PMEL

Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

CHOICE FOR YOUTH & SEXUALITY

A CHOICE Toolkit for Youth-Led Organisations

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

M&E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
MYP:	Meaningful Youth Participation
PMEL:	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning
SRHR:	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
ToC:	Theory of Change
YLOs:	Youth-Led Organisations
ToC:	Theory of Change

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Planning, Monitoring, Evaluating, and Learning (PMEL) toolkit for Youth-Led Organisations! Having a PMEL system can be hugely beneficial for every organisation and programme - but what exactly is it? You might have heard this rather daunting abbreviation pop up in your work, but do you know the ins and outs of what it actually means? Do you want to find out more about how to build a solid PMEL for your organisation? Or are you curious to learn more about how it can help you understand your programme better and improve its results? Whatever your needs, this toolkit will be able to help. Aimed specifically at young professionals like yourself, this toolkit will help you address the following questions:

1. **WHAT IS PMEL?**
2. **WHY IT IS IMPORTANT?**
3. **WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF PMEL?**
4. **WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO DEVELOP A PMEL FRAMEWORK FOR YOUR ORGANISATION OR PROGRAMME?**

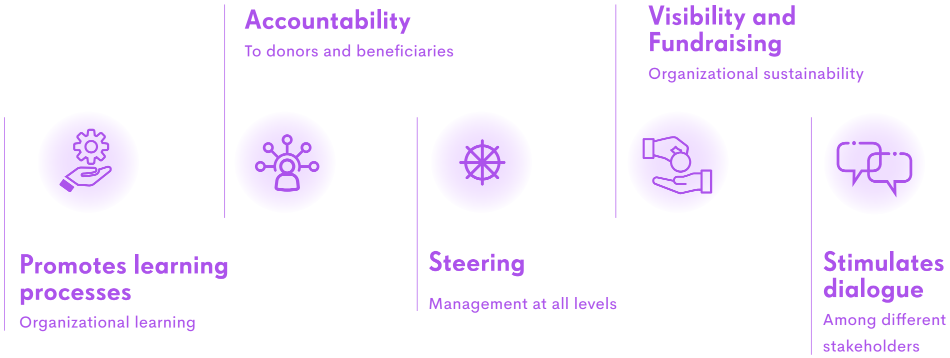
So, let's get started. Nowadays, PMEL is the norm for most non-profit organisations, and is often part of funding requirements. This is because it helps you design actions that will contribute to an already well-defined vision. It also facilitates the assessment of the level of effectiveness of the actions you design. In simple terms, it helps you come up with successful, effective activities that will make achieving your vision more likely. And because every organisation is different, every organisation/programme requires a tailor-made PMEL framework. This framework will support your organisational/programmatic planning processes, monitor progress and evaluate results. And the best thing of all – you'll be able to learn from all this information too!

PMEL is also a way to be accountable towards your partners, donors, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. It helps you showcase the work you have put in to achieving your goals and contributing to your vision. It also helps you be transparent about the things that have worked, and the ones that haven't, regarding your strategies.

While it's clear that there are many advantages to having a PMEL system, there is no denying that it can also be complex! But no need to worry - this is why CHOICE has developed this toolkit! To support CHOICErs, partners and all young people to better understand and implement a PMEL system in your organisation/programmes. The toolkit starts with a dive into what PMEL is, the purpose of each of its four components, and why it is important for an organisation/programme. We will then provide you with a step-by-step guide to help you develop your organisational/programmatic PMEL system . And even if developing a PMEL system is not your goal, this guide may still be useful for you. It will enable you to further understand how a PMEL system works and to contribute better to PMEL discussions within your organisation/programme.

Time to get started!

WHY DO WE NEED PMEL?



A PMEL system can be particularly useful when tackling a problem as a non-profit organisation. Using PMEL is a fantastic way of defining your way forward, providing mechanisms to help you make sure you are heading in the right direction and giving you enough space to adjust when needed.

In addition to this, there can be several other advantages to using a PMEL system[1]:

1. Promotes learning: based on evaluation processes, as mentioned above, you can identify red flags on the way. It helps you learn what works and what does not, when it comes to your impact.
2. Accountability: using organisational results can help organisations be held accountable to their donors and beneficiaries. The M&E framework can provide you with all the relevant information needed for this.
3. Steering: as mentioned above, based on evaluation outcomes, organisations can change the course of their strategies to adjust to unexpected outcomes or to enhance successful strategies.
4. Visibility and fundraising: monitoring and evaluations are a great tool to show your results to the world.
5. Stimulates dialogue: within your organisation or among other organisations in your sector, regarding different ToCs, strategies and results.

NOTE THAT NOT EVERY PURPOSE OF PMEL MIGHT BE RELEVANT TO YOUR ORGANISATION OR PROGRAMME. WHICH IS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO CLARIFY THIS AS PART OF THE PLANNING PROCESS: WHY DO WE WANT TO USE PMEL? AND HOW DO WE WANT TO IMPLEMENT IT IN THE YEARS TO COME? THE REASONS TO USE PMEL (THE WHY) NEED TO BE DEFINED BEFORE STARTING THE PROCESS OF OUTLINING YOUR INDICATORS, SINCE THIS WILL SUPPORT THE DEFINITION PROCESS.

WHAT IS PMEL?

As you've probably already gathered, PMEL stands for Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. Quite a mouthful! PMEL is an organisational process that aims to stimulate learning, improve organisational strategies, and ensure that we're heading in the right direction. All while helping us identify what makes our approach unique. This means that PMEL not only serves organisational learning, but it is also an opportunity to show donors and stakeholders our progress and the potential of our work.

