

OUTCOME STATEMENT

2022 Donor – Practitioner M&E Roundtable: Demonstrating How Mediation and Dialogue Contribute to Peace

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) hosted the seventh donor and practitioner roundtable on M&E in the peace sector on 16 and 17 June 2022 in Geneva. The event brought together leading donor and practitioner organisations (see [Annex A](#)) to test ideas on fit-for-purpose peacemaking M&E systems and tools.

This Outcome Statement summarises the latest insights around adaptive M&E for peace and identifies opportunities for greater collaboration across the sector. In 2022, exchanges between donors and practitioners focused on developing a sector-wide M&E toolbox, exploring quantitative tools, and looking at the latest pilots of innovative M&E and learning approaches. Participants discussed the role of gender and inclusion, as well as of big data and technology in peacemaking M&E.

Fighting the last peace

More than ever, both donors and practitioners feel the pressure created by the changing dynamics of geopolitics and modern warfare. Yet, many peacemaking actors continue to apply and support approaches that are ill-suited to the new realities of power politics and conflict in the 21st century. Participants considered how this mismatch also impacts efforts aimed at measuring and evaluating peacemaking work, and the growing need to adapt both peacemaking methodologies and their accompanying M&E models accordingly.

Towards a whole-of-peacemaking M&E vision

Since the first roundtable in 2014, the mediation sector has evolved and is now in a position to communicate more clearly and confidently about **what it contributes to peace**, how it does so, and **how it assures the quality of its work and demonstrates value**.

Over the years, several **landmarks of consensus have emerged**, notably on **fit-for-purpose peacemaking M&E systems** and ways of thinking about peacemaking results. A growing number of practitioner and donor organisations are using **adaptive M&E systems** and critical reflection tools (e.g. peer reviews, strategic reviews) focused on three fundamental levels of inquiry outlined in [Annex B](#).

The sector has developed and applied **a range of methods and tools** to implement its adaptive M&E system **across the lifecycle of peacemaking engagements**. Each approach is suited to different stages of the peacemaking process and aims to assess, improve and demonstrate the effectiveness and value of peacemaking activities. [Annex C](#) captures a proposed whole-of-peacemaking adaptive M&E toolbox.

Participants agreed that the sector should now focus on refining and **communicating this comprehensive view on adaptive M&E** to government oversight and evaluation bodies to influence policies and guidelines. This can help overcome simplistic arguments and misunderstandings related to peacemaking practice and impact, and allow practitioners and donors alike to best respond to questions concerning value-for-money.

Advances in the use of impact assessments for peace

Several participating organisations have recently trialled impact assessments. Their experience shows that while impact assessments in the peace sector are at times possible, their **feasibility and design depend on several limiting conditions**, including the certainty, size and manipulability of the intervention, as well as the availability and quality of data. In particular:

- **Randomised control trials (RCTs)** are only suitable for demonstrating impact when an intervention is characterised by high certainty and high manipulability, when the sample size is big and when sequencing of activities is possible.
- **Mixed methods approaches** may often be a better fit for assessing the impacts or effectiveness of peacemaking work that takes place in highly uncertain and dynamic conditions. These can draw on **quasi-experimental designs** (e.g. post hoc evaluations, matching or synthetic control), **case studies for theory building**, theory testing approaches, and **developmental evaluations**. An overview of the conditions required for each type of intervention can be found in [Annex D](#).

Discussions showed that there is more work to be done to bring peacemaking practitioners and those requesting or **conducting impact assessments** onto the same page about **the options and trade-offs** in using them (well), but also when and how *not* to use this M&E tool.

Innovative systems and tools to assess contributions to peace

As more classical M&E tools such as external evaluations or impact assessments are often not feasible, practitioners across the sector have developed and adopted various **innovative and effective M&E approaches to assess and demonstrate their contributions to peace**. Donors have become more open to these approaches, but parliaments and oversight bodies often still overly rely on external backwards-looking evaluations. These can be useful for fact-finding or accountability purposes, but have regularly proven ill-suited for dynamic peacemaking activities that require more flexible and forward-looking quality assurance.

