

## **Monitoring of effects ( *movie* )**

*Effects-oriented planning and implementation  
of projects working to promote peace – a manual*

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e. V.  
zivik – civil conflict transformation

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## 1. Introduction: Why develop *movie* as a tool?

This guide focuses on the monitoring of effects, a process known in German as *Monitoring von Wirkungen*, the letters of which led us to name our tool ‘movie’. The purpose of *movie* – just like the writing of a good script for a film – is to assist organisations establish a solid planning basis for the implementation of projects working to promote peace. And, just as the sequences of a film can be recorded and analysed, the same applies in project implementation. Regular recording and evaluation of what has been achieved allows organisations to modify the upcoming stages of the project. This is the key to ensuring successful peace work in turbulent and dynamic conflict settings.

### 1.1. Why (another) manual on effects?

The manual *movie* was developed on the basis of many years’ experience in the zivik programme, funding projects working to promote peace. The zivik programme of the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) is financed by the German Federal Foreign Office and advises NGOs and the Federal Foreign Office on matters of civil conflict resolution and funds, documents and evaluates projects operating in conflict regions throughout the world.

A major challenge often observed in our project funding work concerns the difficulties encountered by funded organisations in the planning and visualisation of linkages between activities and intended effects. The zivik team’s analysis suggested a lack of resources on the issue of effects. Also, following an examination of the existing material and discussions with other organisations and experts, the zivik team concluded that the methods available were often very complex and academic and not always well suited for projects working to promote peace. This was the context in which the idea for this manual was born. The manual was developed through several learning loops involving a review of existing methods and dialogue with experts and other organisations.<sup>1</sup> User experience remains important for future revisions of this manual. Therefore, feedback on *movie* is very welcome.

### 1.2. Who are the intended users of the manual?

This manual was compiled primarily to assist staff in organisations which cooperate with zivik in the context of project funding. It is also intended as a resource for anyone interested in the planning and implementation of civil society projects working to promote peace.

Although the tool *movie* takes its name from the German phrase for the monitoring of effects, *movie* involves much more than monitoring. The tool covers the entire process of analysis, planning, action, observation and the resulting modification of project activities to bring about the desired changes. In other words, *movie* should be understood as tool for the planning and implementation of projects working to promote peace. But it does not prescribe a strict implementation plan. Instead, its flexible design allows for adaptation to individual project needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Particular thanks go to Dirk Sprenger who developed the idea for *movie* and authored the first edition of this manual.

### 1.3. How is the manual structured?

The second chapter *Background: Why focus on effects?* explains the importance of effects for projects working to promote peace and sets out the assumptions and ideas on which *movie* builds.

The third chapter *Methods section: How does movie function?* explains the approach chosen, breaking it down into three steps.

1. Conflict analysis
2. Planning
3. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

Each chapter contains boxes with suggestions for further reading and references to other methods that can be used in combination with *movie*.

## 2. Background: Why focus on effects?

### 2.1. Importance of focusing on effects for projects working to promote peace

Effects are increasingly viewed as important. In German funding law, in the area of international cooperation and at project level in development cooperation – all relevant for the holders of projects funded by zivik – this trend is clear.

The need to review the performance has been a requirement under the **German Federal Budget Code** (Bundshaushaltsordnung) since 2007 (for details see paragraph 2.2 of the general administrative rules implementing section 7 of the Federal Budget Code). This involves a review of whether a project achieved its objectives, what its effects were and whether it was cost effective. The monitoring of effects should examine whether the measure was appropriate and indeed the reason that the objectives were achieved. All its intended and unintended effects need to be recorded.

Similarly, in the area of international cooperation, the focus on effects has become increasingly prominent. A good example is the **Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness** (2005) and its follow-up process. The key issue is how to structure and implement international development such that the intended effects of an action materialise as its actual effects. Important factors in this context – alongside the central themes of planning, monitoring and evaluation that *movie* addresses – are cooperation between donors and partners, greater responsibility of partner countries and better coordination amongst donors.