To understand PMEL better, let us dive into its different elements:

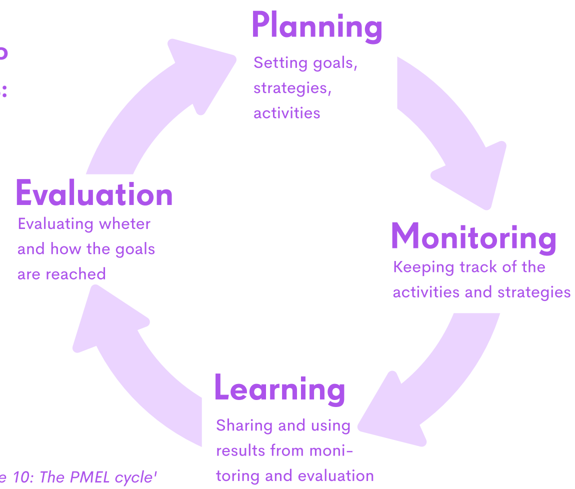


Figure 10: The PMEL cycle'

1. Note that programmatic PMEL systems in programmes that involve multiple partners normally are defined jointly. It could also be the case that the PMEL system is already in place if you join the programme at a later stage or that some guidelines are defined for the system by the lead organisation.

Planning

In simple terms, keep checking in on the original plans to make sure you're on track, fine-tuning as you go if necessary.

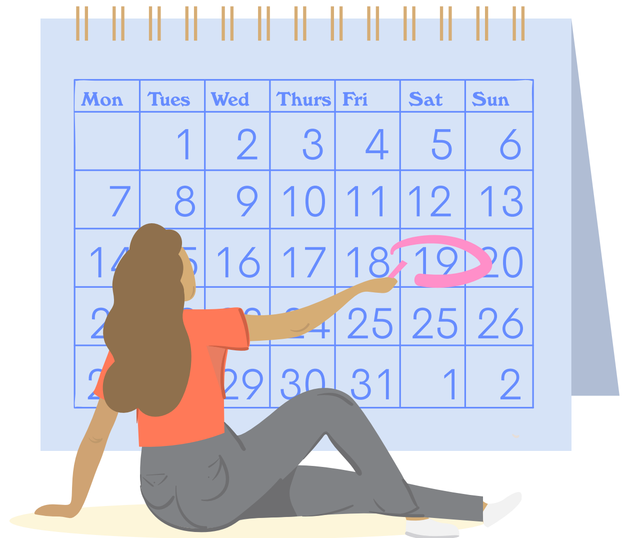
PLANNING

A PMEL process starts with planning. This is usually done when organisations are defining their long-term strategy, their Theory of Change (ToC) and their annual plans. Even though these planning processes happen at the very beginning of an organisational cycle, or at the beginning of a programme, these processes are meant to be reiterated throughout the whole PMEL cycle. Because once you've been through a monitoring or evaluation moment, you should revisit your plans and assess whether or not you need to adjust your strategies or plan in order to create a bigger impact. In simple terms, keep checking in on the original plans to make sure you're on track, fine-tuning as you go if necessary. Nothing is written in stone!

One of the first steps you might take is to make a **multi-annual strategic (long-term) plan** for your organisation. This may sound daunting, but basically you need to define a shared **vision** and **mission** for your organisation and/or programme[2] and establish your priorities and core activities for the coming years. What you want to achieve and how you are going to achieve it. Usually, strategic plans are created for 3-5 years and should be reviewed and adapted every 2-2½ years. This review will allow you to update and align your priorities if needed, also given the changing external contexts you might work in (a big example of this is the COVID 19 pandemic).

Along with your strategic plan, you might want to work on defining or fine-tuning a **Theory of Change (ToC)**. Every organisation and programme is packed with beliefs, assumptions, and hypotheses about how change happens – about the way humans, or organisations, or political systems work. A ToC is about articulating these underlying assumptions about how change will happen in an organisation or programme.[3]

A ToC can also be an organisational map of the path an organisation has chosen to follow in order to get where they want to be in the future (in 4-5 years, depending on the organisation). This is why it is also linked to your long-term strategy, as outlined in your strategic plan. In the case of development programmes, the ToC is typically the first planning moment because it sets the course of the strategies and the activities that will take place on the road to the established vision. If you want to dive even deeper into working with a ToC and learn how to make your own, read our **'How to Work with A Theory of Change'** Guideline **here**. Later in this guide, in the steps to develop your PMEL framework, you will learn more about a ToC.



2. Note that if you have been invited to join a programme that has already been awarded funding the programme's ToC will already be there, as well as its vision. **3.** Vogel, Isabel (2012) Review of the use of Theory of Change, in international development 2 Hivos (2015) Hivos ToC Guidelines: Theory of Change Thinking in Practice (http://www.theoryofchange.nl/sites/default/files/resource/hivos_toc_guidelines_final_nov_2015.pdf)

WHAT ARE OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND IMPACT?

Let's break down the jargon. An output is what you get as a result of certain work/activity (input). It is the immediate and expected result. An outcome, on the other hand, is something that can potentially happen after the output is achieved. It is the reason why beneficiaries need the project or why beneficiaries are required to take certain actions. Finally, the impact is the main objective of a programme/organisation. You can think of the impact as being the dream you want to accomplish with the work you do.

