The Network for Peacebuilding Evaluation
Thursday Talks

“ICT for M&E of Peacebuilding”
Vanessa Corlazzoli, Senior Manager of Design, Monitoring and Evaluation at Search for Common Ground

Part 1: Overview

About the speaker: Vanessa Corlazzoli is a Senior Manager of Design, Monitoring and Evaluation at Search for Common Ground. She manages the Institutional Learning Team, a global technical unit that is responsible for providing monitoring and evaluation support to 34 country programs to enable organizational learning. In her role, she manages four regional DM&E Specialists, as well as special projects that provide M&E technical support to DFID Conflict Advisers and UNICEF’s education and peacebuilding practitioners. The DME for Peace Hub (www.dmeforpeace.org) is also a project that is implemented out of the Institutional Learning Team.

Presenter Remarks:

This presentation is based on Search's Institutional Learning Team’s latest paper on Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for Monitoring and Evaluation of Peacebuilding Programs.

The paper explores the incorporation of ICTs into the monitoring and evaluation systems of peacebuilding programs. It introduces the reader to the breadth and depth of new technologies, exploring the application of the following ICTs: mobile technology, social media, big data, the digitization of surveys, and tools to better visualize data.

This document is one of a series of Practice Products developed under the Conflict, Crime, and Violence Results Initiative funded by Department for International Development (DFID). The full set of products is intended to support DFID country offices and their partners to develop better measures of program results in difficult conflict and fragile environments.

As we discuss and consider the potential for technology in M&E we must always keep in mind, technology is an enabler, not a solution. We must still begin with strong M&E systems and principles.

Today’s talk will cover four out of six tools covered by the paper, plus touch briefly on Big Data.
1) **Mobile Phones and SMS:**
   a. Mobile phones can enable us to communicate with participants directly; we can speak, text, and share photos and information via mobile phones.
   b. They are a tool readily available in conflict-affected and fragile areas; reliably in urban areas and increasingly in rural areas.
   c. Allows us to collect near real time data.
   d. Used for accountability and research. Helps with upward (to funders) but not downward accountability.
   e. Example: SFCG runs radio programming, and gets feedback from listeners and targeted communities via mobile phones and SMS.
   f. Texts can be used for 1) for accountability 2) for learning and surveys, and 3) for data collection and crowd sourcing

2) **Interactive and Online Maps:**
   a. Used in election monitoring and to track crises
      i. Still, data shows that we’re not using these maps to assess program performance. We are *not* mapping changing key indicators; this is surprising since many indicators are related to location, as is conflict.
   b. Why use maps in the field? Mapping helps find patterns and thus benefits analysis.
   c. *Base maps & end maps* would create a view of data on attitudes you’re trying to change
   d. *Peace maps* would track conflict and peace initiatives. Enable the user/researcher to see if the conflict maps are in line with changing attitudes.

3) **Big Data:** “Big Data” refers to the massive quantities of data that is being generated daily as part of the increased computerization of systems and records by citizens, governments, and companies.
   a. Includes texts, video, photos, social media, phone calls.
   b. 90% of the data available has been created in the past two years.
   c. There are potential uses for big data, but it is too soon to concretely say if it’s useful or not.
   d. M&E needs to pay attention to how big data uses evolve.

4) **Social Media**
   a. It’s difficult to monitor program performance in open forums – identifying change is easier in closed forums.
   b. Despite its popularity, it’s not entirely representative
   c. Be transparent: If you collect data from social media, share back your findings.
   d. Be careful with and aware of accountability and privacy.

5) **Data Visualization**
   a. Should become a part of your toolkit. It is increasingly being adopted by Western evaluators in North America and Europe.
   b. Necessity of conveying complexity: beware of only telling one part of the story through data visualization
ICT CONTRIBUTIONS

- Rapid and Near Real-time Monitoring
- Different Type of Data
- Track Indicators more Systematically
- Potential Cost Saving
- Increase Capacities and Collaboration
- Potential Increase Use through Better Data Visualization
- Greater Engagement with Participants
- Analytical software

BE AWARE OF...

- Bias: systematic – does introducing tech change the way people answer questions? Selection – be aware of differences in access to tech (men/women, urban/rural)
- Safety and Security
- Steep Learning Curves Training
- Logistics
- Inconsistent Application of Social Science Methodologies
- Oversimplification through data visualization

Part 2: Question & Answer

Daudi Kona (attendee): How do you overcome the challenge of accuracy and verification of alerts for an appropriate response when utilizing these new technologies?

Answer: Accuracy and verification is not a new problem. But the use of social media and phones/texting does make it more difficult to know your total population and to determine what an appropriate sample size is. We need to keep researching and communicating with academics to work towards the answer to this question.

Peter Woodrow (attendee): I am not clear on what a "dashboard" is, please explain.

A: A dashboard is a one or two pager that combines data sets or indicators and gives said data a visual aspect. Please refer to the paper for some great examples of dashboards.

Ann Jannette Rosga (attendee): Have you seen any specific applications of ICT of M&E in law enforcement performance and/or use of force monitoring?

A: The VERA Institute of Justice could be a better resource to answer that question. For ICT law enforcement please also refer to Small Arms Survey. Both organizations were contributors to the paper.

Christine Dawson (attendee): Do you have any more information on Peace Maps from the Niger Delta?
A: Please refer to the paper. PeaceMaps has been around for two years and keeps improving. They are doing work with peace mapping on the ground.

Norman Shamas (attendee): Can you discuss more about privacy and security for participant responses? Technologies such as SMS do not have any way to encrypt data and it is possible information to be intercepted by governments or other groups.

A: We must take the onus of safety and do no harm, because security and privacy are concerns that demand us being careful. Consider the types of questions you are asking; conflict is dynamic, so today it might be safe to ask a question, but tomorrow the question/answer might do harm. We can’t only think in the short term.

For instance, organizations working in Afghanistan, they have moved away from tech methods for exactly this reason.

Isabella Jean (attendee): Agencies in conflict and disaster affected settings are often concerned that use of ICT technologies can amplify voices of those who are already dominant (elites, people in power/with resources) as they have easier access to technology. What are good examples where crowd-sourcing has been systematically supplemented with additional data collection from those who are illiterate, blind, marginalized, and have no access to ICTs?

A: There is no simple answer, but if access is poor, don’t use ICTs. Work within an area underserved by technology in more traditional ways. Consider access to electricity, and the risk associated with tech getting stolen. With marginalized populations, be aware of limitations, but don’t shy away entirely from tech. Mixed methods work is very important, but the balance is still being sought, we are still working towards synergy.

If you have any follow-up questions, please post them on the Thursday Talk Discussion Forum here.