4">What needs to be changed?
How can positive changes in the dimensions be brought about?
Who are potential agents of change?
What can be the role of our organisations? What is our vision of success? Which of the change agents do we choose as the target group and why? What tools can we use to bring about positive change? How can we link with others to bring about sustainable change (in order to tackle all four dimensions)?
= Formulate theories of change for your engagement! (See next chapter)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Action</td><td>To raise the awareness of key people or individuals in communities in order to empower them to change

To accompany individuals in dealing with the effects of conflict (trauma healing, psycho-social accompaniment)</td><td>To resume constructive relations through e.g.
• Mediation
• Negotiation
• Reflection
• Reconciliation
• Advocacy/ Sensitisation/ Awareness-raising</td><td>To transform structures through e.g.
• Mediation
• Negotiation
• Reflection
• Advocacy/ Sensitisation/ Awareness raising
• Long-term actions: Political reform processes (state building), development work, etc.</td><td>To influence cultural patterns through e.g.
• Mediation
• Negotiation
• Reflection
• Cultural activities
• Etc.</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 4: **Analysis and action**[28]

28 See Bouvy, Alexis, "Construire la paix par le bas: l'experience du Life & Peace Institute aux Kivu", in: Vircoulon, T. (ed.), *Les coulisses de l'aide en République Démocratique du Congo*, L'Harmattan: Paris 2010, p. 24.

What is depicted here is a process starting from an *analysis* that has to be *reflected, shared and discussed* in order to formulate viable *theories of change* for *conflict transformation*. The assumption of conflict transformation is that in order to transform a given conflict in a sustainable manner, all dimensions of change need to be addressed. As this is difficult or even impossible for an actor to achieve alone, the element of coordination and linkage with other actors is central.

3. Theories of change[29]

3.1 What are theories of change?

Conflict transformation aims essentially at *bringing about social change*. Peacebuilders work towards changing a given, often violent, situation into a less violent, more peaceful situation. The work of peacebuilders is therefore guided by assumptions of why and how desired change occurs. Before going into greater detail, it should be noted here that the term "theories of change" can mean different things to different people. In the social sciences, there are different theories about how social change on societal and group level happens. These provide important foundations for the work of practitioners for positive social change.

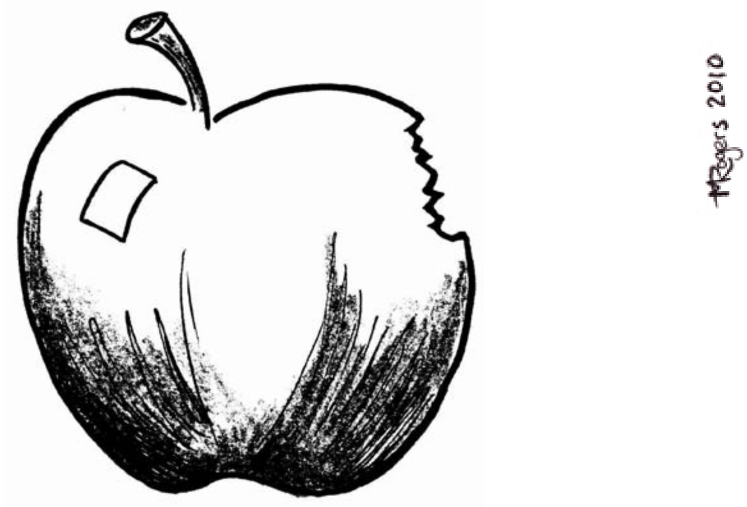
In this tool, theories of change are understood as a planning tool with the purpose of making explicit the assumptions underlying an initiative to bring about social change. This is for instance in line with the definition provided by John Paul Lederach, Reina Neufeldt and Hal Culbertson: "a theory of change is simply an explanation of how and why a set of activities will bring about the changes a project's designer seeks to achieve."[30]

Theories of change, in this understanding, are *not academic hypotheses*, but rather brief formulations of everyday assumptions that taken together explain why and how a project/programme will produce a desired change. Thus it will encompass both a project's or programme's vision of what success would be, its underpinning assumptions for how and why this change will happen and the actions to be undertaken to reach success (see 2, below).

Often theories of change are *implicit*, unstated and unexplored, i.e. they already guide our engagement, but *need to be made explicit*, meaning that the underlying assumptions need to be brought to the surface.

29 This chapter builds on a number of resources, i.a. Lederach et al., *Reflective Peacebuilding*, Church, C. and Rogers, M. M., *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programmes,* Search For Common Ground, Alliance for Peacebuilding and United States Institute of Peace: Washington DC, 2006. <*http://www.sfcg.org/documents/manualpart1.pdf*> (accessed 28 January 2011) CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, *Reflecting on Peace Practice Participant Training Manual*, pp. 18f., Keystone, *Developing a Theory of Change. A Guide to Developing a Theory of Change as a Framework for Inclusive Dialogue, Learning and Accountability for Social Impact*, IPAL Guide 2, August 2009, p. 7 <www.keystoneaccountability.org>, International Network on Strategic Philantrophy, *Theory of Change Tool Manual,* 2003. <http://www.tcfn.efc.be/download.php?d=320> and Grantcraft, *Mapping Change. Using a Theory of Change to Guide Planning and Evaluation,* GrantCraft: 2006.

30 Lederach et.al., *Reflective Peacebuilding*, p. 25. For a comparable definition, see CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, *Reflecting on Peace Practice Participant Training Manual*, pp. 18f.



The original theory of change

Also, *organisations, programmes and projects may incorporate multiple theories of change*, on different levels and in different dimensions. Often an organisation has an idea about how it is to work towards the fulfilment of its vision. This idea, when articulated, constitutes the organisation's theory of change. LPI's theory of change could, for example, be articulated in the following way: *"Support and promotion of nonviolent approaches to conflict transformation through a combination of research and action strengthens local capacities for peacebuilding and will thus contribute to the creation of a world where peace, justice and nonviolent relations prevail."*

The organisation's theory of change is then operationalised through different programmes or projects that in themselves build on more detailed theories of change. Think for instance of a large capacity building programme that aims at enhancing local capacities for building peace. On a programme level, you could formulate a broad theory of change, made-up of simple assumptions, such as: *"Local actors are best-positioned to bring about positive change in their contexts. There are many resources for peacebuilding, such as traditional mechanisms for handling conflicts and knowledge of the context. At the same time, traditional ways have to be complemented as the nature of conflicts has changed over time. Therefore, skills and knowledge about other, that we for lack of a better word could call modern, approaches to peacebuilding are needed."* Within the broader programme framework, yet other smaller projects might be developed for which you once again can formulate more specific theories of change.

3.2 Vision of success

Keeping the logic of RBM (starting from what we want to achieve) in mind, it is very important to derive what tools we want to use (i.e. activities we want to carry out) from the programme's/project's vision of success.[31] The *vision of success* should provide a clear picture of what we want to achieve in the future with our engagement. It specifies what the situation will be when the change we desire has happened. In order to formulate a relevant vision of success, that is visionary but at the same time realistic and tangible, a clear and thorough

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31 This term was found in Keystone, *Developing a Theory of Change*, p. 7.

understanding of the context of engagement is necessary, including the different actors and stakeholders in the context. Such an understanding can be informed by a thorough *conflict analysis*.

The formulation of a good vision of success can then be helped by asking a number of questions (see box 2). Once the vision of success has been formulated, steps for reaching this vision can be developed and the various assumptions that underpin the vision of success can be articulated. The vision of success as well as the assumptions underpinning it will also inform the selection of one or several target groups, i.e. actors that can play a role as agents for positive change within the process of reaching the vision of success.

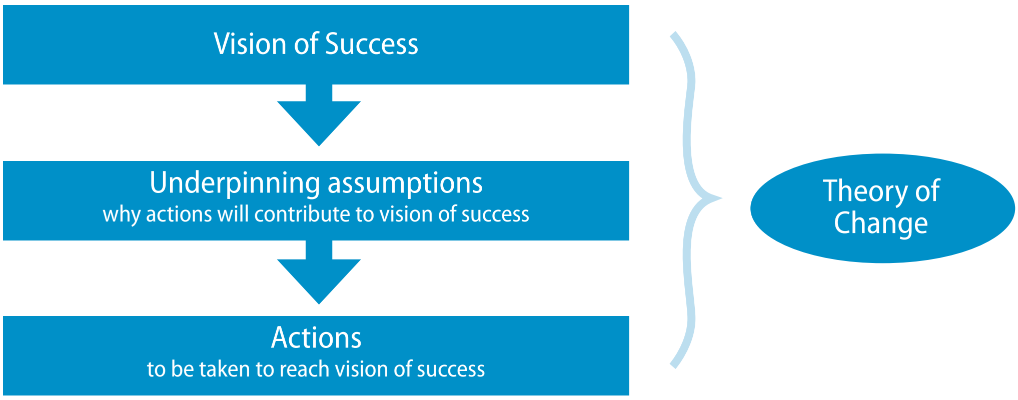

Figure 5: **Theories of change**

3.3 Why are theories of change useful?

First of all, theories of change help peacebuilders to reflect why they are doing what they are doing and to identify ways of doing it in the way that holds most potential for the desired change. Theories of change also help to draw logical connections between expected results and the activities that peacebuilders carry out. Thereby, more realistic and relevant plans of action can be developed. Being aware of, and articulating, the programme's or project's theory of change in the planning stage provides firstly a tool for elaborating a project/programme logic (see below: results chain) based on a thorough understanding of the context and problem to be addressed.