In this sense, outputs are part of what is known as the sphere of control, they are something we have control over as long as we can do our work and planned activities. Outcomes on the other hand, are part of our sphere of influence, because we can only do so much in order for them to take place. Lastly, the impact or vision of the programme is part of the sphere of concern, as it is what we hope for with our work. Take as an example the Horse Parable (figure 1). In the horse parable, the sphere of control extends only to the point where the thirsty horse is in front of the fountain. The horse may, or may not, choose to drink the water. Making the outcome part of our sphere of influence, not control. We can only provide the opportunity and encourage the horse to drink. That's where our influence ends. Should the horse drink the water and become a happy horse, the impact will be achieved. Nonetheless, we cannot control the amount of water the horse drinks, nor the effect this amount has on the wellbeing of the horse, therefore it is only part of our sphere of concern.

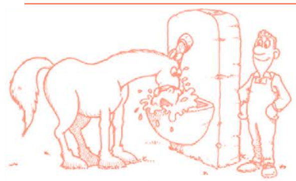
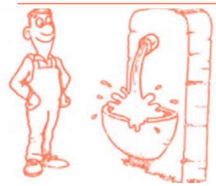
	HORSE PARABLE	RESULTS	EXPLANATION
	Happy Horse	Impact Overall Objective	Importance of the programme/ project for the society
	Horse is not thirsty anymore	Outcome Specific Objective	Use of outputs, reason why beneficiaries need the project
	Horse present at the fountain	Output Expected Results	What will be delivered by the project
	Leading the horse to the fountain	Activities	What stake-holders and beneficiaries will do
	Fountain and the man	Resources	Inputs required for the activities
	Thirsty horse	Needs analysis	Starting situation

Figure 1. Horse parable
Source: MDF Training and Consultancy

Once you have a ToC for your organisation or your programme, it is time to make a more detailed **annual plan** for the coming year of implementation. This annual plan helps you to set short-term goals and milestones you want to achieve by the end of the year. It also helps you schedule activities according to your priorities (e.g. per quarter or per month), create a set budget to implement your activities and delegate clear roles and responsibilities amongst your colleagues. Make sure to be realistic when planning, both financially and in terms of human capacity available

Make sure to be realistic when planning, both financially and in terms of human capacity available

Monitoring and Evaluating

PMEL is an organisational process that aims to stimulate learning, improve organisational strategies, and ensure that we're heading in the right direction.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E)

Once your ToC and strategic plan are established, we arrive at the next step: Monitoring and Evaluation, or M&E.
Monitoring is the process by which we assess the progress made in implementing the ToC and the related activities in your annual plan. In other words, it provides information related to planned changes.
Evaluation, however, is an assessment of the performance of a project, made by measuring set objectives at different points in time (baseline, midline or end line) and comparing these. Other information regarding the project is also used to form conclusions and recommendations.
Usually, organisations refer to their PMEL system when talking about monitoring and evaluation. As we've already seen, PMEL goes far beyond those two components alone. However, establishing a good M&E system is of significant importance for your PMEL framework.

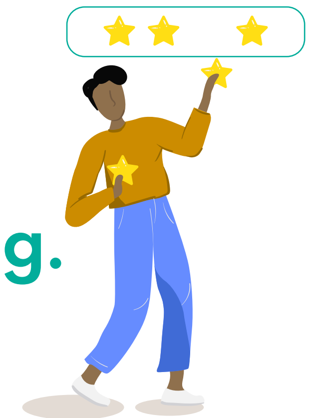
Your M&E system should be developed based on the ToC of your organisation or programme, since it's also in the ToC that you are setting out the change you want to achieve and the results you expect to see as a consequence of your work. However, monitoring all results might not be necessary and relevant for what you want to know. This is why the priorities you have set in your strategy and ToC are important. Ask yourself: why do you want to measure some or all of your results? Is X result showing the impact of your work and if so, is it relevant for your stakeholders and to show the importance of your work? These questions can help you narrow down your monitoring areas. Be critical about what information you need to measure planned changes you hope to see as part of your activities. It is important however to not limit monitoring to outputs alone. Monitoring different types of relevant indicators will allow you to learn from the unexpected. Keep you alert. An example of this practice of monitoring could involve keeping track of how many young people have followed a full comprehensive sexuality education curriculum, to track whether you are achieving the targets of your programme. This also means that monitoring is an ongoing process that happens throughout the implementation of your programmatic work plan or your organisation's Multi-Annual Strategy.

When we select the areas of our work or organisation we want to monitor, we will likely be influenced by our key stakeholders. These could include donors, the partners and communities you work with, and the main beneficiary group of your work. For example, as seen below in CHOICE's ToC, our main beneficiary group is young people! Identifying your stakeholders also helps you direct your monitoring efforts in the right direction.

With your priorities clear, and your stakeholders identified, you can decide what indicators you will use to measure your impact and the targets, and in doing so, measure your progress. It is also important to monitor outside your sphere of control to also improve the quality or effect of your activities for the participants.

For instance, you can follow-up with them and survey to what extent they have experienced change following a training. Based on this result, you can adjust your trainings and achieve better results at outcome level. In regards to quality, keep in mind that monitoring systems are made before implementation starts. Involve the people that will be working with the system from the start, listen to their feedback and issues. Discuss and be critical of the monitoring results and build in the flexibility to adjust the system to grow with the programme.

When evaluation is done properly, it will also question the validity and relevance of indicators and provide space for further reflection on the strategies used in the implementation of the ToC, setting ground for some experienced learning.



UNDERSTANDING WHAT AN INDICATOR IS

Indicators are observable characteristics or conditions that can be used to show progress. In the case of programme/organisational indicators, these are used to measure whether the work that is being done has created the right output or outcome. An example of an output indicator is: # of young people trained on MYP by CHOICE. An example of an outcome indicator is: # of initiatives undertaken by young people who have been trained on MYP by CHOICE.