Further efforts are needed before the robust nature and value-for-money of many of these M&E methods is recognised across the sector:

- Methodologies such as **outcome and results harvesting, contribution analysis, or process tracing** can help identify and capture results for peacemaking activities. The experience of participant organisations shows that these methodologies are suitable for complex and dynamic environments, and lend themselves to institutionalisation at the programme level.
- **Real-time evaluations (RTEs)** can be a useful tool to analyse and improve project implementation and consider whether an organisation is “doing things right” rather than just “doing the right things”. Participants acknowledged that RTEs might not be suitable for sensitive mediation projects, stressing that a necessary condition would be the non-confidential nature of a particular dialogue process.
- **Independent results validation exercises** can add another layer of objectivity to results reporting by considering the specific role played by an organisation, as well as the significance and value of a claimed result in light of conflict intensity. These exercises seem best suited for situations where a comprehensive external evaluation is not feasible, yet where a given peacemaking actor has relatively concrete claims to success.
- **Peer reviews** are an adaptive M&E tool used by a growing number of roundtable participants to review and adapt engagements at critical points in a project’s lifecycle. They help teams identify and address a variety of operational challenges, including changes in the operational space or issues of competition, collaboration and confidentiality. They also represent a source of learning at the project and whole-of-organisational levels.
- The sector has integrated key peer review features – specifically **the use of critical peers or partners** to challenge an organisation’s claims or engagement logic – into a range of methodologies, including outcome harvesting and contribution analysis.
- More donors are accepting **verbal reporting**, which can meaningfully replace written reports to address issues of confidentiality inherent to ongoing mediation efforts, reduce the reporting burden while increasing its quality, and support appreciative donor-grantee relations.

Being truly inclusive in peace sector M&E

Participants used the roundtable to clarify **what the sector can and should measure** when talking about inclusive peacemaking. Consensus emerged that it is useful to measure both representation (i.e. who is engaged) and meaningful participation (i.e. their influence on agenda-setting, discussions and outcomes), as well as consider the extent to which a process and its outcomes are inclusive and gender-responsive.

To ensure inclusive and effective M&E approaches, it is crucial to already **consider gender and inclusion at the project design** phase. **Gender-sensitive conflict analysis** can be an important tool for this purpose. Participants recognised **the value of 'results stories'** for appropriately capturing project achievements and challenges. Critical reflections and evaluations that extend beyond single projects may also better promote inclusion because they are more likely to capture the structural inequalities that inhibit inclusion more broadly.

To successfully conduct inclusive M&E, organisations should review how they incorporate gender-responsiveness and inclusion – and tackle gender bias – in their design and implementation of M&E processes. This can include **adopting a gender and inclusion strategy**, integrating gender and inclusion into management plans, **training staff on gender-sensitive conflict analysis**, and hiring thematic and context-specific expertise.

Advances in big data and technology for peace

Roundtable participants noted the **growing role of big data and technology in peace sector M&E**, which poses new opportunities and challenges for donors, practitioners and evaluators alike.

Digital tools (e.g. virtual collaboration platforms, digital consultations, or online platforms for monitoring and storytelling) can be useful to promote inclusion (e.g. by engaging disenfranchised constituencies, undocumented persons, youth, or women), transparency (e.g. by increasing access to information beyond the narrative of the parties) and accountability. **Geo-spatial and network analysis** can help practitioners break down large-scale conflict into its component parts and help inform project planning, monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Despite the advantages and utility of digital tools, organisations should be aware of their **potential risks for marginalised groups**, including in terms of personal safety and security. There are also additional **challenges linked to conducting digital M&E**, such as the tendency to focus on the number of participants rather than the level of engagement.

Using algorithms for evaluations comes with **new responsibilities for evaluators** linked to (1) ethics, safeguarding and security, (2) accuracy, and (3) data quality. These responsibilities should inform the frameworks that organisations apply to data they generate and analyse themselves, as well as to data generated by others.

Resources

Many roundtable participants shared tools, guidance materials, and case studies to support the discussions and follow-up actions. These resources have been uploaded to an open online library, accessible here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mkJPDEAUXupjIDb6JQRqshPOr4FH4TgL>.

Annexes

- A. Participant list
- B. Levels of inquiry in adaptive M&E for peacemaking
- C. A toolbox for peacemaking M&E and results (draft)
- D. Conditions to select the right type of peacemaking evaluation