Secondly, a theory of change allows the opportunity to monitor to what extent the project/programme's assumptions regarding why and how change happens to play out in reality. If it is discovered that the theory of change (or parts of it) is actually mistaken and that the engagement does not contribute to the desired change, the theory can be corrected, as can the implementation of the programme. It also increases programme effectiveness and accountability as these two elements are tied to a clear and profound understanding of the ways that change happens in the particular context.

Thirdly, a clearly articulated theory of change will also be important for evaluating the project/programme. If theories of change have not been clearly articulated during the design of the project/programme, there is a risk that evaluators will bring their own conscious or unconscious theories of change into the evaluation. This can affect the evaluation's analysis, design and validity.

3.4 How can we make theories of change explicit?

There are different ways to explore which assumptions and expectations underpin peacebuilders' engagement. Here it is suggested that a set of issues are reflected:

1. Do a conflict analysis (see chapter 2) or use an earlier conflict analysis.
2. In order to link the theory of change to this analysis, ask:
   - What are the key driving forces of conflict?
   - What conflict transformation needs and potentials for conflict transformation arise from the context in which the programme is situated? Within which of the four dimensions of conflict transformation do these needs arise?
   - What is our vision for success for the change we desire in the context?
   - Why? (How does the vision of success respond to the problematic causes of the situation that were identified in the conflict analysis? How does the programme relate to needs and change potentials?)
3. What would success look like more concretely? What are indicators for this success?
4. What are the steps that will lead to the desired change (roadmap to change)?
5. What needs to be in place or done in order to ensure that the desired change becomes sustainable?
6. In order to determine the right target group:
   - What is your target group (direct and indirect)?
   - Why can this target group act as an effective agent for change in the context? (In case the programme already has a set target group or selected partners when the formulation of a theory of change begins, then include this question as one of the questions used to explore the context of the programme.)
7. What tools (or activities) do you use to bring about change? Why do you think that these would bring about the desired change? (Note that this question can be asked both in a general manner and in relation to the four dimensions of conflict transformation)
8. Review your answers and try to formulate a clear theory of change, as short and concrete as possible. The formulation of if-statements (see 3.5 below) can be very useful to come to clear hypotheses.

Box 2: **Questions for making theories of change explicit** (Inspired by International Network on Strategic Philantrophy, *Theory of Change Tool Manual*, p. 7.)

3.5 Example

Imagine that you want to work in an area where two communities have been at conflict for a number of years. There are occasional outbreaks of violence and one community tries to destroy the other's harvest every year. Before you start planning your initiative, you try to understand the situation: who are the main actors, what has happened in the past, how is the situation now, etc. You are also talking to the two communities and you realise that the situation is very complex. You can identify community leaders – traditional elders – as a potential group that could be an agent of change as they have the trust of their respective community. Based on these inquiries, you can describe the programme/project's *vision of success* as follows: The two communities have entered into dialogue and have agreed on nonviolent ways for handling their conflict. The theory of change would now include assumptions that explain why and how you will reach the vision of success.

Some of our underpinning assumptions could be:

1. The problem is a cycle of blaming between both communities that makes both sides feel victimised, constituting a barrier to reaching practical ways of handling conflict.
2. If parties have a thorough understanding of the conflict and of each other's position, they are in a better position to find a solution.
3. If community leaders/traditional elders from both sides meet and discuss, this will increase mutual trust and contribute to an atmosphere conducive to addressing causes of conflict.
4. If dialogue participants are well-informed and have a better understanding of the situation, the likelihood to find a solution to the problems/nonviolent and better ways of dealing with their differences is increased.
   ... and more assumptions can be found ...

From here, possible activities could be:

1. Do conflict analysis with both communities, in particular their leaders.
2. Carry out awareness-raising exercises in both communities, highlighting the causes and consequences of the conflict
3. Give support in organising dialogue initiatives

... and more activities...

3.6 Practical suggestions for developing theories of change

One of the best ways to develop the theory of change for your project/programme is to do it in participatory group sessions (involving important stakeholders, such as partners) that are well documented. In these sessions you can let the group brainstorm about answers to all the above questions and the different group members can help each other to see the different underpinning assumptions and think of possible engagement for positive change. More hands-on tools for how to structure the group sessions on developing theories of change are provided at www.peacepaces.com.

Once the target group or partners of your programme has been identified, it is also good to have an open dialogue with them about the theory of change that was the basis for why they were chosen, but also to let them participate in the process of defining theories of change for the specific activities that they are to be part of. This will help you to draw on their understanding of the situation and check whether you were right in your assumptions. In that way you will learn more about the context and about how change can be achieved in it at the same time as partners develop increased ownership of the project/programme.

4. Results chains as roadmaps to change

What is a results chain?

Results chains (or chains of results) are key pillars in *RBM*. A result can be defined as a measurable change that occurs due to a relationship of cause and effect.[32] Results chains translate theories of change into a project/programme logic. During implementation results chains function as roadmaps, showing what activities need to be carried out in order to contribute to positive change. Results chains also provide the basic infrastructure for monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The OECD defines results chains as follows: *"The causal sequence for a development intervention that stipulated the necessary sequence to achieve desired objectives beginning with inputs, moving through activities, and culminating in outcomes, impacts and feedback … Note: the described chain does not always represent the sole conceivable path to the goal; there may be alternative solutions. However the chain is always assumed to be sufficient for achieving the objectives."*[33]

Put more simply, we can say that a results chain is a *logically linked chain where activities lead to planned results*. The chain therefore can be understood as a *roadmap* that shows *how change can be brought* about and what steps have to be taken in order to reach the desired goal. Depending on the complexity of a project/programme, one or several "activity→result" chains can flow from the same overall goal or vision of success. For these cases, the metaphor of a pyramid is often used to describe the structure of the results chains. In the pyramid, results at each level aggregate to contribute to the results at the next higher level, i.e. many inputs feed into many activities, which lead to outputs that add up to some outcomes that then contribute to one impact. Although these different metaphors are sometimes used interchangeably, this handbook will mainly use the term "results chains".

Church and Rogers illustrated the logic of results chains in the following manner: Imagine that you need something that is located on a very high shelf, seemingly far out of reach. Below the shelf is a series of small platforms, which are also out of reach. If we could find a way to get onto the platforms, we might be able to reach the item we need. We look around to see what is available to climb up to a platform. For instance, we could build a ladder. We could try ropes, we could rent a helicopter. We chose to build a ladder because we want to go up and down repeatedly and because we can get the materials quickly and inexpensively. We then get busy ordering supplies, taking measurements, learning ladder safety, cutting wood, etc.

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32 See here CIDA, *RBM Handbook on Developing Results Chains*, p. 10.

33 OECD/DAC, *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-based management*, OECD/DAC: 2002 <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf> (accessed 21 August 2009).

Programme design requires thinking along the same lines: how do we face challenges, how do we get from one place to another, from one result to another, in order to achieve the result at the highest level. In this case, the activities involve building a ladder. The output of those activities is the ladder. Our output – the ladder – will provide access to the platforms. The result we plan for is to stand on the platform. Once we have achieved standing on one, two, or more platforms, we can achieve the result at the highest level – reaching the item on the shelf. The different levels interact with each other. Each higher level explains what we are doing on the proceeding level: we are implementing activities to produce outputs, the outputs add up to outcomes.[34]

4.2 LPI's results chain terminology

Donors and other agencies use quite different terminologies for the levels of the results chain.[35] The general idea is, however, the same: a logical flow of results contributing to a desired final overall change. LPI has decided to adopt a terminology based on the OECD/DAC framework, but also to capture the specificities of its engagement as a capacity-builder for conflict transformation. In the table below you can see how LPI's usage of the terminology compares to that in the OECD/DAC framework:[36]

OECD/DAC		**LPI**	
Definition	***Terminology***		***Definition***
Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.	Impact	Vision of success	Describes the (social) change LPI and its partners want to contribute to. Possible effects of engagement on the broader conflict.
The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs.	Outcome	Higher level outcome	Effects of outputs in the broader intervention context.
		Lower level outcome	Effects of outputs in the immediate intervention context.

34 Adapted from Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, pp. 29ff.

35 See here the overview in Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 42.

36 The distinction of two levels of outcomes and their definition relies on Spurk and a presentation given at a workshop with LPI staff in February 2008. Please see also Spurk, C., "Forget Impact: Concentrate on Measuring Outcomes. Lessons from Recent Debates on Evaluation of Peacebuilding Programmes", *New Routes,* 3/2008, LPI: Uppsala 2008, p. 13. Spurk distinguishes between Outcome I and Outcome II. LPI chose lower and higher level outcome in order to ease numbering.

The products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes.	Output	Output	What is generated directly through LPI's activities, i.e. the direct result(s) of activities.
Actions taken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources are mobilised to produce specific outputs.	Activities	Activities	What LPI does (together with partners) in order to produce defined outputs.
The financial, human, and material resources used for the development intervention.	Inputs	Inputs	The financial, human, and material resources used for the activities in the project/ programme.

