

## Youth Impact: Strengthening Organizational Capacities to Build Peace In Europe Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Practices in Youth Peace

### Organizations

**The project** is an organizational capacity development project (2015 - 2016). It is implemented by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders – UNOY (the Netherlands) in partnership with 5 European UNOY members: SCI (Belgium), PATRIR (Romania), CEIPES (Italy), FCV (Spain) and EIF (Germany).

**Overall goal:** to strengthen organizational capacities in the areas of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

**Activities:** research to identify strengths and weakness in MEL practices, development of assessment tool and guidelines to improve MEL practices, development of action plans to address identified weaknesses and to build on strengths and dissemination activities.

### Key findings of the Research

#### Monitoring, Planning and Learning at project's level

This refers to measures that assess project progress against pre-set goals and learning, their scope and methods - e.g. educational projects, peacebuilding and facilitation of dialogue, advocacy projects.

- Organisations find it easier to evaluate educational projects rather than advocacy projects.
- Many different evaluation methods are used by the organisations to gather information on project outputs and the level of participants' satisfaction.
- Organisations evaluate and assess their educational projects using participants' self-assessment tools and educators' observations.
- Organisations rarely conduct baseline studies and ex-post evaluations to assess the long-term effects or (learning) impact of their projects.
- While monitoring and evaluation is part of the usual project's procedures, generating learning from evaluation results remains a challenge.

#### Monitoring, Planning and Learning at organizational level

##### Organizational culture

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

- Organisations express that their work is guided and motivated by values. Nevertheless, there are contradictions between proclaimed values and actual practices.
- 3 out of 6 organisations have written commitments/ethical guidelines to values (e.g. Code of Conduct).
- Not all individuals involved in the organisation are aware of the existing ethical guidelines

##### Planning and decision-making

This dimension refers to general organisational processes to identify needs, conduct a context analysis, define goals, assess alternative courses of action and make collective strategic choices.

- Strategic plans include goals and are in most organisations resulting from participatory decision making exercises.
- The strategic planning processes are open to participation, but the level of participation varies per organisation
- Most organizations have strategic plans containing goals and general objectives. The plans do not outline specific indicators and do not include a monitoring and evaluation plan

(responsible person, timeframe, measurement instruments). Also, the strategic plans don't include an explicit and/or well-defined Theory of Change.

### Knowledge management and MEL

This dimension refers to processes of acquiring, organising, developing and sharing knowledge and how these processes support and relate to monitor, evaluation and learning. Knowledge management is often confused with information management. Knowledge comes from the information that has been processed and prepared for further usage, while information is rather the collected data connected with organizational activities.

- Organizations rather do information management instead of knowledge management. They use tools to collect and store information through formal documentation or informal ways (e.g. staff meetings).
- Organizations don't have the capacity to process information in order to create knowledge, mostly because the learning dimension of MEL practices is not strongly followed up.
- The organisations have not structured their acquisition, sharing and use of knowledge.

### Human resources management

This refers to finding, managing and supporting personnel working with and for the organisation.

- Even though all organizations agree that learning of its personnel is important, it is not a priority when it comes to practice.
- Personnel have general planning and reporting skills, yet specific and advanced MEL competences are lacking.
- Only half of the organizations have job description, and even those do not all mention MEL responsibilities. MEL responsibilities are marginal compared to other responsibilities.
- Personnel appraisals are done, yet not as periodically as wished. MEL practices vary depending on the size and scope of the organization.
- There are no sufficient human resources allocated to MEL.
- Personnel induction does not include/ focus on MEL practices.

### Financial management

This refers to managing finances: how budgets and expenditures are monitored and the budget allocation to MEL activities.

- Organisations allocate limited resources to MEL activities.
- Resources are clearly assigned to financial management.
- Organisations do external audits and reporting according to legal and donor requirements.

### External relations

This refers to how MEL activities relate to external stakeholders, like partners and donors e.g. joint evaluations, discussions about methods and results.

- Organisations often engage with their partners in a formal or informal dialogue about monitoring and evaluation methods and the expected results.
- However it is rare that organisations create together with their partners a full MEL plan.
- Evaluations with donors go rarely beyond the reporting obligations required by the donors.
- Other stakeholders are only occasionally involved in the MEL strategies and plans.
- One example, of a joint evaluations at impact levels in which two organisations were involved.

### Please consider the following guiding questions when reflecting about the dimensions:

- To what extent do these findings represent the reality of your organisation in terms MEL practices?
- In which ways your MEL practice differs from those identified in these findings?
- What are the main challenges in your organisation related to MEL?