The focus on effects has also become important in professional discourse at the project level, in the context of how to structure projects sensitive to conflict. The crucial issue is the way in which activities are implemented. This is because every action in a particular context results not only in desired but also in unforeseen effects. These can sometimes lead to unexpected positive changes in the situation. However, a dynamic can also develop in which project activities sustain the existence of a conflict situation or even provoke additional conflict. Studies in *peace and conflict impact assessment* (PCIA) and on the *'do no harm' principle* clearly illustrate this point. No matter how paradoxical it may seem, it is quite possible for a project working to promote peace to produce effects that intensify the conflict. The core question is how to structure and implement projects in conflict situations which avoid unwanted effects intensifying the conflict and, at the same time, strengthen the effects of conflict transformation and peace promotion.

Given these circumstances, the construction of *movie* draws on actual experience in the funding of projects and existing approaches to strengthening the effects focus in projects working to promote peace. These include, alongside PCIA and *'do no harm'*, the systemic approach of *outcome mapping* and results from *Reflecting on Peace Practice* (RPP).



are not as simple as the planning stage often assumes. Achievement of a particular state does not result necessarily in the desired societal changes. This often means that, although many actions are implemented, the desired changes result only on a fragmentary basis or do not happen at all. For example, although there are now many well-trained mediators, none of the parties in the conflict is willing to work with them.

This deficit has forced a shift in thinking at project management level. The planning stage no longer focuses on identifying a state to be achieved, but on changes. The primary aim of monitoring is no longer the proper implementation of the planned activities (the training of mediators) but on bringing about the desired changes (a reduction in the use of violence).

### **Levels at which effects occur**

Goal-oriented project planning is concerned with various levels: results, project goals and overall objectives. Under this approach, if the anticipated results have been achieved and certain predetermined assumptions satisfied, the project goal has been reached. On reaching the project goal and satisfaction of certain further assumptions it should become apparent that the overall objectives, at least in part, have been achieved. Most organisations involved in project management have retained these levels following the shift in focus to effects. However, the terminology used to describe them has changed. *Output* has replaced result, *outcome* replaced project goal and *impact* replaced overall objective.

The methodology of *movie* is primarily concerned with the levels of **outcome** and **impact**. Outcome concerns a project's direct effects, in particular, the modified actions of certain key actors whose input is crucial for the change process desired in a particular conflict. Impact concerns the project's indirect effects with regard to those change processes, i.e. its long-term and ideally ongoing contribution towards conflict transformation.

Many projects include in the project description, especially at the impact level, the small but significant phrase: 'To make a contribution towards ...'. This ensures that the approach remains realistic. One project alone cannot bring peace to a region. It can only make a contribution towards that. The projects that other actors are delivering are important, too, as the likelihood of change at the impact level is increased when many different projects are coordinated.

### 2.3. What are the observations, assumptions and ideas which underpin the methods section?

#### **The relationship between outcome and impact**

Donors wish to ensure that their funds are used as effectively as possible. The more comprehensive and clear the effects of a funded measure are, the more this funding will be regarded as appropriate. That is why donors usually want to see effects in the sense of impact, that is to say, visible contributions towards peace. However, project holders create effects that take place within their project environment, in other words at the outcome level. Changes in the broader framework tend to occur only after the funding period has ended.<sup>2</sup> The numerous possibilities for influence at the impact level means that authorship is difficult to identify. The facts may sometimes point towards a connection between the measures funded and changes in the broader framework but a causal connection cannot be established. Peace processes require time and rely on the collaborative effects of many participants and factors.

#### **Networked not linear thinking: a systemic perspective**

Following debates in the field of international cooperation, a model has developed with which to demonstrate causal relationships with regard to effects, linking project's activities with changes in the broader framework. These relationships are known as **chains of effects**. Unfortunately, the image is misleading. It suggests a highly linear process – a chain of dominoes, each falling one after another, triggered by one simple push. With the exception of the first one, all the other dominoes fall because they are hit by the next in line. Here, a direct cause and effect relationship exists.