Table 1: **LPI terminology and OECD/DAC[37] framework**

Vision of success and contribution

In the literature on peacebuilding evaluation, an issue of intense debate is whether peacebuilding programming should actually focus on measuring impact (or, as Reflecting on Peace Practice terms it "Peace Writ Large"). This debate is aptly captured by two articles of Woodrow, Chigas and Spurk, published in *New Routes* in 2008.[38] Spurk recommends setting the monitoring and evaluation focus on the lower and middle level of the results chain, mainly because the higher the level of the results chain, the more difficult the attribution of changes to specific actors and initiatives. Woodrow and Chigas argue instead for a "demystification" of impact in peacebuilding, stating that impact "does not have to be remote or at the level of full peace for a society."[39]

37 See here OECD/DAC, *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-based Management*.

38 Both published in *New Routes*, 3/2008, LPI: Uppsala 2008. <http://www.life-peace.org/sajt/filer/pdf/New_Routes/NewRoutes83.pdf> (accessed 28 January 2011).

39 Chigas, D. and Woodrow, P., "Demystifying Impacts in Evaluation Practice", *New Routes*, 3/2008, LPI: Uppsala 2008, p. 19. See also note 38.

The focus (in planning, monitoring and evaluation) on the "Peace Writ Large" (effects on the broader conflict) is important: "If projects are not accountable for how their interventions contribute to the broader peace, one runs the risk of investing a lot of time, resources, and effort in programmes with excellent outcomes, but that make no difference to the conflict."[40] Key to measuring impact is, according to Woodrow and Chigas, clear and realistic programme planning (including explicit and testable theories of change) as well as setting the focus on contribution and linkage instead of attribution.

It's almost enough to make an evaluator nostalgic for fuzzy goals.

An important issue to take into consideration is the fact that the further upwards one moves in the results chain, the more the extent of control of those engaging decreases, as illustrated in figure 6 below.

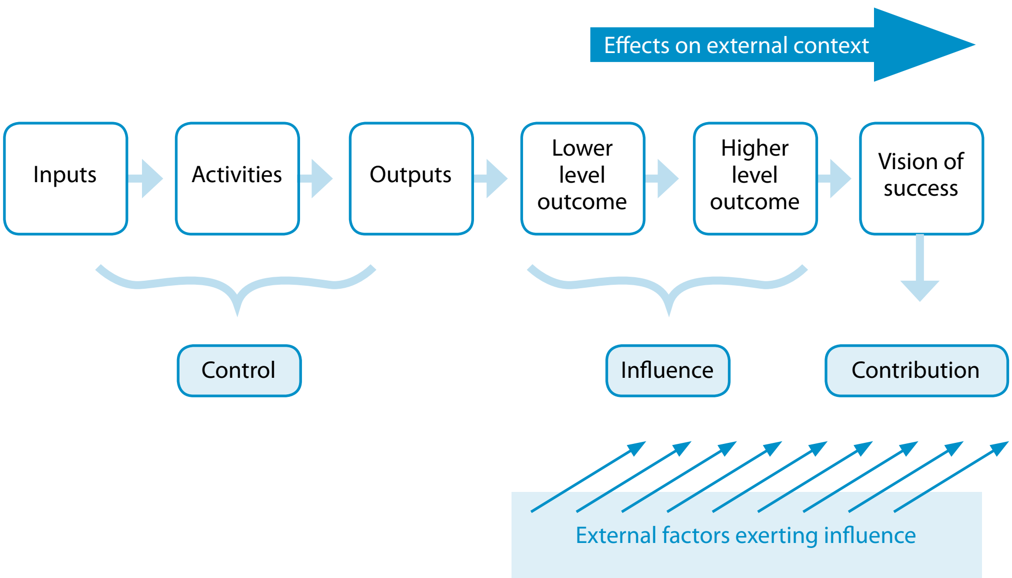

Figure 6: **Control, influence and contribution**

40 Chigas and Woodrow, "Demystifying Impacts in Evaluation Practice",New Routes, 3/2008, LPI: U-a 2008, p. 19.

Reflecting these considerations, LPI has decided to employ the term "vision of success" instead of impact. "Vision of success" refers to changes motivated by capacity building efforts and nonviolent conflict transformation engagement in the context. It captures the fact that such changes 1) are (often) long term in nature and 2) are influenced by many actors and factors outside of LPI and its partners' control. This reflects LPI's conviction that the Institute can merely contribute to the "Peace Writ Large", and that change in the larger conflict context cannot (or only in very exceptional cases) be attributed to LPI and its partners' engagement. In addition, LPI has decided – as recommended by Christoph Spurk – to focus monitoring on outputs and outcomes. However, the vision of success level has to be considered in both planning, monitoring and evaluation.

4.3 How to develop results chains

Remember that programmes/projects should be driven by results and not activities. Activities should be determined by the results you hope to contribute to.

As stated before, theories of change are the starting point for developing results chains. Here, you will have defined a "vision of success" and target group. To see the difference between results chains and theories of change can sometimes be tricky, but if we return to the metaphor above about the platforms and the ladder, the theory of change corresponds why we wanted to build a ladder rather than fly onto the platform on a helicopter, while the results chain corresponded to all the different steps we needed to both build the ladder and reach the item on the platform.

Once you know why you think certain actions will be the best way to achieve a desired change, you can start translating your theory of change into a results chain. As theories of change in conflict transformation engagement are formulated based on a clear understanding of the context – or conflict analysis – the translation of theories of change into a results chain is a tool to ensure that engagement relates to conflict dynamics and peacebuilding needs (relevance).

Ideally, results chains should be developed from top to bottom. Start with the long-term result (what could be called the *vision of success or impact*) that you want to achieve. Then think about your lower and higher level outcomes of your project/programme, thereafter outputs, activities and inputs. The logic is backwards.

This "ideal" way of developing result chains might feel cumbersome in the beginning, as we are used to start with what we have to bring to the process or what activities we usually do or are good at doing. It is specifically useful if you start a project or a programme from scratch as it helps us to not be blinded to "do business as usual" but rather to really see the needs, challenges and possibilities in a new programme's/project's context.

When working with results chains it is necessary to backtrack thoughts and ideas by going both up and down the chain. The reason is that a decision or idea at one level naturally will have consequences at all other levels in the chain. For example, decision on a certain desired outcome will demand certain outputs that in turn will need certain activities to be performed. In the end one might, however, realise that one actually does not have the possibility to provide the needed inputs for these activities. Such challenges could depend on external risk factors, lack of competence, funds or human resources. In such cases it will be necessary to go back up the chain again and adapt both activities and the output in line with available resources and possibilities at input level.

This way of developing results chains can also be quite time-consuming.

	Result	**Explanation**
Vision of success	Contributions to a conducive environment for peace have been made through more effective and evidence based approaches to conflict transformation.	Theory of change: If local actors have an increased capacity in conflict analysis and evidence-based conflict transformation approaches, their possibilities to influence positive change in their context increases.
Higher level outcome	Partners engage more effectively in conflict transformation by basing action on evidence.	Doing conflict analysis with selected tools that work in the context becomes organisational practice of the organisation and is used in order to plan the right conflict transformation activities.
Lower level outcome	Application of conflict analysis tools.	Participants start – with accompaniment by LPI – to apply new tools for conflict analysis.
Output	Increased knowledge and skills in conflict analysis	Participants have increased their skills on an individual basis.
Activity	Training in tools for conflict analysis	Sharing of knowledge and skills. The quality of the tools presented as well as the learning process designed determines to a large extent how far outputs can be reached.

Table 2: **Example results chain for capacity building in conflict transformation**

	Result
Vision of success	Increase in the use of nonviolent conflict handling mechanisms in inter-communal conflicts related to land and refugee return.
Higher level outcome	Follow-up mechanisms of inter-community dialogue are functional and implement action plan.
Lower level outcome	Action plan/plans addressing identified conflict causes are agreed upon by all involved stakeholders.
Output 3	Communities involved in inter-community conflict engage in dialogue process in order to clarify conflict causes and understand mutual conflict perceptions.
Output 2	A draft report or other form of presentation summarising the findings of data collection has been prepared and shared with homogenous community groups.
Output 1	Communities involved in conflict have been engaged in a process of information gathering and sharing in order to increase understanding of the conflict.
Activities	PAR process, including preparation, community sensitisation, data collection, data analysis, sharing, management of political space, etc.

Table 3: **Example results chain for a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project related to inter-community dialogue**

In time-limited workshop sessions or situations when you might need to develop results chains for projects or programmes where the budget and certain activities are already more or less set, a more practical and flexible approach to developing results chains can be used.

Start with the vision of success that you want to achieve. Then move on to your lower and higher level outcomes by defining what you need in order to contribute to the vision of success. Then check what resources you have available in the project/programme and see how these best can be used to reach the short and midterm outcomes and impacts that you have defined.

This helps you to quite clearly see what the best ways are to use the inputs and resources you have in the most efficient way to reach the lower and higher level outcomes and the vision of success you want. Be prepared to move a bit upwards and downwards in the chain before all levels are consistent and logically following each other.