Evaluation becomes a part of the programme cycle in the form of baseline, midline and end line assessments. Evaluation will help us look at our results at a specific, pre-determined moment to make sure we can measure planned and unplanned changes, unlike monitoring that provides information only related to planned changes. When evaluation is done properly, it will also question the validity and relevance of indicators and provide space for further reflection on the strategies used in the implementation of the ToC, setting ground for some experienced learning. For instance, an end evaluation assessment of a programme implemented by CHOICE will probably include interviews with community members, political leaders and young people. This will allow us to understand the extent to which they have been impacted by the programme strategies and what interesting suggestions they have for future programming based on their experiences. An end evaluation will likely also include some reflections from the implementation team, their recommendations and good practices, as well as a final reflection on the achievements made regarding the promised outcomes of the programme, following the programme's ToC.

Learning

PMEL is an organisational process that aims to stimulate learning, improve organisational strategies, and ensure that we're heading in the right direction.

LEARNING

Still with us? We've now arrived at the final element: learning. Learning is the process through which we collect information and knowledge gained throughout implementation of our activities (through the M&E steps above). We can use this information to improve the quality of our programme, reassess our organisational priorities, or even adjust the PMEL-system itself. Learning is the final element of the PMEL cycle, and with it we gain insights into the extent to which the ToC/work plan is contributing to our vision, if at all.

An example of learning is the mid-term report reflection. The mid-term report is a form of evaluation in the cycle. It helps assess the progress we have achieved towards our goals and the extent to which the ToC reflects the reality of the issue we are addressing. The mid-term report reflection is the process by which the organisation(s) involved in implementing the ToC will take a close look at the results and see what needs to be adjusted in the planning. If the report contains red flags regarding the impact of the efforts towards the vision, this needs to be addressed by adjusting the ToC and the planning. Evaluation moments are crucial to make sure that we are always steering in a direction that brings about the most impact.
Learning can also be related to other issues connected with the programmes/organisations that, even though they do not directly impact the goals, can have an effect on the efficacy of your work. Red flags associated with governance, finance, and power imbalances are some examples of the issues that can also be brought up by the evaluations and can help you steer your programme/organisation in a direction that will better contribute to your vision.

Finally, much learning is embedded in what we normally do within a programme cycle. Think of mutual capacity strengthening, exchange, reflections in staff meetings or at global governance level, annual reporting, linking and learning meetings, pilots, planning, monitoring, evaluation, research, review sessions, learning through collaboration in Technical Working Groups, Communities of Practice (CoPs) etc. In other words, learning is a part of everything we do. However it happens, dedicating resources (time and budget) for learning within your organisation or your programme team is crucial. It is also important to identify learning questions for your programme and/or organisation and how to answer these e.g., through operational research, evaluation or informal consultations. Then, you can restart the PMEL cycle with the knowledge gained from the evaluation and adjust your planning and monitoring for the following evaluation.

Some relevant activities that can take place as part of the M&E framework:

- As part of the development of your ToC: Context analysis is important in the process because, as mentioned before, knowing the issue you want to focus on can help you draw causal relationships (cause and effect). These causal relationships are specific to the context in which you will be implementing your ToC.
- Inception workshops to define your ToC: The inception workshop is a methodology used to develop or fine-tune a ToC in an effort to capture stakeholders' viewpoints about the issue, from experience or knowledge expertise. Inception workshops are also a way to avoid the ToC becoming a standalone document developed in a vacuum, while helping to test assumptions along the process with the stakeholders. If you are to implement a programme in a context different from your own, it is paramount that you involve actors from the implementation area from the very start.
- Baseline: is particularly important to define the starting point of the

programme, which will help you track/show progress with the use of your indicators based on where you were when you started.

- Progress tracking: Tracking your progress is an ongoing activity that is relevant to know whether you are moving in the desired direction.
- Reporting (internal and to donor and other stakeholders). This is done along with progress tracking to show donors and beneficiaries what you have done so far.
- ToC reviews: based on your progress tracking/reporting, you should, ideally, take a look at your ToC to check whether the strategies you are using are taking you in the right direction or whether you need to adjust them. A ToC should not be used as a fixed document, because circumstances change so the pathways of change and/or strategies might need to be adjusted along the way.
- Impact studies: This is a great way to show your progress and the impact of your activities in the achievement of your vision. Impact studies are assessments that aim at showing the impact of a new intervention or even laws in society. Impact studies can point out the extent to which your programme/organisation has changed society's ideas in regards to a certain issue. An impact study can also be conducted many years after a programme has ended.
- Case studies: A case study is a closer look at the impact that your programme/organisation had in the life of a specific person, a small community or similar, depending on who/what your target was. It is an investigation to better understand how different activities or the presence of a project come together in one "unit" and how this unit makes meaningful change.
- (External) evaluations, midterm and final. These evaluation moments serve as an external check of your strategies and are a reliable source of information that you can use to showcase your work.
- Reflection and learning: one of the main reasons to do PMEL. Using all the information gathered throughout your M&E framework, you should establish moments in which you can reflect on the results and learn about them jointly with everyone who is implementing the ToC.