The project reality in the field of conflict resolution and the implementation of peace processes looks rather different. Many conflicts are characterised by a high degree of complexity requiring an analysis from a **systemic perspective**. Static cause and effect relationships are excluded from this approach. Instead, the systemic perspective presupposes a complex interaction between cause and effect, in other words, a **change process** that is dynamic.

Although long-term or similarly focused projects may result in synergies, the environment is often competitive and actors in the field can hinder each other's activities. In addition, unexpected events, such as renewed outbreaks of violence, may bring to a halt or even destroy processes of long-term reconciliation between conflicting parties. Consequently, if projects are to contribute successfully towards bringing about changes, they should focus more on the dynamic behaviour of the actors in a conflict and less on chains of effects with their tendency to be rigid and linear.

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<sup>2</sup> This statement is premised on project funding by zivik that allows for a maximum funding period of 12 months taken within a calendar year. It ignores the possibility of any follow-up funding.

### **Thinking in terms of changes, not in states of affairs.**

#### **Making change processes comprehensible**

Whilst projects of international development cooperation concentrate primarily on structural change and on addressing deficiencies, a core focus of conflict resolution and peace support projects is on changing the actions of the actors involved. Projects working to promote peace are capable of achieving effects identifiable at the outcome level as changes in the actions of certain actors. In turn, these changes may contribute, depending on the circumstances, to structural and societal changes observable at the impact level. The actions of actors can be said to have changed where, for example,

- individuals become involved in the peaceful resolution of conflict in their local surroundings;
- individuals resume and attempt to strengthen previous relationships;
- individuals decide in a particular context to reject the use of violence and to resort to other means because of a change of attitude.

#### **Change needs process indicators**

If an organisation wants to be sure of doing the right thing to bring about the changes it desires, criteria need to be identified, i.e. markers that can be used to measure change.

But changes in the actions of actors involved in conflict contexts do not happen overnight. Instead, they take place in the framework of extended processes and are frequently subject to setbacks. That is why organisations need to develop process indicators (and not results or goal indicators). These are **milestones** set down along the route, signposts confirming that the process is moving in the right direction.

#### **What is needed in the conflict situation?**

Before starting to plan the project, the first step is to carry out a conflict analysis. Its aim should be to capture the existing situation and to identify starting points from which to develop the project's own contribution towards conflict resolution or peace support. It should also reduce the complexity, establishing the basic structures and actors capable of bringing about change.

The conflict analysis is particularly important from the perspective of effects. It is crucial to identify the changes that are necessary and actors that are capable of achieving these changes.

Conflict situations are often unstable. Peace processes can be paralysed if one party or simply a splinter group decides to break away. That is why conflict analysis has to be a regular part of the monitoring process throughout the project implementation period and not simply a one-off exercise carried out before starting to plan.

### 3. **Methods section: How does *movie* function?**

This chapter explains the approach taken by *movie*. It can be divided into the following steps:

1. Conflict analysis
2. Planning
3. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

The first step is **conflict analysis**. Its purpose is to document and interpret the conflict context and to identify possible starting points for change processes. The next step concerns the **planning** of a project working to promote peace, in other words, how to formulate desired effects and plan and initiate change processes. The third step deals with **monitoring and evaluation**. It explains the principles for observing and analysing the project's effects so that the organisation can, where necessary, modify its own actions.

Each section has been given the same structure and is based on the following questions:

- What are the important features?
- How can this step be approached?
- What can be done if assistance is needed?

#### 3.1. **Conflict analysis: Understanding the conflict and identifying starting points for change processes**

##### 3.1.1. **What are the important features?**

The purpose of a conflict analysis is to reduce a (generally complex) conflict situation to its core elements: the central actors, the root causes and issues of the conflict and the dynamic interplay of these factors over time. In doing this, the organisation should identify possible opportunities and key actors for change processes that could be the starting point for its own project. As conflict situations change constantly, a conflict analysis should not simply be carried out once but repeated and modified regularly.