Your work might also lead you to the conclusion that some budget reallocations or change of strategy are necessary in order to reach your desired results. Such a conclusion is a natural part of the monitoring and learning process included in PME&L work. Results chains should not be seen as static, but rather as a living tool that needs to be updated constantly as projects/programmes are monitored and evaluated. This is why it is so important to do continuous monitoring, evaluation and learning in relation to both the theory of change and results chain as we implement projects and activities. Keep donors involved in this learning process and communicate suggested changes in good time.

Expected results need to be defined as specifically and attainably as possible. Be careful with nice phrases and jargon and probe what is really going on. When developing expected results, it can be useful to make a comparison to the formulation of hypothesis. Expected results describe the way that certain variables – e.g. the capacity to analyse conflict, the integration of PME&L methodology into programming, inter-communal violence – will change as a result of certain activities. When formulating results, you can already ask yourself what variables are included in the result.
It is also important to keep in mind that it might not in all cases be necessary to distinguish between lower level and higher level outcomes. This depends very much on the kind and extent of engagement.
When formulating results chains for longer-term programmes, it might not always be possible to define outputs and activities in detail from the beginning. Flexibility and adaptability to what is changing in your working context is important.

Box 3: **Some initial lessons from working with results chains**

5. Developing indicators

5.1 Indicators in RBM

"An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to reflect and monitor the changes connected to an intervention."[41] Indicators are therefore *pieces of information* that help to measure or monitor change. In RBM, indicators are used to measure whether/ to what extent the change that has been planned is being/has been achieved. Indicators are developed for each level of the results chain (impact/vision of success, outcomes and outputs) with the purpose to:

- test during the planning phase whether the results chain formulated is realistic and testable, as the development of indicators makes it necessary to think through and make concrete what a project/programme really wants to achieve and learn;[42]
- establish the baseline as a point of reference for measuring change (see next chapter);
- monitor progress towards results achievement (put the expected results to the test); and
- evaluate achievements at certain stages in programme implementation.

The development of indicators is necessary, because often – and especially in conflict transformation and capacity building – formulated results are not directly observable. In social science research indicators are used to "operationalise" theoretical concepts, to bridge the gap between the theoretical and empirical levels. Indicators have a comparable function in RBM as they facilitate the process of measuring latent – not directly observable – results. For instance the variable age is (in most contexts) observable by referring to the date of birth, which produces clear data. Other concepts – for instance social status – are not directly observable, resulting in a need to develop indicators that can be directly observed (or measured), e.g. monthly income, place of living, occupation. Indicators enable the change initiated by a project/ programme to be seen, but are not the same as this change. As very important management tools, they should display a number of qualities:

- Indicators should be SMART:[43]
  - Specific: clear, simple, single items of information, targeted (What is changing? Who is changing?)
  - Measurable: items are observable. This is safeguarded by: using specific units of measurement (What will be measured?), referring to a baseline/ benchmark of comparison and clearly defining the words used (e.g. what does "effective", "appropriate", "successful" mean?)
  - Attainable: data easily and cost-effectively gathered.
  - Relevant: information relates to the different levels of results chain.

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41 Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 44.

42 See here Lederach et.al., *Reflective Peacebuilding*, p. 37.

43 See Australian Government and Australian Agency for International Development, *AusGuideline, Activity implementation 4.2 Baseline studies*, Commonwealth of Australia: 2005, p. 8 <www.ausaid.gov.au/ausguide/pdf/ ausguideline4.2.pdf> (accessed 14 April 2009).

– Timely: data can be collected and analysed quickly enough to be useful in implementation management.

- Indicators should be reliable: Measuring the indicator is independent from who gathers information. There is a direct connection between the indicator and what you are trying to prove.

Indicators can be *quantitative or qualitative*. Quantitative indicators refer to quantities or amounts, whilst qualitative indicators capture people's judgements or perceptions about a subject.[44] Most qualitative indicators contain numeric components, but the change in question relates to an opinion, belief or way of thinking.

> *Example:* A project aims to increase the political empowerment of women. A possible quantitative indicator would be: "number of women elected parliamentarians in the next election", while a qualitative indicator could be "increase in % in women parliamentarians' belief that their voices are making a difference", or "decrease in % of women's perception that they are marginalised in decision-making."[45]

Combining both quantitative and qualitative indicators in a programme enables a richer understanding of the situation.

5.2 How can we develop indicators?

The development of relevant and reliable indicators is a difficult and sometimes rather time-consuming exercise. The main challenge for developing indicators for conflict transformation initiatives is to operationalise concepts that are often highly complex and rather abstract, such as peace, reconciliation, justice or capacity to transform conflict. Good indicators in conflict transformation engagement are often context-specific, because key concepts (trust, dialogue, reconciliation, organisational capacity, etc.) are embedded in the local context. Indicator development therefore should strive to use a *participatory approach*.

The following steps can function as a facilitation for the process of developing indicators:[46]

1. Preparation

- Review expected results and theories of change. Probe for clarity and concreteness.
- Keep an indicator bank (indicators that have been used before, by your organisation or others; borrow from other professions, e.g. public health).
- Make indicator development a continuous undertaking.

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44 See Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 50.

45 Example with slight changes taken from Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 50.

46 See here Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, pp. 53f. and Sartorius, R. and Carver, C., *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Fragile States and Peacebuilding Programs. Practical Tools for Improving Program Performance and Results*, Social Impact: 2006. <http://www.socialimpact.com/resource-center/downloads/fragilestates.pdf> (accessed 14 April 2009). Lederach et.al., Reflective Peacebuilding, pp. 37f.

2. Generation (if possible with partners and other stakeholders)

- The results chain constitutes the starting point for indicator development. Indicators need to be defined for all levels of the results chain.[47] Take one result at a time. First, probe whether the result is clearly formulated and then identify the elements(s) or variable(s) that need to be measured.
- *Brainstorm* all things or dimensions related to these variables that can be counted, observed, measured, or sized. A question that can facilitate your thinking is: How *would we see* that a result is obtained?
- A group process seems best-suited for the generation phase, as creative thinking is needed. If you have less time, you can assign team members and partners to brainstorm indicators individually first. Then list the indicators and discuss together which ones are most appropriate.
- *Break multidimensional concepts into smaller components*. For example, reconciliation can be broken down to the components mercy, justice, truth, and peace. Each of these components again is rather abstract and not directly measurable and therefore needs to be operationalised by finding indicators.
- Ask *partners, local actors and stakeholders* what they consider to be significant signals of change in their context (participatory indicator development).
- Expand the use of proven social science methods for measuring qualitative factors of change (attitudes, opinions, perceptions …).
- When developing indicators, also keep in mind that sometimes your results – in particular the ones at the output level – might already be observable and therefore might not need additional indicators.[48]

3. Refinement

- Keep focused: What do we need to know and what information will facilitate decision-making?
- If formulated results are not providing clarity, consider rewriting them.
- Once you have a couple of possible indicators, look for ways to make them increasingly simple.
- Make sure that you brainstorm sources of verification for each indicator. This will help you to see whether the indicator you have selected is measurable and whether it will be possible to access the information you need to measure changes related to the indicators. If you cannot list a source of verification in relation to an indicator that also is accessible for you, you should probably either reformulate or remove that indicator.

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47 It is often stated that indicators should also be developed for activities. It will depend on the extent of the engagement whether this is necessary and efficient. For a three-year programme with several programme components, there is a risk of overburdening monitoring with activity indicators. For smaller and short-term projects, indicator development can be feasible and relevant, supporting the planning process of the project.

48 Church and Rogers state (*Designing for Results*, p. 44): "*Where the desired change is concrete, tangible, and measurable, indicators are not needed.* If the intended output was 500 brochures, no indicator is needed – simply count the number of brochures produced. Consider the example from a six-month long peace-media radio program, in a context where inaccurate rumours often cause violence. The objective of the project is to increase the public's access to accurate information within 24 hours of when the rumour that promotes violence started circulating. The desired change of substituting rumours with accurate information is concrete, tangible, and directly measurable. There is no need for a separate indicator. Where the intended change is more abstract, *indicators help approximate the change.* For example, in order to monitor a change in the level of trust between groups, one might look at child care practices to see if adults from one group are permitted to care for children from the other group. To detect changes in equality one might monitor inheritance, land ownership, and employment."

4. Less is better – selecting the best indicators

- Once you have generated a list of possible indicators for each of the results, try to reduce the list to the best indicators. This can be done by comparing the indicators to the quality criteria mentioned above.
- Always keep in mind that data needs to be collected for the indicators when conducting a baseline study and monitoring. The more indicators you develop, the more time and energy will have to be invested on their monitoring, regardless of what source of verification you opt for. If you, for instance, opt for a survey approach to monitoring, having a large number of indicators will lead to a long questionnaire, difficult data collection (in particular if translation is needed), lots of data to analyse, and consequently an energy-consuming monitoring system.

5. Testing indicators

Test the utility in decision-making of new and newly modified indicators as soon as possible to avoid the risk of relying on flawed or not useful indicators. Often, this test will take place when preparing and pre-testing the baseline study (see next chapter).

6. Setting targets for indicators

You can define certain values for indicators that will be reached at a certain point in time. This helps to monitor progress in the project/programme over time.

7. Changes during project/programme implementation

Keep in mind that indicators may need to change over the course of a programme due to changes in the definition of what success is or changes in the direction of the programme.[49] Therefore, a regular reflection on used indicators is crucial. It is good to remember that indicators will never be perfect – they are only means to help us see changes taking place.