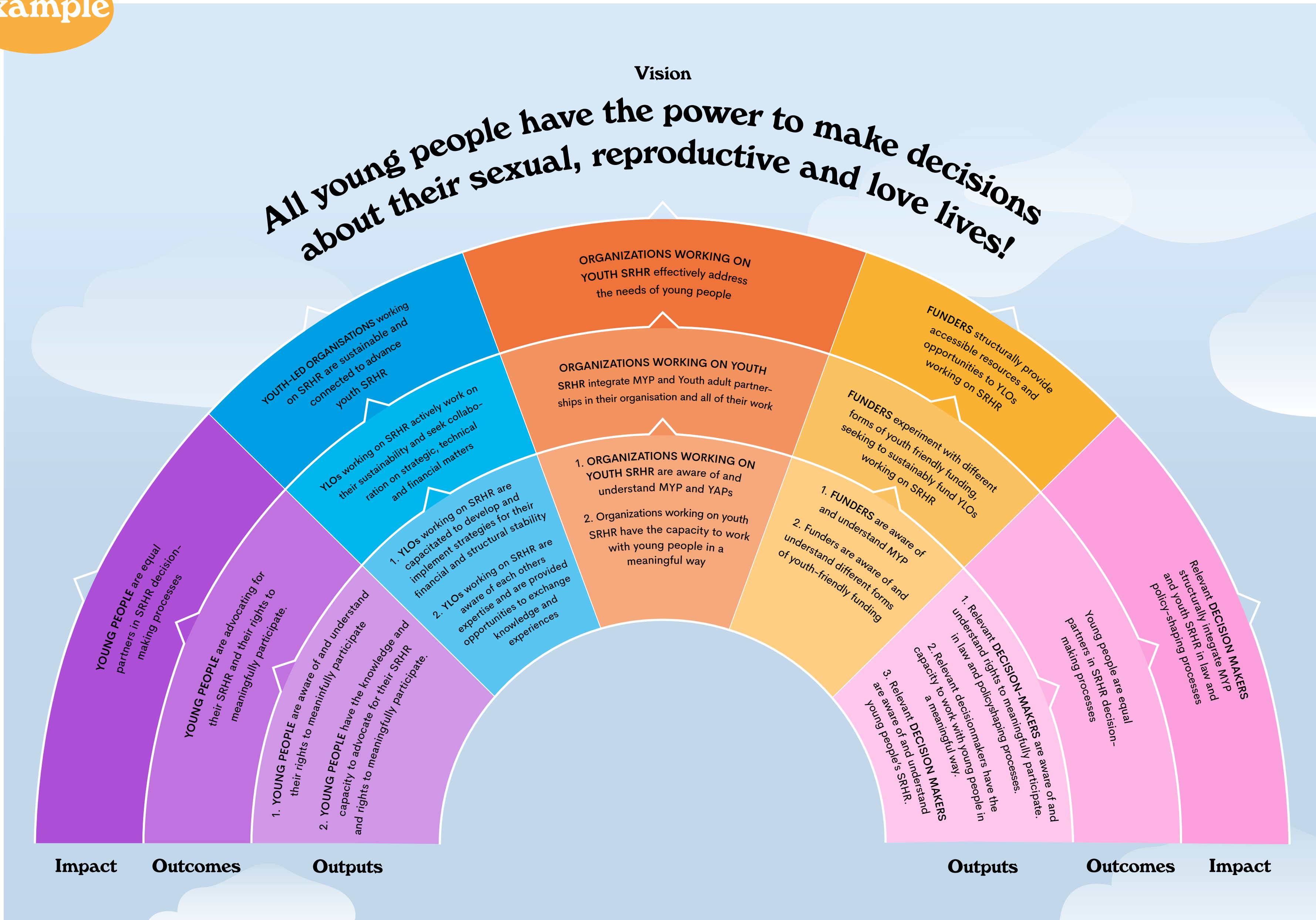
HOW TO SET UP A PMEL SYSTEM IN YOUR ORGANISATION

In this section, we will learn step-by-step how to set up a PMEL system in your organisation. Ready? Let's go!

STEP 0: DEVELOP OR UPDATE YOUR TOC

Make sure your ToC is set up and updated considering the current circumstances of your organisation, the context of the work you do, or the context of the issue you want to target. As mentioned above, your ToC is your own definition of the change you envision in the world with a clear indication of your sphere of control, your sphere of influence and your sphere of concern.

example



Here you can see CHOICE's ToC as an example of what it includes.

Figure 2: CHOICE Theory of Change

example

As you can see in the example, a ToC is normally composed of four main elements: vision and/or impact(s), outcome(s) and outputs. The vision is exactly the world we would like to contribute to, either as an organisation or as a programme. To contribute towards this overarching vision, organisations use their own mission (their core purpose) to reflect on the way they can and will contribute towards achieving the overarching vision, with the combined efforts of other stakeholders. To define the impact(s), outcome(s) and outputs it is necessary to understand the diverse ways in which this vision can be achieved and how we can contribute to that. To do this you use either research and/or your experience.

Going back to the ToC of CHOICE in the example, you can see that the vision is "all young people have the power to make decisions about their sexual, reproductive and love lives." In this case, we know from our organisational expertise that, in order to achieve this goal, five things need to take place (our five impacts or long-term outcomes):

1. Young people are equal partners in SRHR decision making processes
2. YLOs working on SRHR are sustainable and connected to advance youth SRHR
3. Organisations working on youth SRHR effectively address the needs of YP
4. Funders structurally provide accessible resources and opportunities to YLOs working on SRHR, and
5. Relevant decision-makers structurally integrate MYP and youth SRHR in law and policy shaping processes

We know that these five elements are what can bring about our vision because we have either strong knowledge sources that indicate so, or because of our experience in the sector. In any case, this knowledge is the basis of the development of the ToC, because it helps draw causal relationships that allow us to define a path for change. Once the impact level is defined, the same logic can be applied to outcome(s) and outputs. That is to say, you must look at each impact and, based on your knowledge or experience, explain what will be required in order for this to happen. Every level will bring more concrete actions to which you can increasingly contribute. That is how you define your ToC. In the next step you will learn more about assumptions in the ToC and why these are relevant for your PMEL framework.