##### 3.1.2. **How can this step be approached?**

A team involving both internal staff and external contributors encourages an analysis reflecting different views and perspectives. A useful preliminary step is to obtain existing conflict analyses compiled by other actors, e.g. by searching online or talking to other organisations operating in the same field.

Before beginning the analysis itself, the organisation should ask:

- What features of the conflict are currently unknown or difficult to identify because of its complexity?

The conflict analysis should answer the following questions:

- What is the chronology and geographical setting of the conflict?
- What are the causes and issues of the conflict (resources / group rivalries / history of the conflict region)?
- Who are the central actors in the conflict?
  - Who is continuing to use violence?
  - Who benefits from the current situation? How do they benefit?
  - Who is suffering or disadvantaged as a result of the current situation?
  - Who wants to change things? And who is capable of doing this?
  - What is the relationship between the actors (hostile / neutral / cooperative)?
- What is currently happening? What are the dynamics of the situation?

Ideas can then be developed – building on the conflict analysis – for the organisation's own contribution and its project intervention strategy.

- Where do we see starting points for a positive change that can contribute towards a conflict transformation promoting peace?
- Whose activities and which features need to be strengthened or supported?
- Which features need to be reduced? Whose activities need to be limited or halted?
- Taking all these factors into account, who are the actors in the conflict we can work with in our project and influence in the direction of the desired changes? As these individuals and groups symbolise the key to our project of conflict transformation, for the purposes of *movie*, we will call them '**key actors**'.
- What is our role as an organisation in the conflict situation?
- What are other organisations already doing in the field?

- For a quick overview of several conflict analysis tools see the *Tip Sheet: Conflict Analysis Tools* published by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) (available online to download).
- A well-respected compilation of conflict analysis methods is: Fisher, Simon et al.: *Working with Conflict. Skills and Strategies for Action*. London, Zed Books (2000).
- For a comprehensive resource pack developed by a team of organisations including FEWER, International Alert and Saferworld see: *Conflict-sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding* (available online to download).

### **3.1.3. What can be done if assistance is needed?**

Discussions and contact with organisations in the field and with experts may help provide further input on the substantive issues and conflict analysis methods.

Development of the conflict analysis can also be carried out in conjunction with other organisations. Working together in this way may result in a greater coherence between individual activities or in the planning and implementation of joint activities.

### **3.2. Planning: Identifying desired effects, planning change processes**

#### **3.2.1. What are the important features?**

*Planning* means bringing our vision of the future into the present and reflecting on the route needed to get from the present to our desired future. *Planning* also means thinking first in terms of connections and changes and only afterwards in terms of activities.

The plans for the project build on the conflict analysis and set out the basis for the project activities and for the accompanying M&E activities. They will be revised and updated as M&E takes place.

#### **3.2.2. How can this step be approached?**

##### **Developing a vision of the future (impact level)**

The vision of the future, in other words, what the project wants to achieve at an impact level, determines the direction of the change process and the organisation's own project strategy. For example, the organisation might ask itself: 'Five years from now how are people in the current conflict situation going to live and work together?'

Impact relates to long-term changes in the actions of the central actors in the conflict context. A project rarely produces direct and instant effects on this level. Instead, these are achieved indirectly and in the medium to longer-term through the key actors influenced by the project activities.

The vision of the future should be described in as much detail as possible and can be linked to indicators, making it easier to observe changes over time. In most cases, an individual project will only be able to initiate certain aspects of change at the impact level. However, its potential contribution needs to be recognisable so that the project strategy can be modified when changes at the impact level occur.

##### **Giving some thought to the key actors and their role in the change process**

In its activities, the project will work directly with the key actors (individuals, groups or organisations) to ensure an effective as possible contribution towards the desired changes described in its future vision. For the project, the key actors symbolise its 'key' to the desired conflict transformation. They are sometimes – but not in all cases – also the central actors of the conflict context.

Some thought needs to be given to the criteria that will be used in choosing the project's key actors. For example, is it important to ensure a balanced representation of different groups in society?

Finally, the planning team should critically assess whether the key actors have sufficient influence in the conflict context, especially over the central actors involved.