5.3 Challenges and risks in indicator development and usage

While indicators are key elements in RBM, there are a number of limitations and risks that need to be considered.

1. Indicators tell us *what* has changed, but not *why* this change occurred. For this reason, collected indicator information always needs to be interpreted.

2. Indicators are developed to capture expected changes and for that reason are less appropriate lenses for unexpected results. Only focusing on indicators in monitoring implies the risk of being blinkered and missing significant changes that are taking place outside of what is measured by the indicators.

3. The development of good indicators is dependent on the clarity of the programme design, especially the formulation of the results chain. If objectives are vague and broad, then the identification of clearly measurable indicators becomes very difficult.

49 See Woodrow, P., *Myths and Realities of Evaluating Peacebuilding Work. Evolving Practice from the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project*, powerpoint presentation given at the Life & Peace Institute Workshop "Measuring peace", February 2008.

4. Indicators are means to approach the change that we want to achieve, they are not synonymous with the results. This entails also a risk of being tempted to confuse the achievement of results and the measurement of indicators.[50]

5. Due to time-pressure and overload, there is a risk that the development of indicators becomes a "fill-in-the-box" exercise that substitutes good analysis and interpretation.[51] As indicator development occurs at the transition from planning to implementation and monitoring, the quality of indicators however influences how well the project/programme managers (both on the level of LPI and partners) will be able to measure progress and identify what works and what doesn't.

> Developing too many indicators and thereby overloading the monitoring and evaluation system of the project/programme.
>
> Reflecting the challenges connected to finding indicators for the higher levels of the results chain, a common mistake is to develop indicators for activities and outputs, thus not providing the infrastructure for measuring progress towards these higher level changes.
>
> Selecting indicators that do not comply with the quality criteria for indicators mentioned above, e.g. indicators that are not measurable/observable, indicators that are not attainable in good time and with available resources.
>
> Formulating indicators in a way that makes it sound as if your project/programme can guarantee changes that actually are outside the certainty of attribution for that project/programme. This can cause your project/programme to sound incredible in the eyes of donors and cause unnecessary communication problems when applying for funds/reporting.

Box 4: **Common errors when developing indicators**

6. Baseline study

6.1 What is a baseline study?

According to the OECD/DAC, a baseline study is "an analysis describing the situation prior to an intervention, against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made".[52] Defined as such, baseline studies enable before/after comparisons in monitoring and evaluation. Baseline studies should therefore be carried out before the implementation of the project/programme activities starts. The baseline study establishes the status of the intended change before the start of the project, but after it has been designed.[53]

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50 See here Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 52.

51 See Woodrow, P., *Myths and Realities of Evaluating Peacebuilding Work*.

52 OECD/DAC, *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-based management*, p. 18.

53 Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 62.

A baseline study *focuses* on the expected results of an intervention, i.e. gathers information related to the results chain. In addition, a baseline study can scrutinise the underlying assumptions (theories of change) for the engagement, i.e. whether the theories of change for the intervention are valid in reality.

6.2 What is the rationale for doing a baseline study?

Baseline studies are essential to show that change has taken place – as they provide a point of comparison – yet they are often neglected elements of the PME&L process.

Baseline studies are conducted in order to:[54]

- compare baseline information with information gathered during monitoring and evaluation to see whether change has occurred over time;
- set achievable and realistic targets for the expected results that have been defined in the results chain; and
- ensure accuracy and utility of indicators as baseline studies provide the opportunity to test developed indicators. It shows whether indicators are accurate lenses for seeing whether change has occurred.

6.3 How should a baseline study be done?

For conducting a baseline study, several steps need to be taken.

1. Preparing a baseline plan.
2. Conducting the baseline study according to the baseline plan.
3. Analysis of the collected data and review of the findings.
4. Formulation of report/sharing of results from the baseline study.

A baseline study should be meaningful, relevant, cost effective and not too academic!

Baseline plan[55]

In order to illustrate what information is needed, and how, where and by whom it can be collected, a baseline plan can be used. A baseline study focuses on changes (expected results) that are planned to take place through the intervention.

See below a framework for a baseline plan:

Baseline focus	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data source and quantity	Location of data collection	Conflict considerations	Means of analysis	Time needed

Table 4: **Baseline plan** (Church and Rogers: *Designing for Results*, p. 69)

54 This is adapted from Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, pp. 64f.

55 See here Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, pp. 68-76 (with adaptations).

Alternatively to using this table, you could also develop a “narrative” baseline plan, using the elements mentioned above as sub-headings.

Baseline focus: As mentioned above, the primary focus of a baseline study is the change that the intervention aims to bring about, i.e. expected results. Optionally, underpinning assumptions can be looked at.

Indicators: As described in the previous chapter, indicators are used where results cannot be observed or measured directly and are developed for the different levels of the results chain. The baseline study should establish *the values indicators assume prior to starting activities*. The baseline study will also serve to test indicators and determine whether refinements are necessary. In fact, there is no better time for changing indicators, because if changed later, the baseline data collected could be rendered useless.

Data collection methods: This part of the plan describes the way in which the data will be collected, e.g. interviews, focus group discussions, direct observation, analysis of statistics and surveys. The methods are selected depending on what kind of information is needed. There are qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Reflect on which methods provide you with the best understanding of the change you want to measure and which ones best correspond to the sources of verification that you listed as part of your indicator development. However, if you realise that another source of verification than the one you brainstormed earlier will provide you with better information, it is good to change your source of verification. Just make sure that this is communicated to all relevant stakeholders and that you keep the same source of verification throughout the whole monitoring and evaluation cycle. It is an advantage to apply the same methods for the baseline as for monitoring and evaluation. Participatory methods should be used whenever possible. In some rare cases, the data needed for the baseline may already exist – be sure that you have a good overview of what information is already available. The methods used to collect data need to be explained and justified in the baseline plan and in the baseline reports. When selecting data collection methods, the context of the intervention needs to be taken into consideration. This includes cultural aspects (for instance it might be necessary to conduct separate Focus Group Discussion for men and women) as well as security considerations (access to project sites and possibilities for safely transporting and storing data).

Data source and quantity: This refers to from whom the data will be accessed and how many data sources will be used. For example: six teachers per school (three schools), official police statistics, etc.

Location of data collection: Refers to where/through which channels the data will be collected, e.g. during training, in peoples’ homes, in the place of work, via email, etc

Conflict considerations: refers to issues specific to the conflict that may influence conducting the baseline study, e.g. security situation, implications of language selection, nationality of researchers, etc.

Means of analysis: This refers to the tools and methods used to analyse data. Here, common social science research tools, such as SPSS or Envivo, can be used.

Time needed: Refers to the number of days needed to implement each aspect of the baseline including analysing the data.

A *budget* for the baseline study should also be attached to the baseline plan.

> **Preparing this plan demands time and energy. If it is done thoroughly, however, it will make monitoring much easier.**

Conducting the baseline study

Once the baseline plan has been completed, the baseline study should be conducted in accordance with the plan.

When should a baseline study be carried out?
Ideally, the baseline study should take place some weeks before the implementation of a project starts. If the baseline study has to be done quickly, it can also be done in parallel to the first stage of the project. There should not be too much time between the baseline study and the beginning of implementation. In complex programmes, where several different changes are foreseen resulting from activities that start at different times, a *rolling baseline study* can be considered. This means that the baseline is broken down in different parts depending on the different anticipated changes, and each part is implemented before the start of activities for each new change.

Who conducts the baseline study?
Ideally, the same individual or team who conducts the evaluation also conducts the baseline study in order to ensure continuity, accuracy and understanding. In case an external evaluation is planned, this would mean to hire an external consultant also for the baseline study. As this involves substantial costs as well as time, an internal baseline study seems more practical (though not ideal). For the case that the project team does not have the necessary expertise to develop the tools for planning and conducting the baseline study, an option would be to hire an external advisor who provides accompaniment for selecting methods, trains the data collectors and does a quality check on the analysis.

Analysis of the collected data and review of the result

Analysis of the data collected is one of the most important steps in a baseline study, and it is essential to make sure that adequate time and resources are allocated to it. Analysis involves registering the data and interpreting the results in the broader context of the project/programme. It is important that the baseline study and the data collected are stored so that the raw data can be easily accessed during monitoring and evaluation.

Upon completion of data collection and analysis, the project/programme stakeholders should meet to review the conclusions and set targets for expected results and indicators. Also, refinements of the intervention design/planning might be necessary based on the results of the baseline study.

Formulation of report/sharing of results from the baseline study

The results of the baseline should be shared within the organisation and with the implementing partners. Donors and other stakeholders could also be interested in the results.

6.4 LPI's experiences with baselines studies

Looking at LPI's work since 2007 shows that for the Institute baselines studies can be carried out in different ways:

Since 2009, the LPI office in Nairobi has engaged in an initiative with one of its Somali partners (Somali Peace Line, SPL) that aims at strengthening the peacebuilding (here defined in a broader sense than conflict transformation) engagement of track II actors (traditional elders) in Mogadishu and later expending to other South-Central regions. In the current political context in Somalia it is vital to strengthen ties between local, middle and national processes. After results chains were developed and reviewed, indicators brainstormed and selected, a baseline survey was conducted by SPL and LPI in Mogadishu, using a questionnaire filled in by a selection of the primary and secondary target groups of the projects.