When looking at the degree of control you have over the different levels of the ToC, the closer to the vision, the less control you have. Generally, the impact level in a ToC is considered the level or sphere of concern; the outcome level is considered the level of influence; and the output level is considered the level of control. These different levels are important to grasp, since this helps us understand to what extent, and how, we are contributing to the vision. More importantly, it helps us know what we are responsible for and what we should be measuring.

In other words, we can be held accountable for the level of awareness and understanding that young people have about their rights to meaningfully participate (Output 1 in pathway 1, CHOICE ToC), because we can provide training on this. We however cannot control whether young people advocate for their SRHR and their rights to meaningfully participate (Outcome level in pathway 1, CHOICE ToC), based on this knowledge. It's even more difficult to talk about the extent to which young people are equal partners in SRHR decision-making processes (Impact level pathway 1, CHOICE ToC). While we could definitely measure the extent of our contribution to outcome and impact level, doing so is less straightforward than for output level. Which is why, monitoring should focus on the output level and evaluation on the outcomes and impact(s).

To learn more about ToC and guided steps to make your own, read our 'How to Work with A Theory of Change' Guideline here.

STEP 1: ASSUMPTIONS AND LEARNING QUESTIONS

Defining your ToC requires using assumptions of causal relationships between events, drawn based on your knowledge (research, documentation) or your very own experience on the field. Assumptions are the facts we take for granted when defining a pathway for change.

example

Take a look at CHOICE's ToC, in Pathway one we say that "Young people are equal partners in SRHR decision-making processes" only if "Young people are advocating for their SRHR and their rights to meaningfully participate," which will happen only if:

- Young people are aware of their rights to meaningfully participate
- Young people have the capacity to advocate for their SRHR and rights to meaningfully participate

We are therefore assuming here that young people are able to overcome external factors (lack of income, lack of time, family obligations, norms and culture, safety) that might limit their possibility to meaningfully participate. Additionally, we are assuming that by increasing their awareness and capacity of SRHR and MYP, these young people will become active advocates for their rights.

These assumptions are the result of research and experience. Writing them down once you have your ToC enables you to understand what the basis for your line of thinking is. If your assumptions are the result of the knowledge you have from previous experiences or from research you have done or read, then you are good to go. However, assumptions are often actually based on expectancy. This means that you have no way to prove why you decided to take a certain path in your ToC. This is not entirely wrong, but it means we need to take an extra step to make sure we evaluate our ToC.

For this, you need to take aside the assumptions you need to assess and define learning questions that can be answered through research, in the course of implementation of your ToC.

example

In our case, considering our assumptions, we have defined the following learning questions:

- Which external factors/barriers do young people face that limit their possibility to meaningfully participate?
- How can young people overcome the external factors/barriers found that limit their possibility to meaningfully participate?
- Which external factors enable young people's meaningful participation?
- What motivates young people to become active advocates for their rights?

In order to answer these learning questions, we make sure to group them and plan research within our programmatic activities, allowing for budget and a timeline.

STEP 2: DEFINING THE PURPOSE OF YOUR PMEL SYSTEM:

We have already mentioned that there can be different purposes for a PMEL system, right? Namely:

1. Promotes learning
2. Accountability
3. Steering
4. Visibility and fundraising
5. Stimulates dialogue

We have also explained that not all these purposes might serve your organisation/programme. This is why, before diving into developing your PMEL system, it is important that you and your team define which of the purposes of doing PMEL applies to your organisation/programme. This clarity can help you steer your PMEL efforts in the right direction.

STEP 3: DEFINING INDICATORS

Moving on now, to defining indicators. An indicator – as the word already suggests – is a marker of whether a certain change has happened. When formulating indicators, we ask ourselves: what has changed? For whom has it changed? How much has it changed? When did the change happen? And where did it happen? With these questions, we make our indicators as specific as possible. They should however also be relevant (ask ourselves: does the indicator provide the information I need?) and we should be able to measure them (ask ourselves: do we have the budget and capacity to measure the indicator and is the data we need available?). Indicators will form what we will call our PMEL framework.

To start defining indicators, it is best to start at the impact level in the ToC.

To start defining indicators, it is best to start at the impact level in the ToC. Defining indicators at this level is a little complex and being able to assess your contribution will be a lot harder than the other two levels of the ToC (outcome and output level). For that reason, when defining the indicator for an impact, make sure to keep in mind the general picture and identify what evaluation processes can help you shed light on your contributions to it.

Coming back to CHOICE's ToC, in Pathway 1 we have defined the following impact: "Young people are equal partners in SRHR decision-making processes". In this statement, we can already identify the indicator, which is to say, the thing we wish to measure: "equal partners in SRHR decision-making processes." As well as the population where we will be measuring this indicator: "Young people." The indicators here will then be:

- The extent to which young people are structurally and meaningfully involved in SRHR decision-making processes
- Adults perceive young people's participation in SRHR decision-making processes as valuable

Both indicators can help CHOICE measure the extent to which the variable is changing in the population. Now, within CHOICE there are several things we do to ensure awareness raising on the importance of including youth when working on youth SRHR, but there are no direct activities that contribute to this indicator, as will be the case in the other levels of the ToC. Why? Well, we can be held accountable for outputs and contribute to outcomes and with this, hope to create impact, but this is out of our sphere of control.

For the moment, what is important for you to understand is that the impact level indicator can be indeed general and does not need to reflect your activities or efforts per se, as will be the case in the other levels of your ToC.