##### **Specifying the changes amongst the key actors (outcome level)**

The project outcome describes the changes in the actions of the key actors that the project aims to strengthen through its activities, contributing towards the desired change process. For each key actor the outcome needs to be specified in as much detail as possible.

### **Setting milestones (process indicators) for the change process**

The path from the starting point, i.e. what the key actors are doing now, towards the desired change identified as the outcome usually involves several steps. Not all of these steps will follow a linear track. To check whether the project activities actually result in the progress aimed for and whether the project is on the correct path, the setting of milestones is necessary.

### **Reflecting on how outcome influences impact**

After the outcome and milestones have been defined, it is worth checking whether the desired changes in the actions of the key actors provide the correct strategy. Will these changes influence the actions of the central actors in the conflict in the way the project intends and, as a result, produce sustainable effects at the impact level?

### **Including monitoring & evaluation (M&E) in the planned activities**

It needs to be ensured when planning project activities that the M&E process itself is included as a separate activity. A balance has to be achieved between the work with the key actors and reflection on this work. Although the priority is on project implementation and work towards the change process, regular evaluation is also needed. An evaluation of project implementation, effects of the project activities and changes in the conflict context allows project management to react and adjust. The evaluation process should include regular reflection on how the organisation sees itself and on its own role in the conflict context.

### **Planning of activities**

The activities describe what the project will do in specific terms to bring about and strengthen the desired changes in the actions of the key actors. An important aspect of the planning process is to ensure that the activities proposed are linked to clear and realistic resource plans and timelines that will be understood by everyone involved. Project activities require careful planning. Even so, activities may need to be adapted during the project implementation phase as conditions change and events occur within the project itself and in the conflict context.

### **Reflecting on context factors (risks and assumptions)**

The external framework and context factors should be included in the project planning right from the start. During the implementation phase these should be monitored so that, where necessary, adjustments can be made in the project management. Context factors include assumptions concerning developments in the project environment and external risks that could be relevant for the project's success. External factors may produce effects jeopardising or hindering the project. But supportive effects are possible, too.

### **Thinking about unintended effects**

Almost every project results also in unintended effects, some negative, some positive. At the start of the project, only assumptions can be made concerning the likely unintended effects. As the project progresses, an important monitoring task is to observe and take note of the unintended effects actually resulting from the project activities. Project management should then react and make the necessary adjustments.

### **3.2.3. What can be done if assistance is needed?**

Using an external moderator with knowledge of relevant methods is often useful when holding a planning workshop. In addition, the planning stage should involve, as far as possible, the participation of the key actors.

The next two pages set out the planning elements of *movie* in a project planning chart (planning matrix).

### Project planning as a basis for monitoring and evaluation

**Impact:**  
Describe your specific vision of the future: Given the current situation described in the conflict analysis, what are the long lasting changes to which the project will contribute? How will you be able to assess those changes?

<b>Key actors:</b> Identify individuals or groups that you intend to work with for the purpose of facilitating the desired changes. Please explain the criteria and procedures used when selecting participants, especially in relation to group affiliation (e.g. gender, religion, ethnicity, age, regional origin, sexual orientation)	<b>Outcome:</b> How do the actions of the key actors change so that the desired changes can follow?	<b>Milestones/ process indicators:</b> How can you identify that the key actors act differently? (Indicators and means of verification e.g. questionnaire, observations by project staff, interviews with project participants).
<b>Key actor 1: ...</b>		
<b>Additional key actors ...</b>		

**Link to impact:** How can the key actors within the project gain influence over the central actors of the conflict? How do the actions of the central actors change?

<b>Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E):</b> 1. How often (i.e. at what intervals) and using which tools will you check on the project's progress (workshops, external/ internal evaluation, etc.)?	...
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2. Please explain the benefits and purpose of the evaluation activities.	...
3. How do you intend to reflect on your organisation's own role and how will you deal with this during the project?	...

**Action Plan:** Who does what with whom and when, to achieve change processes amongst the key actors within the project?