The LPI office in DRC has been working with its partners in order to reinforce their capacities since 2007. While no "classical" baseline study was carried out at that time, baseline data concerning capacities in key reinforcement areas and strengths and weaknesses of partners were collected, and since that time been updated every six months through a thorough assessment process of all partner organisations (monitoring). The results of the diagnosis both measure achievements and function as a basis for the development of new capacity building plans together with partners.

7. Monitoring as learning

7.1 Why monitoring?

Monitoring plays a central part in LPI's management of its conflict transformation programmes in order to track changes and measure the progress in building the capacities of its partners and the changes that the work with partners produces in the conflict context. In order to do this it is necessary that LPI monitors its capacity building work with partners, but also accompanies and supports its partners in monitoring the conflict transformation engagements implemented as part of this capacity building.

A good monitoring system informs day-to-day decision making. Monitoring first enables us to see to what extent the project/programme progress is in line with expected results. It should however also provide project/programme managers with information about whether the chosen project/programme logic really works. Monitoring findings constitutes the necessary basis and evidence for taking decisions on changes in project/programme implementation. This includes results chains, indicators and even theories of change. LPI's working environment is one of rapid change. Capacity to manoeuvre and manage change is therefore very important both in order to stay relevant, not become counter-productive and to not endanger staff or partners. The same is valid for LPI's partners in the field. A good monitoring system is essential for such capacities to adapt to a shifting environment, to grow and to develop.

Monitoring secondly provides LPI with important information for mid-term and summative evaluations. Brought together, continuous monitoring and evaluation lays the foundation for a fruitful learning process at LPI and a higher degree of accountability towards its beneficiaries and donors.

7.2 What is monitoring and how does it differ from evaluation?

Monitoring is the continuous process of gathering information about programme implementation and using this information in decision-making. It takes place as the project/programme is running. Monitoring is different from evaluation with regard to when it takes place, what information is gathered and what decisions are informed (see table below). Nevertheless, monitoring and evaluation are closely connected. Monitoring lays the basis for evaluation.[56]

Monitoring		**Evaluation**
Implemented throughout the project/programme: continuously, frequently, periodically.	**When?**	An event, implemented at certain stages of programme implementation.
Informs day-to-day decision making; enables management decisions throughout implementation. In relation to **LEARNING**	**Purpose**	Informs future programming. Deepens understanding, why and how things have happened. In relation to **LEARNING**
Tracks progress towards results achievement; observes changes in the context.	**Focus**	Looks at the overall picture. What has happened and why? Determines relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact etc.
Usually carried out internally, by programme staff as well as partners and participants.	**Who does it?**	External consultants or programme staff, together with partners, participants.

Table 5: **Monitoring and evaluation compared**
(adapted from Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 83)

7.3 Forms of monitoring

A programme or a project can be monitored through different lenses. In other words changes can be tracked in different dimensions of the work. The three most important forms – context, implementation and assumptions monitoring – are described below.[57]

a) Context monitoring

Conflict transformation/peacebuilding interventions take place in dynamic and shifting environments. Monitoring the context – or conflict analysis – enables taking pro-active decisions as well as safeguarding the security of staff, partners and participants. Conflict analyses should for this purpose be continuously updated. Here the focus should be on actors and escalating and de-escalating factors. Also, the international context of the conflict should be monitored closely.

56 See Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 82.

57 Adapted from Lederach, et.al., *Reflective Peacebuilding*, pp. 57-60, and Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, pp. 84-89.

Key informants that have access to a wide range of information are vital for updating conflict analyses. This could be local civil society actors (partners), journalists, local leaders, academics, etc. Informal meetings among programme staff and key informants can be a very good opportunity to make sense of recent developments and inform programme implementation. Based on the updated conflict analysis, the following questions should guide management decisions:

- Are our assumptions about the context still valid? Do we have to change them?
- Are our interventions still strategic?
- Have new opportunities or constraints for our engagement emerged?
- If the conflict context has changed considerably, why are we still doing the same things?

b) Implementation monitoring

This form of monitoring looks at how the implementation of the project/programme is running. Thereby it is possible to see whether the project/programme is making progress. The reality of project/programme management is often characterised by setting a focus on the monitoring of activities and outputs, as these are the areas controlled by the project/programme managers and information is often easily obtained. However, implementation monitoring should go beyond that and also measure progress towards higher level results by gathering indicator information.[58]

c) Monitoring assumptions/theories of change

Besides collecting results information, monitoring can also enable learning about the extent to which assumptions about how and why change happens are valid in reality. In order to carry out monitoring in this dimension, it is very important that theories of change are clearly formulated in the form of hypotheses. These can then be tested through different forms of data collection and reflection.

These three forms of monitoring can be seen as interlinked with each other and also as placed within three different control spheres as seen as in the figure below. In this figure all the mentioned aspects have an effect on each other, at the same time as the degrees of influence lessen, the further out they are from the centre. The implementing organisation will be able to monitor all of the dimensions, but will have the biggest control and influence on how it chooses to change its implementation of activities and its theories of change in response to that monitoring.

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58 According to Church and Rogers, there are two ways of measuring progress, even if the results are only to be achieved by the end of project/programme implementation: rationing change and monitoring steps within the process. For further details, see Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 88.

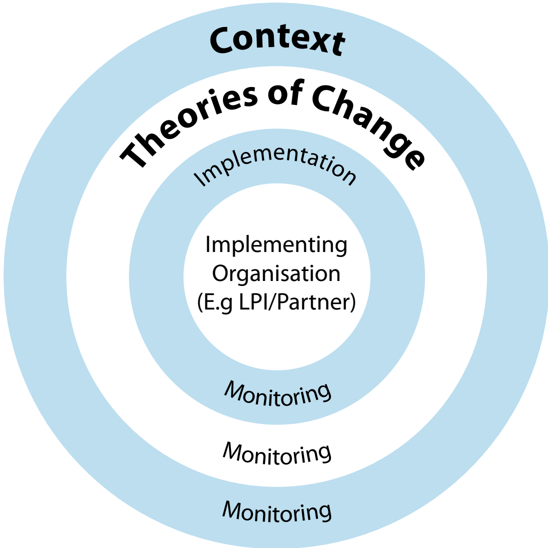

Figure 7: **Dimensions of monitoring and control**
(adapted from Lederach et. al., *Reflective Peacebuilding*, p. 58)

7.4 How to do monitoring?

Doing monitoring is based on the steps described earlier throughout the PME&L tool, namely: theories of change, results chains, indicators and baseline study. The results chain, together with your indicators, can be used as a guide for monitoring, in particular for implementation monitoring. If you have conducted a baseline study, the plan and data collection tools developed will be very useful. In order to be able to draw comparisons between baseline, monitoring and evaluation data, it is actually recommended to use the same data collection tools in both baseline study and monitoring. For this reason it is good to plan how you want to monitor your project/programme already from the beginning. A monitoring plan can help to structure the process.

Below, find an example framework that could be used for monitoring:

Monitoring focus: Result (on different levels: vision of success, outcome, output)	Indicators	Means of Verification/ Information source/ Data collection tool	Frequency of data collection	Who collects data?

Table 6: **Monitoring framework**
(adapted from Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 91)

With this plan, the collection of data can be organised. This is, however, only the first step. Once the data has been collected, it needs to be analysed, interpreted, and incorporated in decision-making processes. Also, this table does not include context monitoring or monitoring of assumptions/theories of change.

When planning monitoring for projects or programmes, several factors need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, monitoring will only fulfil its purpose if data can be collected in good time and hence used in decision-making throughout project/programme implementation. Secondly, and related to the first point, monitoring should facilitate project/programme implementation and should therefore be efficient regarding human and financial resources used. Thirdly, monitoring should be a participatory effort, involving direct and indirect target groups. Engaging in different cultural and language contexts adds another level of complexity to this picture. For these reasons, monitoring should focus on collecting the most important data with as simple means as possible.

Practical tools for monitoring and data collection

Once you have a monitoring plan you also need to decide on what tools you will use to collect the data. The most suitable tools will to a large extent depend on the nature of results and indicators, the context you are working in and the resources that you have available to do monitoring.

Below we will present some different tools for data collection that can be very useful when monitoring.

Monitoring surveys

As long as the data that you want to collect is tangible and easy to measure, a simple questionnaire asking direct and indirect target groups a number of questions can be used in implementation monitoring. When you develop the questionnaire, it is of utmost importance to code it according to results and indicators, so that you can easily summarise the results when doing data analysis. When using questionnaires for the evaluation of activities – such as workshops – it is often suitable to hand them out to participants as soon as possible so that the learning is still fresh. If you use questionnaires to monitor processes, however, there might in fact be reasons for waiting for some time.

While survey methods provide hard data in a time-efficient manner and are a very good basis for monitoring, it is also important to remember that the monitoring of processes might demand the collection of other additional data in order to add more nuances and help you explain why a certain change has or has not happened. A good idea could then be to combine the survey with other tools for qualitative data collection in order to capture the complex dimensions of capacity building and conflict transformation. Monitoring systems can be designed in a way that enables the measuring of results through both indicators and more "qualitative" forms of monitoring, which are suggested below.