Let us now try to define an indicator in the outcome level. Looking at CHOICE's ToC, we have the next outcome in Pathway 1: "Young people are advocating for their SRHR and their rights to meaningfully participate". As in the previous example, the variable/indicator here is advocating for their SRHR and their rights to meaningfully participate. The population in which we would like to see this happening is young people. In the case of the outcome level, as this is closer to our sphere of control before setting up the indicator, we need to define ways in which we can contribute to this outcome.

In the case of CHOICE, we offer young people training to understand different advocacy processes where they can claim their rights. We provide understanding of when these events take place, who is involved, and how youth can participate. Therefore, an indicator that can be relevant for the variable here identified is:

- % of young people who are capacitated that are involved in local, national, regional and international advocacy processes for young people's SRHR and their rights to meaningfully participate.

As you can see, there is a difference in how the indicators are set up per level of the ToC. The closer to our sphere of control, the simpler it is to define the indicator, because our contribution to this level is straightforward. The higher we go within the ToC, the more we need to reflect on how we contribute to the desired result and set up indicators with that in mind, to help us measure our contribution.

Moving on to output level indicators. In pathway 1 of our ToC, we have the following in the output level: "Young people are aware of and understand their rights to meaningfully participate". The variable here is awareness and understanding of the rights to meaningfully participate. The population where we would like to see this variable changing is young people.

In order to measure the number of young people with increased awareness and understanding of meaningful participation, it is important to understand how we contribute to this. In this case, CHOICE provides face-to-face training on MYP, as well as Trainings of Trainers (ToT). Similarly, we offer relevant online resources on YOUTH Do IT! which contribute equally to this goal. We can therefore measure this indicator by measuring the number of young people who have been trained by CHOICE on the topic, in all these different forms. Indicators for this output level will then be:

- # of young people involved in one-off sessions on MYP by CHOICE
- # of one-off sessions on MYP provided to young people by CHOICE
- % of young people involved in sessions by CHOICE who increased their level of understanding on MYP

The closer to our sphere of control, the simpler it is to define the indicator, because our contribution to this level is straight-forward.

Tip **When developing your ToC, keep in mind that its different levels need to be clearly measurable.**

STEP 4: HOW AND WHEN TO MEASURE THE INDICATORS

If you've completed step 3, you have done most of the hard work! Hang on in there! Now, we just need to set up the PMEL framework and a couple of details here and there and we will be almost done. First thing that you need to do is set measurements for the indicators. Remember when defining the indicators that you needed to reflect on your contributions to the output and outcome level? Well, these contributions are the ones we will be measuring. Let's use the previous examples to come back to these ideas.

example

For the output, "Young people are aware of and understand their rights to meaningfully participate" we defined the following indicator "How many young people have increased awareness and understanding on MYP?". We also mentioned that CHOICE provides face-to-face training on MYP, as well as ToT. Similarly, we offer relevant online resources on YOUTH Do IT!, which contribute equally to this goal. We can therefore measure this indicator by measuring the number of young people who have been trained by CHOICE on the topic, in all these different forms. That is to say: we can use documentation from the training sessions and digital analytics from YOUTH Do IT! to count the number of young people trained. In addition to this quantitative data, it is also necessary to compare the needs assessment (that you do at the beginning of the training) to the training evaluations (which you conduct at the end of the training) in which you ask participants to scale their understanding and awareness so that you can measure the qualitative impact of your trainings.

These measurements can be added to your framework as "methodology," so it is clear for you and your team what it is that you will be measuring here. You can do this with all the indicators defined in Step 3. Make sure to define the moments when you will come back to your results and assess your progress. These moments (evaluation moments) are crucial to make sure you keep steering in the right direction.

Impact level indicators, as mentioned before, can be established and defined, however you will need to use different ways of measuring them. You can make use of other evaluation processes that should take place as part of your M&E system, such us: research on specific topics, mid-term and end evaluations, etc. The methods to be used to measure these indicators can be added in the methodology column.

When measuring advocacy outcomes it is useful to use the outcome harvesting methodology. This methodology will help you measure the extent to which your advocacy efforts contributed to a certain high-level change, like the publication or implementation of a new law/policy that aligns with your activities objectives. See the outcome harvesting methodology box for more information.

Make sure to define the moments when you will come back to your results and assess your progress.

Outcome harvesting

Outcome harvesting is a methodology that supports you in conducting an analysis that helps you connect your advocacy efforts with changes that might not be the direct result of your work, or that fall outside of the scope of your M&E system. The final product of a harvest is a document where you outline the following:

- Outcome description, which includes an actor (social actor), a behaviour and the change, should be observable. Tip: Remember there is a difference between output and outcome as mentioned before, so keep this in mind for when writing the outcome description.
- Relevance of the outcome. For this we need to explain how this is relevant in the light of our advocacy strategy and how it is different from normal (showing how we got a step closer to our goal). Here, make sure to include as many details as possible to draw the before/after picture to make the relevance visible.
- Our contribution: what activities were the ones that contributed to this outcome? A story adds extra depth to this contribution, rather than simply a list of activities. Also make sure that it is believable and verifiable (if supporting documentation is available, make sure to collect it). Tip: don't forget to provide details, including dates and periods in which the activity took place.
- Sources. The sources should help in supporting the outcome statement. They can add information about the outcome itself, but more importantly they can support the activities that we implement that contributed to the outcome. Sources includes reports, names of people who can corroborate the story. If an external evaluator wants to check the story, they can do it by using this information, for example.
- A way forward. This is a reflection about what has happened and how this informs us on our way forward. The way forward can also include (important) a follow-up on the compromises actors make while performing their activities (for instance, when a politician compromises to push for more CSE for young people)

Tip

One page with good details and clear explanation is enough. Avoid acronyms.

