

ASK AN EXPERT

with Rebecca Herrington, CEO & Director of Strategic Learning at Headlight Consulting Services

Adapting your peacebuilding programs for maximum impact



How can we adapt our programs to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness? Rebecca Herrington spoke about how peacebuilders can use data and evidence to inform decision making and program adaptation, adjust monitoring and evaluation plans to be more user focused, and leverage systems lens to solve complex problems. Here are four key takeaways from the conversation.

MAKE TIME FOR ADAPTATION

SET ASIDE RESOURCES FOR REFLECTION, LEARNING, ADAPTATION AND FEEDBACK LOOPS

Reflection, learning, and adaptation take time and effort. Negotiate with your donors to set expectations around adaptation. Set aside time and resources to listen to project participants, discuss contextual indicators and data, and create feedback loops to better understand what's effective and not. Be aware that finalizing changes and making decisions requires not just time but resources and stakeholder buy-in.



APPLY CONFLICT SENSITIVE AND DO NO HARM PRINCIPLES

CONFLICT SENSITIVITY AND DO NO HARM PRINCIPLES SHOULD BE INCORPORATED IN ADAPTATION PROCESS

Having conflict-sensitive indicators paired with context indicators is paramount to a successful adaptation strategy. This will ensure the peacebuilding program does not exacerbate conflict. It's not good enough to only apply conflict sensitivity and do no harm principles during project design. It needs to be explicit in all phases- especially the adaptation conversation.



BE PROACTIVE ENGAGE DONORS

BE WILLING TO SPEAK TO STAKEHOLDERS IF THE PROGRAM IS HAVING UNFORESEEN OR NEGATIVE IMPACT

It's negligent to continue programming if and when there is evidence that the peacebuilding program is having a negative impact. Despite the traditional view that donors are restricted and unwilling to change, most donors are willing to engage in conversations around programmatic changes, especially when the program is being implemented in highly uncertain contexts.



REMEMBER THAT ADAPTATION IS ITERATIVE

ADAPTATION IS A CONTINUOUS AND COLLECTIVE LEARNING PROCESS

Misjudgments and misunderstandings are inevitable aspects of working in peacebuilding - especially in highly complex contexts. Incorporating adaptation within project management allows for the possibility of learning from errors, provides space to have difficult conversations and work collaboratively to make improvements.



For more tips from Rebecca on how to adapt your peacebuilding program watch the full video:



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The Ask an Expert Webinar series, sponsored by the Alliance for Peacebuilding and the DME for Peace project at Search for Common Ground as part of the Effective Inter-Religious Action in Peacebuilding (EIAP) program, with support from the GHR Foundation provides practitioners with an opportunity to converse with experts in the inter-religious peacebuilding evaluation field on a range of topics.