Asking for the most significant change[59]

In order to monitor different processes in contexts where the information you need is of a more qualitative nature or where people might not be used to filling in questionnaires, a good tool for monitoring can be to ask for stories of the most significant change. Define a time frame and an area in which you want to monitor change and then ask your target group to describe the most significant change that has taken place during this time period and within the preset area. You can also ask them how this change happened if you want to specifically monitor your own assumptions about change. By asking these relatively open questions, the people you are interviewing are free to answer without being bound to your own indicators or guiding questions which allows you to also see those changes that you had not planned for as well as discover new risks within the programme in time.

This method for monitoring also allows for stories of most significant change to be reported through other means than written text (e.g. images, drawings, taped interviews, videos and films) which might help in target groups that are non-literate or more used to oral traditions or who simply are not trained in formal report writing. You and your team can then sit together and analyse what changes were in line with your own vision of success, theory of change etc. It will be important to identify whether there are connections between your theory of change and how the target group describes how change happened.

Self-assessment tools

Self-assessment can be a very useful approach for internal monitoring of programmes and change processes with partners, as internal staff within a programme or a partner have vital information to contribute to monitoring and often tend to be more critical to their work than external evaluators. One way of carrying out self–assessment in a structured manner is to let staff and/or partners fill in a results journal on a regular basis[60].

To track changes over time for each partner, it seems useful to complete one results journal per partner. The results journal lists the indicators and asks for an assessment of the level of change with regard to indicators. The level of change ranges from low (0-40 per cent), medium (40-80 per cent) to high (80-100 per cent), i.e. to what extent the indicator has been achieved.

In addition, the results journal encourages description and reflection on the change that has taken place and also asks for unexpected changes – that could easily be forgotten when just looking at pre-formulated results and indicators. As a last step, lessons learnt and suggestions for changes in the programme implementation can be noted. The results journal is completed by individual staff members (this can of course be extended to partners' staff) and then discussed in common monitoring sessions that take place regularly.

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59 This is inspired by "The most Significant Change Technique", see Davies, R. and Dart, J., *The Most Significant Change MSC Technique. A Guide to its Use*, Version 1.00, 2005. <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf> (accessed 28 January 2011).

60 The results journal is adapted from Outcome Mapping's "Outcome Journal" to better fit LPI's PME&L system and work. For more information about Outcome Mapping, please see Earl, S., Carden, F. and Smutylo, F., *Outcome Mapping*. and Earl, S., Carden, F. and Smutylo, F., *Brochure on Outcome Mapping. The Challenges of Assessing Development Impact*, International Development Research Center: 2001. <http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/10945665201om_pamplet_final.ppt> (accessed 29 May 2009).

Monitoring period:

Contributors to monitoring update: LPI staff, partners

Vision of success in the programme (for the programme or one partner)

Higher level outcomes	Indicators	Level of change
		L M H L M H L M H L M H L M H
Lower level outcomes	**Indicators**	**Level of change**
		L M H L M H L M H L M H L M H L M H
Outputs	**Indicators**	**Level of change**
		L M H L M H L M H L M H L M H L M H
Description of change What happened in the monitored period? How? Why?		
Contributing factors and actors Who or what contributed to the change?		
Sources of evidence		
Unanticipated change		
How do the changes observed and the way they happened relate to our theories of change for the programme (confirm or contradict)?		
Lessons/required programme changes/reactions		

Table 7: **Results Journal**

Regular project/programme team reflection sessions

If you are working in a team, a good tool for monitoring can be regular programme team reflection sessions, facilitated and prepared by one staff member assigned for the PME&L process. Such meetings can also be a platform to discuss monitoring data, do assumptions monitoring and look at implications for programme implementation. Besides interpreting data collected for quantitative indicators, these sessions could be prepared by asking all team members to use self-assessment tools. If you have collected change stories, these sessions provide the opportunity to review and reflect on them. Such sessions can easily also be conducted with partners.

7.5 Learning from monitoring

A basic principle for learning from monitoring is to ask questions and to confront yourself with possibly uncomfortable perspectives!

Monitoring and evaluating form the core of organisational learning at LPI. It is therefore important that lessons learned in monitoring sessions within the field programmes as well as those conducted and performed with partners are communicated to the head office in order to facilitate dissemination throughout the whole organisation. LPI's reporting systems will gradually be adapted to accommodate a learning perspective. In the mean time such lessons should be communicated to the various focal points at the head office for further dissemination.

8. Evaluation as learning

8.1 What is evaluation?

Below are two definitions from recent literature about peacebuilding evaluations:

> "Evaluation is the systematic acquisition and assessment of information gathered on specific questions to provide useful feedback for a program, organization or individual. (…) Evaluation is commonly known to serve two purposes: learning and accountability."[61]

> "Evaluation offers systematic and objective assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and efficiency of interventions."[62]

The terms "assessment", "systematic" and "objective" evoke associations to research – and that is one side of what evaluation is: It is research about a project, programme or policy that tries to answer specific questions by collecting and analysing data. Just as in social science research, there are many different ways of doing evaluations. Evaluation, as monitoring, is essential for an organisation's learning. This is because it helps the organisation to gather experiences and constitutes a mechanism for the drawing of conclusions from those experiences for future engagement.

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61 Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 93.

62 OECD/DAC, *Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities. Working draft for application period*, OECD: 2008, p. 13. < http://www.oecd.org/secure/pdfDocument/0,2834,en_21571361_34047972_39774574_1_1_1_1,00.pdf>.

8.2 Evaluation: Practitioner's concerns and benefits

Evaluations are often perceived as time-intensive undertakings, consuming scarce financial and human resources, making futile attempts to quantify the unquantifiable, formulating unrealistic recommendations or diverting the attention of staff and management away from more important tasks. In the field of peacebuilding, practitioners often express the concern that established evaluation approaches do not do justice to the nuanced and complex work of peacebuilding.

While these concerns are all important and have to be taken into account when planning the evaluation, the needs for, and benefits of, evaluation clearly outweigh the costs:

- Evaluation is a unique opportunity for learning about a project/programme as well as its context.
- Evaluation strengthens organisational learning – if shared throughout the whole organisation.
- Evaluation can help to improve and professionalise peacebuilding work and thereby contribute to better results.
- Evaluation reports can be shared with other actors and contribute to improve their work.

8.3 How to do an evaluation?

As mentioned before, there are many different ways of carrying out evaluations. The choice of tools from this "toolbox" has to be carefully considered. This decision should be guided by the question: What do you want to learn from the evaluation?

Church and Rogers describe the steps for preparing and conducting an evaluation in detail, as does the OECD/DAC guidance. While no comprehensive outline shall be given here, the main stages are described below.[63]

Stage 1: Evaluation preparation

In order to be useful, evaluation needs to be planned at the same time as the project/programme. Planning the evaluation at an early stage makes sure that costs involved in the evaluation are part of financial plans and that ownership of the evaluation is developed. The project team should therefore drive the preparation of the evaluation, even though it is also possible and useful to hire an evaluator already at this stage, who could be involved in different stages of project design and for instance also conduct the baseline study.

During the preparation of the evaluation, a number of decisions have to be taken. To start with, the team has to decide what it is that it wants to learn from the evaluation i.e. what the *evaluation objectives* are. This decision should be guided by considering what information one needs in order to inform future project/programme decisions, improve future performance and

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63 The following largely draws on Church and Rogers, Designing for Results, pp. 92ff. The OECD/DAC guidance lists the following steps: Planning and preparing the evaluation, conducting the evaluation, concluding and learning from the evaluation. The DAC guidance seems more directed towards evaluators and is less detailed about the planning and preparation phase.

understand how and why the intervention is or is not contributing to positive change. Evaluation objectives can, according to Church and Rogers, be grouped into three main themes.

Evaluation Theme	Evaluation objective
Why and how is the organisation conducting this intervention?	**Appropriateness (or relevance) consideration:** Is the intervention the best for the situation and the desired goal? This includes the review of the theory of change. **Strategic alignment:** Are the activities in line with the organisation's mission and core principles? To effect the change articulated in its mission, an organisation needs to allocate all its resources and attention to that change.
How well was the intervention implemented?	**Management and administration:** How well was the project organised and run? **Implementation process appraisal:** Examines the quality of the conflict transformation techniques used in project implementation.
What were the results of the intervention and how long will they last?	**Output identification** **Outcome identification** **Impact assessment** **Adaptability of change:** Looks at whether the changes on outcome and impact level can adapt over time to shifts in the context and to different stresses and demands. This is a relatively new area of evaluation and needs to be further researched.

Table 8: **Evaluation themes**
(adapted from Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, pp. 100-104)

An important guideline for evaluation objectives – and closely related to the evaluation themes above – are evaluation criteria. In recent years, a lot of effort has been made in order to refine "traditional" evaluation criteria for development work, namely relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and efficiency, for application in the peacebuilding domain. These criteria are not only important for the evaluators of a specific project/programme, but should rather be considered already during the planning stages of a project/programme. It should be noted that the planning steps suggested in this tool – conflict analysis, theories of change, results chains, indicators – are meant to enable a consideration of these criteria.