Annex A: Participant List – 2022 HD Donor and Practitioner Roundtable

ALNAP

American University

Berghof Foundation

Carter Center

Centre for Security Studies, ETH Zürich

CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation

Conciliation Resources

DFA Ireland

European Commission

European Institute of Peace

FCDO UK

FDFA Switzerland

FFO Germany

Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

Global Affairs Canada

HD

Inter Mediate

International Committee of the Red Cross

International Crisis Group

Mercy Corps

MFA Netherlands

MFA Norway

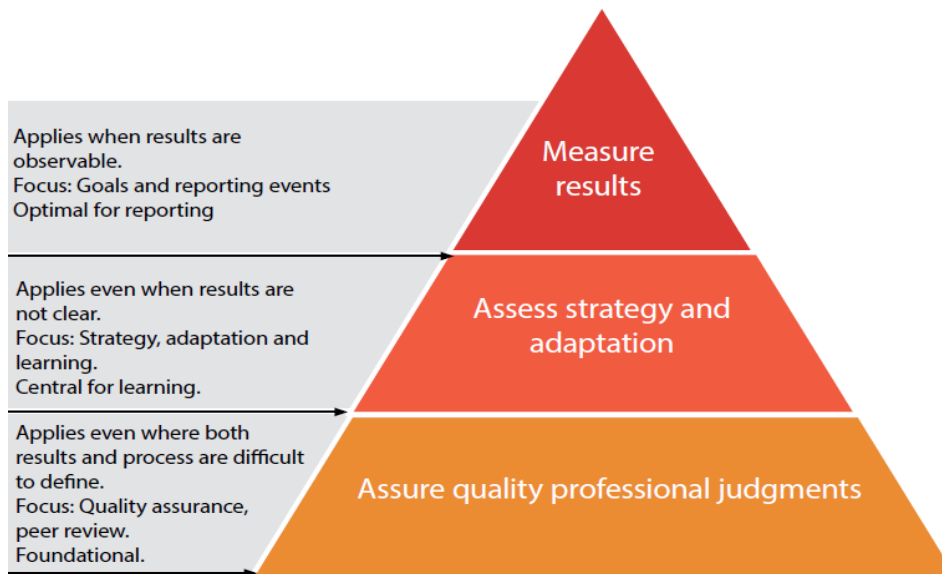
Robert Bosch Foundation

SIDA

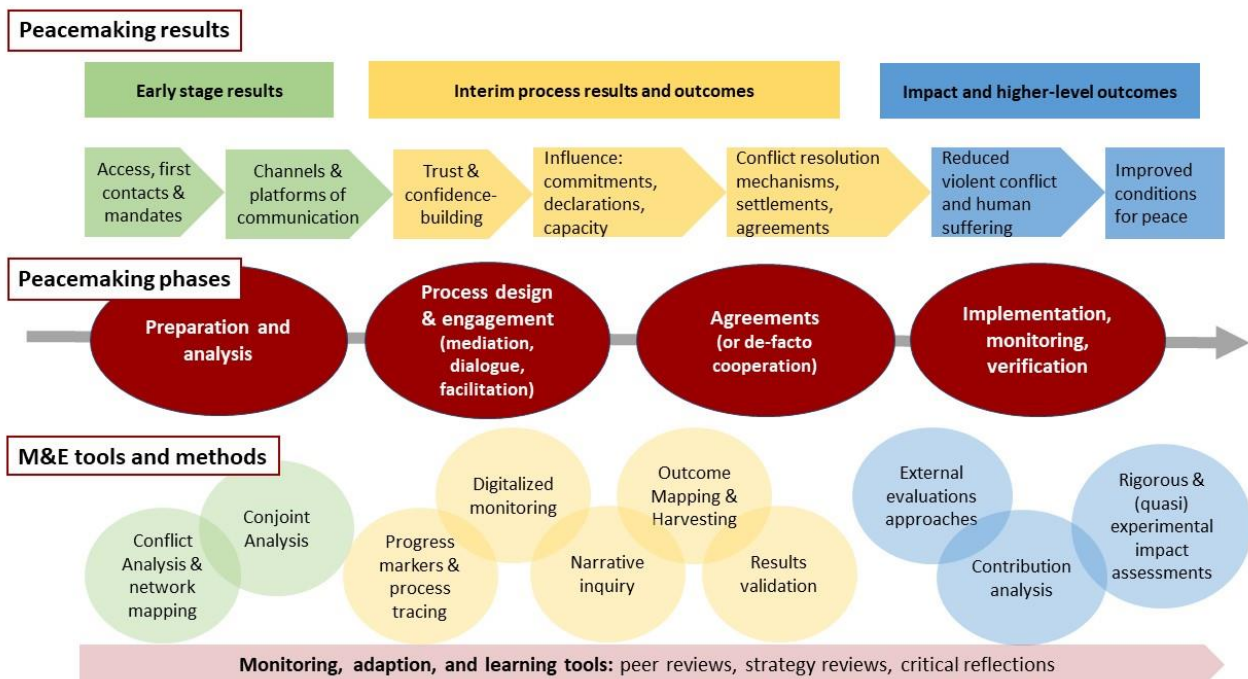
Swisspeace

UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

Annex B: Levels of inquiry in adaptive M&E for peacemaking



Annex C: A toolbox for peacemaking M&E and results (draft)



Annex D: Conditions to select the right type of peacemaking evaluation

	Certainty of "Intervention"		
		<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
Size and "manipulability" of "Intervention"	<i>High</i>	RCT (Observation of mechanism)	Quasi-experimental (i.e., matching, synthetic control) Case study (theory building)
	<i>Low</i>	Case study (theory testing)	Developmental Evaluation