What?	Who?	When?	Remarks
List of activities with the individuals and groups addressed (including persons involved, number of days, etc.)	responsibility for implementation	specific date / time period	concerning implementation
(Activity 1) ...			
(Additional activities) ...			
(M&E activities) ...			

**Assumptions and risks (context → project):**  
 What context factors could hinder, prevent or encourage the intended change process?  
 ...

**Possible unintended effects (project → context):**  
 Which positive or negative, e.g. conflict-exacerbating, side effects might arise as a consequence of the project?  
 ...

### 3.3. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E): Incorporating observation and reflection in project activities

#### 3.3.1. What are the important features?

**Monitoring**, in the *movie* approach, is the systematic observation of connections between an organisation's own actions, the key actors with whom the project works and the overall context. **Evaluation** is the assessment of observations. The process-based approach of *movie* aims primarily to support learning and an appropriate project management. It should not and cannot replace an external evaluation. A decision whether to obtain an external evaluation must be taken separately, depending on the circumstances. The idea of M&E, in the context of *movie*, is to ensure that an organisation's actions in the implementation of a project are considered and well-thought out. Putting it simply:

'Are we doing the right thing? And are we doing it in the right way? In other words, will this lead to the effects we desire and an improvement in the current situation?'

#### 3.3.2. How can this step be approached?

**M&E should cover the following areas:**

- The implementing organisation:
  - What can we observe in relation to
    - its capacity to function as a project team?
    - how the organisation sees itself?
    - the implementation of the activities?
    - the connection between the project activities and the actions of the key actors?
- The key actors:
  - Which of the key actors achieves the milestones established at the planning stage?
  - Are some of the milestones unrealistic or can they no longer be achieved? Should they be redefined or new milestones set?
  - Which key actor goes off in a different direction and why?
  - Which observations are the basis for that conclusion?
  - What led to those changes?
- The context:
  - What changes can be observed in the project surroundings? Which of these could impact on the success of the change process?
  - Is the conflict analysis still current? Does it need adjusting?
  - What unintended effects resulting from the project's own activities can be observed?
  - What led to those changes?

- Analysis and conclusions:
  - What is our analysis resulting from the observations we have made?
  - Do we need to adjust our strategy and plans for the project?
  - What are the next steps?

### **Investing time on a regular basis**

Having observations that are comparable is important for the M&E process. This is why monitoring needs to be carried out at regular intervals. For example, every three months the organisation could hold a one-day workshop and after six months a two-day workshop for more in-depth monitoring. In addition, regular team meetings held at weekly or two-weekly intervals are useful for keeping up to date.

At the end of each project measure, for example a training session, it is a good idea to allow some time for feedback / reflection with the individuals involved (with the participants / with the trainers). Where possible, this reflection exercise can then be repeated six months later.

It is good practice to keep regular notes and to document any observations resulting from team meetings. The outcome of every stage in the M&E process should be recorded in writing. This allows comparisons to be made with later observations.

### **3.3.3. What can be done if assistance is needed?**

Sharing experiences and obtaining ideas from other organisations on the use of different M&E methods can be useful. If an organisation has only limited experience and expertise, it may also be sensible to obtain assistance from an external adviser specialised in M&E methods and with the necessary experience. It is often a good idea to organise an external moderator for an M&E workshop as everyone on the organisation's own team is involved in the project and needs to report on project developments.

- A highly comprehensive manual on M&E has been produced by the organisation Search for Common Ground: *Designing For Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs* (available online to download)
- A particularly pragmatic approach to effects-oriented M&E focused on emergency situations is set out in *The Good Enough Guide – Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergency*, published by a group of NGOs (available online to download).
- A well-respected manual on participatory impact monitoring published by the German international cooperation enterprise, Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), is *Participatory Impact Monitoring* by Eberhard Gohl and Dorsi Germann (available online to download).
- An alternative approach to monitoring, and based on the idea of storytelling, is the 'most significant change' (MSC) method, also known as 'monitoring without indicators' (several manuals available online to download).