The most important criteria are relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, participation, efficiency, coherence and linkages.[64]

64 See here OECD/DAC, *Guidance*, pp. 39-46.

Relevance
A project/programme is relevant if it responds to the peacebuilding needs in the context. Conflict analysis is a principal source of information for determining the relevance of a project/programme. When assessing relevance, it is also important to see how the intervention takes what others do into consideration and how it relates to overall strategies and policy frameworks.

Effectiveness
The assessment of this criteria focuses on the question whether an intervention/project/programme reached its expected results? Additionally, unintended/unexpected results – both positive and negative – need to be taken into account.

Impact
What positive and negative, primary and secondary, intended or unintended long-term effects did an intervention produce? How was the conflict and peacebuilding environment affected, i.e. did the intervention contribute to "peace writ large"? The question of impact assessment is a difficult one and widely discussed (see discussion in the chapter on results chain above). While outcomes and theories of change should be at the heart of the evaluation, the question whether the intervention can in the long-run contribute to peace needs nevertheless to be considered.*

Sustainability
This is the continuation of benefits after the intervention has been completed.

Participation
When assessing participation, evaluators look at whether relevant actors have been involved in the intervention's planning and implementation and whether relevant and sustainable local and national capacities for conflict transformation have been created and are owned by the national/local stakeholders.

Efficiency
Looks at how economically inputs have been translated into results.

Coherence (and coordination)
Here, evaluators ask: Is the intervention consistent with the larger policy context (on national and international level)? Is it coordinated with other policies, programmes or projects?

Linkages
This criterion refers to the connections (linkages) of the intervention with activities, projects, programmes, policies on other levels/tracks. RPP highlights two types of linkages: 1) Engagement aiming at changes on personal/individual level must be linked to the socio-political level and 2) Projects focusing on the broader population must be linked to key decision-makers.**

* Chigas and Woodrow, "Demystifying Impacts in Evaluation Practice", *New Routes,* 3/2008, LPI: Uppsala 2008, p. 19.

** See Reflecting on Peace Practice, *Factsheet and timeline*, June 2010. <http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/other/rpp_fact_sheet_june_2010_Pdf.pdf> (accessed 28 January 2011).

Box 5: **Key evaluation criteria in conflict transformation and peacebuilding**

In conjunction with determining the evaluation objectives, it needs to be decided, what the *audience of the evaluation* will be. There are two principle audiences for an evaluation: users and readers. While every evaluation has to address a user, readers are optional.

Also, it needs to be decided *what type/types of evaluation* will be used in the project's/programme's evaluation. A distinction between formative, summative and impact evaluations can be drawn. Formative evaluations (also mid-term evaluation) occur during – around midway through – project implementation, summative evaluations near or at the end of implementation and impact evaluations some time after a project has been finalised.

Another important decision is the choice of evaluation approach. There is a wide range of approaches, such as action evaluation, goal-free evaluation, self-evaluation, theory-based evaluation, results-based evaluation or utilisation focused evaluation.[65] The evaluation approach is the style or philosophy of the evaluation. When choosing an evaluation approach, the evaluation objectives determined earlier in the preparation process are key, i.e. the approach selected should be best suited for achieving the evaluation objectives.

In addition, decisions about the scope of the evaluation (geographic coverage and the degree to which the conclusions will be generalised) and who should conduct the evaluation need to be considered. Based on all these decisions, the evaluation budget can be developed.

Stage 2: Evaluation management

The process of evaluation management begins with the creation of a Terms of Reference (ToR), which is a guide to the evaluation. Then an evaluation plan needs to be developed, which can be done either by the project team or the evaluator/s. The plan operationalises the guidelines given in the ToR. As in the example outlined below, the evaluation plan should specify how data will be collected, timing and location of conducting the evaluation, etc.

Evaluation Objectives	Lines of Inquiry (Indicators, Standards)	Decisions to Inform	Means of Verification (methods)	Data Source & Quantity	Location of Data Collection	Conflict Considerations	Means of Analysis	Time (days)

Table 9: **Evaluation framework**
(adapted from Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 153)

Stage 3: Evaluation utilisation – learning and sharing

Once the evaluation has been conducted according to plan and a final report has been produced, it is sometimes assumed that the process of evaluation is finished. However, this is actually where the decisive step is taken, namely the utilisation of the conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation. Jerker Carlsson points out that evaluations become most useful when they include stakeholders in the whole evaluation process, include

65 While these approaches shall not be explained in detail here, there are very good summaries in Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, pp. 114-121 and the OECD/DAC, *Guidance*, pp. 85-89.

recommendations that make it clear who it is that should react to them and take the situation of the whole organisation into account.[66] Utilisation has two facets: 1) Internal learning and 2) External sharing. Church and Rogers apply David Kolb's experiential theory of learning in order to show how evaluation and learning go together.[67]

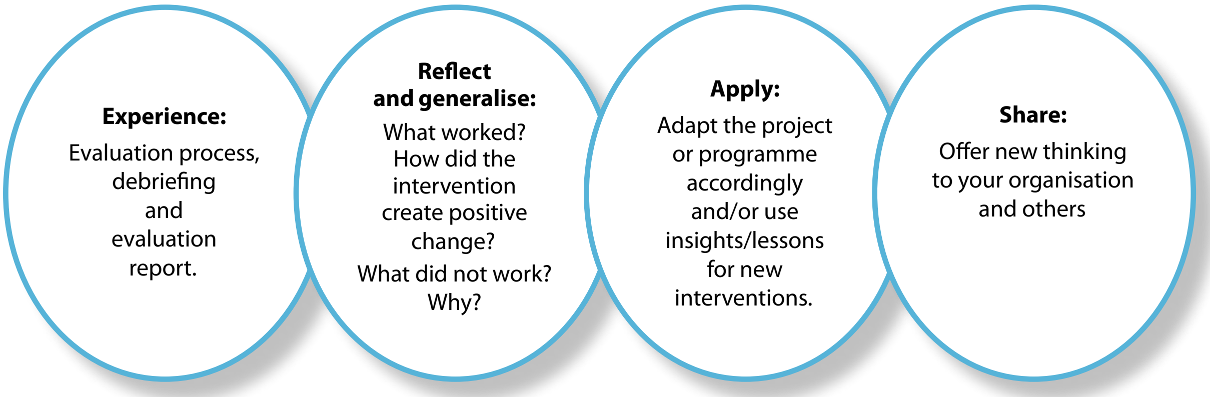

Figure 8: **Learning in Evaluation: Applying Kolb's learning cycle**
(adapted from Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 180)

9. Conclusion: The learning cycle continues

After roughly 60 pages, we have theoretically completed the PME&L learning cycle introduced in the first chapter of this tool. After taking a moment to enjoy this accomplishment, we realise that a new cycle of learning will have to begin, namely the learning about the practical application of the PME&L methodology in conflict transformation and capacity building engagement.

Since developing the first draft of this tool at the beginning of 2008, we have often asked ourselves "How do we now move on? How can we practically apply these concepts and make our work more effective, relevant, efficient and sustainable?" This is a straight-forward question, yet difficult to answer. What is needed is the commitment to improve the quality of our work and a good portion of innovation and creativity in this application process. What this tool provides is a framework for how to structure and develop planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning practice. Filling this framework has to be a contextualised and tailored effort, which should be guided by an inquisitive momentum to learn, but will also demand the skill of reducing complexity.

This might seem a daunting task at first sight. However, below, you can find some steps that can help you to get started:

66 Carlsson cited in Britton, B., Learning for Change: Principles and Practices of Learning Organisations, Swedish Mission Council: Stockholm 2002, p. 32.
<http://www.missioncouncil.se/download/18.5b4c3f30107c27e2cd5800010306/02_5_learning_for_change.pdf> (accessed 1 February 2011).

67 See Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 180. See here also OECD/DAC guidance, pp. 39-46, and Paffenholtz, Thania and Reychler, Luc, Aid for peace: A Guide to planning and Evaluation for Conflict Zones, Baden-Baden 2007. For Kolb's learning theory see Kolb, David A., Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1984.

- Assign one staff member to function as a PME&L advisor (a "champion") within your office. That person makes sure that the process moves forward and that PME&L becomes an integrative part of the work.
- Start with a familiarisation of the programme team (and also other staff) with the PME&L tool. Encourage careful reading of the same.
- Use regular PME&L team sessions to begin the application process. Conflict analysis and theories of change provide a natural point of departure. For programmes that have already set objectives (expected results), such a reflection can be useful for revisiting strategic decisions and giving them a solid basis.
- Then move step by step forward in the PME&L application (results chains, indicators, baseline studies, monitoring, and evaluation). For each step, the PME&L advisor provides an introduction so that the team is enabled to digest the concepts. Following this, the step to formulate theories of change, develop results chains, etc. can be taken.
- When the basic framework of PME&L is developed and staff capacities' are built, PME&L can become an integral part of the work and the PME&L advisor can take responsibility for the technical aspects of the process. At certain stages of the process, e.g. the baseline study, the monitoring sessions and the preparation of the evaluation, the PME&L advisor should create team processes for reflection and joint learning.
- In addition, the PME&L advisor can play a driving role in building partners' capacities in PME&L.

The documentation of the application process of PME&L, combined with internal and external sharing, will facilitate learning about how tools and concepts work in practice. This will fertilise the "theory" for PME&L developed in this tool and contribute to continuously improving the methodology.

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