STEP 5: SETTING TARGETS

So far, we have indicators and methods to measure them. Let us now define the targets. Setting targets can be a challenging task - you don't want to aim for anything unrealistic, yet you do want to challenge yourself. When setting targets, it's important to:

- Clearly set a goal by either using a number or a percentage. That's to say, a target needs to include a clear goal. Be specific!
- Include a reference to something. Do we want to achieve a higher goal than last year, or do we want to improve the numbers found on the baseline? We could also aim to be as good as someone else in the field was, as long as we are being realistic with the numbers we set.
- Include a time frame.

Using this list can help you set sound targets. For instance, saying "Increase the number of young people with awareness of MYP" is not a target. Why? Because we are missing the number we would like to reach, a point of reference to that number and a time frame. On the contrary, "increase the number of young people with awareness of MYP by 20% in reference to the baseline by 2025" provides a clear goal with reference to a clear measurement and a time frame. Got it?

Since we already have our indicators defined at this stage, we can now simply set targets for them. There are two options to choose from: use historic data and/or reflect on past experience.

Finally, when setting targets, it's crucial to be realistic. Make sure you consider your context and the changes that you expect throughout the year(s), and any events that might delay your implementation. Consider cause and effect relationships with partners, consortiums, teams and governments.

STEP 6: DEFINING MONITORING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Your next step in this PMEL journey will be to define roles and responsibilities. PMEL needs to be an organisational responsibility since its outcomes benefit everyone in the organisation. Therefore, you should look at your framework along with your team and decide who will be doing what and when. If there is a lack of capacity within your team, you can also follow specialised trainings or request support from other experts in the programme. You can also decide to involve externals to help you assess your contribution to the impact level. You don't have to do it alone! Make sure you clarify this in your framework and include it in your work plan for the year, if relevant.

STEP 7: DEFINING EVALUATION MOMENTS AND METHODOLOGY

You've got this far – well done! Give yourself a pat on the back, you have done most of the work. There are still some things to be defined but the biggest part of your PMEL system is already done. So far, we have a ToC, which counts as planning (along with work plans and/or MAS), and indicators and targets, which are part of monitoring efforts. Let us discuss evaluation.

Remember we said that evaluation is something that happens at pre-established moments. Mostly, at the beginning, midway and at the end of the implementation of your ToC. Although it's up to you how and when you carry out your evaluation, ideally it should happen at least twice in the lifetime of your implementation, and it should be critical towards the strategies and the ToC itself. Examples of how you can conduct evaluations are: as part of your reporting process (mid-term, annual reporting), through quarterly review meetings, and/or lesson sharing through meetings, webinars or events. You should also think about the format of your reports. If your audience is young people, you can use vlogs, social media and creative videos to showcase your results. If you are reporting to a donor, they usually prefer written reports and infographics. Keep in mind your target group when defining your evaluation methodologies.
Evaluation is meant to help you assess to what extent your strategies and ToC respond to the issue you are addressing. Similarly, your evaluation could be the moment to assess some of your learning questions, if not already addressed. Finally, to ensure the evaluation is completely objective about the work you are doing, external consultants are highly recommended.

Make sure that the evaluation moments are clear for everyone working in your team and that you have someone as the focal point/responsible person for the process.

STEP 8: AGREE ON LEARNING MOMENTS AND METHODOLOGY

Only one more step to go, and it involves learning. Very important! We said before that monitoring and evaluation are used to learn and to be able to steer your organisational efforts towards the achievement of your impact/vision. Agreeing on learning moments is therefore a fundamental part of your PMEL efforts. It requires time and open space for critical reflections. Learning moments are when you allow everyone to come back after an evaluation moment to discuss what can be adjusted and how. Additionally, learning can also involve research reviews within the field, as well as linking with other organisations/programmes that might be targeting the same issues as you are.

It is crucial to plan learning moments with your team throughout the year of implementation of your ToC. As well as a lead person for these moments, who can define the methodology most appropriate for the sessions and who can safeguard other learning moments, like conference attendance, etc. With this done, you are good to go!
Good luck :)

USEFUL RESOURCES ON PMEL:

1. **Basic Monitoring and Evaluation: Video explaining the different steps and concepts used in a ToC, in an easy-to-understand manner (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IR8FalapJf0&)**
2. **3 Ways to tell the Difference between an Output and an Outcome: If you have a hard time understanding the difference between output and outcomes, this video might help! (3 Ways to tell the Difference between an Output and an Outcome)**
3. **Morra Imas, Linda G., and Rist, Ray C.. The road to results. Designing and conducting effective development evaluations Washington: The World Bank, 2009. http://www.worldbank.org/r2r**
4. **Jody Zall Kusek and Ray C.Rist Ten steps to a Results-Based M&E System , The World Bank, 2004.**
5. **Moving from Outputs to Outcomes: Practical Advice from Governments Around the World (Burt Perrin, The World Bank, 2006) www.businessofgovernment.org/report/moving-outputs-outcomes-practical-advice-governments-around-world**
6. **Crosswalk of Evaluator and Evaluation Managers Competencies and Characteristics (IDEAS Competency Workgroup, January 2012)**
7. **Competencies for Development Evaluation Evaluators, Managers, and Commissioners (IDEAS Working Group Evaluation Competencies, February 2012)**
8. **Evaluating Development Co-operation: Summary of Key Norms and Standards (OECD/DAC, 2010)**

Do you want to learn more about MYP, youth-led advocacy, or SRHR in general? You can find many more resources on our website: www.choiceforyouth.org

PLANNING MONITORING AND LEARNING PMEL

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